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# **THE DELUGE**

**HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ**

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# Introduction

The wars described in *The Deluge* are the most complicated and significant in the whole career of the Commonwealth, for the political motives which came into play during these wars had their origin in early and leading historical causes.

The policy of the Teutonic Knights gave the first of its final results in the war of 1655, between Sweden and Poland, since it made the elector independent in Prussia, where soon after, his son was crowned king. The war with Great Russia in 1654, though its formal cause came, partly at least, from the struggle of 1612, in which the Poles had endeavored to subjugate Moscow, was really roused by the conflict of Southern Russia with Poland to win religious and material equality.

The two fundamental events of Polish history are the settlement of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, through the action of the Poles themselves; and the union of Poland with Lithuania and Russia by the marriage of Yadviga, the Polish princess, to Yagyello, Grand Prince of Lithuania.

Before touching on the Teutonic Knights, a few words may be given to the land where they began that career which cut off Poland from the sea, took from the Poles their political birthplace, and gave its name and territory to the chief kingdom of the new German Empire, the kingdom which is in fact the creator and head of that Empire.

Prussia in the thirteenth century extended from the Vistula eastward to the Niemen, and from the Baltic southward about as far as it does at present. In this territory lived the Prussians. East of the Niemen lived the Lithuanians, another division of the same stock of people. West of the Vistula lay Pomorye,<sup>1</sup> now Pomerania, occupied at that time exclusively by Slavs under Polish dominion.

The Prussians, a people closely related to the Slavs, were still Pagans, as were also the Lithuanians; and having a more highly developed religion than either the pre-Christian Slavs or the Germans, their conversion was likely to be of a more difficult nature.

At the end of the tenth and in the beginning of the thirteenth centuries attempts were made to convert the Prussians; but the only result was the death of the missionaries, who seem to have been too greatly filled with zeal to praise their own faith and throw contempt on that of the people among whom they were really only guests and sojourners.

Finally, a man appeared more adroit and ambitious than others—Christian, a monk of Olivka, near Dantzic. This monk, we are told, had a knowledge of the weak points of men, spoke Prussian as well as Polish, was not seeking the crown of martyrdom, and never made light of things held sacred by those to whom he was preaching. After a few years his success was such as to warrant a journey to Rome, where he explained to Innocent III the results of his labor. The Pope encouraged the missionary, and in 1211 instructed the Archbishop of Gnezen to aid Christian with his co-workers and induce secular princes to help them.

Christian returned from Rome with renewed zeal; but instead of being helped he was hindered, for tribute and labor were imposed on his converts by the secular power. Since the new religion was coupled with servitude, the Prussians were roused greatly against it.

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<sup>1</sup> Means "On the sea."

Christian strove to obtain relief for his converts, but in vain. Then, taking two native followers, he made a second journey to Rome, was created first Bishop of Prussia, and returned again to the field.

The great body of Prussians now considered all converts as traitors. The priests of the native religion roused the people, and attacked those persons as renegades who had deserted the ancient faith and were bringing slavery to the country. They went farther and fell upon Mazovia, whence the propaganda had issued. Konrad, unable to defend himself, bought them off with rich presents. The newly made converts were killed, captured, or driven to deep forests.

Christian turned to the Pope a third time, and implored him to direct against Prussia those Poles who were going to the Holy Land.

The Archbishop of Gnezen was instructed from Rome to make this change, and the Poles were summoned against Prussia for the following year. The crusade was preached also in Germany.

Warriors arrived from both countries in fairly large numbers, and during their presence ruined villages and churches were rebuilt in the district of Culm, where the conversions had taken place mainly. In a couple of seasons the majority of the warriors found their way home again. A second crusade was proclaimed, and men responded freely. All these forces were simply guarding the missionaries and the converts—a position which could not endure.

Christian, seeing this, formed the plan of founding an order of armed monks in Poland like the Knights of the Sword in Livonia. Konrad gave his approval at once.

The Bishop of Modena, at that time papal legate in Poland, hastened the establishment of the order; for to him it seemed the best agent to bend the stiff necks of idolaters. Permission to found the order was obtained from the Pope, and a promise of means to maintain it from Konrad.

Christian, who had interested Rome and the West in his work, now gave great praise before the world to the Prince of Mazovia, who thereupon rewarded him with a gift of twelve castles and one hundred villages, reserving merely sovereign rights without income. This gift was confirmed to the Bishop of Prussia by Honorius III.

Christian labored so zealously that in 1225 he consecrated twenty-five superior knights in his new order, which received the same rules as the Livonian Knights of the Sword—that is, the rules of the Templars.

The new knights were called Brothers of Dobjin, from the castle of Dobjin, which Konrad gave them as a residence, adding the district of Leslin near Inowratslav as a means of support.

As soon as the Brothers had settled in their castle, they attacked the Prussians, ruined villages, and brought in plunder. The enraged Prussians collected large forces, and attacked the land of Culm, with the intent to raze Dobjin. On hearing this, Konrad with his own troops and a general levy hastened to the relief of the order.

A bloody and stubborn battle of two days' duration was fought with great loss on both sides. Konrad, despairing of victory, left the field, thus causing the complete overthrow of the Poles. The surviving Brothers of Dobjin took refuge in the castle, which the Prussians were unable to capture. The order, shattered at its very inception, hoped for reinforcements from abroad; but the Pope at that juncture was sending a crusade to Palestine, and would not permit a division in the forces of the West. The Prussians, elated with victory, plundered at pleasure the lands bordering on their own.

In this disaster Christian conceived the idea of calling in the Teutonic Knights against Prussia. This idea, suicidal from a Polish point of view, was accepted by the Prince of Mazovia.

The Teutonic Order was founded in Palestine near the end of the twelfth century to succeed some German hospitallers who had resided in Jerusalem till the capture of the city by Saracens in 1187.

In a few years the new order became military, and under the patronage of Frederick, Duke of Suabia, afterward the Emperor Frederick II, acquired much wealth, with great imperial and papal favor. Under Herman Von Salza, who was grand master from 1210 to 1239, the future of the order was determined, its main scene of action transferred to the West, and that career begun which made the Teutonic Order the most remarkable of the weapon-bearing monks of Europe. Herman Von Salza—a keen, crafty man, of great political astuteness and ambition—had determined to win separate territory for the order, and the dignity of Prince of the Empire for the grand master.

Nothing therefore could be more timely for his plans than the invitation from the Prince of Mazovia, who in 1225 sent envoys to Herman; especially since the order had just been deprived in Transylvania of lands given to support it while warding off heathen Kumanians.

The envoys offered the Teutonic master Culm and some adjoining lands for the order, in return for curbing the Prussians. Herman resolved to accept, should the Emperor prove friendly to the offer. He hastened to Frederick at Rimini, explained the whole question, received a grant in which Konrad's endowment was confirmed; besides the order was given all the land it could conquer and make subject to the Emperor alone. The grand master's next care was to obtain papal approval.

Two envoys from Herman were sent to Poland, where they obtained, as the chronicles of the order relate, a written title to Culm and the neighboring land as well as to all Prussia which they could conquer. Near Torun (Thorn) a wooden fortress was built, called in German Fogelsang (Birdsong). This fortress was the first residence of the knights, who later on had so much power and such influence in the history of Poland.

Only two years later did Herman send his knights to Culm. One of the first acts was to purchase for various considerations, from the Bishop of Płotsk and from Christian, the Bishop of Prussia, their rights over the lands granted them in Culm. The labor of conversion began, and soon the grand master prevailed on the Pope to proclaim throughout Europe a crusade against Prussia.

From Poland alone came twenty thousand men, and many more from other parts of Europe. When the knights had made a firm beginning of work, their design of independence was revealed. They wished to be rid of even a show of submission to the Prince of Mazovia. They raised the question by trying to incorporate the remaining Brothers of Dobjín, and thus acquire the grant given them by Konrad. They had disputes also with Bishop Christian and the Bishop of Płotsk. In 1234 the Bishop of Modena was sent as papal legate to settle the disputes. The legate decided, to the satisfaction of the bishops, that of all lands won from the Pagans two thirds were to be retained by the knights and one third given to the bishops, the church administration being under the order in its own two thirds. For the Prince of Mazovia nothing was left, though he asserted sovereign rights in Culm and Prussia, and would not permit the order to acquire the grant given the Brothers of Dobjín by incorporating the remaining members of that body.

The Teutonic Order would not recognize the sovereignty of the Polish prince, and insisted on incorporating the Brothers of Dobjín. The order, knowing that Konrad would yield only



under constraint, placed its possessions at the feet of the Pope, made them the property of the Holy See. This action found success; the Pope declared Culm and all the acquisitions of the order the property of Saint Peter, which the church for a yearly tax then gave in feudal tenure to the Teutonic Knights, who therefore could not recognize in those regions the sovereignty of any secular prince. In August, 1234, the Pope informed Konrad in a special bull of the position of the order, and enjoined on him to aid it with all means in his power. The Polish prince could do nothing; he could not even prevent the incorporation of the majority of the remaining Brothers of Dobjin, and of the lands and property given for their use he was able to save nothing but the castle of Dobjin.

