ГЕНРИК СЕНКЕВИЧ

WITH FIRE AND SWORD

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the origin and career of the two Slav States, Poland and Russia, is interesting not merely because it contains a vast number of surprising scenes and marvellous pictures of life, not merely because it gives us a kaleidoscope as it were of the acts of men, but because these acts in all their variety fall into groups which may be referred each to its proper source and origin, and each group contains facts that concern the most serious problems of history and political development.

The history of these two States should be studied as one, or rather as two parts of one history, if we are to discover and grasp the meaning of either part fully. When studied as a whole, this history gives us the life story of the greater portion of the Slav race placed between two hostile forces, – the Germans on the west, the Mongols and Tartars on the east.

The advance of the Germans on the Slav tribes and later

on Poland presents, perhaps, the best example in history of the methods of European civilization. The entire Baltic coast from Lubeck eastward was converted to Christianity by the Germans at the point of the sword. The duty of rescuing these people from the errors of paganism formed the moral pretext for conquering them and taking their lands. The warrior was accompanied by the missionary, followed by the political colonist. The people of the country deprived of their lands were reduced to slavery; and if any escaped this lot, they were men from the higher classes who joined the conqueror in the capacity of assistant oppressors. The work was long and doubtful. The Germans made many failures, for their management was often very bad. The Slavs west of the Oder were stubborn, and under good leadership might have been invincible; but the leadership did not come, and to the Germans at last came the Hohenzollerns.

For the serious student there is no richer field of labor than the history of Poland and the Slavs of the Baltic, which is inseparable from the history of Mark Brandenburg and the two military orders, the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword.

The conquest of Russia by the Mongols, the subjection of Europeans to Asiatics, – not Asiatics of the south, but warriors from cold regions led by men of genius; for such were Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, and the lieutenants sent to the west, – was an affair of incomparably greater magnitude than the German wars on the Baltic.

The physical grip of the Mongol on Russia was irresistible.

There was nothing for the Russian princes to do but submit if they wished to preserve their people from dissolution. They had to bow down to every whim of the conqueror; suffer indignity, insult, death, – that is, death of individuals. The Russians endured for a long time without apparent result. But they were studying their conquerors, mastering their policy; and they mastered it so well that finally the Prince of Moscow made use of the Mongols to complete the union of eastern Russia and reduce all the provincial princes of the country, his own relatives, to the position of ordinary landholders subject to himself.

The difference between the Poles and Russians seems to be this, – that the Russians saw through the policy of their enemies, and then overcame them; while the Poles either did not understand the Germans, or if they did, did not overcome them, though they had the power.

This Slav history is interesting to the man of science, it is interesting also to the practical statesman, because there is no country in the Eastern hemisphere whose future may be considered outside of Russian influence, no country whose weal or woe may not become connected in some way with Russia. At the same time there are no states studied by so few and misunderstood by so many as the former Commonwealth of Poland, – whose people, brave and brilliant but politically unsuccessful, have received more sympathy than any other within the circle of civilization, – and Russia, whose people in strength of character and intellectual gifts are certainly among the first of

the Aryan race, though many men have felt free to describe them in terms exceptionally harsh and frequently unjust.

The leading elements of this history on its western side are Poland, the Catholic Church, Germany; on the eastern side they are Russia, Eastern Orthodoxy, Northern Asia.

Now let us see what this western history was. In the middle of the ninth century Slav tribes of various denominations occupied the entire Baltic coast west of the Vistula; a line drawn from Lubeck to the Elbe, ascending the river to Magdeburg, thence to the western ridge of the Bohemian mountains, and passing on in a somewhat irregular course, leaving Carinthia and Styria on the east, gives the boundary between the Germans and the Slavs at that period. Very nearly in the centre of the territory north of Bohemia and the Carpathians lived one of a number of Slav tribes, the Polyane (or men of the plain), who occupied the region afterwards called Great Poland by the Poles, and now called South Prussia by the Germans. In this Great Poland political life among the Northwestern Slavs began in the second half of the ninth century. About the middle of the tenth, Mechislav (Mieczislaw), the ruler, received Christianity, and the modest title of Count of the German Empire. Boleslav the Brave, his son and successor, extended his territory to the upper Elbe, from which region its boundary line passed through or near Berlin, whence it followed the Oder to the sea. Before his death, in 1025, Boleslav wished to be anointed king by the Pope. The ceremony was denied him, therefore he had it performed by bishops at

home. About a century later the western boundary was pushed forward by Boleslav Wry-mouth (1132-1139) to a point on the Baltic about half-way between Stettin and Lubeck. This was the greatest extension of Poland to the west. Between this line and the Elbe were Slav tribes; but the region had already become marken (marches) where the intrusive Germans were struggling for the lands and persons of the Slavs.

The eastern boundary of Poland at this period served also as the western boundary of Russia from the head-waters of the western branch of the river San in the Carpathian Mountains at a point west of Premysl (in the Galicia of to-day) to Brest-Litovsk, from which point the Russian boundary continued toward the northeast till it reached the sea, leaving Pskoff considerably and Yurieff (now Dorpat) slightly to the east, – that is, on Russian territory. Between Russia, north of Brest-Litovsk and Poland, was the irregular triangle composing the lands of Lithuanian and Finnish tribes. From the upper San the Russian boundary southward coincided with the Carpathians, including the territory between the Pruth to its mouth and the Carpathians. This boundary between Poland and Russia, established at that period, corresponds as nearly as possible with the line of demarcation between the two peoples at the present day.

During the two centuries following 1139, Poland continued to lose on the west and the north, and that process was fairly begun through which the Germans finally excluded the Poles from the

sea, and turned the cradle of Poland into South Prussia, the name which it bears to-day.

At the end of the fourteenth century a step was taken by the Poles through which it was hoped to win in other places far more than had been lost on the west. Poland turned now to the east; but by leaving her historical basis on the Baltic, by deserting her political birthplace, the only ground where she had a genuine mission, Poland entered upon a career which was certain to end in destruction, unless she could win the Russian power by agreement, or bend it by conquest, and then strengthened by this power, turn back and redeem the lost lands of Pomerania and Prussia.

The first step in the new career was an alliance with Yagello (Yahailo) of Lithuania, from which much was hoped. This event begins a new era in Polish history; to this event we must now give attention, for it was the first in a long series which ended in the great outburst described in this book, – the revolt of the Russians against the Commonwealth.

To reach the motives of this famous agreement between the Lithuanian prince and the nobles and clergy of Poland, – for these two estates had become the only power in the land, – we must turn to Russia.

Lithuania of itself was small, and a prince of that country, if it stood alone, would have received scant attention from Poland; but the Lithuanian Grand Prince was ruler over all the lands of western Russia as well as those of his own people.

What was Russia?

The definite appearance of Russia in history dates from 862, when Rurik came to Novgorod, invited by the people to rule over them. Oleg, the successor of this prince, transferred his capital from Novgorod to Kieff on the Dnieper, which remained the chief city and capital for two centuries and a half. Rurik's great-grandson, Vladimir, introduced Christianity into Russia at the end of the tenth century. During his long reign and that of his son Yaroslav the Lawgiver, the boundary was fixed between Russia and Poland through the places described above, and coincided very nearly with the watershed dividing the two river-systems of the Dnieper and the Vistula, and serves to this day as the boundary between the Russian and Polish languages and the Eastern and Catholic churches.

In 1157 Kieff ceased to be the seat of the Grand Prince, the capital of Russia. A new centre of activity and government was founded in the north, – first at Suzdal, and then at Vladimir, to be transferred later to Moscow.

In 1240 the conquest of Russia by the Tartars was complete. Half a million or more of armed Asiatics had swept over the land, destroying everything where they went. A part of this multitude advanced through Poland, and were stopped in Silesia and Moravia only by the combined efforts of central Europe. The Tartar dominion lasted about two hundred and fifty years (1240-1490), and during this period great changes took place. Russia before the Tartar conquest was a large country, whose

western boundary was the eastern boundary of Poland; liberated Russia was a comparatively small country, with its capital at Moscow, and having interposed between it and Poland a large state extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea, – a state which was composed of two thirds of that Russia which was ruled before the Tartar conquest by the descendants of Rurik; a state which included Little, Red, Black, and White Russia, more than two thirds of the best lands, and Kieff, with the majority of the historic towns of pre-Tartar Russia.

How was this state founded?

This state was the Lithuanian Russian, – Litva í Rus (Lithuania and Russia), as it is called by the Russians, – and it rose in the following manner. In the irregular triangle on the Baltic, between Russia and Poland of the twelfth century, lived tribes of Finnish and Lithuanian stock, about a dozen in number. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries these were all conquered, – the Prussian Lithuanians from the Niemen to the Vistula, by the Teutonic Knights, aided by crusading adventurers from western Europe; the others, Lithuanian and Finnish, by the Knights of the Sword, – with the exception of two tribes, the Lithuanians proper, on the upper waters of the Niemen and its tributaries, and the Jmuds or Samogitians on the right bank of the same river, lower down and between the Lithuanians and the sea. These two small tribes were destined through their princes-remarkable men in the fullest sense of the word-to play a great part in Russian and Polish history. It is needless to say much

of the Lithuanians, who are better known to scholars than any people, perhaps, of similar numbers in Europe. The main interest in them at present is confined to their language, which, though very valuable to the philologist and beautiful in itself, has never been used in government or law, and has but one book considered as belonging to literature, – "The Four Seasons" by Donaleitis.

Though small, the Lithuanian country, ruled by a number of petty princes, was as much given to anarchy as larger aggregations of men. United for a time under Mindog by reason of pressure from outside, the Lithuanians rose first to prominence under Gedimin (1315-1340), who in a quarter of a century was able to substitute himself for the petty princes of western Russia and extend his power to the south of Kieff. Gedimin was followed by Olgerd, who with his uncle Keistut ruled till 1377; during which time the domains of the Lithuanian prince were extended to the Crimea, and included the whole basin of the Dnieper with its tributaries, together with the upper Dvina. Gedimin and Olgerd respected in all places the clergy of the Eastern Church, and thus acquired rule over a great extent of country with comparative ease and rapidity.

Olgerd, who had completed a great state, left it to his sons and his brother Keistut. Yagello (Yahailo), one of these sons, had Keistut put to death; his brothers and cousins fled; Yagello became sole master. At this juncture the nobles and clergy of Poland effected an arrangement by which Yagello, on condition of becoming a Catholic, introducing the Catholic religion into

Lithuania, and joining the state to Poland, was to marry the Queen Yadviga (the last survivor of the royal house) and be crowned king of Poland at Cracow. All these conditions were carried out, and with the reign of Yagello Polish history assumes an entirely new character.

With the establishment by Gedimin and Olgerd of the Lithuanian dynasty and its conquests, there were two Russias instead of one, – Western Russia, ruled by the house of Gedimin, and Eastern Russia, ruled by the house of Rurik. It had become the ambition of the Lithuanian princes to unite all Russia; it had long been the fixed purpose of the princes at Moscow to recover their ancient patrimony, the lands of Vladimir and Yaroslav; that is, all western Russia to the Polish frontier; consequently all the lands added by the Lithuanian princes to their little realm on the Niemen and its tributaries. This struggle between the two houses was very bitter, and more than once it seemed as though Moscow's day had come, and Vilna was to be the capital of reconstituted Russia.

When the question was at this stage, Yagello became King of Poland. The union, purely personal at first, became more intimate later on by means of the two elements of Polish influence, the Church and the nobility. Catholicism was made the religion of the Lithuanians at once; and twenty-seven years later, at Horodlo, it was settled that the Lithuanian Catholics of the higher classes should receive the same privileges as the Polish nobility, with whom they were joined by means of

heraldry, – a peculiar arrangement, through which a number of Lithuanian families received the arms of some Polish house, and became thus associated, as the original inhabitants of America are associated under the same *totem* by the process of adoption.

Without giving details, for which there is no space here, we state merely the meaning of all the details. Lithuania struggled persistently against anything more than a personal union, while Poland struggled just as persistently for a complete union; but no matter how the Lithuanians might gain at one time or another, the personal union under a king influenced by Polish ideas joined to the great weight of the clergy and nobility was too much for them, and the end of the whole struggle was that under Sigismond Augustus, the last of the Yagellon kings, a diet was held at Lublin in which a union between Poland and Lithuania was proclaimed against the protest of a large number of the Lithuanians who left the diet. The King, who was hereditary Grand Duke of Lithuania, and childless, made a present to Poland of his rights, – made Poland his heir. The petty nobility of Lithuania were placed on the same legal footing as the princes and men of great historic families. Lithuania was assimilated to Poland in institutions.

The northern part of West Russia was attached to Lithuania, and all southern Russia merged directly in Poland. If the work of this diet had been productive of concord, and therefore of strength, Poland might have established herself firmly by the sea and won the first place in eastern Europe; but the Commonwealth, either from choice or necessity, was more

occupied in struggling with Russians than in standing with firm foot on the Baltic. Sound statesmanship would have taught the Poles that for them it was a question of life and death to possess Pomerania and Prussia, and make the Oder at least their western boundary. They had the power to do that; they had the power to expel the two military orders from the coast; but they did not exert it, – a neglect which cost them dear in later times. Moscow would not have escaped the Poles had they been masters of the Baltic, and had they, instead of fighting with Cossacks and Russians, attached them to the Commonwealth by toleration and justice.

The whole internal policy of Poland from the coronation of Yagello to the reign of Vladislav IV. was to assimilate the nobility of Lithuania and Russia to that of Poland in political rights and in religious profession. The success was complete in the political sense, and practically so in the religious. The Polish nobility, who were in fact the state, possessed at the time of Yagello's coronation all the land, and owned the labor of the people; later on they ceased to pay taxes of any kind. It was a great bribe to the nobles of Lithuania and Russia to occupy the same position. The Lithuanians became Catholics at the accession of Yagello, or soon after; but in Russia, where all belonged to the Orthodox Church, the process was slow, even if sure. The princes Ostrorog and Dominik Zaslavski of this book were of Russian families which held their faith for a long time. The parents of Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski were Orthodox, and his mother on her

death-bed implored him to be true to the faith of his ancestors.

All had been done that could be done with the nobility; but the great mass of Russian people holding the same faith as the Russians of the East, whose capital was at Moscow, were not considered reliable; therefore a union of churches was effected, mainly through the formal initiative of the King Sigismond III. and a few ecclesiastics, but rejected by a great majority of the Russian clergy and people. This new or united church, which retained the Slav language with Eastern customs and liturgy, but recognized the supremacy of the Pope, was made the state church of Russia.

From this rose all the religious trouble.

The Russians, when Hmelnitski appeared, were in the following condition: Their land was gone; the power of life and death over them resided in lords, either Poles or Polonized Russians, who generally gave this power to agents or tenants, not infrequently Jews. All justice, all administration, all power belonged to the lord or to whomsoever he delegated his authority; there was no appeal. A people with an active communal government of their own in former times were now reduced to complete slavery. Such was the Russian complaint on the material side. On the moral side it was that their masters were filching their faith from them. Having stripped them of everything in this life, they were trying to deprive them of life to come.

The outburst of popular rage against Poland was without

example in history for intensity and volume, and this would have made the revolt remarkable whatever its motives or objects. But the Cossack war was of world-wide importance in view of the issues. The triumph of Poland would have brought the utter subjection of the Cossacks and the people, with the extinction of Eastern Orthodoxy not only in Russia but in other lands; for the triumph of Poland would have left no place for Moscow on earth but a place of subjection. The triumph of the Cossacks would have brought a mixed government, with religious toleration and a king having means to curb the all-powerful nobles. This was what Hmelnitski sought; this was the dream of Ossolinski the Chancellor; this, if realized, might possibly have saved the Commonwealth, and made it a constitutional government instead of an association of irresponsible magnates.

It turned out that the Cossacks and the uprisen people were not a match for the Poles, and it was not in the interest of the Tartars to give the Cossacks the fruits of victory. It was the policy of the Tartars to bring the Poles into trouble and then rescue them; they wished the Poles to have the upper hand, but barely have it, and be in continual danger of losing it.

The battle of Berestechko, instead of giving peace to the Commonwealth, opened a new epoch of trouble. Hmelnitski, the ablest man in Europe at that time, could be conquered by nothing but death. Though beaten through the treachery of the Khan at Berestechko and perhaps also by treason in his own camp, he rallied, concluded the treaty of Bélaya Tserkoff, which

reduced the Cossack army from forty to twelve thousand men, but left Hmelnitski hetman of the Zaporojians. That was the great mistake of the Poles; every success was for them a failure so long as Hmelnitski had a legal existence.

The Poles, though intellectual, sympathetic, brave, and gifted with high personal qualities that have made them many friends, have been always deficient in collective wisdom; and there is probably no more astonishing antithesis in Europe than the Poles as individuals and the Poles as a people.

After Berestechko the Poles entered the Ukraine as masters. Vishnyevetski went as the ruling spirit. To all appearance the time of his triumph had come; but one day after dinner he fell ill and died suddenly. The verdict of the Russian people was: The Almighty preserved him through every danger, saved him from every enemy, and by reason of the supreme wickedness of "Yarema," reserved him for his own holy and punishing hand.

The old order of things was restored in Russia, – landlords, garrisons, Jews; but now came the most striking event in the whole history.

Moldavia, the northern part of the present kingdom of Romania, was at that time a separate principality, owning the suzerainty of the Sultan. Formerly it had been a part of the Russian principality of Galich (Galicia), joined to Poland in the reign of Kazimir the Great, but connected, at the time of our story, with Turkey. The Poles had intimate relations with the country, and sought to bring it back. The Hospodar was Vassily

Lupul, a man of fabulous wealth, according to report, and the father of two daughters, whose beauty was the wonder of eastern Europe. Prince Radzivil of Lithuania had married the elder; the younger, Domna (Domina) Rosanda, was sought in marriage by three men from Poland and by Timofei Hmelnitski, the son of Bogdan. The first of the Poles was Dmitry Vishnyevetski; the second was Kalinovski, the aged hetman of the Crown, captured by Hmelnitski at Korsún, but now free and more ambitions than any man in the Commonwealth of half his age, which was then near seventy.

Lupul, who had consented to the marriage of his daughter with young Hmelnitski, preferred Vishnyevetski; whereupon Bogdan exclaimed, "We will send a hundred thousand best men with the bridegroom." Thirty-six thousand Cossacks and Tartars set out for Yassy, the residence of Lupul. Kalinovski, the Polish hetman, with twenty thousand men, barred the way to young Hmelnitski at Batog on the boundary. It was supposed that Timofei was attended by a party of only five thousand, and Kalinovski intended to finish a rival and destroy the son of an enemy at a blow. This delusion of the hetman was probably caused, but in every case confirmed, by a letter from Bogdan, in which he stated that his son, with some attendants, was on his way to marry the daughter of the Hospodar; that young men are hot-headed and given to quarrels, blood might be spilled; therefore he asked Kalinovski to withdraw and let the party pass.

This was precisely what Kalinovski would not do; he resolved

to stop Timofei by force. The first day, five thousand Cossacks and Tartars, while passing to the west, were attacked by the Poles, who pursued them with cavalry. When a good distance from the camp, a courier rushed to the hetman with news of a general attack on the rear of the Polish army. The Poles returned in haste, pursued in their turn.

Young Hmelnitski had fallen upon a division of the army in the rear of the camp, and almost destroyed it. Darkness brought an end to the struggle. No eye was closed on either side that night. One half of the Polish army resolved to escape in spite of the hetman. At daybreak they were marching. "They shall not flee!" said Kalinovski "Stop them with cavalry; open on the cowards with cannon!" One part of the Polish army hurried to stop the other; there was a discharge of artillery; some of the fugitives rushed on, but most of them stopped. Then a second discharge of artillery, and a battle began. The Cossacks gazed on this wonderful scene; when their amazement had passed, they attacked the enemy, and indescribable slaughter began. It was impossible for the Poles to re-form or make effective defence. At this moment the army-servants, many of whom were Russians, set fire to the camp. Outnumbered and panic-stricken, thousands of Poles rushed into the Bug and were drowned. The Cossacks, with Berestechko in mind, showed mercy to no man; and of the whole army of twenty thousand, less than five hundred escaped. The peasants in all the country about killed the fugitives with scythes and clubs. Those who crossed the river were slaughtered

on the other bank; among them was Samuel Kalinovski, son of the hetman. Then Kalinovski himself, seeing that all was lost cried, "I have no wish to live; I am ashamed to look on the sun of this morning!" and rushed to the thick of the fight. He perished; and a Nogai horseman raced over the field, while from his saddle-bow depended the head of the hetman with its white streaming hair. After the battle the body was discovered; on it the portrait of Domna Rosanda and the letter of Bogdan.

Farther on, near the Bug, was a division of five thousand Germans under command of Marek Sobieski, the gifted chief who had fought at Zbaraj. Attacked in front by the Cossacks, they stood with manful persistence till Karach Murza, the Nogai commander, at the head of fourteen thousand men, descended upon them from the hills of Botog like a mighty rain from the clouds or a whirlwind of the desert, as the Ukraine chronicler phrases it. Split in the centre, torn through and through, the weapons dropped from their hands, they were ridden down and sabred by Nogais and Cossacks. Sobieski perished; Pshiyemski, commander of artillery, was killed.

A year later the Poles at Jvanyets were in greater straits than ever before. They were surrounded by Hmelnitski and the Khan so that no escape was possible; but they had more gold to give than had the Cossacks. They satisfied those in power, from the Khan downward, with gifts, and covenanted to let them plunder Russia and seize Russian captives during six weeks. On these conditions the Tartars deserted Hmelnitski,

peace was concluded, and the Polish army and king were saved from captivity.

This was the last act of the Cossack-Tartar alliance. Hmelnitski now turned to Moscow; the Zaporojian army took the oath of allegiance to Alexis, father of Peter the Great. Lithuania and western Russia were overrun by the forces of Moscow and the Cossacks. The Swedes occupied Warsaw and Cracow. Karl Gustav, their king, became king of Poland. Yan Kazimir fled to Silesia.

Again the Polish king came back, but soon resigned, and ended his life in France.

The eastern bank of the Dnieper, with Kieff on the west, went to Russia; but it was not till the reign of Katherine II. that western Russia was united to the east, and Prussia and Austria received all the lands of Poland proper.

I feel constrained to ask kindly indulgence from the readers of this sketch. I am greatly afraid that it will seem indefinite and lacking in precision; but the field to be covered is so great that I wrote with two kinds of readers in view, – those who are already well acquainted with Slav history, and those who do not know this history yet, but who may be roused to examine it for themselves. I hope to give a sketch of this history in a future not too remote, with an account of the sources of original information; so that impartial students, as Americans are by position, may have some assistance in beginning a work of such commanding importance as the history of Poland and Russia.

Jeremiah Curtin.

Washington, D. C, April 4, 1890.

CHAPTER I

The year 1647 was that wonderful year in which manifold signs in the heavens and on the earth announced misfortunes of some kind and unusual events. Contemporary chroniclers relate that beginning with spring-time myriads of locusts swarmed from the Wilderness, destroying the grain and the grass; this was a forerunner of Tartar raids. In the summer there was a great eclipse of the sun, and soon after a comet appeared in the sky. In Warsaw a tomb was seen over the city, and a fiery cross in the clouds; fasts were held and alms given, for some men declared that a plague would come on the land and destroy the people. Finally, so mild a winter set in, that the oldest inhabitants could not remember the like of it. In the southern provinces ice did not confine the rivers, which, swollen by the daily melting of snows, left their courses and flooded the banks. Rainfalls were frequent. The steppe was drenched, and became an immense slough. The sun was so warm in the south that, wonder of wonders! in Bratslav and the Wilderness a green fleece covered the steppes and plains in the middle of December. The swarms in the beehives began to buzz and bustle; cattle were bellowing in the fields. Since such an order of things appeared altogether unnatural, all men in Russia who were waiting or looking for unusual events turned their excited minds and eyes especially to the Wilderness, from which rather than anywhere else danger

might show itself.

At that time there was nothing unusual in the Wilderness, – no struggles there, nor encounters, beyond those of ordinary occurrence, and known only to the eagles, hawks, ravens, and beasts of the plain. For the Wilderness was of this character at that period. The last traces of settled life ended on the way to the south, at no great distance beyond Chigirin on the side of the Dnieper, and on the side of the Dniester not far from Uman; then forward to the bays and sea there was nothing but steppe after steppe, hemmed in by the two rivers as by a frame. At the bend of the Dnieper in the lower country beyond the Cataracts Cossack life was seething, but in the open plains no man dwelt; only along the shores were nestled here and there little fields, like islands in the sea. The land belonged in name to Poland, but it was an empty land, in which the Commonwealth permitted the Tartars to graze their herds; but since the Cossacks prevented this frequently, the field of pasture was a field of battle too.

How many struggles were fought in that region, how many people had laid down their lives there, no man had counted, no man remembered. Eagles, falcons, and ravens alone saw these; and whoever from a distance heard the sound of wings and the call of ravens, whoever beheld the whirl of birds circling over one place, knew that corpses or unburied bones were lying beneath. Men were hunted in the grass as wolves or wild goats. All who wished, engaged in this hunt. Fugitives from the law defended themselves in the wild steppes. The armed herdsman guarded

his flock, the warrior sought adventure, the robber plunder, the Cossack a Tartar, the Tartar a Cossack. It happened that whole bands guarded herds from troops of robbers. The steppe was both empty and filled, quiet and terrible, peaceable and full of ambushes; wild by reason of its wild plains, but wild, too, from the wild spirit of men.

At times a great war filled it. Then there flowed over it like waves Tartar chambuls, Cossack regiments, Polish or Wallachian companies. In the night-time the neighing of horses answered the howling of wolves, the voices of drums and brazen trumpets flew on to the island of Ovid and the sea, and along the black trail of Kutchman there seemed an inundation of men. The boundaries of the Commonwealth were guarded from Kamenyets to the Dnieper by outposts and stanitsas; and when the roads were about to swarm with people, it was known especially by the countless flocks of birds which, frightened by the Tartars, flew onward to the north. But the Tartar, if he slipped out from the Black Forest or crossed the Dniester from the Wallachian side, came by the southern provinces together with the birds.

That winter, however, the birds did not come with their uproar to the Commonwealth. It was stiller on the steppe than usual. At the moment when our narrative begins the sun was just setting, and its reddish rays threw light on a land entirely empty. On the northern rim of the Wilderness, along the Omelnik to its mouth, the sharpest eye could not discover a living soul, nor even a movement in the dark, dry, and withered steppe grass. The sun

showed but half its shield from behind the horizon. The heavens became obscured, and then the steppe grew darker and darker by degrees. Near the left bank, on a small height resembling more a grave-mound than a hill, were the mere remnants of a walled stanitsa which once upon a time had been built by Fedor Buchatski and then torn down by raids. A long shadow stretched from this ruin. In the distance gleamed the waters of the widespread Omelnik, which in that place turned toward the Dnieper. But the lights went out each moment in the heavens and on the earth. From the sky were heard the cries of storks in their flight to the sea; with this exception the stillness was unbroken by a sound.

Night came down upon the Wilderness, and with it the hour of ghosts. Cossacks on guard in the stanitsas related in those days that the shades of men who had fallen in sudden death and in sin used to rise up at night and carry on dances in which they were hindered neither by cross nor church. Also, when the wicks which showed the time of midnight began to burn out, prayers for the dead were offered throughout the stanitsas. It was said, too, that the shades of mounted men coursing through the waste barred the road to wayfarers, whining and begging them for a sign of the holy cross. Among these ghosts vampires also were met with, who pursued people with howls. A trained ear might distinguish at a distance the howls of a vampire from those of a wolf. Whole legions of shadows were also seen, which sometimes came so near the stanitsas that the sentries sounded the alarm.

This was generally the harbinger of a great war.

The meeting of a single ghost foreboded no good, either; but it was not always necessarily of evil omen, for frequently a living man would appear before travellers and vanish like a shadow, and therefore might easily and often be taken for a ghost.

Night came quickly on the Omelnik, and there was nothing surprising in the fact that a figure, either a man or a ghost, made its appearance at the side of the deserted stanitsa. The moon coming out from behind the Dnieper whitened the waste, the tops of the thistles, and the distance of the steppe. Immediately there appeared lower down on the plain some other beings of the night. The flitting clouds hid the light of the moon from moment to moment; consequently those figures flashed up in the darkness at one instant, and the next they were blurred. At times they disappeared altogether, and seemed to melt in the shadow. Pushing on toward the height on which the first man was standing, they stole up quietly, carefully, slowly, halting at intervals.

There was something awe-exciting in their movements, as there was in all that steppe which was so calm in appearance. The wind at times blew from the Dnieper, causing a mournful rustle among the dried thistles, which bent and trembled as in fear. At last the figures vanished in the shadow of the ruins. In the uncertain light of that hour nothing could be seen save the single horseman on the height.

But the rustle arrested his attention. Approaching the edge of

the mound, he began to look carefully into the steppe. At that moment the wind stopped, the rustling ceased; there was perfect rest.

Suddenly a piercing whistle was heard; mingled voices began to shout in terrible confusion, "Allah! Allah! Jesus Christ! Save! Kill!" The report of muskets re-echoed; red flashes rent the darkness. The tramp of horses was heard with the clash of steel. Some new horsemen rose as it were from beneath the surface of the steppe. You would have said that a storm had sprung up on a sudden in that silent and ominous land. The shrieks of men followed the terrible clash. Then all was silent; the struggle was over.

Apparently one of its usual scenes had been enacted in the Wilderness.

The horsemen gathered in groups on the height; a few of them dismounted, and examined something carefully. Meanwhile a powerful and commanding voice was heard in the darkness.

"Strike a fire in front!"

In a moment sparks sprang out, and soon a blaze flashed up from the dry reeds and pitch-pine which wayfarers through the Wilderness always carried with them.

Straightway the staff for a hanging-lamp was driven into the earth. The glare from above illuminated sharply a number of men who were bending over a form stretched motionless on the ground.

These men were soldiers, in red uniforms and wolf-skin caps.

Of these, one who sat on a valiant steed appeared to be the leader. Dismounting, he approached the prostrate figure and inquired, -

"Well, Sergeant, is he alive yet, or is it all over with him?"

"He is alive, but there is a rattling in his throat; the lariat stifled him."

"Who is he?"

"He is not a Tartar; some man of distinction."

"Then God be thanked!"

The chief looked attentively at the prostrate man.

"Well, just like a hetman."

"His horse is of splendid Tartar breed; the Khan has no better," said the sergeant. "There he stands."

The lieutenant looked at the horse, and his face brightened. Two soldiers held a really splendid steed, who, moving his ears and distending his nostrils, pushed forward his head and looked with frightened eyes at his master.

"But the horse will be ours, Lieutenant?" put in, with an inquiring tone, the sergeant.

"Dog believer! would you deprive a Christian of his horse in the steppe?"

"But it is our booty-"

Further conversation was interrupted by stronger breathing from the suffocated man.

"Pour gorailka into his mouth," said the lieutenant, undoing his belt.

"Are we to spend the night here?"

"Yes. Unsaddle the horses and make a good fire."

The soldiers hurried around quickly. Some began to rouse and rub the prostrate man; some started off for reeds to burn; others spread camel and bear skins on the ground for couches.

The lieutenant, troubling himself no more about the suffocated stranger, unbound his belt and stretched himself on a burka by the fire. He was a very young man, of spare habit of body, dark complexion, very elegant in manner, with a delicately cut countenance and a prominent aquiline nose. In his eyes were visible desperate daring and endurance, but his face had an honest look. His rather thick mustache and a beard, evidently unshaven for a long time, gave him a seriousness beyond his years.

Meanwhile two attendants were preparing the evening meal. Dressed quarters of mutton were placed on the fire, a number of bustards and partridges were taken from the packs, and one wild goat, which an attendant began to skin without delay. The fire blazed up, casting out upon the steppe an enormous ruddy circle of light. The suffocated man began to revive slowly.

After a time he cast his bloodshot eyes around on the strangers, examining their faces; then he tried to stand up. The soldier who had previously talked with the lieutenant raised him by the armpits; another put in his hand a halbert, upon which the stranger leaned with all his force. His face was still purple, his veins swollen. At last, with a suppressed voice, he coughed out his first word, "Water!"

They gave him gorailka, which he drank repeatedly, and which appeared to do him good, for after he had removed the flask from his lips at last, he inquired in a clear voice, "In whose hands am I?"

The officer rose and approached him. "In the hands of those who saved you."

"It was not you, then, who caught me with a lariat?"

"No; the sabre is our weapon, not the lariat. You wrong our good soldiers with the suspicion. You were seized by ruffians, pretended Tartars. You can look at them if you are curious, for they are lying out there slaughtered like sheep."

Saying this, he pointed with his hand to a number of dark bodies lying below the height.

To this the stranger answered, "If you will permit me to rest."

They brought him a felt-covered saddle, on which he seated himself in silence.

He was in the prime of life, of medium height, with broad shoulders, almost gigantic build of body, and striking features. He had an enormous head, a complexion dried and sunburnt, black eyes, somewhat aslant, like those of a Tartar; over his thin lips hung a mustache ending at the tips in two broad bunches. His powerful face indicated courage and pride. There was in it something at once attractive and repulsive, – the dignity of a hetman with Tartar cunning, kindness, and ferocity.

After he had sat awhile on the saddle he rose, and beyond all expectation, went to look at the bodies instead of returning

thanks.

"How churlish!" muttered the lieutenant.

The stranger examined each face carefully, nodding his head like a man who has seen through everything; then he turned slowly to the lieutenant, slapping himself on the side, and seeking involuntarily his belt, behind which he wished evidently to pass his hand.

This importance in a man just rescued from the halter did not please the young lieutenant, and he said in irony, -

"One might say that you are looking for acquaintances among those robbers, or that you are saying a litany for their souls."

"You are both right and wrong. You are right, for I was looking for acquaintances; and you are wrong, for they are not robbers, but servants of a petty nobleman, my neighbor."

"Then it is clear that you do not drink out of the same spring with that neighbor."

A strange smile passed over the thin lips of the stranger.

"And in that you are wrong," muttered he through his teeth. In a moment he added audibly: "But pardon for not having first given thanks for the aid and effective succor which freed me from such sudden death. Your courage has redeemed my carelessness, for I separated from my men; but my gratitude is equal to your good-will."

Having said this, he reached his hand to the lieutenant.

But the haughty young man did not stir from his place, and was in no hurry to give his hand; instead of that he said, -

"I should like to know first if I have to do with a nobleman; for though I have no doubt you are one, still it does not befit me to accept the thanks of a nameless person."

"I see you have the mettle of a knight, and speak justly, I should have begun my speech and thanks with my name. I am Zenovi Abdank; my escutcheon that of Abdank with a cross; a nobleman from the province of Kieff; a landholder, and a colonel of the Cossack regiment of Prince Dominik Zaslavski."

"And I am Yan Skshetuski, lieutenant of the armored regiment of Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski."

"You serve under a famous warrior. Accept my thanks and hand."

The lieutenant hesitated no longer. It is true that armored officers looked down on men of the other regiments; but Pan Yan was in the steppe, in the Wilderness, where such things were less remembered. Besides, he had to do with a colonel. Of this he had ocular proof, for when his soldiers brought Pan Abdank the belt and sabre which were taken from his person in order to revive him, they brought at the same time a short staff with a bone shaft and ivory head, such as Cossack colonels were in the habit of using. Besides, the dress of Zenovi Abdank was rich, and his educated speech indicated a quick mind and social training.

Pan Yan therefore invited him to supper. The odor of roasted meats began to go out from the fire just then, tickling the nostrils and the palate. The attendant brought the meats, and served them on a plate. The two men fell to eating; and when a good-sized

goat-skin of Moldavian wine was brought, a lively conversation sprang up without delay.

"A safe return home to us," said Pan Yan.

"Then you are returning home? Whence, may I ask?" inquired Abdank.

"From a long journey, – from the Crimea."

"What were you doing there? Did you go with ransom?"

"No, Colonel, I went to the Khan himself."

Abdank turned an inquisitive ear. "Did you, indeed? Were you well received? And what was your errand to the Khan?"

"I carried a letter from Prince Yeremi."

"You were an envoy, then! What did the prince write to the Khan about?"

The lieutenant looked quickly at his companion.

"Well, Colonel," said he, "you have looked into the eyes of ruffians who captured you with a lariat; that is your affair. But what the prince wrote to the Khan is neither your affair nor mine, but theirs."

"I wondered, a little while ago," answered Abdank, cunningly, "that his highness the prince should send such a young man to the Khan; but after your answer I am not astonished, for I see that you are young in years, but mature in experience and wit."

The lieutenant swallowed the smooth, flattering words, merely twisted his young mustache, and inquired, -

"Now do you tell me what you are doing on the Omelnik, and how you come to be here alone."

"I am not alone, I left my men on the road; and I am going to Kudák, to Pan Grodzitski, who is transferred to the command there, and to whom the Grand Hetman has sent me with letters."

"And why don't you go by water?"

"I am following an order from which I may not depart."

"Strange that the hetman issued such an order, when in the steppe you have fallen into straits which you would have avoided surely had you been going by water."

"Oh, the steppes are quiet at present; my acquaintance with them does not begin with to-day. What has met me is the malice and hatred of man."

"And who attacked you in this fashion?"

"It is a long story. An evil neighbor, Lieutenant, who has destroyed my property, is driving me from my land, has killed my son, and besides, as you have seen, has made an attempt on my life where we sit."

"But do you not carry a sabre at your side?"

On the powerful face of Abdank there was a gleam of hatred, in his eyes a sullen glare. He answered slowly and with emphasis, -

"I do; and as God is my aid, I shall seek no other weapon against my foes."

The lieutenant wished to say something, when suddenly the tramp of horses was heard in the steppe, or rather the hurried slapping of horses' feet on the softened grass. That moment, also, the lieutenant's orderly who was on guard hurried up with news

that men of some kind were approaching.

"Those," said Abdank, "are surely my men, whom I left beyond the Tasmina. Not suspecting perfidy, I promised to wait for them here."

Soon a crowd of mounted men formed a half-circle in front of the height. By the glitter of the fire appeared heads of horses, with open nostrils, puffing from exertion; and above them the faces of riders, who, bending forward, sheltered their eyes from the glare of the fire and gazed eagerly toward the light.

"Hei! men, who are you?" inquired Abdank.

"Servants of God," answered voices from the darkness.

"Just as I thought, – my men," repeated Abdank, turning to the lieutenant. "Come this way."

Some of them dismounted and drew near the fire.

"Oh, how we hurried, batko! But what's the matter?"

"There was an ambush. Hvedko, the traitor, learned of my coming to this place, and lurked here with others. He must have arrived some time in advance. They caught me with a lariat."

"God save us! What Poles are these about you?"

Saying this, they looked threateningly on Pan Skshetuski and his companions.

"These are kind friends," said Abdank. "Glory be to God! I am alive and well. We will push on our way at once."

"Glory be to God for that! We are ready."

The newly arrived began to warm their hands over the fire, for the night was cool, though fine. There were about forty of

them, sturdy men and well armed. They did not look at all like registered Cossacks, which astonished Pan Skshetuski not a little, especially since their number was so considerable. Everything seemed very suspicious. If the Grand Hetman had sent Abdank to Kudák, he would have given him a guard of registered Cossacks; and in the second place, why should he order him to go by the steppe from Chigirin, and not by water? The necessity of crossing all the rivers flowing through the Wilderness to the Dnieper could only delay the journey. It appeared rather as if Abdank wanted to avoid Kudák.

In like manner, the personality of Abdank astonished the young lieutenant greatly. He noticed at once that the Cossacks, who were rather free in intercourse with their colonels, met him with unusual respect, as if he were a real hetman. He must be a man of a heavy hand, and what was most wonderful to Skshetuski, who knew the Ukraine on both sides of the Dnieper, he had heard nothing of a famous Abdank. Besides, there was in the countenance of the man something peculiar, – a certain secret power which breathed from his face like heat from a flame, a certain unbending will, declaring that this man withdraws before no man and no thing. The same kind of will was in the face of Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski; but that which in the prince was an inborn gift of nature special to his lofty birth and his position might astonish one when found in a man of unknown name wandering in the wild steppe.

Pan Skshetuski[1] deliberated long. It occurred to him that this might be some powerful outlaw who, hunted by justice, had taken refuge in the Wilderness, – or the leader of a robber band; but the latter was not probable. The dress and speech of the man showed something else. The lieutenant was quite at a loss what course to take. He kept simply on his guard. Meanwhile Abdank ordered his horse.

"Lieutenant, 'tis time for him to go who has the road before him. Let me thank you again for your succor. God grant me to show you a service of equal value!"

"I do not know whom I have saved, therefore I deserve no thanks."

"Your modesty, which equals your courage, is speaking now. Accept from me this ring."

The lieutenant frowned and took a step backward, measuring with his eyes Abdank, who then spoke on with almost paternal dignity in his voice and posture, -

"But look, I offer you not the wealth of this ring, but its other virtues. When still in the years of youth, a captive among infidels, I got this from a pilgrim returning from the Holy Land. In the seal of it is dust from the grave of Christ. Such a gift might not be refused, even if it came from condemned hands. You are still a young man and a soldier; and since even old age, which

[1] The author uses Skshetuski, the family name of his hero, oftener than Yan, his Christian name, prefixing Pan = Mr. in both cases. I have taken the liberty of using Yan oftener than Skshetuski because more easily pronounced in English.

is near the grave, knows not what may strike it before the last hour, youth, which has before it a long life, must meet with many an adventure. This ring will preserve you from misfortune, and protect you when the day of judgment comes; and I tell you that that day is even now on the road through the Wilderness."

A moment of silence followed; nothing was heard but the crackling of the fire and the snorting of the horses. From the distant reeds came the dismal howling of wolves. Suddenly Abdank repeated still again, as if to himself, -

"The day of judgment is already on the road through the Wilderness, and when it comes all God's world will be amazed."

The lieutenant took the ring mechanically, so much was he astonished at the words of this strange man. But the man was looking into the dark distance of the steppe. Then he turned slowly and mounted his horse. His Cossacks were waiting at the foot of the height.

"Forward! forward! Good health to you, my soldier friend!" said he to the lieutenant. "The times are such at present that brother trusts not brother. This is why you know not whom you have saved, for I have not given you my name."

"You are not Abdank, then?"

"That is my escutcheon."

"And your name?"

"Bogdan Zenovi Hmelnitski."

When he had said this, he rode down from the height, and his Cossacks moved after him. Soon they were hidden in the mist

and the night. When they had gone about half a furlong, the wind bore back from them the words of the Cossack song, -

"O God, lead us forth, poor captives,
From heavy bonds,
From infidel faith,
To the bright dawn,
To quiet waters,
To a gladsome land,
To a Christian world.
Hear, O God, our prayers, -
The prayers of the hapless,
The prayers of poor captives."

