

**ГЕНРИК
СЕНКЕВИЧ**

PAN MICHAEL

Генрик Сенкевич

Ran Michael

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Henryk Sienkiewicz
Pan Michael: An Historical Novel
of Poland, the Ukraine, and Turkey

TO

JOHN MURRAY BROWN, Esq

My Dear Brown, – You read "With Fire and Sword" in manuscript: you appreciated its character, and your House published it. What you did for the first, you did later on for the other two parts of the trilogy. Remembering your deep interest in all the translations, I beg to inscribe to you the concluding volume, "Pan Michael."

JEREMIAH CURTIN.

Valentia Island, West Coast of Ireland,

August 15. 1893.

INTRODUCTION

The great struggle begun by the Cossacks, and, after the victory at Korsun, continued by them and the Russian population of the Commonwealth, is described in "With Fire and Sword," from the ambush on the Omelnik¹ to the battle of Berestechko. In "The Deluge" the Swedish invasion is the argument, and a mere reference is made to the war in which Moscow and the Ukraine are on one side and the Commonwealth on the other. In "Pan Michael," the present volume and closing work of the trilogy, the invader is the Turk, whose forces, though victorious at Kamenyets, are defeated at Hotin.

"With Fire and Sword" covers the war of 1648-49, which was ended at Zborovo, where a treaty most hateful to the Poles was concluded between the Cossacks and the Commonwealth. In the second war there was only one great action, that of Berestechko (1651), an action followed by the treaty of Belaya Tserkoff, oppressive to the Cossacks and impossible of execution.

The main event in the interval between Berestechko and the war with Moscow was the siege and peace of Jvanyets, of which mention is made in the introduction to "With Fire and Sword."

After Jvanyets the Cossacks turned to Moscow and swore allegiance to the Tsar in 1654; in that year the war was begun to which reference is made in "The Deluge." In addition to the Cossack cause Moscow had questions of her own, and invaded the Commonwealth with two separate armies; of these one moved on White Russia and Lithuania, the other joined the forces of Hmelnitski.

Moscow had rapid and brilliant success in the north. Smolensk, Orsha, and Vityebsk were taken in the opening campaign, as were Vilno, Kovno, and Grodno in the following summer. In 1655 White Russia and nearly all Lithuania came under the hand of the Tsar.

In view of Moscow's great victories, Karl Gustav made a sudden descent on the Commonwealth. The Swedish monarch became master of Great and Little Poland almost without a blow. Yan Kazimir fled to Silesia, and a majority of the nobles took the oath to Karl Gustav.

Moving from the Ukraine, Hmelnitski and Buturlin, the Tsar's voevoda, carried all before them till they encamped outside Lvoff; there the Cossack hetman gave audience to an envoy from Yan Kazimir, and was persuaded to withdraw with his army, thus leaving the king one city in the Commonwealth, a great boon, as was evident soon after.

When Swedish success was almost perfect, and the Commonwealth seemed lost, the Swedes laid siege to Chenstohova. The amazing defence of that sanctuary roused religious spirit in the Poles, who had tired of Swedish rigor; they resumed allegiance to Yan Kazimir, who returned and rallied his adherents at Lvoff, the city spared by Hmelnitski. In the attempt to strike his rival in that capital of Red Russia, Karl Gustav made the swift though calamitous march across Poland which Sienkiewicz has described in "The Deluge" so vividly.

Soon after his return from Silesia, the Polish king sent an embassy to the Tsar. Austria sent another to strengthen it and arrange a treaty or a truce on some basis.

Yan Kazimir was eager for peace with Moscow at any price, especially a price paid in promises. The Tsar desired peace on terms that would give the Russian part of the Commonwealth to Moscow, Poland proper to become a hereditary kingdom in which the Tsar himself or his heir would succeed Yan Kazimir, and thus give to both States the same sovereign, though different administrations.

An agreement was effected: the sovereign or heir of Moscow was to succeed Yan Kazimir, details of boundaries and succession to be settled by the Diet, both sides to refrain from hostilities till the Swedes were expelled, and neither to make peace with Sweden separately.

Austria forced the Swedish garrison out of Cracow, and then induced the Elector of Brandenburg to desert Sweden. She did this by bringing Poland to grant independence to Princely, that is, Eastern Prussia, where the elector was duke and a vassal of the Commonwealth. The elector,

¹ "With Fire and Sword," page 4.

who at that time held the casting vote in the choice of Emperor, agreed in return for the weighty service which Austria had shown him to give his voice for Leopold, who had just come to the throne in Vienna.

Austria, having secured the imperial election at Poland's expense, took no further step on behalf of the Commonwealth, but disposed troops in Southern Poland and secured her own interests. The Elector, to make his place certain in the final treaty, took active part against Sweden. Peace was concluded in 1657 and ratified in 1660 at Oliva, With the expulsion of the Swedes the historical part of "The Deluge" is ended, no further reference being made to the main war between the Commonwealth and Moscow.

Since the Turkish invasion described in "Pan Michael" was caused by events in this main war, a short account of its subsequent course and its connection with Turkey is in order in this place.

Bogdan Hmelnitski dreaded the truce between Moscow and Poland. He feared lest the Poles, outwitting the Tsar, might recover control of the Cossacks; hence he joined the alliance which Karl Gustav had made with Rakotsy in 1657 to dismember the Commonwealth. Rakotsy was defeated, and the alliance failed; both Moscow and Austria were opposed to it.

In 1657 Hmelnitski died, and was succeeded as hetman by Vygovski, chancellor of the Cossack army, though Yuri, the old hetman's son, had been chosen during his father's last illness. Vygovski was a noble, with leanings toward Poland, though his career was firm proof that he loved himself better than any cause.

In the following year the new hetman made a treaty at Gadyach with the Commonwealth, and in conjunction with a Polish army defeated Prince Trubetskoi in a battle at Konotop. The Polish Diet annulled now the terms of the treaty concluded with Moscow two years before. Various reasons were alleged for this action; the true reason was that in 1655 the succession to the Polish crown had been offered to Austria, and, though refused in public audience, had been accepted in private by the Emperor for his son Leopold. In the following year Austria advised the Poles unofficially to offer this crown (already disposed of) to the Tsar, and thus induce him to give the Commonwealth a respite, and turn his arms against Sweden.

The Poles followed this advice; the Tsar accepted their offer. When the service required had been rendered the treaty was broken. In the same year, however, Vygovski was deposed by the Cossacks, the treaty of Gadyach rejected, and Yuri Hmelnitski made hetman. The Cossacks were again in agreement with Moscow; but the Poles spared no effort to bring Yuri to their side, and they succeeded through the deposed hetman, Vygovski, who adhered to the Commonwealth so far.

Both sides were preparing their heaviest blows at this juncture, and 1660 brought victory to the Poles. In the beginning of that year Moscow had some success in Lithuania, but was forced back at last toward Smolensk. The best Polish armies, trained in the Swedish struggle, and leaders like Charnyetski, Sapyeha, and Kmita, turned the scale in White Russia. In the Ukraine the Poles, under Lyubomirski and Pototski, were strengthened by Tartars and met the forces of Moscow under Sheremetyeff, with the Cossacks under Yuri Hmelnitski. At the critical moment, and during action, Yuri deserted to the Poles, and secured the defeat of Sheremetyeff, who surrendered at Chudново and was sent a Tartar captive to the Crimea.

In all the shifting scenes of the conflict begun by the resolute Bogdan, there was nothing more striking than the conduct and person of Yuri Hmelnitski, who renounced all the work of his father. Great, it is said, was the wonder of the Poles when they saw him enter their camp. Bogdan Hmelnitski, a man of iron will and striking presence, had filled the whole Commonwealth with terror; his son gave way at the very first test put upon him, and in person was, as the Poles said, a dark, puny stripling, more like a timid novice in a monastery than a Cossack. In the words of the captive voevoda, Sheremetyeff, he was better fitted to be a gooseherd than a hetman.

The Polish generals thought now that the conflict was over, and that the garrisons of Moscow would evacuate the Ukraine; but they did not. At this juncture the Polish troops, unpaid for a long

time, refused service, revolted, formed what they called a "sacred league," and lived on the country. The Polish army vanished from the field, and after it the Tartars. Young Hmelnitski turned again to Moscow, and writing to the Tsar, declared that, forced by Cossack colonels, he had joined the Polish king, but wished to return to his former allegiance. Whatever his wishes may have been, he did not escape the Commonwealth; stronger men than he, and among them Vygovski, kept him well in hand. The Ukraine was split into two camps: that west of the river, or at least the Cossacks under Yuri Hmelnitski, obeyed the Commonwealth; the Eastern bank adhered to Moscow.

Two years later, Yuri, the helpless hetman, left his office and took refuge in a cloister. He was succeeded by Teterya, a partisan of Poland, which now made every promise to the leading Cossacks, not as in the old time when the single argument was sabres.

East of the Dnieper another hetman ruled; but there the Poles could take no part in struggles for the office. The rivalry was limited to partisans of Moscow. Besides the two groups of Cossacks on the Dnieper, there remained the Zaporojians. Teterya strove to win these to the Commonwealth, and Yan Kazimir, the king, assembled all the forces he could rally and crossed the Dnieper toward the end of 1663. At first he had success in some degree, but in the following year led back a shattered, hungry army.

Teterya had received a promise from the Zaporojians that they would follow the example of the Eastern Ukraine. The king having failed in his expedition, Teterya declared that peace must be concluded between the Commonwealth and Moscow to save the Ukraine; that the country was reduced to ruin by all parties, neither one of which could subjugate the other; and that to save themselves the Cossacks would be forced to seek protection of the Sultan.

Doroshenko succeeded Teterya in the hetman's office, and began to carry out this Cossack project. In 1666 he sent a message to the Porte declaring that the Ukraine was at the will of the Sultan.

The Sultan commanded the Khan to march to the Ukraine. Toward the end of that year the Tartars brought aid to the Cossacks, and the joint army swept the field of Polish forces.

Meanwhile negotiations had been pending a long time between the Commonwealth and Moscow. An insurrection under Lyubomirski brought the Poles to terms touching boundaries in the north. In the south Moscow demanded, besides the line of the Dnieper, Kieff and a certain district around it on the west. This the Poles refused stubbornly till Doroshenko's union with Turkey induced them to yield Kieff to Moscow for two years. On this basis a peace of twenty years was concluded in 1667, at Andrussoff near Smolensk. This peace became permanent afterward, and Kieff remained with Moscow.

In 1668 Yan Kazimir abdicated, hoping to secure the succession to a king in alliance with France, and avoid a conflict with Turkey through French intervention. No foreign candidate, however, found sufficient support, and Olshovski,² the crafty and ambitious vice-chancellor, proposed at an opportune moment Prince Michael Vishnyevetski, son of the renowned Yeremi, and he was elected in 1669. The new king, of whom a short sketch is given in "The Deluge" (Vol. II. page 253), was, like Yuri Hmelnitski, the imbecile son of a terrible father. Elected by the lesser nobility in a moment of spite against magnates, he found no support among the latter. Without merit or influence at home, he sought support in Austria, and married a sister of the Emperor Leopold. Powerless in dealing with the Cossacks, to whom his name was detestable, without friends, except among the petty nobles, whose support in that juncture was more damaging than useful, he made a Turkish war certain. It came three years later, when the Sultan marched to support Doroshenko, and began the siege of Kamenyets, described in "Pan Michael."

After the fall of Kamenyets, the Turks pushed on to Lvoff, and dictated the peace of Buchach, which gave Podolia and the western bank of the Dnieper, except Kieff and its district, to the Sultan.

² The bishop who visited Zagloba at Ketling's house, see pages 121-126.

The battle of Hotin, described in the epilogue, made Sobieski king in 1674. This election was considered a triumph for France, an enemy of Austria at that time; and during the earlier years of his reign Sobieski was on the French side, and had sound reasons for this policy. In 1674 the Elector of Brandenburg attacked Swedish Pomerania; France supported Sweden, and roused Poland to oppose the Elector, who had fought against Yan Kazimir, his own suzerain. Sobieski, supported by subsidies from France, made levies of troops, went to Dantzic in 1677, concluded with Sweden a secret agreement to make common cause with her and attack the Elector. But in spite of subsidies, preparations, and treaties, the Polish king took no action. Sweden, without an ally, was defeated; Poland lost the last chance of recovering Prussia, and holding thereby an independent position in Europe.

The influence of Austria, the power of the church, and the intrigues of his own wife, bore away Sobieski. He deserted the alliance with France. To the end of his life he served Austria far better than Poland, though not wishing to do so, and died in 1696 complaining of this world, in which, as he said, "sin, malice, and treason are rampant."

Jeremiah Curtin.

Cahirciveen, County Kerry, Ireland,

August 17, 1893.

Note. – The reign of Sobieski brought to an end that part of Polish history during which the Commonwealth was able to take the initiative in foreign politics. After Sobieski the Poles ceased to be a positive power in Europe.

I have not been able to verify the saying said to have been uttered by Sobieski at Vienna. In the text (page 401) he is made to say that Pani Wojnina (War's wife) may give birth to people, but Wojna (War) only destroys them. Who the Pani Wojnina was that Sobieski had in view I am unable to say at this moment, unless she was *Peace*.

CHAPTER I

After the close of the Hungarian war, when the marriage of Pan Andrei Kmita and Panna Aleksandra Billevich was celebrated, a cavalier, equally meritorious and famous in the Commonwealth, Pan Michael Volodyovski, colonel of the Lauda squadron, was to enter the bonds of marriage with Panna Anna Borzobogati Kراسienski.

But notable hindrances rose, which delayed and put back the affair. The lady was a foster-daughter of Princess Griselda Vishnyevetski, without whose permission Panna Anna would in no wise consent to the wedding. Pan Michael was forced therefore to leave his affianced in Vodokty, by reason of the troubled times, and go alone to Zamost for the consent and the blessing of the princess.

But a favoring star did not guide him: he did not find the princess in Zamost; she had gone to the imperial court in Vienna for the education of her son. The persistent knight followed her even to Vienna, though that took much time. When he had arranged the affair there successfully, he turned homeward in confident hope.

He found troubled times at home: the army was forming a confederacy; in the Ukraine uprisings continued; at the eastern boundary the conflagration had not ceased. New forces were assembled to defend the frontiers even in some fashion. Before Pan Michael had reached Warsaw, he received a commission issued by the voevoda of Rus. Thinking that the country should be preferred at all times to private affairs, he relinquished his plan of immediate marriage and moved to the Ukraine. He campaigned in those regions some years, living in battles, in unspeakable hardships and labor, having barely a chance on occasions to send letters to the expectant lady.

Next he was envoy to the Crimea; then came the unfortunate civil war with Pan Lyubomirski, in which Volodyovski fought on the side of the king against that traitor and infamous man; then he went to the Ukraine a second time under Sobieski.

From these achievements the glory of his name increased in such manner that he was considered on all sides as the first soldier of the Commonwealth, but the years were passing for him in anxiety, sighs, and yearning. At last 1668 came, when he was sent at command of the castellan to rest; at the beginning of the year he went for the cherished lady, and taking her from Vodokty, they set out for Cracow.

They were journeying to Cracow, because Princess Griselda, who had returned from the dominions of the emperor, invited Pan Michael to have the marriage at that place, and offered herself to be mother to the bride.

The Kmitas remained at home, not thinking to receive early news from Pan Michael, and altogether intent on a new guest that was coming to Vodokty. Providence had till that time withheld from them children; now a change was impending, happy and in accordance with their wishes.

That year was surpassingly fruitful. Grain had given such a bountiful yield that the barns could not hold it, and the whole land, in the length and the breadth of it, was covered with stacks. In neighborhoods ravaged by war the young pine groves had grown in one spring more than in two years at other times. There was abundance of game and of mushrooms in the forests, as if the unusual fruitfulness of the earth had been extended to all things that lived on it. Hence the friends of Pan Michael drew happy omens for his marriage also, but the fates ordained otherwise.

CHAPTER II

On a certain beautiful day of autumn Pan Andrei Kmita was sitting under the shady roof of a summer-house and drinking his after-dinner mead; he gazed at his wife from time to time through the lattice, which was grown over with wild hops. Pani Kmita was walking on a neatly swept path in front of the summer-house. The lady was unusually stately; bright-haired, with a face serene, almost angelic. She walked slowly and carefully, for there was in her a fulness of dignity and blessing.

Pan Andrei gazed at her with intense love. When she moved, his look turned after her with such attachment as a dog shows his master with his eyes. At moments he smiled, for he was greatly rejoiced at sight of her, and he twirled his mustache upward. At such moments there appeared on his face a certain expression of glad frolicsomeness. It was clear that the soldier was fun-loving by nature, and in years of single life had played many a prank.

Silence in the garden was broken only by the sound of over-ripe fruit dropping to the earth and the buzzing of insects. The weather had settled marvellously. It was the beginning of September. The sun burned no longer with excessive violence, but cast yet abundant golden rays. In these rays ruddy apples were shining among the gray leaves and hung in such numbers that they hid the branches. The limbs of plum-trees were bending under plums with bluish wax on them.

The first movement of air was shown by the spider-threads fastened to the trees; these swayed with a breeze so slight that it did not stir even the leaves.

Perhaps it was that calm in the world which had so filled Pan Kmita with joyfulness, for his face grew more radiant each moment. At last he took a draught of mead and said to his wife, —

"Olenka, but come here! I will tell you something."

"It may be something that I should not like to hear."

"As God is dear to me, it is not. Give me your ear."

Saying this, he seized her by the waist, pressed his mustaches to her bright hair, and whispered, "If a boy, let him be Michael."

She turned away with face somewhat flushed, and whispered, "But you promised not to object to Heraclius."

"Do you not see that it is to honor Volodyovski?"

"But should not the first remembrance be given to my grandfather?"

"And my benefactor – H'm! true – but the next will be Michael. It cannot be otherwise."

Here Olenka, standing up, tried to free herself from the arms of Pan Andrei; but he, gathering her in with still greater force, began to kiss her on the lips and the eyes, repeating at the same time, —

"O thou my hundreds, my thousands, my dearest love!"

Further conversation was interrupted by a lad who appeared at the end of the walk and ran quickly toward the summer-house.

"What is wanted?" asked Kmita, freeing his wife.

"Pan Kharlamp has come, and is waiting in the parlor," said the boy.

"And there he is himself!" exclaimed Kmita, at sight of a man approaching the summer-house. "For God's sake, how gray his mustache is! Greetings to you, dear comrade! greetings, old friend!"

With these words he rushed from the summer-house, and hurried with open arms toward Pan Kharlamp. But first Pan Kharlamp bowed low to Olenka, whom he had seen in old times at the court of Kyedani; then he pressed her hand to his enormous mustache, and casting himself into the embraces of Kmita, sobbed on his shoulder.

"For God's sake, what is the matter?" cried the astonished host.

"God has given happiness to one and taken it from another," said Kharlamp. "But the reasons of my sorrow I can tell only to you."

Here he looked at Olenka; she, seeing that he was unwilling to speak in her presence, said to her husband, "I will send mead to you, gentlemen, and now I leave you."

Kmita took Pan Kharlamp to the summer-house, and seating him on a bench, asked, "What is the matter? Are you in need of assistance? Count on me as on Zavisha!"³

"Nothing is the matter with me," said the old soldier, "and I need no assistance while I can move this hand and this sabre; but our friend, the most worthy cavalier in the Commonwealth, is in cruel suffering. I know not whether he is breathing yet."

"By Christ's wounds! Has anything happened to Volodyovski?"

"Yes," said Kharlamp, giving way to a new outburst of tears. "Know that Panna Anna Borzobogati has left this vale —"

"Is dead!" cried Kmita, seizing his head with both hands.

"As a bird pierced by a shaft."

A moment of silence followed, — no sound but that of apples dropping here and there to the ground heavily, and of Pan Kharlamp panting more loudly while restraining his weeping. But Kmita was wringing his hands, and repeated, nodding his head, —

"Dear God! dear God! dear God!"

"Your grace will not wonder at my tears," said Kharlamp, at last; "for if your heart is pressed by unendurable pain at the mere tidings of what happened, what must it be to me, who was witness of her death and her pain, of her suffering, which surpassed every natural measure?"

Here the servant appeared, bringing a tray with a decanter and a second glass on it; after him came Kmita's wife, who could not repress her curiosity. Looking at her husband's face and seeing in it deep suffering, she said straightway, —

"What tidings have you brought? Do not dismiss me. I will comfort you as far as possible, or I will weep with you, or will help you with counsel."

"Help for this will not be found in your head," said Pan Andrei; "and I fear that your health will suffer from sorrow."

"I can endure much. It is more grievous to live in uncertainty."

"Anusia is dead," said Kmita.

Olenka grew somewhat pale, and dropped on the bench heavily. Kmita thought that she would faint; but grief acted more quickly than the sudden announcement, and she began to weep. Both knights accompanied her immediately.

"Olenka," said Kmita, at last, wishing to turn his wife's thoughts in another direction, "do you not think that she is in heaven?"

"Not for her do I weep, but over the loss of her, and over the loneliness of Pan Michael. As to her eternal happiness, I should wish to have such hope for my own salvation as I have for hers. There was not a worthier maiden, or one of better heart, or more honest. O my Anulka!⁴ my Anulka, beloved!"

"I saw her death," said Kharlamp; "may God grant us all to die with such piety!"

Here silence followed, as if some of their sorrow had gone with their tears; then Kmita said, "Tell us how it was, and take some mead to support you."

"Thank you," said Kharlamp; "I will drink from time to time if you will drink with me; for pain seizes not only the heart, but the throat, like a wolf, and when it seizes a man it might choke him unless he received some assistance. I was going from Chenstohova to my native place to settle there quietly in my old age. I have had war enough; as a stripling I began to practise, and now my mustache is gray. If I cannot stay at home altogether, I will go out under some banner; but these military confederations to the loss of the country and the profit of the enemy, and these civil wars, have disgusted me thoroughly with arms. Dear God! the pelican nourishes its children with its blood,

³ A celebrated bishop of Cracow, famous for ambition and success.

⁴ A diminutive of endearment for Anna. Anusia is another form.

it is true; but this country has no longer even blood in its breast. Sviderski⁵ was a great soldier. May God judge him!"

"My dearest Anulka!" interrupted Pani Kmita, with weeping, "without thee what would have happened to me and to all of us? Thou wert a refuge and a defence to me! O my beloved Anulka!"

Hearing this, Kharlamp sobbed anew, but briefly, for Kmita interrupted him with a question, "But where did you meet Pan Michael?"

"In Chenstohova, where he and she intended to rest, for they were visiting the shrine there after the journey. He told me at once how he was going from your place to Cracow, to Princess Griselda, without whose permission and blessing Anusia was unwilling to marry. The maiden was in good health at that time, and Pan Michael was as joyful as a bird. 'See,' said he, 'the Lord God has given me a reward for my labor!' He boasted also not a little, – God comfort him! – and joked with me because I, as you know, quarrelled with him on a time concerning the lady, and we were to fight a duel. Where is she now, poor woman?"

Here Kharlamp broke out again, but briefly, for Kmita stopped him a second time: "You say that she was well? How came the attack, then, so suddenly?"

"That it was sudden, is true. She was lodging with Pani Martsin Zamoyski, who, with her husband, was spending some time in Chenstohova. Pan Michael used to sit all the day with her; he complained of delay somewhat, and said they might be a whole year on the journey to Cracow, for every one on the way would detain him. And this is no wonder! Every man is glad to entertain such a soldier as Pan Michael, and whoever could catch him would keep him. He took me to the lady too, and threatened smilingly that he would cut me to pieces if I made love to her; but he was the whole world to her. At times, too, my heart sank, for my own sake, because a man in old age is like a nail in a wall. Never mind! But one night Pan Michael rushed in to me in dreadful distress: 'In God's name, can you find a doctor?' 'What has happened?' 'The sick woman knows no one!' 'When did she fall ill?' asked I. 'Pani Zamoyski has just given me word,' replied he. 'It is night now. Where can I look for a doctor, when there is nothing here but a cloister, and in the town more ruins than people?' I found a surgeon at last, and he was even unwilling to go; I had to drive him with weapons. But a priest was more needed than a surgeon; we found at her bedside, in fact, a worthy Paulist, who, through prayer, had restored her to consciousness. She was able to receive the sacrament, and take an affecting farewell of Pan Michael. At noon of the following day it was all over with her. The surgeon said that some one must have given her something, though that is impossible, for witchcraft has no power in Chenstohova. But what happened to Pan Michael, what he said, – my hope is that the Lord Jesus will not account this to him, for a man does not reckon with words when pain is tearing him. You see," Pan Kharlamp lowered his voice, "he blasphemed in his forgetfulness."

"For God's sake, did he blaspheme?" inquired Kmita, in a whisper.

"He rushed out from her corpse to the ante-chamber, from the ante-chamber to the yard, and reeled about like a drunken man. He raised his hands then, and began to cry with a dreadful voice: 'Such is the reward for my wounds, for my toils, for my blood, for my love of country! I had one lamb,' said he, 'and that one, O Lord, Thou didst take from me. To hurl down an armed man,' said he, 'who walks the earth in pride, is a deed for God's hand; but a cat, a hawk, or a kite can kill a harmless dove, and –'"

"By the wounds of God!" exclaimed Pani Kmita, "say no more, or you will draw misfortune on this house."

Kharlamp made the sign of the cross and continued, "The poor soldier thought that he had done service, and still this was his reward. Ah, God knows better what He does, though that is not to be understood by man's reason, nor measured by human justice. Straightway after this blasphemy he

⁵ One of the chiefs of a confederacy formed against the king, Yan Kazimir, by soldiers who had not received their pay.

grew rigid and fell on the ground; and the priest read an exorcism over him, so that foul spirits should not enter him, as they might, enticed by his blasphemy."

"Did he come to himself quickly?"

"He lay as if dead about an hour; then he recovered and went to his room; he would see no one. At the time of the burial I said to him, 'Pan Michael, have God in your heart.' He made me no answer. I stayed three days more in Chenstohova, for I was loath to leave him; but I knocked in vain at his door. He did not want me. I struggled with my thoughts: what was I to do, – try longer at the door, or go away? How was I to leave a man without comfort? But finding that I could do nothing, I resolved to go to Pan Yan Skshetuski. He is his best friend, and Pan Zagloba is his friend also; maybe they will touch his heart somehow, and especially Pan Zagloba, who is quick-witted, and knows how to talk over any man."

"Did you go to Pan Yan?"

"I did, but God gave no luck, for he and Zagloba had gone to Kalish to Pan Stanislav. No one could tell when they would return. Then I thought to myself, 'As my road is toward Jmud, I will go to Pan Kmita and tell what has happened.'"

"I knew from of old that you were a worthy cavalier," said Kmita.

"It is not a question of me in this case, but of Pan Michael," said Kharlamp; "and I confess that I fear for him greatly lest his mind be disturbed."

"God preserve him from that!" said Pani Kmita.

"If God preserves him, he will certainly take the habit, for I tell you that such sorrow I have never seen in my life. And it is a pity to lose such a soldier as he, – it is a pity!"

"How a pity? The glory of God will increase thereby," said Pani Kmita.

Kharlamp's mustache began to quiver, and he rubbed his forehead.

"Well, gracious benefactress, either it will increase or it will not increase. Consider how many Pagans and heretics he has destroyed in his life, by which he has surely delighted our Saviour and His Mother more than any one priest could with sermons. H'm! it is a thing worthy of thought! Let every one serve the glory of God as he knows best. Among the Jesuits legions of men may be found wiser than Pan Michael, but another such sabre as his there is not in the Commonwealth."

"True, as God is dear to me!" cried Kmita. "Do you know whether he stayed in Chenstohova?"

"He was there when I left; what he did later, I know not. I know only this: God preserve him from losing his mind, God preserve him from sickness, which frequently comes with despair, – he will be alone, without aid, without a relative, without a friend, without consolation."

"May the Most Holy Lady in that place of miracles save thee, faithful friend, who hast done so much for me that a brother could not have done more!"

Pani Kmita fell into deep thought, and silence continued long; at last she raised her bright head, and said, "Yendrek, do you remember how much we owe him?"

"If I forget, I will borrow eyes from a dog, for I shall not dare to look an honest man in the face with my own eyes."

"Yendrek, you cannot leave him in that state."