Konrad now found himself in a very awkward position; he had introduced of his own will a foreign and hostile power which had all Western Europe and the Holy See to support it, which had unbounded means of discrediting the Poles and putting them in the wrong before the world; and these means the order never failed to use. In half a century after their coming the knights, by the aid of volunteers and contributions from all Europe, had converted Prussia, and considered Poland and the adjoining parts of Lithuania as sure conquests to be made at their own leisure and at the expense of all Western Christendom.

The first Polish territory acquired was Pomerania. The career of the knights was easy and successful till the union of Poland and Lithuania in 1386. In 1410, at the battle called by the names both of Grünwald and Tannenberg, the power of the order was broken. Some years later Pomerania was returned to Poland, and the order was allowed to remain in East Prussia in the position of a vassal to the Commonwealth. In this reduced state the knights lived for a time, tried to gain allies, but could not; the most they did—and that was the best for the German cause—was to induce Albert, a member of the Franconian branch of the Hohenzollerns, to become grand master. He began to reorganize the order, and tried to shake off allegiance to Poland; but finding no aid in the Empire or elsewhere, he acted on Luther's advice to introduce Protestantism and convert Prussia into a secular and hereditary duchy. This he did in 1525. Poland, with a simplicity quite equal to that of Konrad, who called in the order at first, permitted the change. The military monks married, and were converted into hereditary nobles. Albert became Duke of Prussia, and took the oath of allegiance to Poland. Later the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg inherited the duchy, became feudatories of Poland as well as electors at home. This was the position during the war between Sweden and Poland described in *The Deluge*. Frederick William, known as the Great Elector, was ruling at that time in Brandenburg and Prussia. He acted with great adroitness and success; paying no attention to his oath as vassal, he took the part of one side, and then of the other when he saw fit. He fought on the Swedish side in the three days' battle around Warsaw in which Yan Kazimir was defeated. This service was to be rewarded by the independence of Prussia.

Hardly had the scale turned in favor of Poland when the Great Elector assisted Yan Kazimir against Sweden; and in the treaty of Wehlau (1657) Poland relinquished its rights over Prussia, which thus became sovereign and independent in Europe. This most important change was confirmed three years later at the peace of Oliva.

Frederick, son of the Great Elector, was crowned "King in Prussia" at Königsberg in 1701. The Elector of Brandenburg became king in that territory in which he had no suzerain.

At the first division of Poland, Royal Prussia of *The Deluge*, the territory lying between the Vistula and Brandenburg, went to the new kingdom; and Brandenburg, Pomerania, and Prussia became continuous territory.

The early success of the Teutonic Knights was so great that in the third half century of their rule on the Baltic their power overshadowed Poland, which was thus seriously threatened.

Toward the end of the fourteenth century, however (1386), the Poles escaped imminent danger by their union with Lithuania and Russia. Through this most important connection they rose at once from a position of peril to one of safety and power.

This union, brought about through the marriage of the Polish princess Yadviga to Yagyello, Grand Prince of Lithuania, and by exceedingly adroit management on the part of the Polish nobles and clergy, opened to the Poles immense regions of country and the way to vast wealth. Before the union their whole land was composed of Great and Little Poland, with Mazovia; after the union two thirds of the best lands of pre-Tartar Russia formed part of the Commonwealth.

Since Poland managed to place and maintain itself at the head of affairs, though this roused at all times opposition of varying violence in the other two parts of the Commonwealth, the social ideals and political structure of Poland prevailed in Lithuania and Russia, so far as the upper classes were concerned. In Lithuania, by the terms of the union, all were obliged to become Catholic; in different parts of Russia, which was Orthodox, the people were undisturbed in their religion at first; but after a time the majority of the nobles became Catholic in religion, and Poles in language, name, manners, and ideas. To these was added a large immigration of Polish nobles seeking advancement and wealth. All Russia found itself after a time under control of an upper class which was out of all sympathy with the great mass and majority of the people.

During the Yagyellon dynasty, which lasted from 1386 to 1572, the religious question was not so prominent for any save nobles; but ownership of their own land and their own labor was gradually slipping away from the people. During the reign of Sigismund III (1587–1632), religion was pushed to the foreground, the United Church was brought into Russia; and land and religion, which raise the two greatest problems in a State, the material and the spiritual, were the main objects of thought throughout Russia.

Under Vladislav in 1648 the storm burst forth in Southern Russia. There was a popular uprising, the most widespread and stubborn in history, during which the Poles lost many battles and gained one great victory, that of Berestechko; the Southern Russians turned to the North, and selected the Tsar Alexai Mihailovich as sovereign.

Jan. 8, 1654, there was a great meeting in Pereyaslav,<sup>2</sup> at which Bogdan Hmelnitski, hetman of the Zaporojian army and head of all Southern Russia, after he had consulted with the Cossacks, took his place in the centre of the circle, and in presence of the army, the people, and Buturlin, the envoy of Alexai Mihailovich, said:—

“Gentlemen, Colonels, *Essauls*, Commanders of hundreds, the whole Zaporojian army, and all Orthodox Christians—You know how the Lord delivered us from the hands of our enemies who persecuted the Church of God and were envenomed against all Christians of our Eastern Orthodoxy. We have lived six years without a sovereign, in endless battles against our persecutors and enemies who desire to root out the church of God, so that the Russian name may not be heard in our land. This position has grown unendurable, and we cannot live longer without a sovereign. Therefore we have assembled a council before the whole people, so that you with us may choose from four sovereigns that one whom you wish. The first is the Sovereign of Turkey, who has invited us under his authority many times through his envoys; the second is the Khan of the Crimea; the third the King of Poland, who, if we wish, may receive us into former favor; the fourth is the Orthodox sovereign, the Tsar and Grand Prince Alexai Mihailovich, the sole ruler of all Russia, whom we have been imploring six years with

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<sup>2</sup> Pereyaslav will be remembered by the readers of *With Fire and Sword* as the place where the Polish commissioners with Adam Kisel brought the baton and banner from the king to Hmelnitski.

unceasing petitions. Choose whom you like. The Sovereign of Turkey is a Mussulman; you all know how our brethren, the Greeks, Orthodox Christians, suffer, and what persecution they endure from godless men. A Mussulman also is the Khan of the Crimea, whom we took into friendship of necessity, by reason of the unendurable woes which we passed through. Of persecutions from Polish lords it is needless to speak; you know yourselves that they esteemed a Jew and a dog more than a Christian, our brother. But the great Orthodox sovereign of the East is of one faith with us, one confession of the Greek rite; we are one spiritual body with the Orthodoxy of Great Russia, having Jesus Christ for our head. This great sovereign, this Christian Tsar, taking pity on the suffering of our Orthodox church in Little Russia, giving ear to our six years' entreating, has inclined his heart to us graciously, and was pleased to send with his favor dignitaries from near his person. If we love him earnestly, we shall not find a better refuge than his lofty hand. If any man is not agreed with us, let him go whither he pleases; the road is free—"

Here the whole people shouted: "We choose to be under the Orthodox sovereign; better to die in our Orthodox faith than to go to a hater of Christ, to a Pagan!"

Then the Pereyaslav colonel, Teterya, passed around in the circle, and asked in every direction: "Are all thus agreed?"

"All with one spirit," was the answer.

The hetman now said: "May the Lord our God strengthen us under the strong hand of the Tsar."

The people shouted back in one voice: "God confirm us! God give us strength to be one for the ages!"

The hetman, the army, and the representatives of Southern Russia took the oath of allegiance to the Tsar. The result of this action was a war between the Commonwealth on one side, and Northern and Southern Russia on the other. The Commonwealth being thus occupied on the east, Sweden decided to attack on the west.

The war between Russia and the Commonwealth lasted thirteen years, and ended with a truce of thirteen years more, made at Andrusovo. By this agreement the city and province of Smolensk went to Russia, and all the left bank of the Dnieper, while Kiev was to be occupied by Poland after two years. This truce became a treaty during the reign of Sobyeski. Kiev remained with the Russians, and peace was unbroken till the second half of the following century, when all Russia west of the Dnieper was restored to the East in nearly the same limits which it had before the Tartar invasion; excepting the territory included in Galicia, and known as Red Russia.

Jeremiah Curtin.

Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology,  
November 25, 1891.

## Remarks on Personages in The Deluge

Yan Kazimir was a son of Sigismund III, who was a son of King John of Sweden and Catherine, daughter of Sigismund I of Poland.

John of Sweden was succeeded by his son Sigismund, who under the name of Sigismund III was elected King of Poland in 1587 to succeed his mother's brother, Sigismund Augustus, the last descendant of Yagyello in the male line.

Sigismund III was dethroned by the Swedes, and his issue excluded from the succession. Duke Charles, the ablest of Gustavus Vasa's sons, and uncle of Sigismund, was made king as Charles IX.