The voices grew fainter by degrees, and then were melted in the wind sounding through the reeds.

CHAPTER II

Reaching Chigirin next morning, Pan Skshetuski stopped at the house of Prince Yeremi in the town, where he was to spend some time in giving rest to his men and horses after their long journey from the Crimea, which by reason of the floods and unusually swift currents of the Dnieper had to be made by land, since no boat could make head against the stream that winter. Skshetuski himself rested awhile, and then went to Pan Zatsvilikhovski, former commissioner of the Commonwealth, – a sterling soldier, who, though he did not serve with the prince, was his confidant and friend. The lieutenant wanted to ask him if there were instructions from Lubni; but the prince had sent nothing special. He had ordered Skshetuski, in the event of a favorable answer from the Khan, to journey slowly, so that his men and horses might be in good health. The prince had the following business with the Khan; He desired the punishment of certain Tartar murzas, who had raided his estates beyond the Dnieper, and whom he himself had punished severely. The Khan had in fact given a favorable answer, – had promised to send a special envoy in the following April to punish the disobedient; and wishing to gain the good-will of so famous a warrior as the prince, he had sent him by Skshetuski a horse of noted stock and also a sable cap.

Pan Skshetuski, having acquitted himself of his mission with

no small honor, the mission itself being a proof of the high favor of the prince, was greatly rejoiced at the permission to stop in Chigirin without hastening his return. But old Zatsvilikhovski was greatly annoyed by what had been taking place for some time in Chigirin. They went together to the house of Dopula, a Wallachian, who kept an inn and a wine-shop in the place. There they found a crowd of nobles, though the hour was still early; for it was a market-day, and besides there happened to be a halt of cattle driven to the camp of the royal army, which brought a multitude of people together. The nobles generally assembled in the square at Dopula's, at the so-called Bell-ringers' Corner. There were assembled tenants of the Konyetspolskis, and Chigirin officials, owners of neighboring lands, settlers on crown lands, nobles on their own soil and dependent on no one, land stewards, some Cossack elders, and a few inferior nobles, – some living on other men's acres and some on their own.

These groups occupied benches at long oaken tables and conversed in loud voices, all speaking of the flight of Hmelnitski, which was the greatest event of the place. Zatsvilikhovski sat with Skshetuski in a corner apart. The lieutenant began to inquire what manner of phœnix that Hmelnitski was of whom all were speaking.

"Don't you know?" answered the old soldier. "He is the secretary of the Zaporojian army, the heir of Subotoff, – and my friend," added he, in a lower voice. "We have been long acquainted, and were together in many expeditions in

which he distinguished himself, especially under Tetera. Perhaps there is not a soldier of such military experience in the whole Commonwealth. This is not to be mentioned in public; but he has the brain of a hetman, a heavy hand, and a mighty mind. All the Cossacks obey him more than koshevoi and ataman. He is not without good points, but imperious and unquiet; and when hatred gets the better of him he can be terrible."

"What made him flee from Chigirin?"

"Quarrels with the Starosta Chaplinski; but that is all nonsense. Usually a nobleman bespatters a nobleman from enmity. Hmelnitski is not the first and only man offended. They say, too, that he turned the head of the starosta's wife; that the starosta carried off his mistress and married her; that afterward Hmelnitski took her fancy, – and that is a likely matter, for woman is giddy, as a rule. But these are mere pretexts, under which certain intrigues find deeper concealment. This is how the affair stands: In Chigirin lives old Barabash, a Cossack colonel, our friend. He had privileges and letters from the king. Of these it was said that they urged the Cossacks to resist the nobility; but being a humane and kindly man, he kept them to himself and did not make them known. Then Hmelnitski invited Barabash to a dinner in his own house, here in Chigirin, and sent people to Barabash's country-place, who took the letters and the privileges away from his wife and disappeared. There is danger that out of them such a rebellion as that of Ostranitsa may arise; for, I repeat, he is a terrible man, and has fled, it is unknown whither."

To this Skshetuski answered: "He is a fox, and has tricked me. He told me he was a Cossack colonel of Prince Dominik Zaslavski. I met him last night in the steppe, and freed him from a lariat."

Zatsvilikhovski seized himself by the head.

"In God's name, what do you tell me? It cannot have been."

"It can, since it has been. He told me he was a colonel in the service of Prince Dominik Zaslavski, on a mission from the Grand Hetman to Pan Grodzitski at Kudák. I did not believe this, since he was not travelling by water, but stealing along over the steppe."

"He is as cunning as Ulysses! But where did you meet him?"

"On the Omelnik, on the right bank of the Dnieper. It is evident that he was on his way to the Saitch."

"He wanted to avoid Kudák. I understand now. Had he many men?"

"About forty. But they came to meet him too late. Had it not been for me, the servants of the starosta would have strangled him."

"But stop a moment! That is an important affair. The servants of the starosta, you say?"

"That is what he told me."

"How could the starosta know where to look for him, when here in this place all were splitting their heads to know what he had done with himself?"

"I can't tell that. It may be, too, that Hmelnitski lied, and

represented common robbers as servants of the starosta, in order to call more attention to his wrongs."

"Impossible! But it is a strange affair. Do you know that there is a circular from the hetman, ordering the arrest and detention of Hmelnitski?"

The lieutenant gave no answer, for at that moment some nobleman entered the room with a tremendous uproar. He made the doors rattle a couple of times, and looking insolently through the room cried out, -

"My respects, gentlemen!"

He was a man of forty years of age, of low stature, with peevish face, the irritable appearance of which was increased by quick eyes, protruding from his face like plums, – evidently a man very rash, stormy, quick to anger.

"My respects, gentlemen!" repeated he more loudly and sharply, since he was not answered at once.

"Respects! respects!" was answered by several voices.

This man was Chaplinski, the under-starosta of Chigirin, the trusted henchman of young Konyetspolski. He was not liked in Chigirin, for he was a terrible blusterer, always involved in lawsuits, always persecuting some one; but for all that he had great influence, consequently people were polite to him.

Zatsvilikhovski, whom all respected for his dignity, virtues, and courage, was the only man he regarded. Seeing him, he approached immediately, and bowing rather haughtily to Skshetuski, sat down near them with his tankard of mead.

"Well," inquired Zatsvilikhovski, "do you know what has become of Hmelnitski?"

"He is hanging, as sure as I am Chaplinski; and if he is not hanging yet, he will be soon. Now that the hetman's orders are issued, let me only get him in my hands!"

Saying this, he struck the table with his fist till the liquor was spilled from the glasses.

"Don't spill the wine, my dear sir!" said Skshetuski.

Zatsvilikhovski interrupted: "But how will you get him, since he has escaped and no one knows where he is?"

"No one knows? I know, – true as I am Chaplinski. You know Hvedko. That Hvedko is in his service, but in mine too. He will be Hmelnitski's Judas. It's a long story. He has made friends with Hmelnitski's Cossacks. A sharp fellow! He knows every step that is taken. He has engaged to bring him to me, living or dead, and has gone to the steppe before Hmelnitski, knowing where to wait for him."

Having said this, he struck the table again.

"Don't spill the wine, my dear sir!" repeated with emphasis Skshetuski, who felt an astonishing aversion to the man from the first sight of him.

Chaplinski grew red in the face; his protruding eyes flashed. Thinking that offence was given him, he looked excitedly at Pan Yan; but seeing on him the colors of Vishnyevetski, he softened. Though Konyetspolski had a quarrel with Yeremi at the time, still Chigirin was too near Lubni, and it was dangerous not to

respect the colors of the prince. Besides, Vishnyevetski chose such people for his service that any one would think twice before disputing with them.

"Hvedko, then, has undertaken to get Hmelnitski for you?" asked Zatsvilikhovski again.

"He has, and he will get him, – as sure as I am Chaplinski."

"But I tell you that he will not. Hmelnitski has escaped the ambush, and has gone to the Saitch, which you should have told Pan Pototski to-day. There is no fooling with Hmelnitski. Speaking briefly, he has more brains, a heavier hand, and greater luck than you, who are too hotheaded. Hmelnitski went away safely, I tell you; and if perhaps you don't believe me, this gentleman, who saw him in good health on the steppe and bade good-by to him yesterday, will repeat what I have said."

"Impossible, it cannot be!" boiled up Chaplinski, seizing himself by the hair.

"And what is more," added Zatsvilikhovski, "this knight before you saved him and killed your servants, – for which he is not to blame, in spite of the hetman's order, since he was returning from a mission to the Crimea and knew nothing of the order. Seeing a man attacked in the steppe by ruffians, as he thought, he went to his assistance. Of this rescue of Hmelnitski I inform you in good season, for he is ready with his Zaporojians, and it is evident that you wouldn't be very glad to see him, for you have maltreated him over-much. Tfu! to the devil with such tricks!"

Zatsvilikhovski, also, did not like Chaplinski.

Chaplinski sprang from his seat, losing his speech from rage; his face was completely purple, and his eyes kept coming more and more out of his head. Standing before Skshetuski in this condition, he belched forth disconnected words, -

"How! – in spite of the hetman's orders! I will-I will-"

Skshetuski did not even rise from the bench, but leaned on his elbows and watched Chaplinski, darting like a hawk on a sparrow.

"Why do you fasten to me like a burr to a dog's tail?"

"I'll drag you to the court with me! – You in spite of orders! – I with Cossacks!"

He stormed so much that it grew quieter in other parts of the room, and strangers began to turn their faces in the direction of Chaplinski. He was always seeking a quarrel, for such was his nature; he offended every man he met. But all were astonished, then, that he began with Zatsvilikhovski, who was the only person he feared, and with an officer wearing the colors of Prince Yeremi.

"Be silent, sir!" said the old standard-bearer. "This knight is in my company."

"I'll take you to the court! – I'll take you to the court-to the stocks!" roared Chaplinski, paying no attention to anything or any man.

Then Skshetuski rose, straightened himself to his full height, but did not draw his sabre; he had it hanging low, and taking it

by the middle raised it till he put the cross hilt under the very nose of Chaplinski.

"Smell that!" said he.

"Strike, whoever believes in God! – Ai! here, my men!" shouted Chaplinski, grasping after his sword-hilt.

But he did not succeed in drawing his sword. The young lieutenant turned him around, caught him by the nape of the neck with one hand, and with the other by the trousers below the belt raised him, squirming like a salmon, and going to the door between the benches called out, -

"Brothers, clear the road for big horns; he'll hook!"

Saying this, he went to the threshold, struck and opened the door with Chaplinski, and hurled the under-starosta out into the street. Then he resumed his seat quietly at the side of Zatsvilikhovski.

In a moment there was silence in the room. The argument used by Pan Yan made a great impression on the assembled nobles. After a little while, however, the whole place shook with laughter.

"Hurrah for Vislinyevetski's man!" cried some.

"He has fainted! he has fainted, and is covered with blood!" cried others, who had looked through the door, curious to know what Chaplinski would do. "His servants are carrying him off!"

The partisans of the under-starosta, but few in number, were silent, and not having the courage to take his part, looked sullenly at Skshetuski.

"Spoken truth touches that hound to the quick," said

Zatsvilikhovski.

"He is a cur, not a hound," said, while drawing near, a bulky nobleman who had a cataract on one eye and a hole in his forehead the size of a thaler, through which the naked skull appeared, – "He is a cur, not a hound! Permit me," continued he, turning to Pan Yan, "to offer you my respects. I am Yan Zagloba; my escutcheon 'In the Forehead,' as every one may easily know by this hole which the bullet of a robber made in my forehead when I was on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in penance for the sins of my youth."

"But leave us in peace," said Zatsvilikhovski; "you said yourself that that was knocked out of you with a tankard in Radom."

"As I live, the bullet of a robber! That was another affair in Radom."

"You made a vow to go to the Holy Land, perhaps; but that you have never been there is certain."

"I have not been there, for in Galáts I received the palm of martyrdom; and if I lie, I am a supreme dog and not a nobleman."

"Ah, you never stop your stories!"

"Well, I am a rogue without hearing. To you, Lieutenant!"

In the mean while others came up to make the acquaintance of Skshetuski and express their regard for him. In general Chaplinski was not popular, and they were glad that disgrace had met him. It is strange and difficult to understand at this day that all the nobility in the neighborhood of Chigirin, and the

smaller owners of villages, landed proprietors, and agriculturists, even though serving the Konyetspolskis, all knowing in neighbor fashion the dispute of Chaplinski with Hmelnitski, were on the side of the latter. Hmelnitski had indeed the reputation of a famous soldier who had rendered no mean services in various wars. It was known, also, that the king himself had had communication with him and valued his opinion highly. The whole affair was regarded as an ordinary squabble of one noble with another; such squabbles were counted by thousands, especially in the Russian lands. The part of the man was taken who knew how to incline to his side the majority, who did not foresee what terrible results were to come from this affair. Later on it was that hearts flamed up with hatred against Hmelnitski, – the hearts of nobility and clergy of both churches in equal degree.

Presently men came up to Skshetuski with liquor by the quart, saying, -

"Drink, brother!"

"Have a drink with me too!"

"Long life to Vishnyevetski's men!"

"So young, and already a lieutenant with Vishnyevetski!"

"Long life to Yeremi, hetman of hetmans! With him we will go to the ends of the earth!"

"Against Turks and Tartars!"

"To Stamboul!"

"Long life to Vladislav, our king!"

Loudest of all shouted Pan Zagloba, who was ready all alone

to out-drink and out-talk a whole regiment.

"Gentlemen!" shouted he, till the window-panes rattled, "I have summoned the Sultan for the assault on me which he permitted in Galáts."

"If you don't stop talking, you may wear the skin off your mouth."

"How so, my dear sir? Quatuor articuli judicii castrensis: stuprum, incendium, latrocinium et vis armata alienis ædibus illata. Was not that specifically vis armata?"

"You are a noisy woodcock, my friend."

"I'll go even to the highest court."

"But won't you keep quiet?"

"I will get a decision, proclaim him an outlaw, and then war to the knife."

"Health to you, gentlemen!"

Some broke out in laughter, and with them Skshetuski, for his head buzzed a trifle now; but Zagloba babbled on just like a woodcock, charmed with his own voice. Happily his discourse was interrupted by another noble, who, stepping up, pulled him by the sleeve and said in singing Lithuanian tones, -

"Introduce me, friend Zagloba, to Lieutenant Skshetuski, – introduce me, please!"

"Of course, of course. Most worthy lieutenant, this is Pan Povsinoga."

"Podbipienta," said the other, correcting him.

"No matter; but his arms are Zervipludry-"[2]

"Zervikaptur,"[3] corrected the stranger.

"All right. From Psikishki-"[4]

"From Myshikishki,"[5] corrected the stranger.

"It's all the same. I don't remember whether I said mouse or dog entrails. But one thing is certain: I should not like to live in either place, for it is not easy to get there, and to depart is unseemly. Most gracious sir," said he, turning to Skshetuski, "I have now for a week been drinking wine at the expense of this gentleman, who has a sword at his belt as heavy as his purse, and his purse is as heavy as his wit. But if ever I have drunk wine at the cost of such an original, then may I call myself as big a fool as the man who buys wine for me."

"Well, he has given him a description!"

But the Lithuanian was not angry; he only waved his hand, smiled kindly, and said: "You might give us a little peace; it is terrible to listen to you!"

Pan Yan looked with curiosity at the new figure, which in truth deserved to be called original. First of all, it was the figure of a man of such stature that his head was as high as a wall, and his extreme leanness made him appear taller still. His broad shoulders and sinewy neck indicated uncommon strength, but he

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[2] Tear-trousers.

[3] Tear-cowl.

[4] Dog entrails.

[5] Mouse entrails.

was merely skin and bone. His stomach had so fallen in from his chest that he might have been taken for a man dying of hunger. He was well dressed in a gray closely fitting coat of sveboda cloth with narrow arms, and high Swedish boots, then coming into use in Lithuania. A broad and well-filled elk-skin girdle with nothing to support it had slipped down to his hips; to this girdle was attached a Crusader's sword, which was so long that it reached quite to the shoulder of this gigantic man.

But whoever should be alarmed at the sword would be reassured in a moment by a glance at the face of its owner. The face, lean like the whole person, was adorned with hanging brows and a pair of drooping, hemp-colored mustaches, but was as honest and sincere as the face of a child. The hanging mustaches and brows gave him an expression at once anxious, thoughtful, and ridiculous. He looked like a man whom people elbow aside; but he pleased Skshetuski from the first glance because of the sincerity of his face and his perfect soldierly self-control.

"Lieutenant," said he, "you are in the service of Prince Vishnyevetski?"

"I am."

The Lithuanian placed his hands together as if in prayer, and raised his eyes.

"Ah, what a mighty warrior, what a hero, what a leader!"

"God grant the Commonwealth as many such as possible!"

"But could I not enter his service?"

"He will be glad to have you."

At this point Zagloba interrupted the conversation.

"The prince will have two spits for his kitchen, – one in you, one in your sword, – or he will hire you as a cook, or he will order robbers to be hanged on you, or he will measure cloth with you to make uniforms! Tfu! why are you not ashamed as a man and a Catholic to be as long as a serpent or the lance of an infidel?"

"Oh, it's disgusting to hear you," said the Lithuanian, patiently.

"What is your title?" asked Skshetuski; "for when you were speaking Pan Zagloba interrupted so often that if you will pardon me-"

"Podbipienta."

"Povsinoga," added Zagloba.

"Zervikaptur of Myshikishki."

"Here, old woman, is fun for you. I drink his wine, but I'm a fool if these are not outlandish titles."

"Are you from Lithuania?" asked the lieutenant.

"Well, I'm two weeks now in Chigirin. Hearing from Pan Zatsvilikhovski that you were coming, I waited to present my request to the prince with his recommendation."

"Tell me, please, – for I am curious, – why do you carry such an executioner's sword under your arm?"

"It is not the sword of an executioner, Lieutenant, but of a Crusader, and I wear it because it is a trophy and has been long in my family. It served at Khoinitsi in Lithuanian hands, and that's why I wear it."

"But it's a savage machine, and must be terribly heavy. It's for two hands, I suppose?"

"Oh, it can be used in two hands or one."

"Let me have a look at it."

The Lithuanian drew the sword and handed it to him; but Skshetuski's arm dropped in a moment. He could neither point the weapon nor aim a blow freely. He tried with both hands; still it was heavy. Skshetuski was a little ashamed, and turning to those present, said, -

"Now, gentlemen, who can make a cross with it?"

"We have tried already," answered several voices. "Pan Zatsvilikhovski is the only man who raises it, but he can't make a cross with it."

"Well, let us see you, sir," said Skshetuski, turning to the Lithuanian.

Podbipienta raised the sword as if it were a cane, and whirled it several times with the greatest ease, till the air in the room whistled and a breeze was blowing on their faces.

"May God be your aid!" said Skshetuski. "You have sure service with the prince."

"God knows that I am anxious, and my sword will not rust in it."

"But what about your wits," asked Zagloba, "since you don't know how to use them?"

Zatsvilikhovski now rose, and with the lieutenant was preparing to go out, when a man with hair white as a dove

entered, and seeing Zatsvilikhovski, said, -

"I have come here on purpose to see you, sir."

This was Barabash, the Colonel of Cherkasi.

"Then come to my quarters," replied Zatsvilikhovski. "There is such a smoke here that nothing can be seen."

They went out together, Skshetuski with them. As soon as he had crossed the threshold, Barabash asked, -

"Are there news of Hmelnitski?"

"There are. He has fled to the Saitch. This officer met him yesterday in the steppe."

"Then he has not gone by water? I hurried off a courier to Kudák to have him seized; but if what you say is true, 'tis useless."

When he had said this, Barabash covered his eyes with his hands, and began to repeat, "Oh, Christ save us! Christ save us!"

"Why are you disturbed?"

"Don't you know the treason he has wrought on me? Don't you know what it means to publish such documents in the Saitch? Christ save us! Unless the king makes war on the Mussulman, this will be a spark upon powder."

"You predict a rebellion?"

"I do not predict, I see it; and Hmelnitski is somewhat beyond Nalivaika and Loboda."

"But who will follow him?"

"Who? Zaporojians, registered Cossacks, people of the towns, the mob, cottagers, and such as these out here."

Barabash pointed to the market-square and to the people moving around upon it. The whole square was thronged with great gray oxen on the way to Korsún for the army; and with the oxen went a crowd of herdsmen (Chabani), who passed their whole lives in the steppe and Wilderness, – men perfectly wild, professing no religion, ("religionis nullius," as the Voevoda Kisel said). Among them were forms more like robbers than herdsmen, – fierce, terrible, covered with remnants of various garments. The greater part of them were dressed in sheepskin doublets or in untanned skins with the wool outside, open in front and showing, even in winter, the naked breast embrowned by the winds of the steppe. All were armed, but with the greatest variety of weapons. Some had bows and quivers on their shoulders; some muskets or "squealers" (so called by the Cossacks); some had Tartar sabres, some scythes; and finally, there were those who had only sticks with horse-jaws fastened on the ends. Among them mingled the no less wild, though better armed men from the lower country, taking to the camp for sale dried fish, game, and mutton fat. Farther on were the Chumaki (ox-drivers) with salt, bee-keepers from the steppes and forest, wax-bleachers with honey, forest-dwellers with tar and pitch, peasants with wagons, registered Cossacks, Tartars from Bélgorod, and God knows what tramps and "vampires" from the ends of the earth. The whole town was full of drunken men. Chigirin was the place of lodging, and therefore of a frolic before bedtime. Fires were scattered over the market-square, while here and there an empty

tar-barrel was burning. From every point were heard cries and bustle. The shrill squeak of Tartar pipes and the sound of drums was mingled with the bellowing of cattle and the softer note of the lyre, to which old men sang the favorite song of the time, -

"Oh, bright falcon,
My own brother,
Thou soarest high,
Thou seest far."

And besides this went up the wild shouts "U-ha! u-ha!" of the Cossacks, smeared with tar and quite drunk, dancing the tropak on the square. All this was at once wild and frenzied. One glance was enough to convince Zatsvilikhovski that Barabash was right; that one breath was sufficient to let loose those chaotic elements, inclined to plunder and accustomed to violence, with which the whole Ukraine was filled. And behind these crowds stood the Saitch, the Zaporojie, recently bridled and put in curb after Masloff Stav, still gnawing the bit impatiently, remembering ancient privileges and hating commissioners, but forming an organized power. That power had also on its side the sympathy of a countless mass of peasants, less patient of control than in other parts of the Commonwealth, because near them was Chertomelik, and beyond lordlessness, booty, and freedom. The standard-bearer in view of this, though a Russian himself and a devoted adherent of Eastern orthodoxy, fell into gloomy thought.

Being an old man, he remembered well the times of Nalivaika,

Loboda, and Krempski. He knew the robbers of the Ukraine better perhaps than any one in Russia; and knowing at the same time Hmelnitski, he knew that he was greater than twenty Lobodas and Nalivaikas. He understood, therefore, all the danger of his escape to the Saitch, especially with the letters of the king, which Barabash said were full of promises to the Cossacks and incitements to resistance.

"Most worthy colonel," said Zatsvilikhovski to Barabash, "you should go to the Saitch and neutralize the influence of Hmelnitski; pacify them, pacify them."

"Most worthy standard-bearer," answered Barabash, "I will merely say that in consequence of the news of Hmelnitski's flight with the papers of the king, one half of my men have followed him to the Saitch. My time has passed; not the baton awaits me, but the grave!"

Barabash was indeed a good soldier, but old and without influence.

Meanwhile they had come to the quarters of Zatsvilikhovski, who had regained somewhat the composure peculiar to his mild character; and when they sat down to half a gallon of mead, he said emphatically, -

"All this is nothing, if, as they say, war is on foot against the Mussulman; and it is likely that such is the case, for though the Commonwealth does not want war, and the diets have roused much bad blood in the king, still he may carry his point. All this fire may be turned against the Turk, and in every case we have

time on our side. I will go myself to Pan Pototski, inform him, and ask that he, being nearest to us, should come with his army. I do not know whether I shall succeed, for though a brave man and a trained warrior, he is terribly confident in himself and his army. And you, Colonel of Cherkasi, keep the Cossacks in curb- and you, Lieutenant, the moment you arrive at Lubni warn the prince to keep his eyes on the Saitch. Even if they begin action, I repeat it, we have time. There are not many people at the Saitch now; they have scattered around, fishing and hunting, and are in villages throughout the whole Ukraine. Before they assemble, much water will flow down the Dnieper. Besides, the name of the prince is terrible, and if they know that he has his eye on Chertomelik, perhaps they will remain in peace."

"I am ready," said the lieutenant, "to start from Chigirin even in a couple of days."

"That's right. Two or three days are of no account. And do you, Colonel of Cherkasi, send couriers with an account of the affair to Konyetspolski and Prince Dominic. But you are asleep, as I see."

Barabash had crossed his hands on his stomach and was in a deep slumber, snoring from time to time. The old colonel, when neither eating nor drinking, – and he loved both beyond measure, – was sleeping.

"Look!" said Zatsvilikhovski quietly to the lieutenant; "the statesmen at Warsaw think of holding the Cossacks in curb through such an old man as that. God be good to them! They put

trust, too, even in Hmelnitski himself, with whom the chancellor entered into some negotiations or other; and Hmelnitski no doubt is fooling them terribly."

The lieutenant sighed in token of sympathy. But Barabash snored more deeply, and then murmured in his sleep: "Christ save us! Christ save us!"

"When do you think of leaving Chigirin?" asked Zatsvilikhovski.

"I shall have to wait two days for Chaplinski, who will bring an action, beyond doubt, for what has happened to him."

"He will not do that. He would prefer to send his servants against you if you didn't wear the uniform of the prince; but it is ugly work to tackle the prince, even for the servants of the Konyetspolskis."

"I will notify him that I am waiting, and start in two or three days. I am not afraid of an ambush, either, having a sabre at my side and a party of men."

The lieutenant now took farewell of Zatsvilikhovski, and went out.

The blaze from the piles on the square spread such a glare over the town that all Chigirin seemed burning. The bustle and shouts increased with the approach of night. The Jews did not peep from their houses. In every corner crowds of Chabani howled plaintive songs of the steppe. The wild Zaporojians danced around the fires, hurling their caps in the air, firing from their "squealers," and drinking gorailka by the quart. Here and there a scuffle broke

out, which the starosta's men put down. The lieutenant had to open a way with the hilt of his sabre. Hearing the shouts and noise of the Cossacks, he thought at times that rebellion was already beginning to speak. It seemed to him, also, that he saw threatening looks and heard low-spoken curses directed against his person. In his ears were still ringing the words of Barabash, "Christ save us! Christ save us!" and his heart beat more quickly.

But the Chabani sang their songs more loudly in the town; the Zaporojians fired from their muskets and swam in gorailka. The firing and the wild "U-ha! u-ha!" reached the ears of the lieutenant, even after he had lain down to sleep in his quarters.

CHAPTER III

A few days later the lieutenant with his escort pressed forward briskly in the direction of Lubni. After the passage of the Dnieper, they travelled by a broad steppe road which united Chigirin with Lubni, passing through Juki, Semi Mogil, and Khorol. A similar road joined Lubni with Kieff. In times past, before the campaign of the hetman Jolkyevski against Solonitsa, these roads were not in existence. People travelled to Kieff from Lubni by the desert and the steppe; the way to Chigirin was by water, with return by land through Khorol. In general the country beyond the Dnieper, the ancient land of the Pólovtsi, was wild, scarcely more inhabited than the Wilderness, frequently visited by the Tartars, and exposed to Zaporojian bands.

On the banks of the Sula immense forests, which had never been touched by the foot of man, gave forth their voices; and in places also on the low shores of the Sula, the Ruda, Sleporod, Korovai, Orjavets, Psel, and other greater and smaller rivers and streams, marshes were formed, partly grown over with dense thickets and pine forests, and partly open in the form of meadows. In these pine woods and morasses wild beasts of every kind found commodious refuge; and in the deepest forest gloom lived in countless multitudes the bearded aurochs, bears, with wild boars, and near them wolves, lynxes, martens, deer, and wild goats. In the swamps and arms of rivers beavers built their dams.

There were stories current among the Zaporojians that of these beavers were some a century old and white as snow from age.

On the elevated dry steppes roamed herds of wild horses, with shaggy foreheads and bloodshot eyes. The rivers were swarming with fish and water-fowl. It was a wonderful land, half asleep, but bearing traces of the former activity of man. It was everywhere filled with the ruins of towns of previous generations; Lubni and Khorol were raised from such ruins as these. Everywhere the country was full of grave-mounds, ancient and modern, covered already with a growth of pine. Here, as in the Wilderness, ghosts and vampires rose up at night. Old Zaporojians, sitting around their fires, told marvellous tales of what took place in those forest depths, from which issued the howling of unknown beasts, – cries half human, half brute, – terrible sounds as of battle or the chase. Under water was heard the ringing of bells in submerged cities. The land was inhospitable, little accessible, in places too soft, in places suffering from lack of water, – parched, dry, and dangerous to live in; for when men settled down there anyhow and began to cultivate the land, they were swept away by Tartar raids. But it was frequently visited by Zaporojians while hunting- or, as they phrased it, while at "industry" – along all the rivers, ravines, forests, and reedy marshes, searching for beavers in places of which even the existence was known to few.

And still settled life struggled to cling to those regions, like a plant which seizes the ground with its roots wherever it can, and though torn out repeatedly, springs up anew. On desert sites rose

towns, settlements, colonies, hamlets, and single dwellings. The earth was fruitful in places, and freedom was enticing. But life bloomed up first when these lands came into possession of the princes Vishnyevetski. Prince Michael, after his marriage with a Moldavian lady, began to put his domain beyond the Dnieper into careful order. He brought in people, settled waste regions, gave exemption from service for thirty years, built monasteries, and introduced his princely authority. Even a settler in that country from a time of unreckoned priority, who considered that he was on his own ground, was willing to descend to the status of a tribute-payer, since for his tribute he came under the powerful protection of the prince who guarded him, – defended him from the Tartars and the men from below, who were often worse than the Tartars. But real activity commenced under the iron hand of young Prince Yeremi. His possessions began immediately outside Chigirin, and ended at Konotóp and Komni. This did not constitute all the wealth of the prince, for beginning at Sandomir his lands lay in the voevodstvos of Volynia, Russia, and Kieff; but his domain beyond the Dnieper was as the eye in his head to the victor of Putívl.

The Tartar lay long in wait on the Oryól or the Vorskla, and sniffed like a wolf before he ventured to urge his horse to the north. The men from below did not attempt attack. The local disorderly bands entered service. Wild, plundering people, who had long subsisted by violence and raids, now held in check, occupied outposts on the borders, and lying on the boundaries of

the state, were like a bull-dog on his chain, threatening intruders with his teeth.

Everything flourished and was full of life. Roads were laid out on the trace of ancient highways; rivers were blocked with dams, built by the captive Tartar or men from below caught robbing with armed hand. The mill now resounded where the wind used to play wildly at night in the reeds, and where wolves howled in company with the ghosts of drowned men. More than four hundred wheels, not counting the numerous windmills, ground grain beyond the Dnieper. More than forty thousand men were tributary to the prince's treasury. The woods swarmed with bees. On the borders new villages, hamlets, and single dwellings were rising continually. On the steppes, by the side of wild herds, grazed whole droves of domestic cattle and horses. The endless monotony of pine groves and steppes was varied by the smoke of cottages, the gilded towers of churches, – Catholic and orthodox. The desert was changed into a peopled land.

Lieutenant Skshetuski travelled on gladly, and without hurry, as if going over his own ground, having plenty of leisure secured to him on the road. It was the beginning of January, 1648; but that wonderful, exceptional winter gave no sign of its approach. Spring was breathing in the air; the earth was soft and shining with the water of melted snow, the fields were covered with green, and the sun shone with such heat on the road at midday that fur coats burdened the shoulders as in summer.

The lieutenant's party was increased considerably in Chigirin,

for it was joined by a Wallachian embassy which the hospodar sent to Lubni in the person of Pan Rozvan Ursu. The embassy was attended by an escort, with wagons and servants. Our acquaintance, Pan Longin Podbipienta, with the shield of Zervikaptur, his long sword under his arm, and with a few servants, travelled with Pan Yan.

Sunshine, splendid weather, and the odor of approaching spring filled the heart with gladness; and the lieutenant was the more rejoiced, since he was returning from a long journey to the roof of the prince, which was at the same time his own roof. He was returning having accomplished his mission well, and was therefore certain of a good reception.

There were other causes, also, for his gladness. Besides the good-will of the prince, whom the lieutenant loved with his whole soul, there awaited him in Lubni certain dark eyes. These eyes belonged to Anusia Borzobogata Krasenska, lady-in-waiting to Princess Griselda, the most beautiful maiden among all her attendants; a fearful coquette, for whom every one was languishing in Lubni, while she was indifferent to all. Princess Griselda was terribly strict in deportment and excessively austere in manner, which, however, did not prevent young people from exchanging ardent glances and sighs. Pan Yan, in common with the others, sent his tribute to the dark eyes, and when alone in his quarters he would seize a lute and sing, -

"Thou'rt the daintiest of the dainty;"

or,

> "The Tartar seizes people captive;
> Thou seizest captive hearts."

But being a cheerful man, and, besides, a soldier thoroughly devoted to his profession, he did not take it too much to heart that Anusia smiled on Pan Bykhovets of the Wallachian regiment, or Pan Vurtsel of the artillery, or Pan Volodyovski of the dragoons, as well as on him, and smiled even on Pan Baranovski of the huzzars, although he was already growing gray, and lisped since his palate had been wounded by a musket-ball. Our lieutenant had even had a sabre duel with Volodyovski for the sake of Anusia; but when obliged to remain too long at Lubni without an expedition against the Tartars, life was tedious there, even with Anusia, and when he had to go on an expedition, he went gladly, without regret or remembrance.

He returned joyfully, however, for he was on his way from the Crimea after a satisfactory arrangement of affairs. He hummed a song merrily, and urged his horse, riding by the side of Pan Longin, who, sitting on an enormous Livonian mare, was thoughtful and serious as usual. The wagons of the embassy escort remained considerably in the rear.

"The envoy is lying in the wagon like a block of wood, and sleeps all the time," said the lieutenant. "He told me wonders of his Wallachian land till he grew tired. I listened, too, with

curiosity. It is a rich country, – no use in denying that, – excellent climate, gold, wine, dainties, and cattle in abundance. I thought to myself meanwhile: Our prince is descended from a Moldavian mother, and has as good a right to the throne of the hospodar as any one else; which rights, moreover, Prince Michael claimed. Wallachia is no new country to our warriors; they have beaten the Turks, Tartars, Wallachians, and Transylvanians."

"But the people are of weaker temper than with us, as Pan Zagloba told me in Chigirin," said Pan Longin. "If he is not to be believed; confirmation of what he says may be found in prayer-books."

"How in prayer-books?"

"I have one myself, and I can show it to you, for I always carry one with me."

Having said this, he unbuckled the saddle-straps in front of him, and taking out a small book carefully bound in calfskin, kissed it reverentially; then turning over a few leaves, said, "Read."

Skshetuski began: "'We take refuge under thy protection, Holy Mother of God-' Where is there anything here about Wallachia? What are you talking of? This is an antiphone!"

"Read on farther."

"'That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

"Well, here we've got a question."

Skshetuski read: "'Question: Why is Wallachian cavalry called

light? Answer: Because it is light-footed in flight. Amen.' H'm! this is true. Still, there is a wonderful mixture of matters in this book."

"It is a soldiers' book, where, side by side with prayers, a variety of military information is given, from which you may gain knowledge of all nations, – which of them is noblest, and which mean. As to the Wallachians, it appears that they are cowardly fellows, and terrible traitors besides."

"That they are traitors is undoubted, for that is proven by the adventures of Prince Michael. I have heard as a fact that their soldiers are nothing to boast of by nature. But the prince has an excellent Wallachian regiment, in which Bykhovets is lieutenant; but to tell the truth, I don't think it contains even two hundred Wallachians."

"Well, Lieutenant, what do you think? Has the prince many men under arms?"

"About eight thousand, not counting the Cossacks that are at the outposts. But Zatsvilikhovski tells me that new levies are ordered."

"Well, may God give us a campaign under the prince!"

"It is said that a great war against Turkey is in preparation, and that the king himself is going to march with all the forces of the Commonwealth. I know, too, that gifts are withheld from the Tartars, who, I may add, are afraid to stir. I heard of this even in the Crimea, where on this account, I suppose, I was received with such honor; for the report is, that if the king moves with

the hetmans, Prince Yeremi will strike the Crimea and wipe out the Tartars. It is quite certain they will not confide such an undertaking to any one else."

Pan Longin raised his hands and eyes to heaven.

"May the God of mercy grant such a holy war for the glory of Christianity and our nation, and permit me, sinful man, to fulfil my vow, so that I may receive joy in the struggle or find a praiseworthy death!"

"Have you made a vow, then, concerning the war?"

"I will disclose all the secrets of my soul to such a worthy knight, though the story is a long one; but since you incline a willing ear I will begin. You are aware that the motto on my shield is 'Tear cowl;' and this has the following origin: When my ancestor, Stoveiko Podbipienta, at the battle of Grünwald saw three knights in monks' cowls riding in a row, he dashed up to them and cut the heads off all three with one blow. Touching this glorious deed, the old chroniclers write in great praise of my ancestor."

"Your ancestor had not a lighter hand than you, and he was justly 'Tear cowl.'"

"To him the king granted a coat of arms, and upon it three goat-heads on a silver field in memory of those knights, because the same heads were depicted on their shields. Those arms, together with this sword, my ancestor, Stoveiko Podbipienta, left to his descendants with the injunction to strive to uphold the glory of their race and sword."

"It is not to be denied that you come of gentle stock."

Here Pan Longin began to sigh earnestly; and when he had comforted himself somewhat he continued: -

"Being the last of my race, I made a vow in Troki to the Most Holy Lady to live in continence and not marry till, in emulation of my ancestor Stoveiko Podbipienta, I should sweep off with this same sword three heads at one blow. Oh, merciful God, thou seest that I have done all in my power. I have preserved my purity to this day; I have commanded a tender heart to be still; I have sought war and I have fought, but without good fortune."

The lieutenant smiled under his mustache. "And you have not taken off three heads?"

"'No! it has not come to pass! No luck! Two at a blow I have taken more than once, but never three. I've never been able to come up to them, and it would be hard to ask enemies to stand in line for a blow. God knows my grief. There is strength in my bones, I have wealth, youth is passing away, I am approaching my forty-fifth year, my heart rushes forth in affection, my family is coming to an end, and still the three heads are not there! Such a Zervikaptur am I. A laughing-stock for the people, as Pan Zagloba truly remarks. All of which I endure patiently and offer to the Lord."

The Lithuanian began again to sigh, noticing which his Livonian mare from sympathy for her master fell to groaning and snorting.

"Well, I can only tell you," said the lieutenant, "if you do not

find an opportunity under Prince Yeremi, then you will find it nowhere."

"God grant!" answered Podbipienta; "this is why I am going to beg a favor of the prince."

Further conversation was interrupted by an unusual sound of wings. As has been stated, birds of passage did not go beyond the sea that winter; the rivers did not freeze over, therefore the whole country was full of water-fowl, especially over the marshes. Just as the lieutenant and Pan Longin were approaching the bank of the Kagamlik there was a sudden rushing noise above their heads of a whole flock of storks, which flew so near the ground that it was almost possible to strike them with a stick. The flock flew with a tremendous outcry, and instead of settling in the reeds rose unexpectedly through the air.

"They rush as if hunted," said Skshetuski.

"Ah, see!" said Pan Longin, pointing to a white bird which, cutting the air in sidelong flight, tried to overtake the flock.

"A falcon stops them from alighting," said the lieutenant. "The envoy has a falcon; it must be that he has let her out."

At that moment Pan Rozvan Ursu rode up at full speed on a black Anatolian steed, and after him a number of his service.

"I beg you to come to the sport, Lieutenant," said he.

"This falcon is yours, then?"

"Yes, and a very noble bird, as you will see."

All three rushed forward, followed by the Wallachian falconer with a hoop, who, fixing his eyes on the bird, shouted with all

his might, urging her to the struggle.

The valiant bird immediately forced the flock to rise in the air, and then in a flash shot up still higher and hung over it. The storks arranged themselves in one enormous circle, making the noise of a storm with their wings. They filled the air with terrible cries, stretched their necks, pointed their bills upward like lances, and waited the attack. The falcon circled above them, at one time descending, at another rising, as if hesitating to sweep down since a hundred sharp beaks were waiting for her breast. Her white plumage, shone on by rays of light, gleamed like the sun itself on the clear blue of the sky. Suddenly, instead of rushing on the flock, the falcon darted like an arrow into the distance, and disappeared at once behind the trees and the reeds.

Skshetuski at first rushed after her at full speed. The envoy, the falconer, and Longin followed his example.

At the crossing of the roads the lieutenant checked his horse. A new and wonderful sight met his eye. In the middle of the road a carriage lay on its side with a broken axle. Horses detached from the carriage were held by two Cossacks. There was no driver at hand; he had evidently gone for assistance. At the side of the carriage stood two women. One wore a fox-skin cloak and a round-topped cap of the same material; her face was stern and masculine. The other was a young lady of tall stature, and gentle features of great regularity. On the shoulder of the young lady the falcon was sitting quietly. Having parted the feathers on her breast, the bird was stroking them with her bill.

The lieutenant reined in his horse till its hoofs dug into the sand of the road, and raised his hand to his cap in uncertainty, not knowing what to say, – whether to greet the ladies or to speak to the falcon. He was confused also because there looked upon him from under a marten-skin hood eyes such as he had never seen in his life, – black, satinlike, liquid, full of life and fire, – near which the eyes of Anusia Borzobogata would be as a tallow candle before a torch. Above those eyes dark velvety brows were defined in two delicate arches; her blushing face bloomed like the most beautiful flower, and through her slightly opened lips of raspberry hue were seen teeth like pearls, and from under her hood flowed out rich dark tresses.

"Are you Juno in person or some other divinity?" thought the lieutenant, seeing the form straight as an arrow, the swelling bosom, and the white falcon on her shoulder. Our lieutenant stood with uncovered head and forgot himself as before a marvellous image; his eyes gleamed, and something, as if with a hand, seized his heart, and he was about to begin, "If you are a mortal and not a divinity," when the envoy, the falconer with his hoop, and Pan Longin came up. On seeing them the goddess held her hand to the falcon, which, leaving the shoulder, came to the hand at once, shifting from foot to foot.