"How can I help him?"

"Go to him."

"There speaks a woman's honest heart; there is a noble woman," cried Kharlamp, seizing her hands and covering them with kisses.

But the advice was not to Kmita's taste; hence he began to twist his head, and said, "I would go to the ends of the earth for him, but – you yourself know – if you were well – I do not say – but you know. God preserve you from any accident! I should wither away from anxiety – A wife is above the best friend. I am sorry for Pan Michael but – you yourself know – "

"I will remain under the protection of the Lauda fathers. It is peaceful here now, and I shall not be afraid of any small thing. Without God's will a hair will not fall from my head; and Pan Michael needs rescue, perhaps."

"Oi, he needs it!" put in Kharlamp.

"Yendrek, I am in good health. Harm will come to me from no one; I know that you are unwilling to go – "

"I would rather go against cannon with an oven-stick!" interrupted Kmita.

"If you stay, do you think it will not be bitter for you here when you think, 'I have abandoned my friend'? and besides, the Lord God may easily take away His blessing in His just wrath."

"You beat a knot into my head. You say that He may take away His blessing? I fear that."

"It is a sacred duty to save such a friend as Pan Michael."

"I love Michael with my whole heart. The case is a hard one! If there is need, there is urgent need, for every hour in this matter is important. I will go at once to the stables. By the living God, is there no other way out of it? The Evil One inspired Pan Yan and Zagloba to go to Kalish. It is not a question with me of myself, but of you, dearest. I would rather lose all I have than be without you one day. Should any one say that I go from you not on public service, I would plant my sword-hilt in his mouth to the cross. Duty, you say? Let it be so. He is a fool who hesitates. If this were for any one else but Michael, I never should do it."

Here Pan Andrei turned to Kharlamp. "Gracious sir, I beg you to come to the stable; we will choose horses. And you, Olenka, see that my trunk is ready. Let some of the Lauda men look to the threshing. Pan Kharlamp, you must stay with us even a fortnight; you will take care of my wife for me. Some land may be found for you here in the neighborhood. Take Lyubich! Come to the stable. I will start in an hour. If 'tis needful, 'tis needful!"

CHAPTER III

Some time before sunset Pan Kmita set out, blessed by his tearful wife with a crucifix, in which splinters of the Holy Cross were set in gold; and since during long years the knight had been inured to sudden journeys, when he started, he rushed forth as if to seize Tartars escaping with plunder.

When he reached Vilno, he held on through Grodno to Bialystok, and thence to Syedlets. In passing through Lukov, he learned that Pan Yan had returned the day previous from Kalish with his wife and children, Pan Zagloba accompanying. He determined, therefore, to go to them; for with whom could he take more efficient counsel touching the rescue of Pan Michael?

They received him with surprise and delight, which were turned into weeping, however, when he told them the cause of his coming.

Pan Zagloba was unable all day to calm himself, and shed so many tears at the pond that, as he said himself afterward, the pond rose, and they had to lift the flood-gate. But when he had wept himself out, he thought deeply; and this is what he said at the council, —

"Yan, you cannot go, for you are chosen to the Chapter; there will be a multitude of cases, as after so many wars the country is full of unquiet spirits. From what you relate. Pan Kmita, it is clear that the storks⁶ will remain in Vodokty all winter, since they are on the work-list and must attend to their duties. It is no wonder that with such housekeeping you are in no haste for the journey, especially since 'tis unknown how long it may last. You have shown a great heart by coming; but if I am to give earnest advice, I will say: Go home; for in Michael's case a near confidant is called for, — one who will not be offended at a harsh answer, or because there is no wish to admit him. Patience is needful, and long experience; and your grace has only friendship for Michael, which in such a contingency is not enough. But be not offended, for you must confess that Yan and I are older friends, and have passed through more adventures with him than you have. Dear God! how many are the times in which I saved him, and he me, from disaster!"

"I will resign my functions as a deputy," interrupted Pan Yan.

"Yan, that is public service!" retorted Zagloba, with sternness.

"God sees," said the afflicted Pan Yan, "that I love my cousin Stanislav with true brotherly affection; but Michael is nearer to me than a brother."

"He is nearer to me than any blood relative, especially since I never had one. It is not the time now to discuss our affection. Do you see, Yan, if this misfortune had struck Michael recently, perhaps I would say to you, 'Give the Chapter to the Devil, and go!' But let us calculate how much time has passed since Kharlamp reached Jmud from Chenstohova, and while Pan Andrei was coming from Jmud here to us. Now, it is needful not only to go to Michael, but to remain with him; not only to weep with him, but to persuade him; not only to show him the Crucified as an example, but to cheer his heart and mind with pleasant jokes. So you know who ought to go, — I! and I will go, so help me God! If I find him in Chenstohova, I will bring him to this place; if I do not find him, I will follow him even to Moldavia, and I will not cease to seek for him while I am able to raise with my own strength a pinch of snuff to my nostrils."

When they had heard this, the two knights fell to embracing Pan Zagloba; and he grew somewhat tender over the misfortune of Pan Michael and his own coming fatigues. Therefore he began to shed tears; and at last, when he had embraced enough, he said, —

"But do not thank me for Pan Michael; you are not nearer to him than I."

"Not for Pan Michael do we thank you," said Kmita; "but that man must have a heart of iron, or rather one not at all human, who would be unmoved at sight of your readiness, which in the service of

⁶ The story in Poland is that storks bring all the infants to the country.

a friend makes no account of fatigue and has no thought for age. Other men in your years think only of a warm corner; but you speak of a long journey as if you were of my years or those of Pan Yan."

Zagloba did not conceal his years, it is true; but, in general, he did not wish people to mention old age as an attendant of incapability. Hence, though his eyes were still red, he glanced quickly and with a certain dissatisfaction at Kmita, and answered, —

"My dear sir, when my seventy-seventh year was beginning, my heart felt a slight sinking, because two axes⁷ were over my neck; but when the eighth ten of years passed me, such courage entered my body that a wife tripped into my brain. And had I married, we might see who would be first to have cause of boasting, you or I."

"I am not given to boasting," said Kmita; "but I do not spare praises on your grace."

"And I should have surely confused you as I did Revera Pototski, the hetman, in presence of the king, when he jested at my age. I challenged him to show who could make the greatest number of goat-springs one after the other. And what came of it? The hetman made three; the haiduks had to lift him, for he could not rise alone; and I went all around with nearly thirty-five springs. Ask Pan Yan, who saw it all with his own eyes."

Pan Yan, knowing that Zagloba had had for some time the habit of referring to him as an eye-witness of everything, did not wink, but spoke again of Pan Michael. Zagloba sank into silence, and began to think of some subject deeply; at last he dropped into better humor and said after supper, —

"I will tell you a thing that not every mind could hit upon. I trust in God that our Michael will come out of this trouble more easily than we thought at first."

"God grant! but whence did that come to your head?" inquired Kmita.

"H'm! Besides an acquaintance with Michael, it is necessary to have quick wit from nature and long experience, and the latter is not possible at your years. Each man has his own special qualities. When misfortune strikes some men, it is, speaking figuratively, as if you were to throw a stone into a river. On the surface the water flows, as it were, quietly; but the stone lies at the bottom and hinders the natural current, and stops it and tears it terribly, and it will lie there and tear it till all the water of that river flows into the Styx. Yan, you may be counted with such men; but there is more suffering in the world for them, since the pain, and the memory of what caused it, do not leave them. But others receive misfortune as if some one had struck them with a fist on the shoulder. They lose their senses for the moment, revive later on, and when the black-and-blue spot is well, they forget it. Oi! such a nature is better in this world, which is full of misfortune."

The knights listened with attention to the wise words of Zagloba; he was glad to see that they listened with such respect, and continued, —

"I know Michael through and through; and God is my witness that I have no wish to find fault with him now, but it seems to me that he grieves more for the loss of the marriage than of the maiden. It is nothing that terrible despair has come, though that too, especially for him, is a misfortune above misfortunes. You cannot even imagine what a wish that man had to marry. There is not in him greed or ambition of any kind, or selfishness: he has left what he had, he has as good as lost his own fortune, he has not asked, for his salary; but in return for all his labors and services he expected, from the Lord God and the Commonwealth, only a wife. And he reckoned in his soul that such bread as that belonged to him; and he was about to put it to his mouth, when right there, as it were, some one sneered at him, saying, 'You have it now! Eat it!' What wonder that despair seized him? I do not say that he did not grieve for the maiden; but as God is dear to me, he grieved more for the marriage, though he would himself swear to the opposite."

"That may be true," said Pan Yan.

"Wait! Only let those wounds of his soul close and heal; we shall see if his old wish will not come again. The danger is only in this, that now, under the weight of despair, he may do something

⁷ This refers to the axelike form of the numeral 7.

or make some decision which he would regret later on. But what was to happen has happened, for in misfortune decision comes quickly. My attendant is packing my clothes. I am not speaking to dissuade you from going; I wished only to comfort you."

"Again, father, you will be a plaster to Michael," said Pan Yan.

"As I was to you, you remember? If I can only find him soon, for I fear that he may be hiding in some hermitage, or that he will disappear somewhere in the distant steppes to which he is accustomed from childhood. Pan Kmita, your grace criticises my age; but I tell you that if ever a courier rushed on with despatches as I shall rush, then command me when I return to unravel old silk, shell peas, or give me a distaff. Neither will hardships detain me, nor wonders of hospitality tempt me; eating, even drinking, will not stop me. You have not yet seen such a journey! I can now barely sit in my place, just as if some one were pricking me from under the bench with an awl. I have even ordered that my travelling-shirt be rubbed with goats' tallow, so as to resist the serpent."

CHAPTER IV

Pan Zagloba did not drive forward so swiftly, however, as he had promised himself and his comrades. The nearer he was to Warsaw, the more, slowly he travelled. It was the time in which Yan Kazimir, king, statesman, and great leader, having extinguished foreign conflagration and brought the Commonwealth, as it were, from the depths of a deluge, had abdicated lordship. He had suffered everything, had endured everything, had exposed his breast to every blow which came from a foreign enemy; but when later on he aimed at internal reforms and instead of aid from the nation found only opposition and ingratitude, he removed from his anointed temples of his own will that crown which had become an unendurable burden to him.

The district and general diets had been held already; and Prajmovski, the primate, summoned the Convocation for November 5.

Great were the early efforts of various candidates, great the rivalry of various parties; and though it was the election alone which would decide, still, each one felt the uncommon importance of the Diet of Convocation. Therefore deputies were hastening to Warsaw, on wheels and on horseback, with attendants and servants; senators were moving to the capital, and with each one of them a magnificent escort.

The roads were crowded; the inns were filled, and discovery of lodgings for a night was connected with great delay. Places were yielded, however, to Zagloba out of regard for his age; but at the same time his immense reputation exposed him more than once to loss of time.

This was the way of it: He would come to some public house, and not another finger could be thrust into the place; the personage who with his escort had occupied the building would come out then, through curiosity to see who had arrived, and finding a man with mustaches and beard as white as milk, would say, in view of such dignity, —

"I beg your grace, my benefactor, to come with me for a chance bite."

Zagloba was no boor, and refused not, knowing that acquaintance with him would be pleasing to every man. When the host conducted him over the threshold and asked, "Whom have I the honor?" he merely put his hands on his hips, and sure of the effect, answered in two words, "Zagloba sum! (I am Zagloba)."

Indeed, it never happened that after those two words a great opening of arms did not follow, and exclamations, "I shall inscribe this among my most fortunate days!" And the cries of officers or nobles, "Look at him! that is the model, the *gloria et decus* (glory and honor) of all the cavaliers of the Commonwealth." They hurried together then to wonder at Zagloba; the younger men came to kiss the skirts of his travelling-coat. After that they drew out of the wagons kegs and vessels, and a *gaudium* (rejoicing) followed, continuing sometimes a number of days.

It was thought universally that he was going as a deputy to the Diet; and when he declared that he was not, the astonishment was general. But he explained that he had yielded his mandate to Pan Domashevski, so that younger men might devote themselves to public affairs. To some he related the real reason why he was on the road; but when others inquired, he put them off with these words, —

"Accustomed to war from youthful years, I wanted in old age to have a last drive at Doroshenko."

After these words they wondered still more at him, and to no one did he seem less important because he was not a deputy, for all knew that among the audience were men who had more power than the deputies themselves. Besides, every senator, even the most eminent, had in mind that, a couple of months later, the election would follow, and then every word of a man of such fame among the knighthood would have value beyond estimation.

They carried, therefore, Zagloba in their arms, and stood before him with bared heads, even the greatest lords. Pan Podlyaski drank three days with him; the Patses, whom he met in Kalushyn, bore him on their hands.

More than one man gave command to thrust into the old hero's hamper considerable gifts, from vodka and wine to richly ornamented caskets, sabres, and pistols.

Zagloba's servants too had good profit from this; and he, despite resolutions and promises, travelled so slowly that only on the third week did he reach Minsk.

But he did not halt for refreshments at Minsk. Driving to the square, he saw a retinue so conspicuous and splendid that he had not met such on the road hitherto: attendants in brilliant colors; half a regiment of infantry alone, for to the Diet of Convocation men did not go armed on horseback, but these troops were in such order that the King of Sweden had not a better guard; the place was filled with gilded carriages carrying tapestry and carpets to use in public houses on the way; wagons with provision chests and supplies of food; with them were servants, nearly all foreign, so that in that throng few spoke an intelligible tongue.

Zagloba saw at last an attendant in Polish costume; hence he gave order to halt, and sure of good entertainment, had put forth one foot already from the wagon, asking at the same time, "But whose retinue is this, so splendid that the king can have no better?"

"Whose should it be," replied the attendant, "but that of our lord, the Prince Marshal of Lithuania?"

"Whose?" repeated Zagloba.

"Are you deaf? Prince Boguslav Radzivil, who is going to the Convocation, but who, God grant, after the election will be elected."

Zagloba hid his foot quickly in the wagon. "Drive on!" cried he. "There is nothing here for us!" And he went on, trembling from indignation.

"O Great God!" said he, "inscrutable are Thy decrees; and if Thou dost not shatter this traitor with Thy thunderbolts. Thou hast in this some hidden designs which it is not permitted to reach by man's reason, though judging in human fashion, it would have been proper to give a good blow to such a bull-driver. But it is evident that evil is working in this most illustrious Commonwealth, if such traitors, without honor and conscience, not only receive no punishment, but ride in safety and power, – nay, exercise civil functions also. It must be that we shall perish, for in what other country, in what other State, could such a thing be brought to pass? Yan Kazimir was a good king, but he forgave too often, and accustomed the wickedest to trust in impunity and safety. Still, that is not his fault alone. It is clear that in the nation civil conscience and the feeling of public virtue has perished utterly. Tfu! tfu! he a deputy! In his infamous hands citizens place the integrity and safety of the country, – in those very hands with which he was rending it and fastening it in Swedish fetters. We shall be lost; it cannot be otherwise! Still more to make a king of him, the – But what! 'tis evident that everything is possible among such people. He a deputy! For God's sake! But the law declares clearly that a man who fills offices in a foreign country cannot be a deputy; and he is a governor-general in princely Prussia under his mangy uncle. Ah, ha! wait, I have thee. And verifications at the Diet, what are they for? If I do not go to the hall and raise this question, though I am only a spectator, may I be turned this minute into a fat sheep, and my driver into a butcher! I will find among deputies men to support me. I know not, traitor, whether I can overcome such a potentate and exclude thee; but what I shall do will not help thy election, – that is sure. And Michael, poor fellow, must wait for me, since this is an action of public importance."

So thought Zagloba, promising himself to attend with care to that case of expulsion, and to bring over deputies in private; for this reason he hastened on more hurriedly to Warsaw from Minsk, fearing to be late for the opening of the Diet. But he came early enough. The concourse of deputies and other persons was so great that it was utterly impossible to find lodgings in Warsaw itself, or in Praga, or even outside the city; it was difficult too to find a place in a private house, for three or

four persons were lodged in single rooms. Zagloba spent the first night in a shop, and it passed rather pleasantly; but in the morning, when he found himself in his wagon, he did not know well what to do.

"My God! my God!" said he, falling into evil humor, and looking around on the Cracow suburbs, which he had just passed; "here are the Bernardines, and there is the ruin of the Kazanovski Palace! Thankless city! I had to wrest it from the enemy with my blood and toil, and now it grudges me a corner for my gray head."

But the city did not by any means grudge Zagloba a corner for his gray head; it simply hadn't one. Meanwhile a lucky star was watching over him, for barely had he reached the palace of the Konyetypolskis when a voice called from one side to his driver, "Stop!"

The man reined in the horses; then an unknown nobleman approached the wagon with gleaming face, and cried out, "Pan Zagloba! Does your grace not know me?"

Zagloba saw before him a man of somewhat over thirty years, wearing a leopard-skin cap with a feather, – an unerring mark of military service, – a poppy-colored under-coat, and a dark-red kontush, girded with a gold brocade belt. The face of the unknown was of unusual beauty: his complexion was pale, but burned somewhat by wind in the fields to a yellowish tinge; his blue eyes were full of a certain melancholy and pensiveness; his features were unusually symmetrical, almost too beautiful for a man. Notwithstanding his Polish dress, he wore long hair and a beard cut in foreign fashion. Halting at the wagon, he opened his arms widely; and Zagloba, though he could not remember him at once, bent over and embraced him. They pressed each other heartily, and at moments one pushed the other back so as to have a better look.

"Pardon me, your grace," said Zagloba, at last; "but I cannot call to mind yet."

"Hassling-Ketling!"

"For God's sake! The face seemed well known to me, but the dress has changed you entirely, for I saw you in old times in a Prussian uniform. Now you wear the Polish dress?"

"Yes; for I have taken as my mother this Commonwealth, which received me when a wanderer, almost in years of boyhood, and gave me abundant bread and another mother I do not wish. You do not know that I received citizenship after the war."

"But you bring me good news! So Fortune favored you in this?"

"Both in this and in something else; for in Courland, on the very boundary of Jmud, I found a man of my own name, who adopted me, gave me his escutcheon, and bestowed on me property. He lives in Syventa in Courland; but on this side he has an estate called Shkudy, which he gave me."

"God favor you! Then you have given up war?"

"Only let the chance come, and I'll take my place without fail. In view of that, I have rented my land, and am waiting here for an opening."

"That is the courage that I like. Just as I was in youth, and I have strength yet in my bones. What are you doing now in Warsaw?"

"I am a deputy at the Diet of Convocation."

"God's wounds! But you are already a Pole to the bones!"

The young knight smiled. "To my soul, which is better."

"Are you married?"

Ketling sighed. "No."

"Only that is lacking. But I think – wait a minute! But has that old feeling for Panna Billevich gone out of your mind?"

"Since you know of that which I thought my secret, be assured that no new one has come."

"Oh, leave her in peace! She will soon give the world a young Kmita. Never mind! What sort of work is it to sigh when another is living with her in better confidence? To tell the truth, 'tis ridiculous."

Ketling raised his pensive eyes. "I have said only that no new feeling has come."

"It will come, never fear! we'll have you married. I know from experience that in love too great constancy brings merely suffering. In my time I was as constant as Troilus, and lost a world of pleasure and a world of good opportunities; and how much I suffered!"

"God grant every one to retain such jovial humor as your grace!"

"Because I lived in moderation always, therefore I have no aches in my bones. Where are you stopping? Have you found lodgings?"

"I have a comfortable cottage, which I built after the war."

"You are fortunate; but I have been travelling through the whole city in vain since yesterday."

"For God's sake! my benefactor, you will not refuse, I hope, to stop with me. There is room enough; besides the house, there are wings and a commodious stable. You will find room for your servants and horses."

"You have fallen from heaven, as God is dear to me!"

Ketling took a seat in the wagon and they drove forward. On the way Zagloba told him of the misfortune that had met Pan Michael, and he wrung his hands, for hitherto he had not heard of it.

"The dart is all the keener for me," said he, at last; "and perhaps your grace does not know what a friendship sprang up between us in recent times. Together we went through all the later wars with Prussia, at the besieging of fortresses, where there were only Swedish garrisons. We went to the Ukraine and against Pan Lyubomirski, and after the death of the voevoda of Rus, to the Ukraine a second time under Sobieski, the marshal of the kingdom. The same saddle served us as a pillow, and we ate from the same dish; we were called Castor and Pollux. And only when he went for his affianced, did the moment of separation come. Who could think that his best hopes would vanish like an arrow in the air?"

"There is nothing fixed in this vale of tears," said Zagloba.

"Except steady friendship. We must take counsel and learn where he is at this moment. We may hear something from the marshal of the kingdom, who loves Michael as the apple of his eye. If he can tell nothing, there are deputies here from all sides. It cannot be that no man has heard of such a knight. In what I have power, in that I will aid you, more quickly than if the question affected myself."

Thus conversing, they came at last to Ketling's cottage, which turned out to be a mansion. Inside was every kind of order and no small number of costly utensils, either purchased, or obtained in campaigns. The collection of weapons especially was remarkable. Zagloba was delighted with what he saw, and said, —

"Oh, you could find lodgings here for twenty men. It was lucky for me that I met you. I might have occupied apartments with Pan Anton Hrapovitski, for he is an acquaintance and friend. The Patses also invited me, — they are seeking partisans against the Radzivils, — but I prefer to be with you."

"I have heard among the Lithuanian deputies," said Ketling, "that since the turn comes now to Lithuania, they wish absolutely to choose Pan Hrapovitski as marshal of the Diet."

"And justly. He is an honest man and a sensible one, but too good-natured. For him there is nothing more precious than harmony; he is only seeking to reconcile some man with some other, and that is useless. But tell me sincerely, what is Boguslav Radzivill to you?"

"From the time that Pan Kmita's Tartars took me captive at Warsaw, he has been nothing; for although he is a great lord, he is a perverse and malicious man. I saw enough of him when he plotted in Taurogi against that being superior to earth."

"How superior to earth? What are you talking of, man? She is of clay, and may be broken like any clay vessel. But that is no matter."

Here Zagloba grew purple from rage, till the eyes were starting from his head. "Imagine to yourself, that ruffian is a deputy!"

"Who?" asked in astonishment Ketling, whose mind was still on Olenka.

"Boguslav Radzivil! But the verification of powers, – what is that for? Listen: you are a deputy; you can raise the question. I will roar to you from the gallery in support; have no fear on that point. The right is with us; and if they try to degrade the right, a tumult may be raised in the audience that will not pass without blood."

"Do not do that, your grace, for God's sake! I will raise the question, for it is proper to do so; but God preserve us from stopping the Diet!"

"I will go to Hrapovitski, though he is lukewarm; but no matter, much depends on him as the future marshal. I will rouse the Patses. At least I will mention in public all Boguslav's intrigues. Moreover, I have heard on the road that that ruffian thinks of seeking the crown for himself."

"A nation would have come to its final decline and would not be worthy of life if such a man could become king," said Ketling. "But rest now, and on some later day we will go to the marshal of the kingdom and inquire about our friend."

CHAPTER V

Some days later came the opening of the Diet, over which, as Ketling had foreseen. Pan Hrapovitski was chosen to preside; he was at that time chamberlain of Smolensk, and afterward vоеvoda of Vityebsk. Since the only question was to fix the time of election and appoint the supreme Chapter, and as intrigues of various parties could not find a field in such questions, the Diet was carried on calmly enough. The question of verification roused it merely a little in the very beginning. When the deputy Ketling challenged the election of the secretary of Belsk and his colleague. Prince Boguslav Radzivill, some powerful voice in the audience shouted "Traitor! foreign official!" After that voice followed others; some deputies joined them; and all at once the Diet was divided into two parties, – one striving to exclude the deputies of Belsk, the other to confirm their election. Finally a court was appointed to settle the question, and recognized the election. Still, the blow was a painful one to Prince Boguslav. This alone, that the Diet was considering whether the prince was qualified to sit in the chamber; this alone, that all his treasons and treacheries in time of the Swedish invasion were mentioned in public, – covered him with fresh disgrace in the eyes of the Commonwealth, and undermined fundamentally all his ambitious designs. For it was his calculation that when the partisans of Condé, Neuburgh, and Lorraine, not counting inferior candidates, had injured one another mutually, the choice might fall easily on a man of the country. Hence, pride and his sycophants told him that if that were to happen, the man of the country could be no other than a man endowed with the highest genius, and of the most powerful and famous family, – in other words, he himself.

Keeping matters in secret till the hour came, the prince spread his nets in advance over Lithuania, and just then he was spreading them in Warsaw, when suddenly he saw that in the very beginning they were torn, and such a broad rent made that all the fish might escape through it easily. He gritted his teeth during the whole time of the court; and since he could not wreak his vengeance on Ketling, as he was a deputy, he announced among his attendants a reward to him who would indicate that spectator who had cried out just after Ketling's proposal, "Traitor! foreign official!"

Zagloba's name was too famous to remain hidden long; moreover, he did not conceal himself in any way. The prince indeed raised a still greater uproar, but was disconcerted not a little when he heard that he was met by so popular a man and one whom it was dangerous to attack.

Zagloba too knew his own power; for when threats had begun to fly about, he said once at a great meeting of nobles, "I do not know if there would be danger to any one should a hair of my head fall. The election is not distant; and when a hundred thousand sabres of brothers are collected, there may easily be some making of mince-meat."

These words reached the prince, who only bit his lips and smiled sneeringly; but in his soul he thought that the old man was right. On the following day he changed his plans evidently with regard to the old knight, for when some one spoke of Zagloba at a feast given by the prince chamberlain, Boguslav said, —

"That noble is greatly opposed to me, as I hear; but I have such love for knightly people that even if he does not cease to injure me in future, I shall always love him."

And a week later the prince repeated the same directly to Pan Zagloba, when they met at the house of the Grand Hetman Sobieski. Though Zagloba preserved a calm face, full of courage, the heart fluttered a little in his breast at sight of the prince; for Boguslav had far-reaching hands, and was a man-eater of whom all were in dread. The prince called out, however, across the whole table, —

"Gracious Pan Zagloba, the report has come to me that you, though not a deputy, wished to drive me, innocent man, from the Diet; but I forgive you in Christian fashion, and should you ever need advancement, I shall not be slow to serve you."

"I merely stood by the Constitution," answered Zagloba, "as a noble is bound to do; as to assistance, at my age it is likely that the assistance of God is needed most, for I am near ninety."

"A beautiful age if its virtue is as great as its length, and this I have not the least wish to doubt."

"I served my country and my king without seeking strange gods."

The prince frowned a little. "You served against me too; I know that. But let there be harmony between us. All is forgotten, and this too, that you aided the private hatred of another against me. With that enemy I have still some accounts; but I extend my hand to your grace, and offer my friendship."

"I am only a poor man; the friendship is too high for me. I should have to stand on tiptoe, or spring to it; and that in old age is annoying. If your princely grace is speaking of accounts with Pan Kmita, my friend, then I should be glad from my heart to leave that arithmetic."

"But why so, I pray?" asked the prince.

"For there are four fundamental rules in arithmetic. Though Pan Kmita has a respectable fortune, it is a fly if compared with your princely wealth; therefore Pan Kmita will not consent to division. He is occupied with multiplication himself, and will let no man take aught from him, though he might give something to others, I do not think that your princely grace would be eager to take what he'd give you."

Though Boguslav was trained in word-fencing, still, whether it was Zagloba's argument or his insolence that astonished him so much, he forgot the tongue in his own mouth. The breasts of those present began to shake from laughter. Pan Sobieski laughed with his whole soul, and said, —

"He is an old warrior of Zbaraj. He knows how to wield a sabre, but is no common player with the tongue. Better let him alone."

In fact, Boguslav, seeing that he had hit upon an irreconcilable, did not try further to capture Zagloba; but beginning conversation with another man, he cast from time to time malign glances across the table at the old knight.

But Sobieski was delighted, and continued, "You are a master, lord brother, — a genuine master. Have you ever found your equal in this Commonwealth?"

"At the sabre," answered Zagloba, satisfied with the praise, "Volodyovski has come up to me; and Kmita too I have trained not badly."

Saying this, he looked at Boguslav; but the prince feigned not to hear him, and spoke diligently with his neighbor.

"Why!" said the hetman, "I have seen Pan Michael at work more than once, and would guarantee him even if the fate of all Christendom were at stake. It is a pity that a thunderbolt, as it were, has struck such a soldier."