This Charles IX was father of Gustavus Adolphus. Gustavus Adolphus was succeeded by his only daughter, Christina, who would not marry, and who after reigning for a time resigned in favor of her cousin Karl Gustav of Zweibrücken,<sup>3</sup> son of the only sister of Gustavus Adolphus. Gustavus Vasa was therefore the great-grandfather of both Yan Kazimir and Karl Gustav, who were thus second cousins. The Polish Vasas laid claim to the Swedish crown, thereby causing the Commonwealth during sixty years much loss in money and men. Yan Kazimir relinquished this claim when he made peace with Sweden.

Before his election Yan Kazimir, being a cardinal, was dispensed from his vows by the Pope. Chosen king, he married Louise Marie, daughter of the Duke of Nevers, a woman of strong will and much beauty.

Discouraged and wearied by many wars and reverses, and more than all by the endless dissensions of magnates, Yan Kazimir resigned the kingly office in 1668, and retired to France. Being now a widower, he became Abbot of St. Germain and St. Martin, and lived on his stipend from these foundations, for the Poles refused to continue his pension. It seems, however, that he did not remain in seclusion till the end, for he is mentioned as marrying in secret a widow who had once been a laundress. He died in 1672, remembering the world much more than the world remembered him.

Yan Zamoyski, one of the most celebrated nobles in Polish history, was the grandfather of Sobiepan Zamoyski. The time of Zamoyski's success was during the reign of Stephen Batory, who gave him more offices and power than any citizen of the Commonwealth had ever enjoyed. As castellan of Krakow, he was the first among lay senators; as starosta of the same territory, he had extensive jurisdiction over criminals in Little Poland; as hetman, he was commander of all the military forces of the kingdom; as chancellor, he held the seals, without which no official act of the king had validity.

Perhaps the most notable action in Zamoyski's career as a civilian during Batory's reign was his treatment of the Zborovskis, one of whom he had beheaded, and another condemned to decapitation and infamy. The hatred of the Zborovskis for Zamoyski became so intense that later on they tried to seat their candidate, Maximilian of Austria, in opposition to Sigismund III, Zamoyski's choice and that of the majority. The Zborovski party brought their candidate to the gate of Krakow, intending to enthrone him with armed hand. Zamoyski repulsed and pursued them to Silesia, where he defeated and made Maximilian prisoner. The Austrian Archduke was held in captivity till he renounced all claim to the throne. This is the captivity to which Sobiepan refers in chapter LXIX.

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<sup>3</sup> "Two-bridges," the Bipont of chapter LXXXIV.

Zamoyski had Sigismund impeached in 1592, not to condemn him, but to give him a lesson. Zamoyski's course in this affair, and his last speech in the Diet of 1605 are his most prominent acts during a reign in which he was first in opposition, as he had been first on the king's side during Batory's time. Zamoyski died in 1605, alarmed, as Lelevel says, for the future of his country.

Sobiepan Zamoyski, who conceived such a friendship for Zagloba, married the daughter of Henri de la Grange, a captain in the guard of Philip, Duke of Orleans. After Zamoyski's death, his widow, a woman of great beauty and ambition, married Sobyieski, subsequently elected king to succeed Michael Vishnyevetski, who is mentioned in chapter LXI.

Kmita, the hero of *The Deluge*, was probably of the Kmitas of Little Poland, and of those who inherited lands granted Poles in Lithuania and Russia after the union.

Kmitsits, which means "son of Kmita," as "starostsits" means "son of a starosta," is the name used by Sienkiewicz; but as that word would baffle most English readers, I have taken Kmita, the original form of the family name. Kmita is mentioned in Solovyóff's Russian history as cooperating with Sapyeha and Charnyetski against Hovanski and Dolgoruki; in that connection he is called Kmitich.



# Notes

## Polish Alphabet

Since the Polish alphabet has many peculiar phonetic combinations which are difficult to one who does not know the language, it was decided to transliterate the names of persons and places in which such combinations occur in this book. The following are the letters and combinations which are met with most frequently:—

Polish Letters	English Sounds
<i>c</i>	<i>ts</i>
<i>cz</i>	<i>ch</i> in “chief”
<i>sz</i>	<i>sh</i> in “ship”
<i>szcz</i>	<i>shch</i>
<i>rz</i>	<i>r</i> followed by the French <i>j</i>
<i>w</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>ż</i>	<i>j</i> in French

In this transliteration *ch* retains its ordinary English sound. *Kh* is used as the German *ch*, or the Gaelic *ch* in “loch;” so is *h*, as in Hmelnitski, and a few names in which it is used at the beginning and preceding a consonant, where it has the power of the German *ch*. *J* is the French *j*; the vowels *e*, *i*, *u*, are, respectively, *ai* in “bait,” *ee* in “beet,” *oo* in “pool,” when long; when short, “bet,” “bit,” “put” would represent their values.

The following names will illustrate the method of this transliteration:—

Polish Form of Name	Form in Transliteration
Potocki	Pototski
Chudzynski	Hudzynski
Czarnkowski	Charnkovski
Rzendzian	Jendzian
Bleszynski	Bleshyuski
Szandarowski	Shandarovski
Wlostowski	Vlostovski
Żyromski	Jyromski

In Jendzian and Jechytsa—the only names, as I believe, beginning in Polish with *rz* in this work—the initial *r* has been omitted in the transliteration on account of the extreme difficulty, for anyone not a Pole, of pronouncing *r* followed by the French *j*.

## Accent

All Polish words, with few exceptions, are accented on the syllable next the last, the penult. The exceptions are foreign names, some compounds, some words with enclitics. Polish names of men and places are generally accented on the penult.

## Titles of Rank and Address

The highest military rank in Poland was grand hetman; next in order came field-hetman, which has appeared inadvertently in these volumes as full hetman. "Your worthiness," so frequently used, would be better translated "your dignity," "dignity" being used in the sense of "office." The terms Pan, Pani, and Panna are applied, respectively, to a gentleman, a married lady, and an unmarried lady; they are now equivalent to Mr., Mrs. or Madame, and Miss.

# Chapter I

There was in Jmud a powerful family, the Billeviches, descended from Mendog, connected with many, and respected, beyond all, in the district of Rossyeni. The Billeviches had never risen to great offices, the highest they had filled were provincial; but in war they had rendered the country unsurpassed services, for which they were richly rewarded at various times. Their native nest, existing to this day, was called Billeviche; but they possessed many other estates, both in the neighborhood of Rossyeni and farther on toward Krakin, near Lauda, Shoi, Nyevyaja, and beyond Ponyevyej. In later times they branched out into a number of houses, the members of which lost sight of one another. They all assembled only when there was a census at Rossyeni of the general militia of Jmud on the plain of the invited Estates. They met also in part under the banners of the Lithuanian cavalry and at provincial diets; and because they were wealthy and influential, even the Radzivills, all powerful in Lithuania and Jmud, had to reckon with them.

In the reign of Yan Kazimir, the patriarch of all the Billeviches, was Heraclius, colonel of light-horse and under-chamberlain of Upita. He did not dwell in the ancestral nest, which was rented at that time by Tomash, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni; Heraclius Billevich owned also Vodokty, Lyubich, and Mitruny, situated near Lauda, surrounded, as if with a sea, by agriculturists of the petty nobility.

Besides the Billeviches there were only a few of the more considerable families in the neighborhood, such as the Sollohubs, the Montvills, the Schyllings, the Koryznis, the Sitsinskis—though there was no lack of smaller nobility of these names; finally, the whole river region of Lauda was thickly studded with so-called “neighborhoods,” or, in common parlance, *zastsianki*,<sup>4</sup> occupied by the nobility of Lauda, renowned and celebrated in the history of Jmud.

In other neighborhoods of the region the families took their names from the places, or the places from the families, as was customary in Podlyasye; but along the river region of Lauda it was different. In Morezi dwelt the Stakyans, whom Batory in his time settled there for bravery at Pskoff; in Volmontovichi, on good land, swarmed the Butryms, the bulkiest fellows in all Lauda, noted for few words and heavy hands—men who in time of provincial diets, raids on property, or wars were wont to go in close rank and in silence. The lands in Drojeykani and Mozgi were managed by the numerous Domasheviches, famed hunters; these men tramped through the wilderness of Zyelonka as far as Wilkomir on bear-trails. The Gashtovts occupied Patsuneli; their women were famous for beauty, so that finally all pretty girls around Krakin, Ponyevyej, and Upita were known as Patsuneli girls. The Sollohubs Mali were rich in horses and excellent cattle, bred in forest pastures. The Gostsyeviches in Goshchuni made tar in the woods, from which occupation they were called Gostsyevichi Charni (Black) or Dymni (Smoky)—the Black or Smoky Gostsyeviches.

There were other villages and families also. The names of many of them are still extant; but these villages are not situated as before, and men call them by other names. Wars came too with misfortunes and fires, villages were not always rebuilt on the ruins; in a word, much has changed. But in that time old Lauda was still flourishing in its primeval estate; and the nobles had reached their highest repute a few years before, when, fighting at Loyovo against the

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<sup>4</sup> This word means technically “villages inhabited by petty nobles:” etymologically it means “behind walls,”—hence, “beyond or outside the walls,” as above.

uprisen Cossacks, they covered themselves with great glory under the lead of Yanush Radzivill.