The lieutenant, anticipating the falconer, wished to remove the bird, when suddenly a wonderful omen was seen. The falcon, leaving one foot on the hand of the lady, caught with the other the hand of the lieutenant, and instead of going to it began to

scream joyfully and pull the hands together with such power that they touched. A quiver ran over the lieutenant. The bird allowed herself to be taken only after being hooded by the falconer. Then the old lady began to speak.

"Gentlemen!" said she, "whoever you are, you will not deny your assistance to women who, left helpless on the road, know not themselves what to do. It is no more than fifteen miles to our house; but the carriage is broken, and we shall surely have to spend the night in the field. I hurried off the driver to have my sons send even a wagon; but before he reaches the house and returns, darkness will come, and it is a terrible thing to be out in this place, for there are graves in the neighborhood."

The old lady spoke rapidly and with such a rough voice that the lieutenant was astonished; still he answered politely, -

"Do not think that we should leave you and your beautiful daughter without assistance. We are going to Lubni, for we are soldiers in the service of Prince Yeremi, and likely our roads are in the same direction; and even if they are not, we shall be glad to go out of our way in case our assistance is acceptable. As to a carriage I have none, for with my companions I am travelling, soldier-fashion, on horseback; but the envoy has, and being an affable gentleman will be glad, I think, to put it at the service of yourself and your daughter."

The envoy removed his sable cap, for knowing the Polish language he understood the conversation, and with a delicate compliment as became a gracious boyar, he yielded his carriage

to the ladies, and straightway ordered the falconer to gallop for it to the wagons, which had lagged considerably in the rear. Meanwhile the lieutenant looked at the young lady, who, unable to endure his eager glance, dropped her eyes; and the elderly lady, who had a Cossack face, continued, -

"God reward you, gentlemen, for your assistance; and since there is still a long road to Lubni, do not reject my roof and that of my sons, under which we shall be glad to see you. We are from Rozlogi-Siromakhi. I am the widow of Prince Kurtsevich Bulyga; and this is not my daughter, but the daughter of the elder Kurtsevich, brother of my husband, who left his orphan to our care. My sons are not all at home this moment, and I am returning from Cherkasi, where I was performing devotions at the altar of the Holy Mother, and on our way back this accident has met us, and were it not for your politeness, gentlemen, we should undoubtedly have to pass the night on the road."

The princess would have said still more, but at that moment the wagons appeared in the distance, approaching at a trot, surrounded by a crowd of the envoy's retinue and the soldiers of Pan Yan.

"Then you are the widow of Prince Vassily Kurtsevich?" asked the lieutenant.

"No!" retorted the princess, quickly and as if in anger; "I am the widow of Constantine, and this is the daughter of Vassily," said she, pointing to the young lady.

"They speak of Prince Vassily often in Lubni. He was a great

soldier, and a confidant of the late Prince Michael."

"I have not been in Lubni," said she, with a certain haughtiness. "Of his military virtues I have no knowledge. There is no need of mentioning his later acts, since all know what they were."

Hearing this, Princess Helena dropped her head on her breast like a flower cut with a scythe, and the lieutenant answered quickly, -

"Do not say that, madam. Prince Vassily, sentenced, through a terrible error in the administration of human justice, to the loss of life and property, was forced to save himself by flight; but later his entire innocence was discovered. By the publication of this innocence he was restored to honor as a virtuous man; and the greater the injustice done him, the greater should be his glory."

The princess glanced quickly at the lieutenant, and in her disagreeable sharp face anger was clearly expressed. But though Skshetuski was a young man, he had so much knightly dignity and such a clear glance that she did not dare to dispute him; she turned instead to Princess Helena.

"It is not proper for you to hear these things," said she. "Go and see that the luggage is removed from our carriage to the equipage in which, with the permission of these gentlemen, we are to ride."

"You will allow me to help you," said the lieutenant to Princess Helena.

Both went to the carriage; but as soon as they stood opposite, at the doors on each side of it, the princess raised the lashes of

her eyes, and her glance fell upon the face of the lieutenant like a bright, warm ray of the sun.

"How can I thank you," said she, in a voice which to him seemed music as sweet as the sound of lyres and flutes, – "How can I thank you for defending the good name of my father against the injustice which is put upon it by his nearest relatives?"

The lieutenant felt his heart melting like snow in springtime, and answered: "May God be as good to me as I am ready to rush into the fire or shed my blood for such thanks, though the service is so slight that I ought not to accept a reward."

"If you contemn my thanks, then I, poor orphan, have no other way to show my gratitude."

"I do not contemn them," said he, with growing emphasis; "but for such favor I wish to perform true and enduring service, and I only beg you to accept me for that service."

The princess, hearing these words, blushed, was confused, then suddenly grew pale, raised her hands to her face, and said in a sad voice: "Such a service could bring only misfortune to you."

The lieutenant bent through the door of the carriage, and spoke quietly and feelingly: "Let it bring what God gives; even should it bring suffering, still I am ready to fall at your feet and beg for it."

"It cannot be that you, who have just seen me for the first time, should conceive such a great desire for that service."

"I had scarcely seen you when I had forgotten myself altogether, and I see that it has come to the soldier hitherto free

to be changed to a captive; but such clearly is the will of God. Love is like an arrow which pierces the breast unexpectedly; and now I feel its sting, though yesterday I should not have believed this if any man had told it me."

"If you could not have believed it yesterday, how am I to believe it to-day?"

"Time will convince you best; but you can see my sincerity even now, not only in my words but in my face."

Again the princess raised her eyes, and her glance met the manly and noble face of the young soldier, and his look, so full of rapture that a deep crimson covered her face. But she did not lower her glance, and for a time he drank in the sweetness of those wonderful eyes, and they looked at each other like two beings who, though they have met merely on the highroad through the steppe, feel in a flash that they have chosen each other, and that their souls begin to rush to a meeting like two doves.

The moment of exaltation was disturbed for them by the sharp voice of Constantine's widow calling to the princess. The carriages had arrived. The attendants began to transfer the packages from the carriages, and in a moment everything was ready. Pan Rozvan Ursu, the gracious boyar, gave up his own carriage to the two ladies, the lieutenant mounted his horse, and all moved forward.

The day was nearing its rest. The swollen waters of the Kagamlik were bright with gold of the setting sun, and purple

of the evening light. High in the heavens flocks of small clouds reddening drifted slowly to the horizon, as if, tired from flying through the air, they were going to sleep somewhere in an unknown cradle.

Pan Yan rode by the side of Princess Helena, but without conversation, since he could not speak to her before strangers as he had spoken a few moments before, and frivolous words would not pass his lips now. But in his heart he felt happiness, and in his head something sounding as if from wine.

The whole caravan pushed on briskly, and quiet was broken only by the snorting of the horses or the clank of stirrup against stirrup. After a time the escort at the rear wagons began a plaintive Wallachian song; soon, however, they stopped, and immediately the nasal voice of Pan Longin was heard singing piously, -

> "In heaven I caused an endless light to dwell,
> And mist I spread o'er all the earth."

That moment it grew dark, the stars twinkled in the sky, and from the damp plains white mists rose, boundless as the sea.

They entered a forest, but had gone only a few furlongs when the sound of horses' feet was heard and five riders appeared before the caravan. They were the young princes, who, informed by the driver of the accident which had happened to their mother, were hurrying to meet her, bringing a wagon drawn by four

horses.

"Is that you, my sons?" called out the old princess.

The riders approached the carriage. "We, mother!"

"Come this way! Thanks to these gentlemen, we need no more assistance. These are my sons, whom I commend to your favor, gentlemen, – Simeon, Yury, Andrei, Nikolai- And who is the fifth?" asked she, looking around attentively. "Oh! if my old eyes can see in the darkness, it is Bogun."

The princess drew back quickly to the depth of the carriage.

"Greetings to you, Princess, and to you, Princess Helena!" said the fifth.

"Ah, Bogun! You have come from the regiment, my falcon? And have you brought your lute? Welcome, welcome! Well, my sons, I have asked these gentlemen to spend the night with us at Rozlogi; and now greet them! A guest in the house is God in the house. Be gracious to our house, gentlemen!"

The young men removed their caps. "We entreat you most respectfully to cross our lowly threshold."

"They have already promised me, – the envoy has promised and the lieutenant. We shall receive honorable guests, but I am not sure that our poor fare will be savory for men accustomed to castle dainties."

"We are reared on the fare of soldiers, not of castles," said Skshetuski.

And Pan Rozvan added: "I have tried the hospitality of country-houses, and know that it is better than that of castles."

The carriages moved on, and the old princess continued: "Our best days have passed long ago. In Volynia and Lithuania there are still members of the Kurtsevich family who have retinues of attendants and live in lordly fashion, but they do not recognize their poor relations, for which God punish them. We live in real Cossack poverty, which you must overlook, and accept with a good heart what we offer with sincerity. I and my five sons live on one village and a few hamlets, and in addition we have this young lady to care for."

These words astonished the lieutenant not a little, for he had heard in Lubni that Rozlogi was no small estate, and also that it belonged to Prince Vassily, the father of Helena. He did not deem it proper, however, to inquire how the place had passed into the hands of Constantine and his widow.

"Then you have five sons, Princess?" asked Pan Rozvan Ursu.

"I had five, all like lions," answered she; "but the infidels in Bélgorod put out the eyes of the eldest, Vassily, with torches, wherefore his mind has failed him. When the young men go on an expedition I stay at home with him and this young lady, with whom I have more suffering than comfort."

The contemptuous tone with which the princess spoke of her niece was so evident that it did not escape the attention of the lieutenant. His breast boiled up in anger, and he had almost allowed an unseemly oath to escape him; but the words died on his lips when he looked at the young princess, and in the light of the moon saw her eyes filled with tears.

"What has happened? Why do you weep?" asked he, in a low voice.

She was silent.

"I cannot endure to see you weep," said Pan Yan, and bent toward her. Seeing that the old princess was conversing with the envoy and not looking toward him, he continued: "In God's name, speak but one word, for I would give blood and health to comfort you!"

All at once he felt one of the horsemen press against him so heavily that the horses began to rub their sides together. Conversation with the princess was interrupted. Skshetuski, astonished and also angered, turned to the intruder. By the light of the moon he saw two eyes, which looked at him insolently, defiantly, sneeringly. Those terrible eyes shone like those of a wolf in a dark forest.

"What devil is that?" thought the lieutenant, – "a demon or who?" And then, looking closely into those burning eyes, he asked: "Why do you push on me with your horse, and dig your eyes into me?"

The horseman did not answer, but continued to look with equal persistence and insolence.

"If it is dark, I can strike a light; and if the road is too narrow, then to the steppe with you!" said the lieutenant, in a distinct voice.

"Off with you from the carriage, Pole, if you see the steppe!" answered the horseman.

The lieutenant, being a man quick of action, instead of an answer struck his foot into the side of his enemy's horse with such force that the beast groaned and in a moment was on the very edge of the road.

The rider reined him in on the spot, and for a moment it seemed that he was about to rush on the lieutenant; but that instant the sharp, commanding voice of the old princess resounded.

"Bogun, what's the matter?"

These words had immediate effect. Bogun whirled his horse around, and passed to the other side of the carriage to the princess, who continued: "What is the matter? You are not in Pereyasláv nor the Crimea, but in Rozlogi. Remember this! But now gallop ahead for me, conduct the carriages; the ravine is at hand, and it is dark. Hurry on, you vampire!"

Skshetuski was astonished, as well as vexed. Bogun evidently sought a quarrel and would have found it; but why did he seek it, – whence this unexpected attack? The thought flashed through the lieutenant's mind that Princess Helena had something to do with this; and he was confirmed in the thought, for, looking at her face, he saw, in spite of the darkness, that it was pale, and evident terror was on it.

Bogun spurred forward immediately in obedience to the command of the princess, who, looking after him, said half to herself and half to Pan Yan, -

"That's a madcap, a Cossack devil."

"It is evident that he is not in his full mind," answered the lieutenant, contemptuously. "Is that Cossack in the service of your sons?"

The old princess threw herself back in the seat.

"What do you mean? Why, that is Bogun, lieutenant-colonel, a famous hero, a friend of my sons, and adopted by me as a sixth son. Impossible that you have not heard his name, for all know of him."

This name was, in fact, well known to Pan Yan. From among the names of various colonels and Cossack atamans this one had come to the top, and was on every lip on both banks of the Dnieper. Blind minstrels sang songs of Bogun in market-places and shops, and at evening meetings they told wonders about the young leader. Who he was, whence he had come, was known to no man. This much was certain, – the steppes, the Dnieper, the Cataracts, and Chertomelik, with its labyrinth of narrows, arms, islands, rocks, ravines, and reeds, had been his cradle. From childhood he had lived and communed with that wild world.

In time of peace he went with others to fish and hunt, battered through the windings of the Dnieper, wandered over swamps and reeds with a crowd of half-naked comrades; then again he spent whole months in forest depths. His school was in raids to the Wilderness on the herds of the Tartars, in ambushes, battles, campaigns against Tartar coast towns, against Bélgorod, Wallachia, or with boats on the Black Sea. He knew no days but days on his horse, no nights but nights at a steppe fire.

Soon he became the favorite of the entire lower country, a leader of others, and surpassed all men in daring. He was ready to go with a hundred horse even to Bagche Sarai, and start up a blaze under the very eyes of the Khan; he burned Tartar towns and villages, exterminated the inhabitants, tore captive murzas to pieces with horses, came down like a tempest, passed by like death. On the sea he fell upon Turkish galleys with frenzy, swept down upon the centre of Budjak, – rushed into the lion's mouth, as 'tis said. Some of his expeditions were simple madness. Men less daring, less fond of danger, perished impaled on stakes in Stamboul, or rotted at the oar on Turkish galleys; he always escaped unhurt, and with rich booty. It was said that he had collected immense treasures, which he had hidden in the reeds of the Dnieper; but it was also seen more than once how with muddy boots he had stamped upon cloth of gold, and spread carpets under the hoofs of his horse, – how, dressed in satin, he had spotted himself with tar, on purpose to show Cossack contempt for these lordly stuffs.

He never warmed any place long. Caprice was the motive of his deeds. At times, when he came to Chigirin, Cherkasi, or Pereyasláv, he had terrible frolics with other Zaporojians; at times he lived like a monk, spoke to no man, escaped to the steppe. Then again he surrounded himself with blind minstrels, and listened to their songs and stories for days at a time, heaping gold on them. Among nobles he knew how to be a polished cavalier; among Cossacks he was the wildest of Cossacks. In

knightly company he was a knight; among robbers, a robber. Some held him to be insane; for he was an unbridled, mad spirit. Why he was living in the world, what he wanted, whither he was tending, whom he served, he knew not himself. He served the steppes, the whirlwinds, war, love, his own fancy. This fancy of his distinguished him from all the other rude leaders, and from the whole robber herd who had only plunder as an object, and for whom it was the same whether they plundered Tartars or their own. Bogun took plunder, but preferred war to pillage; he was in love with peril for its own charm; he gave gold for songs; he hunted for glory, and cared for no more.

Of all leaders, he alone personified best the Cossack knight; therefore songs had sought him out as a favorite, and his name was celebrated throughout the whole Ukraine.

He had recently become the Pereyasláv lieutenant-colonel, but he exercised the power of colonel; for old Loboda held the baton feebly in his stiffening hand.

Pan Yan, therefore, knew well who Bogun was, and if he asked the old princess whether the Cossack was in the service of her sons, he did it through studied contempt; for he felt in him an enemy, and in spite of all the reputation of Bogun, his blood boiled up because the Cossack had begun with him so insolently. He understood, too, that what had been begun would not end in a trifle. But Skshetuski was as unbending as an axle, self-confident to excess, yielding before nothing, and really eager for danger. He was ready even that moment to urge his horse after Bogun,

but he rode near the princess. Besides, the wagon had already passed the ravine, and lights were gleaming in Rozlogi.

CHAPTER IV

The Kurtsevichi Bulygi were of an ancient princely stock which used the escutcheon of Kurts, claimed to be from Koryat, but was really from Rurik. Of the two main lines, one lived in Lithuania, the other in Volynia, till Prince Vassily, one of the numerous descendants of the Volynian line, settled beyond the Dnieper. Being poor, he did not wish to remain among his powerful relatives, and entered the service of Prince Michael Vishnyevetski, father of the renowned "Yarema."[6]

Having covered himself with glory in that service, he received from the latter, as a permanent possession, Krasnie Rozlogi, which subsequently, by reason of its vast number of wolves, was called Volchie Rozlogi; and there he settled for good. He went over to the Latin rite in 1629, and married a lady of a distinguished Austrian family of Italian descent. From that marriage a daughter, Helena, came into the world a year later, her mother dying at her birth. Prince Vassily, without thinking of a second marriage, gave himself up altogether to the management of his land and the rearing of his only daughter. He was a man of great character and uncommon virtue. Having acquired a moderate fortune rather rapidly, he remembered at once his eldest brother Constantine, who, rejected by his powerful family,

[6] This is the popular form in Little Russian; therefore it is quoted.

remained in Volynia, and was obliged to live on rented land. He brought him, with his wife and five sons, to Rozlogi, and shared every bit of bread with him.

The two Kurtsevichi lived in this way quietly till the end of 1634, when Vassily went with King Vladislav to the siege of Smolensk, where that unfortunate event took place which caused his ruin. In the royal camp was intercepted a letter written to Sheyin (the Russian commander), signed with the name of the prince, with the seal of Kurts added. Such a clear proof of treason on the part of a knight who till then had enjoyed an unspotted fame, astonished and confounded every one. It was in vain that Vassily called God to witness that neither the hand nor the signature on the paper was his; the arms of Kurts on the seal removed every doubt, no one believed that the seal had been lost, – which was the prince's explanation, – and finally the unfortunate prince, sentenced *pro crimine perduelionis* to the loss of his honor and his head, was forced to seek safety in flight.

Arriving at Rozlogi in the night, Vassily implored his brother Constantine, by all that was holy, to care for Helena as his own daughter, and then he disappeared forever. It was said that he wrote a letter from Bar to Vishnyevetski, entreating the prince not to take the bread out of Helena's mouth, and to leave her in peace at Rozlogi under the care of Constantine; after that there was no more word of him. There was a report that he had died suddenly, also that he had joined the imperial army and had perished in battle in Germany. No one, however, had certain

knowledge of him; but he must have died, since he inquired no further for his daughter. Soon mention of his name ceased, and he was only remembered when his innocence became evident. A certain Kuptsevich from Vytebsk confessed on his death-bed that he had written, at the siege of Smolensk, the letter to Sheyin, and sealed it with the seal found in camp. In the face of such testimony, pity and confusion seized all hearts. The sentence was revoked, the name of Prince Vassily restored to honor, but for Vassily himself the reward for his sufferings came too late. As to Rozlogi, Yeremi did not think of confiscating that; for the Vishnyevetskis, knowing Vassily better than others, were never entirely convinced of his guilt. He might even have remained under their powerful protection and laughed at the sentence; and if he fled, it was because he was unable to endure disgrace.

Helena grew up quietly at Rozlogi under the tender care of her uncle, and only after his death did painful times begin for her. The wife of Constantine, from a family of dubious origin, was a stern, impulsive, and energetic woman, whom her husband alone was able to keep within bounds. After his death she gathered into her iron hand the management of Rozlogi. The serving-men trembled before her, the house-servants feared her as fire, and soon she made herself known to the neighbors. During the third year of her management she attacked the Sivinskis of Brovarki twice with armed hand, dressed in male attire and on horseback, leading her servants with hired Cossacks. Once when the regiments of Prince Yeremi scattered Tartar bands,

plundering in the neighborhood of Semi Mogil, the princess at the head of her people cut to pieces the remnant that had escaped as far as Rozlogi. She had settled for good in Rozlogi, and began to consider the place as the property of herself and her sons. She loved these sons as the wolf loves her young, but being rude she had no thought of a proper education for them. A monk of the Greek rite from Kieff taught them to read and write; here their education ended. It was not far to Lubni, where Vishnyevetski's court was, at which the young princes might have acquired polish and trained themselves to public business in the Chancery, or entered the school of knighthood under his banners. The princess, however, had reasons of her own for not sending the young men to Lubni.

Prince Yeremi might remember to whom Rozlogi belonged, and might look into the guardianship of Helena, or in memory of Vassily might take that guardianship upon himself; then she would undoubtedly have to move away from Rozlogi. The princess preferred, therefore, that in Lubni they should forget there were Kurtsevichi on earth. So the young princes were reared half wild, more as Cossacks than as nobles. While still young, they took part in the quarrels of the old princess, in attacks on the Sivinskis, and in her expeditions against Tartars. Feeling an innate aversion to books and letters, they fired arrows from bows for whole days, or took exercise in the management of their fists or sabres and lariats. They never occupied themselves with the estate, for their mother would not let that out of her own

hands. It was sad to look at those descendants of a noted stock in whose veins princely blood was flowing, but whose manners were harsh and rude, and whose ideas and dull hearts reminded one of the uncultivated steppe. Meanwhile they were growing up like young oaks; seeing their own ignorance, they were ashamed to live with the nobility; on the contrary, the companionship of wild Cossack leaders was more agreeable. When old enough, therefore, they went with companies to the lower country, where they were considered as comrades. Sometimes they stayed half a year in the Saitch; went to "industry" with the Cossacks, took part in campaigns against the Turks and Tartars, which finally became their chief and favorite occupation.

Their mother was not opposed to this, for they often brought back abundant booty. But in one of these campaigns the eldest, Vassily, fell into pagan hands. His brothers, it is true, with the aid of Bogun and the Zaporojians, rescued him, but without his eyes. From that time Vassily was forced to remain at home; as formerly he had been the wildest of all, so then he became very mild and was sunk in meditation and religious exercises. The young men continued their warlike occupations, which at last obtained for them the surname of Prince-Cossacks.

A glance at Rozlogi-Siromakhi was enough to enable one to guess what kind of people lived there. When the envoy and Pan Yan drove through the gate with their wagons, they saw, not a castle, but rather a roomy shed built of enormous oak planks, with narrow windows like port-holes. Dwellings for servants

and Cossacks, the stables, the granaries, and store-rooms were attached directly to the house, composing an irregular building made up of many parts, some high and some low. It would have been difficult to consider such a poor and rude exterior as a human dwelling, but for the lights in the windows. On the square in front of the house were two well-cranes; nearer the gate was a post with a ring on the top, to which was chained a bear. A strong gate of the same kind of planks as the house afforded entrance to the square, which was surrounded by a ditch and a palisade.

Evidently it was a fortified place, secure against attacks and incursions. It recalled in every regard the Cossack posts of the frontier; and though the majority of nobles on the border had no houses of fashion different from this, still this was more like some species of robber's nest than any of them. The attendants who came out with torches to meet the guests were bandits in appearance, rather than servants. Great dogs on the square tugged at their chains as if to break away and rush at the newly arrived. From the stable was heard the neighing of horses. The young Bulygi and their mother began to call to the servants with commands and curses.

In the midst of this hurly-burly the guests entered the house. But now Pan Rozvan Ursu, who had almost regretted his promise to pass the night there when he saw the wildness and wretchedness of the place, was really astonished at the sight that met his eyes. The inside of the house answered in no way to the unseemly exterior. First they entered a broad ante-room,

the walls of which were almost entirely covered with armor, weapons, and skins of wild beasts. Logs of wood were blazing in two enormous fireplaces, and by their bright light were to be seen, on one wall, horse-trappings, shining armor, Turkish steel shirts on which here and there were glittering precious stones; chain-mail with gilt knobs on the buckles, half armor, breast-pieces, neck-pieces, steel armor of great value, Polish and Turkish helmets, steel caps with silver tips. On the opposite wall hung shields, no longer used in that age; near them Polish lances and Oriental javelins, also edged weapons in plenty, – from sabres to daggers and yatagans, – the hilts of which glittered in the firelight with various colors, like stars. In the corners hung bundles of skins of bears, wolves, foxes, martens, and ermine, gained by the hunting of the princes. Farther away, near the walls, dozing on their rings were hawks, falcons, and great golden eagles; the last, brought from the distant steppes of the East, were used in the wolf-hunt.

From that antechamber the guests passed to a spacious reception-room, and here in a chimney with a depression in front burned a brisk fire. In this room there was still greater luxury than in the antechamber. The bare planks of the walls were covered with woven stuffs. On the floor lay splendid Oriental carpets. In the centre of the room stood a long, cross-legged table, made of common planks, on which were goblets, gilt or cut from Venetian glass. At the walls were smaller tables, bureaus, and shelves on which were caskets, bottle-cases inlaid

with bronze, brass candlesticks and clocks, taken in their time by the Turks from the Venetians and by the Cossacks from the Turks. The whole room was crowded with superfluous objects, of a use very often unknown to the possessor. Everywhere was luxury blended with the extreme rudeness of the steppe. Costly Turkish bureaus, inlaid with bronze, ebony, mother-of-pearl, were standing at the side of unplaned shelves; simple wooden chairs at the side of soft sofas. Cushions lying in Eastern fashion on sofas had covers of brocade or silk stuff, but were rarely filled with down, oftener with hay or pea-stalks. Costly stuffs and superfluous objects were the so-called Turkish or Tartar goods, partly bought for a trifle from the Cossacks, partly obtained in numerous wars by old Prince Vassily, partly during expeditions with men of the lower country by the young Bulygi, who chose rather to go with boats to the Black Sea than to marry or manage the land.

All this roused no surprise in Skshetuski, who was well acquainted with houses on the border; but the Wallachian boyar was astonished to see in the midst of all this luxury the Kurtsevichi in leather boots and fur coats not much better than those worn by the servants. Pan Longin Podbipienta, accustomed to a different order of things in Lithuania, was equally astonished.

Meanwhile the young princes received the guests heartily and with great welcome. Being little trained in society, they did this in so awkward a manner that the lieutenant was scarcely able to restrain his laughter. The eldest, Simeon, said, -

"We are glad to see you, and are thankful for your kindness. Our house is your house; therefore make yourselves at home. We bow to you, gentlemen, at our lowly thresholds."

And though no humility was observable in the tone of his speech, nor a recognition that he received persons superior to himself, he bowed in Cossack fashion to the girdle; and after him bowed the younger brothers, thinking that politeness required it.

"The forehead to you, gentlemen, the forehead."

Just then the princess, seizing Bogun by the sleeve, led him to another room.

"Listen, Bogun," said she, hurriedly, "I've no time for long speeches: I saw you attack that young noble. You are seeking a quarrel with him."

"Mother," answered the Cossack, kissing the old woman's hand, "the world is wide, – one road to him, another to me. I have not known him, nor heard of him; but let him not draw near the princess, or as I live I'll flash my sabre in his eyes."

"Oh! are you mad? Where, Cossack, is your head? What has come upon you? Do you want to ruin yourself and us? He is a soldier of Prince Yeremi, a lieutenant, a person of distinction, for he was sent as envoy from the prince to the Khan. Let a hair fall from his head while under our roof, do you know what will happen? The prince will turn his eyes to Rozlogi, will avenge this man, send us to the four winds, take Helena to Lubni, – and then what? Will you quarrel with Vishnyevetski, or attack Lubni? Try it if you want to taste an impaling stake, lost Cossack! Whether

he comes near the girl or not, he will leave here as he came, and there will be peace. But restrain yourself! If not, then be off to where you came from, for you will bring misfortune to us if you stay."

The Cossack gnawed his mustache, frowned, but saw that the princess was right.

"They will go away in the morning, mother, and I will restrain myself; only let the princess stay in her own rooms."

"Why do you ask this? So that they should think I keep her in confinement? She will appear, because I wish it. Give no orders to me in this house, for you are not master here!"

"Be not angry. Princess! Since it cannot be otherwise, I will be as sweet to them as Turkish tidbits. I'll not grind my teeth nor touch my head, even though anger were consuming me, though my soul were ready to groan. Let your will be done."

"Oh, that's your talk! Take your lyre, play, sing; then you will feel easier. But now meet the guests."

They returned to the reception-room, in which the princes, not knowing how to entertain the guests, continued to ask them to make themselves at home, and were bowing to the girdle before them.

Skshetuski looked sharply and haughtily into the eyes of Bogun as soon as he came, but he saw in them neither quarrel nor defiance. The face of the youthful leader was lighted up with good-humor, so well simulated that it might have deceived the most experienced eye. The lieutenant looked at him carefully, for

previously he had been unable to distinguish his features in the darkness. He saw now a young hero, straight as a poplar, with splendid brunette face, and rich, dark, drooping mustache. On that face gladness burst through the pensive mood of the Ukraine, as the sun through a mist. The leader had a lofty forehead, on which his dark hair drooped as a mane above his powerful brow. An aquiline nose, dilated nostrils, and white teeth, shining at every smile, gave the face a slight expression of rapacity; but on the whole it was a model of Ukraine beauty, luxuriant, full of character and defiance. His splendid dress also distinguished this hero of the steppe from the princes dressed in skins. Bogun wore a tunic of silver brocade and a scarlet kontush, which color was worn by all the Pereyasláv Cossacks. His loins were girt with a silken sash from which depended a rich sabre; but the sabre and the dress paled before the Turkish dagger at his belt. This dagger was so thickly studded with jewels that sparks flew from it. Arrayed in this fashion, he would have been easily taken by any one for a scion of some great house; rather than a Cossack, especially since his freedom and his lordly manners betrayed no low descent.

Approaching Pan Longin, he listened to the story of his ancestor Stoveiko and the cutting off of the three heads. He turned to the lieutenant, and said with perfect indifference, just as if nothing had happened between them, -

"You are on your way from the Crimea, I hear."

"From the Crimea," answered the lieutenant, dryly.

"I have been there too, though I did not go to Baktche Serai; but I think I shall be there if the favorable news we hear comes true."

"Of what news are you speaking?"

"It is said that if the king opens war against the Turks, Prince Vishnyevetski will visit the Crimea with fire and sword. This report brings great joy through the whole Ukraine and the lower country, for if under such a leader we do not frolic in Baktche Serai, then under none."

"We will frolic, as God is in heaven!" cried the young princes.

The respect with which Bogun spoke of the prince captivated the lieutenant; so he smiled and said in a more friendly voice, -

"I see that you are not satisfied yet with the expeditions which you have had with men of the lower country, which however have covered you with glory."

"Small war, small glory! Konashevich Sahaidachni did not win it on boats, but in Khotím."

At that moment a door opened, and Vassily, the eldest of the Kurtsevichi, came slowly into the room, led by Helena. He was a man of ripe years, pale and emaciated, with a sad ascetic countenance, recalling the Byzantine pictures of saints. His long hair, prematurely gray from misfortune and pain, came down to his shoulders, and instead of his eyes were two red depressions. In his hand he held a bronze cross, with which he began to bless the room and all present.

"In the name of God the Father, in the name of the Saviour

and of the Holy Most Pure," said he, "if you are apostles and bring good tidings, be welcome on Christian thresholds!"

"Be indulgent, gentlemen," muttered the princess; "his mind is disturbed."

But Vassily continued to bless them with the cross, and added: "As it is said in the 'Dialogues of the Apostles,' 'Whoso sheds his blood for the faith will be saved; he who dies for gain or booty will be damned.' Let us pray! Woe to you, brothers, woe to me, since we made war for booty! God be merciful to us, sinners! God be merciful! And you, men who have come from afar, what tidings do you bring? Are you apostles?"

He was silent, and appeared to wait for an answer; therefore the lieutenant replied, -

"We are far from such a lofty mission. We are only soldiers ready to lay down our lives for the faith."

"Then you will be saved," said the blind man; "but for us the hour of liberation has not come. Woe to you, brothers! woe to me!"

He uttered the last words almost with a groan, and such deep despair was depicted on his countenance that the guests were at a loss what to do. Helena seated him straightway on a chair, and hastening to the anteroom, returned in a moment with a lute in her hand.

Low sounds were heard in the apartment, and the princess began to sing a hymn as accompaniment, -

"By night and by day I call thee, O Lord!
Relieve thou my torment, and dry my sad tears;
Be a merciful Father to me in my sins;
Oh, hear thou my cry!"

The blind man threw his head back and listened to the words of the song, which appeared to act as a healing balm, for the pain and terror disappeared by degrees from his face. At last his head fell upon his bosom, and he remained as if half asleep and half benumbed.

"If the singing is continued, he will become altogether pacified. You see, gentlemen, his insanity consists in this, that he is always waiting for apostles; and if visitors appear, he comes out immediately to ask if they are apostles."

Helena continued: -

"Show me the way, Lord above Lords!
I'm like one astray in a waste without end,
Or a ship in the waves of a measureless sea,
Lost and alone."

Her sweet voice grew louder and louder. With the lute in her hands, and eyes raised to heaven, she was so beautiful that the lieutenant could not take his eyes from her. He looked, was lost in her, and forgot the world. He was roused from his ecstasy only by the words of the old princess, -

"That's enough! He will not wake soon. But now I request you

to supper, gentlemen."

"We beg you to our bread and salt," said the young princes after their mother.

Pan Rozvan, as a man of polished manners, gave his arm to the lady of the house. Seeing this, Skshetuski hurried to the Princess Helena. His heart grew soft within him when he felt her hand on his arm, till fire flashed in his eyes, and he said, -

"The angels in heaven do not sing more beautifully than you."

"It is a sin for you to compare my singing to that of angels," answered Helena.

"I don't know whether I sin or not; but one thing is sure, – I would give my eyes to hear your singing till death. But what do I say? If blind, I could have no sight of you, which would be the same as torture beyond endurance."

"Don't say that, for you will leave here to-morrow, and to-morrow forget me."

"That will not be. My love is such that to the end of life I can love no one else."

The face of the princess grew scarlet; her breast began to heave. She wished to answer, but her lips merely trembled. Then Pan Yan continued, -

"But you will forget me in the presence of that handsome Cossack, who will accompany your singing on a balalaika."

"Never, never!" whispered the maiden. "But beware of him; he is a terrible man."

"What is one Cossack to me? Even if the whole Saitch were

behind him, I should dare everything for your sake. You are for me like a jewel without price, – you are my world. But tell me, have you the same feeling for me?"

A low "Yes" sounded like music of paradise in the ears of Pan Yan, and that moment it seemed to him as if ten hearts, at least, were beating in his breast; in his eyes all things grew bright, as if a ray of sunlight had come to the world; he felt an unknown power within himself, as if he had wings on his shoulders.

During supper Bogun's face, which was greatly changed and pale, glared several times. The lieutenant, however, possessing the affection of Helena, cared not for his rival. "The devil take him!" thought he. "Let him not get in my way; if he does, I'll rub him out."

But his mind was not on Bogun. He felt Helena sitting so near that he almost touched her shoulder with his own; he saw the blush which never left her face, from which warmth went forth; he saw her swelling bosom, and her eyes, now drooping and covered with their lids, now flashing like a pair of stars, – for Helena, though cowed by the old princess and living in orphanhood, sadness, and fear, was still of the Ukraine and hot-blooded. The moment a warm ray of love fell on her she bloomed like a flower, and was roused at once to new and unknown life. Happiness with courage gleamed in her eyes, and those impulses struggling with her maiden timidity painted her face with the beautiful colors of the rose.

Pan Yan was almost beside himself. He drank deeply, but the

mead had no effect on him; he was already drunk from love. He saw no one at the table save her who sat at his side. He saw not how Bogun grew paler each moment, and, touching the hilt of his dagger, gave no ear to Pan Longin, who for the third time told of his ancestor Stoveiko, nor to Kurtsevich, who told about his expedition for "Turkish goods."

All drank except Bogun; and the best example was given by the old princess, who raised a goblet, now to the health of her guests, now to the health of Vishnyevetski, now to the health of the hospodar Lupul. There was talk, too, of blind Vassily and his former knightly deeds, of his unlucky campaign and his present insanity, which Simeon, the eldest, explained as follows: -

"Just think! the smallest bit of anything in the eye prevents sight; why should not great drops of pitch reaching the brain cause madness?"

"Oh, it is a very delicate organ," said Pan Longin.

At this moment the old princess noticed the changed face of Bogun.

"What is the matter, my falcon?"

"My soul is suffering, mother," said he, gloomily; "but a Cossack word is not smoke. I will endure."

"Hold out, my son; there will be a feast."

Supper came to an end, but mead was poured into the goblets unsparingly. Cossacks called to the dance came, therefore, with greater readiness. The balalaikas and drums, to which the drowsy attendants were to dance, began to sound. Later on, the young

princes dropped into the prisyadka. The old princess, putting her hands on her sides, began to keep time with her foot and hum. Pan Yan, seeing this, took Helena to the dance. When he embraced her with his arm it seemed to him that he was drawing part of heaven toward his breast. In the whirl of the dance her long tresses swept around his neck, as if she wished to bind him to herself forever. He did not restrain himself; and when he saw that no one was looking, he bent and kissed her lips with all his might.

Late at night, when alone with Longin in their sleeping-room, the lieutenant, instead of going to rest, sat on the wooden bedstead and began: "You will go to Lubni tomorrow with another man."

Podbipienta, who had just finished his prayers, opened wide his eyes and asked: "How is that? Are you going to stay here?"

"I shall not stay, but my heart will remain, and only the *dulcis recordatio* will go with me. You see in me a great change, since from tender desires I am scarcely able to listen to a thing."

"Then you have fallen in love with the princess?"

"Nothing else, as true as I am alive before you. Sleep flees from my lids, and I want nothing but sighs, from which I am ready to vanish into vapor. I tell you this, because, having a tender heart famishing for love, you will easily understand my torture."

Pan Longin began to sigh, in token that he understood the torments of love, and after a time he inquired mournfully: "Maybe you have also made a vow of celibacy?"

"Your inquiry is pointless, for if all made such vows the *genus humanum* would soon be at an end."

The entrance of a servant interrupted further conversation. It was an old Tartar, with quick black eyes and a face as wrinkled as a dried apple. After he came in he cast a significant look at Pan Yan and asked, -

"Don't you wish for something? Perhaps a cup of mead before going to bed?"

"No, 'tis not necessary."

The Tartar approached Skshetuski and muttered: "I have a word from the young princess for you."

"Then be my gift-giver! You may speak before this knight, for he knows everything."

The Tartar took a ribbon from his sleeve, saying, "The lady has sent you this scarf, with a message that she loves you with her whole soul."

The lieutenant seized the scarf, kissed it with ecstasy, and pressed it to his bosom. After he had become calmer, he asked: "What did the princess tell you to say?"

"That she loved you with her whole soul."

"Here is a thaler for your message. She said, then, that she loved me?"

"Yes."

"Here is another thaler for you. May God bless her, for she is most dear to me. Tell her, too-But wait, I'll write to her. Bring me ink, pen, and paper."

"What?" asked the Tartar.

"Ink, pen, and paper."

"We have none in the house. In the time of Prince Vassily we had, and afterward when the young princes learned to write from the monk; but that is a long time ago."

Pan Yan clasped his hands. "Haven't you ink and pen?" asked he of Podbipienta.

The Lithuanian opened his hands and raised his eyes to heaven.

"Well, plague take it!" said the lieutenant; "what can I do?"

The Tartar had squatted before the fire. "What is the use of writing?" said he, gathering up the coals. "The young lady has gone to sleep. And what you would write to her now, you can tell her in the morning."

"In that case I need no ink. You are a faithful servant to the young lady, as I see. Here is a third thaler for you. Are you long in her service?"

"It is now fourteen years since Prince Vassily took me captive, and since that time I have served faithfully. The night he went away through losing his name he left his little child to Constantine, and said to me: 'You will not desert the little girl, and you will be as careful of her as the eye in your head."

"Are you doing what he told you?"

"Yes, I am; I will care for her."

"Tell me what you see. How is she living here?"

"They have evil designs against her, for they wish to give her

to Bogun, and he is a cursed dog."

"Oh, nothing will come of that! A man will be found to take her part."

"Yes!" said the old man, pushing the glowing coals. "They want to give her to Bogun, to take and bear her away as a wolf bears a lamb, and leave them in Rozlogi; for Rozlogi is not theirs, but hers from her father, Prince Vassily. Bogun is willing to do this, for he has more gold and silver in the reeds than there is sand in Rozlogi; but she holds him in hatred from the time he brained a man before her face. Blood has fallen between them, and hatred has sprung up. God is one!"

The lieutenant was unable to sleep that night. He paced the apartment, gazed at the moon, and had many thoughts on his mind. He penetrated the game of the Bulygi. If a nobleman of the vicinity were to marry the princess, he would remember Rozlogi, and justly, for it belonged to her; and he might demand also an account of the guardianship. Therefore the Bulygi, already turned Cossacks, decided to give the young woman to a Cossack. While thinking of this, Skshetuski clinched his fists and sought the sword at his side. He resolved to baffle these plots, and felt that he had the power to do so. Besides, the guardianship of Helena belonged to Prince Yeremi, – first, because Rozlogi was given by the Vishnyevetskis to old Vassily; secondly, because Vassily himself wrote a letter to the prince from Bar, requesting this guardianship. The pressure of public business alone-wars and great undertakings-could have prevented the prince from

looking into the guardianship. But it would be sufficient to remind him with a word, and he would have justice done.

The gray of dawn was appearing when Skshetuski threw himself on the bed. He slept soundly, and in the morning woke with a finished plan. He and Pan Longin dressed in haste, all the more since the wagons were ready and the soldiers on horseback waiting to start. He breakfasted in the reception-room with the young princes and their mother, but Bogun was not there; it was unknown whether he was sleeping yet or had gone.

After he had refreshed himself Skshetuski said: "Worthy princess! time flies, and we must be on horseback in a moment; but before we thank you with grateful hearts for your entertainment, I have an important affair on which I should like to say a few words to you and your sons apart."

Astonishment was visible on the face of the princess. She looked at her sons, at the envoy, and Pan Longin, as if trying to divine from their faces what the question might be; and with a certain alarm in her voice she said: "I am at your service."

The envoy wished to retire, but she did not permit him. They went at once to the room which was hung with armor and weapons. The young princes took their places in a row behind their mother, who, standing opposite Skshetuski, asked: "Of what affair do you wish to speak, sir?"

The lieutenant fastened a quick and indeed severe glance on her, and said: "Pardon me, Princess, and you, young Princes, that I act contrary to custom, and instead of speaking through

ambassadors of distinction, I am the advocate in my own cause. But it cannot be otherwise; and since no man can battle with necessity, I present my humble request to you as guardians to be pleased to give me Princess Helena as wife."