"But what has happened to him?" asked Sarbyeovski, the sword-bearer of Tsehanov.

"The maiden he loved died in Chenstohova," answered Zagloba; "and the worst is that I cannot learn from any source where he is."

"But I saw him," cried Pan Varshytski, the castellan of Cracow. "While coming to Warsaw, I saw him on the road coming hither also; and he told me that being disgusted with the world and its vanities, he was going to Mons Regius to end his suffering life in prayer and meditation."

Zagloba caught at the remnant of his hair. "He has become a monk of Camaldoli, as God is dear to me!" exclaimed he, in the greatest despair.

Indeed, the statement of the castellan had made no small impression on all. Pan Sobieski, who loved soldiers, and knew himself best how the country needed them, was pained deeply, and said after a pause, —

"It is not proper to oppose the free-will of men and the glory of God, but it is a pity to lose him; and it is hard for me to hide from you, gentlemen, that I am grieved. From the school of Prince Yeremi that was an excellent soldier against every enemy, but against the horde and ruffiandom incomparable. There are only a few such partisans in the steppes, such as Pan Pivo among the Cossacks, and Pan Rushchyts in the cavalry; but even these are not equal to Pan Michael."

"It is fortunate that the times are somewhat calmer," said the sword-bearer of Tsehanov, "and that Paganism observes faithfully the treaty of Podhaytse extorted by the invincible sword of my benefactor."

Here the sword-bearer inclined before Sobieski, who rejoiced in his heart at the public praise, and answered, "That was due, in the first instance, to the goodness of God, who permitted me to stand at the threshold of the Commonwealth, and cut the enemy somewhat; and in the second, to the courage of good soldiers who are ready for everything. That the Khan would be glad to keep the treaties, I know; but in the Crimea itself there are tumults against the Khan, and the Belgrad horde does not obey him at all. I have just received tidings that on the Moldavian boundary clouds are collecting, and that raids may come in; I have given orders to watch the roads carefully, but I have not soldiers sufficient. If I send some to one place, an opening is left in another. I need men trained specially and knowing the ways of the horde; this is why I am so sorry for Volodyovski."

In answer to this, Zagloba took from his temples the hands with which he was pressing his head, and cried, "But he will not remain a monk, even if I have to make an assault on Mons Regius and take him by force. For God's sake! I will go to him straightway to-morrow, and perhaps he will obey my persuasion; if not, I will go to the primate, to the prior. Even if I have to go to Rome, I will go. I have no wish to detract from the glory of God; but what sort of a monk would he be without a beard? He has as much hair on his face as I on my fist! As God is dear to me, he will never be able to sing Mass; or if he sings it, the rats will run out of the cloister, for they will think a tom-cat is wailing. Forgive me, gentlemen, for speaking what sorrow brings to my tongue. If I had a son, I could not love him as I do that man. God be with him! God be with him! Even if he were to become a Bernardine, but a monk of Camaldoli! As I sit here, a living man, nothing can come of this! I will go straightway to the primate to-morrow, for a letter to the prior."

"He cannot have made vows yet," put in the marshal, "but let not your grace be too urgent, lest he grow stubborn; and it is needful to reckon with this too, – has not the will of God appeared in his intention?"

"The will of God? The will of God does not come on a sudden; as the old proverb says, 'What is sudden is of the Devil.' If it were the will of God, I should have noted the wish long ago in him; and he was not a priest, but a dragoon. If he had made such a resolve while in full reason, in meditation and calmness, I should say nothing; but the will of God does not strike a despairing man as a falcon does a duck. I will not press him. Before I go I will meditate well with myself what to say, so that he may not play the fox to begin with; but in God is my hope. This little soldier has confided always more to my wit than his own, and will do the like this time, I trust, unless he has changed altogether."

CHAPTER VI

Next day, Zagloba, armed with a letter from the primate, and having a complete plan made with Ketling, rang the bell at the gate of the monastery on Mons Regius. His heart was beating with violence at this thought, "How will Michael receive me?" and though he had prepared in advance what to say, he acknowledged himself that much depended on the reception. Thinking thus, he pulled the bell a second time; and when the key squeaked in the lock, and the door opened a little, he thrust himself into it straightway a trifle violently, and said to the confused young monk, —

"I know that to enter here a special permission is needed; but I have a letter from the archbishop, which you, *carissime frater*, will be pleased to give the reverend prior."

"It will be done according to the wish of your grace," said the doorkeeper, inclining at sight of the primate's seal.

Then he pulled a strap hanging at the tongue of a bell, and pulled twice to call some one, for he himself had no right to go from the door. Another monk appeared at that summons, and taking the letter, departed in silence. Zagloba placed on a bench a package which he had with him, then sat down and began to puff wonderfully. "Brother," said he, at last, "how long have you been in the cloister?"

"Five years," answered the porter.

"Is it possible? so young, and five years already! Then it is too late to leave, even if you wanted to do so. You must yearn sometimes for the world; the world smells of war for one man, of feasts for another, of fair heads for a third."

"Avaunt!" said the monk, making the sign of the cross with devotion.

"How is that? Has not the temptation to go out of the cloister come on you?" continued Zagloba.

The monk looked with distrust at the envoy of the archbishop, speaking in such marvellous fashion, and answered, "When the door here closes on any man, he never goes out."

"We'll see that yet! What is happening to Pan Volodyovski? Is he well?"

"There is no one here named in that way."

"Brother Michael?" said Zagloba, on trial. "Former colonel of dragoons, who came here not long since."

"We call him Brother Yerzy; but he has not made his vows yet, and cannot make them till the end of the term."

"And surely he will not make them; for you will not believe, brother, what a woman's man he is! You could not find another man so hostile to woman's virtue in all the clois – I meant to say in all the cavalry."

"It is not proper for me to hear this," said the monk, with increasing astonishment and confusion.

"Listen, brother; I do not know where you receive visitors, but if it is in this place, I advise you to withdraw a little when Brother Yerzy comes, – as far as that gate, for instance, – for we shall talk here of very worldly matters."

"I prefer to go away at once," said the monk.

Meanwhile Pan Michael, or rather Brother Yerzy, appeared; but Zagloba did not recognize the approaching man, for Pan Michael had changed greatly. To begin with, he seemed taller in the long white habit than in the dragoon jacket; secondly, his mustaches, pointing upward toward his eyes formerly, were hanging down now, and he was trying to let out his beard, which formed two little yellow tresses not longer than half a finger; finally, he had grown very thin and meagre, and his eyes had lost their former glitter. He approached slowly, with his hands hidden on his bosom under his habit, and with drooping head.

Zagloba, not recognizing him, thought that perhaps the prior himself was coming; therefore he rose from the bench and began, "Laudetur – " Suddenly he looked more closely, opened his arms, and cried, "Pan Michael! Pan Michael!"

Brother Yerzy let himself be seized in the embrace; something like a sob shook his breast, but his eyes remained dry. Zagloba pressed him a long time; at last he began to speak, —

"You have not been alone in weeping over your misfortune. I wept; Yan and his family wept; the Kmitas wept. It is the will of God! be resigned to it, Michael. May the Merciful Father comfort and reward you! You have done well to shut yourself in for a time in these walls. There is nothing better than prayer and pious meditation in misfortune. Come, let me embrace you again! I can hardly see you through my tears."

And Zagloba wept with sincerity, moved at the sight of Pan Michael. "Pardon me for disturbing your meditation," said he, at last; "but I could not act otherwise, and you will do me justice when I give you my reasons. Ai, Michael! you and I have gone through a world of evil and of good. Have you found consolation behind these bars?"

"I have," replied Pan Michael, — "in those words which I hear in this place daily, and repeat, and which I desire to repeat till my death, *memento mori*. In death is consolation for me."

"H'm! death is more easily found on the battlefield than in the cloister, where life passes as if some one were unwinding thread from a ball, slowly."

"There is no life here, for there are no earthly questions; and before the soul leaves the body, it lives, as it were, in another world."

"If that is true, I will not tell you that the Belgrad horde are mustering in great force against the Commonwealth; for what interest can that have for you?"

Pan Michael's mustaches quivered on a sudden, and he stretched his right hand unwittingly to his left side; but not finding a sword there, he put both hands under his habit, dropped his head, and repeated, "Memento mori!"

"Justly, justly!" answered Zagloba, blinking his sound eye with a certain impatience. "No longer ago than yesterday Pan Sobieski, the hetman, said: 'Only let Volodyovski serve even through this one storm, and then let him go to whatever cloister he likes. God would not be angry for the deed; on the contrary, such a monk would have all the greater merit.' But there is no reason to wonder that you put your own peace above the happiness of the country, for *prima charitas ab ego* (the first love is of self)."

A long interval of silence followed; only Pan Michael's mustaches stood out somewhat and began to move quickly, though lightly.

"You have not taken your vows yet," asked Zagloba, at last, "and you can go out at any moment?"

"I am not a monk yet, for I have been waiting for the favor of God, and waiting till all painful thoughts of earth should leave my soul. His favor is upon me now; peace is returning to me. I can go out; but I have no wish to go, since the time is drawing near in which I can make my vows with a clear conscience and free from earthly desires."

"I have no wish to lead you away from this; on the contrary, I applaud your resolution, though I remember that when Yan in his time intended to become a monk, he waited till the country was free from the storm of the enemy. But do as you wish. In truth, it is not I who will lead you away; for I myself in my own time felt a vocation for monastic life. Fifty years ago I even began my novitiate; I am a rogue if I did not. Well, God gave me another direction. Only I tell you this, Michael, you must go out with me now even for two days."

"Why must I go out? Leave me in peace!" said Volodyovski.

Zagloba raised the skirt of his coat to his eyes and began to sob. "I do not beg rescue for myself," said he, in a broken voice, "though Prince Boguslav Radzivill is hunting me with vengeance; he puts his murderers in ambush against me, and there is no one to defend and protect me, old man. I was thinking that you — But never mind! I will love you all my life, even if you are unwilling to know me. Only pray for my soul, for I shall not escape Boguslav's hands. Let that come upon me which has to come; but another friend of yours, who shared every morsel of bread with you, is now on his

death-bed, and wishes to see you without fail. He is unwilling to die without you; for he has some confession to make on which his soul's peace depends."

Pan Michael, who had heard of Zagloba's danger with great emotion, sprang forward now, and seizing him by the arms, inquired, "Is it Pan Yan?"

"No, not Yan, but Ketling!"

"For God's sake! what has happened to him?"

"He was shot by Prince Boguslav's ruffians while defending me; I know not whether he will be alive in twenty-four hours. It is for you, Michael, that we have both fallen into these straits, for we came to Warsaw only to think out some consolation for you. Come for even two days, and console a dying man. You will return later; you will become a monk. I have brought the recommendation of the primate to the prior to raise no impediment against you. Only hasten, for every moment is precious."

"For God's sake!" cried Pan Michael; "what do I hear? Impediments cannot keep me, for so far I am here only on meditation. As God lives, the prayer of a dying man is sacred! I cannot refuse that."

"It would be a mortal sin!" cried Zagloba.

"That is true! It is always that traitor, Boguslav – But if I do not avenge Ketling, may I never come back! I will find those ruffians, and I will split their skulls! O Great God! sinful thoughts are already attacking me! *Memento mori!* Only wait here till I put on my old clothes, for it is not permitted to go out in the habit."

"Here are clothes!" cried Zagloba, springing to the bundle, which was lying there on the bench near them. "I foresaw everything, prepared everything! Here are boots, a rapier, a good overcoat."

"Come to the cell," said the little knight, with haste.

They went to the cell; and when they came out again, near Zagloba walked, not a white monk, but an officer with yellow boots to the knees, with a rapier at his side, and a white pendant across his shoulder. Zagloba blinked and smiled under his mustaches at sight of the brother at the door, who, evidently scandalized, opened the gate to the two.

Not far from the cloister and lower down, Zagloba's wagon was waiting, and with it two attendants. One was sitting on the seat, holding the reins of four well-attached horses; at these Pan Michael cast quickly the eye of an expert. The other stood near the wagon, with a mouldy, big-bellied bottle in one hand, and two goblets in the other.

"It is a good stretch of road to Mokotov," said Zagloba; "and harsh sorrow is waiting for us at the bedside of Ketling. Drink something, Michael, to gain strength to endure all this, for you are greatly reduced."

Saying this, Zagloba took the bottle from the hands of the man and filled both glasses with Hungarian so old that it was thick from age.

"This is a goodly drink," said Zagloba, placing the bottle on the ground and taking the goblets. "To the health of Ketling!"

"To his health!" repeated Pan Michael. "Let us hurry!"

They emptied the glasses at a draught.

"Let us hurry," repeated Zagloba. "Pour out, man!" said he, turning to the servant. "To the health of Pan Yan! Let us hurry!"

They emptied the goblets again at a draught, for there was real urgency.

"Let us take our seats!" cried Pan Michael.

"But will you not drink my health?" asked Zagloba, with a complaining voice.

"If quickly!"

And they drank quickly. Zagloba emptied the goblet at a breath, though there was half a quart in it, then without wiping his mustaches, he cried, "I should be thankless not to drink your health. Pour out, man!"

"With thanks!" answered Brother Yerzy.

The bottom appeared in the bottle, which Zagloba seized by the neck and broke into small pieces, for he never could endure the sight of empty vessels. Then he took his seat quickly, and they rode on.

The noble drink soon filled their veins with beneficent warmth, and their hearts with a certain consolation. The cheeks of Brother Yerzy were covered with a slight scarlet, and his glance regained its former vivacity. He stretched his hand unwittingly once, twice, to his mustaches, and turned them upward like awls, till at last they came near his eyes. He began meanwhile to gaze around with great curiosity, as if looking at the country for the first time. All at once Zagloba struck his palms on his knees and cried without evident reason, —

"Ho! ho! I hope that Ketling will return to health when he sees you! Ho! ho!"

And clasping Pan Michael around the neck, he began to embrace him with all his power. Pan Michael did not wish to remain in debt to Zagloba; he pressed him with the utmost sincerity. They went on for some time in silence, but in a happy one. Meanwhile the small houses of the suburbs began to appear on both sides of the road. Before the houses there was a great movement. On this side and that, townspeople were strolling, servants in various liveries, soldiers and nobles, frequently very well-dressed.

"Swarms of nobles have come to the Diet," said Zagloba; "for though not one of them is a deputy, they wish to be present, to hear and to see. The houses and inns are so filled everywhere that it is hard to find a room, and how many noble women are strolling along the streets! I tell you that you could not count them on the hairs of your beard. They are pretty too, the rogues, so that sometimes a man has the wish to slap his hands on his sides as a cock does his wings, and crow. But look! look at that brunette behind whom the haiduk is carrying the green shuba; isn't she splendid? Eh?"

Here Zagloba nudged Pan Michael in the side with his fist, and Pan Michael looked, moved his mustaches; his eyes glittered, but in that moment he grew shamefaced, dropped his head, and said after a brief silence, "Memento mori!"

But Zagloba clasped him again, and cried, "As you love me, *per amicitiam nostram* (by our friendship), as you respect me, get married. There are so many worthy maidens, get married!"

Brother Yerzy looked with astonishment on his friend. Zagloba could not be drunk, however, for many a time he had taken thrice as much wine without visible effect; therefore he spoke only from tenderness. But all thoughts of marriage were far away then from the head of Pan Michael, so that in the first instant astonishment overcame in him indignation; then he looked severely into the eyes of Zagloba and asked, —

"Are you tipsy?"

"Prom my whole heart I say to you, get married!"

Pan Michael looked still more severely. "Memento mori."

But Zagloba was not easily disconcerted. "Michael, if you love me, do this for me, and kiss a dog on the snout with your 'memento.' I repeat, you will do as you please, but I think in this way: Let each man serve God with that for which he was created; and God created you for the sword: in this His will is evident, since He has permitted you to attain such perfection in the use of it. In case He wished you to be a priest, He would have adorned you with a wit altogether different, and inclined your heart more to books and to Latin. Consider, too, that soldier saints enjoy no less respect in heaven than saints with vows, and they go campaigning against the legions of hell, and receive rewards from God's hands when they return with captured banners. All this is true; you will not deny it?"

"I do not deny it, and I know that it is hard to skirmish against your reasoning; but you also will not deny that for grief life is better in the cloister than in the world."

"If it is better, bah! then all the more should cloisters be shunned. Dull is the man who feeds mourning instead of keeping it hungry, so that the beast may die of famine as quickly as possible."

Pan Michael found no ready argument; therefore he was silent, and only after a while answered with a sad voice, "Do not mention marriage, for such mention only rouses fresh grief in me. My

old desire will not revive, for it has passed away with tears; and my years are not suitable. My hair is beginning to whiten. Forty-two years, and twenty-five of them spent in military toil, are no jest, no jest!"

"O God, do not punish him for blasphemy! Forty-two years! Tfu! I have more than twice as many on my shoulders, and still at times I must discipline myself to shake the heat out of my blood, as dust is shaken from clothing. Respect the memory of that dear dead one. You were good enough for her, I suppose? But for others are you too cheap, too old?"

"Give me peace! give me peace!" said Pan Michael, with a voice of pain; and the tears began to flow to his mustaches.

"I will not say another syllable," added Zagloba; "only give me the word of a cavalier that no matter what happens to Ketling you will stay a month with us. You must see Yan. If you wish afterward to return to the cloister, no one will raise an impediment."

"I give my word," said Pan Michael.

And they fell to talking of something else. Zagloba began to tell of the Diet, and how he had raised the question of excluding Prince Boguslav, and of the adventure with Ketling. Occasionally, however, he interrupted the narrative and buried himself in thoughts; they must have been cheerful, for from time to time he struck his knees with his palms, and repeated, —

"Ho! ho!"

But as he approached Mokotov, a certain disquiet appeared on his face. He turned suddenly to Pan Michael and said, "Your word is given, you remember, that no matter what happens to Ketling, you will stay a month with us."

"I gave it, and I will stay," said Pan Michael.

"Here is Ketling's house," cried Zagloba, — "a respectable place." Then he shouted to the driver, "Fire out of your whip! There will be a festival in this house to-day."

Loud cracks were heard from the whip. But the wagon had not entered the gate when a number of officers rushed from the ante-room, acquaintances of Pan Michael; among them also were old comrades from the days of Hmelnitski and young officers of recent times. Of the latter were Pan Vasilevski and Pan Novoveski, — youths yet, but fiery cavaliers who in years of boyhood had broken away from school and had been working at war for some years under Pan Michael. These the little knight loved beyond measure. Among the oldest was Pan Orlik of the shield Novin, with a skull stopped with gold, for a Swedish grenade had taken a piece of it on a time; and Pan Rushchyt, a half-wild knight of the steppes, an incomparable partisan, second in fame to Pan Michael alone; and a number of others. All, seeing the two men in the wagon, began to shout, —

"He is there! he is there! Zagloba has conquered! He is there!"

And rushing to the wagon, they seized the little knight in their arms and bore him to the entrance, repeating, "Welcome! dearest comrade, live for us! We have you; we won't let you go! Vivat Volodyovski, the first cavalier, the ornament of the whole army! To the steppe with us, brother! To the wild fields! There the wind will blow your grief away."

They let him out of their arms only at the entrance. He greeted them all, for he was greatly touched by that reception, and then he inquired at once, "How is Ketling? Is he alive yet?"

"Alive! alive!" answered they, in a chorus, and the mustaches of the old soldiers began to move with a strange smile. "Go to him, for he cannot stay lying down; he is waiting for you impatiently."

"I see that he is not so near death as Pan Zagloba said," answered the little knight.

Meanwhile they entered the ante-room and passed thence to a large chamber, in the middle of which stood a table with a feast on it; in one corner was a plank bed covered with white horse-skin, on which Ketling was lying.

"Oh, my friend!" said Pan Michael, hastening toward him.

"Michael!" cried Ketling, and springing to his feet as if in the fulness of strength, he seized the little knight in his embrace.

They pressed each other then so eagerly that Ketling raised Volodyovski, and Volodyovski Ketling.

"They commanded me to simulate sickness," said the Scot, "to feign death: but when I saw you, I could not hold out. I am as well as a fish, and no misfortune has met me. But it was a question of getting you out of the cloister. Forgive, Michael. We invented this ambush out of love for you."

"To the wild fields with us!" cried the knights, again; and they struck with their firm palms on their sabres till a terrible clatter was raised in the room.

But Pan Michael was astounded. For a time he was silent, then he began to look at all, especially at Zagloba. "Oh, traitors!" exclaimed he, at last, "I thought that Ketling was wounded unto death."

"How is that, Michael?" cried Zagloba. "You are angry because Ketling is well? You grudge him his health, and wish death to him? Has your heart become stone in such fashion that you would gladly see all of us ghosts, and Ketling, and Pan Orlik, and Pan Rushchyts, and these youths, – nay, even Pan Yan, even me, who love you as a son?" Here Zagloba closed his eyes and cried still more piteously, "We have nothing to live for, gracious gentlemen; there is no thankfulness left in this world; there is nothing but callousness."

"For God's sake!" answered Pan Michael, "I do not wish you ill, but you have not respected my grief."

"Have pity on our lives!" repeated Zagloba.

"Give me peace!"

"He says that we show no respect to his grief; but what fountains we have poured out over him, gracious gentlemen! We have, Michael. I take God to witness that we should be glad to bear apart your grief on our sabres, for comrades should always act thus. But since you have given your word to stay with us a month, then love us at least for that month."

"I will love you till death," said Pan Michael.

Further conversation was interrupted by the coming of a new guest. The soldiers, occupied with Volodyovski, had not heard the arrival of that guest, and saw him only when he was standing in the door. He was a man enormous in stature, of majestic form and bearing. He had the face of a Roman emperor; in it was power, and at the same time the true kindness and courtesy of a monarch. He differed entirely from all those soldiers around him; he grew notably greater in face of them, as if the eagle, king of birds, had appeared among hawks, falcons, and merlins.

"The grand hetman!" cried Ketling, and sprang up, as the host, to greet him.

"Pan Sobieski!" cried others.

All heads were inclined in an obeisance of deep homage. All save Pan Michael knew that the hetman would come, for he had promised Ketling; still, his arrival had produced so profound an impression that for a time no one dared to speak first. That too was homage extraordinary. But Sobieski loved soldiers beyond all men, especially those with whom he had galloped over the necks of Tartar chambuls so often; he looked on them as his own family, and for this reason specially he had determined to greet Volodyovski, to comfort him, and finally, by showing such unusual favor and attention, to retain him in the ranks of the army. Therefore when he had greeted Ketling, he stretched out his hands at once to the little knight; and when the latter approached and seized him by the knees, Sobieski pressed the head of Pan Michael with his palms.

"Old soldier," said he, "the hand of God has bent thee to the earth, but it will raise thee, and give comfort. God aid thee! Thou wilt stay with us now."

Sobbing shook the breast of Pan Michael. "I will stay!" said he, with tears.

"That is well; give me of such men as many as possible. And now, old comrade, let us recall those times which we passed in the Russian steppes, when we sat down to feast under tents. I am happy among you. Now, our host, now!"

"Vivat Joannes dux!" shouted every voice.

The feast began and lasted long. Next day the hetman sent a cream-colored steed of great price to Pan Michael.

CHAPTER VII

Ketling and Pan Michael promised each other to ride stirrup to stirrup again should occasion offer, to sit at one fire, and to sleep with their heads on one saddle. But meanwhile an event separated them. Not later than a week after their first greeting, a messenger came from Courland with notice that that Hassling who had adopted the youthful Scot and given him his property had fallen suddenly ill, and wished greatly to see his adopted son. The young knight did not hesitate; he mounted his horse and rode away. Before his departure he begged Zagloba and Pan Michael to consider his house as their own, and to live there until they were tired of it.

"Pan Yan may come," said he. "During the election he will come himself surely; even should he bring all his children, there will be room here for the whole family. I have no relatives; and even if I had brothers, they would not be nearer to me than you are."

Zagloba especially was gratified by these invitations, for he was very comfortable in Ketling's house; but they were pleasant for Pan Michael also. Pan Yan did not come, but Pan Michael's sister announced her arrival. She was married to Pan Makovetski, stolnik of Litychov. His messenger came to the residence of the hetman to inquire if any of his attendants knew of the little knight. Evidently Ketling's house was indicated to him at once.

Volodyovski was greatly delighted, for whole years had passed since he had seen his sister; and when he learned that, in absence of better lodgings, she had stopped at Rybaki in a poor little cottage, he flew off straightway to invite her to Ketling's house. It was dusk when he rushed into her presence; but he knew her at once, though two other women were with her in the room, for the lady was small of stature, like a ball of thread. She too recognized him; while the other women stood like two candles and looked at the greeting.

Pani Makovetski found speech first, and began to cry out in a thin and rather squeaking voice, "So many years, – so many years! God give you aid, dearest brother! The moment the news of your misfortune came, I sprang up at once to come hither; and my husband did not detain me, for a storm is threatening us from the side of Budjyak. People are talking also of the Belgrad Tartars; and surely the roads are growing black, for tremendous flocks of birds are appearing, and before every invasion it is that way. God console you, beloved, dear, golden brother! My husband must come to the election himself, so this is what he said: 'Take the young ladies, and go on before me. You will comfort Michael,' said he, 'in his grief; and you must hide your head somewhere from the Tartars, for the country here will be in a blaze, therefore one thing fits with another. Go,' said he, 'to Warsaw, hire good lodgings in time, so there may be some place to live in.' He, with men of those parts, is listening on the roads. There are few troops in the country; it is always that way with us. You, Michael, my loved one, come to the window, let me look in your face; your lips have grown thin, but in grief it cannot be otherwise. It was easy for my husband to say in Russia, 'Find lodgings!' but here there is nothing anywhere. We are in this hovel; you see it. I have hardly been able to get three bundles of straw to sleep on."

"Permit me, sister," said the little knight.

But the sister would not permit, and spoke on, as if a mill were rattling: "We stopped here; there was no other place. My host looks out of his eyes like a wolf; maybe they are bad people in the house. It is true that we have four attendants, – trusty fellows, – and we ourselves are not timid, for in our parts a woman must have a cavalier's heart, or she could not live there. I have a pistol which I carry always, and Basia⁸ has two of them; but Krysia⁹ does not like fire-arms. This is a strange place, though, and we prefer safer lodgings."

⁸ Diminutive of Barbara.

⁹ Diminutive of Krystina, or Christiana.

"Permit me, sister," repeated Volodyovski.

"But where do you live, Michael? You must help me to find lodgings, for you have experience in Warsaw."

"I have lodgings ready," interrupted Pan Michael, "and such good ones that a senator might occupy them with his retinue. I live with my friend, Captain Ketling, and will take you with me at once."

"But remember that there are three of us, and two servants and four attendants. But for God's sake! I have not made you acquainted with the company." Here she turned to her companions. "You know, young ladies, who he is, but he does not know you; make acquaintance even in the dark. The host has not heated the stove for us yet. This is Panna Krystina Drohoyovski, and that Panna Barbara Yezorkovski. My husband is their guardian, and takes care of their property; they live with us, for they are orphans. To live alone does not beseem such young ladies."

While his sister was speaking, Pan Michael bowed in soldier fashion; the young ladies, seizing their skirts with their fingers, courtesied, wherewith Panna Barbara nodded like a young colt.

"Let us take our seats in the carriage, and drive on!" said the little knight. "Pan Zagloba lives with me. I asked him to have supper prepared for us."

"That famous Pan Zagloba?" asked Panna Basia, all at once.

"Basia, be quiet!" said the lady. "I am afraid that there will be annoyance."

"Oh, if Pan Zagloba has his mind on supper," said the little knight, "there will be enough, even if twice as many were to come. And, young ladies, will you give command to carry out the trunks? I brought a wagon too for things, and Ketling's carriage is so wide that we four can sit in it easily. See what comes to my head; if your attendants are not drunken fellows, let them stay here till morning with the horses and larger effects. We'll take now only what things are required most."

"We need leave nothing," said the lady, "for our wagons are still unpacked; just attach the horses, and they can move at once. Basia, go and give orders!"

Basia sprang to the entrance; and a few "Our Fathers" later she returned with the announcement that all was ready.

"It is time to go," said Pan Michael.