All the Lauda men served in the regiment of old Heraclius Billevich—the richer with two horses, the poorer with one, and the poorest as attendants. In general, these nobles were warlike, and especially enamoured of a knightly career; but in questions which formed the ordinary subjects of discussion at a provincial diet they were less skilled. They knew that there was a king in Warsaw; that Radzivill and Pan Hlebovich were starostas in Jmud, and Pan Billevich at Vodokty in Lauda. That was sufficient for them; and they voted as Pan Billevich instructed them, convinced that he wanted the same as Pan Hlebovich, and that the latter went hand in hand with Radzivill. Radzivill was the king's arm in Lithuania and Jmud; the king was the consort of the Commonwealth, the father of the legion of nobles.

Pan Billevich was, in fact, a friend rather than a client of the powerful oligarchs in Birji, and a greatly esteemed one at that; for at every call he had a thousand voices and a thousand Lauda sabres—and sabres in the hands of the Stakyans, the Butryms, the Domasheviches, or the Gashtovts were despised at that period by no man on earth. It was only later that everything changed, just at the time when Pan Heraclius Billevich was no more.

This father and benefactor of the nobles of Lauda died in 1654. In that year a terrible war<sup>5</sup> flamed forth along the whole eastern line of the Commonwealth; Pan Billevich did not go to it, for his age and his deafness did not permit; but the Lauda men went. When tidings came that Radzivill was defeated at Shklov, and the Lauda regiment in an attack on the hired infantry of France was cut almost to pieces, the old colonel, stricken by apoplexy, yielded his soul.

These tidings were brought by a certain Pan Michael Volodyovski, a young but very famous warrior, who instead of Heraclius had led the Lauda regiment by appointment of Radzivill. The survivors came with him to their inherited fields, wearied, weighed down, and famished; in common with the whole army, they complained that the grand hetman, trusting in the terror of his name and the spell of victory, had rushed with small forces on a power ten times greater than his own, and thus had overwhelmed the army and the whole country.

But amid the universal complaining not one voice was raised against Volodyovski. On the contrary, those who had escaped lauded him to the skies, relating wonders of his skill and his deeds. And the only solace left the survivors was the memory of the exploits performed under the young colonel's leadership—how in the attack they had burst through the first line of reserves as through smoke; how later they fell on the French mercenaries and cut to pieces with their sabres the foremost regiment, on which occasion Pan Volodyovski with his own hand killed the colonel; how at last, surrounded and under fire from four sides, they saved themselves from the chaos by desperate fighting, falling in masses, but breaking the enemy.

Those of the Lauda men who, not serving in the Lithuanian quota, were obliged to form a part of the general militia, listened in sorrow but with pride to these narratives. It was hoped on all sides that the general militia, the final defence of the country, would soon be called. It was agreed already that Volodyovski would be chosen captain of Lauda in that event; for though not of the local residents, there was no man among them more celebrated than he. The survivors said, besides, that he had rescued the hetman himself from death. Indeed, all Lauda almost bore him in its arms, and one neighborhood seized him from another. The Butryms, the Domasheviches, and the Gashtovts disputed as to whose guest he should be for the longest period. He pleased that valiant nobility so much that when the remnant of Radzivill's

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<sup>5</sup> This war was carried on by the Tsar Alexis, father of Peter the Great and son of Michael Romanoff. See Introduction.

troops marched to Birji so as to be brought to some order after the defeat, he did not go with others, but passing from village to village took up his abode at last in Patsuneli with the Gashtovts, at the house of Pakosh Gashtovt, who had authority over all in that place.

In fact, Pan Volodyovski could not have gone to Birji in any event, for he was so ill as to be confined to the bed. First an acute fever came on him; then from the contusion which he had received at Tsybihovo he lost the use of his right arm. The three daughters of his host, who were noted for beauty, took him into their tender care, and vowed to bring back to his original health such a celebrated cavalier. The nobility to the last man were occupied with the funeral of their former chief, Heraclius Billevich.

After the funeral the will of the deceased was opened, from which it transpired that the old colonel had made his granddaughter, Aleksandra Billevich, daughter of the chief hunter of Upita, the heiress of all his property with the exception of the village of Lyubich. Guardianship over her till her marriage he confided to the entire nobility of Lauda—

*“who, as they were well wishing to me,” continued he in the will, “and returned kindness for kindness, let them do the same too for the orphan in these times of corruption and wickedness, when no one is safe from the license of men or free of fear; let them guard the orphan from mischance, through memory of me.*

*“They are also to see that she has safe use of her property with the exception of the village of Lyubich, which I give, present, and convey to the young banneret of Orsha, so that he may meet no obstacle in entering into possession of it. Should any man wonder at this my affection for Andrei Kmita, or see in it injustice to my own granddaughter Aleksandra, he must and should know that I held in friendship and true brotherly love from youthful years till the day of his death the father of Andrei Kmita. I was with him in war, he saved my life many times; and when the malice and envy of the Sitsinskis strove to wrest from me my fortune, he lent me his aid to defend it. Therefore I, Heraclius Billevich, under-chamberlain of Upita, and also an unworthy sinner standing now before the stern judgment of God, went four years ago, while alive and walking upon the earthly vale, to Pan Kmita, the father, the sword-bearer of Orsha, to vow gratitude and steady friendship. On that occasion we made mutual agreement, according to ancient noble and Christian custom, that our children—namely his son Andrei and my granddaughter Aleksandra—were to be married, so that from them posterity might rise to the praise of God and the good of the State, which I wish most earnestly; and by the will here written I bind my granddaughter to obedience unless the banneret of Orsha (which God forbid) stain his reputation with evil deeds and be despoiled of honor. Should he lose his inheritance near Orsha, which may easily happen, she is to take him as husband with blessing; and even should he lose Lyubich, to pay no heed to the loss.*

*“However, if by the special favor of God, my granddaughter should wish in praise of Him to make an offering of her virginity and put on the habit of a nun, it is permitted her to do so, for I know that the praise of God is to precede that of man.”*

In such fashion did Pan Heraclius Billevich dispose of his fortune and his granddaughter, at which no one wondered much. Panna Aleksandra had been long aware of what awaited her, and the nobles had heard from of old of the friendship between Billevich and the Kmitas; besides, in time of defeat the thoughts of men were occupied with other things, so that soon they ceased to talk of the will.

But they talked of the Kmitas continually in the house at Vodokty, or rather of Pan Andrei, for the old sword-bearer also was dead. The younger Kmita had fought at Shklov with his own banner and with volunteers from Orsha. Then he vanished from the eye; but it was not admitted that he had perished, since the death of so noted a cavalier would surely not have



escaped notice. The Kmitas were people of birth in Orsha, and lords of considerable fortune; but the flame of war had ruined those regions. Districts and entire lands were turned into deserts, fortunes were devoured, and people perished. After the crushing of Radzivill no one offered firm resistance. Gosyevski, full hetman, had no troops; the hetmans of the Crown with their armies in the Ukraine were struggling with what strength they had left and could not help him, exhausted as well as the Commonwealth by the Cossack wars. The deluge covered the land more and more, only breaking here and there against fortified walls; but the walls fell one after another, as had fallen Smolensk. The province of Smolensk, in which lay the fortune of the Kmitas, was looked on as lost. In the universal chaos, in the general terror, people were scattered like leaves in a tempest, and no man knew what had become of the banneret of Orsha.

But war had not reached Jmud yet. The nobles of Lauda returned to their senses by degrees. "The neighborhoods" began to assemble, and discuss both public and private affairs. The Butryms, readiest for battle, muttered that it would be necessary to go to Rossyeni to the muster of the general militia, and then to Gosyevski, to avenge the defeat of Shklov; the Domasheviches, the hunters, had gone through the wilderness of Rogovo by the forests till they found parties of the enemy and brought back news; the Smoky Gostsyeviches smoked meat in their huts for a future expedition. In private affairs it was decided to send tried and experienced men to find Pan Andrei Kmita.

The old men of Lauda held these deliberations under the presidency of Pakosh Gashtovt and Kassyan Butrym, two neighborhood patriarchs. All the nobility, greatly flattered by the confidence which the late Pan Billevich had placed in them, swore to stand faithfully by the letter of the will, and to surround Panna Aleksandra with well-nigh fatherly care. This was in time of war, when even in places to which war had not come disturbance and suffering were felt. On the banks of the Lauda all remained quiet, there were no disputes, there was no breaking through boundaries on the estates of the young heiress, landmarks were not shifted, no ditches were filled, no branded pine-trees were felled on forest borders, no pastures were invaded. On the contrary, the heiress was aided with provisions—whatever the neighborhood had; for instance, the Stakjans on the river sent salt-fish, wheat came from the surly Butryms at Voimontovichi, hay from the Gashtovts, game from the Domasheviches (the hunters), tar and pitch from the Gostsyeviches. Of Panna Aleksandra no one in the villages spoke otherwise than as "our lady," and the pretty girls of Patsuneli waited for Pan Kmita perhaps as impatiently as she.