If at that moment of the winter season lightning had descended in front of the house at Rozlogi, it would have caused less astonishment to the princess and her sons than those words of the lieutenant. For a time they looked with amazement on the speaker, who stood before them erect, calm, and wonderfully proud, as if he intended not to ask, but to command; and they could not find a word of answer, but instead, the princess began to ask, -

"How is this? Are you speaking of Helena?"

"I am, Princess, and you hear my fixed resolve."

A moment of silence followed.

"I am waiting for your answer, Princess."

"Forgive me, sir," said she, coughing; and her voice became dry and sharp. "The proposal of such a knight is no small honor for us; but nothing can come of it, since I have already promised Helena to another."

"But be pleased to consider, as a careful guardian, whether that promise was not made against the will of the princess, and if I am not better than he to whom you have promised her."

"Well, sir, it is for me to judge who is better. You may be the best of men; but that is nothing to us, for we do not know you."

The lieutenant straightened himself still more proudly, and his

glances, though cold, became sharp as knives.

"But I know you, you traitors!" he burst forth. "You wish to give your relative to a peasant, on condition that he leaves you property unjustly acquired."

"You are a traitor yourself!" shouted the princess. "Is this your return for hospitality? Is this the gratitude you cherish in your heart? Oh, serpent! What kind of person are you? Whence have you come?"

The fingers of the young princes began to quiver, and they looked along the walls for weapons; but the lieutenant cried out, -

"Wretches! you have seized the property of an orphan, but to no purpose. In a day from now Vishnyevetski will know of this."

At these words the princess rushed to the end of the room, and seizing a dart, went up to the lieutenant. The young men also, having seized each what he could lay hands on, – one a sabre, another a knife, – stood in a half-circle near him, panting like a pack of mad wolves.

"You will go to the prince, will you?" shouted the old woman; "and are you sure that you will go out of here alive, and that this is not your last hour?"

Skshetuski crossed his arms on his breast, and did not wink an eye.

"I am on my way from the Crimea," said he, "as an envoy of Prince Yeremi. Let a single drop of my blood fall here, and in three days the ashes of this house will have vanished, and you will rot in the dungeons of Lubni. Is there power in the world to

save you? Do not threaten, for I am not afraid of you."

"We may perish, but you will perish first."

"Then strike! Here is my breast."

The princes, with their mother near them, held weapons pointed at the breast of the lieutenant; but it seemed as if invisible fetters held their hands. Panting, and gnashing their teeth, they struggled in vain rage, but none of them struck a blow. The terrible name of Vishnyevetski deprived them of strength. The lieutenant was master of the position.

The weak rage of the princess was poured out in a mere torrent of abuse: "Trickster! beggar! you want princely blood. But in vain; we will give her to any one, but not to you. The prince cannot make us do that."

Skshetuski answered: "This is no time for me to speak of my nobility. I think, however, that your rank might well bear the sword and shield behind mine. But for that matter, since a peasant was good in your eyes, I am better. As to my fortune, that too may be compared with yours; and since you say that you will not give me Helena, then listen to what I tell you: I will leave you in Rozlogi, and ask no account of guardianship."

"Do not give that which is not yours."

"I give nothing but my promise for the future. I give it, and strengthen it with my knightly word. Now choose, either to render account to the prince of your guardianship and leave Rozlogi, or give me Helena and you may keep the land."

The dart dropped slowly from the hand of the princess, and

after a moment fell on the floor with a rattle.

"Choose," repeated Skshetuski, – "either peace or war!"

"It is lucky," said she, more mildly, "that Bogun has gone out with the falcon, not wishing to look at you; for he had suspicions even yesterday. If he were here, we should not get on without bloodshed."

"I do not wear a sword, madam, to have my belt cut off."

"But think, is it polite on the part of such a knight as you, after entering a house by invitation, to force people in this way, and take a maiden by assault, as if from Turkish slavery?"

"It is right, since she was to be sold against her will to a peasant."

"Don't say that of Bogun, for though of unknown parentage, he is a famous warrior and a splendid knight; known to us from childhood, he is like a relative in the house. To take the maiden from him is the same as to stab him with a knife."

"Well, Princess, it is time for me to go. Pardon me, then, if I ask you once more to make your choice."

The princess turned to her sons. "Well, my sons, what do you say to such an humble request from this cavalier?"

The young men looked down, nudged each other with their elbows, and were silent. At last Simeon muttered: "If you tell us, mother, to slay him, we will slay; if you say give the girl, we will give her."

"To give is bad, and to slay is bad." Then turning to Skshetuski, she said: "You have pushed us to the wall so closely

that there is no escape. Bogun is a madman, ready for anything. Who will save us from his vengeance? He will perish himself through the prince, but he will destroy us first. What are we to do?"

"That is your affair."

The princess was silent for a time, then said: "Listen to me. All this must remain a secret. We will send Bogun to Pereyasláv, and will go ourselves with Helena to Lubni, and you will ask the prince to send us a guard at Rozlogi. Bogun has a hundred and fifty Cossacks in the neighborhood; part of them are here. You cannot take Helena immediately, for he would rescue her. It cannot be arranged otherwise. Go your way, therefore; tell the secret to no man, and wait for us."

"But won't you betray me?"

"If we only could; but we cannot, as you see yourself. Give your word that you will keep the secret."

"If I give it, will you give the girl?"

"Yes, for we are unable not to give her, though we are sorry for Bogun."

"Pshaw!" said the lieutenant, turning to the princes, "There are four of you, like oaks, and afraid of one Cossack, and you wish to overcome him by treason! Though I am obliged to thank you, still I say that it is not the thing for men of honor."

"Do not interfere in this," cried the princess. "It is not your affair. What can we do? How many soldiers have you against his hundred and fifty Cossacks? Will you protect us? Will you

protect Helena herself, whom he is ready to bear away by force? This is not your affair. Go your way to Lubni. How we must act is for us to judge, if we only bring Helena to you."

"Do what you like; but one thing I repeat: If any wrong comes to Helena, woe to you!"

"Do not treat us in this fashion, you might drive us to desperation."

"You wished to bend her to your will, and now, when selling her for Rozlogi, it has never entered your heads to ask whether my person is pleasing to her."

"We are going to ask her in your presence," said the princess, suppressing the rage which began to seethe up again in her breast, for she felt clearly the contempt in these words of Skshetuski.

Simeon went for Helena, and soon entered the room with her. Amidst the rage and threats which still seemed to quiver in the air like the echoes of a tempest that has passed, amidst those frowning brows, angry looks, and threatening scowls, her beautiful face shone like the sun after a storm.

"Well, young lady!" said the princess sullenly, pointing to Pan Yan; "if you choose this man, he is your future husband."

Helena grew pale, and with a sudden cry covered her eyes with her two hands; then suddenly stretched them toward Skshetuski.

"Is this true?" whispered she, in transport.

An hour later the retinue of the envoy and the lieutenant moved slowly along the forest road toward Lubni. Skshetuski with Pan Longin Podbipienta rode in front; after them came the

wagons of the envoy in a long line. The lieutenant was completely sunk in thought and longing, when suddenly he was roused from his pensiveness by the words of the song, -

"I grieve, I grieve, my heart is sore."

In the depth of the forest appeared Bogun on a narrow path trodden out by the peasants. His horse was covered with foam and mud. Apparently the Cossack, according to habit, had gone out to the steppes and the forest to dissipate with the wind, destroy, and forget in the distance that which over-pained his heart. He was returning then to Rozlogi.

Looking on that splendid, genuine knightly form, which only flashed up before him and vanished, Skshetuski murmured involuntarily, -

"It is lucky in every case that he brained a man in her presence."

All at once an undefined sorrow pressed his heart. He was sorry as it were for Bogun, but still more sorry that having bound himself by word to the princess, he was unable that moment to urge his horse after him and say, -

"We love the same woman; there is one of us, therefore, who cannot live in the world. Draw your sword, Cossack!"

CHAPTER V

When he arrived at Lubni, Pan Yan did not find the prince, who had gone to a christening at the house of an old attendant of his, Pan Sufchinski, at Senchy, taking with him the princess, two young princesses Zbaraskie, and many persons of the castle. Word was sent to Senchy of the lieutenant's return from the Crimea, and of the arrival of the envoy.

Meanwhile Skshetuski's acquaintances and comrades greeted him joyfully after his long journey; and especially Pan Volodyovski, who had been the most intimate of all since their last duel. This cavalier was noted for being always in love. After he had convinced himself of the insincerity of Anusia Borzobogata, he turned his sensitive heart to Angela Lenska, one of the attendants of the princess; and when she, a month before, became engaged to Pan Stanishevski, Volodyovski, to console himself, began to sigh after Anna, the eldest princess Zbaraska, niece of Prince Yeremi.

But he understood himself that he had raised his eyes so high that he could not strengthen himself with the least hope, especially since Pan Bodzynski and Pan Lyassota came to make proposals for the princess in the name of Pan Pshiyemski, son of the voevoda of Lenchitsk. The unfortunate Volodyovski therefore told his new troubles to the lieutenant, initiating him into all the affairs and secrets of the castle, to which he listened

with half an ear, since his mind and heart were otherwise occupied. Had it not been for that mental disquiet which always attends even mutual love, Skshetuski would have felt himself happy on returning, after a long absence, to Lubni, where he was surrounded by friendly faces and that bustle of military life to which he had long grown accustomed. Though Lubni, as a lordly residence, was equal in grandeur to any of the seats of the "kinglets," still it was different from them in this, – that its life was stern, really of the camp. A visitor unacquainted with its usages and order, and coming, even in time of profoundest peace, might suppose that some military expedition was on foot. The soldier there was above the courtier, iron above gold, the trumpet-call louder than sounds of feasts and amusements. Exemplary order reigned in every part, and a discipline elsewhere unknown. On all sides were throngs of knights of various regiments, armored cavalry dragoons, Cossacks, Tartars, and Wallachians, in which served not only the whole Trans-Dnieper, but volunteers, nobles from every part of the Commonwealth. Whoever wished training in a real school of knighthood set out for Lubni; therefore neither the Mazur, the Lithuanian, the man of Little Poland, nor even the Prussian, was absent from the side of the Russian. Infantry and artillery, or the so-called "fire people," were composed, for the greater part, of picked Germans engaged for high wages. Russians served principally in the dragoons, Lithuanians in the Tartar regiments; the men of Little Poland rallied most willingly to the armored regiments.

The prince did not allow his men to live in idleness; hence there was ceaseless movement in the camp. Some regiments were marching out to relieve the stanitsas and outposts, others were entering the capital, – day after day drilling and manœuvres. At times, even when there was no trouble from Tartars, the prince undertook distant expeditions into the wild steppes and wildernesses to accustom the soldiers to campaigning, to push forward where no man had gone before, and to spread the glory of his name. So the past spring he had descended the left bank of the Dnieper to Kudák, where Pan Grodzitski, in command of the garrison, received him as a monarch; then he advanced farther beyond the Cataracts to Hortitsa; and at Kuchkasy he gave orders to raise a great mound of stones as a memorial and a sign that no other lord had gone so far along that shore.

Pan Boguslav Mashkevich-a good soldier, though young, and also a learned man, who described that expedition as well as various campaigns of the prince-told Skshetuski marvels concerning it, which were confirmed at once by Volodyovski, for he had taken part in the expedition. They had seen the Cataracts and wondered at them, especially at the terrible Nenasytets, which devoured every year a number of people, like Scylla and Charybdis of old. Then they set out to the east along the parched steppes, where cavalry were unable to advance on the burning ground and they had to cover the horses' hoofs with skins. Multitudes of reptiles and vipers were met with, – snakes ten ells long and thick as a man's arm. On some oaks standing

apart they inscribed, in eternal memory of the expedition, the arms of the prince. Finally, they entered a steppe so wild that in it no trace of man was found.

"I thought," said the learned Pan Mashkevich, "that at last we should have to go to Hades, like Ulysses."

To this Volodyovski added: "The men of Zamoiski's vanguard swore that they saw those boundaries on which the circle of the earth rests."

The lieutenant told his companions about the Crimea, where he had spent almost half a year in waiting for the answer of the Khan; he told of the towns there, of present and remote times, of Tartars and their military power, and finally of their terror at reports of a general expedition to the Crimea, in which all the forces of the Commonwealth were to engage.

Conversing in this way every evening, they waited the return of the prince. The lieutenant presented to his most intimate companions Pan Longin Podbipienta, who as a man of mild manners gained their hearts at once, and by exhibiting his superhuman strength in exercises with the sword acquired universal respect. He did not fail to relate to each one the story of his ancestor Stoveiko and the three severed heads; but he said nothing of his vow, not wishing to expose himself to ridicule. He pleased Volodyovski, especially by reason of the sensitive hearts of both. After a few days they went out together to sigh on the ramparts, – one for a star which shone above his reach, that is, for Princess Anna; the other for an unknown, from whom he was

separated by the three heads of his vow.

Volodyovski tried to entice Longin into the dragoons; but the Lithuanian decided at last to join the armored regiment, so as to serve with Skshetuski, whom, as he learned in Lubni, to his delight, all esteemed as a knight of the first degree, and one of the best officers in the service of the prince. And precisely in Skshetuski's regiment there was a vacancy in prospect. Pan Zakshevski, nicknamed "Miserere Mei," had been ill for two weeks beyond hope of recovery, since all his wounds had opened from dampness. To the love-cares of Skshetuski was now added sorrow for the impending loss of his old companion and tried friend. He did not go a step, therefore, from Zakshevski's pillow for several hours each day, comforting him as best he could, and strengthening him with the hope that they would still have many a campaign together.

But the old man needed no consolation; he was closing life joyfully on the hard bed of the soldier, covered with a horse-skin. With a smile almost childlike, he gazed on the crucifix above his bed, and answered Skshetuski, -

"Miserere mei! Lieutenant, I am on my way to the heavenly garrison. My body has so many holes from wounds that I fear Saint Peter, who is the steward of the Lord and must look after order in heaven, won't let me in with such a rent body; but I'll say: 'Saint Peter, my dear, I implore you, by the ear of Malchus, make no opposition, for it was pagans who injured my mortal coil,' miserere mei. And if Saint Michael shall have any campaigning

against the powers of hell, old Zakshevski will be useful yet."

The lieutenant, though he had looked so often upon death as a soldier and inflicted it himself, could not restrain his tears while listening to the old man, whose departure was like a quiet sunset.

At last, one morning the bells tolled in all the churches of Lubni, announcing the death of Pan Zakshevski. That same day the prince came from Senchy, and with him Bodzynski and Lyassota, with the whole court and many nobles in a long train of carriages, for the company at Pan Sufchinski's was very large. The prince arranged a great funeral, wishing to honor the services of the deceased and to show how he loved brave men. All the regiments at Lubni took part in the procession; from the ramparts guns and cannon were fired; the cavalry marched from the castle to the parish church in battle-array, but with furled banners; after them the infantry, with muskets reversed. The prince himself, dressed in mourning, rode behind the hearse in a gilded carriage, drawn by eight milk-white horses with purple-stained manes and tails, and tufts of black ostrich feathers on their heads. In front of the carriage marched a detachment of janissaries, the body-guard of the prince. Behind the carriage, on splendid steeds, rode pages in Spanish costume; farther on, high officials of the castle, attendants, lackeys; finally, haiduks and guards.

The cortége stopped before the church door, where the priest, Yaskolski, made a speech beginning with the words: "Whither art thou hastening, O Zakshevski!" Then speeches were made by some of his comrades, and among them by Skshetuski, as

the superior and friend of the deceased. Then his body was borne into the church, and there was heard the voice of the most eloquent of the eloquent, the Jesuit priest Mukhovetski, who spoke with such loftiness and grace that the prince himself wept; for he was a man of rare tenderness of heart and a real father to the soldiers. He maintained an iron discipline, but was unequalled in liberality and kindly treatment of people, and in the care with which he surrounded not only them, but their children and wives. Terrible and pitiless to rebels, he was a real benefactor, not only to the nobility, but to all his people. When the locusts destroyed the crops in 1646 he remitted the rent for a year, and ordered grain to be given from the granaries to his subjects; and after the fire in Khorol he supported all the townspeople at his own expense for two months. Tenants and managers of crown estates trembled lest accounts of any of the abuses or wrongs inflicted by them on the people should come to the ears of the prince. His guardianship over orphans was so good that these orphans were called, in the country beyond the Dnieper, "the prince's children." Princess Griselda herself watched over this, aided by Father Mukhovetski.

Order reigned in all the lands of the prince, with plenty, justice, peace, but also terror, – for in case of the slightest opposition the prince knew no bounds to his anger and to the punishments he inflicted; to such a degree was magnanimity joined with severity in his nature. But in those times and in those regions that severity alone permitted life and the labor of men

to thrive and continue. Thanks to it alone, towns and villages rose, the agriculturist took the place of the highwayman, the merchant sold his wares in peace, bells called the devout in safety to prayer, the enemy dared not cross the boundaries, crowds of thieves perished, empaled on stakes, or were changed into regular soldiers, and the wilderness bloomed.

A wild country and its wild inhabitants needed such a hand; for to the country beyond the Dnieper went the most restless elements of the Ukraine. Settlers came in, allured by the land and the fatness of the soil; runaway peasants from all lands of the Commonwealth; criminals escaping from prison, – in one word, as Livy said, "Pastorum convenarumque plebs transfuga ex suis populis." Only a lion at whose roar everything trembled could hold them in check, make them peaceable inhabitants, and force them into the bonds of settled life.

Pan Longin Podbipienta, seeing the prince for the first time at the funeral, could not believe his own eyes. Having heard so much of his glory, he imagined that he must be a sort of giant, a head above the race of common men; while the prince was really of small stature, and rather delicate. He was still young, – in the thirty-sixth year of his age, – but on his countenance military toil was evident; and as he lived in Lubni like a real king, so did he share in time of campaign and expedition the hardships of the common soldier. He ate black bread, slept on the ground in a blanket; and since the greater part of his life was spent in labors of the camp, the years left their marks on his face. But

that countenance revealed at the first glance an extraordinary man. There was depicted on it an iron, unbending will, and a majesty before which all involuntarily inclined. It was evident that this man knew his own power and greatness; and if on the morrow a crown were placed on his head, he would not feel astonished or oppressed by its weight. He had large eyes, calm, and indeed mild; still, thunders seemed to slumber in them, and you felt that woe would follow him who should rouse them. No man could endure the calm light of that look; and ambassadors trained at courts on appearing before Yeremi were seen to grow confused and unable to begin their discourse. He was, moreover, in his domain beyond the Dnieper a genuine king. There went out from his chancery privileges and grants headed, "We, by the grace of God Prince and Lord," etc. There were few magnates whom he considered equal to himself. Princes of the blood of ancient rulers were his stewards. Such in his day was the father of Helena, Vassily Bulyga Kurtsevich, who counted his descent, as already mentioned, from Koryat; but really he was descended from Rurik.

There was something in Prince Yeremi which, in spite of his native kindness, kept men at a distance. Loving soldiers, he was familiar with them; with him no one dared to be familiar; and still, if he should ask mounted knights to spring over the precipices of the Dnieper, they would do so without stopping to think. From his Wallachian mother he inherited a clearness of complexion like the color of iron at a white glow, from which

heat radiates, and hair black as a raven's wing, which, shaven closely at the sides of his head, was cut square above the brows, covering half his forehead. He wore the Polish costume, and was not over-careful of his dress. Only on great occasions did he wear costly apparel; but then he was all glitter from gold and jewels.

Pan Longin, a few days later, was present at such a solemnity, when the prince gave audience to Rozvan Ursu. The reception of ambassadors always took place in a Heavenly Hall, so called because on its ceiling was depicted the firmament of heaven with the stars, by the pencil of Helm of Dantzig. On that occasion the prince sat under a canopy of velvet and ermine on an elevated seat like a throne, the footstool of which was bound with a gilded circle. Behind the prince stood the priest Mukhovetski, his secretary, the steward prince Voronich, and Pan Boguslav Mashkevich; farther on, pages and twelve body-guards, in Spanish costume, bearing halberts. The depths of the hall were filled with knights in splendid dress and uniforms. Pan Rozvan asked, in the name of the hospodar, that the prince by his influence and the terror of his name should cause the Khan to prohibit the Budjak Tartars from attacking Wallachia, where they caused fearful losses and devastation every year. The prince answered in elegant Latin that the Budjak Tartars were not over-obedient to the Khan himself; still, since he expected to receive an envoy of the Khan during the coming April, he would remind the Khan through him of the injury done the Wallachians.

Pan Yan had already given a report of his embassy and

his journey, together with all he had heard of Hmelnitski and his flight to the Saitch. The prince decided to despatch a few regiments to Kudák, but did not attach great importance to this affair. Since nothing appeared therefore to threaten the peace and power of his domain beyond the Dnieper, festivals and amusements were begun in Lubni by reason of the presence of the envoy Rozvan, also because Bodzynski and Lyassota on the part of the son of the voevoda Pshiyemski had made a formal proposal for the hand of Anna, the elder princess, and had received a favorable answer from the prince and the Princess Griselda.

Volodyovski suffered not a little from this; and when Skshetuski tried to pour consolation into his heart, he answered, -

"It is easy for you to talk; you have but to wish and Anusia Borzobogata will not avoid you. She spoke of you very handsomely all the time. I thought at first that she was rousing the jealousy of Bykhovets; but I see that she was ready to put him on a hook, feeling living sentiment in her heart for you alone."

"Oh! what is Anusia to me? Return to her; I have no objection. But forget Princess Anna, since thinking of her is like wishing to cover the phœnix on its nest with your cap."

"I know she is a phœnix, and therefore I shall surely die of grief for her."

"You'll live and straightway be in love again; but don't fall in love with Princess Barbara, for another son of a voevoda will snatch her away from under your nose."

"Is the heart a servant at command, or can the eyes be stopped from looking at such a wonderful being as Princess Barbara, the sight of whom would be enough to move wild beasts themselves?"

"Well, devil, here is an overcoat for you!" cried Pan Yan. "I see you will console yourself without my help. But I repeat. Go back to Anusia; you will meet with no hindrance from me."

But Anusia was not thinking, in fact, of Volodyovski. Instead of that, her curiosity was roused. She was angry at the indifference of Skshetuski, who on his return from so long an absence did not even look at her. In the evening, when the prince with his chief officers and courtiers came to the drawing-room of the princess to converse, Anusia, looking from behind the shoulder of her mistress (for the princess was tall and Anusia was short), peered with her black eyes into the lieutenant's face, wishing to get at the solution of this riddle. But the eyes of Skshetuski, like his mind, were elsewhere; and when his glance fell on the maiden it was as preoccupied and glassy as if he had never looked upon her, of whom he had once sung, -

> "The Tartar seizes people captive;
> Thou seizest captive hearts!"

"What has happened to him?" asked of herself the petted favorite of the whole castle; and stamping with her little foot, she determined to investigate the matter. She didn't love Skshetuski;

but accustomed to homage, she was unable to endure neglect, and was ready from very spite to fall in love with the insolent fellow.

Once, when running with skeins of thread for the princess, she met Pan Yan coming out of the bedchamber of the prince. She ran against him like a storm, striking him full in the breast; then springing back, she exclaimed, -

"Oh, how you have frightened me! Good-day, sir!"

"Good-day. Am I such a monster as to terrify you?"

She stood with downcast eyes, began to twist the end of her tresses, and standing first on one foot and then on the other, as if confused, she answered with a smile: "Oh, no! not at all, – sure as I love my mother!" She looked quickly at the lieutenant and dropped her eyes a second time. "Are you angry with me?" asked she.

"I? But could Panna Anna care for my anger?"

"Well, to tell the truth, no. Maybe you think that I would fall to crying at once? Pan Bykhovets is more polite."

"If that is true, there is nothing for me but to leave the field to Pan Bykhovets and vanish from the eyes of Panna Anna."

"Do I prevent you?" Having said this, Anusia blocked the way before him. "You have just returned from the Crimea?" asked she.

"From the Crimea."

"And what have you brought back from the Crimea?"

"I've brought back Pan Podbipienta. You have seen him, I think? A very amiable and excellent cavalier."

"It is sure he is more amiable than you. And why has he come?"

"So there might be some one on whom Panna Anna might try her power. But I advise great care, for I know a secret which makes this cavalier invincible, and Panna Anna can do nothing with him."

"Why is he invincible?"

"He cannot marry."

"What do I care for that? Why can he not marry?"

Skshetuski bent to the ear of the young woman, but said very clearly and emphatically: "He has made a vow of celibacy."

"Oh, you stupid!" cried Anusia, quickly; and at the same moment she shot away like a frightened bird.

That evening, however, she looked for the first time carefully at Pan Longin. The guests were numerous, for the prince gave a farewell dinner to Pan Bodzynski. Our Lithuanian, dressed with care in a white satin tunic and a dark blue velvet coat, had a grand appearance, especially since a light curved sabre hung at his side in a gilded sheath, instead of his death-dealing long sword.

The eyes of Anusia shot their darts at Pan Longin, somewhat on purpose to spite Skshetuski. The lieutenant would not have noticed them, however, had it not been for Volodyovski, who, pushing him with his elbow, said, -

"May captivity strike me if Anusia isn't making up to that Lithuanian hop-pole!"

"Tell him so."

"Of course I will. They will make a pair."

"Yes, he might wear her in place of a button in his coat, such is the proportion between them, or instead of a plume in his cap."

Volodyovski went up to the Lithuanian and said: "It is not long since you arrived, but I see you are getting to be a great rogue."

"How is that, brother? how is that?"

"You have already turned the head of the prettiest girl among the ladies in waiting."

"Oh, my dear friend!" said Podbipienta, clasping his hands together, "what do you tell me?"

"Well, look for yourself at Panna Anusia Borzobogata, with whom we have all fallen in love, and see how she fixes you with her eyes. But look out that she doesn't fool you as she has us!"

When he had said this, Volodyovski turned on his heel and walked off, leaving Podbipienta in meditation. He did not indeed dare to look in the direction of Anusia at once. After a time, however, he cast a quick glance at her, but he trembled. From behind the shoulder of Princess Griselda two shining eyes looked on him steadfastly and curiously. "Avaunt, Satan!" thought the Lithuanian; and he hurried off to the other end of the hall, blushing like a schoolboy.

Still, the temptation was great. That imp, looking from behind the shoulder of the princess, possessed such charm, those eyes shone so clearly, that something drew Pan Longin on to glance at them even once more. But that moment he remembered his vow. Zervikaptur stood before him, his ancestor Stoveiko Podbipienta,

the three severed heads, – and terror seized him. He made the sign of the cross, and looked at her no more that evening. But next morning, early, he went to the quarters of Pan Yan.

"Well, Lieutenant, are we going to march soon? What do you hear about the war?"

"You are in great straits. Be patient till you join the regiment."

Pan Podbipienta had not yet been enrolled in the place of the late Zakshevski; he had to wait till the quarter of the year had expired, – till the first of April. But he was in a real hurry; therefore he asked, -

"And has the prince said nothing about this matter?"

"Nothing. The king won't stop thinking of war while he lives, but the Commonwealth does not want it."

"But they say in Chigirin that a Cossack rebellion is threatened."

"It is evident that your vow troubles you greatly. As to a rebellion, you may be sure there will be none till spring; for though the winter is mild, winter is winter. It is now the 15th of February, and frost may come any day. The Cossacks will not take the field till they can intrench themselves behind earthworks; they fight terribly, but in the field they cannot hold their own."

"So one must wait for the Cossacks?"

"Think of this, too, that although you should find your three heads in time of rebellion, it is unknown whether you would be released from your vow; for Crusaders or Turks are one thing, and your own people are another, – children of the same mother,

as it were."

"Oh, great God! what a blow you have planted on my head! Here is desperation! Let the priest Mukhovetski relieve me from this doubt, for otherwise I shall not have a moment's rest."

"He will surely solve your doubt, for he is a learned and pious man; but he will not tell you anything else. Civil war is a war of brothers."

"But if a foreign power should come to the aid of the rebels?"

"Then you would have a chance. Meanwhile I can recommend but one thing to you, – wait, and be quiet."

But Skshetuski was unable to follow this advice himself. His melancholy increased continually. He was annoyed by the festivals at the castle, and by those faces on which some time before he gazed with such pleasure. Bodzynski and Rozvan Ursu departed at last, and after their departure profound quiet set in. Life began to flow on monotonously. The prince was occupied with the review of his enormous estates, and every morning shut himself in with his agents, who were arriving from all Rus and Sandomir, so that even military exercises took place but rarely. The noisy feasts of the officers, at which future wars were discussed, wearied Skshetuski beyond measure; so he used to go out with a gun on his shoulder to Solonitsa, where Jolkefski had inflicted such terrible defeats on Nalivaika, Loboda, and Krempski. The traces of these battles had already disappeared from the memory of men, and the field of conflict; but from time to time the earth cast up from its bosom whitened bones,

and beyond the water was visible the Cossack breastwork from behind which the Zaporojians of Loboda and the volunteers of Nalivaika had made such a desperate defence. But a dense grove had already spread its roots over the breastwork. That was the place where Skshetuski hid himself from the noise of the castle; and instead of shooting at birds he fell into meditation, and before the eyes of his spirit stood the form of the beloved maiden called hither by his memory and his heart. There in the mist, the rustle of the reeds, and the melancholy of those places he found solace in his own yearning.

But later on began abundant rains, the harbinger of spring. Solonitsa became a morass; it was difficult to put one's head from under the roof. The lieutenant was deprived, therefore, even of the comfort which he had found in wandering about alone; and immediately his disquiet began to increase, and justly. He had hoped at first that the princess would come immediately with Helena to Lubni, if she could only succeed in sending Bogun away; but now that hope vanished. The wet weather had destroyed the roads; the steppe for many miles on both sides of the Sula had become an enormous quagmire, which could not be crossed till the warm sun of spring should suck out the superfluous water.

All this time Helena would have to remain under guardianship in which Skshetuski had no trust, in a real den of wolves, among wild, uncouth people, ill disposed to him. They had, it is true, to keep faith for their own sake, and really they had no other

choice; but who could guess what they might invent, what they might venture upon, especially when they were pressed by the terrible Bogun, whom they seemed both to love and fear? It would be easy for Bogun to force them to yield up the girl, for similar deeds were not rare. In this way Loboda, the comrade of the ill-starred Nalivaika, had forced Pani Poplinska to give him her foster-daughter as wife, although she was of good family and hated the Cossack with her whole soul. And if what was said of the immeasurable wealth of Bogun were true, he might remunerate them for the girl and the loss of Rozlogi. And then what? "Then," thought Pan Yan, "they will tell me with a sneer, 'Your lash is lost,' they will vanish into some Lithuanian or Mazovian wilderness, where even the hand of the prince cannot reach them."

Skshetuski shook as if in a fever at the thought, and was impatient as a chained wolf, regretted the word of honor he had given the princess, and knew not what to do. He was a man who was unwilling to let chance pull him on by the beard. There was great energy and enterprise in his nature. He did not wait for what fate would give, he chose to take fate by the shoulder and force it to give him good fortune; hence it was more difficult for him than any other man to sit with folded hands in Lubni. He resolved, therefore, to act. He had a young lad in waiting, Jendzian, from Podlesia, – sixteen years old, but a most cunning rogue, whom no old fox could out-trick, – and he determined to send him to Helena at once to discover everything.

February was at an end; the rains had ceased. March appeared rather favorable, and the roads must have improved a little. Jendzian got ready for the journey, Skshetuski provided him with paper, pens, and a bottle of ink, which he commanded him to guard as the eye in his head, for he remembered that those things were not to be had at Rozlogi. The young fellow was not to tell from whom he came, but to pretend that he was going to Chigirin, to keep a sharp eye on everything, and especially to find out carefully where Bogun was, and what he was doing. Jendzian did not wait to have his instructions repeated; he stuck his cap on the side of his head, cracked his whip, and was off.

Dreary days of waiting set in for Skshetuski. To kill time, he occupied himself in sword exercise with Volodyovski, who was a great master in this art, or hurled javelins at a ring. There happened in Lubni also something which came near costing the lieutenant his life. One day a bear, having broken away from his chain, wounded two stable-boys, frightened the horse of Pan Hlebovski, the commissary, and finally rushed on the lieutenant, who was on his way to the prince at the armory without a sabre, and had only a light stick with a brass knob in his hand. He would have perished undoubtedly, had it not been for Pan Longin, who, seeing from the armory what was passing, rushed for his long sword, and hurried to the rescue. Pan Longin showed himself a worthy descendant of his ancestor Stoveiko in the full sense, for with one blow he swept off the front half of the bear's head, together with his paw, before the eyes of the whole

court. This proof of extraordinary strength was seen from the window by the prince himself, who took Pan Longin afterward to the apartments of the princess, where Anusia Borzobogata so tempted him with her eyes that next morning he had to go to confession, and for three days following he did not show himself in the castle until by earnest prayer he had expelled every temptation.

Ten days had passed, and no sign of Jendzian. Skshetuski had grown so thin from waiting and so wretched-looking that Anusia began to ask, through messengers, what the matter was, and Carboni, physician of the princess, prescribed an herb for melancholy. But he needed another remedy; for he was thinking of his princess day and night, and with each moment he felt more clearly that no trivial feeling had nestled in his heart, but a great love which must be satisfied, or his breast would burst like a weak vessel.

It is easy to imagine, then, the gladness of Pan Yan when one morning about daybreak Jendzian entered his room covered with mud, weary, thin, but joyful, and with good news written on his forehead. The lieutenant tore himself from the bed, rushed to the youth, caught him by the shoulder, and cried, -

"Have you a letter?"

"I have. Here it is."

The lieutenant tore it open and began to read. For a long time he had been in doubt whether in the most favorable event Jendzian would bring a letter, for he was not sure that Helena

knew how to write. Women in the country were uneducated, and Helena was reared among illiterate people. It was evident now that her father had taught her to write, for she had sent a long letter on four pages of paper. The poor girl didn't know how to express herself elegantly or rhetorically, but she wrote straight from the heart, as follows: -

"Indeed I shall never forget you. You will forget me sooner, for I hear that there are deceivers among you. But since you have sent your lad on purpose so many miles, it is evident that I am dear to you as you are to me, for which I thank you with a grateful heart. Do not think that it is not against my feeling of modesty to write thus to you about loving; but it is better to tell the truth, than to lie or dissemble when there is something altogether different in the heart. I have asked Jendzian what you are doing in Lubni, and what are the customs at a great castle; and when he told me about the beauty and comeliness of the young ladies there, I began to cry from sorrow " -

Here the lieutenant stopped reading and asked Jendzian: "What did you tell her, you dunce?"

"Everything good," answered Jendzian.

The lieutenant read on: -

> -"for how could I, ignorant girl, be equal to them? But your servant told me that you wouldn't look at any of them" -

"You answered well," said the lieutenant.

Jendzian didn't know what the question was, for the lieutenant read to himself; but he put on a wise look and coughed

significantly. Skshetuski read on: -

–"and I immediately consoled myself, begging God to keep you for the future in such feeling for me and to bless us both, – Amen. I have also yearned for you as if for my mother; for it is sad for me, orphan in the world, when not near you. God sees that my heart is clean; anything else comes from my want of experience, which you must forgive."

Farther on in the letter, the charming princess wrote that she and her aunt would come to Lubni as soon as the roads were better, and that the old princess herself wanted to hasten the journey, for tidings were coming from Chigirin of Cossack disturbances. She was only waiting for the return of her sons, who had gone to Boguslav to the horse-fair.

"You are a real wizard [wrote Helena] to be able to win my aunt to your side."

Here the lieutenant smiled, for he remembered the means which he was forced to use in winning her aunt. The letter ended with assurances of unbroken and true love such as a future wife owed her husband. And in general a genuine good heart was evident in it. Therefore the lieutenant read the affectionate letter several times from beginning to end, repeating to himself in spirit, "My dear girl, may God forsake me if I ever abandon you!"

Then he began to examine Jendzian on every point.

The cunning lad gave him a detailed account of the whole journey. He was received politely. The old princess made inquiries of him concerning the lieutenant, and learning that he

was a famous knight, a confidant of the prince, and a man of property besides, she was glad.

"She asked me, too," said Jendzian, "if you always keep your word when you make a promise, and I answered, 'My noble lady, if the Wallachian horse on which I have come had been promised me, I should be sure he wouldn't escape me.'"

"You are a rogue," said the lieutenant; "but since you have given such bonds for me, you may keep the horse. You made no pretences, then, – you said that I sent you?"

"Yes, for I saw that I might; and I was still better received, especially by the young lady, who is so wonderful that there isn't another like her in the world. When she knew that I came from you, she didn't know where to seat me; and if it hadn't been a time of fast, I should have been really in heaven. While reading your letter she shed tears of delight."

The lieutenant was silent from joy, too, and after a moment asked again: "But did you hear nothing of that fellow Bogun?"

"I didn't get to ask the old lady or the young princess about him, but I gained the confidence of Chehly, the old Tartar, who, though a pagan, is a faithful servant of the young lady. He said they were all very angry at you, but became reconciled afterward, when they discovered that the reports of Bogun's treasures were fables."

"How did they discover that?"

"Well, you see, this is how it was. They had a dispute with the Sivinskis which they bound themselves to settle by payment.

When the time came, they went to Bogun with, 'Lend us money!' 'I have some Turkish goods,' said he, 'but no money; for what I had I squandered.' When they heard this, they dropped him, and their affection turned to you."

"It must be said that you have found out everything well."

"If I had found out one thing and neglected another, then you might say that you would give me the horse, but not the saddle; and what is the horse without a saddle?"

"Well, well, take the saddle too."

"Thank you most humbly. They sent Bogun off to Pereyasláv immediately. When I found that out, I thought to myself, 'Why shouldn't I push on to Pereyasláv? My master will be satisfied with me, and a uniform will come to me the sooner.'"

"You'll get it next quarter. So you were in Pereyasláv?"

"I was, but didn't find Bogun. Old Colonel Loboda is sick. They say Bogun will succeed him soon. But something strange is going on. Hardly a handful of Cossacks have remained in the regiment; the others, they say, have gone after Bogun, or run away to the Saitch; and this is very important, for some rebellion is on foot. I wanted to know something certain about Bogun, but all they told me was that he had crossed to the Russian bank,[7] 'Well,' thought I, 'if that is true, then our princess is safe from him;' and I returned."

"You did well. Had you any adventures on the road?"

"No, but I want awfully to eat something."

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[7] The right bank of the Dnieper was called Russian; the left, Tartar.

Jendzian went out; and the lieutenant, being alone, began to read Helena's letter again, and to press to his lips those characters that were not so shapely as the hand that had penned them. Confidence entered his heart, and he thought, -

"The road will soon dry, if God gives good weather. The Kurtsevichi, too, knowing that Bogun has nothing, will be sure not to betray me. I will leave Rozlogi to them, and add something of my own to get that dear little star."

He dressed with a bright face, and with a bosom full of happiness went to the chapel to thank God humbly for the good news.

CHAPTER VI

Over the whole Ukraine and beyond the Dnieper strange sounds began to spread like the heralds of a coming tempest; certain wonderful tidings flew from village to village, from farmhouse to farmhouse, – like those plants which the breezes of spring push along the steppes, and which the people call field-rollers. In the towns there were whispers of some great war, though no man knew who was going to make war, nor against whom. Still the tidings were told. The faces of people became unquiet. The tiller of the soil went with his plough to the field unwillingly, though the spring had come early, mild and warm, and long since the larks had been singing over the steppes. Every evening people gathered in crowds in the villages, and standing on the road, talked in undertones of terrible things. Blind men wandering around with lyres and songs were asked for news. Some persons thought they saw in the night-time reflections in the sky, and that a moon redder than usual rose from behind the pine woods. Disaster or the death of the king was predicted. And all this was the more wonderful, since fear found no easy approach to those lands, long accustomed to disturbances, conflicts, and raids. Some exceptionally ominous currents must have been playing in the air, since the alarm had become universal.

It was the more oppressive and stifling, because no one

was able to point out the danger. But among the signs of evil omen, two especially seemed to show that really something was impending. First, an unheard-of multitude of old minstrels appeared in all the villages and towns, and among them were forms strange, and known to no one; these, it was whispered, were counterfeit minstrels. These men, strolling about everywhere, told with an air of mystery that the day of God's judgment and anger was near. Secondly, the men of the lower country began to drink with all their might.

The second sign was the more serious. The Saitch, confined within too narrow limits, was unable to feed all its inhabitants; expeditions were not always successful; besides, the steppes yielded no bread to the Cossacks. In time of peace, therefore, a multitude of Zaporojians scattered themselves yearly over the inhabited districts. The Ukraine, and indeed all Russia, was full of them. Some rose to be land stewards; some sold liquor on the highways; some labored in hamlets and towns, in trade and industry. In every village there was sure to be a cottage on one side, at a distance from the rest, in which a Zaporojian dwelt. Some of them had brought their wives with them, and kept house in these cottages. But the Zaporojian, as a man who usually had passed through every experience, was generally a benefactor to the village in which he lived. There were no better blacksmiths, wheelwrights, tanners, wax-refiners, fishermen, and hunters than they. The Cossack understood everything, did everything; he built a house, he sewed a saddle.

But the Cossacks were not always such quiet inhabitants, for they lived a temporary life. Whoever wished to carry out a decision with armed hand, to make an attack on a neighbor, or to defend himself from an expected attack, had only to raise the cry, and straightway the Cossacks hurried to him like ravens to a ready spoil. The nobility and magnates, involved in endless disputes among themselves, employed the Cossacks. When there was a lack of such undertakings the Cossacks stayed quietly in the villages, working with all diligence, earning their daily bread in the sweat of their brows.

They would continue in this fashion for a year or two, till sudden tidings came of some great expedition, either of an ataman against the Tartars or the Poles, or of Polish noblemen against Wallachia; and that moment the wheelwrights, blacksmiths, tanners, and wax-refiners would desert their peaceful occupations, and begin to drink with all their might in every dram-shop of the Ukraine. After they had drunk away everything, they would drink on credit, – not on what they had, but on what they would have. Future booty must pay for the frolic.

This phenomenon was repeated so regularly that after a while people of experience in the Ukraine used to say; "The dram-shops are bursting with men from below; something is on foot in the Ukraine."

The starostas strengthened the garrisons in the castles at once, looking carefully to everything; the magnates increased their

retinues; the nobility sent their wives and children to the towns.

That spring the Cossacks began to drink as never before, squandering at random all they had earned, not in one district, not in one province, but throughout all Russia, – the length and the breadth of it.

Something was on foot, indeed, though the men from below had no idea of what it was. People had begun to speak of Hmelnitski, of his flight to the Saitch, of the men from Cherkasi, Boguslav, Korsún, and other places who had followed him; but something else was talked of too. For years reports had been current of a great war with the Pagans, – a war desired by the king to give booty to the Cossacks, but opposed by the Poles. This time all reports were blended, and roused in the brains of men uneasiness and the expectation of something uncommon.