After a while they took their seats in the carriage and moved on toward Mokotov. Pan Michael's sister and Panna Krysia occupied the rear seats; in front sat the little knight at the side of Basia. It was so dark already that they could not see one another's features.

"Young ladies, do you know Warsaw?" asked Pan Michael, bending toward Panna Krysia, and raising his voice above the rattle of the carriage.

"No," answered Krysia, in a low but resonant and agreeable voice. "We are real rustics, and up to this time have known neither famous cities nor famous men."

Saying this, she inclined her head somewhat, as if giving to understand that she counted Pan Michael among the latter; he received the answer thankfully. "A polite sort of maiden!" thought he, and straightway began to rack his head over some kind of compliment to be made in return.

"Even if the city were ten times greater than it is," said he at last, "still, ladies, you might be its most notable ornament."

"But how do you know that in the dark?" inquired Panna Basia, on a sudden.

"Ah, here is a kid for you!" thought Pan Michael.

But he said nothing, and they rode on in silence for some time; Basia turned again to the little knight and asked, "Do you know whether there will be room enough in the stable? We have ten horses and two wagons."

"Even if there were thirty, there would be room for them."

"Hwew! hwew!" exclaimed the young lady.

"Basia! Basia!" said Pani Makovetski, persuasively.

"Ah, it is easy to say, 'Basia, Basia!' but in whose care were the horses during the whole journey?"

Conversing thus, they arrived before Ketling's house. All the windows were brilliantly lighted to receive the lady. The servants ran out with Pan Zagloba at the head of them; he, springing to the wagon and seeing three women, inquired straightway, —

"In which lady have I the honor to greet my special benefactress, and at the same time the sister of my best friend, Michael?"

"I am she!" answered the lady.

Then Zagloba seized her hand, and fell to kissing it eagerly, exclaiming, "I beat with the forehead, — I beat with the forehead!"

Then he helped her to descend from the carriage, and conducted her with great attention and clattering of feet to the ante-room. "Let me be permitted to give greeting once more inside the threshold," said he, on the way.

Meanwhile Pan Michael was helping the young ladies to descend. Since the carriage was high, and it was difficult to find the steps in the darkness, he caught Panna Krysia by the waist, and bearing her through the air, placed her on the ground; and she, without resisting, inclined during the twinkle of an eye her breast on his, and said, "I thank you."

Pan Michael turned then to Basia; but she had already jumped down on the other side of the carriage, therefore he gave his arm to Panna Krysia. In the room acquaintance with Zagloba followed. He, at sight of the two young ladies, fell into perfect good-humor, and invited them straightway to supper. The platters were steaming already on the table; and as Pan Michael had foreseen, there was such an abundance that it would have sufficed for twice as many persons.

They sat down. Pan Michael's sister occupied the first place; next to her, on the right, sat Zagloba, and beyond him Panna Basia. Pan Michael sat on the left side near Panna Krysia. And now for the first time the little knight was able to have a good look at the ladies. Both were comely, but each in her own style. Krysia had hair as black as the wings of a raven, brows of the same color, deep-blue eyes; she was a pale brunette, but of complexion so delicate that the blue veins on her temples were visible. A barely discernible dark down covered her upper lip, showing a mouth sweet and attractive, as if put slightly forward for a kiss. She was in mourning, for she had lost her father not long before, and the color of her garments, with the delicacy of her complexion and her dark hair, lent her a certain appearance of pensiveness and severity. At the first glance she seemed older than her companion; but when he had looked at her more closely, Pan Michael saw that the blood of first youth was flowing under that transparent skin. The more he looked, the more he admired the distinction of her posture, the swanlike neck, and those proportions so full of maiden charms.

"She is a great lady," thought he, "who must have a great soul; but the other is a regular tomboy."

In fact, the comparison was just. Basia was much smaller than her companion, and generally minute, though not meagre; she was ruddy as a bunch of roses, and light-haired. Her hair had been cut, apparently after illness, and she wore it gathered in a golden net. But the hair would not sit quietly on her restless head; the ends of it were peeping out through every mesh of the net, and over her forehead formed an unordered yellow tuft which fell to her brows like the tuft of a Cossack, which, with her quick, restless eyes and challenging mien, made that rosy face like the face of a student who is only watching to embroil some one and go unpunished himself. Still, she was so shapely and fresh that it was difficult to take one's eyes from her; she had a slender nose, somewhat in the air, with nostrils dilating and active; she had dimples in her cheeks and a dimple in her chin, indicating a joyous disposition. But now she was sitting with dignity and eating heartily, only shooting glances every little while, now at Pan Zagloba, now at Volodyovski, and looking at them with almost childlike curiosity, as if at some special wonder.

Pan Michael was silent; for though he felt it his duty to entertain Panna Krysia, he did not know how to begin. In general, the little knight was not happy in conversation with ladies; but now he was the more gloomy, since these maidens brought vividly to his mind the dear dead one.

Pan Zagloba entertained Pani Makovetski, detailing to her the deeds of Pan Michael and himself. In the middle of the supper he fell to relating how once they had escaped with Princess Kurtsevich and Jendzian, four of them, through a whole chambul, and how, finally, to save the princess and stop the pursuit, they two had hurled themselves on the chambul.

Basia stopped eating, and resting her chin on her hand, listened carefully, shaking her forelock, at moments blinking, and snapping her fingers in the most interesting places, and repeating, "Ah, ah! Well, what next?" But when they came to the place where Kushel's dragoons rushed up with aid unexpectedly, sat on the necks of the Tartars, and rode on, slashing them, for three miles, she could contain herself no longer, but clapping her hands with all her might, cried, "Ah, I should like to be there, God knows I should!"

"Basia!" cried the plump little Pani Makovetski, with a strong Russian accent, "you have come among polite people; put away your 'God knows.' O Thou Great God! this alone is lacking, Basia, that you should cry, 'May the bullets strike me!'"

The maiden burst out into fresh laughter, resonant as silver, and cried, "Well, then, auntie, may the bullets strike me!"

"O my God, the ears are withering on me! Beg pardon of the whole company!" cried the lady.

Then Basia, wishing to begin with her aunt, sprang up from her place, but at the same time dropped the knife and the spoons under the table, and then dived down after them herself.

The plump little lady could restrain her laughter no longer; and she had a wonderful laugh, for first she began to shake and tremble, and then to squeak in a thin voice. All had grown joyous. Zagloba was in raptures. "You see what a time I have with this maiden," said Pani Makovetski.

"She is a pure delight, as God is dear to me!" exclaimed Zagloba.

Meanwhile Basia had crept out from under the table; she had found the spoons and the knife, but had lost her net, for her hair was falling into her eyes altogether. She straightened herself, and said, her nostrils quivering meanwhile, "Aha, lords and ladies, you are laughing at my confusion. Very well!"

"No one is laughing," said Zagloba, in a tone of conviction, "no one is laughing, – no one is laughing! We are only rejoicing that the Lord God has given us delight in the person of your ladyship."

After supper they passed into the drawing-room. There Panna Krysia, seeing a lute on the wall, took it down and began to run over the strings. Pan Michael begged her to sing.

"I am ready, if I can drive sadness from your soul."

"I thank you," answered the little knight, raising his eyes to her in gratitude.

After a while this song was heard: —

"O knights, believe me,
Useless is armor;
Shields give no service;
Cupid's keen arrows,
Through steel and iron,
Go to all hearts."

"I do not indeed know how to thank you," said Zagloba, sitting at a distance with Pan Michael's sister, and kissing her hands, "for coming yourself and bringing with you such elegant maidens that the Graces themselves might heat stoves for them. Especially does that little haiduk please my heart, for such a rogue drives away sorrow in such fashion that a weasel could not hunt mice better. In truth, what is grief unless mice gnawing the grains of joyousness placed in our hearts? You, my benefactress,

should know that our late king, Yan Kazimir, was so fond of my comparisons that he could not live a day without them. I had to arrange for him proverbs and wise maxims. He used to have these repeated to him before bed-time, and by them it was that he directed his policy. But that is another matter. I hope too that our Michael, in company with these delightful girls, will forget altogether his unhappy misfortune. You do not know that it is only a week since I dragged him out of the cloister, where he wished to make vows; but I won the intervention of the nuncio himself, who declared to the prior that he would make a dragoon of every monk in the cloister if he did not let Michael out straightway. There was no reason for him to be there. Praise be to God! Praise be to God! If not to-day, to-morrow some one of those two will strike such sparks out of him that his heart will be burning like punk."

Meanwhile Krysia sang on: —

"If shields cannot save
From darts a strong hero,
How can a fair head
Guard her own weakness?
Where can she hide!"

"The fair heads have as much fear of those shafts as a dog has of meat," whispered Zagloba to Pan Michael's sister. "But confess, my benefactress, that you did not bring these titmice here without secret designs. They are maidens in a hundred! — especially that little haiduk. Would that I were as blooming as she! Ah, Michael has a cunning sister."

Pani Makovetski put on a very artful look, which did not, however, become her honest, simple face in the least, and said, "I thought of this and that, as is usual with us; shrewdness is not wanting to women. My husband had to come here to the election; and I brought the maidens beforehand, for with us there is no one to see unless Tartars. If anything lucky should happen to Michael from this, I would make a pilgrimage on foot to some wonder-working image."

"It will come; it will come!" said Zagloba.

"Both maidens are from great houses, and both have property; that, too, means something in these grievous times."

"There is no need to repeat that to me. The war has consumed Michael's fortune, though I know that he has some money laid up with great lords. We took famous booty more than once, gracious lady; and though that was placed at the hetman's discretion, still, a part went to be divided 'according to sabres,' as the saying is in our soldier speech. So much came to Michael's share more than once that if he had saved all his own, he would have to-day a nice fortune. But a soldier has no thought for to-morrow; he only frolics to-day. And Michael would have frolicked away all he had, were it not that I restrained him on every occasion. You say, then, gracious lady, that these maidens are of high blood?"

"Krysia is of senatorial blood. It is true that our castellans on the border are not castellans of Cracow, and there are some of whom few in the Commonwealth have heard; but still, whoso has sat once in a senator's chair bequeaths to posterity his splendor. As to relationship, Basia almost surpasses Krysia."

"Indeed, indeed! I myself am descended from a certain king of the Massagetes, therefore I like to hear genealogies."

"Basia does not come from such a lofty nest as that; but if you wish to listen, — for in our parts we can recount the relationship of every house on our fingers, — she is, in fact, related to the Pototskis and the Yazlovyetskis and the Lashches. You see, it was this way." Here Pan Michael's sister gathered in the folds of her dress and took a more convenient position, so that there might be no hindrance to any part of her favorite narrative; she spread out the fingers of one hand, and straightening the index finger of the other, made ready to enumerate the grandfathers and grandmothers. "The daughter of

Pan Yakob Pototski, Elizabeth, from his second wife, a Yazlovyetski, married Pan Yan Smyotanko, banneret of Podolia."

"I have caulked that into my memory," said Zagloba.

"From that marriage was born Michael Smyotanko, also banneret of Podolia."

"H'm! a good office," said Zagloba.

"He was married the first time to a Dorohosto – no! to a Rojynski – no! to a Voronich! God guard me from forgetting!"

"Eternal rest to her, whatever her name was," said Zagloba, with gravity.

"And for his second wife he married Panna Lashch."

"I was waiting for that! What was the result of the marriage?"

"Their sons died."

"Every joy crumbles in this world."

"But of four daughters, the youngest, Anna, married Yezorkovski, of the shield Ravich, a commissioner for fixing the boundaries of Podolia; he was afterward, if I mistake not, sword-bearer of Podolia."

"He was, I remember!" said Zagloba, with complete certainty.

"From that marriage, you see, was born Basia."

"I see, and also that at this moment she is aiming Ketling's musket." In fact, Krysia and the little knight were occupied in conversation, and Basia was aiming the musket at the window for her own amusement.

Pani Makovetski began to shake and squeak at sight of that. "You cannot imagine what I pass through with that girl! She is a regular haydamak."

"If all the haydamaks were like her, I would join them at once."

"There is nothing in her head but arms, horses, and war. Once she broke out of the house to hunt ducks with a gun. She crept in somewhere among the rushes, was looking ahead of her, the reeds began to open – what did she see? The head of a Tartar stealing along through the reeds to the village. Another woman would have been terrified, and woe to her if she had not fired quickly; the Tartar dropped into the water. Just imagine, she laid him out on the spot; and with what? With duck-shot."

Here the lady began to shake again and laugh at the mishap of the Tartar; then she added, "And to tell the truth, she saved us all, for a whole chambul was advancing; but as she came and gave the alarm, we had time to escape to the woods with the servants. With us it is always so!"

Zagloba's face was covered with such delight that he half closed his eye for a moment; then he sprang up, hurried to the maiden, and before she saw him, he kissed her on the forehead. "This from an old soldier for that Tartar in the rushes," said he.

The maiden gave a sweeping shake to her yellow forelock. "Didn't I give him beans?" cried she, with her fresh, childish voice, which sounded so strangely in view of what she meant with her words.

"Oh, my darling little haydamak!" cried Zagloba, with emotion.

"But what is one Tartar? You gentlemen have cut them down by the thousand, and Swedes, and Germans, and Rakotsi's Hungarians. What am I before you, gentlemen, – before knights who have not their equals in the Commonwealth? I know that perfectly! Oho!"

"I will teach you to work with the sabre, since you have so much courage. I am rather heavy now, but Michael there, he too is a master."

The maiden sprang up in the air at such a proposal; then she kissed Zagloba on the shoulder and courtesied to the little knight, saying, "I give thanks for the promise. I know a little already."

But Pan Michael was wholly occupied talking with Krysia; therefore he answered inattentively, "Whatever you command."

Zagloba, with radiant face, sat down again near Pani Makovetski. "My gracious benefactress," said he, "I know well which Turkish sweetmeats are best, for I passed long years in Stambul; but I

know this too, that there is just a world of people hungry for them. How has it happened that no man has coveted that maiden to this time?"

"As God lives, there was no lack of men who were courting them both. But Basia we call, in laughing, a widow of three husbands, for at one time three worthy cavaliers paid her addresses, – all nobles of our parts, and heirs, whose relationship I can explain in detail to you."

Saying this, Pani Makovetski spread out the fingers of her left hand and straightened her right index finger; but Zagloba inquired quickly, "And what happened to them?"

"All three died in war; therefore we call Basia a widow."

"H'm! but how did she endure the loss?"

"With us, you see, a case like that happens every day; and it is a rare thing for any man, after reaching ripe age, to pass away with his own death. Among us people even say that it is not befitting a nobleman to die otherwise than in the field. 'How did Basia endure it?' Oh, she whimpered a little, poor girl, but mostly in the stable; for when anything troubles her, she is off to the stable. I sent for her once and inquired, 'For whom are you crying?' 'For all three,' said she. I saw from the answer that no one of them pleased her specially. I think that as her head is stuffed with something else, she has not felt the will of God yet; Krysia has felt it somewhat, but Basia perhaps not at all."

"She will feel it!" said Zagloba. "Gracious benefactress, we understand that perfectly. She will feel it! she will feel it!"

"Such is our predestination," said Pani Makovetski.

"That is just it. You took the words out of my mouth."

Further conversation was interrupted by the approach of the younger society. The little knight had grown much emboldened with Krysia; and she, through evident goodness of heart, was occupied with him and his grief, like a physician with a patient. And perhaps for this very reason she showed him more kindness than their brief acquaintance permitted. But as Pan Michael was a brother of the stolnik's wife, and the young lady was related to the stolnik, no one was astonished. Basia remained, as it were, aside; and only Pan Zagloba turned to her unbroken attention. But however that might be, it was apparently all one to Basia whether some one was occupied with her or not. At first, she gazed with admiration on both knights; but with equal admiration did she examine Ketling's wonderful weapons distributed on the walls. Later she began to yawn somewhat; then her eyes grew heavier and heavier, and at last she said, —

"I am so sleepy that I may wake in the morning."

After these words the company separated at once; for the ladies were very weary from the journey, and were only waiting to have beds prepared. When Zagloba found himself at last alone with Pan Michael, he began first of all to wink significantly, then he covered the little knight with a shower of light fists. "Michael! what, Michael, hei? like turnips! Will you become a monk, what? That bilberry Krysia is a sweet one. And that rosy little haiduk, uh! What will you say of her, Michael?"

"What? Nothing!" answered the little knight.

"That little haiduk pleased me principally. I tell you that when I sat near her during supper I was as warm from her as from a stove."

"She is a kid yet; the other is ever so much more stately."

"Panna Krysia is a real Hungarian plum; but this one is a little nut! As God lives, if I had teeth! I wanted to say if I had such a daughter, I'd give her to no man but you. An almond, I say, an almond!"

Volodyovski grew sad on a sudden, for he remembered the nicknames which Zagloba used to give Anusia. She stood as if living before him there in his mind and memory, – her form, her small face, her dark tresses, her joyfulness, her chattering, and ways of looking. Both these were younger, but still she was a hundred times dearer than all who were younger.

The little knight covered his face with his palms, and sorrow carried him away the more because it was unexpected. Zagloba was astonished; for some time he was silent and looked unquietly, then he asked, "Michael, what is the matter? Speak, for God's sake!"

Volodyovski spoke, "So many are living, so many are walking through the world, but my lamb is no longer among them; never again shall I see her." Then pain stifled his voice; he rested his forehead on the arm of the sofa and began to whisper through his set lips, "O God! O God! O God!"

CHAPTER VIII

Basia insisted that Volodyovski should give her instruction in "fencing;" he did not refuse, though he delayed for some days. He preferred Kryisia; still, he liked Basia greatly, so difficult was it, in fact, not to like her.

A certain morning the first lesson began, mainly because of Basia's boasting and her assurances that she knew that art by no means badly, and that no common person could stand before her. "An old soldier taught me," said she; "there is no lack of these among us; it is known too that there are no swordsmen superior to ours. It is a question if even you, gentlemen, would not find your equals."

"Of what are you talking?" asked Zagloba. "We have no equals in the whole world."

"I should wish it to come out that even I am your equal. I do not expect it, but I should like it."

"If it were firing from pistols, I too would make a trial," said Pani Makovetski, laughing.

"As God lives, it must be that the Amazons themselves dwell in Latychov," said Zagloba. Here he turned to Kryisia: "And what weapon do you use best, your ladyship?"

"None," answered Kryisia.

"Ah, ha! none!" exclaimed Basia. And here, mimicking Kryisia's voice, she began to sing: —

"O knights, believe me,
Useless is armor,
Shields give no service;
Cupid's keen arrows,
Through steel and iron,
Go to all hearts."

"She wields arms of that kind; never fear," added Basia, turning to Pan Michael and Zagloba. "In that she is a warrior of no common skill."

"Take your place, young lady!" said Pan Michael, wishing to conceal a slight confusion.

"Oh, as God lives! if what I think should come true!" cried Basia, blushing with delight.

And she stood at once in position with a light Polish sabre in her right hand; the left she put behind her, and with breast pushed forward, with raised head and dilated nostrils, she was so pretty and so rosy that Zagloba whispered to Pan Michael's sister, "No decanter, even if filled with Hungarian a hundred years old, would delight me so much with the sight of it."

"Remember," said the little knight to Basia, "that I will only defend myself; I will not thrust once. You may attack as quickly as you choose."

"Very well. If you wish me to stop, give the word."

"The fencing could be stopped without a word, if I wished."

"And how could that be done?"

"I could take the sabre easily out of the hand of a fencer like you."

"We shall see!"

"We shall not, for I will not do so, through politeness."

"There is no need of politeness in this case. Do it if you can. I know that I have less skill than you, but still I will not let that be done."

"Then you permit it?"

"I permit it."

"Oh, do not permit, sweetest haiduk," said Zagloba. "He has disarmed the greatest masters."

"We shall see!" repeated Basia.

"Let us begin," said Pan Michael, made somewhat impatient by the boasting of the maiden.

They began. Basia thrust terribly, skipping around like a pony in a field. Volodyovski stood in one place, making, according to his wont, the slightest movements of the sabre, paying but little respect to the attack.

"You brush me off like a troublesome fly!" cried the irritated Basia.

"I am not making a trial of you; I am teaching you," answered the little knight. "That is good! For a fair head, not bad at all! Steadier with the hand!"

"For a fair head? You call me a fair head! you do! you do!"

But Pan Michael, though Basia used her most celebrated thrusts, was untouched. Even he began to talk with Zagloba, of purpose to show how little he cared for Basia's thrusts: "Step away from the window, for you are in the lady's light; and though a sabre is larger than a needle, she has less experience with the sabre."

Basia's nostrils dilated still more, and her forelock fell to her flashing eyes. "Do you hold me in contempt?" inquired she, panting quickly.

"Not your person; God save me from that!"

"I cannot endure Pan Michael!"

"You learned fencing from a schoolmaster." Again he turned to Zagloba: "I think snow is beginning to fall."

"Here is snow! snow for you!" repeated Basia, giving thrust after thrust.

"Basia, that is enough! you are barely breathing," said Pani Makovetski.

"Now hold to your sabre, for I will strike it from your hand."

"We shall see!"

"Here!" And the little sabre, hopping like a bird out of Basia's hands, fell with a rattle near the stove.

"I let it go myself without thinking! It was not you who did that!" cried the young lady, with tears in her voice; and seizing the sabre, in a twinkle she thrust again: "Try it now."

"There!" said Pan Michael. And again the sabre was at the stove. "That is enough for to-day," said the little knight.

Pani Makovetski began to bustle about and talk louder than usual; but Basia stood in the middle of the room, confused, stunned, breathing heavily, biting her lips and repressing the tears which were crowding into her eyes in spite of her. She knew that they would laugh all the more if she burst out crying, and she wished absolutely to restrain herself; but seeing that she could not, she rushed from the room on a sudden.

"For God's sake!" cried Pani Makovetski. "She has run to the stable, of course, and being so heated, will catch cold. Some one must go for her. Kryisia, don't you go!"

So saying, she went out, and seizing a warm shuba in the ante-room, hurried to the stable; and after her ran Zagloba, troubled about his little haiduk. Kryisia wished to go also, but the little knight held her by the hand. "You heard the prohibition. I will not let this hand go till they come back."

And, in fact, he did not let it go. But that hand was as soft as satin. It seemed to Pan Michael that a kind of warm current was flowing from those slender fingers into his bones, rousing in them an uncommon pleasantness; therefore he held them more firmly. A slight blush flew over Kryisia's face. "I see that I am a prisoner taken captive."

"Whoever should take such a prisoner would not have reason to envy the Sultan, for the Sultan would gladly give half his kingdom for her."

"But you would not sell me to the Pagans?"

"Just as I would not sell my soul to the Devil."

Here Pan Michael remarked that momentary enthusiasm had carried him too far, and he corrected himself: "As I would not sell my sister."

"That is the right word," said Kryisia, seriously. "I am a sister in affection to your sister, and I will be the same to you."

"I thank you from my heart!" said Pan Michael, kissing her hand; "for I have great need of consolation."

"I know, I know," repeated the young lady; "I am an orphan myself." Here a small tear rolled down from her eyelid and stopped at the down on her lip.

Pan Michael looked on that tear, on the mouth slightly shaded, and said, "You are as kind as a real angel; I feel comforted already."

Krysia smiled sweetly: "May God reward you!"

"As God is dear to me."

The little knight felt meanwhile that if he should kiss her hand a second time, it would comfort him still more; but at that moment his sister appeared. "Basia took the shuba," said she, "but is in such confusion that she will not come in for anything. Pan Zagloba is chasing her through the whole stable."

In fact, Zagloba, sparing neither jests nor persuasion, not only followed Basia through the stable, but drove her at last to the yard, in hopes that he would persuade her to the warm house. She ran before him, repeating, "I will not go! Let the cold catch me! I will not go! I will not go!"

Seeing at last a pillar before the house with pegs, and on it a ladder, she sprang up the ladder like a squirrel, stopped, and leaned at last on the eave of the roof. Sitting there, she turned to Pan Zagloba and cried out half in laughter, "Well, I will go if you climb up here after me."

"What sort of a cat am I, little haiduk, to creep along roofs after you? Is that the way you pay me for loving you?"

"I love you too, but from the roof."

"Grandfather wants his way; grandmother will have hers. Come down to me this minute!"

"I will not go down!"

"It is laughable, as God is dear to me, to take defeat to heart as you do. Not you alone, angry weasel, but Kmita, who passed for a master of masters, did Pan Michael treat in this way, and not in sport, but in a duel. The most famous swordsmen – Italians, Germans, and Swedes – could not stand before him longer than during one 'Our Father,' and here such a gadfly takes the affair to heart. Fie! be ashamed of yourself! Come down, come down! Besides, you are only beginning to learn."

"But I cannot endure Pan Michael!"

"God be good to you! Is it because he is *exquisitissimus* in that which you yourself wish to know? You should love him all the more."

Zagloba was not mistaken. The admiration of Basia for the little knight increased in spite of her defeat; but she answered, "Let Krysia love him."

"Come down! come down!"

"I will not come down."

"Very well, stay there; but I will tell you one thing: it is not nice for a young lady to sit on a ladder, for she may give an amusing exhibition to the world."

"But that's not true," answered Basia, gathering in her skirts with her hand.

"I am an old fellow, – I won't look my eyes out; but I'll call everybody this minute, let others stare at you."

"I'll come down!" cried Basia.

With that, Zagloba turned toward the side of the house. "As God lives, somebody is coming!" said he.

In fact, from behind the corner appeared young Adam Novoveski, who, coming on horseback, had tied his beast at the side-gate and passed around the house himself, wishing to enter through the main door. Basia, seeing him, was on the ground in two springs, but too late. Unfortunately Pan Adam had seen her springing from the ladder, and stood confused, astonished, and covered with blushes like a young girl. Basia stood before him in the same way, till at last she cried out, —

"A second confusion!"

Zagloba, greatly amused, blinked some time with his sound eye; at length he said, "Pan Novoveski, a friend and subordinate of our Michael, and this is Panna Drabinovski (Ladder). Tfu! I wanted to say Yezorkovski."

Pan Adam recovered readily; and because he was a soldier of quick wit, though young, he bowed, and raising his eyes to the wonderful vision, said, "As God lives! roses bloom on the snow in Ketling's garden."

But Basia, courtesying, muttered to herself, "For some other nose than yours." Then she said very charmingly, "I beg you to come in."

She went forward herself, and rushing into the room where Pan Michael was sitting with the rest of the company, cried, making reference to the red kontush of Pan Adam, "The red finch has come!" Then she sat at the table, put one hand into the other, and pursed her mouth in the style of a demure and strictly reared young lady.

Pan Michael presented his young friend to his sister and Panna Krysia; and the friend, seeing another young lady of equal beauty, but of a different order, was confused a second time; he covered his confusion, however, with a bow, and to add to his courage reached his hand to his mustache, which had not grown much yet. Twisting his fingers above his lip, he turned to Pan Michael and told him the object of his coming. The grand hetman wished anxiously to see the little knight. As far as Pan Adam could conjecture, it was a question of some military function, for the hetman had received letters recently from Pan Vilchkovski, from Pan Silnitski, from Colonel Pivo, and other commandants stationed in the Ukraine and Podolia, with reports of Crimean events which were not of favorable promise.

"The Khan himself and Sultan Galga, who made treaties with us at Podhaytse," continued Pan Adam, "wish to observe the treaties; but Budjyak is as noisy as a bee-hive at time of swarming. The Belgrad horde also are in an uproar; they do not wish to obey either the Khan or Galga."

"Pan Sobieski has informed me already of that, and asked for advice," said Zagloba. "What do they say now about the coming spring?"

"They say that with the first grass there will be surely a movement of those worms; that it will be necessary to stamp them out a second time," replied Pan Adam, assuming the face of a terrible Mars, and twisting his mustache till his upper lip reddened.

Basia, who was quick-eyed, saw this at once; therefore she pushed back a little, so that Pan Adam might not see her, and then twisted, as it were, her mustache, imitating the youthful cavalier. Pan Michael's sister threatened with her eyes, but at the same time she began to quiver, restraining her laughter with difficulty. Volodyovski bit his lips; and Krysia dropped her eyes till the long lashes threw a shadow on her cheeks.

"You are a young man," said Zagloba, "but a soldier of experience."