Meanwhile came the summons calling the nobility. The Lauda men began to move. He who from being a youth had grown to be a man, he whom age had not bent, had to mount his horse. Yan Kazimir arrived at Grodno, and fixed that as the place of general muster. There, then, they mustered. The Butryms in silence went forth; after them others, and the Gashtovts last—as they always did, for they hated to leave the Patsuneli girls. The nobles from other districts appeared in scant numbers only, and the country was left undefended; but God-fearing Lauda had appeared in full quota.

Pan Volodyovski did not march, for he was not able yet to use his arm; he remained therefore as if district commander among the women. The neighborhoods were deserted, and only old men and women sat around the fires in the evening. It was quiet in Ponyevyej and Upita; they were waiting on all sides for news.

Panna Aleksandra in like manner shut herself in at Vodokty, seeing no one but servants and her guardians of Lauda.

## Chapter II

The new year 1655 came. January was frosty, but dry; a stern winter covered sacred Jmud with a white coat three feet thick, the forests were bending and breaking under a wealth of snow bunches, snow dazzled the eyes during days of sunshine, and in the night by the moon there glittered as it were sparks vanishing on a surface stiffened by frost; wild beasts approached the dwellings of men, and the poor gray birds hammered with their beaks the windows covered with hoar frost and snow-flowers.

On a certain evening Panna Aleksandra was sitting in the servants' hall with her work-maidens. It was an old custom of the Billeviches, when there were no guests, to spend evenings with the servants singing hymns and edifying simple minds by their example. In this wise did Panna Aleksandra; and the more easily since among her house-maidens were some really noble, very poor orphans. These performed every kind of work, even the rudest, and were servants for ladies; in return they were trained in good manners, and received better treatment than simple girls. But among them were peasants too, differing mainly in speech,<sup>6</sup> for many did not know Polish.

Panna Aleksandra, with her relative Panna Kulvyets, sat in the centre, and the girls around on benches; all were spinning. In a great chimney with sloping sides pine-logs were burning, now dying down and now flaming freshly with a great bright blaze or with sparks, as the youth standing near the chimney threw on small pieces of birch or pitch-pine. When the flame shot upward brightly, the dark wooden walls of the great hall were to be seen, with an unusually low ceiling resting on crossbeams. From the beams hung, on threads, many-colored stars, made of wafers, trembling in the warm air; behind, from both sides of the beams, were bunches of combed flax, hanging like captured Turkish horsetail standards. Almost the whole ceiling was covered with them. On the dark walls glittered, like stars, tin plates, large and small, standing straight or leaning on long oaken shelves.

In the distance, near the door, a shaggy-haired man of Jmud was making a great noise with a hand-mill, and muttering a song with nasal monotone. Panna Aleksandra slipped her beads through her fingers in silence; the spinners spun on, saying nothing the one to the other.

The light of the flame fell on their youthful, ruddy faces. They, with both hands raised—with the left feeding the soft flax, with the right turning the wheel—spun eagerly, as if vying with one another, urged on by the stern glances of Panna Kulvyets. Sometimes, too, they looked at one another with quick eye, and sometimes at Panna Aleksandra, as if in expectation that she would tell the man to stop grinding, and would begin the hymn; but they did not cease working. They spun and spun on; the threads were winding, the wheel was buzzing, the distaff played in the hand of Panna Kulvyets, the shaggy-haired man of Jmud rattled on with his mill.

But at times he stopped his work. Evidently something was wrong with the mill, for at those times was heard his angry voice: "It's down!"

Panna Aleksandra raised her head, as if roused by the silence which followed the exclamations of the man; then the blaze lighted up her face and her serious blue eyes looking from beneath black brows. She was a comely lady, with flaxen hair, pale complexion, and delicate features. She had the beauty of a white flower. The mourning robes added to her

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<sup>6</sup> The speech of the main body of the people in Jmud is Lithuanian to this day.

dignity. Sitting before the chimney, she seemed buried in thought, as in a dream; doubtless she was meditating over her own lot, for her fates were in the balance. The will predestined her to be the wife of a man whom she had not seen for ten years; and as she was now almost twenty, there remained to her but unclear childhood reminiscences of a certain boisterous boy, who at the time when he with his father had come to Vodokty, was more occupied with racing through the swamps with a gun than in looking at her. "Where is he, and what manner of man is he now?" These were the questions which thrust themselves on the mind of the dignified lady. She knew him also, it is true, from the narratives of the late under-chamberlain, who four years before had undertaken the long journey to Orsha. According to those narratives, he was a cavalier "of great courage, though very quick-tempered." By the contract of marriage for their descendants concluded between old Billevich and Kmita the father, Kmita the son was to go at once to Vodokty and be accepted by the lady; but a great war broke out just then, and the cavalier, instead of going to the lady, went to the fields of Berestechko. Wounded at Berestechko, he recovered at home; then he nursed his sick father, who was near death; after that another war broke out, and thus four years passed. Since the death of the old colonel considerable time had elapsed, but no tidings of Kmita.

Panna Aleksandra therefore had something to meditate upon, and perhaps she was pining for the unknown. In her pure heart, especially because it knew not love as yet, she bore a great readiness for that feeling. A spark only was needed to kindle on that hearth a flame quiet but bright, and as steady as the undying sacred fire of Lithuania.

Disquiet then seized her—at times pleasant, at times bitter; and her soul was ever putting questions to which there was no answer, or rather the answer must come from distant fields. The first question was whether he would marry her with goodwill and respond with readiness to her readiness. In those days contracts by parents for the marriage of their children were usual; and if the parents died the children, held by the blessing, observed in most cases the contract. In the engagement itself the young lady saw nothing uncommon; but good pleasure does not always go hand in hand with duty; hence the anxiety that weighed down the blond head of the maiden. "Will he love me?" And then a flock of thoughts surrounded her, as a flock of birds surround a tree standing alone in spacious fields: "Who art thou? What manner of person? Art walking alive in the world, or perhaps thou hast fallen? Art thou distant or near?" The open heart of the lady, like a door open to a precious guest, called involuntarily to distant regions, to forests and snowfields covered with night: "Come hither, young hero; for there is naught in the world more bitter than waiting."

That moment, as if in answer to the call, from outside, from those snowy distances covered with night, came the sound of a bell.

The lady trembled, but regaining her presence of mind, remembered that almost every evening someone came to Vodokty to get medicine for the young colonel.

Panna Kulvyets confirmed that idea by saying, "Someone from the Gashtovts for herbs."

The irregular sound of the bell shaken by the shaft rang more distinctly each moment; at last it stopped on a sudden. Evidently the sleigh had halted before the door.

"See who has come," said Panna Kulvyets to the man of Jmud who was turning the mill.

The man went out of the servants' hall, but soon returned, and taking again the handle of the mill, said phlegmatically, "Panas Kmitas."<sup>7</sup>

"The word is made flesh!" cried Panna Kulvyets.

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<sup>7</sup> Lithuanian forms, with nominative ending in *s* and *as*.

The spinners sprang to their feet; the flax and the distaffs fell to the floor.

Panna Aleksandra rose also. Her heart beat like a hammer; a flush came forth on her face, and then pallor; but she turned from the chimney, lest her emotion might be seen.

Then in the door appeared a certain lofty figure in a fur mantle and fur-bound cap. A young man advanced to the middle of the room, and seeing that he was in the servants' hall, inquired in a resonant voice, without removing his cap, "Hei! but where is your mistress?"

"I am the mistress," said Panna Billevich, in tones sufficiently clear.

Hearing this, the newly arrived removed his cap, cast it on the floor, and inclining said, "I am Andrei Kmita."

The eyes of Panna Aleksandra rested with lightning-like swiftness on the face of Kmita, and then dropped again to the floor; still during that time the lady was able to see the tuft shaven high, yellow as wheat, an embrowned complexion, blue eyes, looking quickly to the front, dark mustache, a face youthful, eagle-like, but joyous and gallant.

He rested his left hand on his hip, raised his right to his mustache, and said: "I have not been in Lyubich yet, for I hastened here like a bird to bow down at the feet of the lady, the chief hunter's daughter. The wind—God grant it was a happy one!—brought me straight from the camp."

"Did you know of the death of my grandfather?" asked the lady.

"I did not; but I bewailed with hot tears my benefactor when I learned of his death from those rustics who came from this region to me. He was a sincere friend, almost a brother, of my late father. Of course it is well known to you that four years ago he came to us at Orsha. Then he promised me your ladyship, and showed a portrait about which I sighed in the nighttime. I wished to come sooner, but war is not a mother: she makes matches for men with death only."

This bold speech confused the lady somewhat. Wishing to change the subject, she said, "Then you have not seen Lyubich yet?"

"There will be time for that. My first service is here; and here the dearest inheritance, which I wish to receive first. But you turned from the hearth, so that to this moment I have not been able to look you in the eye—that's the way! Turn, and I will stand next the hearth; that's the way!"