This uneasiness penetrated the walls of Lubni also. It was not proper to shut one's eyes to such signs, and Prince Yeremi especially had not that habit. In his domain the disturbance did not really come to an outbreak, fear kept all within bounds; but for some time reports had been coming from the Ukraine, that here and there peasants were beginning to resist the nobles, that they were killing Jews, that they wished to force their own enrolment for war against the Pagans, and that the number of deserters to the Saitch was increasing continually.

The prince sent envoys in various directions, – to Pan Pototski, to Pan Kalinovski, to Loboda in Pereyasláv, – and collected in person the herds from the steppes and the troops from the

outposts. Meantime peaceful news was brought. The Grand Hetman communicated all that he knew concerning Hmelnitski; he did not think, however, that any storm could rise out of the affair. The full hetman wrote that the rabble were accustomed "to bustle in spring like bees," Zatsvilikhovski was the only man who sent a letter imploring the prince to underestimate nothing, for a mighty storm was coming on from the Wilderness. He wrote that Hmelnitski had hurried to the Crimea to ask assistance of the Khan.

"And as friends from the Saitch inform me," wrote he, "the koshevoi is collecting the army, horse and foot, from all the meadows and streams, telling no one why he does it. I think, therefore, that this storm will come on us. If it comes with Tartar aid, then God save all Russian lands from ruin!"

The prince had more confidence in Zatsvilikhovski than in the hetmans, for he knew that no one in all Russia had such knowledge of the Cossacks and their devices as he. He determined, therefore, to concentrate as many troops as possible, and also to get to the bottom of the truth.

One morning he summoned to his presence the lieutenant of the Wallachian regiment, Pan Bykhovets, to whom he said, -

"You will go for me to the Saitch on a mission to the koshevoi, and give him this letter with the seal of my lordship. But that you may know what plan of action to follow, I tell you this letter is a pretext, and the whole meaning of the mission lies in your own wit. You are to see everything that is done there, – what troops

they have assembled, and whether they are assembling more. I enjoin you specially to win some people to your person, and find out for me carefully all about Hmelnitski, – where he is, and if it is true that he has gone to the Crimea to ask aid of the Tartars. Do you understand what I say?"

"As if it had been written on the palm of my hand."

"You will go by Chigirin. Rest but one night on the way. When you arrive, go to Zatsvilikhovski for letters, which you will deliver secretly to his friends in the Saitch. They will tell you all they know. From Chigirin you will go by water to Kudák. Give my respects with this letter to Pan Grodzitski. He will issue orders to convey you over the Cataracts by proper guides. Be fearless in the Saitch, keep your eyes and ears open, and come back if you survive, for the expedition is no easy one."

"Your Highness is the steward of my blood. Shall I take many men?"

"You will take forty attendants. Start to-day; before evening come for further instructions. Your mission is important."

Pan Bykhovets went out rejoicing. In the antechamber he met Skshetuski with some artillery officers.

"Well, what is going on?" asked they.

"I take the road to-day."

"Where, where?"

"To Chigirin, and from there farther on."

"Then come with me," said Pan Yan.

And taking him to his quarters, he began to tease him to

transfer his mission to him.

"As my friend," said he, "ask what you like, – a Turkish horse, an Arab steed, – you shall have one. I'll spare nothing if I can only go, for my soul is rushing out in that direction. If you want money I'll give it, if you will only yield. The trip will bring you no glory; for if war breaks out it will begin here, and you may be killed in the Saitch. I know, too, that Anusia is as dear to you as to others; if you go they will get her away from you."

This last argument went home to the mind of Pan Bykhovets more than any other, but still he resisted. What would the prince say if he should withdraw? Wouldn't he take it ill of him? An appointment like this was such a favor.

Hearing this, Skshetuski rushed off to the prince and directed the page at once to announce him.

The page returned soon with the answer that the prince permitted him to enter.

The lieutenant's heart beat like a hammer, from fear that he should hear a curt "No!" after which he would be obliged to let the matter drop entirely.

"Well, what have you to say?" asked the prince, looking at the lieutenant.

Skshetuski bent down to his feet.

"Mighty prince, I have come to implore you most humbly to intrust me with the expedition to the Saitch. Bykhovets would give it up, perhaps, for he is my friend, and to me it is as important as life. Bykhovets' only fear is that you may be angry with him

for yielding the place."

"As God lives!" said the prince, "I should have sent no one else, but I thought you would not like to go just after returning from a long journey."

"I should rejoice to be sent even every day in that direction."

The prince looked at him very attentively with his black eyes, and after a while inquired: "What have you got there?"

The lieutenant grew confused, like a culprit unable to bear a searching glance.

"I must tell the truth, I see," said he, "since no secret can stand before your reason. Of one thing I am not sure, – your favorable hearing."

Thereupon he began to tell how he had become acquainted with the daughter of Prince Vassily, had fallen in love with her and would like to visit her, and on his return from the Saitch to Lubni to remove and save her from Cossack turmoil and the importunities of Bogun. But he said nothing of the machinations of the old princess, for in this he was bound by his word. He began then to beg the prince so earnestly to give him the mission confided to Bykhovets, that Vishnyevetski said, -

"I should permit you to go on your own account and give you men; but since you have planned everything so cleverly that your personal affection agrees with your office, I must arrange this affair for you."

Then he clapped his hands and commanded the page to call Pan Bykhovets.

The lieutenant kissed the prince's hand with joy. Yeremi took him by the head and commanded him to be quiet. He loved Skshetuski beyond measure as a splendid soldier and officer whom he could trust in all things. Besides, there was between them that bond which is formed between a subordinate reverencing his chief with his whole soul and a chief who feels this clearly. There were not a few courtiers and flatterers who circled around the prince for their own profit; but the eagle eye of Yeremi knew well whom to choose. He knew that Pan Yan was a man without blemish; he valued him, and was grateful to him for his feelings. He rejoiced, too, that his favorite had fallen in love with the daughter of the old servant of the Vishnyevetskis, Vassily Kurtsevich, whose memory was the dearer because of its sadness.

"It was not from ungratefulness to the prince," said he, "that I made no inquiry concerning his daughter. Since the guardians did not visit Lubni, and I received no complaint against them, I supposed they were good people. But as you have put me in mind of the lady, I will care for her as for my own daughter."

Skshetuski, hearing this, could not admire sufficiently the kindness of the prince, who reproached himself, notwithstanding the multitude of his occupations, with inattention to the child of his former soldier and official.

Bykhovets now came in.

"Well," said the prince, "my word is given, and if you wish to go you will go; but I ask you to do this for me: yield your

mission to Skshetuski, – he has his own special and solid reasons for wanting it, – and I will think of another reward for you."

"Oh, your Highness," said Bykhovets, "your favor is great; for while able to command, you ask that which if I refused to give I should be unworthy of your favor."

"Thank your friend," said the prince, turning to Pan Yan, "and prepare for the road."

Skshetuski thanked Bykhovets heartily indeed, and in a few hours he was ready. For some time it had been irksome for him in Lubni, and this expedition accorded with all his wishes. First, he was to see Helena. True, he had to go from her for a long time; but just such an interval was needed to make the roads passable for wheels, after such measureless rains. The princess and Helena could not come earlier to Lubni. Skshetuski therefore must either wait in Lubni or live at Rozlogi, – which would be against his covenant with the princess, and, what was more, rouse the suspicions of Bogun. Helena could be really safe against his attacks only in Lubni; but since she must in every case wait some time yet in Rozlogi, it appeared best to Pan Yan to depart, and on his return take her under the protection of the armed power of the prince. Having settled the matter thus, the lieutenant hastened his journey, – got everything ready, took letters and instructions from the prince, money for expenses from the treasurer, and made a good start over the road before night, having with him Jendzian and forty horsemen from the Cossack regiment.

CHAPTER VII

It was now the second half of March; the grass was growing luxuriantly, the field-roller was blooming, the steppe was stirring with life. In the morning the lieutenant, travelling at the head of his men, rode as if over a sea whose moving wave was the wind-stirred grass. Every place was filled with joy and the voices of spring, – chirruping, whistling, clattering, the shaking of wings, the glad hum of insects; the steppe sounded like a lyre touched by the hand of the Lord. Above the heads of the horsemen floated falcons motionless in the blue ether, like suspended crosses, triangles of wild geese, lines of storks; and on the ground the coursing of flocks run wild. Behold, a herd of steppe horses rush on! They move like a storm, stop before the mounted men in a half-circle suddenly, as if spiked to the earth, their manes spread to the wind, their nostrils dilated, their eyes full of wonder. You would say they are here to trample the unbidden guests. But a moment more they are gone, vanishing as suddenly as they came. Now we have only the sound of the grass and the gleam of the flowers; the clatter is still. Again nothing is heard save the play of birds. The land seems full of joy; yet a kind of sadness is in that joy. It seems crowded, and it is an empty land. Oh, it is wide, and it is roomy! With a horse you cannot surround it; in thought you cannot grasp it, – unless you love the sadness, the desert, and the steppes, and with yearning soul circle above them, linger upon

their gravemounds, hearken to their voices, and give answer.

It was early morning. Great drops glittered on the grass and reeds; the quick movement of the wind dried the ground, on which after the rains broad ponds were spread, like lakes shining in the sun. The retinue of the lieutenant moved on slowly, for it was difficult to hasten when the horses sank to their knees at times in the soft earth; and he gave them only short resting-spells on the grave-mounds, for he was hastening to a greeting and a parting.

The second day, about noon, after he had passed a strip of forest, he saw the windmills of Rozlogi scattered on the hillsides and mounds. His heart beat like a hammer. No one there expected him; no one knew he was coming. What will she say when she sees him? Now he beholds the cottages of the neighbors, nearly hidden, covered in the cherry-orchards; farther on is a straggling village of cottages; and still farther is seen the well-sweep on the square in front of the house. The lieutenant, putting spurs to his horse, galloped swiftly; and after him flew his suite through the village with a clatter and a noise. Here and there a peasant, rushing out of his cottage, made a sign of the cross. Devils! – not devils? Tartars! – not Tartars? The mud spatters from under their hoofs so that you don't know who is hurrying on. Meanwhile they are at the square, and have halted before the closed gate.

"Hallo there! Who lives, open!"

The bustle and pounding, the barking of dogs, called out

the people from the house. They hurried to the gate frightened, thinking it was an attack.

"Who goes?"

"Open!"

"The princes are not at home."

"But open, you son of an infidel! We are from the prince at Lubni."

The servants at last recognized Skshetuski. "Oh, that is you! Right away! right away!"

The gate was thrown open. Then the princess herself appeared before the entrance, and shading her eyes with her hand, looked at the new-comers.

Skshetuski sprang from his horse, and coming up to her said: "Don't you know me?"

"Oh! that is you. Lieutenant. I thought it was a Tartar raid. I salute you and beg you to enter."

"You wonder, no doubt," said Pan Yan, "at seeing me in Rozlogi. Still I have not broken my word, for the prince sends me to Chigirin and farther. He asked me also to stop at Rozlogi and inquire for your health."

"I am thankful to his Highness. Does he think of driving us from Rozlogi soon?"

"He doesn't think of it at all, for he knows of no cause to drive you out; and what I have said will take place. You will remain in Rozlogi; I have bread enough of my own."

Hearing this, the princess grew good-humored at once, and

said: "Be seated, and be as glad as I am to see you."

"Is Princess Helena well? Where is she?"

"I know you. You have not come to see me, my cavalier. She is in good health, she is well; the girl has improved in appearance. But I'll call her to you this minute, and I'll dress a little myself, for I am ashamed to receive guests in this gown."

The princess was wearing a faded dress, with a fur coat outside, and heavy boots.

At this moment Helena, though not called, rushed into the room; for she had heard from the old Tartar, Chehly, who the visitor was. She ran in panting, and red as a cherry, barely able to catch her breath, but her eyes were laughing from happiness and joy. Skshetuski sprang to her hand, and when the princess had withdrawn discreetly, kissed her on the lips, for he was an impulsive man. She did not defend herself vigorously, feeling that weakness had come upon her from an overflow of happiness and joy.

"I did not expect to see you," whispered she, half closing her eyes. "But don't kiss me that way, for it isn't proper."

"Why shouldn't I kiss when honey is not half so sweet? I thought I should wither away without you, till the prince himself sent me here."

"What does the prince know?"

"I told him all, and he was glad when he remembered your father. Oh, you must have given me some herb, my girl, for I cannot see the light of day on account of you."

"Your blindness is a favor from God."

"But do you remember that omen which the falcon gave when she drew our hands together? It was destiny beyond a doubt."

"I remember."

"When at Lubni I used to go from sadness to Solonitsa and see you there just as if present, if I stretched forth my hand you disappeared; but you will not escape me again, for I think that nothing will stand in our way now."

"If anything does, it will not be my will."

"Tell me again that you love me."

Helena dropped her eyes, but answered with dignity and decision: "As nobody in the world."

"If any one should surround me with honor and gold, I should prefer those words of yours; for I feel that you speak the truth, though I do not know why I deserve such favor from you."

"Because you had pity on me, drew me to you, took my part, and spoke words such as I had never heard before."

Helena was silent from emotion, and the lieutenant began again to kiss her hand.

"You will be my ruler, not my wife."

They were silent for a while, but he did not take his eyes from her, wishing to make up for the long time in which he had not seen her. She seemed to him more beautiful than before. In that dim room, in the sunlight broken into rays by the glass window-panes, she looked like those pictures of holy virgins in dusky chapels. At the same time such warmth and life surrounded her,

so many splendid womanly graces and charms were pictured in her face and whole form, that it was possible to lose one's head, fall desperately in love with her, and love forever.

"I shall lose my sight from your beauty," said the lieutenant.

The white teeth of the princess glittered joyously in a smile. "Undoubtedly Anusia Borzobogata is a hundred times better looking than I!"

"She is to you as a pewter plate to the moon."

"But Jendzian told me a different story."

"Jendzian deserves a slap on the mouth. What do I care for her? Let other bees take honey from that flower, and there are plenty of them there."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of old Chehly, who came to greet the lieutenant. He looked on him already as his future master, and he bowed to him at the threshold, giving the salaam in Oriental fashion.

"Well, old Chehly, I take you too with your mistress. You will serve her till you die."

"She won't have long to wait for my death; but while I live I will serve her. God is one!"

"In a month or so, when I return from the Saitch, we will go to Lubni," said the lieutenant, turning to Helena; "and there Mukhovetski is ready with his robes."

Helena was startled. "Then you are going to the Saitch?"

"The prince sends me with letters. But have no fear; the person of an envoy is sacred, even among pagans. I should send you and

the princess immediately to Lubni, but the roads are fearful. Even on horseback it is hard to get along."

"Will you stay long in Rozlogi?"

"I leave this evening for Chigirin. The sooner I go the sooner I shall return. Besides, it is the prince's service; neither my time nor will is at my disposal."

"Will you come to dinner, if you have had enough of billing and cooing?" said the princess, coming in. "Ho! ho! the young woman's cheeks are red; 'tis evident you have not been idle, sir! Well, I'm not surprised at you."

Saying this, she stroked Helena affectionately on the shoulder, and they went to dinner. The princess was in perfectly good humor. She had given up Bogun long ago, and all was arranged now, owing to the liberality of the lieutenant, so that she could look on Rozlogi, "with its pine woods, forests, boundaries, and inhabitants," as belonging to her and her sons, – no small property, indeed.

The lieutenant asked for the princes, – whether they would return soon.

"I expect them every day. They were angry at first with you, but afterward, when they scrutinized your acts, they conceived a great affection for you as their future relative; for in truth it is difficult in these mild times to find a man of such daring."

After dinner the lieutenant and Helena went to the cherry orchard, which came up to the ditch beyond the square. The orchard was covered with early white blossoms as if with snow;

beyond the orchard was a dark oak grove in which a cuckoo was heard.

"That is a happy augury for us," said Skshetuski, "but we must make the inquiry." And turning to the oak grove, he asked: "Good cuckoo, how many years shall I live in marriage with this lady?"

The cuckoo began to call, and counted fifty and more.

"God grant it!"

"The cuckoo always tells the truth," remarked Helena.

"If that's the case, I'll ask another question," said the enamoured lieutenant.

"No, it is not necessary."

In converse and merriment like this the day passed as a dream. In the evening came the moment of tender and long parting, and the lieutenant set out for Chigirin.

CHAPTER VIII

In Chigirin, Skshetuski found the old man Zatsvilikhovski in great excitement and fever. He looked impatiently at the prince's envoy, for tidings more and more terrible kept coming from the Saitch. There was no doubt that Hmelnitski was preparing to demand with armed hand justice for himself and the ancient rights of the Cossacks. Zatsvilikhovski had news that he had been with the Khan in the Crimea to beg Tartar aid, with which he was expected every day in the Saitch. Then there would be a general campaign from the lower country against the Commonwealth, which with Tartar assistance might be destructive. The storm drew nearer and nearer, more definite and more terrible. It was no longer vague undefined alarm that swept over the Ukraine, but clear certainty of slaughter and war. The Grand Hetman, who at first had made light of the whole affair, was pushing forward with his troops to Cherkasi. The advance guard of the royal armies was advancing mainly to prevent desertion; for the Cossacks of the towns, and the mob had begun to flee to the Saitch in masses. The nobility assembled in the towns. It was said that the general militia were to be called out in the southern provinces. Some, not waiting for the call, sent their wives and children to castles, and assembled in person at Cherkasi. The ill-fated Ukraine was divided into two parties, – one of these hastened to the Saitch, the other to the royal camp; one declared for the

existing order of affairs, the other for wild freedom; one desired to keep possession of that which was the fruit of ages of labor, the other desired to deprive these possessors of that property. Both were to imbrue fraternal hands in the blood of each other. The terrible dispute, before it found religious rallying-cries which were completely foreign to the lower country, was breaking out as a social war.

But though black clouds were gathering on the heaven of the Ukraine, though a dark and ominous night was descending from these clouds, though within them it rumbled and roared and thunder-claps rolled from horizon to horizon, people still could not tell to what degree the storm would burst forth. Perhaps even Hmelnitski himself could not, – Hmelnitski, who had just sent letters to Pan Pototski, to the Cossack commissioner, and to the royal standard-bearer, full of accusation and complaints, and at the same time of assurances of loyalty to Vladislav IV. and the Commonwealth. Did he wish to win time, or did he suppose that some agreement might yet end the dispute? On this there was a variety of opinions. There were only two men who did not deceive themselves for a single moment. These men were Zatsvilikhovski and Barabash.

The old colonel had also received a letter from Hmelnitski. The letter was sarcastic, threatening, and full of abuse. Hmelnitski wrote: -

"We shall begin, with the whole Zaporojian army, to beg most fervently and to ask for that charter of rights which you secreted.

And because you secreted it for your own personal profit and advantage, the whole Zaporojian army creates you a colonel over sheep or swine, but not over men. I beg pardon if in any way I failed to please you in my poor house in Chigirin on the feast-day of Saint Nicholas, and that I went off to the Zaporojie without your knowledge or permission."

"Do you see," said Barabash to Zatsvilikhovski and Pan Yan, "how he ridicules me? Yet it was I who taught him war, and was in truth a father to him."

"He says, then, that the whole Zaporojian army will demand their rights," said Zatsvilikhovski. "That is simply a civil war, of all wars the most terrible."

"I see that I must hasten," said Skshetuski. "Give me the letters to those men with whom I am to come in contact."

"You have one to the koshevoi ataman?"

"I have, from the prince himself."

"I will give you a letter to one of the kuren atamans. Barabash has a relative there, – Barabash also. From these you will learn everything. Who knows, though, but it is too late for such an expedition? Does the prince wish to hear what is really to be heard there? The answer is brief: 'Evil!' And he wants to know what to do? Short advice: 'Collect as many troops as possible and join the hetmans.'"

"Despatch a messenger, then, to the prince with the answer and the advice," said Skshetuski. "I must go; for I am on a mission, and I cannot alter the decision of the prince."

"Are you aware that this is a terribly dangerous expedition?" asked Zatsvilikhovski. "Even here the people are so excited that it is difficult for them to keep still. Were it not for the nearness of the army of the crown, the mob would rush upon us. But there you are going into the dragon's mouth."

"Jonah was in the whale's belly, not his mouth, and with God's aid he came out in safety."

"Go, then! I applaud your courage. You can go to Kudák in safety, and there you will see what is to be done further. Grodzitski is an old soldier; he will give you the best of advice. And I will go to the prince without fail. If I have to fight in my old age, I would rather fight under him than any one else. Meanwhile I will get boats for you, and guides who will take you to Kudák."

Skshetuski slipped out, and went straight to his quarters on the square, in the prince's house, to make his final preparations. In spite of the dangers of the journey mentioned by Zatsvilikhovski, the lieutenant thought of it not without a certain satisfaction. He was going to behold the Dnieper in its whole length, almost to the lower country and the Cataracts; and for the warrior of that time it was a sort of enchanted and mysterious land, to which every adventurous spirit was drawn. Many a man had passed his whole life in the Ukraine, and still was unable to say that he had seen the Saitch, – unless he wished to join the Brotherhood, and there were fewer volunteers among the nobility than formerly. The times of Samek Zborovski had passed never to return. The break between the Saitch and the Commonwealth which began

in the time of Nalivaika and Pavlyuk had not lessened, but, on the contrary, had increased continually; and the concourse of people of family, not only Polish, but Russian, differing from the men of the lower country neither in speech nor faith, had greatly decreased. Such persons as the Bulygi Kurtsevichi did not find many imitators. In general, nobles were forced into the Brotherhood at that time either by misfortune or outlawry, – in a word, by offences which were inconvenient for repentance. Therefore a certain mystery, impenetrable as the fogs of the Dnieper, surrounded the predatory republic of the lower country. Concerning it men related wonders, which Pan Yan was curious to see with his own eyes. To tell the truth, he expected to come out of it safely; for an envoy is an envoy, especially from Prince Yeremi.

While meditating in this fashion he gazed through the windows into the square. Meanwhile one hour had followed another, when suddenly it appeared to Pan Yan that he recognized a couple of figures going toward the Bell-ringers' Corner to the wine-cellar of Dopula, the Wallachian. He looked more carefully, and saw Zagloba with Bogun. They went arm in arm, and soon disappeared in the dark doorway over which was the sign denoting a drinking-place and a wine-shop.

The lieutenant was astonished at the presence of Bogun in Chigirin and his friendship with Zagloba.

"Jendzian! are you here?" called he to his attendant.

Jendzian appeared in the doorway of the adjoining room.

"Listen to me, Jendzian! Go to the wine-shop where the sign hangs. You will find a fat nobleman with a hole in his forehead there. Tell him that some one wants to see him quickly. If he asks who it is, don't tell him."

Jendzian hurried off, and in a short time Skshetuski saw him returning in company with Zagloba.

"I welcome you," said Pan Yan, when the noble appeared in the door of the room. "Do you remember me?"

"Do I remember you? May the Tartars melt me into tallow and make candles of me for the mosques if I forget you! Some months ago you opened the door at Dopula's with Chaplinski, which suited my taste exactly, for in the selfsame way I got out of prison once in Stamboul. And what is Pan Povsinoga, with the escutcheon Zervipludry, doing with his innocence and his sword? Don't the sparrows always perch on his head, taking him for a withered tree?"

"Pan Podbipienta is well, and asked to be remembered to you."

"He is a very rich man, but fearfully dull. If he should cut off three heads like his own, it would be only a head and a half, for he would cut off three half-heads. Pshaw! how hot it is, though it is only March yet! The tongue dries up in one's throat."

"I have some excellent triple mead; maybe you would take a glass of it?"

"It is a fool who refuses when a wise man offers. The barber has enjoined me to drink mead to draw melancholy from my

head. Troublesome times for the nobility are approaching, *-dies iræ et calamitatis*. Chaplinski is breathless from fear; he visits Dopula's no longer, for the Cossack elders drink there. I alone set my forehead bravely against danger, and keep company with those colonels, though their dignity smells of tar. Good mead! really very excellent! Where do you get it?"

"I got this in Lubni. Are there many Cossack elders here?"

"Who is not here? Fedor Yakubovich, Old Filon Daidyalo, Danilo Nechai, and their eye in the head, Bogun, who became my friend as soon as I outdrank him and promised to adopt him. Chigirin is filled with the odor of them. They are looking which way to turn, for they do not dare yet to take the side of Hmelnitski openly. But if they do not declare for him, it will be owing to me."

"How is that?"

"While drinking with them I bring them over to the Commonwealth and argue them into loyalty. If the king does not give me a crown estate for this, then believe me there is no justice in the Commonwealth, nor reward for services; and in such a case it would be better to breed chickens than to risk one's head *pro bono publico*."

"It would be better for you to risk your head fighting with them; but it appears to me you are only throwing away your money for nothing in treating them, for in that way you will never win them."

"I throw money away! For whom do you take me? Isn't it enough for me to hobnob with trash, without paying their scores?

I consider it a favor that I allow them to pay mine."

"And that fellow Bogun, what is he doing here?"

"He? He keeps his ears open to hear reports from the Saitch, like the rest. That is why he came here. He is the favorite of all the Cossacks. They are after him like monkeys, for it is certain that the Pereyasláv regiment will follow him, and not Loboda. And who knows, too, whom Krechovski's registered Cossacks will follow? Bogun is a brother to the men of the lower country when it is a question of attacking the Turks or the Tartars; but this time he is calculating very closely, for he confessed to me, in drink, that he was in love with a noblewoman, and intended to marry her. On this account it would not befit him, on the eve of marriage, to be a brother to slaves. He wishes, too, that I should adopt him and give him my arms. That is very excellent triple mead!"

"Take another drink of it."

"I will, I will. They don't sell such mead as that behind tavern-signs."

"You did not ask, perhaps, the name of the lady whom Bogun wants to marry?"

"Well, my dear sir, what do I care about her name? I know only that when I put horns on Bogun, she will be Madame Deer. In my youthful years I was a fellow of no ordinary beauty. Only let me tell you how I carried off the palm of martyrdom in Galáts. You see that hole in my forehead? It is enough for me to say that the eunuchs in the harem of the local pasha made it."

"But you said the bullet of a robber made it."

"Did I? Then I told the truth; for every Turk is a robber, as God is my aid!"

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Zatsvilikhovski.

"Well, my dear lieutenant," said the old man, "the boats are ready, you have trusty men for attendants; you can start, in God's name, this moment, if you like. And here are the letters."

"Then I'll tell my people to be off for the shore at once."

"But where are you going?" asked Zagloba.

"To Kudák."

"It will be hot for you there."

The lieutenant did not hear his prophecy, for he went out of the room into the court, where the Cossacks with horses were almost ready for the road.

"To horse and to the shore!" commanded Pan Yan. "Put the horses on the boats, and wait for me."

Meanwhile the old man said to Zagloba: "I hear that you court the Cossack colonels, and drink with them."

"For the public good, most worthy standard-bearer."

"You have a nimble mind, but inclining rather to disgrace. You wish to bring the Cossacks to your side in their cups, so they may befriend you in case they win."

"Even if that were true, having been a martyr to the Turks, I do not wish to become one to the Cossacks; and there is nothing wonderful in that, for two mushrooms would spoil the best soup.

And as to disgrace, I ask no one to drink it with me, – I drink it alone; and God grant that it taste no worse than this mead. Merit, like oil, must come to the top."

At that moment Skshetuski returned. "The men have started already," said he.

Zatsvilikhovski poured out a measure. "Here is to a pleasant journey!"

"And a return in health!" added Zagloba.

"You will have an easy journey, for the water is tremendous."

"Sit down, gentlemen, and drink the rest. It is not a large vessel."

They sat down and drank.

"You will see a curious country," said Zatsvilikhovski. "Greet Pan Grodzitski in Kudák for me. Ah, that is a soldier! He lives at the end of the world, far from the eyes of the hetman, and he maintains such order that God grant its like might be in the whole Commonwealth. I know Kudák and the Cataracts well. Years ago I used to travel there, and there is gloom on the soul when one thinks of what is past and gone; but now-"

Here the standard-bearer rested his milk-white head on his hand, and fell into deep thought. A moment of silence followed, broken only by the tramp of horses heard at the gate; for the rest of Skshetuski's men were going to the boats at the shore.

"My God!" said Zatsvilikhovski, starting from his meditation; "and there were better times formerly, though in the midst of turmoil. I remember Khotím, twenty-seven years ago, as if

it were to-day! When the hussars under Lyubomirski moved to attack the janissaries, then the Cossacks in the trenches threw up their caps and shouted to Sahaidachny, till the earth trembled, 'Let us die with the Poles!' And what do we see to-day? To-day the lower country, which should be the first bulwark of Christendom, lets Tartars into the boundaries of the Commonwealth, to fall upon them when they are returning with booty. It is still worse; for Hmelnitski allies himself directly with Tartars, with whom he will murder Christians."

"Let us drink by reason of this sorrow!" said Zagloba. "What triple mead this is!"

"God grant me the grave as soon as possible!" said the old man, continuing. "Mutual crimes will be washed out in blood, but not blood of atonement, for here brother will murder brother. Who are in the lower country? Russians. Who in the army of Prince Yeremi? Russians. Who in the retinues of the magnates? Russians. And are there few of them in the king's camp? And I myself, – who am I? Oh, unhappy Ukraine! pagans of the Crimea will put the chain upon thy neck, and thou wilt pull the oar in the galley of the Turk!"

"Grieve not so, worthy standard-bearer," said Pan Yan; "if you do, tears will come to our eyes. A fair sun may shine upon us yet!"

In fact, the sun was going down that very moment, and its last rays fell with a red gleam on the white hair of the old man. In the town the bells began to ring "Ave Maria" and "Praise to God."

They left the house. Skshetuski went to the Polish church,

Zatsvilikhovski to the Russian, and Zagloba to Dopula's at the Bell-ringers' Corner.

It was dark when they met again at the shore by the landing. Skshetuski's men were sitting already in the boats. The ferrymen were still carrying in packages. The cold wind blew from the neighboring point where the river entered the Dnieper, and the night gave no promise of being very pleasant. By the light of the fire burning on the bank, the water of the river looked bloody, and seemed to be running with immeasurable speed somewhere into the unknown gloom.

"Well, happy journey to you!" said the old man, pressing the lieutenant's hand heartily; "but be careful of yourself!"

"I will neglect nothing. God grant us soon to meet!"

"Either in Lubni or the prince's camp."

"Then you will go without fail to the prince?"

Zatsvilikhovski shrugged his shoulders. "What am I to do? If there is war, then war!"

"Be in good health."

"God guard you!"

"Vive, valeque!" said Zagloba. "And if the water bears you all the way to Stamboul, then give my respects to the Sultan. Or rather, let the devil take him! That was very respectable triple mead. Brr! how cold it is!"

"Till we meet again!"

"Till we see each other!"

"May God conduct you!"

The oar creaked and plashed against the water, the boats moved on. The fire burning on the shore began to recede quickly. For a long time Skshetuski saw the gray form of the standard-bearer lighted up by the flame of the fire, and a certain sadness pressed his heart. The water is bearing him on, but far away from well-wishing hearts and from the loved one; from known lands it is bearing him as mercilessly as fate, but into wild places and into darkness.

They sailed through the mouth of the Tasma into the Dnieper. The wind whistled; the oars plashed monotonously and sadly. The oarsmen began to sing.

Skshetuski wrapped himself in a burka, and lay down on the bed which the soldier had fixed for him. He began to think of Helena, – that she was not yet in Lubni, that Bogun was behind, and he departing. Fear, evil presentiments, care, besieged him like ravens. He began to struggle with them, struggled till he was wearied; thoughts tormented him; something wonderful was blended with the whistle of the wind, the plash of the oars, and the songs of the oarsmen, – he fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX

Next morning Pan Yan woke up fresh, in good health, and cheerful. The weather was wonderful. The widely overflowed waters were wrinkled into small ripples by the warm, light breeze. The banks were in a fog, and were merged in the plain of waters in one indistinguishable level.

Jendzian, when he woke, rubbed his eyes and was frightened. He looked around with astonishment, and seeing shore nowhere, cried out, -

"Oh, for God's sake! my master, we must be out on the sea."

"It is the swollen river, not the sea," answered Pan Yan; "you will find the shores when the fog rises."

"I think we shall be travelling before long in the Turkish land."

"We shall travel there if we are ordered, but you see we are not sailing alone."

And in the twinkle of an eye were to be seen many large boats and the narrow Cossack craft, generally called chaiki, with bulrushes fastened around them. Some of these were going down the river, borne on by the swift current; others were being urged laboriously against the stream with oars and sail. They were carrying fish, wax, salt, and dried cherries to towns along the river, or returning from inhabited neighborhoods laden with provisions for Kudák, and goods which found ready sale in the bazaar at the Saitch. From the mouth of the Psel down the banks

of the Dnieper was a perfect desert, on which only here and there wintering-posts of the Cossacks whitened. But the river formed a highway connecting the Saitch with the rest of the world; therefore there was a considerable movement on it, especially when the increase of water made it easy for vessels, and when the Cataracts, with the exception of Nenasytets, were passable for craft going with the current.

The lieutenant looked with curiosity at that life on the river. Meanwhile his boats were speeding on quickly to Kudák. The fog rose, and the shore appeared in clear outline. Over the heads of the travellers flew millions of water-birds, – pelicans, wild geese, storks, ducks, gulls, curlews, and mews. In the reeds at the side of the river was heard such an uproar, such a plashing of water, such a sound of wings, that you would have said there was either a war or a council of birds. Beyond Kremenchug the shores became lower and open.

"Oh, look, my master!" cried Jendzian, suddenly; "the sun is roasting, but snow lies on the fields."

Skshetuski looked, and indeed on both sides of the river, as far as the eye could reach, some kind of a white covering glittered in the rays of the sun.

"Hallo! what is that which looks white over there?" asked he of the pilot.

"Cherry-trees!" answered the old man.

In fact there were forests of dwarf cherry-trees, with which both shores were covered from beyond the mouth of the Psel.

In autumn the sweet and large fruit of these trees furnished food to birds and beasts, as well as to people losing their way in the Wilderness. This fruit was also an article of commerce which was taken in boats to Kieff and beyond. When they went to the shore, to give the oarsmen time to rest, the lieutenant landed with Jendzian, wishing to examine the bushes more closely. The two men were surrounded by such an intoxicating odor that they were scarcely able to breathe. Many branches were lying on the ground. In places an impenetrable thicket was formed. Among the cherry-trees were growing, also luxuriantly, small wild almond-trees covered with rose-colored blossoms, which gave out a still more pungent odor. Myriads of black bees and yellow bees, with many-colored butterflies, were flitting over this variegated sea of blossoms, the end of which could not be seen.

"Oh, this is wonderful, wonderful!" said Jendzian. "And why do not people live here? I see plenty of wild animals too."

Among the cherry-trees gray and white rabbits were running, and countless flocks of large blue-legged quails, some of which Jendzian shot; but to his great distress he learned from the pilot that their flesh was poisonous. On the soft earth tracks of deer and wild goats were to be seen, and from afar came sounds like the grunting of wild boars.

When the travellers had sated their eyes and rested, they pushed on farther. The shores were now high, now low, disclosing views of fine oak forests, fields, mounds, and spacious steppes. The surrounding country seemed so luxuriant that Skshetuski

involuntarily repeated to himself the question of Jendzian: "Why do not people live here?" But for this there was need of some second Yeremi Vishnyevetski to occupy those desert places, bring them to order, and defend them from attacks of Tartars and men from the lower country. At points the river made breaches and bends, flooded ravines, struck its foaming wave against cliffs on the shore, and filled with water dark caverns in the rocks. In such caverns and bends were the hiding-places and retreats of the Cossacks. The mouths of rivers were covered with forests of rushes, reeds, and plants, which were black from the multitude of birds; in a word, a wild region, precipitous, in places sunken, but waste and mysterious, unrolled itself before the eyes of our travellers. Movement on the water became disagreeable; for by reason of the heat swarms of mosquitoes and insects unknown in the dry steppe appeared, – some of them as large as a man's finger, and whose bite caused blood to flow in a stream.

In the evening they arrived at the island of Romanovka, the fires of which were visible from a distance, and there they remained for the night. The fishermen who had hurried up to look at the escort of the lieutenant had their shirts, their faces, and their hands entirely covered with tar to save them from insect bites. These were men of rude habits and wild. In spring they assembled here in crowds to catch and dry fish, which afterward they took to Chigirin, Cherkasi, Pereyasláv, and Kieff. Their occupation was difficult, but profitable, by reason of the multitude of fish that in the summer became a misfortune to that

region; for, dying from lack of water in the bays and so-called "quiet corners," they infected the air with putrefaction.

The lieutenant learned that all the Zaporojians occupied there in fishing had left the island some days before and returned at the call of the koshevoi ataman. Every night, too, from the island were seen fires kindled on the steppe by people hastening to the Saitch. The fishermen knew that an expedition against the Poles was in preparation, and they made no secret of this from the lieutenant. Skshetuski saw that his journey might indeed be too late; perhaps before he could reach the Saitch the Cossack regiments would be moving to the north; but he had been ordered to go, and like a true soldier he did not argue, but resolved to push on, even to the centre of the Zaporojian camp.

Early next morning they kept on their way. They passed the wonderful Tarenski Corner, Sukhaya Gora, and Konski Ostrog, famous for its swamps and myriads of insects, which rendered it unfit for habitation. Everything about them-the wildness of the region, the increased rush of the water-announced the vicinity of the Cataracts. At last the tower of Kudák was outlined on the horizon; the first part of their journey was ended.

The lieutenant, however, did not reach the castle that night; for Pan Grodzitski had established the order that after the change of guard, just before sunset, no one would be permitted to enter the fortress or leave it. Even if the king himself were to arrive after that hour, he would be obliged to pass the night in the village under the walls of the castle.

And this is what the lieutenant did. His lodgings were not very commodious; for the cabins in the village, of which there were about sixty, built of clay, were so small that it was necessary to crawl into some of them on hands and knees. It was not worth while to build any other; for the fortress reduced them to ruins at every Tartar attack, so as not to give the assailants shelter or safe approach to the walls. In that village dwelt "incomers," – that is, wanderers from Poland, Russia, the Crimea, and Wallachia. Almost every man had a faith of his own, but of that no one raised a question. They cultivated no land because of danger from the horde. They lived on fish and grain brought from the Ukraine; they drank spirits distilled from millet, and worked at handicraft for which they were esteemed at Kudák.

The lieutenant was scarcely able to close his eyes that night from the odor of horse-skins, of which straps were made in the village. Next morning at daybreak, as soon as the bell rang and the tattoo was sounded, he gave notice at the fortress that an envoy of the prince had arrived.

Grodzitski, who had the visit of the prince fresh in mind, went out to meet him in person. He was a man fifty years of age, one-eyed like a Cyclops, sullen; for, seated in a desert at the end of the world and not seeing people, he had become wild, and in exercising unlimited power had grown stern and harsh. Besides, his face was pitted with small-pox, and adorned with sabre-cuts and scars from Tartar arrows, like white spots on a tawny skin. But he was a genuine soldier, watchful as a stork; he kept his eye

strained in the direction of Tartars and Cossacks. He drank only water, and slept but seven hours in twenty-four; often he would spring up in the night to see if the guards were watching the walls properly, and for the least carelessness condemned soldiers to death. Though terrible, he was indulgent to the Cossacks, and acquired their respect. When in winter they were short of provisions in the Saitch, he helped them with grain. He was a Russian like those who in their day campaigned in the steppes with Psheslav, Lantskoronski, and Samek Zborovski.

"Then you are going to the Saitch?" asked he of Skshetuski, conducting him first to the castle and treating him hospitably.

"To the Saitch. What news have you from there?"

"War! The koshevoi ataman is concentrating the Cossacks from all the meadows, streams, and islands. Fugitives are coming from the Ukraine, whom I stop when I can. There are thirty thousand men or more in the Saitch at present. When they move on the Ukraine and when the town Cossacks and the crowd join them, there will be a hundred thousand."

"And Hmelnitski?"

"He is looked for every day from the Crimea with the Tartars; he may have come already. To tell the truth, it is not necessary for you to go to the Saitch; in a little while you will see them here, for they will not avoid Kudák, nor leave it behind them."

"But will you defend yourself?"

Grodzitski looked gloomily at the lieutenant and said with a calm, emphatic voice: "I will not defend myself."

"How is that?"

"I have no powder. I sent twenty boats for even a little; none has been sent me. I don't know whether the messengers were intercepted or whether there is none. I only know that so far none has come. I have powder for two weeks, – no longer. If I had powder enough, I should blow Kudák and myself into the air before a Cossack foot should enter. I am commanded to lie here, – I lie; commanded to watch, – I watch; commanded to be defiant, – I am defiant; and if it comes to dying, since my mother gave me birth, I shall know how to die too."

"And can't you make powder yourself?"

"For two months the Cossacks have been unwilling to let me have saltpetre, which must be brought from the Black Sea. No matter! if need be I will die!"

"We can all learn of you old soldiers. And if you were to go for the powder yourself?"

"I will not and cannot leave Kudák; here was life for me, let my death be here. Don't you think, either, that you are going to banquets and lordly receptions, like those with which they welcome envoys in other places, or that the office of envoy will protect you there. They kill their own atamans; and since I have been here I don't remember that any of them has died a natural death. And you will perish also."

Skshetuski was silent.

"I see that your courage is dying out; you would better not go."

"My dear sir," said the lieutenant, angrily, "think of something

more fitted to frighten me, for I have heard what you have told me ten times, and if you counsel me not to go I shall see that in my place you would not go. Consider, therefore, if powder is the only thing you need, and not bravery too, in the defence of Kudák."

Grodzitski, instead of growing angry, looked with clear eyes at the lieutenant.

"You are a biting dog!" muttered he in Russian. "Pardon me. From your answer I see that you are able to uphold the dignity of the prince and the rank of noble. I'll give you a couple of Cossack boats, for with your own you will not be able to pass the Cataracts."

"I wished to ask you for them."

"At Nenasytets you will have them drawn overland; for although the water is deep, it is never possible to pass, – scarcely can some kind of small boat slip through. And when you are on the lower waters guard against surprise, and remember that iron and lead are more eloquent than words. There they respect none but the daring. The boats will be ready in the morning; but I will order a second rudder to be put on each, for one is not enough on the Cataracts."

Grodzitski now conducted the lieutenant from the room, to show him the fortress and its arrangements. It was a model of order and discipline throughout. Night and day guards standing close to one another watched the walls, which Tartar captives were forced to strengthen and repair continually.