"I am twenty-two years old, and I have served the country seven years without ceasing; for I escaped to the field from the lowest bench in my fifteenth year," answered the young man.

"He knows the steppe, knows how to make his way through the grass, and to fall on the horde as a kite falls on grouse," said Pan Michael. "He is no common partisan! The Tartar will not hide from him in the steppe."

Pan Adam blushed with delight that praise from such famous lips met him in presence of ladies. He was withal not merely a falcon of the steppes, but a handsome fellow, dark, embrowned by the winds. On his face he bore a scar from his ear to his nose, which from this cut was thinner on one side than the other. He had quick eyes, accustomed to look into the distance, above them very dark brows, joined at the nose and forming, as it were, a Tartar bow. His head, shaven at the sides, was surmounted by a black, bushy forelock. He pleased Basia both in speech and in bearing; but still she did not cease to mimic him.

"As I live!" said Zagloba, "it is pleasant for old men like me to see that a new generation is rising up worthy of us."

"Not worthy yet," answered Pan Adam.

"I praise the modesty too. We shall see you soon receiving commands."

"That has happened already!" cried Pan Michael. "He has been commandant, and gained victories by himself."

Pan Adam began so to twist his mustache that he lacked little of pulling out his lip. And Basia, without taking her eyes from him, raised both hands also to her face, and mimicked him in everything. But the clever soldier saw quickly that the glances of the whole company were turning to one side, where, somewhat behind him, was sitting the young lady whom he had seen on the ladder, and he divined at once that something must be against him. He spoke on, as if paying no heed to the matter, and sought his mustache as before. At last he selected the moment, and wheeled around so quickly that Basia had no time either to turn her eyes from him, or to take her hands from her face. She blushed terribly, and not knowing herself what to do, rose from the chair. All were confused, and a moment of silence followed.

Basia struck her sides suddenly with her hands: "A third confusion!" cried she, with her silvery voice.

"My gracious lady," said Pan Adam, with animation, "I saw at once that something hostile was happening behind me. I confess that I am anxious for a mustache; but if I do not get it, it will be because I shall fall for the country, and in that event I hope I shall deserve tears rather than laughter from your ladyship."

Basia stood with downcast eyes, and was the more put to shame by the sincere words of the cavalier.

"You must forgive her," said Zagloba. "She is wild because she is young, but she has a golden heart."

And Basia, as if confirming Zagloba's words, said at once in a low voice, "I beg your forgiveness most earnestly."

Pan Adam caught her hands that moment and fell to kissing them. "For God's sake, do not take it to heart! I am not some kind of barbarian. It is for me to beg pardon for having dared to interrupt your amusement. We soldiers ourselves are fond of jokes. *Mea culpa!* I will kiss those hands again, and if I have to kiss them till you forgive me, then, for God's sake, do not forgive me till evening!"

"Oh, he is a polite cavalier. You see, Basia!" said Pani Makovetski.

"I see!" answered Basia.

"It is all over now," cried Pan Adam.

When he said this he straightened himself, and with great resolution reached to his mustache from habit, but suddenly remembered himself and burst out in hearty laughter. Basia followed him; others followed Basia. Joy seized all. Zagloba gave command straightway to bring one and a second bottle from Ketling's cellar, and all felt well. Pan Adam, striking one spur against the other, passed his fingers through his forelock and looked more and more ardently at Basia. She pleased him greatly. He grew immensely eloquent; and since he had served with the hetman, he had lived in the great world, therefore had something to talk about. He told them of the Diet of Convocation, of its close, and how in the senate the stove had tumbled down under the inquisitive spectators, to the great amusement of all. He departed at last after dinner, with his eyes and his soul full of Basia.

CHAPTER IX

That same day Pan Michael announced himself at the quarters of the hetman, who gave command to admit the little knight, and said to him, "I must send Rushchyts to the Crimea to see what is passing there, and to stir up the Khan to observe his treaties. Do you wish to enter service again and take the command after Rushchyts? You, Vilchkovski, Silnitski, and Pivo will have an eye on Doroshenko, and on the Tartars, whom it is impossible to trust altogether at any time."

Pan Michael grew sad. He had served the flower of his life. For whole tens of years he had not known rest; he had lived in fire, in smoke, in toil, in sleeplessness, without a roof over his head, without a handful of straw to lie on. God knows what blood his sabre had not shed. He had not settled down; he had not married. Men who deserved a hundred times less were eating the bread of merit; had risen to honors, to offices, to starostaships. He was richer when he began to serve than he was then. But still it was intended to use him again, like an old broom. His soul was rent, because, when friendly and pleasant hands had been found to dress his wounds, the command was given to tear himself away and fly to the desert, to the distant boundaries of the Commonwealth, without a thought that he was so greatly wearied in soul. Had it not been for interruptions and service, he would have enjoyed at least a couple of years with Anusia. When he thought of all this, an immense bitterness rose in his soul; but since it did not seem to him worthy of a cavalier to mention his own services and dwell on them, he answered briefly, —

"I will go."

"You are not in service," said the hetman; "you can refuse. You know better yourself if this is too soon for you."

"It is not too soon for me to die," replied Pan Michael.

Sobieski walked a number of times through the chamber, then he stopped before the little knight and put his hand on his shoulder confidentially. "If your tears are not dried yet, the wind of the steppe will dry them for you. You have toiled, cherished soldier, all your life; toil on still further! And should it come ever to your head that you are forgotten, unrewarded, that rest is not granted you, that you have received not buttered toast, but a crust, not a starostaship, but wounds, not rest, but suffering only, set your teeth and say, 'For thee, O Country!' Other consolation I cannot give, for I haven't it; but though not a priest, I can give you the assurance that serving in this way, you will go farther on a worn-out saddle than others in a carriage and six, and that gates will be opened for you which will be closed before them."

"To thee, O Country!" said Pan Michael, in his soul, wondering at the same time that the hetman could penetrate his secret thoughts so quickly.

Pan Sobieski sat down in front of him and continued: "I do not wish to speak with you as with a subordinate, but as with a friend, — nay! as a father with a son. When we were in the fire at Podhaytse, and before that in the Ukraine; when we were barely able to prevent the preponderance of the enemy, — here, in the heart of the country, evil men in security, behind our shoulders, were attaining in turbulence their own selfish ends. Even in those days it came more than once to my head that this Commonwealth must perish. License lords it too much over order; the public good yields too often to private ends. This has never happened elsewhere in such a degree. These thoughts were gnawing me in the day in the field, and in the night in the tent, for I thought to myself: 'Well, we soldiers are in a woful condition; but this is our duty and our portion. If we could only know that with this blood which is flowing from our wounds, salvation was issuing also.' No! even that consolation there was not. Oh, I passed heavy days in Podhaytse, though I showed a glad face to you officers, lest you might think that I had lost hope of victory in the field. 'There are no men,' thought I, — 'there are no men who love this country really.' And it was to me as if some one had planted a knife in my breast, till a certain time — the last day at Podhaytse, when I sent you with two thousand to the attack

against twenty-six thousand of the horde, and you all flew to apparent death, to certain slaughter, with such a shouting, with such willingness, as if you were going to a wedding – suddenly the thought came to me: 'Ah, these are my soldiers.' And God in one moment took the stone from my heart, and in my eyes it grew clear. 'These,' said I, 'are perishing from pure love of the mother; they will not go to confederacies, nor to traitors. Of these I will form a sacred brotherhood; of these I will form a school, in which the young generation will learn. Their example will have influence; through them this ill-fated people will be reborn, will become free of selfishness, forget license, and be as a lion feeling wonderful strength in his limbs, and will astonish the world. Such a brotherhood will I form of my soldiers!'"

Here Sobieski flushed up, reared his head, which was like the head of a Roman Cæsar, and stretching forth his hands, exclaimed, "O Lord! inscribe not on our walls 'Mene, Tekel, Peres!' and permit me to regenerate my country!"

A moment of silence followed. Pan Michael sat with drooping head and felt that trembling had seized his whole body.

The hetman walked some time with quick steps through the room and then stopped before the little knight. "Examples are needed," said he, – "examples every day to strike the eye. Volodyovski, I have reckoned you in the first rank of the brotherhood. Do you wish to belong to it?"

The little knight rose and embraced the hetman's knees. "See," said he, with a voice of emotion, "when I heard that I had to march again, I thought that a wrong had been done, and that leisure for my suffering belonged to me; but now I see that I sinned, and I repent of my thought and am unable to speak, for I am ashamed."

The hetman pressed Pan Michael to his heart in silence. "There is a handful of us," said he; "but others will follow the example."

"When am I to go?" asked the little knight. "I could go even to the Crimea, for I have been there."

"No," answered the hetman; "to the Crimea I will send Pan Rushchyts. He has relations there, and even namesakes, likely cousins, who, seized in childhood by the horde, have become Mussulmans and obtained office among the Pagans. They will help him in everything. Besides, I need you in the field; there is no man your equal in dealing with Tartars."

"When have I to go?" repeated the little knight.

"In two weeks at furthest. I need to confer yet with the vice-chancellor of the kingdom and with the treasurer, to prepare letters for Rushchyts and give him instructions. But be ready, for I shall be urgent."

"I shall be ready from to-morrow."

"God reward you for the intention! but it is not needful to be ready so soon. Moreover, you will not go to stay long; for during the election, if only there is peace, I shall need you in Warsaw. You have heard of candidates. What is the talk among nobles?"

"I came from the cloister not long since, and there they do not think of worldly matters. I know only what Pan Zagloba has told me."

"True. I can obtain information from him; he is widely known among the nobles. But for whom do you think of voting?"

"I know not myself yet; but I think that a military king is necessary for us."

"Yes, yes! I have such a man too in mind, who by his name alone would terrify our neighbors. We need a military king, as was Stefan Batory. But farewell, cherished soldier! We need a military king. Do you repeat this to all. Farewell. God reward you for your readiness!"

Pan Michael took farewell and went out. On the road he meditated. The soldier, however, was glad that he had before him a week or two, for that friendship and consolation which Kryisia gave was dear to him. He was pleased also with the thought that he would return to the election, and in general he went home without suffering. The steppes too had for him a certain charm; he was pining

for them without knowing it. He was so used to those spaces without end, in which the horseman feels himself more a bird than a man.

"Well, I will go," said he, "to those measureless fields, to those stanitsas and mounds, to taste the old life again, make new campaigns with the soldiers, to guard those boundaries like a crane, to frolic in spring in the grass, – well, now, I will go, I will go!"

Meanwhile he urged on the horse and went at a gallop, for he was yearning for the speed and the whistle of the wind in his ears. The day was clear, dry, frosty. Frozen snow covered the ground and squeaked under the feet of the horse. Compressed lumps of it flew with force from his hoofs. Pan Michael sped forward so that his attendant, sitting on an inferior horse remained far behind. It was near sunset; a little later twilight was in the heavens, casting a violet reflection on the snowy expanse. On the ruddy sky the first twinkling stars came out; the moon hung in the form of a silver sickle. The road was empty; the knight passed an odd wagon and flew on without interruption. Only when he saw Ketling's house in the distance did he rein in his horse and let his attendant come up. All at once he saw a slender figure coming toward him. It was Kryisia.

When he recognized her, Pan Michael sprang at once from his horse, which he gave to the attendant, and hurried up to the maiden, somewhat astonished, but still more delighted at sight of her. "Soldiers declare," said he, "that at twilight we may meet various supernatural beings, who are sometimes of evil, sometimes of good, omen; but for me there can be no better omen than to meet you."

"Pan Adam has come," answered Kryisia; "he is passing the time with Basia and Pani Makovetski. I slipped out purposely to meet you, for I was anxious about what the hetman had to say."

The sincerity of these words touched the little knight to the heart. "Is it true that you are so concerned about me?" asked he, raising his eyes to her.

"It is," answered Kryisia, with a low voice.

Pan Michael did not take his eyes from her; never before had she seemed to him so attractive. On her head was a satin hood; white swan's-down encircled her small, palish face, on which the moonlight was falling, – light which shone mildly on those noble brows, downcast eyes, long lids, and that dark, barely visible down above her mouth. There was a certain calm in that face and great goodness. Pan Michael felt at the moment that the face was a friendly and beloved one; therefore he said, —

"Were it not for the attendant who is riding behind, I should fall on the snow at your feet from thankfulness."

"Do not say such things," answered Kryisia, "for I am not worthy; but to reward me say that you will remain with us, and that I shall be able to comfort you longer."

"I shall not remain," said Pan Michael.

Kryisia stopped suddenly. "Impossible!"

"Usual soldier's service! I go to Russia and to the Wilderness."

"Usual service?" repeated Kryisia, And she began to hurry in silence toward the house. Pan Michael walked quickly at her side, a trifle confused. Somehow it was a little oppressive and dull in his mind. He wanted to say something; he wanted to begin conversation again; he did not succeed. But still it seemed to him that he had a thousand things to say to her, and that just then was the time, while they were alone and no one preventing.

"If I begin," thought he, "it will go on;" therefore he inquired all at once, "But is it long since Pan Adam came?"

"Not long," answered Kryisia.

And again their conversation stopped.

"The road is not that way," thought Pan Michael. "While I begin in that fashion, I shall never say anything. But I see that sorrow has gnawed away what there was of my wit."

And for a time he hurried on in silence; his mustaches merely quivered more and more vigorously. At last he halted before the house and said, "Think, if I deferred my happiness so many years to serve the country, with what face could I refuse now to put off my own comfort?"

It seemed to the little knight that such a simple argument should convince Krysia at once; in fact, after a while she answered with sadness and mildness, "The more nearly one knows Pan Michael, the more one respects and honors him."

Then she entered the house. Basia's exclamations of "Allah! Allah!" reached her in the entrance. And when they came to the reception-room, they saw Pan Adam in the middle of it, blindfolded, bent forward, and with outstretched arms trying to catch Basia, who was hiding in corners and giving notice of her presence by cries of "Allah!" Pani Makovetski was occupied near the window in conversation with Zagloba.

The entrance of Krysia and the little knight interrupted the amusement. Pan Adam pulled off the handkerchief and ran to greet Volodyovski. Immediately after came Pani Makovetski, Zagloba, and the panting Basia.

"What is it? what is it? What did the hetman say?" asked one, interrupting another.

"Lady sister," answered Pan Michael, "if you wish to send a letter to your husband, you have a chance, for I am going to Russia."

"Is he sending you? In God's name, do not volunteer yet, and do not go," cried his sister, with a pitiful voice. "Will they not give you this bit of time?"

"Is your command fixed already?" asked Zagloba, gloomily. "Your sister says justly that they are threshing you as with flails."

"Rushchyts is going to the Crimea, and I take the squadron after him; for as Pan Adam has mentioned already, the roads will surely be black (with the enemy) in spring."

"Are we alone to guard this Commonwealth from thieves, as a dog guards a house?" cried Zagloba. "Other men do not know from which end of a musket to shoot, but for us there is no rest."

"Never mind! I have nothing to say," answered Pan Michael. "Service is service! I gave the hetman my word that I would go, and earlier or later it is all the same." Here Pan Michael put his finger on his forehead and repeated the argument which he had used once with Krysia, "You see that if I put off my happiness so many years to serve the Commonwealth, with what face can I refuse to give up the pleasure which I find in your company?"

No one made answer to this; only Basia came up, with lips pouting like those of a peevish child, and said, "I am sorry for Pan Michael."

Pan Michael laughed joyously. "God grant you happy fortune! But only yesterday you said that you could no more endure me than a wild Tartar."

"What Tartar? I did not say that at all. You will be working there against the Tartars, and we shall be lonely here without you."

"Oh, little haiduk, comfort yourself; forgive me for the name, but it fits you most wonderfully. The hetman informed me that my command would not last long. I shall set out in a week or two, and must be in Warsaw at the election. The hetman himself wishes me to come, and I shall be here even if Rushchyts does not return from the Crimea in May."

"Oh, that is splendid!"

"I will go with the colonel; I will go surely," said Pan Adam, looking quickly at Basia; and she said in answer, —

"There will be not a few like you. It is a delight for men to serve under such a commander. Go; go! It will be pleasanter for Pan Michael."

The young man only sighed and stroked his forelock with his broad palm; at last he said, stretching his hands, as if playing blind-man's-buff, "But first I will catch Panna Barbara! I will catch her most surely."

"Allah! Allah!" exclaimed Basia, starting back.

Meanwhile Krysia approached Pan Michael, with face radiant and full of quiet joy. "But you are not kind, not kind to me, Pan Michael; you are better to Basia than to me."

"I not kind? I better to Basia?" asked the knight, with astonishment.

"You told Basia that you were coming back to the election; if I had known that, I should not have taken your departure to heart."

"My golden – " cried Pan Michael. But that instant he checked himself and said, "My dear friend, I told you little, for I had lost my head."

CHAPTER X

Pan Michael began to prepare slowly for his departure; he did not cease, however, to give lessons to Basia, whom he liked more and more, nor to walk alone with Krysia and seek consolation in her society. It seemed to him also that he found it; for his good-humor increased daily, and in the evening he even took part in the games of Basia and Pan Adam. That young cavalier became an agreeable guest at Ketling's house. He came in the morning or at midday, and remained till evening; as all liked him, they were glad to see him, and very soon they began to hold him as one of the family. He took the ladies to Warsaw, gave their orders at the silk shops, and in the evening played blind-man's-buff and patience with them, repeating that he must absolutely catch the unattainable Basia before his departure.

But Basia laughed and escaped always, though Zagloba said to her, "If this one does not catch you at last, another man will."

It became clearer and clearer that just "this one" had resolved to catch her. This must have come even to the head of the haiduk herself, for she fell sometimes to thinking till the forelock dropped into her eyes altogether. Pan Zagloba had his reasons, according to which Pan Adam was not suitable. A certain evening, when all had retired, he knocked at Pan Michael's chamber.

"I am so sorry that we must part," said he, "that I have come to get a good look at you. God knows when we shall see each other again."

"I shall come in all certainty to the election," said the little knight, embracing his old friend, "and I will tell you why. The hetman wishes to have here the largest number possible of men beloved by the knighthood, so that they may capture nobles for his candidate; and because – thanks to God! – my name has some weight among our brethren, he wants me to come surely. He counts on you also."

"Indeed, he is trying to catch me with a large net; yet I see something, and though I am rather bulky, still I can creep out through any hole in that net. I will not vote for a Frenchman."

"Why?"

"Because he would be for *absolutum dominium* (absolute rule)."

"Condé would have to swear to the *pacta conventa* like any other man; and he must be a great leader, – he is renowned for warlike achievement."

"With God's favor we have no need of seeking leaders in France. Pan Sobieski himself is surely no worse than Condé. Think of it, Michael; the French wear stockings like the Swedes; therefore, like them they of course keep no oaths. Carolus Gustavus was ready to take an oath every hour. For the Swedes to take an oath or crack a nut is all one. What does a pact mean when a man has no honesty?"

"But the Commonwealth needs defence. Oh, if Prince Yeremi were alive! We would elect him king with one voice."

"His son is alive, the same blood."

"But not the same courage. It is God's pity to look at him, for he is more like a serving-man than a prince of such worthy blood. If it were a different time! But now the first virtue is regard for the good of the country. Pan Yan says the same thing. Whatever the hetman does, I will do, for I believe in his love of the Commonwealth as in the Gospel."

"It is time to think of that. It is too bad that you are going now."

"But what will you do?"

"I will go to Pan Yan. The boys torment me at times; still, when I am away for a good while I feel lonely without them."

"If war comes after the election, Pan Yan too will go to it. Who knows? You may take the field yourself; we may campaign yet together in Russia. How much good and evil have we gone through in those parts!"

"True, as God is dear to me! there our best years flowed by. At times the wish comes to see all those places which witnessed our glory."

"Then come with me now. We shall be cheerful together; in five months I will return to Ketling. He will be at home then, and Pan Yan will be here."

"No, Michael, it is not the time for me now; but I promise that if you marry some lady with land in Russia, I will go with you and see your installation."

Pan Michael was confused a little, but answered at once, "How should I have a wife in my head? The best proof that I have not is that I am going to the army."

"It is that which torments me; for I used to think, if not one, then another woman. Michael, have God in your heart; stop; where will you find a better chance than just at this moment? Remember that years will come later in which you will say to yourself: 'Each has his wife and his children, but I am alone, like Matsek's pear-tree, sticking up in the field.' And sorrow will seize you and terrible yearning. If you had married that dear one; if she had left children, – I should not trouble you; I should have some object for my affection and ready hope for consolation; but as things now are, the time may come when you will look around in vain for a near soul, and you will ask yourself, 'Am I living in a foreign country?'"

Pan Michael was silent; he meditated; therefore Zagloba began to speak again, looking quickly into the face of the little knight, "In my mind and my heart I chose first of all that rosy haiduk for you: to begin with, she is gold, not a maiden; and secondly, such venomous soldiers as you would give to the world have not been on earth yet."

"She is a storm; besides, Pan Adam wants to strike fire with her."

"That's it, – that's it! To-day she would prefer you to a certainty, for she is in love with your glory; but when you go, and he remains – I know he will remain, the rascal! for there is no war – who knows what will happen?"

"Basia is a storm! Let Novoveski take her. I wish him well, because he is a brave man."

"Michael!" said Zagloba, clasping his hands, "think what a posterity that would be!"

To this the little knight answered with the greatest simplicity, "I knew two brothers Bal whose mother was a Drohoyovski,¹⁰ and they were excellent soldiers."

"Ah! I was waiting for that. You have turned in that direction?" cried Zagloba.

Pan Michael was confused beyond measure; at last he replied, "What do you say? I am turning to no side; but when I thought of Basia's bravery, which is really manlike, Krysia came to my mind at once; in her there is more of woman's nature. When one of them is mentioned, the other comes to mind, for they are both together."

"Well, well! God bless you with Krysia, though as God is dear to me, if I were young, I should fall in love with Basia to kill. You would not need to leave such a wife at home in time of war; you could take her to the field, and have her at your side. Such a woman would be good for you in the tent; and if it came to that, even in time of battle she would handle a musket. But she is honest and good. Oh, my haiduk, my little darling haiduk, they have not known you here, and have nourished you with thanklessness; but if I were something like sixty years younger, I should see what sort of a Pani Zagloba there would be in my house."

"I do not detract from Basia."

"It is not a question of detracting from her virtues, but of giving her a husband. But you prefer Krysia."

"Krysia is my friend."

"Your friend, not your friendess? That must be because she has a mustache. I am your friend; Pan Yan is; so is Ketling. You do not need a man for a friend, but a woman. Tell this to yourself clearly, and don't throw a cover over your eyes. Guard yourself, Michael, against a friend of the fair

¹⁰ Drohoyovski is Parma Krysia's family name.

sex, even though that friend has a mustache; for either you will betray that friend, or you yourself will be betrayed. The Devil does not sleep, and he is glad to sit between such friends; as example of this, Adam and Eve began to be friends, till that friendship became a bone in Adam's throat."

"Do not offend Krysia, for I will not endure it in any way."

"God guard Krysia! There is no one above my little haiduk; but Krysia is a good maiden too. I do not attack her in any way, but I say this to you: When you sit near her, your cheeks are as flushed as if some one had pinched them, and your mustaches are quivering, your forelock rises, and you are panting and striking with your feet and stamping like a ring-dove; and all this is a sign of desires. Tell some one else about friendship; I am too old a sparrow for that talk."

"So old that you see that which is not."

"Would that I were mistaken! Would that my haiduk were in question! Michael, good-night to you. Take the haiduk; the haiduk is the comelier. Take the haiduk; take the haiduk!"

Zagloba rose and went out of the room.

Pan Michael tossed about the whole night; he could not sleep, for unquiet thoughts passed through his head all the time. He saw before him Krysia's face, her eyes with long lashes, and her lip with down. Dozing seized him at moments, but the vision did not vanish. On waking, he remembered the words of Zagloba, and called to mind how rarely the wit of that man was mistaken in anything. At times when half sleeping, half waking, the rosy face of Basia gleamed before him, and the sight calmed him; but again Krysia took her place quickly. The poor knight turns to the wall now, sees her eyes; turns to the darkness in the room, sees her eyes, and in them a certain languishing, a certain encouragement. At times those eyes are closing, as if to say, "Let thy will be done!" Pan Michael sat up in the bed and crossed himself. Toward morning the dream flew away altogether; then it became oppressive and bitter to him. Shame seized him, and he began to reproach himself harshly, because he did not see before him that beloved one who was dead; that he had his eyes, his heart, his soul, full not of her, but of the living. It seemed to him that he had sinned against the memory of Anusia, hence he shook himself once and a second time; then springing from the bed, though it was dark yet, he began to say his morning "Our Father."

When Pan Michael had finished, he put his finger on his forehead and said, "I must go as soon as possible, and restrain this friendship at once, for perhaps Zagloba is right." Then, more cheerful and calm, he went down to breakfast. After breakfast he fenced with Basia, and noticed, beyond doubt, for the first time, that she drew one's eyes, she was so attractive with her dilated nostrils and panting breast. He seemed to avoid Krysia, who, noting this, followed him with her eyes, staring from astonishment; but he avoided even her glance. It was cutting his heart; but he held out.

After dinner he went with Basia to the storehouse, where Ketling had another collection of arms. He showed her various weapons, and explained the use of them. Then they shot at a mark from Astrachan bows. The maiden was made happy with the amusement, and became giddier than ever, so that Pani Makovetski had to restrain her. Thus passed the second day. On the third Pan Michael went with Zagloba to Warsaw to the Danilovich Palace to learn something concerning the time of his departure. In the evening the little knight told the ladies that he would go surely in a week. While saying this, he tried to speak carelessly and joyfully. He did not even look at Krysia. The young lady was alarmed, tried to ask him touching various things; he answered politely, with friendliness, but talked more with Basia.

Zagloba, thinking this to be the fruit of his counsel, rubbed his hands with delight; but since nothing could escape his eye, he saw Krysia's sadness. "She has changed," thought he; "she has changed noticeably. Well, that is nothing, – the ordinary nature of fair heads. But Michael has turned away sooner than I hoped. He is a man in a hundred, but a whirlwind in love, and a whirlwind he will remain."

Zagloba had, in truth, a good heart, and was sorry at once for Panna Krysia. "I will say nothing to the maiden directly," thought he, "but I must think out some consolation for her." Then, using the

privilege of age and a white head, he went to her after supper and began to stroke her black, silky hair. She sat quietly, raising toward him her mild eyes, somewhat astonished at his tenderness, but grateful.

In the evening Zagloba nudged Pan Michael in the side at the door of the little knight's room, "Well, what?" said he. "No one can beat the haiduk?"

"A charming kid," answered Pan Michael. "She will make as much uproar as four soldiers in the house, – a regular drummer."

"A drummer? God grant her to go with your drum as quickly as possible!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night! Wonderful creatures, those fair heads! Since you approached Basia a little, have you noted the change in Krysia?"

"No, I have not," answered the little knight.

"As if some one had tripped her."

"Good-night," repeated Pan Michael, and went quickly to his room.

Zagloba, in counting on the little knight's instability, over-reckoned somewhat, and in general acted awkwardly in mentioning the change in Krysia; for Pan Michael was so affected that something seemed to seize him by the throat.

"And this is how I pay her for kindness, for comforting me in grief, like a sister," said he to himself. "Well, what evil have I done to her?" thought he, after a moment of meditation. "What have I done? I have slighted her for three days, which was rude, to say the least. I have slighted the cherished girl, the dear one. Because she wished to cure my wounds, I have nourished her with ingratitude. If I only knew," continued he, "how to preserve measure and restrain dangerous friendship, and not offend her; but evidently my wit is too dull for such management."

Pan Michael was angry at himself; but at the same time great pity rose in his breast. Involuntarily he began to think of Krysia as of a beloved and injured person. Anger against himself grew in him every moment.

"I am a barbarian, a barbarian!" repeated he. And Krysia overwhelmed Basia completely in his mind. "Let him who pleases take that kid, that wind-mill, that rattler," said he to himself, – "Pan Adam or the Devil, it is all one to me!"