Thus speaking, the daring soldier seized by the hand Olenka,<sup>8</sup> who did not expect such an act, and brought her face toward the fire, turning her like a top. She was still more confused, and covering her eyes with her long lashes, stood abashed by the light and her own beauty. Kmita released her at last, and struck himself on the doublet.

"As God is dear to me, a beauty! I'll have a hundred Masses said for my benefactor because he left you to me. When the betrothal?"

"Not yet awhile; I am not yours yet," said Olenka.

"But you will be, even if I have to burn this house! As God lives, I thought the portrait flattered. I see that the painter aimed high, but missed. A thousand lashes to such an artist, and stoves to paint, not beauties, with which eyes are feasted! Oh, 'tis a delight to be the heir to such an inheritance, may the bullets strike me!"

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<sup>8</sup> The diminutive or more familiar form for Aleksandra. It is used frequently in this book.

“My late grandfather told me that you were very hotheaded.”

“All are that way with us in Smolensk; not like your Jmud people. One, two! and it must be as we want; if not, then death.”

Olenka laughed, and said with a voice now more confident, raising her eyes to the cavalier, “Then it must be that Tartars dwell among you?”

“All one! but you are mine by the will of parents and by your heart.”

“By my heart? That I know not yet.”

“Should you not be, I would thrust myself with a knife!”

“You say that laughing. But we are still in the servants’ hall; I beg you to the reception-room. After a long road doubtless supper will be acceptable. I beg you to follow me.”

Here Olenka turned to Panna Kulvyets. “Auntie, dear, come with us.”

The young banneret glanced quickly. “Aunt?” he inquired—“whose aunt?”

“Mine—Panna Kulvyets.”

“Then she is mine!” answered he, going to kiss her hand. “I have in my company an officer named Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus. Is he not a relative?”

“He is of the same family,” replied the old maid, with a courtesy.

“A good fellow, but a whirlwind like myself,” added Kmita.

Meanwhile a boy appeared with a light. They went to the antechamber, where Pan Andrei removed his shuba; then they passed to the reception-room.

Immediately after their departure the spinners gathered in a close circle, and one interrupted another, talking and making remarks. The stately young man pleased them greatly; therefore they did not spare words on him, vying with one another in praises.

“Light shines from him,” said one; “when he came I thought he was a king’s son.”

“And he has lynx eyes, so that he cuts with them,” said another; “do not cross such a man.”

“That is worst of all,” said a third.

“He met the lady as a betrothed. It is easily seen that she pleased him greatly, for whom has she not pleased?”

“But he is not worse than she, never fear! Could you get his equal, you would go even to Orsha, though likely that is at the end of the world.”

“Ah, lucky lady!”

“It is always best for the rich in the world. *Ei, ei*, that’s gold, not a knight.”

“The Patsuneli girls say that that cavalry captain who is stopping with old Pakosh is a handsome cavalier.”

“I have not seen him; but how compare him with Pan Kmita! Such another as Pan Kmita surely there is not in the world!”

“It’s down!” cried the man of Jmud on a sudden, when something broke again in the mill.

“Go out, shaggy head, with thy freaks! Give us peace, for we cannot hear.—True, true; hard to find better than Pan Kmita in the whole world; surely in Kyedani there is none such.”

“Dream of one like him!”



“May his like come in a dream!”

In such fashion did the girls talk among themselves in the servants' hall. Meanwhile in the dining-room the table was laid in all haste, while in the drawing-room Panna Aleksandra conversed face to face with Kmita, for Aunt Kulvyets had gone to bustle about the supper.

Pan Andrei did not remove his gaze from Olenka, and his eyes shot sparks more and more every moment; at last he said—

“There are men to whom land is dearer than all things else; there are others who chase after plunder in war, others love horses; but I would not give you for any treasure. As God lives, the more I look the more I wish to marry; so that even if it were tomorrow—Oh, that brow—just as if painted with burned cork!”

“I hear that some use such strange things, but I am not of that kind.”

“And eyes as from heaven! From confusion, words fail me.”

“You are not greatly confused, if in my presence you can be so urgent that I am wonder-stricken.”

“That is our way in Smolensk—to go boldly at women as we do into battle. You must, my queen, grow accustomed to this, for thus will it ever be.”

“You must put it aside, for thus it cannot be.”

“Perhaps I may yield, may I be slain! Believe, believe me not, but with gladness would I bend the skies for you. For you, my queen, I am ready to learn other manners; for I know myself that I am a simple soldier, I have lived more in camps than in chambers of castles.”

“Oh, that harms nothing, for my grandfather was a soldier; but I give thanks for the goodwill,” said Olenka; and her eyes looked with such sweetness on Pan Andrei that his heart melted like wax in a moment, and he answered—

“You will lead me on a thread.”

“Ah, you are not like those who are led on threads; to do that is most difficult with men who are unsteady.”

Kmita showed in a smile teeth as white as a wolf's teeth, “How is that?” asked he. “Are the rods few that the fathers broke on me in the monastery to bring me to steadiness and make me remember various fair maxims for guidance in life—”

“And which one do you remember best?”

“‘When in love, fall at the feet,’—in this fashion.”

When he had spoken, Kmita was already on his knees. The lady screamed, putting her feet under the table.

“For God's sake! they did not teach that in the monastery. Leave off, or I shall be angry—my aunt will come this minute—”

Still on his knees, he raised his head and looked into her eyes. “Let a whole squadron of aunts come; I shall not forbid their pleasure.”

“But stand up!”

“I am standing.”

“Sit down!”

“I am sitting.”

“You are a traitor, a Judas!”

“Not true, for when I kiss ’tis with sincerity—will you be convinced?”

“You are a serpent!”

Panna Aleksandra laughed, however, and a halo of youth and gladness came from her. His nostrils quivered like the nostrils of a young steed of noble blood.

“*Ai! ai!*” said he. “What eyes, what a face! Save me, all ye saints, for I cannot keep away!”

“There is no reason to summon the saints. You were absent four years without once looking in here; sit still now!”

“But I knew only the counterfeit. I will have that painter put in tar and then in feathers, and scourge him through the square of Upita. I will tell all in sincerity—forgive, if it please you; if not, take my head. I thought to myself when looking at that portrait: ‘A pretty little rogue, pretty; but there is no lack of pretty ones in the world. I have time.’ My late father urged me hither, but I had always one answer: ‘I have time! The little wife will not vanish; maidens go not to war and do not perish.’ I was not opposed at all to the will of my father, God is my witness; but I wanted first to know war and feel it on my own body. This moment I see my folly. I might have married and gone to war afterward; and here every delight was waiting for me. Praise be to God that they did not hack me to death! Permit me to kiss your hand.”

“Better, I’ll not permit.”

“Then I will not ask. In Orsha we say, ‘Ask; but if they don’t give, take it thyself.’”

Here Pan Andrei clung to the hand of the lady and began to kiss it; and the lady did not resist too greatly, lest she might exhibit ill-will.

Just then Panna Kulvyets came in. When she saw what was going on, she raised her eyes. That intimacy did not please her, but she dared not scold. She gave invitation to supper.

Both went to the supper-room, holding each the other’s hand as if they were related. In the room stood a table covered, and on it an abundance of all kinds of food, especially choice smoked meats and a mouldy thick bottle of strength-giving wine. It was pleasant for the young people with each other, gladsome, vivacious. The lady had supped already; therefore Kmita sat alone, and began to eat with animation equal to that with which he had just been conversing.

Olenka looked at him with sidelong glance, glad that he was eating and drinking. When he had appeased his first hunger, she began again to inquire—

“Then you are not direct from Orsha?”

“Scarcely do I know whence I come—here today, tomorrow in another place. I prowled near the enemy as a wolf around sheep, and what was possible to seize I seized.”

“And how had you daring to meet such a power, before which the grand hetman himself had to yield?”

“How had I daring? I am ready for all things, such is the nature within me.”

“That is what my grandfather said. Great luck that you were not killed!”

“*Ai*, they covered me with cap and with hand as a bird is covered on the nest; but I, whom they covered, sprang out and bit them in another place. I made it so bitter for them that there is a price on my head—A splendid half-goose!”

“In the name of the Father and the Son!” cried Olenka, with unfeigned wonder, gazing with homage on that young man who in the same moment mentions the price on his head and the half-goose. “Had you many troops for defence?”

“I had, of course, my poor dragoons—very excellent men, but in a month they were all kicked to bits. Then I went with volunteers whom I gathered wherever I could without question. Good fellows for battle, but knave upon knave! Those who have not perished already will sooner or later be meat for the crows.”

Pan Andrei laughed, emptied his goblet of wine, and added: “Such plunderers you have not seen yet. May the hangman light them! Officers—all nobles from our parts, men of family, worthy people, but against almost every one of them is a sentence of outlawry. They are now in Lyubich, for where else could I send them?”

“So you have come to us with the whole squadron?”

“I have. The enemy took refuge in towns, for the winter is bitter. My men too are as ragged as brooms after long sweeping. The prince *voevoda* assigned me winter quarters in Ponyevyej. God knows the breathing-spell is well earned!”

“Eat, I beg you.”