"Every year I add one ell to the height of the walls," said Grodzitski, "and they are now so strong that if I had powder enough even a hundred thousand men could do nothing against me; but without ammunition I can't defend myself when superior force appears."

The fortress was really impregnable; for besides the guns it was defended by the precipices of the Dnieper and inaccessible cliffs rising sheer from the water, and did not require a great garrison. Therefore there were not more than six hundred men in the fortress; but they were the very choicest soldiers, armed with muskets. The Dnieper, flowing in that place in a compressed bed, was so narrow that an arrow shot from the walls went far on to the other bank. The guns of the fortress commanded both shores and the whole neighborhood. Besides, about two miles and a half from the fortress was a lofty tower, from which everything was visible for forty miles around, and in which were one hundred soldiers whom Pan Grodzitski visited every day. Whenever they saw people in the neighborhood they gave signal to the fortress immediately, the alarm was rung, and the whole garrison stood under arms at once.

"In truth," said Grodzitski, "there is no week without an alarm; for the Tartars, sometimes several thousands strong, wander around like wolves. We strike them as well as we can with the guns, and many times wild horses are mistaken for Tartars."

"And are you not weary of living in such a wild place?" asked Skshetuski.

"Even if a place were given me in the chambers of the king, I would not take it. I see more of the world from this place than the king does from his windows in Warsaw."

In truth, from the walls an immense stretch of steppes was to be seen, which at that time seemed one sea of green, – to the north the mouth of the Samara; and on the south the whole bank of the Dnieper, rocks, precipices, forests, as far as the foam of the second Cataract, the Sur.

Toward evening they visited the tower again, since Skshetuski, seeing for the first time that fortress in the steppe, was curious about everything. Meanwhile in the village boats were being prepared for him, which, provided with rudders at both ends, could be turned more easily. He was to start early in the morning; yet during the night he did not lie down to sleep at all, but pondered what was to be done in face of the inevitable destruction with which his mission to the terrible Saitch was threatened. Life smiled on him indeed; for he was young and in love, and a future at the side of a loved one was promised him. Still honor and glory were dearer. But he remembered that war was near; that Helena, waiting for him in Rozlogi, might be seized by the most terrible misfortune, – exposed to the violence, not of Bogun alone, but of the wild and unbridled mob. Alarm for her and pain had seized his spirits. The steppes must have become dry already; it was surely possible to go from Rozlogi to Lubni. But he had told Helena and the old princess to wait for him; for he had not expected that the storm would burst so soon, he did

not know the danger in the journey to the Saitch. He walked therefore with quick steps in his room in the fortress, twisted his beard, and wrung his hands. What was he to do? How was he to act? In his mind he saw Rozlogi already in flames, surrounded by a howling mob, more like devils than men. His own steps were answered by a gloomy echo under the vault of the castle; and it seemed to him that an evil power was already approaching Helena. On the walls the quenching of the lights was signalled, and that seemed to him the echo of Bogun's horn. He gnashed his teeth, and grasped after the hilt of his sword. Oh! why did he insist on this expedition, and get it away from Bykhovets?

Jendzian, who was sleeping on the threshold, noticed the change in his master, rose therefore, wiped his eyes, snuffed the torch burning in the iron candlestick, and began to walk around in the room, wishing to arrest the attention of his master.

But the lieutenant, buried completely in his own painful thoughts, kept walking on, rousing with his steps the slumbering echoes.

"Oh, my master!" said Jendzian.

Skshetuski gazed at him with a glassy look. Suddenly he woke up from his revery.

"Jendzian, are you afraid of death?" asked he.

"How death? What are you saying?"

"For who goes to the Saitch does not return."

"Then why do you go?"

"That is my affair; do not meddle with it. But I am sorry for

you; you are a stripling, and though a cunning fellow, cunning cannot save you in the Saitch. Return to Chigirin, and then to Lubni."

Jendzian began to scratch his head.

"My master, I fear death; for whoever would not fear death would not fear God; for it is his will either to keep a man alive or to put him to death. But if you run to death of your own will, then it is your sin as a master, not mine as a servant. I will not leave you; for I am not a serf, but a nobleman; though poor, still I am not without pride."

"I see that you are a good fellow; but I will tell you, if you do not wish to go willingly, you will go by command, since it cannot be otherwise."

"Though you were to kill me, I will not go. Do you think that I am a Judas, to give you up to death?"

Here Jendzian raised his hands to his eyes, and began to sob audibly. Skshetuski saw that he could not reach him in that way, and he did not wish to command him threateningly, for he was sorry for the lad.

"Listen!" said he to him. "You can give me no assistance, and I shall not put my head under the sword voluntarily. You will take letters to Rozlogi, which are of more importance to me than my own life. You will tell the old princess to take the young lady to Lubni at once, without the least delay, otherwise rebellion will catch them; and do you watch to see they go. I give you an important mission, worthy of a friend, not a servant."

"You can send somebody else with the letter, – anybody will go."

"And what trusted person have I here? Have you lost your senses? I repeat to you: Doubly save my life, and still you do not wish to render me such service, while I am living in torment, thinking what may happen, and my skin is sweating from pain."

"Well, as God lives, I see I must go! But I grieve for you; so if you were even to give me that spotted belt, I should take no comfort in it at all."

"You shall have the belt; but do your work well."

"I do not want the belt, if you will only let me go with you."

"To-morrow you will return with the boat which Pan Grodzitski is sending to Chigirin. From there you will go, without delay or rest, straight to Rozlogi. Here is a purse for the road. I will write letters immediately."

Jendzian fell at the feet of the lieutenant, "Oh, my master, shall I never see you again?"

"As God gives, as God gives," said Skshetuski, raising him up. "But show a glad face in Rozlogi. Now go to sleep."

The remainder of the night passed for Skshetuski in writing letters and ardent prayer, after which the angel of rest came to him. Meanwhile the night was growing pale; light whitened the narrow windows from the east; day was coming. Then rosy gleams stole into the room; on the tower and fortress they began to play the morning "tattoo." Shortly after Grodzitski appeared in the room.

"The boats are ready."
"And I am ready," said Skshetuski, calmly.

CHAPTER X

The swift boats bearing the knight and his fortunes shot down the current with the speed of swallows. By reason of high water the Cataracts presented no great danger. They passed Surski and Lokhanny; a lucky wave threw them over the Voronoff bar; the boats grated a little on the Knyaji and Streletski, but they were scratched, not broken. At length they beheld in the distance the foaming and whirling of the terrible Nenasytets. There they were obliged to land and drag the boats along the shore, – a tedious and difficult labor, usually occupying an entire day. Fortunately a great many blocks, apparently left by previous travellers, lay along the whole way; these were placed under the boats to ease them over the ground. In all the region about and on the steppes not a living soul was to be seen, nor a single boat; for none could sail to the Saitch excepting those alone whom Pan Grodzitski permitted to pass Kudák, and Pan Grodzitski cut off the Zaporojie from the rest of the world on purpose. Only the splash of the waves on the cliff of Nenasytets broke the silence.

While the men were dragging the boats, Skshetuski examined this wonder of Nature. An awful sight met his eyes. Through the entire width of the river extended crosswise seven rocky ridges, jutting out above the water, black, rent by waves which broke through them gaps and passages after their fashion. The river pressed with the whole weight of its waters against those ridges,

and was broken on them; then wild and raging, lashed into white foaming pulp, it sought to spring over like an infuriated horse, but, pushed back again before it could sweep through the passage, it seemed to gnaw the rocks with its teeth, making enormous circles in impotent wrath; it leaped up toward the sky, raging like a monster, panting like a wild beast in pain. And then again a roar from it as from a hundred cannon, howls as from whole packs of wolves, wheezing, struggling, and at every ridge the same conflict. Over the abyss were heard screams of birds, as if terrified by the sight. Between the ridges the gloomy shadows of the cliff quivered like spirits of evil.

The men, though accustomed to the place, crossed themselves devoutly while dragging the boats, warning the lieutenant not to approach too near the shore; for there were traditions that whoever should gaze too long on Nenasytets would at last see something at which his mind would be disturbed. They asserted, also, that at times there rose from the whirlpool long black hands which caught the unwary who approached too near, and then terrible laughter was heard through the precipices. The Zaporojians did not dare to drag boats along in the night-time.

No man could be received into the Brotherhood of the Saitch who had not crossed the Cataracts alone in a boat; but an exception was made of Nenasytets, since its rocks were never under water. Of Bogun alone blind minstrels sang as if he had stolen through Nenasytets; still belief was not given to the song.

The transfer of the boats occupied nearly all the day, and the

sun had begun to set when the lieutenant resumed his place in the boat. But to make up for this the succeeding Cataracts were crossed with ease, for the rocks were covered entirely, and after that they sailed out into the quiet waters of the lower country.

Along the way Skshetuski saw on the field of Kuchkasi the enormous mound of white stone raised at command of Prince Yeremi as a memorial of his visit, and of which Pan Boguslav Mashkevich had spoken in Lubni. From there it was not far to the Saitch. But the lieutenant did not wish to enter the Chertomelik labyrinth in the dark; he determined therefore to pass the night at Hortitsa.

He wished to meet some Zaporojians and announce himself, so that it should be known that an envoy and no one else was coming. Hortitsa, however, appeared to be empty; which surprised the lieutenant not a little, for he had learned from Grodzitski that a Cossack garrison was always stationed there against Tartar attacks. He went himself with some of the men a considerable distance from the shore to reconnoitre; but he could not go over the whole island, for it was more than five miles long, and the night was coming down dark and not very clear. He returned then to the boats, which meanwhile had been dragged up on the sand, and a fire had been made as protection against mosquitoes.

The greater part of the night passed quietly. The Cossacks and the guides slept by the fire. Only the guards were awake, and the lieutenant, who had been tormented by a terrible sleeplessness

since he left Kudák. He felt also that fever was wearing him. At times he fancied he heard steps approaching from the interior of the island, then again certain strange sounds like the distant bleating of goats. But he thought that his hearing deceived him. Suddenly, when it was near daybreak, a dark figure stood before him. It was a servant from the guard.

"People are coming!" said he, hastily.

"Who are they?"

"Undoubtedly Zaporojians. There are forty of them."

"Very well. That is not a great number. Rouse the men! Stir the fire!"

The Cossacks sprang to their feet at once. The replenished fire blazed high, and lighted the boats and the handful of soldiers under the lieutenant. The guards ran up also to the circle.

Meanwhile the irregular steps of a crowd became distinctly audible. The steps stopped at a certain distance. Immediately some voice inquired in threatening accents, -

"Who is on shore?"

"And who are you?" answered the sergeant.

"Answer, son of the enemy! if not, we will inquire with a musket."

"His Highness, the envoy of Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski, going to the koshevoi ataman," said the sergeant, with emphasis.

The voices in the crowd were silent; evidently there was a short consultation.

"But come here yourself," cried the sergeant; "don't be afraid!

People do not fall upon envoys, and envoys do not attack."

Steps were heard again, and after a while a number of figures came out of the shadow. By the swarthy complexion, low stature, and skin coats with wool outside, the lieutenant knew from the first glance that most of them were Tartars; there were only a few Cossacks among them. The idea flashed like lightning through Skshetuski's brain that if the Tartars were in Hortitsa Hmelnitski had returned from the Crimea.

In front of the crowd stood an old Zaporojian of gigantic size, with a wild and savage face. Approaching the fire, he asked, -

"Who is the envoy here?" A strong smell of spirits came from him; the Zaporojian was evidently drunk. "Who is envoy here?" repeated he.

"I am," said Skshetuski, haughtily.

"Thou!"

"Am I a brother to thee that thou sayest 'Thou' to me?"

"Learn politeness, you ruffian!" interrupted the sergeant. "You must say, 'Serene great mighty lord envoy.'"

"Destruction to you, devils' sons! May the death of Serpyagoff strike you, serene great mighty sons! And what business have you with the ataman?"

"It is not thy affair! Know only that thy life depends upon my reaching the ataman as quickly as possible."

At that moment another Zaporojian came out from the crowd.

"We are here at the command of the ataman," said he, "on guard so that no one from the Poles may approach; and if any

man approaches, we are to bind him and deliver him bound, and we will do that."

"Whoever goes voluntarily, you will not bind."

"I will, for such is the order."

"Do you know, clown, what the person of an envoy means? Do you know whom I represent?"

Then the old giant interrupted: "We will lead in the envoy, but by the beard, – in this fashion!"

Saying this, he reached his hand to the lieutenant's beard. But that moment he groaned, and as if struck by lightning dropped to the earth. The lieutenant had shivered his head with a battle-hammer.

"Slash! slash!" howled enraged voices from the crowd.

The Cossacks of the prince hurried to the rescue of their leader; muskets roared. "Slash! slash!" was mingled with the clash of steel. A regular battle began. The fire, trampled in the disturbance, went out, and darkness surrounded the combatants. Soon both sides had grappled each other so closely that there was no room for blows and knives; fists and teeth took the place of sabres.

All at once, in the interior of the island, were heard numerous fresh shouts and cries. Aid was coming to the attacking party. Another moment and they would have come too late, for the disciplined Cossacks were getting the upper hand of the crowd.

"To the boats!" cried the lieutenant, in a thundering voice.

The escort executed the command in a twinkle. Unfortunately

the boats had been dragged too far on the sand, and could not be pushed at once into the water. That moment the enemy sprang furiously toward the shore.

"Fire!" commanded Pan Yan.

A discharge of musketry restrained the assailants, who became confused, crowded together, and retreated in disorder, leaving a number of bodies stretched upon the sand. Some of these bodies squirmed convulsively, like fish snatched from the water and thrown on shore.

The boatmen, assisted by a number of the Cossacks, planting their oars in the ground, pushed with all their might to get the boats into the water; but in vain.

The enemy began their attack from a distance. The splashing of balls on the water was mingled with the whistling of arrows and the groans of the wounded. The Tartars, shouting "Allah!" with increased shrillness, urged one another on. The Cossack cries: "Cut! cut!" answered them; and the calm voice of Skshetuski, repeating faster and faster the command, "Fire!"

The dawn was beginning to shine with pale light on the struggle. From the land side was to be seen a crowd of Cossacks and Tartars, some with their muskets held ready to aim, others stooping in the rear and drawing their bowstrings; from the side of the water two boats smoking and flashing with the continual discharges of musketry. Between them lay bodies stretched quietly on the sand.

In one of these boats stood Pan Yan, taller than the others,

haughty, calm, with the lieutenant's staff in his hand and with uncovered head, – for a Tartar arrow had swept away his cap. The sergeant approached him and whispered, -

"We cannot hold out; the crowd is too great!"

But the lieutenant's only thought was to seal his mission with his blood, to prevent the disgrace of his office, and to perish not without glory. Therefore, when the Cossacks made a sort of breastwork for themselves of the provision bags, from behind which they struck the enemy, he remained visible and exposed to attack.

"Good!" said he; "we will die to the last man."

"We will die, father!" cried the Cossacks.

"Fire!"

Again the boats smoked. From the interior of the island new crowds came, armed with pikes and scythes. The assailants separated into two parties. One party kept up the fire; the other, composed of more than two hundred Cossacks and Tartars, only waited the proper moment for a hand-to-hand encounter. At the same time from the reeds of the island came out four boats, which were to attack the lieutenant from the rear and from both sides.

It was clear daylight now. The smoke stretched out in long streaks in the quiet air, and covered the scene of conflict.

The lieutenant commanded his twenty Cossacks to turn to the attacking boats, which, pushed with oars, moved on swiftly as birds over the quiet water of the river. The fire directed against

the Tartars and Cossacks approaching from the interior of the island, was notably weakened on that account. They seemed, too, to expect this.

The sergeant approached the lieutenant again.

"The Tartars are taking their daggers between their teeth; they will rush on us this minute."

In fact, almost three hundred of the horde, with sabres in hand and knives in their teeth, prepared for the attack. They were accompanied by some tens of Zaporojians armed with scythes.

The attack was to begin from every direction, for the assailing boats were within gunshot; their sides were already covered with smoke.

Bullets began to fall like hail on the lieutenant's men. Both boats were filled with groans. In a few moments half of the Cossacks were down; the remainder still defended themselves desperately. Their faces were black, their hands wearied, their sight dim, their eyes full of blood; their gun-barrels began to burn their hands. Most of them were wounded.

At that moment a terrible cry and howl rent the air. The Tartars rushed to the attack.

The smoke, pushed by the movement of the mass of bodies, separated suddenly and left exposed to the eye the two boats of the lieutenant covered with a dark crowd of Tartars, like two carcasses of horses torn by a pack of wolves. Some Cossacks resisted yet; and at the mast stood Pan Yan, with bleeding face and an arrow sunk to the shaft in his left shoulder, but defending

himself furiously. His form was like that of a giant in the crowd surrounding him. His sabre glittered like lightning; groans and howls responded to his blows. The sergeant, with another Cossack, guarded him on both sides; and the crowd swayed back at times in terror before those three, but, urged from behind, pushed on, and died under the blows of the sabre.

"Take them alive to the ataman!" was called out in the crowd. "Surrender!"

But Skshetuski was surrendering only to God; for he grew pale in a moment, tottered, and fell to the bottom of the boat.

"Farewell, father!" cried the sergeant, in despair.

But in a moment he fell also. The moving mass of assailants covered the boats completely.

CHAPTER XI

At the house of the inspector of weights and measures, in the outskirts of Hassan Pasha, at the Saitch, sat two Zaporojians at a table, fortifying themselves with spirits distilled from millet, which they dipped unceasingly from a wooden tub that stood in the middle of the table. One of them, already old and quite decrepit, was Philip Zakhar. He was the inspector. The other, Anton Tatarchuk, ataman of the Chigirin kuren, was a man about forty years old, tall, with a wild expression of face and oblique Tartar eyes. Both spoke in a low voice, as if fearing that some one might overhear them.

"But it is to-day?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, almost immediately," answered Tatarchuk. "They are waiting for the koshevoi and Tugai Bey, who went with Hmelnitski himself to Bazaluk, where the horde is quartered. The Brotherhood is already assembled on the square, and the kuren atamans will meet in council before evening. Before night all will be known."

"It may have an evil end," muttered old Philip Zakhar.

"Listen, inspector! But did you see that there was a letter to me also?"

"Of course I did, for I carried the letters myself to the koshevoi, and I know how to read. Three letters were found on the Pole, – one to the koshevoi himself, one to you, the third to

young Barabash. Every one in the Saitch knows of this already."

"And who wrote? Don't you know?"

"The prince wrote to the koshevoi, for his seal was on the letter; who wrote to you is unknown."

"God guard us!"

"If they don't call you a friend of the Poles openly, nothing will come of it."

"God guard us!" repeated Tatarchuk.

"It is evident that you have something on your mind."

"Pshaw! I have nothing on my mind."

"The koshevoi, too, may destroy all the letters, for his own head is concerned. There was a letter to him as well as to you."

"He may."

"But if you have done anything, then-" here the old inspector lowered his voice still more-"go away!"

"But how and where?" asked Tatarchuk, uneasily. "The koshevoi has placed guards on all the islands, so that no one may escape to the Poles and let them know what is going on. The Tartars are on guard at Bazaluk. A fish couldn't squeeze through, and a bird couldn't fly over."

"Then hide in the Saitch, wherever you can."

"They will find me, – unless you hide me among the barrels in the bazaar? You are my relative."

"I wouldn't hide my own brother. If you are afraid of death, then drink; you won't feel it when you are drunk."

"Maybe there is nothing in the letters."

"Maybe."

"Here is misfortune, misfortune!" said Tatarchuk. "I don't feel that I have done anything. I am a good fellow, an enemy to the Poles. But though there is nothing in the letter, the devil knows what the Pole may say at the council. He may ruin me."

"He is a severe man; he won't say anything."

"Have you seen him to-day?"

"Yes; I rubbed his wounds with tar, I poured spirits and ashes into his throat. He will be all right. He is an angry fellow! They say that at Hortitsa he slaughtered the Tartars like swine, before they captured him. Set your mind at rest about the Pole."

The sullen sound of the kettledrums which were beaten on the Koshevoi's Square interrupted further conversation. Tatarchuk, hearing the sound, shuddered and sprang to his feet. Excessive fear was expressed by his face and movements.

"They are beating the summons to council," said he, catching his breath. "God save us! And you, Philip, don't speak of what we have been saying here. God save us!"

Having said this, Tatarchuk, seizing the tub with the liquor, brought it to his mouth with both hands, and drank, – drank as though he wished to drink himself to death.

"Let us go!" said the inspector.

The sound of the drums came clearer and clearer.

They went out. The field of Hassan Pasha was separated from the square by a rampart surrounding the encampment proper, and by a gate with lofty towers on which were seen the muzzles

of cannon fixed there. In the middle of the field stood the house of the inspector of weights and measures, and the cabins of the shop atamans, and around a rather large space were shops in which goods were stored. These shops were in general wretched structures made of oak planks, which Hortitsa furnished in abundance, fastened together with twigs and reeds. The cabins, not excepting that of the inspector, were mere huts, for only the roofs were raised above the ground. The roofs were black and smoked; for when there was fire in the cabin the smoke found exit, not only through the smoke-hole, but through every cranny in the roof, and one might suppose that it was not a cabin at all, but a pile of branches and reeds covering a tar-pit. No daylight entered these cabins; therefore a fire of pitch pine and oak chips was kept up. The shops, a few dozen in number, were divided into camp-shops which belonged to individual camps, and those of strangers in which during time of peace Tartars and Wallachians traded, – the first in skins, Eastern fabrics, arms, and every kind of booty; the second, chiefly in wine. But the shops for strangers were rarely occupied, since in that wild nest trade was changed most frequently to robbery, from which neither the inspectors nor the shop atamans could restrain the crowds.

Among the shops stood also thirty-eight camp-drinking shops; and before them always lay, on the sweepings, shavings, oak-sticks, and heaps of horse-manure, Zaporojians, half dead from drinking, – some sunk in a stony sleep; others with foam in their mouths, in convulsions or delirium-tremens; others half

drunk, howling Cossack songs, spitting, striking, kissing, cursing Cossack fate or weeping over Cossack sorrow, walking upon the heads and breasts of those lying around. Only during expeditions against the Tartars or the upper country was sobriety enforced, and at such times those who took part in an expedition were punished with death for drunkenness. But in ordinary times, and especially in the bazaar, all were drunk, – the inspector, the camp ataman, the buyers, and the sellers. The sour smell of unrectified spirits, mixed with the odor of tar, fish, smoke, and horse-hides, filled the air of the whole place, which in general, by the variety of its shops, reminded one of some little Turkish or Tartar town. Everything was for sale that at any time had been seized as plunder in the Crimea, Wallachia, or on the shores of Anatolia, – bright fabrics of the East, satins, brocades, velvets, cotton cloths, ticking, linen, iron and brass guns, skins, furs, dried fish, cherries, Turkish sweetmeats, church vessels, brass crescents taken from minarets, gilded crosses torn from churches, powder and sharp weapons, spear-staffs, and saddles. In that mixture of objects and colors moved about people dressed in remnants of the most varied garments, in the summer half-naked, always half-wild, discolored with smoke, black, rolled in mud, covered with wounds, bleeding from the bites of gigantic gnats which hovered in myriads over Chertomelik, and eternally drunk, as has been stated above.

At that moment the whole of Hassan Pasha was more crowded with people than usual; the shops and drinking-places were

closed, and all were hastening to the Square of the Saitch, on which the council was to be held. Philip Zakhar and Anton Tatarchuk went with the others; but Tatarchuk loitered, and allowed the crowd to precede him. Disquiet grew more and more evident on his face. Meanwhile they crossed the bridge over the fosse, passed the gate, and found themselves on the broad fortified square, surrounded by thirty-eight large wooden structures. These were the kurens, or rather the buildings of the kurens, – a kind of military barracks in which the Cossacks lived. These kurens were of one structure and measure, and differed in nothing unless in the names, borrowed from the various towns of the Ukraine from which the regiments also took their names. In one corner of the square stood the council-house, in which the atamans used to sit under the presidency of the koshevoi. The crowd, or the so-called "Brotherhood," deliberated under the open sky, sending deputations every little while, and sometimes bursting in by force to the council-house and terrorizing those within.

The throng was already enormous on the square, for the ataman had recently assembled at the Saitch all the warriors scattered over the islands, streams, and meadows; therefore the Brotherhood was more numerous than on ordinary occasions. Since the sun was near its setting, a number of tar-barrels had been ignited already; and here and there were kegs of spirits which every kuren had set out for itself, and which added no small energy to the deliberations. Order between the kurens was

maintained by the essauls, armed with heavy sticks to restrain the councillors, and with pistols to defend their own lives, which were frequently in danger.

Philip Zakhar and Tatarchuk went straight to the council-house; for one as inspector, and the other as kuren ataman, had a right to a seat among the elders. In the council-room there was but one small table, before which sat the army secretary. The atamans and the koshevoi had seats on skins by the walls; but at that hour their places were not yet occupied. The koshevoi walked with great strides through the room; the kuren atamans, gathering in small groups, conversed in low tones, interrupted from time to time by more audible oaths. Tatarchuk, noticing that his acquaintances and even friends pretended not to see him, at once approached young Barabash, who was more or less in a position similar to his own. Others looked at them with a scowl, to which young Barabash paid no attention, not understanding well the reason. He was a man of great beauty and extraordinary strength, thanks to which he had the rank of kuren ataman. He was notorious throughout the whole Saitch for his stupidity, which had gained him the nickname of "Dunce Ataman" and the privilege of being laughed at by the elders for every word he uttered.

"Wait awhile; maybe we shall go in the water with a stone around the neck," whispered Tatarchuk to him.

"Why is that?" asked Barabash.

"Don't you know about the letters?"

"The plague take his mother! Have I written any letters?"

"See how they frown at us!"

"If I give it to one of them in the forehead, he won't look that way, for his eyes will jump out."

Just then shouts from the outside announced that something had happened. The doors of the council-house opened wide, and in came Hmelnitski with Tugai Bey. They were the men greeted so joyfully. A few months before Tugai Bey, as the most violent of the Tartars and the terror of the men from below, was the object of extreme hatred in the Saitch. Now the Brotherhood hurled their caps in the air at the sight of him, as a good friend of Hmelnitski and the Zaporojians.

Tugai Bey entered first, and then Hmelnitski, with the baton in his hand as hetman of the Zaporojian armies. He had held that office since his return from the Crimea with reinforcements from the Khan. The crowd at that time raised him in their hands, and bursting open the army treasury, brought him the baton, the standard, and the seal which were generally borne before the hetman. He had changed, too, not a little. It was evident that he bore within himself the terrible power of the whole Zaporojie. This was not Hmelnitski the wronged, fleeing to the steppe through the Wilderness, but Hmelnitski the hetman, the spirit of blood, the giant, the avenger of his own wrongs on millions of people.

Still he did not break the chains; he only imposed new and heavier ones. This was evident from his relations with Tugai Bey.

This hetman, in the heart of the Zaporojie, took a place second to the Tartar, and endured with submission Tartar pride and treatment contemptuous beyond expression. It was the attitude of a vassal before his lord. But it had to be so. Hmelnitski owed all his credit with the Cossacks to the Tartars and the favor of the Khan, whose representative was the wild and furious Tugai Bey. But Hmelnitski knew how to reconcile with submission the pride which was bursting his own bosom, as well as to unite courage with cunning; for he was a lion and a fox, an eagle and a serpent. This was the first time since the origin of the Cossacks that the Tartar had acted as master in the centre of the Saitch; but such were the times that had come. The Brotherhood hurled their caps in the air at sight of the Pagan. Such were the times that had been accepted.

The deliberations began. Tugai Bey sat down in the middle of the room on a large bundle of skins, and putting his legs under him, began to crack dry sunflower-seeds and spit out the husks in front of himself. On his right side sat Hmelnitski, with the baton; on his left the koshevoi; but the atamans and the deputation from the Brotherhood sat farther away near the walls. Conversation had ceased; only from the crowd outside, debating under the open sky, came a murmur and dull sound like the noise of waves. Hmelnitski began to speak: -

"Gentlemen, with the favor, attention, and aid of the serene Tsar[8] of the Crimea, the lord of many peoples and relative

[8] Hmelnitski is made to apply the title Tsar to the Khan, either to give him more

of the heavenly hosts; with the permission of his Majesty the gracious King Vladislav, our lord, and the hearty support of the brave Zaporojian armies, – trusting in our innocence and the justice of God, we are going to avenge the terrible and savage deeds of injustice which, while we had strength, we endured like Christians, at the hands of the faithless Poles, from commissioners, starostas, crown agents, from all the nobility, and from the Jews. Over these deeds of injustice you, gentlemen, and the whole Zaporojian army have shed many tears, and you have given me this baton that I might find the speedy vindication of our innocence and that of all our people. Esteeming this appointment as a great favor from you, my well-wishers, I went to ask of the serene Tsar that aid which he has given. But being ready and willing to move, I was grieved not a little when I heard that there could be traitors in the midst of us, entering into communication with the faithless Poles, and informing them of our work. If this be true, then they are to be punished according to your will and discretion. We ask you, therefore, to listen to the letters brought from our enemy. Prince Vishnyevetski, by an envoy who is not an envoy but a spy, who wants to note our preparations and the good-will of Tugai Bey, our friend, so as to report them to the Poles. And you are to decide whether he is to be punished as well as those to whom he brought letters, and of whom the koshevoi, as a true friend of me, of Tugai Bey, and of the whole army, gave prompt notice."

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importance in the eyes of the Cossacks or because Tugai Bey was present.

Hmelnitski stopped. The tumult outside the windows increased every moment. Then the army secretary began to read, first, the letter of the prince to the koshevoi ataman, beginning with these words: "We, by the grace of God, prince and lord in Lubni, Khorol, Pryluki, Gadyatch, etc., voevoda in Russia, etc., starosta, etc." The letter was purely official. The prince, having heard that forces were called in from the meadows, asked the ataman if that were true, and summoned him at once to desist from such action for the sake of peace in Christian lands; and in case Hmelnitski disturbed the Saitch, to deliver him up to the commissioners on their demand. The second letter was from Pan Grodzitski, also to the chief ataman; the third and fourth from Zatsvilikhovski and the old colonel of Cherkasi to Tatarchuk and Barabash. In all these there was nothing that could bring the persons to whom they were addressed into suspicion. Zatsvilikhovski merely begged Tatarchuk to take the bearer of his letter in care, and to make everything he might want easy for him.

Tatarchuk breathed more freely.

"What do you say, gentlemen, of these letters?" inquired Hmelnitski.

The Cossacks were silent. All their councils began thus, till liquor warmed up their heads, since no one of the atamans wished to raise his voice first. Being rude and cunning people, they did this principally from a fear of being laughed at for folly, which might subject the author of it to ridicule or give him a sarcastic

nickname for the rest of his life; for such was the condition in the Saitch, where amidst the greatest rudeness the sense of the ridiculous and the dread of sarcasm were wonderfully developed.

The Cossacks remained silent. Hmelnitski raised his voice again.

"The koshevoi ataman is our brother and sincere friend. I believe in the koshevoi as I do in my own soul. And if any man were to speak otherwise, I should consider him a traitor. The koshevoi is our old friend and a soldier."

Having said this, he rose to his feet and kissed the koshevoi.

"Gentlemen," said the koshevoi, in answer, "I bring the forces together, and let the hetman lead them. As to the envoy, since they sent him to me, he is mine; and I make you a present of him."

"You, gentlemen of the delegation, salute the koshevoi," said Hmelnitski, "for he is a just man, and go to inform the Brotherhood that if there is a traitor, he is not the man; he first stationed a guard, he gave the order to seize traitors escaping to the Poles. Say, gentlemen, that the koshevoi is not the traitor, that he is the best of us all."

The deputies bowed to their girdles before Tugai Bey, who chewed his sunflower-seeds the whole time with the greatest indifference; then they bowed to Hmelnitski and the koshevoi, and went out of the room.

After a while joyful shouts outside the windows announced that the deputies had accomplished their task.

"Long life to our koshevoi! long life to our koshevoi!" shouted hoarse voices, with such power that the walls of the building seemed to tremble to their foundations.

At the same time was heard the roar of guns and muskets. The deputies returned and took their seats again in the corner of the room.

"Gentlemen," said Hmelnitski, after quiet had come in some degree outside the windows, "you have decided wisely that the koshevoi is a just man. But if the koshevoi is not a traitor, who is the traitor? Who has friends among the Poles, with whom do they come to an understanding, to whom do they write letters, to whom do they confide the person of an envoy? Who is the traitor?"

While saying this, Hmelnitski raised his voice more and more, and directed his ominous looks toward Tatarchuk and young Barabash, as if he wished to point them out expressly.

A murmur rose in the room; a number of voices began to cry, "Barabash and Tatarchuk!" Some of the kuren atamans stood up in their places, and among the deputies was heard the cry, "To destruction!"

Tatarchuk grew pale, and young Barabash began to look with astonished eyes at those present. His slow mind struggled for a time to discover what was laid to his charge; at length he said, -

"The dog won't eat meat!"

Then he burst out into idiotic laughter, and after him others. And all at once the majority of the kuren atamans began to laugh

wildly, not knowing themselves why. From outside the windows came shouts, louder and louder; it was evident that liquor had begun to heat their brains. The sound of the human wave rose higher and higher.

But Anton Tatarchuk rose to his feet, and turning to Hmelnitski, began to speak: -

"What have I done to you, most worthy hetman of the Zaporojie, that you insist on my death? In what am I guilty before you? The commissioner Zatsvilikhovski has written a letter to me, – what of that? So has the prince written to the koshevoi. Have I received a letter? No! And if I had received it, what should I do with it? I should go to the secretary and ask to have it read; for I do not know how to write or to read. And you would always know what was in the letter. The Pole I don't know by sight. Am I a traitor, then? Oh, brother Zaporojians! Tatarchuk went with you to the Crimea; when you went to Wallachia, he went to Wallachia; when you went to Smolensk, he went to Smolensk, – he fought with you, brave men, lived with you, and shed his blood with you, was dying of hunger with you; so he is not a Pole, not a traitor, but a Cossack, – your own brother; and if the hetman insists on his death, let the hetman say why he insists. What have I done to him? In what have I shown my falsehood? And do you, brothers, be merciful, and judge justly."

"Tatarchuk is a brave fellow! Tatarehuk is a good man!" answered several voices.

"You, Tatarchuk, are a brave fellow," said Hmelnitski; "and I

do not persecute you, for you are my friend, and not a Pole, – a Cossack, our brother. If a Pole were the traitor, then I should not be grieved, should not weep; but if a brave fellow is the traitor, my friend the traitor, then my heart is heavy, and I am grieved. Since you were in the Crimea and in Wallachia and at Smolensk, then the offence is the greater; because now you were ready to inform the Poles of the readiness and wishes of the Zaporojian army. The Poles wrote to you to make it easy for their man to get what he wanted; and tell me, worthy atamans, what could a Pole want? Is it not my death and the death of my good friend Tugai Bey? Is it not the destruction of the Zaporojian army? Therefore you, Tatarchuk, are guilty; and you cannot show anything else. And to Barabash his uncle the colonel of Cherkasi wrote, – his uncle, a friend to Chaplinski, a friend to the Poles, who secreted in his house the charter of rights, so the Zaporojian army should not obtain it. Since it is this way, – and I swear, as God lives, that it is no other way, – you are both guilty; and now beg mercy of the atamans, and I will beg with you, though your guilt is heavy and your treason clear."

From outside the windows came, not a sound and a murmur, but as it were the roar of a storm. The Brotherhood wished to know what was doing in the council-room, and sent a new deputation.

Tatarchuk felt that he was lost. He remembered that the week before he had spoken in the midst of the atamans against giving the baton to Hmelnitski, and against an alliance with the Tartars.

Cold drops of sweat came out on his forehead; he understood that there was no rescue for him now. As to young Barabash, it was clear that in destroying him Hmelnitski wished to avenge himself on the old colonel of Cherkasi, who loved his nephew deeply. Still Tatarchuk did not wish to die. He would not have paled before the sabre, the bullet, or the stake; but a death such as that which awaited him pierced him to the marrow of his bones. Therefore, taking advantage of a moment of quiet which reigned after the words of Hmelnitski, he screamed in a terrified voice, -

"In the name of Christ, brother atamans, dear friends, do not destroy an innocent man! I have not seen the Pole, I have not spoken with him! Have mercy on me, brothers! I do not know what the Pole wanted of me; ask him yourselves! I swear by Christ the Saviour, the Holy Most Pure, Saint Nicholas the wonder-worker, by Michael the archangel, that you are destroying an innocent man!"

"Bring in the Pole!" shouted the chief inspector.

"The Pole this way! the Pole this way!" shouted the kuren atamans.

Confusion began. Some rushed to the adjoining room in which the prisoner was confined, to bring him before the council. Others approached Tatarchuk and Barabash with threats. Gladki, the ataman of the Mirgorod kuren, first cried, "To destruction!" The deputies repeated the cry. Chernota sprang to the door, opened it, and shouted to the assembled crowd, -

"Worthy Brotherhood, Tatarchuk is a traitor, Barabash is a

traitor; destruction to them!"

The multitude answered with a fearful howl. Confusion continued in the council-room; all the atamans rose from their places; some cried, "The Pole! the Pole!" others tried to allay the disturbance. But while this was going on the doors were thrown wide open before the weight of the crowd, and to the middle of the room rushed in a mass of men from the square outside. Terrible forms, drunk with rage, filled the space, seething, waving their hands, gnashing their teeth, and exhaling the smell of spirits. "Death to Tatarchuk, and Barabash to destruction! Give up the traitors! To the square with them!" shouted the drunken voices. "Strike! kill!" And hundreds of hands were stretched out in a moment toward the hapless victims.

Tatarchuk offered no resistance; he only groaned in terror. But young Barabash began to defend himself with desperate strength. He understood at last that they wanted to kill him. Terror, despair, and madness were seen on his face; foam covered his lips, and from his bosom came forth the roar of a wild beast. Twice he tore himself from the hands of his executioners, and twice their hands seized him by the shoulders, by the breast, by the beard and hair. He struggled, he bit, he bellowed, he fell on the ground, and again rose up bleeding and terrible. His clothes were torn, his hair was pulled out of his head, an eye knocked out. At last, pressed to the wall, his arm was broken; then he fell. His executioners seized his feet, and dragged him with Tatarchuk to the square. There, by the light of tar-barrels and the great

fires, the final execution began. Several thousand people rushed upon the doomed men and tore them, howling and struggling among themselves to get at the victims. They were trampled under foot; bits of their bodies were torn away. The multitude struggled around them with that terrible convulsive motion of furious masses. For a moment bloody hands raised aloft two shapeless lumps, without the semblance of human form; then again they were trampled upon the earth. Those standing farther away raised their voices to the sky, – some crying out to throw the victims into the water, others to beat them into a burning tar-barrel. The drunken ones began to fight among themselves. In the frenzy two tubs of alcohol were set on fire, which lighted up the hellish scene with trembling blue flames; from heaven the moon looked down on it also, – the moon calm, bright, and mild. In this way the Brotherhood punished its traitors.

In the council-chamber, the moment the Cossacks dragged Tatarchuk and young Barabash through the doors there was quiet, and the atamans occupied their former places near the wall; for a prisoner was led forth from the adjoining closet.

The shade fell upon his face; in the half-light could be seen only the tall figure, with simple and haughty bearing, though with hands bound together. But Gladki threw a bundle of twigs on the fire, and in a moment a bright flame shot up and covered with a clear light the face of the prisoner, who turned to Hmelnitski.

When he saw him Hmelnitski started. The prisoner was Pan Yan.

Tugai Bey spat out husks of sunflower-seeds, and muttered in Russian, -

"I know that Pole; he was in the Crimea."

"Destruction to him!" cried Gladki.

"Destruction!" repeated Chernota.

Hmelnitski mastered his surprise, but turned his eyes to Gladki and Chernota, who under the influence of that glance grew quiet; then turning to the koshevoi, he said: "And I know him too."

"Whence do you come?" asked the koshevoi of Pan Yan.

"I was coming with an embassy to you, kosheroi ataman, when robbers fell upon me at Hortitsa, and, in spite of customs observed among the wildest people, killed my men, and, regarding neither my office of envoy nor my birth, wounded me, insulted me, and brought me here as a prisoner; for which my lord, Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski, will know how to demand of you account, koshevoi ataman."

"And why did you dissemble? Why did you crush the head of a brave man? Why did you kill four times as many people as your own number? And you came with a letter to me to observe our preparations and report them to the Poles! We know also that you had letters to traitors in the Zaporojian army, so as to plan with them the destruction of that whole army; therefore you will be received, not as an envoy, but as a traitor, and punished with justice."

"You deceive yourself, koshevoi, and you, self-styled

hetman," said the lieutenant, turning to Hmelnitski. "If I brought letters, every envoy does the same when he goes to strange places; for he takes letters from acquaintances to acquaintances, so that through them he may have society. And I came here with a letter from the prince, not to contrive your destruction, but to restrain you from deeds which are an unendurable outrage to the Commonwealth, and which in the end will bring ruin on you and the whole Zaporojian army. For on whom do you raise your godless hands? Against whom do you, who call yourselves defenders of Christianity, form an alliance with Pagans? Against the king, against the nobility, and the whole Commonwealth. You therefore, not I, are traitors; and I tell you that unless you efface your crimes with obedience and humility, then woe to you! Are the times of Pavlyuk and Nalivaika so remote? Has their punishment left your memory? Remember, then, that the patience of the Commonwealth is exhausted, and the sword is hanging over your heads."

"Oh, you son of Satan!" shouted the koshevoi. "You bark to squeeze out and escape death; but your threatening and your Polish Latin won't help you."

Other atamans began to gnash their teeth and shake their sabres; but Skshetuski raised his head still higher, and said, -

"Do not think, atamans, that I fear death, or that I defend my life, or that I am exhibiting my innocence. Being a noble, I can be tried only by equals. Here I am standing, not before judges, but before bandits, – not before nobility, but before serfdom, –

not before knighthood, but before barbarism; and I know well I shall not escape my death, with which you will fill the measure of your iniquity. Before me are death and torment; but behind me the power and vengeance of the Commonwealth, in presence of which you are all trembling."

Indeed the lofty stature, the grandeur of his speech, and the name of the Commonwealth made a deep impression. The atamans looked at one another in silence. After a while it seemed to them that not a prisoner, but the terrible messenger of a mighty people, was standing before them.

Tugai Bey murmured: "That is an angry Pole!"

"An angry Pole!" said Hmelnitski.