Anger rose in him against Basia, who was indebted to God for her disposition; but it never came to his head once that he might wrong her more with this anger than Krysia with his pretended indifference. Krysia, with a woman's instinct, divined straightway that some change was taking place in Pan Michael. It was at once both bitter and sad for the maiden that the little knight seemed to avoid her; but she understood instantly that something must be decided between them, and that their friendship could not continue unmodified, but must become either far greater than it had been or cease altogether. Hence she was seized by alarm, which increased at the thought of Pan Michael's speedy departure. Love was not in Krysia's heart yet. The maiden had not come to self-consciousness on that point; but in her heart and in her blood there was a great readiness for love. Perhaps too she felt a light turning of the head. Pan Michael was surrounded with the glory of the first soldier in the Commonwealth. All knights were repeating his name with respect. His sister exalted his honor to the sky; the charm of misfortune covered him; and in addition, the young lady, living under the same roof with him, grew accustomed to his attraction.

Krysia had this in her nature, she was fond of being loved; therefore when Pan Michael began in those recent days to treat her with indifference, her self-esteem suffered greatly; but having a good heart, she resolved not to show an angry face or vexation, and to win him by kindness. That came to her all the more easily, since on the following day Pan Michael had a penitent mien, and not only did not avoid Krysia's glance, but looked into her eyes, as if wishing to say, "Yesterday I offended you; to-day I implore your forgiveness." He said so much to her with his eyes that under their influence the blood flowed to the young lady's face, and her disquiet was increased, as if with a presentiment that very soon something important would happen. In fact, it did happen. In the afternoon Pani Makovetski

went with Basia to Basia's relative, the wife of the chamberlain of Lvoff, who was stopping in Warsaw; Krysia feigned purposely a headache, for curiosity seized her to know what she and Pan Michael would do if left to themselves.

Zagloba did not go, it is true, to the chamberlain's wife, but he had the habit of sleeping a couple of hours after dinner, for he said that it saved him from fatness, and gave him clear wit in the evening; therefore, after he had chatted an hour or so, he began to prepare for his room. Krysia's heart beat at once more unquietly. But what a disillusion was awaiting her! Pan Michael sprang up, and went out with Zagloba.

"He will come back soon," thought Krysia. And taking a little drum, she began to embroider on it a gold top for a cap to give Pan Michael at his departure. Her eyes rose, however, every little while, and went to the Dantzig clock, which stood in the corner of Ketling's room, and ticked with importance.

But one hour and a second passed; Pan Michael was not to be seen. Krysia placed the drum on her knees, and crossing her hands on it, said in an undertone, "But before he decides, they may come, and we shall not say anything, or Pan Zagloba may wake."

It seemed to her in that moment that they had in truth to speak of some important affair, which might be deferred through the fault of Pan Michael. At last, however, his steps were heard in the next room. "He is wandering around," thought she, and began to embroider diligently again.

Volodyovski was, in fact, wandering; he was walking through the room, and did not dare to come in. Meanwhile the sun was growing red and approaching its setting.

"Pan Michael!" called Krysia, suddenly.

He came in and found her sewing. "Did you call me?"

"I wished to know if some stranger was walking in the house; I have been here alone for two hours."

Pan Michael drew up a chair and sat on the edge of it. A long time elapsed; he was silent; his feet clattered somewhat as he pushed them under the table, and his mustache quivered. Krysia stopped sewing and raised her eyes to him; their glances met, and then both dropped their eyes suddenly.

When Pan Michael raised his eyes again, the last rays of the sun were falling on Krysia's face, and it was beautiful in the light; her hair gleamed in its folds like gold. "In a couple of days you are going?" asked she, so quietly that Pan Michael barely heard her.

"It cannot be otherwise."

Again a moment of silence, after which Krysia said, "I thought these last days that you were angry with me."

"As I live," cried Pan Michael, "I would not be worthy of your regard if I had been, but I was not."

"What was the matter?" asked Krysia, raising her eyes to him.

"I wish to speak sincerely, for I think that sincerity is always better than dissimulation; but I cannot tell how much solace you have poured into my heart, and how grateful I feel."

"God grant it to be always so!" said Krysia, crossing her hands on the drum.

To this Pan Michael answered with great sadness, "God grant! God grant – But Pan Zagloba told me – I speak before you as before a priest – Pan Zagloba told me that friendship with fair heads is not a safe thing, for a more ardent feeling may be hidden beneath it, as fire under ashes. I thought that perhaps Pan Zagloba was right. Forgive me, a simple soldier; another would have brought out the idea more cleverly, but my heart is bleeding because I have offended you these recent days, and life is not pleasant to me."

When he had said this. Pan Michael began to move his mustaches more quickly than any beetle. Krysia dropped her head, and after a while two tears rolled down her cheeks. "If it will be easier for you, I will conceal my sisterly affection." A second pair of tears, and then a third, appeared on her cheeks.

At sight of this, Pan Michael's heart was rent completely; he sprang toward Krysia, and seized her hands. The drum rolled from her knees to the middle of the room; the knight, however, did not care for that; he only pressed those warm, soft, velvety hands to his mouth, repeating, —

"Do not weep. For God's sake, do not weep!"

Pan Michael did not cease to kiss the hands even when Krysia put them on her head, as people do usually when embarrassed; but he kissed them the more ardently, till the warmth coming from her hair and forehead intoxicated him as wine does, and his ideas grew confused. Then not knowing himself how and when, his lips came to her forehead and kissed that still more eagerly; and then he pushed down to her tearful eyes, and the world went around with him altogether. Next he felt that most delicate down on her lip; and after that their mouths met and were pressed together with all their power. Silence fell on the room; only the clock ticked with importance.

Suddenly Basia's steps were heard in the ante-room, and her childlike voice repeating, "Frost! frost! frost!"

Pan Michael sprang away from Krysia like a frightened panther from his victim; and at that moment Basia rushed in with an uproar, repeating incessantly, "Frost! frost! frost!" Suddenly she stumbled against the drum lying in the middle of the room. Then she stopped, and looking with astonishment, now on the drum, now on Krysia, now on the little knight, said, "What is this? You struck each other, as with a dart?"

"But where is auntie?" asked Krysia, striving to bring out of her heaving breast a quiet, natural voice.

"Auntie is climbing out of the sleigh by degrees," answered Basia, with an equally changed voice. Her nostrils moved a number of times. She looked once more at Krysia and Pan Michael, who by that time had raised the drum, then she left the room suddenly.

Pani Makovetski rolled into the room; Pan Zagloba came downstairs, and a conversation set in about the wife of the chamberlain of Lvoff.

"I did not know that she was Pan Adam's godmother," said Pani Makovetski; "he must have made her his confidante, for she is persecuting Basia with him terribly."

"But what did Basia say?" asked Zagloba.

"A halter for a dog!" She said to the chamberlain's lady: 'He has no mustache, and I have no sense; and it is not known which one will get what is lacking first.'"

"I knew that she would not lose her tongue; but who knows what her real thought is? Ah, woman's wiles!"

"With Basia, what is on her heart is on her lips. Besides, I have told you already that she does not feel the will of God yet; Krysia does, in a higher degree."

"Auntie!" said Krysia, suddenly.

Further conversation was interrupted by the servant, who announced that supper was on the table. All went then to the dining-room; but Basia was not there.

"Where is the young lady?" asked Pani Makovetski of the servant.

"The young lady is in the stable. I told the young lady that supper was ready; the young lady said, 'Well,' and went to the stable."

"Has something unpleasant happened to her? She was so gay," said Pani Makovetski, turning to Zagloba.

Then the little knight, who had an unquiet conscience, said, "I will go and bring her." And he hurried out. He found her just inside the stable-door, sitting on a bundle of hay. She was so sunk in thought that she did not see him as he entered.

"Panna Basia," said the little knight, bending over her.

Basia trembled as if roused from sleep, and raised her eyes, in which Pan Michael saw, to his utter astonishment, two tears as large as pearls. "For God's sake! What is the matter? You are weeping."

"I do not dream of it," cried Basia, springing up; "I do not dream of it! That is from frost." She laughed joyously, but the laughter was rather forced. Then, wishing to turn attention from herself, she pointed to the stall in which was the steed given Pan Michael by the hetman, and said with animation, "You say it is impossible to go to that horse? Now let us see!"

And before Pan Michael could restrain her, she had sprung into the stall. The fierce beast began to rear, to paw, and to put back his ears.

"For God's sake! he will kill you!" cried Pan Michael, springing after her.

But Basia had begun already to stroke with her palm the shoulder of the horse, repeating, "Let him kill! let him kill!"

But the horse turned to her his steaming nostrils and gave a low neigh, as if rejoiced at the fondling.

CHAPTER XI

All the nights that Pan Michael had spent were nothing in comparison with the night after that adventure with Krysia. For, behold, he had betrayed the memory of his dead one, and he loved that memory. He had deceived the confidence of the living woman, had abused friendship, had contracted certain obligations, had acted like a man without conscience. Another soldier would have made nothing of such a kiss, or, what is more, would have twisted his mustache at thought of it; but Pan Michael was squeamish, especially since the death of Anusia, as is every man who has a soul in pain and a torn heart. What was left for him to do, then? How was he to act?

Only a few days remained until his departure; that departure would cut short everything. But was it proper to go without a word to Krysia, and leave her as he would leave any chamber-maid from whom he might steal a kiss? The brave heart of Pan Michael trembled at the thought. Even in the struggle in which he was then, the thought of Krysia filled him with pleasure, and the remembrance of that kiss passed through him with a quiver of delight. Rage against his own head seized him; still he could not refrain from a feeling of sweetness. And he took the whole blame on himself.

"I brought Krysia to that," repeated he, with bitterness and pain; "I brought her to it, therefore it is not just for me to go away without a word. What, then? Make a proposal, and go away Krysia's betrothed?"

Here the form of Anusia stood before the knight, dressed in white, and pale herself as wax, just as he had laid her in the coffin. "This much is due me," said the figure, "that you mourn and grieve for me. You wished at first to become a monk, to bewail me all your life; but now you are taking another before my poor soul could fly to the gates of heaven. Ah! wait, let me reach heaven first; let me cease looking at the earth."

And it seemed to the knight that he was a species of perjurer before that bright soul whose memory he should honor and hold as sacred. Sorrow and immeasurable shame seized him, and self-contempt. He desired death.

"Anulya,"¹¹ repeated he, on his knees, "I shall not cease to bewail thee till death; but what am I to do now?"

The white form gave no answer to that as it vanished like a light mist; and instead of it appeared in the imagination of the knight Krysia's eyes and her lip covered with down, and with it temptations from which the knight wished to free himself. So his heart was wavering in uncertainty, suffering, and torment. At moments it came to his head to go and confess all to Zagloba, and take counsel of that man whose reason could settle all difficulties. And he had foreseen everything; he had told beforehand what it was to enter into "friendship" with fair heads. But just that view restrained the little knight. He recollected how sharply he had called to Pan Zagloba, "Do not offend Panna Krysia, sir!" And now, who had offended Panna Krysia? Who was the man who had thought, "Is it not best to leave her like a chamber-maid and go away?"

"If it were not for that dear one up there, I would not hesitate a moment," thought the knight, "I should not be tormented at all; on the contrary, I should be glad in soul that I had tasted such delight." After a while he muttered, "I would take it willingly a hundred times." Seeing, however, that temptations were flocking around him, he shook them off again powerfully, and began to reason in this way: "It is all over. Since I have acted like one who is not desirous of friendship, but who is looking for satisfaction from Cupid, I must go by that road, and tell Krysia tomorrow that I wish to marry her."

Here he stopped awhile, then thought further thuswise: "Through which declaration the confidence of to-day will become quite proper, and to-morrow I can permit myself – " But at this

¹¹ A diminutive of Anna, expressing endearment.

moment he struck his mouth with his palm. "Tfu!" said he; "is a whole chambul of devils sitting behind my collar?"

But still he did not set aside his plan of making the declaration, thinking to himself simply: "If I offend the dear dead one, I can conciliate her with Masses and prayer; by this I shall show also that I remember her always, and will not cease in devotion. If people wonder and laugh at me because two weeks ago I wanted from sorrow to be a monk, and now have made a declaration of love to another, the shame will be on my side alone. If I make no declaration, the innocent Krysia will have to share my shame and my fault. I will propose to her to-morrow; it cannot be otherwise," said he, at last.

He calmed himself then considerably; and when he had repeated "Our Father," and prayed earnestly for Anusia, he fell asleep. In the morning, when he woke, he repeated, "I will propose to-day." But it was not so easy to propose, for Pan Michael did not wish to inform others, but to talk with Krysia first, and then act as was proper. Meanwhile Pan Adam arrived in the early morning, and filled the whole house with his presence.

Krysia went about as if poisoned; the whole day she was pale, worried, sometimes dropped her eyes, sometimes blushed so that the color went to her neck; at times her lips quivered as if she were going to cry; then again she was as if dreamy and languid. It was difficult for the knight to approach her, and especially to remain long alone with her. It is true he might have taken her to walk, for the weather was wonderful, and some time before he would have done so without any scruple; but now he dared not, for it seemed to him that all would divine on the spot what his object was, – all would think he was going to propose.

Pan Adam saved him. He took Pani Makovetski aside, conversed with her a good while touching something, then both returned to the room in which the little knight was sitting with the two young ladies and Pan Zagloba, and said, "You young people might have a ride in two sleighs, for the snow is sparkling."

At this Pan Michael inclined quickly to Krysia's ear and said, "I beg you to sit with me. I have a world of things to say."

"Very well," answered Krysia.

Then the two men hastened to the stables, followed by Basia; and in the space of a few "Our Fathers," the two sleighs were driven up before the house. Pan Michael and Krysia took their places in one. Pan Adam and the little haiduk in the other, and moved on without drivers.

When they had gone, Pani Makovetski turned to Zagloba and said, "Pan Adam has proposed for Basia."

"How is that?" asked Zagloba, alarmed.

"His godmother, the wife of the chamberlain of Lvoff, is to come here to-morrow to talk with me; Pan Adam himself has begged of me permission to talk with Basia, even hintingly, for he understands himself that if Basia is not his friend, the trouble and pains will be useless."

"It was for this that you, my benefactress, sent them sleigh-riding?"

"For this. My husband is very scrupulous. More than once he has said to me, 'I will guard their property, but let each choose a husband for herself; if he is honorable, I will not oppose, even in case of inequality of property.' Moreover, they are of mature years and can give advice to themselves."

"But what answer do you think of giving Pan Adam's godmother?"

"My husband will come in May. I will turn the affair over to him; but I think this way, – as Basia wishes, so will it be."

"Pan Adam is a stripling!"

"But Michael himself says that he is a famous soldier, noted already for deeds of valor. He has a respectable property, and his godmother has recounted to me all his relations. You see, it is this way: his great-grandfather was born of Princess Senyut; he was married the first time to –"

"But what do I care for his relations?" interrupted Zagloba, not hiding his ill-humor; "he is neither brother nor godfather to me, and I tell your ladyship that I have predestined the little haiduk

to Michael; for if among maidens who walk the world on two feet there is one better or more honest than she, may I from this moment begin to walk on all-four like a bear!"

"Michael is thinking of nothing yet; and even if he were, Kryisia has struck his eye more. Ah! God, whose ways are inscrutable, will decide this."

"But if that bare-lipped youngster goes away with a water-melon,¹² I shall be drunk with delight," added Zagloba.

Meanwhile in the two sleighs the fates of both knights were in the balance. Pan Michael was unable to utter a word for a long time; at last he said to Kryisia, "Do not think that I am a frivolous man, or some kind of fop, for not such are my years."

Kryisia made no answer.

"Forgive me for what I did yesterday, for it was from the good feeling which I have for you, which is so great that I was altogether unable to restrain it. My gracious lady, my beloved Kryisia, consider who I am; I am a simple soldier, whose life has been passed in wars. Another would have prepared an oration beforehand, and then come to confidence; I have begun with confidence. Remember this also, that if a horse, though trained, takes the bit in his teeth and runs away with a man, why should not love, whose force is greater, run away with him? Love carried me away, simply because you are dear to me. My beloved Kryisia, you are worthy, of castellans and senators; but if you do not disdain a soldier, who, though in simple rank, has served the country not without some glory, I fall at your feet, I kiss your feet, and I ask, do you wish me? Can you think of me without repulsion?"

"Pan Michael!" answered Kryisia. And her hand, drawn from her muff, hid itself in the hand of the knight.

"Do you consent?" asked Volodyovski.

"I do!" answered Kryisia; "and I know that I could not find a more honorable man in all Poland."

"God reward you! God reward you, Kryisia!" said the knight, covering the hand with kisses. "A greater happiness could not meet me. Only tell me that you are not angry at yesterday's confidence, so that I may find relief of conscience."

"I am not angry."

"Oh that I could kiss your feet!" cried Pan Michael.

They remained some time in silence; the runners were whistling on the snow, and snowballs were flying from under the horse's feet. Then Pan Michael said, "I marvel that you regard me."

"It is more wonderful," answered Kryisia, "that you came to love me so quickly."

At this Pan Michael's face grew very serious, and he said, "It may seem ill to you that before I shook off sorrow for one, I fell in love with another. I own to you also, as if I were at confession, that in my time I have been giddy; but now it is different. I have not forgotten that dear one, and shall never forget her; I love her yet, and if you knew how much I weep for her, you would weep over me yourself."

Here voice failed the little knight, for he was greatly moved, and perhaps for that reason he did not notice that these words did not seem to make a very deep impression on Kryisia.

Silence followed again, interrupted this time by the lady: "I will try to comfort you, as far as my strength permits."

"I loved you so soon," said Pan Michael, "because you began from the first day to cure my wounds. What was I to you? Nothing! But you began at once, because you had pity in your heart for an unfortunate. Ah! I am thankful to you, greatly thankful! Who does not know this will perhaps reproach me, since I wished to be a monk in November, and am preparing for marriage in December. First, Pan Zagloba will be ready to jeer, for he is glad to do that when occasion offers; but let the man jeer who is able! I do not care about that, especially since the reproach will not fall on you, but on me."

¹² To place a water-melon in the carriage of a suitor was one way of refusing him.

Kryisia began to look at the sky thoughtfully, and said at last, "Must we absolutely tell people of our engagement?"

"What is your meaning?"

"You are going away, it seems, in a couple of days?"

"Even against my will, I must go."

"I am wearing mourning for my father. Why should we exhibit ourselves to the gaze of people? Let our engagement remain between ourselves, and people need not know of it till you return from Russia. Are you satisfied?"

"Then I am to say nothing to my sister?"

"I will tell her myself, but after you have gone."

"And to Pan Zagloba?"

"Pan Zagloba would sharpen his wit on me. Ei, better say nothing! Basia too would tease me; and she these last days is so whimsical and has such changing humor as never before. Better say nothing." Here Kryisia raised her dark-blue eyes to the heavens: "God is the witness above us; let people remain uninformed."

"I see that your wit is equal to your beauty. I agree. Then God is our witness. Amen! Now rest your shoulder on me; for as soon as our contract is made, modesty is not opposed to that. Have no fear! Even if I wished to repeat yesterday's act, I cannot, for I must take care of the horse."

Kryisia gratified the knight, and he said, "As often as we are alone, call me by name only."

"Somehow it does not fit," said she, with a smile. "I never shall dare to do that."

"But I have dared."

"For Pan Michael is a knight, Pan Michael is daring, Pan Michael is a soldier."

"Kryisia, you are my love!"

"Mich – " But Kryisia had not courage to finish, and covered her face with her muff.

After a while Pan Michael returned to the house; they did not converse much on the road, but at the gate the little knight asked again, "But after yesterday's – you understand – were you very sad?"

"Oh, I was ashamed and sad, but had a wonderful feeling," added she, in a lower voice.

All at once they put on a look of indifference, so that no one might see what had passed between them. But that was a needless precaution, for no one paid heed to them. It is true that Zagloba and Pan Michael's sister ran out to meet the two couples, but their eyes were turned only on Basia and Pan Adam.

Basia was red, certainly, but it was unknown whether from cold or emotion; and Pan Adam was as if poisoned. Immediately after, too, he took farewell of the lady of the house. In vain did she try to detain him; in vain Pan Michael himself tried to persuade him to remain to supper: he excused himself with service and went away. That moment Pan Michael's sister, without saying a word, kissed Basia on the forehead; the young lady flew to her own chamber and did not return to supper.

Only on the next day did Zagloba make a direct attack on her and inquire, "Well, little haiduk, a thunderbolt, as it were, struck Pan Adam?"

"Aha!" answered she, nodding affirmatively and blinking.

"Tell me what you said to him."

"The question was quick, for he is daring; but so was the answer, for I too am daring. Is it not true?"

"You acted splendidly! Let me embrace you! What did he say? Did he let himself be beaten off easily?"

"He asked if with time he could not effect something. I was sorry for him, but no, no; nothing can come of that!"

Here Basia, distending her nostrils, began to shake her forelock somewhat sadly, as if in thought.

"Tell me your reasons," said Zagloba.

"He too wanted them, but it was of no use; I did not tell him, and I will tell no man."

"But perhaps," said Zagloba, looking quickly into her eyes, "you bear some hidden love in your heart. Hei?"

"A fig for love!" cried Basia. And springing from the place, she began to repeat quickly, as if wishing to cover her confusion, "I do not want Pan Adam! I do not want Pan Adam! I do not want any one! Why do you plague me? Why do you plague me, all of you?" And on a sudden she burst into tears.

Zagloba comforted her as best he could, but during the whole day she was gloomy and peevish. "Michael," said he at dinner, "you are going, and Ketling will come soon; he is a beauty above beauties. I know not how these young ladies will defend themselves, but I think this, when you come back, you will find them both dead in love."

"Profit for us!" said Volodyovski. "We'll give him Panna Basia at once."

Basia fixed on him the look of a wild-cat and said, "But why are you less concerned about Krysia?"

The little knight was confused beyond measure at these words, and said, "You do not know Ketling's power, but you will discover it."

"But why should not Krysia discover it? Besides, it is not I who sing, —

'The fair head grows faint;
Where will she hide herself?
How will the poor thing defend herself?'"

Now Krysia was confused in her turn, and the little wasp continued, "In extremities I will ask Pan Adam to lend me his shield; but when you go away, I know not with what Krysia will defend herself, if peril comes on her."

Pan Michael had now recovered, and answered somewhat severely, "Perhaps she will find wherewith to defend herself better than you."

"How so?"

"For she is less giddy, and has more sedateness and dignity."

Pan Zagloba and the little knight's sister thought that the keen haiduk would come to battle at once; but to their great amazement, she dropped her head toward the plate, and after a while said, in a low voice, "If you are angry, I ask pardon of you and of Krysia."

CHAPTER XII

As Pan Michael had permission to set out whenever he wished, he went to Anusia's grave at Chenstohova. After he had shed the last of his tears there, he journeyed on farther; and under the influence of fresh reminiscences it occurred to him that the secret engagement with Krysia was in some way too early. He felt that in sorrow and mourning there is something sacred and inviolable, which should not be touched, but permitted to rise heavenward like a cloud, and vanish in measureless space. Other men, it is true, after losing their wives, had married in a month or in two months; but they had not begun with the cloister, nor had misfortune met them at the threshold of happiness after whole years of waiting. But even if men of common mould do not respect the sacredness of sorrow, is it proper to follow their example?

Pan Michael journeyed forward then toward Russia, and reproaches went with him. But he was so just that he took all the blame on himself, and did not put any on Krysia; and to the many alarms which seized him was added this also, would not Krysia in the depth of her soul take that haste ill of him?

"Surely she would not act thus in my place," said Pan Michael to himself; "and having a lofty soul herself, beyond doubt, she seeks loftiness in others."

Fear seized the little knight lest he might seem to her petty; but that was vain fear. Krysia cared nothing for Pan Michael's mourning; and when he spoke to her too much concerning it, not only did it not excite sympathy in the lady, but it roused her self-love. Was not she, the living woman, equal to the dead one? Or, in general, was she of such small worth that the dead Anusia could be her rival? If Zagloba had been in the secret, he would have pacified Pan Michael certainly, by saying that women have not over-much mercy for one another.

After Volodyovski's departure, Panna Krysia was astonished not a little at what had happened, and at this, that the latch had fallen. In going from the Ukraine to Warsaw, where she had never been before, she had imagined that it would be different altogether. At the Diet of Convocation the escorts of bishops and dignitaries would meet; a brilliant knighthood would assemble from all sides of the Commonwealth. How many amusements and reviews would there be, how much bustle! and in all that whirl, in the concourse of knights, would appear some unknown "he," some knight such as maidens see only in dreams. This knight would flush up with love, appear under her windows with a lute; he would form cavalcades, love and sigh a long time, wear on his armor the knot of his loved one, suffer and overcome obstacles before he would fall at her feet and win mutual love.

But nothing of all that had come to pass. The haze, changing and colored, like a rainbow, vanished; a knight appeared, it is true, – a knight not at all common, heralded as the first soldier of the Commonwealth, a great cavalier, but not much, or indeed, not at all, like that "he." There were no cavalcades either, nor playing of lutes, nor tournaments, nor the knot on the armor, nor bustle, nor games, nor any of all that which rouses curiosity like a May dream, or a wonderful tale in the evening, which intoxicates like the odor of flowers, which allures as bait does a bird; from which the face flushes, the heart throbs, the body trembles. There was nothing but a small house outside the city; in the house Pan Michael; then intimacy grew up, and the rest of the vision disappeared as the moon disappears in the sky when clouds come and hide it. If that Pan Michael had appeared at the end of the story, he would be the desired one. More than once, when thinking of his fame, of his worth, of his valor, which made him the glory of the Commonwealth and the terror of its enemies, Krysia felt that, in spite of all, she loved him greatly; only it seemed to her that something had missed her, that a certain injustice had met her, a little through him, or rather through haste. That haste, therefore, had fallen into the hearts of both like a grain of sand; and since both were farther and farther from each other, that grain began to pain them somewhat. It happens frequently that something insignificant as a little thorn pricks the feelings of people, and in time either heals or festers more and more, and brings

bitterness and pain, even to the greatest love. But in this case it was still far to pain and bitterness. For Pan Michael, the thought of Krysia was especially agreeable and soothing; and the thought of her followed him as his shadow follows a man. He thought too that the farther he went, the dearer she would become to him, and the more he would sigh and yearn for her. The time passed more heavily for her; for no one visited Ketling's house since the departure of the little knight, and day followed day in monotony and weariness.

Pani Makovetski counted the days before the election, waited for her husband, and talked only of him; Basia had put on a very long face. Zagloba reproached her, saying that she had rejected Pan Adam and was then wishing for him. In fact, she would have been glad if even he had come; but Novoveski said to himself, "There is nothing for me there," and soon he followed Pan Michael. Zagloba too was preparing to return to Pan Yan's, saying that he wished to see his boys. Still, being heavy, he put off his journey day after day; he explained to Basia that she was the cause of his delay, that he was in love with her and intended to seek her hand. Meanwhile he kept company with Krysia when Pan Michael's sister went with Basia to visit the wife of the chamberlain of Lvoff. Krysia never accompanied them in those visits; for the lady, notwithstanding her worthiness, could not endure Krysia. Frequently and often too Zagloba went to Warsaw, where he met pleasant company and returned more than once tipsy on the following day; and then Krysia was entirely alone, passing the dreary hours in thinking a little of Pan Michael, a little of what might happen if that latch had not fallen once and forever, and often, what did that unknown rival of Pan Michael look like, – the King's son in the fairy tale?

Once Krysia was sitting by the window and looking in thoughtfulness at the door of the room, on which a very bright gleam of the setting sun was falling, when suddenly a sleigh-bell was heard on the other side of the house. It ran through Krysia's head that Pani Makovetski and Basia must have returned; but that did not bring her out of meditation, and she did not even withdraw her eyes from the door. Meanwhile the door opened; and on the background of the dark depth beyond appeared to the eyes of the maiden some unknown man.

At the first moment it seemed to Krysia that she saw a picture, or that she had fallen asleep and was dreaming, such a wonderful vision stood before her. The unknown was young, dressed in black foreign costume, with a white lace collar coming to his shoulders. Once in childhood Krysia had seen Pan Artsishevski, general of the artillery of the kingdom, dressed in such a costume; by reason of the dress, as well as of his unusual beauty, the general had remained long in her memory. Now, that young man before her was dressed in like fashion; but in beauty he surpassed Pan Artsishevski and all men walking the earth. His hair, cut evenly over his forehead, fell in bright curls on both sides of his face, just marvellously. He had dark brows, definitely outlined on a forehead white as marble; eyes mild and melancholy; a yellow mustache and a yellow, pointed beard. It was an incomparable head, in which nobility was united to manfulness, – the head at once of an angel and a warrior. Krysia's breath was stopped in her breast, for looking, she did not believe her own eyes, nor could she decide whether she had before her an illusion or a real man. He stood awhile motionless, astonished, or through politeness feigning astonishment at Krysia; at last he moved from the door, and waving his hat downward began to sweep the floor with its plumes. Krysia rose, but her feet trembled under her; and now blushing, now growing pale, she closed her eyes.