“I would eat poison for your sake! I left a part of my ragged fellows in Ponyevyej, a part in Upita, and the most worthy officers I invited to Lyubich as guests. These men will come to beat to you with the forehead.”

“But where did the Lauda men find you?”

“They found me on the way to winter quarters in Ponyevyej. Had I not met them I should have come here.”

“But drink.”

“I would drink even poison for you!”

“Were the Lauda men the first to tell you of my grandfather’s death and the will?”

“They told of the death.—Lord, give light to the soul of my benefactor!—Did you send those men to me?”

“Think not such a thing! I had nothing but mourning and prayer on my mind.”

“They too said the same. They are an arrogant set of homespuns. I wanted to give them a reward for their toil; instead of accepting it, they rose against me and said that the nobility of Orsha might take drink-money, but the Lauda men never. They spoke very foully to me; while listening, I thought to myself: ‘If you don’t want money, then I’ll command to give you a hundred lashes.’”

Panna Aleksandra seized her head. “Jesus Mary! and did you do that?”

Kmita looked at her in astonishment. “Have no fears! I did not, though my soul revolts within me at such trashy nobility, who pretend to be the equal of us. But I thought to myself, ‘They will cry me down without cause in those parts, call me tyrant, and calumniate me before you!’”

“Great is your luck,” said Olenka, drawing a deep breath of relief, “for I should not have been able to look you in the eyes.”

“But how so?”

“That is a petty nobility, but ancient and renowned. My dear grandfather always loved them, and went with them to war. He served all his life with them. In time of peace he received them in his house. That is an old friendship of our family which you must respect. You have moreover a heart, and will not break that sacred harmony in which thus far we have lived.”

“I knew nothing of them at that moment—may I be slain if I did!—but yet I confess that this barefooted nobledom somehow cannot find place in my head. With us a peasant is a peasant, and nobles are all men of good family, who do not sit two on one mare. God knows that such scurvy fellows have nothing to do with the Kmitas nor with the Billeviches, just as a mudfish has nothing to do with a pike, though this is a fish and that also.”

“My grandfather used to say that blood and honor, not wealth, make a man; and these are honorable people, or grandfather would not have made them my guardians.”

Pan Andrei was astonished and opened wide his eyes, “Did your grandfather make all the petty nobility of Lauda guardians over you?”

“He did. Do not frown, for the will of the dead is sacred. It is a wonder to me that the messengers did not mention this.”

“I should have—But that cannot be. There is a number of villages. Will they all discuss about you? Will they discuss me—whether I am to their thinking or not? But jest not, for the blood is storming up in me.”

“Pan Andrei, I am not jesting; I speak the sacred and sincere truth. They will not debate about you; but if you will not repulse them nor show haughtiness, you will capture not only them, but my heart. I, together with them, will thank you all my life—all my life, Pan Andrei.”

Her voice trembled as if in a beseeching request; but he did not let the frown go from his brow, and was gloomy. He did not burst into anger, it is true, though at moments there flew over his face as it were lightnings; but he answered with haughtiness and pride—

“I did not look for this! I respect the will of the dead, and I think the under-chamberlain might have made those petty nobles your guardians till the time of my coming; but when once I have put foot here, no other, save me, will be guardian. Not only those gray coats, but the Radzivills of Birji themselves have nothing in this place to do with guardianship.”

Panna Aleksandra grew serious, and answered after a short silence: “You do ill to be carried away by pride. The conditions laid down by my late grandfather must be either all accepted or all rejected. I see no other way. The men of Lauda will give neither trouble nor annoyance, for they are worthy people and peaceful. Do not suppose that they will be disagreeable. Should any trouble arise, they might say a word; but it is my opinion that all will pass in harmony and peace, and then the guardianship will be as if it had not been.”

Kmita held silence a moment, then waved his hand and said: “It is true that the marriage will end everything. There is nothing to quarrel about. Let them only sit quietly and not force themselves on me; for God knows I will not let my mustache be blown upon. But no more of them. Permit an early wedding; that will be best.”

“It is not becoming to mention that now, in time of mourning.”

“*Ai*, but shall I be forced to wait long?”

“Grandfather himself stated that no longer than half a year.”

“I shall be as dried up as a chip before that time. But let us not be angry. You have begun to look on me as sternly as on an offender. God be good to you, my golden queen! In what am I

to blame if the nature within me is such that when anger against a man takes me I would tear him to pieces, and when it passes I would sew him together again.”

“’Tis a terror to live with such a man,” answered Olenka, more joyously.

“Well, to your health! This is good wine; for me the sabre and wine are the basis. What kind of terror to live with me? You will hold me ensnared with your eyes, and make a slave of me—a man who hitherto would endure no superior. At the present time I chose to go with my own little company in independence rather than bow to the hetman. My golden queen, if anything in me does not please you, overlook it; for I learned manners near cannon and not among ladies, in the tumult of soldiers and not at the lute. Our region is restless, the sabre is never let go from the hand. There, though some outlawry rests on a man, though he be pursued by sentences, ’tis nothing! People respect him if he has the daring of a warrior. For example, my companions who in some other place would have long been in prison are in their fashion worthy persons. Even women among us go in boots, and with sabres lead parties—like Pani Kokosinski, the aunt of my lieutenant. She died a hero’s death; and her nephew in my command has avenged her, though in life he did not love her. Where should we, even of the greatest families, learn politeness? But we know when there is war how to fight, when there is a diet how to talk; and if the tongue is not enough, then the sabre. That’s the position; as a man of such action did the late chamberlain know me, and as such did he choose me for you.”

“I have always followed the will of my grandfather willingly,” answered the lady, dropping her eyes.

“Let me kiss your hand once again, my dear girl! God knows you have come close to my heart. Feeling has so taken hold of me that I know not how I can find that Lyubich which I have not yet seen.”

“I will give you a guide.”

“Oh, I shall find the way. I am used to much pounding around by night. I have an attendant from Ponyevyej who must know the road. And there Kokosinski and his comrades are waiting for me. With us the Kokosinskis are a great family, who use the seal of Pypka. This one was outlawed without reason because he burned the house of Pan Orpisevski, carried off a maiden, and cut down some servants. A good comrade!—Give me your hand once more. I see it is time to go.”

Midnight began to beat slowly on the great Dantzic clock standing in the hall.

“For God’s sake! ’tis time, ’tis time!” cried Kmita. “I may not stay longer. Do you love me, even as much as would go around your finger?”

“I will answer another time. You will visit me, of course?”

“Every day, even if the ground should open under me! May I be slain!”

Kmita rose, and both went to the antechamber. The sleigh was already waiting before the porch; so he enrobed himself in the shuba, and began to take farewell, begging her to return to the chamber, for the cold was flying in from the porch.

“Good night, my dear queen,” said he, “sleep sweetly, for surely I shall not close an eye thinking of your beauty.”

“May you see nothing bad! But better, I’ll give you a man with a light, for there is no lack of wolves near Volmontovich.”

“And am I a lamb to fear wolves? A wolf is a friend to a soldier, for often has he profit from his hand. We have also firearms in the sleigh. Good night, dearest, good night.”

“With God.”

Olenka withdrew, and Pan Kmita went to the porch. But on the way, through the slightly open door of the servants' hall he saw a number of pairs of eyes of maidens who waiting to see him once more had not yet lain down to sleep. To them Pan Andrei sent, soldier-fashion, kisses from his mouth with his hand, and went out. After a while the bell began to jingle, at first loudly, then with a continually decreasing sound, ever fainter and fainter, till at last it was silent.

It grew still in Vodokty, till the stillness amazed Panna Aleksandra. The words of Pan Andrei were sounding in her ears; she heard his laughter yet, heartfelt, joyous; in her eyes stood the rich form of the young man; and now after that storm of words, mirth, and joyousness, such marvellous silence succeeded. The lady bent her ear—could she not hear even one sound more from the sleigh? But no! it was sounding somewhere off in the forest, near Volmontovich. Therefore a mighty sadness seized the maiden, and never had she felt so much alone in the world.

Taking the light, slowly she went to her chamber, and knelt down to say the Lord's Prayer. She began five times before she could finish with proper attention; and when she had finished, her thoughts, as if on wings, chased after that sleigh and that figure sitting within. On one side were pinewoods, pinewoods on the other, in the middle a broad road, and he driving on—Pan Andrei! Here it seemed to Olenka that she saw as before her the blond foretop, the blue eyes, the laughing mouth in which are gleaming teeth as white as the teeth of a young dog. For this dignified lady could hardly deny before her own face that this wild cavalier had greatly pleased her. He alarmed her a little, he frightened her a little, but he attracted her also with that daring, that joyous freedom and sincerity, till she was ashamed that he pleased her, especially with his haughtiness when at mention of the guardians he reared his head like a Turkish warhorse and said, “Even the Radzivils of Birji themselves have nothing to do here with guardianship.”

“That is no dangler around women; that is a true man,” said the lady to herself. “He is a soldier of the kind that my grandfather loved most of all—and he deserved it!”

So meditated the lady; and a happiness undimmed by anything embraced her. It was an unquiet; but that unquiet was something dear. Then she began to undress; the door creaked, and in came Panna Kulvyets, with a candle in her hand.