A violent knocking at the door stopped further conversation. On the square the remains of Tatarchuk and Barabash had been disposed of; and the Brotherhood sent a new deputation. A number of Cossacks, bloody, panting, covered with sweat, drunk, entered the room. They stood near the door, and stretching forth their hands still steaming with blood, began to speak.

"The Brotherhood bow to the elders," – here they bowed to their girdles, – "and ask that the Pole be given them to play with, as they played with Barabash and Tatarchuk."

"Let them have the Pole!" cried Chernota.

"No," cried others, "let them wait! He is an envoy!"

"To destruction with him!" answered a number of voices.

Then all were silent, waiting for the answer of the koshevoi and Hmelnitski.

"The Brotherhood ask; and if he is not given, they will take him themselves," said the deputies.

Skshetuski seemed lost beyond redemption, when Hmelnitski inclined to the ear of Tugai Bey and whispered, -

"He is your captive. The Tartars took him, he is yours. Will you let him be taken from you? He is a rich nobleman, and besides Prince Yeremi will ransom him with gold."

"Give up the Pole!" cried the Cossacks, with increasing violence.

Tugai Bey straightened himself in his seat and stood up. His countenance changed in a moment; his eyes dilated like the eyes of a wildcat, they began to flash fire. Suddenly he sprang like a tiger in front of the Cossacks who were demanding the prisoner.

"Be off, clowns, infidel dogs, slaves, pig-eaters!" bellowed he, seizing by the beard two of the Zaporojians and pulling them with rage. "Be off, drunkards, brutes, foul reptiles! You have come to take my captive, but this is the way I'll treat you." So saying, he pulled some by the beard; at last he threw one down and began to stamp on him with his feet. "On your faces, slaves! I will send you into captivity, I will trample the whole Saitch under foot as I trample you! I will send it up in smoke, cover it with your carcasses."

The deputies drew back in fear; their terrible friend had shown what he could do.

And, wonderful thing in Bazaluk, there were only six thousand of the horde! It is true that behind them stood the Khan and

all the power of the Crimea; but in the Saitch itself there were several thousand Cossacks besides those whom Hmelnitski had already sent to Tomakovka, – but still not one voice was raised in protest against Tugai Bey. It might be that the method with which the terrible murza had defended his captive was the only one practicable, and that it brought conviction at once to the Zaporojians, to whom the aid of the Tartars was at that time indispensable.

The deputation went out on the square, shouting to the crowd that they would not play with the Pole, for he was Tugai Bey's captive and Tugai Bey said he himself was wild! "He has pulled our beards!" cried they. On the square they began immediately to repeat: "Tugai Bey is wild!" "Is wild!" cry the crowd, plaintively, – "is wild, is wild!" In a few minutes a certain shrill voice began to sing near the fire, -

"Hei, hei!
Tugai Bey
Is wild, roaring wild.
Hei, hei!
Tugai Bey,
Don't get wild, my friend!"

Immediately thousands of voices repeated: "Hei, hei! Tugai Bey!" And at once rose one of those songs which afterward spread over the whole Ukraine, as if the wind had carried it, and was sung to the sound of lyre and teorban.

But suddenly the song was interrupted; for through the gates, from the side of Hassan Pasha, rushed a number of men who broke through the crowd, shouting, "Out of the way! out of the way!" and hastened with all speed to the council-house. The atamans were preparing to go out when these new guests fell into the room.

"A letter to the hetman!" shouted an old Cossack. "We are from Chigirin. We have rushed on night and day with the letter. Here it is!"

Hmelnitski took the letter from the hands of the Cossack, and began to read. Suddenly his face changed; he stopped the reading, and said with a piercing voice, -

"Atamans! The Grand Hetman Pototski sends his son Stephen with his army against us. War!"

In the room there rose a wonderful sound, – uncertain whether of joy or amazement. Hmelnitski stepped forward into the middle of the room, and put his hand on his hip; his eyes flashed lightning, his voice was awful and commanding, -

"Atamans, to the kurens! Fire the cannon from the tower! Break the liquor-barrels! We march at daybreak to-morrow!"

Prom that moment the common council ceased, the rule of atamans and the preponderance of the Brotherhood were at an end. Hmelnitski assumed unlimited power. A little while before, through fear that his voice might not be obeyed, he was forced to destroy his opponents by artifice, and by artifice defend the prisoner. Now he was lord of life and death for them all.

So it was ever. Before and after expeditions, even if the hetman was chosen, the multitude still imposed its will on the atamans and the koshevoi for whom opposition was coupled with danger. But when the campaign was declared, the Brotherhood became an army subject to military discipline, the atamans officers, and the hetman a dictator in command. Therefore, when they heard the orders of Hmelnitski, the atamans went at once to their kurens. The council was at an end.

Soon the roar of cannon from the gates leading from Hassan Pasha to the square of the Saitch shook the walls of the room, and spread with gloomy echoes through all Chertomelik, giving notice of war.

It opened also an epoch in the history of two peoples; but that was unknown to the drunken Cossacks as well as to the Zaporojian hetman himself.

CHAPTER XII

Hmelnitski and Skshetuski went to spend the night at the house of the koshevoi, and with them Tugai Bey, for whom it was too late to return to Bazaluk. The wild bey treated the lieutenant as a captive who was to be ransomed for a large sum, and therefore not as a slave; and with greater respect indeed than he would have shown perhaps to Cossacks, for he had seen him formerly as an envoy at the court of the Khan. In view of this the koshevoi asked Pan Yan to his own house, and also changed his bearing toward him. The old koshevoi was a man devoted body and soul to Hmelnitski, who had conquered and taken possession of him. He had observed that Hmelnitski seemed anxious to save the life of the captive at the time of the council; but he was more astonished when, after having barely entered the room, Hmelnitski turned to Tugai Bey.

"Tugai Bey," said he, "how much ransom do you think of getting for this captive?"

Tugai Bey looked at Skshetuski and answered: "You said this was a man of distinction, and I know that he was an envoy of the terrible prince, and the terrible prince is fond of his own men. Bismillah! one pays and the other pays-together-" here Tugai Bey stopped to think-"two thousand thalers."

Hmelnitski answered: "I will give you two thousand thalers."

The Tartar was silent for a moment. His black eyes appeared

to pierce Hmelnitski through and through. "You will give three," said he.

"Why should I give three when you asked two yourself?"

"For if you wish to have him, it is important for you; and if it is important, you will give three."

"He saved my life."

"Allah! that is worth a thousand more."

Here Skshetuski interfered in the bargain. "Tugai Bey," said he, with anger, "I can promise you nothing from the prince's treasury; but even if I had to injure my own fortune, I would give you three. I have almost that much saved in the prince's hands, and a good village, which will be sufficient. And I do not want to thank this hetman for my freedom and life."

"And whence dost thou know what I shall do with thee?" asked Hmelnitski; and then turning to Tugai Bey, he said: "The war will begin. You will send to the prince, and before the return of your messenger much water will flow down the Dnieper, but I will take you the money myself to Bazaluk to-morrow."

"Give four, and I will not say another word to the Pole," answered Tugai, impatiently.

"I will give four, on your word."

"Hetman," said the koshevoi, "I will count it out this minute. I have it here under the wall, maybe more."

"To-morrow you will take it to Bazaluk," said Hmelnitski.

Tugai Bey stretched himself and yawned. "I am sleepy," said he. "To-morrow before daylight I must start for Bazaluk. Where

am I to sleep?"

The koshevoi showed him a pile of sheepskins against the wall. The Tartar threw himself on this bed, and a little later was snorting like a horse.

Hmelnitski walked a number of times across the room, and said: "Slumber escapes my eyelids; I cannot sleep. Give me something to drink, most worthy koshevoi."

"Gorailka or wine?"

"Gorailka. I cannot sleep."

"It is cockcrow already," said the koshevoi.

"It is late. Go you to sleep, old friend! Drink and go!"

"Here is to fame and success!"

"To success!"

The koshevoi wiped his lips with his sleeve, then gave his hand to Hmelnitski, and going to the other corner of the room buried himself almost in sheepskins, for his blood had grown cold through age. Soon his snoring answered the snoring of Tugai Bey.

Hmelnitski sat at the table, sunk in silence. Suddenly he started up, looked at Skshetuski, and said: "Well, worthy lieutenant, you are free."

"I am thankful to you, Zaporojian hetman, though I do not conceal from you that I should prefer to thank some one else for my freedom."

"Then do not thank. You saved my life, I return you good; now we are even. And I must tell you also that I will not let you

go immediately unless you give me the word of a knight that when you have returned you will say nothing of our preparation or power or of anything you have seen in the Saitch."

"I see only this, that you offer me useless fruit of freedom to taste. I will not give you such a word; for by giving it, I should act precisely as those who go over to the enemy."

"My life and the safety of the Zaporojian army lie in this, that the Grand Hetman should not move on us with all his forces, which he would not be slow to do should you inform him of our power. Be not surprised, then, if I detain you until I find myself out of danger, unless you give your word. I know what I have undertaken; I know how formidable is the power opposed to me, – the two hetmans, your terrible prince (who is a whole army himself), the Zaslavskis and Konyetspolskis and all those kinglets who keep their feet on the Cossack neck! Not small was my labor, nor few the letters I wrote before I succeeded in putting their watchfulness to sleep; now I cannot allow you to rouse it. Since the masses of the people, with the Cossacks of the towns, and all who are oppressed in faith and freedom will take my side, as well as the Zaporojian army and the Khan of the Crimea, I expect to manage the enemy, for my power will be considerable; but most of all do I trust in God, who has beheld the injustice done, and who sees my innocence."

Here Hmelnitski drank a glass of vudka, and began to walk unquietly around the table. Skshetuski measured him with his eyes, and spoke with power, -

"Do not blaspheme, Zaporojian hetman, by calling upon God and his divine protection; for in truth you will only bring down upon yourself his anger and swift punishment. Is it right for you to call the Highest to your defence, – you, who for the sake of your private squabbles and the injustice done you raise such a terrible storm, kindle the flame of civil war, and join yourself with Pagans against Christians? For what will happen? Whether victorious or vanquished, you will shed a sea of human blood and tears, you will desolate the land worse than locusts, you will shake the Commonwealth, you will raise your hand against majesty, you will desecrate the altars of the Lord; and all this because Chaplinski took some land from you, and threatened you when he was drunk! What do you not attempt? What do you not devote to your private interests? You call upon God; and though I am in your power, though you can take my life and freedom, I tell you that you are a Satan. Call not God to your assistance, for hell alone can give you aid!"

Hmelnitski grew purple and reached for his sword. He looked at the lieutenant like a lion about to roar and spring on his victim, but he restrained himself. Fortunately, he was not drunk yet. Perhaps, also, disquiet had seized him, maybe certain voices called from his soul to turn from the road; for suddenly, as if wishing to defend himself before his own thoughts, he said, -

"From another I should not have endured such speech, but do you have a care that your boldness does not exhaust my patience. You frighten me with hell, you speak to me of private

interests and of treason. And from whence do you know that I have risen to avenge private wrongs alone? Where should I find assistance, where those thousands who have, already taken my side and who are taking it, if I wished merely to redress wrongs of my own? Look around at what is going on in the Ukraine. Oh, rich land, motherland, native land! And who in her is sure of to-morrow, who in her is happy, who is not robbed of his faith, spoiled of his freedom; who in her is not weeping and sighing? – save only the Vishnyevetskis, the Pototskis, the Zaslavskis, Kalinovskis, Konyetspolskis, and a handful of nobles! For them are crown estates, dignities, land, and people, – for them happiness and golden freedom; and the rest of the nation in tears stretch forth their hands to heaven waiting for the pity of God, since the pity of the king cannot help them. How many, even of the nobility, unable to bear this intolerable oppression, have fled to the Saitch, as I myself have fled? I want no war with the king, I want no war with the Commonwealth! It is the mother, and he is the father. The king is a merciful lord; but the kinglets! – with them it is impossible for us to live; their extortions, their rents, meadow-taxes, mill-taxes, eye and horn taxes, their tyranny and oppression exercised through the agency of Jews, cry for vengeance. What thanks has the Zaporojian army received for great services rendered in numerous wars? Where are the Cossack rights? The king gave them, the kinglets took them away. Nalivaika quartered! Pavlyuk burned in a brazen bull! The blood is not dry on the wounds inflicted by the sabres of

Jolkevski and Konyetspolski! The tears have not dried for those killed and empaled an stakes; and now look! What is gleaming in the sky?" – here Hmelnitski pointed through the window at the flaming comet, – "The anger of God, the scourge of God! And if I have to be the scourge of God on earth, then let the will of God be done! I will take the burden on my shoulders."

Having said this, he raised his hand above his head and seemed to flame up like a great torch of vengeance, and began to tremble; and then he dropped on the bench, as if bent down by the weight of his destiny.

Silence followed, interrupted only by the snoring of Tugai Bey and the koshevoi, and by the plaintive chirp of the cricket in one corner of the cabin.

The lieutenant sat with drooping head, as if seeking answers to the words of Hmelnitski, as weighty as blocks of granite; at length he began to speak in a quiet and sad voice, -

"Alas! even if that were true, who art thou, Hetman, to create thyself judge and executioner? With what tyranny and pride art thou carried away? Why dost thou not leave judgment and punishment to God? I do not defend the wicked, I do not praise injustice, I do not call oppression right; but, dost thou believe in thyself, Hetman? Thou complainest of oppression from the kinglets, – that they listen neither to the king nor justice. Thou condemnest their pride, but art thou free of it thyself? Do you not raise your hand upon the Commonwealth, on right and majesty? You see the tyranny of lordlets and nobility, but you

do not see that were it not for their breasts, their bosoms, their breastplates, their power, their castles, their cannon, and their legions, this land, flowing with milk and honey, would groan under the hundred times heavier yoke of the Turk and the Tartar! For who would defend it? By whose care and power is it that your children are not serving as janissaries, and your women dragged off to infamous harems? Who settled the desert, founded villages and towns, and raised up the sanctuary of God?"

Here the voice of Skshetuski grew stronger and stronger; and Hmelnitski looked with gloomy eyes into the bottle of vudka,[9] put his clinched fists on the table, and was silent as if struggling with himself.

"And who are they?" continued Skshetuski. "Have they come from Germany or from Turkey? Is it not the blood of your blood, and the bone of your bone? Are not the nobility yours, and the princelets yours? If that is true, then woe to thee, Hetman; for thou art raising up the younger brothers against the elder, and making parricides of them. Oh, in God's name, even if they were wicked, – even if all of them, as many as there are, have trampled upon justice, violated rights, – let God judge them in heaven, and the Diet on earth, but not you, O Hetman! Are you able to say that among yours there are only just men? Have yours never been guilty, that you have a right to cast a stone

[9] The author uses sometimes the word *vudka* and sometimes *gorailka*. The first is Polish; the second Little Russian. Both mean a liquor distilled generally from rye. When *vudka* is used it might mean that the liquor was from Poland, and when *gorailka* that it was of Ukraine origin; but here the words are used indifferently.

at another for his guilt? And if you ask me, Where are the rights of the Cossacks, I answer: Not kinglets betrayed them, but Zaporojians, – Loboda, Sasko, Nalivaika, and Pavlyuk, of whom you falsely say that he was roasted in a brazen bull, for you know well that this is not true! Your seditions, your disturbances and attacks, made like attacks of Tartars, were put down. Who let the Tartars into the boundaries of the Commonwealth, so that when they were coming back laden with booty, they might be attacked? You! Who-God guard us! – gave their own Christian people into captivity? Who raised the greatest disturbances? You! Before whom is neither noble nor merchant nor village safe? Before you! Who has inflamed domestic war, who has sent up in smoke the villages and towns of the Ukraine, plundered the sanctuaries of God, violated women? You! you! What do you want, then? Do you want that the rights of making civil war and of robbing and plundering should be granted you? In truth, more has been forgiven you than taken away! We wished to cure putrid members instead of cutting them off, and I know no power in the world but the Commonwealth that would exhibit equal patience and clemency by permitting such an ulcer in its own bosom. But what is your gratitude in response? There sleeps your ally, but the raging enemy of the Commonwealth, – your friend, but the foe of the cross and Christianity, – not a kinglet of the Ukraine, but a murza of the Crimea; and with him you will go to burn your own home, and with him to judge your own brother. But he will lord it over you, and you will be forced to hold his stirrup."

Hmelnitski emptied another glass of vudka. "When we, with Barabash, were with his Majesty the King, and when we wept over the oppression and injustice practised on us, he said, 'But have you not muskets, and have you not sabres at your side?'"

"If you were standing before the King of kings, he would say, 'Forgive your enemies, as I forgive mine.'"

"I do not wish to war with the Commonwealth."

"But you put your sword to its throat."

"I go to free the Cossacks from your fetters."

"To tie them in Tartar bonds!"

"I wish to defend the faith."

"In company with the Pagan."

"Stop! You are not the voice of my conscience. Stop, I tell you!"

"Blood will weigh you down, the tears of men will accuse you, death awaits you, judgment awaits you!"

"Screech-owl!" shouted Hmelnitski in rage, and flashed a knife before the breast of Skshetuski.

"Strike!" said Skshetuski.

Again came a moment of silence; again there was nothing to be heard but the snore of the sleeping men and the plaintive chirp of the cricket.

Hmelnitski stood for a time with the knife at Skshetuski's breast; suddenly he trembled, he bethought himself, dropped the knife, and seizing the decanter of vudka, began to drink. He emptied it, and sat heavily on the bench.

"I cannot stab him," he muttered, – "I cannot. It is late-is that daylight? – but it is late to turn from the road. Why speak to me of judgment and blood?"

He had already drunk much; the vudka was rising to his head. He went on, gradually losing consciousness: "What judgment? The Khan promised me reinforcements. Tugai Bey is sleeping here! To-morrow the Cossacks march. With us is Saint Michael the victorious! But if-if-I ransomed thee from Tugai Bey-remember it, and say-Oh, something pains-pains! To turn from the road-'tis late! – judgment-Nalivaika-Pavlyuk-"

Suddenly he straightened himself, strained his eyes in fright, and cried: "Who is there?"

"Who is there?" repeated the half-roused koshevoi.

But Hmelnitski dropped his head on his breast, nodded a couple of times, muttered, "What judgment?" and fell asleep.

Skshetuski grew very pale and weak from recent wounds and from the excitement of talking. He thought therefore that perhaps death was coming, and began to pray aloud.

CHAPTER XIII

Next morning early the Cossacks marched out of the Saitch, foot and horse. Though blood had not yet stained the steppes, the war had begun. Regiment followed regiment; just as if locusts, warmed by the spring sun, had swarmed in the reeds of Chertomelik, and were flying to the fields of the Ukraine. In the woods behind Bazaluk the warriors of the horde were waiting, ready for the march. Six thousand chosen men, armed incomparably better than ordinary partisan robbers, composed the contingent which the Khan sent to the Zaporojians and to Hmelnitski. At the sight of them the Cossacks hurled their caps into the air. The guns and muskets rattled. The shouts of the Cossacks, mingling with the "Allah" of the Tartars, struck the dome of heaven. Hmelnitski and Tugai Bey, both under their banners, galloped toward each other on horseback, and exchanged formal greetings.

The order of march was formed with the rapidity peculiar to Tartars and Cossacks; then the troops moved on. The horde occupied both Cossack wings; the centre was formed by Hmelnitski and his cavalry, behind which marched the terrible Zaporojian infantry. Farther in the rear were the gunners, with their cannon; still farther the tabor-wagons, in them camp-servants and stores of provisions; finally, the herdsmen, with reserve herds and cattle.

After they had passed the forest of Bazaluk the regiments flowed out on the level country. The day was clear, the field of heaven unspotted by a cloud. A light breeze blew from the north to the sea; the sun played on the lances, and on the flowers of the plain. The primeval steppes were spread before the Zaporojians like a boundless sea, and at this sight joy embraced the Cossack hearts. The great red standard, with the archangel, was inclined repeatedly in greeting to the native steppe; and following its example, every bunchuk and regimental standard was lowered. One shout sprang from all breasts.

The regiments deployed freely on the plain. The drummers and buglers went to the van of the army; the drums thundered, trumpets and bugles sounded, and in concert with them a song, sung by thousands of voices, reverberated through the air and the earth, -

"O steppes, our native steppes,
Ye are painted with beautiful flowers,
Ye are broad as the sea!"

The teorbanists dropped the reins, and bending back in the saddles, with eyes turned to the sky, struck the strings of their teorbans; the cymbalists, stretching their arms above their heads, struck their brazen disks; the drummers thundered with their kettledrums; and all these sounds, together with the monotonous words of the song and the shrill whistle of the tuneless Tartar pipes, mingled in a kind of mighty note, wild and sad as the

Wilderness itself. Delight seized all the regiments; the heads bent in time with the song, and at last it seemed as if the entire steppe, infected with music, trembled together with the men and the horses and the standards.

Frightened flocks of birds rose from the steppe and flew before the army like another army, – an army of the air. At times the song and music stopped; then could be heard the rustling of banners, the tramping and snorting of horses, the squeak of the tabor-wagons, – like the cry of swans or storks.

At the head of the army, under a great red standard and the bunchuk, rode Hmelnitski, in a red uniform, on a white horse, holding a gilded baton in his hand.

The whole body moved on, slowly marching to the north, covering like a terrible wave the rivers, groves, and grave-mounds, filling with its noise and sound the space of the steppe.

But from Chigirin, from the northern rim of the Wilderness, there moved against this wave a wave of the armies of the crown, under the leadership of young Pototski. Here the Zaporojians and the Tartars went as if to a wedding, with a joyful song on their lips; there the serious hussars advanced in grim silence, going unwillingly to that struggle without glory. Here, under the red banner, an old experienced leader shook his threatening baton, as if certain of victory and vengeance; there in front rode a youth with thoughtful countenance, as if knowing, his sad and approaching fate. A great expanse of steppe still divided them.

Hmelnitski did not hurry, for he calculated that the farther

young Pototski went into the Wilderness, the farther he went from the two hetmans, the more easily could he be conquered. Meanwhile new fugitives from Chigirin, Povolochi, and all the shore towns of the Ukraine gave daily increase to the Zaporojian power, bringing also news from the opposite camp. From them Hmelnitski learned that the old hetman had sent his son with only two thousand cavalry by land and six thousand Cossacks, with one thousand German infantry in boats by the Dnieper. Both these divisions were ordered to maintain communication with each other, but the order was violated from the first day; for the boats, borne on by the current of the Dnieper, went considerably in advance of the hussars going along the shore, whose march was greatly delayed by the crossings at all the rivers falling into the Dnieper.

Hmelnitski, wishing that the distance between them should be increased still more, did not hurry. On the third day of his march he disposed his camp around Komysha Water, and rested.

At that time the scouts of Tugai Bey brought informants, – two dragoons who just beyond Chigirin had escaped from the camp of Pototski. Hurrying on day and night, they had succeeded in getting considerably in advance of their camp. They were brought immediately to Hmelnitski.

Their account confirmed what was already known to Hmelnitski concerning the forces of young Stephen Pototski; but they brought him intelligence, besides, that the leaders of the Cossacks sailing down in the boats with the German infantry

were old Barabash and Krechovski.

When he heard the last name, Hmelnitski sprang up. "Krechovski? the commander of the registered Pereyasláv Cossacks?"

"The same, serene hetman!" answered the dragoons.

Hmelnitski turned to the colonels surrounding him. "Forward!" commanded he, with thundering voice.

Less than an hour later the tabor was moving on, though the sun was already setting and the night did not promise to be clear. Certain terrible reddish clouds rolled along on the western side of the heavens, like dragons or leviathans, and approached one another as if wishing to begin battle.

The tabor turned to the left, toward the bank of the Dnieper. The host marched quietly, without songs, without noise of drums or trumpets, and as quickly as the grass permitted, which was so luxuriant in that neighborhood that the regiments buried in it were lost from view at times, and the many-colored flags seemed to sail along the steppe. The cavalry beat a road for the wagons and the infantry, which, advancing with difficulty, soon fell considerably in the rear.

Night covered the steppes. An enormous red moon rose slowly in the heavens, but, hidden repeatedly by the clouds, flamed up and was quenched like a lamp smothered by the blowing of the wind.

It was well after midnight when, to the eyes of the Cossacks and the Tartars, black gigantic masses seemed outlined clearly on

the dark background of the sky. These were the walls of Kudák.

Scouts, hidden by darkness, approached the fortress as carefully and quietly as wolves or night-birds. And now perhaps a surprise for the sleeping fortress!

But suddenly a flash on the ramparts rent the darkness. A terrible report shook the rocks of the Dnieper, and a fiery ball, leaving a circle of sparks in the air, fell among the grass of the steppe. The gloomy cyclops Grodzitski gave notice that he was watching.

"The one-eyed dog!" muttered Tugai Bey to Hmelnitski; "he sees in the night."

The Cossacks avoided the fortress and marched on. They could not think of taking it at a time when the armies of the crown were marching against them. But Grodzitski fired after them from his cannon till the walls of the fortress trembled; not so much to injure them-for they passed at a good distance-as to warn the troops sailing down the Dnieper, who at that time might be not far away.

But the thunder of the guns of Kudák found echo first of all in the heart and hearing of Pan Yan. The young knight, brought by the command of Hmelnitski with the Cossack tabor, became seriously ill on the second day. In the fight at Hortitsa he had not received, it is true, a mortal wound, but he had lost so much blood that little life was left in him. His wounds, dressed in Cossack fashion by the old inspector of weights and measures, opened; fever attacked him, and that night he lay half senseless

in a Cossack telega, unconscious of God's world.

The cannon of Kudák first roused him. He opened his eyes, raised himself in the wagon, and began to look around. The Cossack tabor glided along in the darkness, like a circle of dream figures, but the fortress roared and was lighted with rosy smoke; fiery balls sprang along the steppe, snapping and barking, like infuriated dogs. At this sight such sadness and sorrow seized Skshetuski that he was ready to die on the spot, if he could only go even in spirit to his friends. War! war! and he in the camp of the enemy, disarmed, sick, unable to rise from the wagon! The Commonwealth in danger, and he not flying to save it! There in Lubni the troops are surely moving. The prince, with lightning in his eyes, is flying before the ranks; and on whatever side he turns his baton, three hundred lances strike like three hundred thunderbolts. Here a number of well-known faces begin to appear before the eyes of the lieutenant. Little Volodyovski, at the head of his dragoons, with his thin sabre in hand, – the king of swordsmen; whoever crosses weapons with him is as if in the tomb. There Pan Podbipienta raises his executioner's snatch-cowl! Will he cut off the three heads, or will he not? The priest Yaskolski waves the banners, and prays with his hands lifted to heaven. But he is an old soldier; therefore, unable to restrain himself, he thunders out at times, "Strike! kill!" Mailed riders incline half-way to the horse's ear. The regiments rush on, open their ranks, and close. Battle and tumult are there!

Suddenly the vision changes. Before the lieutenant stands

Helena, pale, with dishevelled hair; and she cries: "Save me, for Bogun pursues!"

Skshetuski tears himself from the wagon, till a voice-but a real one-calls to him: "Lie down, child, or I will bind you."

That was the essaul of the tabor, Zakhar, whom Hmelnitski had commanded to guard the lieutenant as the eye in his head. He puts him back in the wagon, covers him with a horse-skin, and asks: "What's the matter with you?"

Now Skshetuski has perfect presence of mind. The visions vanish. The wagons move along the very bank of the Dnieper. A cool breeze is blowing from the river, and the night is growing pale. Water-birds have begun their morning noise.

"Listen, Zakhar! have we passed Kudák already?" asked Skshetuski.

"We have," answered the Zaporojian,

"And where are you going?"

"I don't know. There will be a battle, they say; but I don't know."

At these words Skshetuski's heart beat joyfully. He had supposed that Hmelnitski would besiege Kudák, and with that the war would begin. Meanwhile the haste with which the Cossacks pushed on permitted the inference that the armies of the Crown were already near, and that Hmelnitski was passing the fortress so as not to be forced to give battle under its cannon.

"I may be free to-day," thought the lieutenant, and raised his eyes to heaven in thanks.

CHAPTER XIV

The thunder of the guns of Kudák was heard also by the forces descending in boats under the command of old Barabash and Krechovski. These forces were composed of six thousand registered Cossacks, and one of picked German infantry led by Colonel Hans Flick.

Pan Nikolai Pototski, the hetman, hesitated long before he sent the Cossacks against Hmelnitski; but since Krechovski had an immense influence over them, and Pototski trusted Krechovski absolutely, he merely commanded the Cossacks to take the oath of allegiance, and sent them off in the name of God.

Krechovski was a soldier full of experience and of great reputation in previous wars. He was a client of the Pototskis, to whom he was indebted for everything, – his rank of colonel, his nobility, which they obtained for him in the Diet, and finally for broad lands situated near the confluence of the Dniester and Lada, which he held for life. He was connected, therefore, by so many bonds with the Commonwealth and the Pototskis, that a shadow of a suspicion could not rise in the mind of the hetman. Krechovski was, besides, a man in his best days, for he was scarcely fifty years old, and a great future was opening before him in the service of the country. Some were ready to see in him the successor of Stephen Hmeletski, who, beginning his career as a simple knight of the steppe, ended it as voevoda of

Kieff and senator of the Commonwealth. It was for Krechovski to advance by the same road, along which he was impelled by bravery, a wild energy, and unbridled ambition, equally eager for wealth and distinction. Through this ambition he had struggled a short time before for the starostaship of Lita; and when at last Pan Korbut received it, Krechovski buried the disappointment deep in his heart, but almost fell ill of envy and mortification. This time fortune seemed to smile on him again; for having received from the hetman such an important military office, he could consider that his name would reach the ears of the king; and that was important, for afterward he had only to bow to receive the reward, with the words dear to the heart of a noble: "He has bowed to us and asked that we grant him; and we remembering his services, do grant, etc." In this way were wealth and distinction acquired in Russia; in this way enormous expanses of the empty steppe, which hitherto had belonged to God and the Commonwealth, passed into private hands; in this way a needy stripling grew to be a lord, and might strengthen himself with the hope that his descendants would hold their seats among senators.

Krechovski was annoyed that in the office committed to him he must divide authority with Barabash; still it was only a nominal division. In reality, the old colonel of Cherkasi, especially in the latter time, had grown so old and worn that his body alone belonged to this earth; his mind and soul were continually sunk in torpidity and lifelessness, which generally precede real death. At

the beginning of the expedition he roused up and began to move about with considerable energy, as if at the sound of the trumpet the old soldier's blood had begun to course more vigorously within him, for he had been in his time a famous Cossack and a leader in the steppe; but as soon as they started the plash of the oars lulled him, the songs of the Cossacks and the soft movement of the boats put him to sleep, and he forgot the world of God. Krechovski ordered and managed everything. Barabash woke up only to eat; having eaten his fill, he inquired, as was his custom, about this and that. He was put off with some kind of answer; then he sighed and said, -

"I should be glad to die in some other war, but God's will be done!"

Connection with the army of the crown marching under Stephen Pototski was severed at once. Krechovski complained that the hussars and the dragoons marched too slowly, that they loitered too long at the crossings, that the young son of the hetman had no military experience; but with all that he gave orders to move on.

The boats moved along the shores of the Dnieper to Kudák, going farther and farther from the armies of the crown.

At last one night the thunder of cannon was heard. Barabash slept without waking. Flick, who was sailing ahead, entered the scout-boat and repaired to Krechovski.

"Colonel," said he, "those are the cannon of Kudák! What are we to do?"

"Stop your boats. We will spend the night in the reeds."

"Apparently Hmelnitski is besieging the fortress. In my opinion we ought to hurry to the relief."

"I do not ask you for opinions, but give orders. I am the commander."

"But, Colonel-"

"Halt and wait!" said Krechovski. But seeing that the energetic German was twitching his beard and not thinking of going away without a reason, he added more mildly: "The castellan may come up to-morrow morning with the cavalry, and the fortress will not be taken in one night."

"But if he does not come up?"

"Well, we will wait even two days. You don't know Kudák. They will break their teeth on the walls, and I will not go to relieve the place without the castellan, for I have not the right to do so. That is his affair."

Every reason seemed to be on Krechovski's side. Flick therefore insisted no longer, and withdrew to his Germans. After a while the boats began to approach the right bank and push into the reeds, that for a width of more than forty rods covered the river, which had spread widely in that part. Finally the plash of oars stopped; the boats were hidden entirely in the reeds, and the river appeared to be wholly deserted. Krechovski forbade the lighting of fires, singing of songs, and conversation. Hence there fell upon the place a quiet unbroken save by the distant cannon of Kudák.

Still no one in the boats except Barabash slept. Flick, a knightly man and eager for battle, wished to hurry straight to Kudák. The Cossacks asked one another in a whisper what might happen to the fortress. Would it hold out or would it not hold out? Meanwhile the noise increased every moment. All were convinced that the castle was meeting a violent assault.

"Hmelnitski isn't joking; but Grodzitski isn't joking, either," whispered the Cossacks. "What will come tomorrow?"

Krechovski was probably asking himself the very same question, as, sitting in the prow of his boat, he fell into deep thought. He knew Hmelnitski intimately and of old. Up to that time he had always considered him a man of uncommon gifts, to whom only a field was wanting to soar like an eagle; but now Krechovski doubted him. The cannon thundered unceasingly; therefore it must be that Hmelnitski was really investing Kudák.

"If that is true," thought Krechovski, "he is lost. How is it possible, having roused the Zaporojians and secured the assistance of the Khan, having assembled forces such as none of the Cossack leaders has hitherto commanded, instead of marching with all haste to the Ukraine, rousing the people and attaching to himself the town Cossacks, breaking the hetmans as quickly as possible, and gaining the whole country before new troops could come to its defence, that he, Hmelnitski, an old soldier, is storming an impregnable fortress, capable of detaining him for a whole year? And is he willing that his best forces should break themselves on the walls of Kudák, as a wave of the Dnieper

is dashed on the rocks of the Cataracts? And will he wait under Kudák till the hetmans are reinforced and surround him, like Nalivaika at Solonitsa?"

"If he does, he is a lost man," repeated Krechovski once more. "His own Cossacks will give him up. The unsuccessful assault will cause discontent and disorder. The spark of rebellion will go out at its very birth, and Hmelnitski will be no more terrible than a sword broken at the hilt. He is a fool! Therefore," thought Krechovski, "to-morrow I will land my Cossacks and Germans on the bank, and the following night will fall on him unexpectedly, when he is weakened by assaults. I will cut the Zaporojians to pieces, and throw down Hmelnitski bound at the feet of the hetman. It is his own fault, for it might have been otherwise."

The unbridled ambition of Krechovski soared on the wings of a falcon. He knew well that young Pototski could not arrive on the following night by any possibility. Who, then, was to sever the head of the hydra? Krechovski! Who was to put down the rebellion which might wrap the whole Ukraine in a terrible conflagration? Krechovski! The old hetman might be angry for a while that this had taken place without the participation of his son; but he would soon get over that, and meanwhile all the rays of glory and the favors of the king would descend on the conqueror's head. No! It would be necessary, however, to divide the glory with old Barabash and with Grodzitski.

Krechovski scowled darkly; but suddenly his face grew bright.

"They will bury that old block Barabash in the ground to-morrow or next day. Grodzitski, if he can only remain at Kudák to frighten the Tartars from time to time with his cannon, will ask for no more. Krechovski alone will remain. If he can only become hetman of the Ukraine!"

The stars twinkled in the sky, and it appeared to the colonel that those were the jewels in his baton; the wind sounded in the reeds, and it seemed to him the rustling of the hetman's standard. The guns of Kudák thundered unceasingly.

"Hmelnitski has given his throat to the sword," continued the colonel in thought, "but that is his own fault. It might have been otherwise. If he had gone straight to the Ukraine, it might have been otherwise. There all is seething and roaring; there lies powder, only waiting for a spark. The Commonwealth is powerless, but it has forces in the Ukraine; the king is not young, and is sickly. One battle won by the Zaporojians will bring incalculable results."

Krechovski covered his face with his hands, and sat motionless. The stars came down nearer and nearer, and settled gradually on the steppe. The quail hidden in the grass began to call. Soon the day would break.

At last the meditations of the colonel became strengthened into a fixed purpose. Next day he would strike Hmelnitski and grind him in the dust. Over his body he would go to wealth and dignities. He would be the instrument of punishment in the hands of the Commonwealth, its defender, in the future its dignitary

and senator. After victory over the Zaporojians and the Tartars they would refuse him nothing.

Still, they had not given him the starostaship of Lita. When he remembered this, Krechovski clenched his fists. They had not given him this, in spite of the powerful influence of his protectors the Pototskis, in spite of his military services, simply because he was a new man and his rival drew his origin from princes. In that Commonwealth it was not enough to be a noble, it was necessary to wait till that nobility was covered with must like old wine, till it was rusty like iron.

Hmelnitski alone could introduce a new order of things, to which the king himself would become favorable; but the unfortunate man had preferred to beat out his brains against the walls of Kudák.

The colonel gradually grew calm. They had refused him the starostaship, – what of that? They would strive all the more to recompense him, especially after his victory, – after quenching the rebellion, after freeing the Ukraine from civil war, yes, the whole Commonwealth! They would refuse him nothing; then he would not need even the Pototskis.

His drowsy head inclined upon his breast, and he fell asleep, dreaming of starostaships, of dignities, of grants from the king and the Diet.

When he woke it was daybreak. In the boats all were still sleeping. In the distance the waters of the Dnieper were gleaming in a pale, fugitive light. Around them reigned absolute stillness.

It was the stillness that roused him. The cannon of Kudák had ceased to roar.

"What is that?" thought Krechovski. "The first attack is repulsed, or maybe Kudák is taken?"

But that was unlikely. No; the beaten Cossacks were lying somewhere at a distance from the fortress, licking their wounds, and the one-eyed Grodzitski was looking at them through the port-hole, aiming his guns anew. To-morrow they would repeat the storm, and again break their teeth. The day had now come. Krechovski roused the men in his own boat, and sent a boat for Flick. Flick came at once.

"Colonel," said Krechovski, "if the castellan does not come before evening, and if the storm is repeated during the night, we will move to the relief of the fortress."

"My men are ready," answered Flick.

"Issue powder and balls to them."

"I have done so."

"We land during the night and go by the steppe in the greatest quiet. We will come upon them with a surprise."

"Gut! sehr gut! But mightn't we go on a little in the boats? It is twenty miles to the fortress, – rather far for infantry."

"The infantry will mount Cossack horses."

"Gut! sehr gut!"

"Let the men lie quietly in the reeds, not go on shore; make no noise, kindle no fires, for smoke would betray us. We must not be revealed."

"There is such a fog that the smoke will not be seen."

Indeed the river, the inlet overgrown with reeds, in which the boats were hidden, and the steppe were covered as far as the eye could see with a white, impenetrable fog. But it was only the beginning of day; so the fog might rise and uncover the expanse of the steppe.

Flick departed. The men in the boats woke gradually. Krechovski's commands to keep quiet and take the morning meal without tumult were made known. No person going along the shore or sailing in the middle of the river would have even imagined that in the adjoining thicket several thousand men were hidden. The horses were fed from the hand, so that they should not neigh. The boats, covered with fog, lay tied up in the reeds. Here and there only passed a small two-oared boat carrying biscuits and commands; with this exception, the silence of the grave reigned everywhere.

Suddenly in the reeds, rushes, and shore-grass all around the inlet were heard strange and very numerous voices, calling, -

"Pugú! pugú!"

Then quiet. "Pugú! pugú!"

And again silence, as if those voices, calling on the banks, waited for an answer.

But there was no answer. The calling sounded a third time, but more quickly and impatiently.

"Pugú! pugú!"

This time from the side of the boats was heard in the middle

of the fog the voice of Krechovski, -

"But who is there?"

"A Cossack from the meadows."

The hearts of the Cossacks hidden in the boats beat unquietly. That mysterious call was well known to them. In that manner the Zaporojiana made themselves known to one another in their winter quarters; in that way in time of war they asked to conference their brothers, the registered and town Cossacks, among whom were many belonging in secret to the Brotherhood.

The voice of Krechovski was heard again; "What do you want?"

"Bogdan Hmelnitski, the Zaporojian hetman, announces that his cannon are turned on the Poles."

"Inform the Zaporojian hetman that ours are tamed to the shore."

"Pugú! Pugú!"

"What more do you want?"

"Bogdan Hmelnitski, the Zaporojian hetman, invites his friend Colonel Krechovski to a conference."

"Let him give hostages."

"Ten kuren atamans."

"Agreed."

That moment the shores of the inlet bloomed with Zaporojians as if with flowers; they stood up from the grass in which they had been hidden. From the steppe approached their cavalry and artillery, tens and hundreds of their banners, flags, and bunchuks.

They marched with singing and beating of kettledrums. All this was rather like a joyful greeting than a collision of hostile forces.

The Cossacks on the river answered with shouts. Meanwhile boats came up bringing the kuren atamans. Krechovski entered one of the boats and went to the shore. There a horse was given him, and he was conducted immediately to Hmelnitski.

Seeing him, Hmelnitski removed his cap, and then greeted him cordially.

"Colonel," said he, "my old friend and comrade! When the hetman of the crown commanded you to seize me and bring me to the camp, you did not do it, but you warned me so that I might save myself by flight; for that act I am bound to you in thankfulness and brotherly love."

While saying this he stretched out his hand kindly; but the swarthy face of Krechovski remained cold as ice. "Now, therefore, after you have saved yourself, worthy hetman, you excite rebellion!"

"I go to ask reparation for the wrongs inflicted on myself, on you, on the whole Ukraine, with the charter of Cossack rights granted by the king in my hand, and with the hope that our merciful sovereign will not count it evil in me."

Krechovski looked quickly into the eyes of Hmelnitski, and asked with emphasis: "Have you invested Kudák?"

"I? Do you think I have lost my mind? I passed Kudák without a shot, though the old blind man celebrated it with guns. I was hurrying not to Kudák, but to the Ukraine, and to you, my old

friend and benefactor."

"What do you wish, then, of me?"

"Come a little way in the steppe, and we will talk."

They spurred their horses, and rode on. They remained about an hour. On returning, the face of Krechovski was pale and terrible. He took quick farewell of Hmelnitski, who said, -

"There will be two of us in the Ukraine, and above us the king, and no man else."

Krechovski turned to the boats. Old Barabash, Flick, and the elders waited for him with impatience. "What's going on? What's going on?" he was asked on every side.

"Come out on the shore!" answered Krechovski, with a commanding voice.

Barabash raised his sleepy lids; a certain wonderful fire was gleaming in his eyes. "How is that?" asked he.

"Come to the shore; we yield!"