Meanwhile his voice sounded low and soft, "I am Ketling of Elgin, – the friend and companion-at-arms of Pan Volodyovski. The servant has told me already that I have the unspeakable happiness and honor to receive as guests under my roof the sister and relatives of my Pallas; but pardon, worthy lady, my confusion, for the servant told me nothing of what my eyes see, and my eyes are overcome by the brightness of your presence."

With such a compliment did the knightly Ketling greet Krysia; but she did not repay him in like manner, for she could not find a single word. She thought only that when he had finished, he would incline surely a second time, for in the silence she heard again the rustle of plumes on the

floor. She felt also that there was need, urgent need, to make some answer and return compliment for compliment, otherwise she might be held a simple woman; but meanwhile her breath fails her, the pulse is throbbing in her hands and her temples, her breast rises and falls as if she were suffering greatly. She opens her eyelids; he stands before her with head inclined somewhat, with admiration and respect in his wonderful face. With trembling hand Krysia seizes her robe to make even a courtesy before the cavalier; fortunately, at that moment cries of "Ketling! Ketling!" are heard behind the door, and into the room rushes, with open arms, the panting Zagloba.

The two men embraced each other then; and during that time the young lady tried to recover, and to look two or three times at the knight. He embraced Zagloba heartily, but with that unusual elegance in every movement which he had either inherited from his ancestors or acquired at the refined courts of kings and magnates.

"How are you?" cried Zagloba. "I am as glad to see you in your house as in my own. Let me look at you. Ah, you have grown thin! Is it not some love-affair? As God lives, you have grown thin. Do you know, Michael has gone to the squadron? Oh, you have done splendidly to come! Michael thinks no more of the cloister. His sister is living here with two young ladies, – maidens like turnips! Oh, for God's sake, Panna Krysia is here! I beg pardon for my words, but let that man's eyes crawl out who denies beauty to either of you; this cavalier has seen it already in your case."

Ketling inclined his head a third time, and said with a smile, "I left the house a barrack and find it Olympus; for I see a goddess at the entrance."

"Ketling! how are you?" cried a second time Zagloba, for whom one greeting was too little, and he seized him again in his arms. "Never mind," said he, "you haven't seen the haiduk yet. One is a beauty, but the other is honey! How are you, Ketling? God give you health! I will talk to you. It is you; very good. That is a delight to this old man. You are glad of your guests. Pani Makovetski has come here, for it was difficult to find lodgings in the time of the Diet; but now it is easier, and she will go out, of course, for it is not well for young ladies to lodge in a single man's house, lest people might look awry, and some gossip might come of the matter."

"For God's sake! I will never permit that! I am to Volodyovski not a friend, but a brother; and I may receive Pani Makovetski as a sister under my roof. To you, young lady, I shall turn for assistance, and if necessary will beg it here on my knees."

Saying this, Ketling knelt before Krysia, and seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips and looked into her eyes imploringly, joyously, and at the same time pensively; she began to blush, especially as Zagloba cried out straightway, "He has barely come when he is on his knees before her. As God lives! I'll tell Pani Makovetski that I found you in that posture. Sharp, Ketling! See what court customs are!"

"I am not skilled in court customs," whispered the lady, in great confusion.

"Can I reckon on your aid?" asked Ketling.

"Rise, sir!"

"May I reckon on your aid? I am Pan Michael's brother. An injury will be done him if this house is abandoned."

"My wishes are nothing here," answered Krysia, with more presence of mind, "though I must be grateful for yours."

"I thank you!" answered Ketling, pressing her hand to his mouth.

"Ah! frost out of doors, and Cupid is naked; but he would not freeze in this house," said Zagloba. "And I see that from sighs alone there will be a thaw, – from nothing but sighs."

"Spare us," said Krysia.

"I thank God that you have not lost your jovial humor," said Ketling, "for joyousness is a sign of health."

"And a clear conscience," added Zagloba. "'He grieves who is troubled,' declares the Seer in Holy Writ. Nothing troubles me, therefore I am joyous. Oh, a hundred Turks! What do I behold? For

I saw you in Polish costume with a lynx-skin cap and a sabre, and now you have changed again into some kind of Englishman, and are going around on slim legs like a stork."

"For I have been in Courland, where the Polish dress is not worn, and have just passed two days with the English resident in Warsaw."

"Then you are returning from Courland?"

"I am. The relative who adopted me has died, and left me another estate there."

"Eternal repose to him! He was a Catholic, of course?"

"He was."

"You have this consolation at least. But you will not leave us for this property in Courland?"

"I will live and die here," answered Ketling, looking at Kryisia; and at once she dropped her long lashes on her eyes.

Pani Makovetski arrived when it was quite dark; and Ketling went outside the gate to meet her. He conducted the lady to his house with as much homage as if she had been a reigning princess. She wished on the following day to seek other quarters in the city itself; but her resolve was ineffective. The young knight implored, dwelt on his brotherhood with Pan Michael, and knelt until she agreed to stay with him longer. It was merely stipulated that Pan Zagloba should remain some time yet, to shield the ladies with his age and dignity from evil tongues. He agreed willingly, for he had become attached beyond measure to the haiduk; and besides, he had begun to arrange in his head certain plans which demanded his presence absolutely. The maidens were both glad, and Basia came out at once openly on Ketling's side.

"We will not move out to-day, anyhow," said she to Pan Michael's hesitating sister; "and if not, it is all the same whether we stay one day or twelve."

Ketling pleased her as well as Kryisia, for he pleased all women; besides, Basia had never seen a foreign cavalier, except officers of foreign infantry, – men of small rank and rather common persons. Therefore she walked around him, shaking her forelock, dilating her nostrils, and looking at him with a childlike curiosity; so importunate was she that at last she heard the censure of Pani Makovetski. But in spite of the censure, she did not cease to investigate him with her eyes, as if wishing to fix his military value, and at last she turned to Pan Zagloba.

"Is he a great soldier?" asked she of the old man in a whisper.

"Yes; so that he cannot be more celebrated. You see he has immense experience, for, remaining in the true faith, he served against the English rebels from his fourteenth year. He is a noble also of high birth, which is easily seen from his manners."

"Have you seen him under fire?"

"A thousand times! He would halt for you in it without a frown, pat his horse on the shoulder, and be ready to talk of love."

"Is it the fashion to talk of love at such a time? Hei?"

"It is the fashion to do everything by which contempt for bullets is shown."

"But hand to hand, in a duel, is he equally great?"

"Yes, yes! a wasp; it is not to be denied."

"But could he stand before Pan Michael?"

"Before Michael he could not!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Basia, with joyous pride, "I knew that he could not. I thought at once that he could not." And she began to clap her hands.

"So, then, do you take Pan Michael's side?" asked Zagloba.

Basia shook her forelock and was silent; after a while a quiet sigh raised her breast. "Ei! what of that? I am glad, for he is ours."

"But think of this, and beat it into yourself, little haiduk," said Zagloba, "that if on the field of battle it is hard to find a better man than Ketling, he is most dangerous for maidens, who love him madly for his beauty. He is trained famously in love-making too."

"Tell that to Krysia, for love is not in my head," answered Basia, and turning to Krysia, she began to call, "Krysia! Krysia! Come here just for a word."

"I am here," said Krysia.

"Pan Zagloba says that no lady looks on Ketling without falling in love straightway. I have looked at him from every side, and somehow nothing has happened; but do you feel anything?"

"Basia, Basia!" said Krysia, in a tone of persuasion.

"Has he pleased you, eh?"

"Spare us! be sedate. My Basia, do not talk nonsense, for Ketling is coming."

In fact, Krysia had not taken her seat when Ketling approached and inquired, "Is it permitted to join the company?"

"We request you earnestly," answered Krysia.

"Then I am bold to ask, of what was your conversation?"

"Of love," cried Basia, without hesitation.

Ketling sat down near Krysia. They were silent for a time; for Krysia, usually self-possessed and with presence of mind, had in some wonderful way become timid in presence of the cavalier; hence he was first to ask, —

"Is it true that the conversation was of such a pleasant subject?"

"It was," answered Krysia, in an undertone.

"I shall be delighted to hear your opinion."

"Pardon me, for I lack courage and wit, so I think that I should rather hear something new from you."

"Krysia is right," said Zagloba. "Let us listen."

"Ask a question," said Ketling. And raising his eyes somewhat, he meditated a little, then, although no one had questioned him, he began to speak, as if to himself: "Loving is a grievous misfortune; for by loving, a free man becomes a captive. Just as a bird, shot by an arrow, falls to the feet of the hunter, so the man struck by love has no power to escape from the feet of the loved one. To love is to be maimed; for a man, like one blind, does not see the world beyond his love. To love is to mourn; for when do more tears flow, when do more sighs swell the breast? When a man loves, there are neither dresses nor hunts in his head; he is ready to sit embracing his knees with his arms, sighing as plaintively as if he had lost some one near to him. Love is an illness; for in it, as in illness, the face becomes pale, the eyes sink, the hands tremble, the fingers grow thin, and the man thinks of death, or goes around in derangement, with dishevelled hair, talks with the moon, writes gladly the cherished name on the sand, and if the wind blows it away, he says, 'misfortune,' and is ready to sob."

Here Ketling was silent for a while; one would have said that he was sunk in musing. Krysia listened to his words with her whole soul, as if they were a song. Her lips were parted, and her eyes did not leave the pale face of the knight. Basia's forelock fell to her eyes, hence it could not be known what she was thinking of; but she sat in silence also.

Then Zagloba yawned loudly, drew a deep breath, stretched his legs, and said, "Give command to make boots for dogs of such love!"

"But yet," began the knight, anew, "if it is grievous to love, it is more grievous still not to love; for who without love is satisfied with pleasure, glory, riches, perfumes, or jewels? Who will not say to the loved one, 'I choose thee rather than a kingdom, than a sceptre, than health or long life'? And since each would give life for love willingly, love has more value than life." Ketling finished.

The young ladies sat nestling closely to each other, wondering at the tenderness of his speech and those conclusions of love foreign to Polish cavaliers, till Zagloba, who was napping at the end, woke and began to blink, looking now at one, now at another, now at the third; at last gaining presence of mind, he inquired in a loud voice, "What do you say?"

"We say good-night to you," said Basia.

"Ah! I know now we were talking of love. What was the conclusion?"

"The lining was better than the cloak."

"There is no use in denying that I was drowsy; but this loving, weeping, sighing – Ah, I have found another rhyme for it, – namely, sleeping, – and at this time the best, for the hour is advanced. Good-night to the whole company, and give us peace with your love. O my God, my God, while the cat is miauwing, she will not eat the cheese; but until she eats, her mouth is watering. In my day I resembled Ketling as one cup does another; and I was in love so madly that a ram might have pounded my back for an hour before I should have known it. But in old age I prefer to rest well, especially when a polite host not only conducts me to bed, but gives me a drink on the pillow."

"I am at the service of your grace," said Ketling.

"Let us go; let us go! See how high the moon is already. It will be fine to-morrow; it is glittering and clear as in the day. Ketling is ready to talk about love with you all night; but remember, kids, that he is road-weary."

"Not road-weary, for I have rested two days in the city. I am only afraid that the ladies are not used to night-watching."

"The night would pass quickly in listening to you," said Krysia.

Then they parted, for it was really late. The young ladies slept in the same room and usually talked long before sleeping; but this evening Basia could not understand Krysia, for as much as the first had a wish to speak, so much was the second silent and answered in half-words. A number of times too, when Basia, in speaking of Ketling, caught at an idea, laughing somewhat at him and mimicking him a little, Krysia embraced her with great tenderness, begging her to leave off that nonsense.

"He is host here, Basia," said she; "we are living under his roof; and I saw that he fell in love with you at once."

"Whence do you know that?" inquired Basia.

"Who does not love you? All love you, and I very much." Thus speaking, she put her beautiful face to Basia's face, nestled up to her, and kissed her eyes.

They went at last to their beds, but Krysia could not sleep for a long time. Disquiet had seized her. At times her heart beat with such force that she brought both hands to her satin bosom to restrain the throbbing. At times too, especially when she tried to close her eyes, it seemed to her that some head, beautiful as a dream, bent over her, and a low voice whispered into her ear, —

"I would rather have thee than a kingdom, than a sceptre, than health, than long life!"

CHAPTER XIII

A few days later Zagloba wrote a letter to Pan Yan with the following conclusion, "If I do not go home before election, be not astonished. This will not happen through my lack of good wishes for you; but as the Devil does not sleep, I do not wish that instead of a bird something useless should remain in my hand. It will come out badly if when Michael returns, I shall not be able to say to him, 'That one is engaged, and the haiduk is free.' Everything is in the power of God; but this is my thought, that it will not be necessary then to urge Michael, nor to make long preparations, and that you will come when the engagement is made. Meanwhile, remembering Ulysses, I shall be forced to use stratagems and exaggerate more than once, which for me is not easy, since all my life I have preferred truth to every delight, and was glad to be nourished by it. Still, for Michael and the haiduk I will take this on my head, for they are pure gold. Now I embrace you both with the boys, and press you to my heart, commending you to the Most High God."

When he had finished writing, Zagloba sprinkled sand on the paper; then he struck it with his hand, read it once more, holding it at a distance from his eyes; then he folded it, took his seal ring from his finger, moistened it, and prepared to seal the letter, at which occupation Ketling found him.

"A good day to your grace!"

"Good-day, good-day!" said Zagloba. "The weather, thanks be to God, is excellent, and I am just sending a messenger to Pan Yan."

"Send an obeisance from me."

"I have done so already. I said at once to myself, 'It is necessary to send a greeting from Ketling. Both of them will be glad to receive good news.' It is evident that I have sent a greeting from you, since I have written a whole epistle touching you and the young ladies."

"How is that?" inquired Ketling.

Zagloba placed his palms on his knees, which he began to tap with his fingers; then he bent his head, and looking from under his brows at Ketling, said, "My Ketling, it is not necessary to be a prophet to know that where flint and steel are, sparks will flash sooner or later. You are a beauty above beauties, and even you would not find fault with the young ladies."

Ketling was really confused, "I should have to be wall-eyed or be a wild barbarian altogether," said he, "if I did not see their beauty, and do homage to it."

"But, you see," continued Zagloba, looking with a smile on the blushing face of Ketling, "if you are not a barbarian, it is not right for you to have both in view, for only Turks act like that."

"How can you suppose —"

"I do not suppose; I only say it to myself. Ha! traitor! you have so talked to them of love that pallor is on Krysia's lips this third day. It is no wonder; you are a beauty. When I was young myself, I used to stand in the frost under the window of a certain black brow; she was like Panna Krysia; and I remember how I used to sing, —

'You are sleeping there after the day;
And I am here thrumming my lute,
Höts! Höts!'

If you wish, I will give you a song, or compose an entirely new one, for I have no lack of genius. Have you observed that Panna Krysia reminds one somewhat of Panna Billevich, except that Panna Billevich had hair like flax and had no down on her lip? But there are men who find superior beauty in that, and think it a charm. She looks with great pleasure on you. I have just written so to Pan Yan. Is it not true that she is like the former Panna Billevich?"

"I have not noticed the likeness, but it may be. In figure and stature she recalls her."

"Now listen to what I say. I am telling family secrets directly; but as you are a friend, you ought to know them. Be on your guard not to feed Volodyovski with ingratitude, for I and Pani Makovetski have predestined one of those maidens to him."

Here Zagloba looked quickly and persistently into Ketling's eyes, and he grew pale and inquired, "Which one?"

"Panna Krysia," answered Zagloba, slowly. And pushing out his lower lip, he began to blink from under his frowning brow with his one seeing eye. Ketling was silent, and silent so long that at last Zagloba inquired, "What do you say to this?"

And Ketling answered with changed voice, but with emphasis, "You may be sure that I shall not indulge my heart to Michael's harm."

"Are you certain?"

"I have suffered much in life; my word of a knight that I will not indulge it."

Then Zagloba opened his arms to him: "Ketling, indulge your heart; indulge it, poor man, as much as you like, for I only wanted to try you. Not Panna Krysia, but the haiduk, have we predestined to Michael."

Ketling's face grew bright with a sincere and deep joy, and seizing Zagloba in his embrace, he held him long, then inquired, "Is it certain already that they are in love?"

"But who would not be in love with my haiduk, – who?" asked Zagloba.

"Then has the betrothal taken place?"

"There has been no betrothal, for Michael has barely freed himself from mourning; but there will be, – put that on my head. The maiden, though she evades like a weasel, is very much inclined to him, for with her the sabre is the main thing."

"I have noticed that, as God is dear to me!" interrupted Ketling, radiant.

"Ha! you noticed it? Michael is weeping yet for the other; but if any one pleases his spirit, it is certainly the haiduk, for she is most like the dead one, though she cuts less with her eyes, for she is younger. Everything is arranging itself well. I am the guarantee that these two weddings will be at election-time."

Ketling, saying nothing, embraced Zagloba again, and placed his beautiful face against his red cheeks, so that the old man panted and asked, "Has Panna Krysia sewed herself into your skin like that already?"

"I know not, – I know not," answered Ketling; "but I know this, that barely had the heavenly vision of her delighted my eyes when I said at once to myself that she was the one woman whom my suffering heart might love yet; and that same night I drove sleep away with sighs, and yielded myself to pleasant yearnings. Thenceforth she took possession of my being, as a queen does of an obedient and loyal country. Whether this is love or something else, I know not."

"But you know that it is neither a cap nor three yards of cloth for trousers, nor a saddle-girth, nor a crouper, nor sausage and eggs, nor a decanter of gorailka. If you are certain of this, then ask Krysia about the rest; or if you wish, I will ask her."

"Do not do that," said Ketling, smiling. "If I am to drown, let it seem to me, even a couple of days yet, that I am swimming."

"I see that the Scots are fine men in battle; but in love they are useless. Against women, as against the enemy, impetus is needful. 'I came, I saw, I conquered!' that was my maxim."

"In time, if my most ardent desires are to be accomplished, perhaps I shall ask you for friendly assistance; though I am naturalized, and of noble blood, still my name is unknown here, and I am not sure that Pani Makovetski – "

"Pani Makovetski?" interrupted Zagloba. "Have no fear about her. Pani Makovetski is a regular music-box. As I wind her, so will she play. I will go at her immediately; I must forewarn her, you know, so that she may not look awry at your approaches to the young lady. To such a degree is your Scottish method one, and ours another, I will not make a declaration straightway in your name, of

course; I will say only that the maiden has taken your eye, and that it would be well if from that flour there should be bread. As God is dear to me, I will go at once; have no fear, for in every case I am at liberty to say what I like."

And though Ketling detained him, Zagloba rose and went out. On the way he met Basia, rushing along as usual, and said to her, "Do you know that Krysia has captured Ketling completely?"

"He is not the first man!" answered Basia.

"And you are not angry about it?"

"Ketling is a doll! – a pleasant cavalier, but a doll! I have struck my knee against the wagon-tongue; that is what troubles me."

Here Basia, bending forward, began to rub her knee, looking meanwhile at Zagloba, and he said, "For God's sake, be careful! Whither are you flying now?"

"To Krysia."

"But what is she doing?"

"She? For some time past she keeps kissing me, and rubs up to me like a cat."

"Do not tell her that she has captured Ketling."

"Ah! but can I hold out?"

Zagloba knew well that Basia would not hold out, and it was for that very reason that he forbade her. He went on, therefore, greatly delighted with his own cunning, and Basia fell like a bomb into Krysia's chamber.

"I have smashed my knee; and Ketling is dead in love with you!" cried she, right on the threshold. "I did not see the pole sticking out at the carriage-house – and such a blow! There were flashes in my eyes, but that is nothing. Pan Zagloba begged me to say nothing to you about Ketling. I did not say that I would not; I have told you at once. And you were pretending to give him to me! Never fear; I know you – My knee pains me a little yet. I was not giving Pan Adam to you, but Ketling. Oho! He is walking through the whole house now, holding his head and talking to himself. Well done, Krysia; well done! Scot, Scot! kot, kot!"¹³

Here Basia began to push her finger toward the eye of her friend.

"Basia!" exclaimed Panna Krysia.

"Scot, Scot! kot, kot!"

"How unfortunate I am!" cried Krysia, on a sudden, and burst into tears.

After a while Basia began to console her; but it availed nothing, and the maiden sobbed as never before in her life. In fact, no one in all that house knew how unhappy she was. For some days she had been in a fever; her face had grown pale; her eyes had sunk; her breast was moving with short, broken breath. Something wonderful had taken place in her; she had dropped, as it were, into extreme weakness, and the change had come not gradually, slowly, but on a sudden. Like a whirlwind, like a storm, it had swept her away; like a flame, it had heated her blood; like lightning, it had flashed on her imagination. She could not, even for a moment, resist that power which was so mercilessly sudden. Calmness had left her. Her will was like a bird with broken wings.

Krysia herself knew not whether she loved Ketling or hated him; and a measureless fear seized her in view of that question. But she felt that her heart beat so quickly only through him; that her head was thinking thus helplessly only through him; that in her and above her it was full of him, – and no means of defence. Not to love him was easier than not to think of him, for her eyes were delighted with the sight of him, her ears were lost in listening to his voice, her whole soul was absorbed by him. Sleep did not free her from that importunate man, for barely had she closed her eyes when his head bent above her, whispering, "I would rather have thee than a kingdom, than a sceptre, than fame, than wealth." And that head was near, so near that even in the darkness blood-red blushes covered the face of the maiden. She was a Russian with hot blood; certain fires rose in her breast, – fires of which

¹³ "Kot" means "cat," hence Basia's exclamations are, "Scot, Scot! cat, cat!"

she had not known till that time that they could exist, and from the ardor of which she was seized with fear and shame, and a great weakness and a certain faintness at once painful and pleasant. Night brought her no rest. A weariness continually increasing gained control of her, as if after great toil.

"Kryisia! Kryisia! what is happening to thee?" cried she to herself. But she was as if in a daze and in unceasing distraction. Nothing had happened yet; nothing had taken place. So far she had not exchanged two words with Ketling alone; still, the thought of him had taken hold of her thoroughly; still, a certain instinct whispered unceasingly, "Guard thyself! Avoid him." And she avoided him.

Kryisia had not thought yet of her agreement with Pan Michael, and that was her luck; she had not thought specially, because so far nothing had taken place, and because she thought of no one, — thought neither of herself nor of others, but only of Ketling. She concealed this too in her deepest soul; and the thought that no one suspected what was taking place in her, that no one was occupied with her and Ketling at the same time, brought her no small consolation. All at once the words of Basia convinced her that it was otherwise, — that people were looking at them already, connecting them in thought, divining the position. Hence the disturbance, the shame and pain, taken together, overcame her will, and she wept like a little child.

But Basia's words were only the beginning of those various hints, significant glances, blinking of eyes, shaking of heads, finally, of those double meaning phrases which Kryisia must endure. This began during dinner. Pan Michael's sister turned her gaze from Kryisia to Ketling, and from Ketling to Kryisia, which she had not done hitherto. Pan Zagloba coughed significantly. At times the conversation was interrupted, — it was unknown wherefore; silence followed, and once during such an interval Basia, with dishevelled hair, cried out to the whole table, —

"I know something, but I won't tell!"

Kryisia blushed instantly, and then grew pale at once, as if some terrible danger had passed near her; Ketling too bent his head. Both felt perfectly that that related to them, and though they avoided conversation with each other, so that people might not look at them, still it was clear to both that something was rising between them; that some undefined community of confusion was in process of creation; that it would unite them and at the same time keep them apart, for by it they lost freedom completely, and could be no longer ordinary friends to each other. Happily for them, no one gave attention to Basia's words. Pan Zagloba was preparing to go to the city and return with a numerous company of knights; all were intent on that event.

In fact, Ketling's house was gleaming with light in the evening; between ten and twenty officers came with music, which the hospitable host provided for the amusement of the ladies. Dancing of course there could not be, for it was Lent, and Ketling's mourning was in the way; but they listened to the music, and were entertained with conversation. The ladies were dressed splendidly. Pani Makovetski appeared in Oriental silk. The haiduk was arrayed in various colors, and attracted the eyes of the military with her rosy face and bright hair, which dropped at times over her eyes; she roused laughter with the decision of her speech, and astonished with her manners, in which Cossack daring was combined with unaffectedness.

Kryisia, whose mourning for her father was at an end, wore a white robe trimmed with silver. The knights compared her, some to Juno, others to Diana; but none came too near her; no man twirled his mustache, struck his heels, or cast glances; no one looked at her with flashing eyes or began a conversation about love. But soon she noticed that those who looked at her with admiration and homage looked afterward at Ketling; that some, on approaching him, pressed his hand, as if congratulating him and giving him good wishes; that he shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands, as if in denial. Kryisia, who by nature was watchful and keen, was nearly certain that they were talking to him of her, that they considered her as almost his affianced; and since she could not see that Pan Zagloba whispered in the ear of each man, she was at a loss to know whence these suppositions came. "Have I something written on my forehead?" thought she, with alarm. She was ashamed and

anxious. And then even words began to fly to her through the air, as if not to her, but still aloud. "Fortunate Ketling!" "He was born in a caul." "No wonder, for he is a beauty!" and similar words.

Other polite cavaliers, wishing to entertain her and say something pleasant, spoke of Ketling, praising him beyond measure, exalting his bravery, his kindness, his elegant manners, and ancient lineage. Krysia, whether willing or unwilling, had to listen, and involuntarily her eyes sought him of whom men were talking to her, and at times they met his eyes. Then the charm seized her with new force, and without knowing it, she was delighted at the sight of him; for how different was Ketling from all those rugged soldier-forms! "A king's son among his attendants," thought Krysia, looking at that noble, aristocratic head and at those ambitious eyes, full of a certain inborn melancholy, and on that forehead, shaded by rich golden hair. Her heart began to sink and languish, as if that head was the dearest on earth to her. Ketling saw this, and not wishing to increase her confusion, did not approach, as if another were sitting by her side. If she had been a queen, he could not have surrounded her with greater honor and higher attention. In speaking to her, he inclined his head and pushed back one foot, as if in sign that he was ready to kneel at any moment; he spoke with dignity, never jestingly, though with Basia, for example, he was glad to jest. In intercourse with Krysia, besides the greatest respect there was rather a certain shade of melancholy full of tenderness. Thanks to that respect, no other man permitted himself either a word too explicit, or a jest too bold, as if the conviction had been fixed upon every one that in dignity and birth she was higher than all others, – a lady with whom there was never politeness enough.

Krysia was heartily grateful to him for this. In general, the evening passed anxiously for her, but sweetly. When midnight approached, the musicians stopped playing, the ladies took farewell of the company, and among the knights goblets began to make the round frequently, and there followed a noisier entertainment, in which Zagloba assumed the dignity of hetman.

Basia went upstairs joyous as a bird, for she had amused herself greatly. Before she knelt down to pray she began to play tricks and imitate various guests; at last she said to Krysia, clapping her hands, —

"It is perfect that your Ketling has come! At least, there will be no lack of soldiers. Oho! only let Lent pass, and I will dance to kill. We'll have fun. And at your betrothal to Ketling, and at your wedding, well, if I don't turn the house over, let the Tartars take me captive! What if they should take us really! To begin with, there would be – Ha! Ketling is good! He will bring musicians for you; but with you I shall enjoy them. He will bring you new wonders, one after another, until he does this – "

Then Basia threw herself on her knees suddenly before Krysia, and encircling her waist with her arms, began to speak, imitating the low voice of Ketling: "Your ladyship! I so love you that I cannot breathe. I love you on foot and on horseback. I love you fasting and after breakfast. I love you for the ages and as the Scots love. Will you be mine?"

"Basia, I shall be angry!" cried Krysia. But instead of growing angry, she caught Basia in her arras, and while trying, as it were, to lift her, she began to kiss her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

Pan Zagloba knew perfectly that the little knight was more inclined toward Krysia than Basia; but for that very reason he resolved to set Krysia aside. Knowing Pan Michael through and through, he was convinced that if he had no choice, he would turn infallibly to Basia, with whom the old noble himself was so blindly in love that he could not get it into his head how any man could prefer another to her. He understood also that he could not render Pan Michael a greater service than to get him his haiduk, and he was enchanted at thought of that match. He was angry at Pan Michael, at Krysia also; it was true he would prefer that Pan Michael should marry Krysia rather than no one, but he determined to do everything to make him marry the haiduk. And precisely because the little knight's inclination toward Krysia was known to him, he determined to make a Ketling of her as quickly as possible.

Still, the answer which Zagloba received a few days later from Pan Yan staggered him somewhat in his resolution. Pan Yan advised him to interfere in nothing, for he feared that in the opposite case great troubles might rise easily between the friends. Zagloba himself did not wish this, therefore certain reproaches made themselves heard in him; these he stilled in the following manner: —

"If Michael and Krysia were betrothed, and I had thrust Ketling between them like a wedge, then I say nothing. Solomon says, 'Do not poke your nose into another man's purse,' and he is right. But every one is free to wish. Besides, taking things exactly, what have I done? Let any one tell me what."

When he had said this, Zagloba put his hands on his hips, pouted his lips, and looked challengingly on the walls of his chamber, as if expecting reproaches from them; but since the walls made no answer, he spoke on: "I told Ketling that I had predestined the haiduk to Michael. But is this not permitted me? Maybe it is not true that I have predestined her! If I wish any other woman for Michael, may the gout bite me!"

The walls recognized the justice of Zagloba in perfect silence; and he continued further: "I told the haiduk that Ketling was brought down by Krysia; maybe that is not true? Has he not confessed; has he not sighed, sitting near the fire, so that the ashes were flying through the room! And what I saw, I have told others. Pan Yan has sound sense; but no one will throw my wit to the dogs. I know myself what may be told, and what would be better left in silence. H'm! he writes not to interfere in anything. That may be done also. Hereafter I will interfere in nothing. When I am a third party in presence of Krysia and Ketling, I will go out and leave them alone. Let them help themselves without me. In fact, I think they will be able. They need no help, for now they are so pushed toward each other that their eyes are growing white; and besides, the spring is coming, at which time not only the sun, but desires begin to grow warm. Well! I will leave them alone; but I shall see what the result will be."

And, in truth, the result was soon to appear. During Holy Week the entire company at Ketling's house went to Warsaw and took lodgings in the hotel on Długa Street, to be near the churches and perform their devotions at pleasure, and at the same time to sate their eyes with the holiday bustle of the city. Ketling performed here the honors of host, for though a foreigner by origin, he knew the capital thoroughly and had many acquaintances in every quarter, through whom he was able to make everything easy. He surpassed himself in politeness, and almost divined the thoughts of the ladies he was escorting, especially Krysia. Besides, all had taken to loving him sincerely. Pan Michael's sister, forewarned by Zagloba, looked on him and Krysia with a more and more favorable eye; and if she had said nothing to the maiden so far, it was only because he was silent. But it seemed to the worthy "auntie" a natural thing and proper that the cavalier should win the lady, especially as he was a cavalier really distinguished, who was met at every step by marks of respect and friendship, not only from the lower but from the higher people; he was so capable of winning all to his side by his truly wonderful beauty, bearing, dignity, liberality, mildness in time of peace, and manfulness in war.

"What God will give, and my husband decide, will come to pass," said Pani Makovetski to herself; "but I will not cross these two."

Thanks to this decision, Ketling found himself oftener with Krysia and stayed with her longer than when in his own house. Besides, the whole company always went out together. Zagloba generally gave his arm to Pan Michael's sister, Ketling to Krysia, and Basia, as the youngest, went alone, sometimes hurrying on far ahead, then halting in front of shops to look at goods and various wonders from beyond the sea, such as she had never seen before. Krysia grew accustomed gradually to Ketling; and now when she was leaning on his arm, when she listened to his conversation or looked at his noble face, her heart did not beat in her breast with the former disquiet, presence of mind did not leave her, and she was seized not by confusion, but by an immense and intoxicating delight. They were continually by themselves; they knelt near each other in the churches; their voices were mingled in prayer and in pious hymns.

Ketling knew well the condition of his heart. Krysia, either from lack of decision or because she wished to tempt herself, did not say mentally, "I love him;" but they loved each other greatly. A friendship had sprung up between them; and besides love, they had immense regard for each other. Of love itself they had not spoken yet; time passed for them as a dream, and a serene sky was above them. Clouds of reproaches were soon to hide it from Krysia; but the present was a time of repose. Specially through intimacy with Ketling, through becoming accustomed to him, through that friendship which with love bloomed up between them, Krysia's alarms were ended, her impressions were not so violent, the conflicts of her blood and imagination ceased. They were near each other; it was pleasant for them in the company of each other; and Krysia, yielding herself with her whole soul to that agreeable present, was unwilling to think that it would ever end, and that to scatter those illusions it needed only one word¹⁴ from Ketling, "I love." That word was soon uttered. Once, when Pan Michael's sister and Basia were at the house of a sick relative, Ketling persuaded Krysia and Pan Zagloba to visit the king's castle, which Krysia had not seen hitherto, and concerning whose curiosities wonders were related throughout the whole country. They went, then, three in company. Ketling's liberality had opened all doors, and Krysia was greeted by obeisances from the doorkeepers as profound as if she were a queen entering her own residence. Ketling, knowing the castle perfectly, conducted her through lordly halls and chambers. They examined the theatre, the royal baths; they halted before pictures representing the battles and victories gained by Sigismund and Vladislav over the savagery of the East; they went out on the terraces, from which the eye took in an immense stretch of country. Krysia could not free herself from wonder; he explained everything to her, but was silent from moment to moment, and looking into her dark-blue eyes, he seemed to say with his glance, "What are all these wonders in comparison with thee, thou wonder? What are all these treasures in comparison with thee, thou treasure?" The young lady understood that silent speech. He conducted her to one of the royal chambers, and stood before a door concealed in the wall.

"One may go to the cathedral through this door. There is a long corridor, which ends with a balcony not far from the high altar. From this balcony the king and queen hear Mass usually."

"I know that way well," put in Zagloba, "for I was a confidant of Yan Kazimir. Marya Ludovika loved me passionately; therefore both invited me often to Mass, so that they might take pleasure in my company and edify themselves with piety."

"Do you wish to enter?" asked Ketling, giving a sign to the doorkeeper.

"Let us go in," said Krysia.

"Go alone," said Zagloba; "you are young and have good feet; I have trotted around enough already. Go on, go on; I will stay here with the doorkeeper. And even if you should say a couple of 'Our Fathers,' I shall not be angry at the delay, for during that time I can rest myself."

¹⁴ In Polish, "I love" is one word, "Kocham."

They entered. Ketling took Kryisia's hand and led her through a long corridor. He did not press her hand to his heart; he walked calmly and collectedly. At intervals the side windows threw light on their forms, then they sank again in the darkness. Her heart beat somewhat, because they were alone for the first time; but his calmness and mildness made her calm also. They came out at last to the balcony on the right side of the church, not far from the high altar. They knelt and began to pray. The church was silent and empty. Two candles were burning before the high altar, but all the deeper part of the nave was buried in impressive twilight. Only from the rainbow-colored panes of the windows various gleams entered and fell on the two wonderful faces, sunk in prayer, calm, like the faces of cherubim.

Ketling rose first and began to whisper, for he dared not raise his voice in the church, "Look," said he, "at this velvet-covered railing; on it are traces where the heads of the royal couple rested. The queen sat at that side, nearer the altar. Rest in her place."

"Is it true that she was unhappy all her life?" whispered Kryisia, sitting down. "I heard her history when I was still a child, for it is related in all knightly castles. Perhaps she was unhappy because she could not marry him whom her heart loved."

Kryisia rested her head on the place where the depression was made by the head of Marya Ludovika, and closed her eyes. A kind of painful feeling straitened her breast; a certain coldness was blown suddenly from the empty nave and chilled that calm which a moment before filled her whole being.

Ketling looked at Kryisia in silence; and a stillness really churchlike set in. Then he sank slowly to her feet, and began to speak thus with a voice that was full of emotion, but calm: —

"It is not a sin to kneel before you in this holy place; for where does true love come for a blessing if not to the church? I love you more than life; I love you beyond every earthly good; I love you with my soul, with my heart; and here before this altar I confess that love to you."

Kryisia's face grew pale as linen. Resting her head on the velvet back of the prayer-stool, the unhappy lady stirred not, but he spoke on: —

"I embrace your feet and implore your decision. Am I to go from this place in heavenly delight, or in grief which I am unable to bear, and which I can in no way survive?"

He waited awhile for an answer; but since it did not come, he bowed his head till he almost touched Kryisia's feet, and evident emotion mastered him more and more, for his voice trembled, as if breath were failing his breast, —

"Into your hands I give my happiness and life. I expect mercy, for my burden is great."

"Let us pray for God's mercy!" exclaimed Kryisia, suddenly, dropping on her knees.

Ketling did not understand her; but he did not dare to oppose that intention, therefore he knelt near her in hope and fear. They began to pray again. From moment to moment their voices were audible in the empty church, and the echo gave forth wonderful and complaining sounds.

"God be merciful!" said Kryisia.

"God be merciful!" repeated Ketling.

"Have mercy on us!"

"Have mercy on us!"

She prayed then in silence; but Ketling saw that weeping shook her whole form. For a long time she could not calm herself; and then, growing quiet, she continued to kneel without motion. At last she rose and said, "Let us go."

They went out again into that long corridor. Ketling hoped that on the way he would receive some answer, and he looked into her eyes, but in vain. She walked hurriedly, as if wishing to find herself as soon as possible in that chamber in which Zagloba was waiting for them. But when the door was some tens of steps distant, the knight seized the edge of her robe.

"Panna Kryisia!" exclaimed he, "by all that is holy —"

Then Krysia turned away, and grasping his hand so quickly that he had not time to show the least resistance, she pressed it in the twinkle of an eye to her lips. "I love you with my whole soul; but I shall never be yours!" and before the astonished Ketling could utter a word, she added, "Forget all that has happened."

A moment later they were both in the chamber. The doorkeeper was sleeping in one armchair, and Zagloba in the other. The entrance of the young people roused them. Zagloba, however, opened his eye and began to blink with it half consciously; but gradually memory of the place and the persons returned to him.

"Ah, that is you!" said he, drawing down his girdle, "I dreamed that the new king was elected, but that he was a Pole. Were you at the balcony?"

"We were."

"Did the spirit of Marya Ludovika appear to you, perchance?"

"It did!" answered Krysia, gloomily.

CHAPTER XV

After they had left the castle, Ketling needed to collect his thoughts and shake himself free from the astonishment into which Kryisia's action had brought him. He took farewell of her and Zagloba in front of the gate, and they went to their lodgings. Basia and Pani Makovetski had returned already from the sick lady; and Pan Michael's sister greeted Zagloba with the following words, —

"I have a letter from my husband, who remains yet with Michael at the stanitsa. They are both well, and promise to be here soon. There is a letter to you from Michael, and to me only a postscript in my husband's letter. My husband writes also that the dispute with the Jubris about one of Basia's estates has ended happily. Now the time of provincial diets is approaching. They say that in those parts Pan Sobieski's name has immense weight, and that the local diet will vote as he wishes. Every man living is preparing for the election; but our people will all be with the hetman. It is warm there already, and rains are falling. With us in Verhutka the buildings were burned. A servant dropped fire; and because there was wind — "

"Where is Michael's letter to me?" inquired Zagloba, interrupting the torrent of news given out at one breath by the worthy lady.

"Here it is," said she, giving him a letter. "Because there was wind, and the people were at the fair — "

"How were the letters brought here?" asked Zagloba, again.

"They were taken to Ketling's house, and a servant brought them here. Because, as I say, there was wind — "

"Do you wish to listen, my benefactress?"

"Of course, I beg earnestly."

Zagloba broke the seal and began to read, first in an undertone, for himself, then aloud for all, —

"I send this first letter to you; but God grant that there will not be another, for posts are uncertain in this region, and I shall soon present myself personally among you. It is pleasant here in the field, but still my heart draws me tremendously toward you, and there is no end to thoughts and memories, wherefore solitude is dearer to me in this place than company. The promised work has passed, for the hordes sit quietly, only smaller bands are rioting in the fields; these also we fell upon twice with such fortune that not a witness of their defeat got away."

"Oh, they warmed them!" cried Basia, with delight. "There is nothing higher than the calling of a soldier!"

"Doroshenko's rabble" (continued Zagloba) "would like to have an uproar with us, but they cannot in any way without the horde. The prisoners confess that a larger chambul will not move from any quarter, which I believe, for if there was to be anything like this it would have taken place already, since the grass has been green for a week past, and there is something with which to feed horses. In ravines bits of snow are still hiding here and there; but the open steppes are green, and a warm wind is blowing, from which the horses begin to shed their hair, and this is the surest sign of spring. I have sent already for leave, which may come any day, and then I shall start at once. Pan Adam succeeds me in keeping guard, at which there is so little labor that Makovetski and I have been fox-hunting whole days, — for simple amusement, as the fur is useless when spring is near. There are many bustards, and my servant shot a pelican. I embrace you with my whole heart; I kiss the hands of my sister, and those of Panna Kryisia, to whose good-will I commit myself most earnestly, imploring God specially to let me find her unchanged, and to receive the same consolation. Give an obeisance from me to Panna Basia. Pan Adam has vented the anger roused by his rejection at Mokotov on the backs of ruffians, but there is still some in his mind, it is evident. He is not wholly relieved. I commit you to God and His most holy love.

"P. S. I bought a lot of very elegant ermine from passing Armenians; I shall bring this as a gift to Panna Krysia, and for your haiduk there will be Turkish sweetmeats."

"Let Pan Michael eat them himself; I am not a child," said Basia, whose cheeks flushed as if from sudden pain.

"Then you will not be glad to see him? Are you angry at him?" asked Zagloba.

But Basia merely muttered something in low tones, and really settled down in anger, thinking some of how lightly Pan Michael was treating her, and a little about the bustard and that pelican, which roused her curiosity specially.

Krysia sat there during the reading with closed eyes, turned from the light; in truth, it was lucky that those present could not see her face, for they would have known at once that something uncommon was happening. That which took place in the church, and the letter of Pan Volodyovski, were for her like two blows of a club. The wonderful dream had fled; and from that moment the maiden stood face to face with a reality as crushing as misfortune. She could not collect her thoughts to wait, and indefinite, hazy feelings were storming in her heart. Pan Michael, with his letter, with the promise of his coming, and with a bundle of ermine, seemed to her so flat that he was almost repulsive. On the other hand, Ketling had never been so dear. Dear to her was the very thought of him, dear his words, dear his face, dear his melancholy. And now she must go from love, from homage, from him toward whom her heart is struggling, her hands stretching forth, in endless sorrow and suffering, to give her soul and her body to another, who for this alone, that he is another, becomes wellnigh hateful to her.

"I cannot, I cannot!" cried Krysia, in her soul. And she felt that which a captive feels whose hands men are binding; but she herself had bound her own hands, for in her time she might have told Pan Michael that she would be his sister, nothing more.

Now the kiss came to her memory, – that kiss received and returned, – and shame, with contempt for her own self, seized her. Was she in love with Pan Michael that day? No! In her heart there was no love, and except sympathy there was nothing in her heart at that time but curiosity and giddiness, masked with the show of sisterly affection. Now she has discovered for the first time that between kissing from great love and kissing from impulse of blood, there is as much difference as between an angel and a devil. Anger as well as contempt was rising in Krysia; then pride began to storm in her and against Pan Michael. He too was at fault; why should all the penance, contrition, and disappointment fall upon her? Why should he too not taste the bitter bread? Has she not the right to say when he returns, "I was mistaken; I mistook pity for love. You also were mistaken; now leave me, as I have left you."

Suddenly fear seized her by the hair, – fear before the vengeance of the terrible man; fear not for herself, but for the head of the loved one, whom vengeance would strike without fail. In imagination she saw Ketling standing up to the struggle with that ominous swordsman beyond swordsmen, and then falling as a flower falls cut by a scythe; she sees his blood, his pale face, his eyes closed for the ages, and her suffering goes beyond every measure. She rose with all speed and went to her chamber to vanish from the eyes of people, so as not to hear conversation concerning Pan Michael and his approaching return. In her heart rose greater and greater animosity against the little knight. But Remorse and Regret pursued her, and did not leave her in time of prayer; they sat on her bed when, overcome with weakness, she lay in it, and began to speak to her.

"Where is he?" asked Regret. "He has not returned yet; he is walking through the night and wringing his hands. Thou wouldst incline the heavens for him, thou wouldst give him thy life's blood; but thou hast given him poison to drink, thou hast thrust a knife through his heart."

"Had it not been for thy giddiness, had it not been for thy wish to lure every man whom thou meetest," said Remorse, "all might be different; but now despair alone remains to thee. It is thy fault, – thy great fault! There is no help for thee; there is no rescue for thee now, – nothing but shame and pain and weeping."

"How he knelt at thy feet in the church!" said Regret, again. "It is a wonder that thy heart did not burst when he looked into thy eyes and begged of thee pity. It was just of thee to give pity to a stranger, but to the loved one, the dearest, what? God bless him! God solace him!"

"Were it not for thy giddiness, that dearest one might depart in joy," repeated Remorse; "thou mightest walk at his side, as his chosen one, his wife – "

"And be with him forever," added Regret.

"It is thy fault," said Remorse.

"Weep, O Krysia," cried Regret.

"Thou canst not wipe away that fault!" said Remorse, again.

"Do what thou pleasest, but console him," repeated Regret.

"Volodyovski will slay him!" answered Remorse, at once.

Cold sweat covered Krysia, and she sat on the bed. Bright moonlight fell into the room, which seemed somehow weird and terrible in those white rays.

"What is that?" thought Krysia. "There Basia is sleeping. I see her, for the moon is shining in her face; and I know not when she came, when she undressed and lay down. And I have not slept one moment; but my poor head is of no use, that is clear." Thus meditating, she lay down again; but Regret and Remorse sat on the edge of her bed, exactly like two goddesses, who were diving in at will through the rays of moonlight, or sweeping out again through its silvery abysses.

"I shall not sleep to-night," said Krysia to herself, and she began to think about Ketling, and to suffer more and more.

Suddenly the sorrowful voice of Basia was heard in the stillness of the night, "Krysia!"

"Are you not sleeping?"

"No for I dreamed that some Turk pierced Pan Michael with an arrow. O Jesus! a deceiving dream. But a fever is just shaking me. Let us say the Litany together, that God may avert misfortune."

The thought flew through Krysia's head like lightning, "God grant some one to shoot him!" But she was astonished immediately at her own wickedness; therefore, though it was necessary for her to get superhuman power to pray at that particular moment for the return of Pan Michael, still she answered, —

"Very well, Basia."

Then both rose from their beds, and kneeling on their naked knees on the floor, began to say the Litany. Their voices responded to each other, now rising and now falling; you would have said that the chamber was changed into the cell of a cloister in which two white nuns were repeating their nightly prayers.

CHAPTER XVI

Next morning Kryisia was calmer; for among intricate and tangled paths she had chosen for herself an immensely difficult, but not a false one. Entering upon it, she saw at least whither she was going. But, first of all, she determined to have an interview with Ketling and speak with him for the last time, so as to guard him from every mishap. This did not come to her easily, for Ketling did not show himself for a number of consecutive days, and did not return at night.

Kryisia began to rise before daylight and walk to the neighboring church of the Dominicans, with the hope that she would meet him some morning and speak to him without witnesses. In fact, she met him a few days later at the very door. When he saw her, he removed his cap and bent his head in silence. He stood motionless; his face was wearied by sleeplessness and suffering, his eyes sunk; on his temples there were yellowish spots; the delicate color of his face had become waxlike; he looked like a flower that is withering. Kryisia's heart was rent at sight of him; and though every decisive step cost her very much, for she was not bold by nature, she was the first to extend the hand, and said, —

"May God comfort you and send you forgetfulness!"

Ketling took her hand, raised it to his forehead, then to his lips, to which he pressed it long and with all his force; then he said with a voice full of mortal sadness and of resignation, "There is for me neither solace nor forgetfulness."

There was a moment when Kryisia needed all her self-control to restrain herself from throwing her arms around his neck and exclaiming, "I love thee above everything! take me," She felt that if weeping were to seize her she would do so; therefore she stood a long time before him in silence, struggling with her tears. At last she conquered herself and began to speak calmly, though very quickly, for breath failed her: —

"It may bring you some relief if I say that I shall belong to no one, I go behind the grating. Do not judge me harshly at any time, for as it is I am unhappy. Promise me, give me your word, that you will not mention your love for me to any one: that you will not acknowledge it; that you will not disclose to friend or relative what has happened. This is my last prayer. The time will come when you will know why I do this; then at least you will have the explanation. To-day I will tell you no more, for my sorrow is such that I cannot. Promise me this, — it will comfort me; if you do not, I may die."

"I promise, and give my word," answered Ketling.

"God reward you, and I thank you from my whole heart! Besides, show a calm face in presence of people, so that no one may have a suspicion. It is time for me to go. Your kindness is such that words fail to describe it. Henceforth we shall not see each other alone, only before people. Tell me further that you have no feeling of offence against me; for to suffer is one thing and to be offended another. You yield me to God, to no one else; keep this in mind."

Ketling wished to say something; but since he was suffering beyond measure, only indefinite sounds like groans came from his mouth; then he touched Kryisia's temples with his fingers and held them for a while as a sign that he forgave her and blessed her. They parted then; she went to the church, and he to the street again, so as not to meet in the inn an acquaintance.

Kryisia returned only in the afternoon; and when she came she found a notable guest, Bishop Olshovski, the vice-chancellor. He had come unexpectedly on a visit to Pan Zagloba, wishing, as he said himself, to become acquainted with such a great cavalier, "whose military pre-eminence was an example, and whose reason was a guide to the knights of that whole lordly Commonwealth." Zagloba was, in truth, much astonished, but not less gratified, that such a great honor had met him in presence of the ladies; he plumed himself greatly, was flushed, perspired, and at the same time endeavored to show Pani Makovetski that he was accustomed to such visits from the greatest dignitaries in the country, and that he made nothing of them. Kryisia was presented to the prelate, and kissing his hands with humility, sat near Basia, glad that no one could see the traces of recent emotion on her face.

Meanwhile the vice-chancellor covered Zagloba so bountifully and so easily with praises that he seemed to be drawing new supplies of them continually from his violet sleeves embroidered with lace. "Think not, your grace," said he, "that I was drawn hither by curiosity alone to know the first man in the knighthood; for though admiration is a just homage to heroes, still men make pilgrimages for their own profit also to the place where experience and quick reason have taken their seats at the side of manfulness."

"Experience," said Zagloba, modestly, "especially in the military art, comes only with age; and for that cause perhaps the late Pan Konyetspolski, father of the banneret, asked me frequently for counsel, after him Pan Nikolai Pototski, Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski, Pan Sapyeha, and Pan Charnyetski; but as to the title 'Ulysses,' I have always protested against that from considerations of modesty."

"Still, it is so connected with your grace that at times no one mentions your real name, but says, 'Our Ulysses,' and all divine at once whom the orator means. Therefore, in these difficult and eventful times, when more than one wavers in his thoughts and does not know whither to turn, whom to uphold, I said to myself, 'I will go and hear convictions, free myself from doubt, enlighten my mind with clear counsel.' You will divine, your grace, that I wish to speak of the coming election, in view of which every estimate of candidates may lead to some good; but what must one be which flows from the mouth of your grace? I have heard it repeated with the greatest applause among the knighthood that you are opposed to those foreigners who are pushing themselves on to our lordly throne. In the veins of the Vazas, as you explained, there flowed Yagellon blood, – hence they could not be considered as strangers; but those foreigners, as you said, neither know our ancient Polish customs nor will they respect our liberties, and hence absolute rule may arise easily. I acknowledge to your grace that these are deep words; but pardon me if I inquire whether you really uttered them, or is it public opinion that from custom ascribes all profound sentences to you in the first instance?"

"These ladies are witness," answered Zagloba; "and though this subject is not suited to their judgment, let them speak, since Providence in its inscrutable decrees has given them the gift of speech equally with us."

The vice-chancellor looked involuntarily on Pani Makovetski, and then on the two young ladies nestled up to each other. A moment of silence followed. Suddenly the silvery voice of Basia was heard, —

"I did not hear anything!"

Then she was confused terribly and blushed to her very ears, especially when Zagloba said at once, "Pardon her, your dignity. She is young, therefore giddy. But as to candidates, I have said more than once that our Polish liberty will weep by reason of these foreigners."

"I fear that myself," said the prelate; "but even if we wished some Pole, blood of our blood and bone of our bone, tell me, your grace, to what side should we turn our hearts? Your grace's very thought of a Pole is great, and is spreading through the country like a flame; for I hear that everywhere in the diets which are not fettered by corruption one voice is to be heard, 'A Pole, a Pole!'"

"Justly, justly!" interrupted Zagloba. "Still," continued the vice-chancellor, "it is easier to call for a Pole than to find a fit person; therefore let your grace be not astonished if I ask whom you had in mind."

"Whom had I in mind?" repeated Zagloba, somewhat puzzled; and pouting his lips, he wrinkled his brows. It was difficult for him to give a sudden answer, for hitherto not only had he no one in mind, but in general he had not those ideas at all which the keen prelate had attributed to him. Besides, he knew this himself, and understood that the vice-chancellor was inclining him to some side; but he let himself be inclined purposely, for it flattered him greatly. "I have insisted only in principle that we need a Pole," said he at last; "but to tell the truth, I have not named any man thus far."

"I have heard of the ambitious designs of Prince Boguslav Radzivill," muttered the prelate, as if to himself.

"While there is breath in my nostrils, while the last drop of blood is in my breast," cried Zagloba, with the force of deep conviction, "nothing will come of that! I should not wish to live in a nation so disgraced as to make a traitor and a Judas its king."

"That is the voice not only of reason, but of civic virtue," muttered the vice-chancellor, again.

"Ha!" thought Zagloba, "if you wish to draw me, I will draw you."

Then the vice-chancellor began anew: "When wilt thou sail in, O battered ship of my country? What storms, what rocks are in wait for thee? In truth, it will be evil if a foreigner becomes thy steersman; but it must be so evidently, if among thy sons there is no one better." Here he stretched out his white hands, ornamented with glittering rings, and inclining his head, said with resignation, "Then Condé, or he of Lorraine, or the Prince of Neuberg? There is no other outcome!"

"That is impossible! A Pole!" answered Zagloba.

"Who?" inquired the prelate.

Silence followed. Then the prelate began to speak again: "If there were even one on whom all could agree! Where is there a man who would touch the heart of the knighthood at once, so that no one would dare to murmur against his election? There was one such, the greatest, who had rendered most service, – your worthy friend, O knight, who walked in glory as in sunlight. There was such a – "

"Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski!" interrupted Zagloba.

"That is true. But he is in the grave."

"His son lives," replied Zagloba.

The vice-chancellor half closed his eyes, and sat some time in silence; all at once he raised his head, looked at Zagloba, and began to speak slowly: "I thank God for having inspired me with the idea of knowing your grace. That is it! the son of the great Yeremi is alive, – a prince young and full of hope, to whom the Commonwealth has a debt to pay. Of his gigantic fortune nothing remains but glory, – that is his only inheritance. Therefore in the present times of corruption, when every man turns his eyes only to where gold is attracting, who will mention his name, who will have the courage to make him a candidate? You? True! But will there be many like you? It is not wonderful that he whose life has been passed in heroic struggles on all fields will not fear to give homage to merit with his vote on the field of election; but will others follow his example?" Here the vice-chancellor fell to thinking, then raised his eyes and spoke on: "God is mightier than all. Who knows His decisions, who knows? When I think how all the knighthood believe and trust you, I see indeed with wonderment that a certain hope enters my heart. Tell me sincerely, has the impossible ever existed for you?"

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