A wave of blood rushed to the pale and faded face of Barabash. He rose from the kettle on which he had been sitting, straightened himself up, and suddenly that bent and decrepit old man was changed into a giant full of life and power.

"Treason!" roared he.

"Treason!" repeated Flick, grasping after the hilt of his rapier.

But before he could draw it Krechovski's sabre whistled, and with one blow Flick was stretched on the ground. Then Krechovski sprang into the scout-boat standing there, in which four Zaporojians were sitting with oars in their hands, and cried:

"To the boats!"

The scout-boat shot on like an arrow. Krechovski, standing in the centre of it, with his cap on his bloody sabre, his eyes like flames, cried with a mighty voice, -

"Children, we will not murder our own. Long life to Hmelnitski, the Zaporojian hetman!"

"Long life!" repeated hundreds and thousands of voices.

"Destruction to the Poles!"

"Destruction!"

The roar from the boats answered the shouts of the Zaporojians on land. But many men in the boats did not know what was going on till the news spread everywhere that Krechovski had gone over to the Zaporojians. A regular furor of joy seized the Cossacks. Six thousand caps flew into the air; six thousand muskets roared. The boats trembled under the feet of the brave fellows. A tumult and uproar set in. But that joy had to be sprinkled with blood; for old Barabash preferred to die rather than betray the flag under which he had served a lifetime. A few tens of the men of Cherkasi declared for him, and a struggle began, short but terrible, – like all struggles in which a handful of men, asking not quarter but death, defend themselves in a mass. Neither Krechovski nor any one of the Cossacks expected such resistance. The lion of other days was roused in the old colonel. The summons to lay down his arms he answered with shots; and he was seen, with baton in hand and streaming white hair, giving orders with a voice of thunder and the energy of youth. His boat

was surrounded on every side. The men of those boats which could not press up jumped into the water, and by swimming or wading among the reeds, and then seizing the edge of the boat, climbed it with fury. The resistance was short. The faithful Cossacks of Barabash, stabbed, cut to pieces, torn asunder with hands, lay dead in the boat. The old man with sabre in hand defended himself yet.

Krechovski pushed forward toward him. "Yield!" shouted he.

"Traitor! destruction!" answered Barabash, raising his sabre to strike.

Krechovski drew back quickly into the crowd. "Strike!" cried he to the Cossacks.

It seemed that no one wished to raise his hand first on the old man. But unfortunately the colonel slipped in blood and fell. When lying he did not rouse that respect or that fear, and immediately a number of lances were buried in his body. The old man was able only to cry: "Jesus, Mary!"

They began to cut the prostrate body to pieces. The severed head was hurled from boat to boat, like a ball, until by an awkward throw it fell into the water.

There still remained the Germans, with whom the settlement was more difficult, for the regiment was composed of one thousand old soldiers trained in many wars. The valiant Flick had fallen, it is true, by the hand of Krechovski, but there remained at the head of the regiment Johann Werner, lieutenant-colonel, a veteran of the Thirty Years' War.

Krechovski was certain of victory, for the German boats were hemmed in on every side by the Cossacks; still he wished to preserve for Hmelnitski such a respectable reinforcement of incomparable infantry, splendidly armed, therefore he preferred to begin a parley with them.

It seemed for a time that Werner would agree, for he conversed calmly with Krechovski and listened attentively to promises of which the faithless colonel was not sparing. The pay in which the Commonwealth was in arrears was to be paid on the spot, and an additional year in advance. At the expiration of the year the soldiers might go where they pleased, even to the camp of the king.

Werner, appeared to meditate over these conditions, but meanwhile he had quietly issued a command for the boats to press up to him, so that they formed a close circle. On the edge of that circle stood a wall of infantry, – well-grown and powerful men, dressed in yellow coats and caps of the same color, in perfect battle-array, with the left foot forward and muskets at the right side ready to fire. Werner stood in the first rank with drawn sword, and meditated long; at last he raised his head.

"Colonel, we agree!"

"You will lose nothing in your new service," cried Krechovski, with joy.

"But on condition-"

"I agree to that, besides."

"If that is true, then all is settled. Our service with the

Commonwealth ends in three months. At the end of three months we will go over to you."

A curse was leaving Krechovski's mouth, but he restrained the outburst. "Are you joking, worthy lieutenant?"

"No!" answered Werner, phlegmatically; "our soldierly honor commands us to keep our agreement. Our service ends in three months. We serve for money, but we are not traitors. If we were, nobody would hire us, and you yourselves would not trust us; for who could guarantee that we should not go over again to the hetmans in the first battle?"

"What do you want, then?"

"We want you to let us go."

"Why, you crazy man, that is impossible! I shall order you to be cut to pieces."

"And how many of your own will you lose?"

"A foot of you will not leave here!"

"And half of your men will not remain."

Both spoke the truth; therefore Krechovski, although the coolness of the German roused all his blood, and rage began to overpower him, did not wish to begin the battle for a while.

"Till the sun leaves the inlet," said he, "think the matter over; after that I will give the order to touch the triggers!"

And he went off hurriedly in his boat to counsel with Hmelnitski.

The silence of expectation began. The Cossack boats surrounded in a dense circle the Germans, who maintained

the cool bearing possible only to old and experienced soldiers in the presence of danger. To the threats and insults which burst out on them every moment from the Cossack boats, they answered with contemptuous silence. It was in truth an imposing spectacle, – that calm in the midst of increasing outbursts of rage on the part of the Cossacks, who, shaking their lances and muskets threateningly, gnashed their teeth and, cursing, waited impatiently the signal for battle.

Meanwhile the sun, turning from the south to the west, removed gradually its golden rays from the inlet, which was slowly covered with shade. At length it was completely covered. Then the trumpet began to sound, and immediately after the voice of Krechovski was heard in the distance, -

"The sun has gone down! Have you decided yet?"

"We have!" answered Werner. And turning to the soldiers, he waved his naked sword. "Fire!" commanded he, with a quiet phlegmatic voice.

There was a roar! The plash of bodies falling into the water, the cries of rage, and rapid firing answered the voice of German muskets. Cannon drawn up on shore answered with a deep roar, and began to hurl balls on the German boats. Smoke covered the inlet completely, and only the regular salvos of the muskets amidst the shouts, roaring, whistle of Tartar arrows, and the rattle of guns and muskets, announced that the Germans were still defending themselves.

At sunset the battle was still raging, but appeared to be weaker.

Hmelnitski, with his companions Krechovski, Tugai Bey, and some atamans, came to the shore to observe the struggle. The dilated nostrils of the hetman inhaled the smoke of powder, and his ears took in with pleasure the sound of the drowning and dying Germans. All three of the leaders looked on the slaughter as on a spectacle, which at the same time was a favorable omen for them.

The struggle was coming to an end. As the musketry ceased, the shouts of Cossack triumph rose louder and louder to the sky.

"Tugai Bey," said Hmelnitski, "this is our first victory."

"There are no captives!" blurted out the murza. "I want no such victories as this!"

"You will get captives in the Ukraine. You will fill all Stamboul and Galata with your prisoners!"

"I will take even you, if there is no one else!" Having said this, the wild Tugai Bey laughed ominously; then he added: "Still I should be glad to have those 'Franks.'"

The battle had ended. Tugai Bey turned his horse to the camp.

"Now for Jóltiya Vodi!" cried Hmelnitski.

CHAPTER XV

Skshetuski, hearing the battle, waited with trembling for the conclusion of it. He thought at first that Hmelnitski was meeting all the forces of the hetmans. But toward evening old Zakhar led him out of his error. The news of the treason of the Cossacks under Krechovski and the destruction of the Germans agitated Pan Yan to the bottom of his soul; for it was prophetic of future desertions, and the lieutenant knew perfectly that no small part of the armies of the hetmans was made up of Cossacks.

The anguish of the lieutenant increased, and triumph in the Zaporojian camp added bitterness to his sorrow. Everything foreshadowed the worst. There were no tidings of Prince Yeremi, and evidently the hetmans had made a terrible mistake; for instead of moving with all their forces to Kudák or waiting for the enemy in fortified camps in the Ukraine, they had divided their forces, weakened themselves of their own accord, and opened a wide field to breach of faith and treason. It is true that mention had been made previously in the Zaporojian camp of Krechovski, and of the special despatch of troops under the leadership of Stephen Pototski; but the lieutenant had given no faith to those reports. He supposed that these troops were strong advance guards which would be withdrawn in time. But it turned out otherwise. Hmelnitski was strengthened several thousand men by the treason of Krechovski, and terrible danger hung over young

Pototski. Deprived of assistance and lost in the Wilderness, Hmelnitski might easily surround and crush him completely.

In pain from his wounds, in disquiet, during sleepless nights, Skshetuski had consoled himself with the single thought of the prince. The star of Hmelnitski must pale when that of the prince rises in Lubni. And who knows whether he has not joined the hetmans already? Though the forces of Hmelnitski were considerable, though the beginning of the campaign was favorable, though Tugai Bey marched with him, and in case of failure the "Tsar of the Crimea" had promised to move with reinforcements in person, the thought never rose in the mind of Skshetuski that the disturbance could endure long, that one Cossack could shake the whole Commonwealth and break its terrible power. "That wave will be broken at the threshold of the Ukraine," thought the lieutenant. "How have all the Cossack rebellions ended? They have burst out like a flame and have been stifled at the first meeting with the hetmans." Such had been the outcome up to that time. For on one side there rose a crowd of bandits from the lower country, and on the other the power whose shores were washed by two seas. The end was easily foreseen: the storm could not be lasting; it would pass, and calm would follow. This thought strengthened Skshetuski, and perhaps kept him on his feet while he was weighted with such a burden as he had never carried in his life before. The storm, though it would pass might desolate fields, wreck houses, and inflict unspeakable harm. In this storm he had almost lost his life, had lost his strength, and

had fallen into bitter captivity just at the time when freedom was worth really as much to him as life itself. What, then, must be the suffering, in this uproar, of beings without power to defend themselves? What was happening to Helena in Rozlogi?

But Helena must be in Lubni already. The lieutenant in his sleep saw her surrounded by friendly faces, petted by Princess Griselda and the prince himself, admired by the knights, – and still grieving for her hussar, who had disappeared somewhere in the Saitch. But the time would come at last when he would return, Hmelnitski himself had promised freedom; and besides, the Cossack wave would flow on and on, to the threshold of the Commonwealth, where it would be broken; then would come the end of anxiety, affliction, and dread.

The wave flowed on, indeed. Hmelnitski moved forward without delay, and marched to meet the son of the hetman. His power was really formidable; for with the Cossacks of Krechovski and the party of Tugai Bey, he led nearly twenty-five thousand trained men eager for battle. There was no reliable information concerning Pototski's numbers. Deserters declared that he had two thousand heavy cavalry and a number of field-pieces. A battle with that proportion of forces might be doubtful; for one attack of the terrible hussars was often sufficient to destroy ten times the number of troops. Thus Pan Hodkyevich, the Lithuanian hetman, in his time, with three thousand hussars at Kirchholm, ground into the dust eighteen thousand chosen men of the Swedish infantry and cavalry; and at Klushin one

armored regiment with wild fury dispersed several thousand English and Scotch mercenaries. Hmelnitski remembered this, and marched, as the Russian chronicler has it, slowly and carefully; "looking, with the many eyes of his mind, on every side, like a cunning hunter, and having sentries posted five miles and farther from his camp."

In this fashion he approached Jóltiya Vodi. Two new informants were brought in. These gave assurance of the small number of Pototski's forces, and stated that the castellan had already crossed Jóltiya Vodi.

Hearing this, Hmelnitski stopped as if pinned to the earth, and intrenched himself. His heart beat joyfully. If Pototski would venture on a storm, he must be beaten. The Cossacks were unequal to armored men in the field, but behind a rampart they fought to perfection; and with such great preponderance of power they would surely repulse an assault. Hmelnitski reckoned on the youth and inexperience of Pototski. But at the side of the young castellan was an accomplished soldier, – the starosta of Jiwets, Stephen Charnetski, colonel of hussars. He saw the danger, and persuaded Pototski to withdraw beyond Jóltiya Vodi.

Nothing was left to Hmelnitski but to follow him. Next day he crossed the swamps of Jóltiya Vodi. The armies stood face to face, but neither of the leaders wished to strike the first blow. The hostile camps began to surround themselves hurriedly with trenches. It was Saturday, the 5th of May. Rain fell all day; clouds so covered the sky that from noon darkness reigned as on a winter

day. Toward evening the rain increased still more. Hmelnitski rubbed his hands with joy.

"Only let the steppe get soft," said he to Krechovski, "and I shall not hesitate to meet even the hussars on the offensive; for they will be drowned in the mud with their heavy armor."

The rain fell and fell, as if Heaven itself wished to come to the aid of the Zaporojians. The armies intrenched themselves lazily and gloomily amidst streams of water. It was impossible to kindle fires. Several thousand Tartars issued from the camp to watch lest the Polish tabor, taking advantage of the fog, the rain, and the night, might try to escape. Then profound stillness fell upon the camp. Nothing was heard but the patter of rain and the sound of wind. It was certain that no one slept on either side that night.

In the morning the trumpets sounded in the Polish camp, prolonged and plaintive, as if giving an alarm; then drums began to rattle here and there. The day rose gloomy, dark, damp; the storm had ceased, but still there was rain, fine as if strained through a sieve.

Hmelnitski ordered the firing of a cannon. After it, was heard a second, a third, – a tenth; and when the usual "correspondence" of camp with camp had begun. Pan Yan said to Zakhar, his Cossack guardian: "Take me out on the rampart, that I may see what is passing."

Zakhar was curious himself, and therefore made no opposition. They mounted a lofty bastion, whence could be seen, as if on the palm of the hand, the somewhat sunken valley in the

steppe, the swamp of Jóltiya Vodi, and both armies. But Pan Yan had barely given a glance when, seizing his head, he cried, -

"As God is living! it is the advance guard, – nothing more!"

In fact, the ramparts of the Cossack camp extended almost a mile and a quarter, while the Polish intrenchment looked like a little ditch in comparison with it. The disparity of forces was so great that the victory for the Zaporojians was beyond a doubt.

Pain straitened the lieutenant's heart. The hour of fall had not come yet for pride and rebellion, and that which was coming was to be a new triumph for them. At least, so it appeared.

Skirmishing under cannon-fire had already begun. From the bastion single horsemen, or groups of them, could be seen in hand-to-hand conflict. Now the Tartars fought with Pototski's Cossacks, dressed in dark blue and yellow. The cavalry rushed on one another and retreated quickly; approached from the flanks, hit one another from pistols and bows or with lances, tried to catch one another with lariats. These actions seemed from a distance more like amusement than fighting; and only the horses, running along the field without riders, showed that it was a question of life and death.

The Tartars came out thicker and thicker. Soon the plain was black from the dense mass of them. Then, too, new regiments began to issue from the Polish camp, and arrange themselves in battle-array before the intrenchment. This was so near that Pan Yan, with his quick eye, was able to distinguish clearly the flags and ensigns, and also the cavalry captains and lieutenants, who

were on horseback a little on one side of the regiments.

His heart began to leap within him. A ruddy color appeared on his pale face; and just as if he could find a favorable audience in Zakhar and the Cossacks standing to their guns on the bastion, he cried with enthusiasm as the regiments marched out of the intrenchments, -

"Those are the dragoons of Balaban; I saw them in Cherkasi! That is the Wallachian regiment; they have a cross on their banner! Oh! now the infantry comes down from the ramparts!" Then with still greater delight, opening his hands: "The hussars! Charnetski's hussars!"

In fact the hussars came out, above their heads a cloud of wings; a forest of lances embellished with golden tassels and with long green and black bannerets, stood above them in the air. They went out six abreast, and formed under the wall. At the sight of their calmness, dignity, and good order tears of joy came into Skshetuski's eyes, dimming his vision for a moment.

Though the forces were so disproportionate; though against these few regiments there was blackening a whole avalanche of Zaporojians and Tartars, which, as is usual, occupied the wings; though their ranks extended so far into the steppe that it was difficult to see the end of them, – Pan Yan believed now in the victory of the Poles. His face was smiling, his strength came back; his eyes, intent on the field, shot fire, but he was unable to stand.

"Hei, my child!" muttered old Zakhar, "the soul would like to

enter paradise."

A number of detached Tartar bands rushed forward, with cries and shouts of "Allah!" They were answered from the camp with shots. But these were merely threats. The Tartars, before reaching the Polish regiments, retreated on two sides to their own people and disappeared in the host.

Now the great drum of the Saitch was sounded, and at its voice a gigantic crescent of Cossacks and Tartars rushed forward swiftly. Hmelnitski was trying, apparently, to see whether he could not with one sweep dislodge those regiments and occupy the camp. In case of disorder, that was possible. But nothing of the kind took place with the Polish regiments. They remained quietly, deployed in rather a long line, the rear of which was covered by the intrenchment, and the flanks by the cannon of the camp; so it was possible to strike them only in front. For a while it seemed as if they would receive battle on the spot; but when the crescent had passed half the field, the trumpets in the intrenchment were sounded for attack, and suddenly the fence of spears, till then pointing straight to the sky, was lowered to a line with the heads of the horses.

"The hussars are charging!" cried Pan Yan.

They had, in fact, bent forward in the saddles, and were moving on, and immediately after them the dragoon regiments and the whole line of battle.

The momentum of the hussars was terrible. At the first onset they struck three kurens, – two of Stebloff, and one of

Mirgorod, – and crushed them in the twinkle of an eye. The roar reached the ears of Skshetuski. Horses and men, thrown from their feet with the gigantic weight of the iron riders, fell like grain at the breath of a storm. The resistance was so brief that it seemed to Pan Yan as though some enormous dragons had swallowed the three kurens at a gulp. And they were the best troops of the Saitch. Terrified by the noise of the wings, the horses began to spread disorder in the Zaporojian ranks. The Irkleyeff, Kalnibolok, Minsk, Shkurinsk, and Titareff regiments fell into complete disorder, and pressed by the mass of the fleeing, began to retreat in confusion. Meanwhile the dragoons came up with the hussars, and began to help them in the bloody harvest. The Vasyurinsk kuren, after a desperate resistance, turned in flight to the Cossack intrenchments. The centre of Hmelnitski's forces, shaken more and more, beaten, pushed into a disorderly mass, slashed with swords, forced back in the iron onset, was unable to get time to stop and re-form.

"Devils! not Poles!" cried old Zakhar.

Skshetuski was as if bewildered. Being ill, he could not master himself. He laughed and cried at once, and at times screamed out words of command, as if he were leading the regiments himself. Zakhar held him by the skirts, and had to call others to his aid.

The battle came so near the Cossack camp that faces could be almost distinguished. There were artillery discharges from the intrenchments; but the Cossack balls, striking their own men as well as the enemy, increased the disorder. The hussars struck

upon the Pashkoff kuren, which formed the guard of the hetman, in the centre of which was Hmelnitski himself. Suddenly a fearful cry was heard through all the Cossack ranks. The great red standard had tottered and fallen.

But at that moment Krechovski, at the head of his five thousand Cossacks, rushed to the fight. Sitting on an enormous cream-colored horse, he flew on in the first rank, without a cap, a sabre above his head, gathering before him the disordered Zaporojians, who, seeing the approaching succor, though without order, returned to the attack. The battle raged again in the centre of the line.

On both flanks fortune in like manner failed Hmelnitski. The Tartars, repulsed twice by the Wallachian regiments and Pototski's Cossacks, lost all eagerness for the fight. Two horses were killed under Tugai Bey. Victory inclined continually to the side of young Pototski.

But the battle did not last long. The rain, which for some time had been increasing every moment, soon became so violent that through the rush of water nothing could be seen. Not streams, but torrents of rain fell on the ground from the open flood-gates of heaven. The steppe was turned into a lake. It grew so dark that one man could not distinguish another at a few paces' distance. The noise of the storm drowned the words of command. The wet muskets and guns grew silent. Heaven itself put an end to the slaughter.

Hmelnitski, drenched to the skin, furious, rushed into his

camp. He spoke not a word to any man. A tent of camelskin was pitched, under which, hiding himself, he sat alone with his sad thoughts.

Despair seized him. He understood at last what work he had begun. See! he is beaten, repulsed, almost broken, in a battle with such a small force that it could be properly considered as a scouting party. He knew how great was the power of resistance in the armies of the Commonwealth, and he took that into account when he ventured on a war. And still he had failed in his reckoning, – so at least it seemed to him at that moment. Therefore he seized himself by his shaven head, and wished to break it against the first cannon he saw. What would the resistance be at his meeting with the hetmans and the whole Commonwealth?

His thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Tugai Bey. The eyes of the Tartar were blazing with rage; his face was pale, and his teeth glittered from behind his lips, unhidden by mustaches.

"Where is the booty, where the prisoners, where the heads of the leaders, – where is victory?" asked he, in a hoarse voice.

Hmelnitski sprang from his place. "There!" answered he loudly, pointing to the Polish camp.

"Go there, then!" roared Tugai Bey; "and if you don't go, I will drag you by a rope to the Crimea."

"I will go," said Hmelnitski, – "I will go to-day! I will take booty and prisoners; but you shall give answer to the Khan, for

you want booty and you avoid battle."

"Dog!" howled Tugai Bey, "you are destroying the army of the Khan!"

For a moment they stood snorting in front of each other. Hmelnitski regained his composure first.

"Tugai Bey," said he, "be not disturbed! Rain interrupted the battle, just as Krechovski was breaking the dragoons. I know them! They will fight with less fury to-morrow. The steppe will be mud to the bottom. The hussars will be beaten. To-morrow everything will be ours."

"That's your word!" blurted out Tugai Bey.

"And I will keep it. Tugai Bey, my friend, the Khan sent you for my assistance, not for my misfortune."

"You prophesied victory, not defeat."

"A few prisoners of the dragoons are taken; I will give them to you."

"Let me have them. I will order them to be empaled."

"Don't do that. Give them their liberty. They are men from the Ukraine, from Balaban's regiment. I will send them to bring the dragoons over to our side. It will be with them as with Krechovski."

Tugai Bey was satisfied; he glanced quickly at Hmelnitski, and muttered: "Serpent!"

"Craft is the equal of courage. If we persuade the dragoons to our side, not a man of the Poles will escape, – you understand!"

"I will have Pototski."

"I will give him to you, and Charnetski also."

"Let me have some vudka now, for it is cold."

"Agreed."

At that moment entered Krechovski. The colonel was as gloomy as night. His future starostaships, dignities, castles, and wealth were covered as if with a fog. To-morrow they may disappear altogether, and perhaps out of that fog will rise in their place a rope or a gibbet. Were it not that the colonel had burned the bridges in his rear by destroying the Germans, he would surely have begun to think how to betray Hmelnitski in his turn, and go over with his Cossacks to Pototski's camp. But that was impossible now.

The three sat down, therefore, to a decanter of vudka, and began to drink in silence. The noise of the rain ceased gradually. It was growing dark.

Skshetuski, exhausted from joy, weak and pale, lay motionless in the telega. Zakhar, who had become attached to him, ordered the Cossacks to put a little felt roof over him. The lieutenant listened to the dreary sound of the rain, but in his soul it was clear, bright, and joyful. Behold, his hussars had shown what they could do; his Commonwealth had shown a resistance worthy of its majesty; the first impetus of the Cossack storm had broken on the sharp spears of the royal army. And besides there are the hetmans, there is also Prince Yeremi, and so many lords, so many nobles, so much power, and above all these the king, *primus inter pares*. Pride expanded the breast of Skshetuski, as if at that

moment it contained all that power.

In feeling this, he felt, for the first time since he had lost his freedom in the Saitch, a certain pity for the Cossacks; they were guilty, but blinded, since they tried to go to the sun on a spade. They were guilty, but unfortunate, since they allowed themselves to be carried away by one man, who is leading them to evident destruction.

Then his thoughts wandered farther. Peace would come, when every one would have the right to think of his own private happiness. Then in memory and spirit he hovers above Rozlogi. There, near the lion's den, it must be as quiet as the falling of poppy-seeds. There the rebellion will never raise its head; and though it should, Helena is already in Lubni beyond a doubt.

Suddenly the roar of cannon disturbed the golden thread of his thoughts. Hmelnitski, after drinking, led his regiments again to the attack. But it ended with the play of cannon-firing. Krechovski restrained the hetman.

The next morning was Sunday. The whole day passed quietly and without a shot. The camps lay opposite each other, like the camps of two allied armies.

Skshetuski attributed that silence to the discouragement of the Cossacks. Alas! he did not know that then Hmelnitski, "looking forward with the many eyes of his mind," was occupied in bringing Balaban's dragoons to his side.

On Monday the battle began at daybreak. Pan Yan looked on it, as on the first one, with a smiling, happy face. And again

the regiments of the crown came out before the intrenchment; but this time, not rushing to the attack, they opposed the enemy where they stood. The steppe had grown soft, not on the surface only, as during the first day of the battle, but to its depths. The heavy cavalry could scarcely move; this gave a great preponderance at once to the flying regiments of the Cossacks and the Tartars. The smile vanished gradually from the lieutenant's lips. At the Polish intrenchment the avalanche of attack covered completely the narrow line of the Polish regiments. It appeared as if that chain might break at any moment, and the attack begin directly on the intrenchments. Skshetuski did not observe half of the spirit or warlike readiness with which the regiments fought on the first day. They defended themselves with stubbornness, but did not strike first, did not crush the kurens to the earth, did not sweep the field like a hurricane. The soft soil had rendered fury impossible, and in fact fastened the heavy cavalry to its place in front of the intrenchment. Impetus was the power of the cavalry, and decided victories; but this time the cavalry was forced to remain on one spot.

Hmelnitski, on the contrary, led new regiments every moment to the battle. He was present everywhere. He led each kuren personally to the attack, and withdrew only before the sabres of the enemy. His ardor was communicated gradually to the Zaporojians, who, though they fell in large numbers, rushed to the attack with shouts and cries. They struck the wall of iron

breasts and sharp spears, and beaten, decimated, returned again to the attack. Under this weight the regiments began to waver, to disappear, and in places to retreat, just as an athlete caught in the iron arms of an opponent grows weak, then struggles, and strains every nerve.

Before midday nearly all the forces of the Zaporojians had been under fire and in battle. The fight raged with such stubbornness that between the two lines of combatants a new wall, as it were, was formed of the bodies of horses and men. Every little while, from the battle to the Cossack intrenchments came crowds of wounded men, – bloody, covered with mud, panting, falling from weakness, – but they came with songs on their lips. Fainting, they still cried, "To the death!" The garrison left in the camp was impatient for the fight.

Pan Yan hung his head. The Polish regiments began to retreat from the field to the intrenchment. They were unable to hold out, and a feverish haste was observable in their retreat. At the sight of this twenty thousand mouths and more gave forth a shout of joy, and redoubled the attack. The Zaporojians sprang upon the Cossacks of Pototski, who covered the retreat. But the cannon and a shower of musket-balls drove them back. The battle ceased for a moment. In the Polish camp a trumpet for parley was sounded.

Hmelnitski, however, did not wish to parley. Twelve kurens slipped from their horses to storm the breastworks on foot, with the infantry and Tartars. Krechovski, with three thousand

infantry, was coming to their aid in the decisive moment. All the drums, trumpets, and kettledrums sounded at once, drowning the shouts and salvos of musketry.

Skshetuski looked with trembling upon the deep ranks of the peerless Zaporojian infantry rushing to the breastworks and surrounding them with an ever-narrowing circle. Long streaks of white smoke were blown out at it from the breastworks, as if some gigantic bosom were striving to blow away the locusts closing in upon it inexorably from every side. Cannon-balls dug furrows in it; the firing of musketry did not weaken for a moment. Swarms melted before the eye; the circle quivered in places like a wounded snake, but went on. Already they are coming! They are under the breastworks! The cannon can hurt them no longer! Skshetuski closed his eyes.

And now questions flew through his head as swift as lightning: When he opens his eyes will he see the Polish banners on the breastwork? Will he see-or will he not see? There is some unusual tumult increasing every moment. Something must have happened? The shouts come from the centre of the camp. What is it? What has happened?

"All-powerful God!"

That cry was forced from the mouth of Pan Yan when opening his eyes he saw on the battlements the crimson standard with the archangel, instead of the golden banner of the crown. The camp was captured.

In the evening he learned from Zakhar of the whole course of

the storm. Not in vain had Tugai Bey called Hmelnitski a serpent; for in the moment of most desperate defence the dragoons of Balaban, talked over by the hetman, joined the Cossacks, and hurling themselves on the rear of their own regiments, aided in cutting them to pieces.

In the evening the lieutenant saw the prisoners, and was present at the death of young Pototski, who, having his throat pierced by an arrow, lived only a few hours after the battle, and died in the arms of Stephen Charnetski: "Tell my father," whispered the young castellan in his last moments, – "tell my father-that-like a knight-" He could add no more. His soul left the body and flew to heaven.

Pan Yan long after remembered that pale face and those blue eyes gazing upward in the moment of death. Charnetski made a vow over the cold body to expiate the death of his friend and the disgrace of defeat in torrents of blood, should God give him freedom. And not a tear flowed over his stern face, for he was a knight of iron, greatly famed already for deeds of daring, and known as a man whom no misfortune could bend. He kept the vow. Instead of yielding to despair, he strengthened Pan Yan, who was suffering greatly from the disgrace and defeat of the Commonwealth.

"The Commonwealth has passed through more than one defeat," said Charnetski, "but she contains within her inexhaustible force. No power has broken her as yet, and she will not be broken by a sedition of serfs, whom God himself

will punish, since by rising up against authority, they are putting themselves against his will. As to defeat, true, it is sad; but who have endured defeat? – the hetmans, the forces of the crown? No! After the defection and treason of Krechovski, the division which Pototski led could be considered only an advance guard. The uprising will spread undoubtedly through the whole Ukraine, for the serfs there are insolent and trained to fighting; but an uprising in that part is no novelty. The hetmans will quell it, with Prince Yeremi, whose power stands unshaken as yet; the more violent the outburst, when once put down, the longer will be the peace, which may last perhaps forever. He would be a man of little faith and a small heart, who could admit that some Cossack leader, in company with one Tartar murza, could really threaten a mighty people. Evil would it be with the Commonwealth, if a simple outbreak of serfs could be made a question of its fate or its existence. In truth we did set out contemptuously on this expedition," said Charnetski; "and though our division is rubbed out, I believe that the hetmans are able to put down this rebellion, not with the sword, not with armor, but with clubs."

And while he was speaking in this manner, it seemed that not a captive, not a soldier after a lost battle was speaking, but a proud hetman, certain of victory on the morrow. This greatness of soul and faith in the Commonwealth flowed like balsam over the wounds of the lieutenant. He had had a near view of the power of Hmelnitski, therefore it blinded him somewhat, especially since success had followed it to that moment. But Charnetski

must be right. The forces of the hetmans were still intact, and behind them stood the power of the Commonwealth, the rights of authority, and the will of God. The lieutenant therefore went away strengthened in soul and more cheerful. When going he asked Charnetski if he did not wish to begin negotiations for his freedom with Hmelnitski at once.

"I am the captive of Tugai Bey," said Charnetski; "to him I will pay my ransom. But with that fellow Hmelnitski I will have nothing to do; I give him to the hangman."

Zakhar, who had made it easy for Skshetuski to see the prisoners, comforted him while returning to the telega.

"Not with young Pototski, but with the hetmans is the difficulty. The struggle is only begun, but what will be the end, God knows! The Cossacks and Tartars have taken Polish treasure, it is true, but it is one thing to take and another to keep. And you, my child, do not grieve, do not despair, for you will get your freedom in time. You will go to your own people, and I, old man, shall be sorry for you. It is sad for an old man alone in the world. With the hetmans it will be hard, oh, how hard!"

In truth the victory, though brilliant, did not in the least decide the struggle for Hmelnitski. It might even be unfavorable for him, because it was easy to foresee that now the Grand Hetman, to avenge his son, would press upon the Cossacks with special stubbornness, and would leave nothing undone to break them at once. The Grand Hetman, however, cherished a certain dislike for Prince Yeremi, which, though veiled with politeness, was still

evident enough in various circumstances.

Hmelnetski, knowing this perfectly, admitted that now this dislike would cease, and Pototski would first reach out his hand in reconciliation, which would secure for him the assistance of a famous warrior and his powerful troops. With such forces united under a leader like the prince, Hmelnitski did not dare yet to measure strength, for he had not yet sufficient confidence in himself. He determined therefore to hasten, and together with the news of the defeat of Jóltiya Vodi, appear in the Ukraine, and strike the hetmans before the succor of the prince could arrive.

He gave no rest to his troops, therefore, but at daybreak after the battle hurried on. The march was as rapid as if the hetman were fleeing. It was as if an inundation were covering the steppe and rushing forward, collecting all the waters on the way. Forests, oak-groves, grave-mounds were avoided; rivers were crossed without halting. The Cossack forces increased on the road, for new crowds of peasants fleeing from the Ukraine were added to them continually.

They brought news of the hetmans, but contradictory. Some said that Prince Yeremi was yet beyond the Dnieper; others that he had joined the forces of the crown. But all declared that the Ukraine was already on fire. The peasants were not only fleeing to meet Hmelnitski in the Wilderness, but burning villages and towns, throwing themselves on their masters, and arming everywhere. The forces of the crown had been fightings for the past two weeks. Stebloff was destroyed; at Derenhovtsi

a bloody battle had been fought. The town Cossacks in various places went over to the side of the people, and at all points were merely waiting for the word. Hmelnitski had reckoned on all this, and hastened the more.

At last he stood on the threshold. Chigirin opened wide her gates. The Cossack garrison went over at once to his regiments. The house of Chaplinski was wrecked; a handful of nobles, seeking refuge in the town, were cut to pieces. Joyful shouts, ringing of bells, and processions ceased not for a moment. The whole region flamed up at once. All living men, seizing scythes and pikes, joined the Zaporojians; endless crowds hastened to the camp from every side. There came also joyful, because certain, tidings that Yeremi had indeed offered his assistance to the hetmans, but had not yet joined them.

Hmelnitski felt relieved. He moved on without delay, and advanced through insurrection, slaughter, and fire. Ruin and corpses bore witness to this. He advanced like an avalanche, destroying everything in his path. The country rose before him, and was a desert behind. He went like an avenger, like a legendary dragon; his footsteps pressed out blood, his breath kindled conflagrations.

In Cherkasi he halted with his main forces, sending in advance the Tartars under Tugai Bey and the wild Krívonos, who came up with the Polish hetmans at Korsún and attacked them without delay. The Tartars were forced to pay dearly for their boldness. Repulsed, decimated, scattered, they retreated in confusion.

Hmelnitski hurried to their aid. On the way news reached him that Senyavski with some regiments had joined the hetmans, who had left Korsún, and were marching on Boguslav. This was true. Hmelnitski occupied Korsún without resistance, and leaving there his trains and provisions, in a word, his whole camp, hurried after them. He had no need to follow long, for they had not gone far. At Krutaya Balka his advance guard came upon the Polish camp.

It was not given to Skshetuski to see the battle, for he remained in Korsún with the camp. Zakhar lodged him on the square, in the house of Zabokshytski, whom the crowd had already hanged, and placed a guard from the remnants of the Mirgorod kuren; for the crowd robbed continually, and killed every man who seemed to them a Pole. Through the broken windows Skshetuski saw the multitude of drunken peasants, bloody, with rolled-up shirt-sleeves, going from house to house, from cellar to cellar, and searching all corners, garrets, lofts; from time to time a terrible noise announced that a nobleman, a Jew, a man, a woman, or a child had been found. The victim was dragged to the square and gloated over in the most fearful manner. The crowd fought with one another for the remnants of the bodies; with delight they rubbed the blood on their faces and breasts, and wound the still steaming entrails around their necks. They seized little Jews by the legs and tore them apart amid the wild laughter of the mob. They rushed upon houses surrounded by guards in which distinguished captives were confined, – left living because

large ransoms were expected from them. Then the Zaporojians or the Tartars standing guard repulsed the crowd, thumping the assailants on the heads with their pikestaffs, bows, or ox-hide whips. Such was the case before the house where Skshetuski was. Zakhar gave orders to handle the crowd without mercy, and the Mirgorod men executed the order with pleasure; for the men of the lower country received the assistance of the mob willingly in time of insurrection, but had more contempt for them than they had for the nobility. It was not in vain therefore that they called themselves "nobly born Cossacks." Later Hmelnitski himself presented more than once considerable numbers of the mob to the Tartar, who drove them to the Crimea, where they were sold into Turkey and Asia Minor.

The crowd rioted on the square, and reached such wild disorder that at last they began to kill one another. The day was drawing to an end. One side of the square and the priest's house were on fire. Fortunately the wind blew the fire toward the field, and prevented the extension of the conflagration. But the gigantic flame lighted up the square as brightly as the sun's rays. The excitement became too great for restraint. From a distance came the terrible roar of cannon; it was evident that the battle at Krutaya Balka was growing fiercer and fiercer.

"It must be pretty hot for ours there," muttered old Zakhar. "The hetmans are not trifling. Ah! Pan Pototski is a real soldier." Then he pointed through the window at the crowd. "Oh!" said he, "they are revelling now; but if Hmelnitski is beaten, then there

will be revelling over them."

At that moment the tramp of cavalry was heard, and a number of riders rushed to the square on foaming horses. Their faces black from powder, their clothes torn, and the heads of some of them bound in rags showed that they had hurried straightway from battle.

"People who believe in God, save yourselves! The Poles are beating ours!" they cried in loud voices.

Tumult and disorder followed. The multitude moved like a wave tossed by the wind. Suddenly wild dismay possessed all. They rushed to escape; but the streets were blocked with wagons, one part of the square was on fire, there was no place for flight. The crowd began to press and cry, to beat, choke one another, and howl for mercy, though the enemy was far away.

The lieutenant, when he heard what was taking place, grew almost wild from joy. He began to run through the room like a madman, to beat his breast with his hands with all his power, and to cry, -

"I knew that it would be so! As I am alive, I knew it! This is the meeting with the hetmans, with the whole Commonwealth! The hour of punishment has come! What is this?"

Again resounded the tramp; and this time several hundred Tartar horsemen appeared on the square. They rushed on at random. The crowd stopped the way before them. They rushed at the crowd, struck, beat, and dispersed it; they lashed their horses, urging them on to the road leading to Cherkasi.

"They run like a whirlwind," said Zakhar.

Scarcely had Skshetuski moved when a second division flew by, and after that a third. The flight seemed to be general. The guards before the houses began to grow uneasy, and also to show a wish to escape. Zakhar hurried through the porch.

"Halt!" cried he to the Mirgorod men.

Smoke, heat, disorder, the tramping of horses, sounds of alarm, the howling of the crowd in the light of the conflagration, were blended in one fearful picture on which the lieutenant gazed through the window.

"What a defeat there must be! what a defeat!" cried he to Zakhar, not considering that the latter could not share his delight.

Now a new division of fugitives rushed by like lightning. The thunder of cannon shook the houses of Korsún to their foundations. Suddenly a shrieking voice began to cry right there at the house, -

"Save yourselves! Hmelnitski is killed! Hmelnitski is killed! Tugai Bey is killed!"

On the square there was a real end of the world. People in terror rushed into the flames. The lieutenant fell upon his knees, raised his hands to heaven, -

"Oh, almighty, great, and just God, praise to thee in the highest!"

Zakhar interrupted his prayer, running into the room from the antechamber.

"Come now," said he, panting, "come and promise pardon to

the Mirgorod men, for they wish to go away; and if they go, the crowd will fall upon us."

Skshetuski went out to the porch. The Mirgorod men were moving around unquietly before the house, exhibiting a firm determination to leave the place and flee by the road leading to Cherkasi. Fear had taken possession of every one in the town. Each moment new crowds came, fleeing, as if on wings, from the direction of Krutáya Balka, – peasants, Tartars, town Cossacks, Zaporojians, in the greatest disorder. And still Hmelnitski's principal forces must be fighting yet. The battle could not be entirely decided, for the cannon were thundering with redoubled force. Skshetuski turned to the Mirgorod men.

"Because you have guarded my person well," said he, loftily, "you need no flight to save yourselves, for I promise you intercession and favor with the hetman."

The Mirgorod men uncovered their heads. Pan Yan put his hands on his hips, and looked proudly on the square, which grew emptier each moment. What a change of fate! Here is the lieutenant, a short time since a captive, dragged after the Cossack camp; now he has become among insolent Cossacks as a lord among subjects, as a noble among peasants, as an armored hussar among camp-followers. He, a captive, has now promised favor, and heads are uncovered in his presence, while submissive voices cry with that prolonged tone indicating fear and obedience, -

"Show favor to us, lord!"

"It will be as I have said," returned the lieutenant.

He was indeed sure of the efficacy of his intercession with the hetman, with whom he was acquainted, for he had often borne letters to him from Prince Yeremi, and knew how to secure his favor. He stood, therefore, with his hands on his hips; and joy was on his face, lighted up with the blaze of the conflagration.

"Behold! the war is at an end, the wave is broken at the threshold!" thought he. "Pan Charnetski was right: the forces of the Commonwealth are unexhausted, its power unbroken."

When he thought of this, pride swelled his breast, – not ignoble pride, coming from a hoped-for satisfaction of vengeance, from the conquest of an enemy; not the gaining of freedom, which now he expected every moment; nor because caps were removed before him; but he felt proud because he was a son of that victorious and mighty Commonwealth, against whose gates every malice, every attack, every blow, is broken and crushed like the powers of hell against the gates of heaven. He felt proud, as a patriotic nobleman, that he had received strength in his despondency, and was not deceived in his faith. He desired no revenge.

"She has conquered like a queen, she will forgive like a mother," thought he.

Meanwhile the roar of cannon was changed to prolonged thunder. Horses' hoofs clattered again over the empty streets. A Cossack, bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves, dashed into the square on a barebacked horse, with the speed of a thunderbolt; his face, cut open with a sword, was streaming with blood. He

reined in the horse, stretched forth his hands, and when he had taken breath, with open mouth began to cry, -

"Hmelnitski is beating the Poles! The serene great mighty lords, the hetmans and colonels, are conquered, – the knights and the cavalry!"

When he had said this, he reeled and fell to the ground. The men of Mirgorod sprang to assist him.

Flame and pallor passed over the face of Skshetuski.

"What does he say?" asked he feverishly of Zakhar. "What has happened? It cannot be. By the living God, it cannot be!"

Silence! Only the hissing of flames on the opposite side of the square, shaking out clusters of sparks, and from time to time a burnt house falls with a crash.

Now more couriers rush in. "Beaten are the Poles, – beaten!"

After them follow a detachment of Tartars. They march slowly, for they surround men on foot, evidently prisoners.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.