“You sat terribly long,” said she. “I did not wish to interfere with young people, so that you might talk your fill the first time. He seems a courteous cavalier. But how did he please you?”

Panna Aleksandra gave no answer at first, but barefooted ran up to her aunt, threw herself on her neck, and placing her bright head on her bosom, said with a fondling voice, “Auntie, oh, Auntie!”

“Oho!” muttered the old maid, raising her eyes and the candle toward heaven.

## Chapter III

When Pan Andrei drove up to the mansion at Lyubich, the windows were gleaming, and bustle reached the front yard. The servants, hearing the bell, rushed out through the entrance to greet their lord, for they had learned from his comrades that he would come. They greeted him with submission, kissing his hands and seizing his feet. The old land-steward, Znikis, stood in the entrance holding bread and salt, and beating worship with the forehead; all gazed with uneasiness and curiosity—how would their future lord look? Kmita threw a purse full of thalers on the tray, and asked for his comrades, astonished that no one of them had come forth to meet his proprietary mightiness.

But they could not come forth, for they were then the third hour at the table, entertaining themselves at the cup, and perhaps in fact they had not taken note of the sounding of the bell outside. But when he entered the room, from all breasts a loud shout burst forth: “The heir, the heir has come!” and all his comrades, springing from their places, started toward him with their cups. But he placed his hands on his hips, and laughed at the manner in which they had helped themselves in his house, and had gone to drinking before his arrival. He laughed with increasing heartiness when he saw them advance with tipsy solemnity.

Before the others went the gigantic Pan Yaromir Kokosinski, with the seal of Pypka, a famous soldier and swaggerer, with a terrible scar across his forehead, his eye, and his cheek, with one mustache short, the other long, the lieutenant and friend of Kmita, the “worthy comrade,” condemned to loss of life and honor in Smolensk for stealing a maiden, for murder and arson. At that time war saved him, and the protection of Kmita, who was of the same age; and their lands were adjoining in Orsha till Pan Yaromir had squandered his away. He came up holding in both hands a great-eared bowl filled with *dembniak*.

Next came Ranitski, whose family had arms—Dry Chambers (Suche Komnaty). He was born in the province of Mstislavsk, from which he was an outlaw for killing two noblemen, landowners. One he slew in a duel, the other he shot without an encounter. He had no estate, though he inherited his stepmother’s land on the death of his father. War saved him, too, from the executioner. He was an incomparable hand-to-hand sword-slasher.

The third in order was Rekuts-Leliva, on whom blood did not weigh, save the blood of the enemy. But he had played away, drunk away his substance. For the past three years he had clung to Kmita.

With him came the fourth, also from Smolensk, Pan Uhlik, under sentence of death and dishonor for breaking up a court. Kmita protected him because he played beautifully on the flageolet.

Besides them was Pan Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, in stature the equal of Kokosinski, in strength even his superior; and Zend, a horse-trainer, who knew how to imitate wild beasts and all kinds of birds—a man of uncertain descent, though claiming to be a noble of Courland; being without fortune he trained Kmita’s horses, for which he received an allowance.

These then surrounded the laughing Pan Andrei. Kokosinski raised the eared bowl and intoned:—

“Drink with us, dear host of ours,  
Dear host of ours!

With us thou mightst drink to the grave,  
Drink to the grave!”

Others repeated the chorus; then Kokosinski gave Kmita the eared bowl, and Zend gave Kokosinski a goblet.

Kmita raised high the eared bowl and shouted, “Health to my maiden!”

“Vivat! vivat!” cried all voices, till the windowpanes began to rattle in their leaden fittings.  
“Vivat! the mourning will pass, the wedding will come!”

They began to pour forth questions: “But how does she look? Hei! Yendrus,<sup>9</sup> is she very pretty, or such as you pictured her? Is there another like her in Orsha?”

“In Orsha?” cried Kmita. “In comparison with her you might stop chimneys with our Orsha girls! A hundred thunders! there’s not another such in the world.”

“That’s the kind we wanted for you,” answered Ranitski. “Well, when is the wedding to be?”

“The minute the mourning is over.”

“Oh, fie on the mourning! Children are not born black, but white.”

“When the wedding comes, there will be no mourning. Hurry, Yendrus!”

“Hurry, Yendrus!” all began to exclaim at once.

“The little bannerets of Orsha are crying in heaven for the earth,” said Kokosinski.

“Don’t make the poor little things wait!”

“Mighty lords,” added Rekuts-Leliva, with a thin voice, “at the wedding we’ll drink ourselves drunk as fools.”

“My dear lambs,” said Kmita, “pardon me, or, speaking more correctly, go to a hundred devils, let me look around in my own house.”

“Nonsense!” answered Uhlik. “Tomorrow the inspection, but now all to the table; there is a pair of demijohns there yet with big bellies.”

“We have already made inspection for you. This Lyubich is a golden apple,” said Ranitski.

“A good stable!” cried Zend; “there are two ponies, two splendid hussar horses, a pair of Jmud horses, and a pair of Kalmuks—all in pairs, like eyes in the head. We will look at the mares and colts tomorrow.”

Here Zend neighed like a horse; they wondered at his perfect imitation, and laughed.

“Is there such good order here?” asked Kmita, rejoiced.

“And how the cellar looks!” piped Rekuts; “resinous kegs and mouldy jugs stand like squadrons in ranks.”

“Praise be to God for that! let us sit down at the table.”

“To the table! to the table!”

They had barely taken their places and filled their cups when Ranitski sprang up again: “To the health of the Under-chamberlain Billevich!”

“Stupid!” answered Kmita, “how is that? You are drinking the health of a dead man.”

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<sup>9</sup> The diminutive of Andrei.



“Stupid!” repeated the others. “The health of the master!”

“Your health!”

“May we get good in these chambers!”

Kmita cast his eyes involuntarily along the dining-hall, and he saw on the larch wood walls, blackened by age, a row of stern eyes fixed on him. Those eyes were gazing out of the old portraits of the Billeviches, hanging low, within two ells of the floor, for the wall was low. Above the portraits in a long unbroken row were fixed skulls of the aurochs, of stags, of elks, crowned with their antlers: some, blackened, were evidently very old; others were shining with whiteness. All four walls were ornamented with them.

“The hunting must be splendid, for I see abundance of wild beasts,” said Kmita.

“We will go tomorrow or the day after. We must learn the neighborhood,” answered Kokosinski. “Happy are you, Yendrus, to have a place to shelter your head!”

“Not like us,” groaned Ranitski.

“Let us drink for our solace,” said Rekuts.

“No, not for our solace,” answered Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, “but once more to the health of Yendrus, our beloved captain. It is he, my mighty lords, who has given here in Lyubich an asylum to us poor exiles without a roof above our heads.”

“He speaks justly,” cried a number of voices; “Kulvyets is not so stupid as he seems.”

“Hard is our lot,” piped Rekuts. “Our whole hope is that you will not drive us poor orphans out through your gates.”

“Give us peace,” said Kmita; “what is mine is yours.”

With that all rose from their places and began to take him by the shoulders. Tears of tenderness flowed over those stern drunken faces.

“In you is all our hope, Yendrus,” cried Kokosinski, “Let us sleep even on pea straw; drive us not forth.”

“Give us peace,” repeated Kmita.

“Drive us not forth; as it is, we have been driven—we nobles and men of family,” said Uhlik, plaintively.

“To a hundred fiends with you, who is driving you out? Eat, drink! What the devil do you want?”

“Do not deny us,” said Ranitski, on whose face spots came out as on the skin of a leopard.

“Do not deny us, Andrei, or we are lost altogether.”

Here he began to stammer, put his finger to his forehead as if straining his wit, and suddenly said, looking with sheepish eyes on those present, “Unless fortune changes.”

And all blurted out at once in chorus, “Of course it will change.”

“And we will yet pay for our wrongs.”

“And come to fortune.”

“And to office.”

“God bless the innocent! Our prosperity!”

“Your health!” cried Pan Andrei.

“Your words are holy, Yendrus,” said Kokosinski, placing his chubby face before Kmita. “God grant us improvement of fortune!”

Heaths began to go around, and tufts to steam. All were talking, one interrupting the other; and each heard only himself, with the exception of Rekuts, who dropped his head on his breast and slumbered. Kokosinski began to sing, “She bound the flax in bundles,” noting which Uhlik took a flageolet from his bosom and accompanied him.

Ranitski, a great fencer, fenced with his naked hand against an unseen opponent, repeating in an undertone, “You thus, I thus; you cut, I strike—one, two, three, check!”

The gigantic Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus stared fixedly for some time at Ranitski; at last he waved his hand and said: “You’re a fool! Strike your best, but still you can’t hold your own before Kmita with a sabre.”

“For no one can stand before him; but try yourself.”

“You will not win against me with a pistol.”

“For a ducat a shot.”

“A ducat! But where and at what?”

Ranitski cast his eyes around; at last he cried out, pointing at the skulls, “Between the antlers, for a ducat!”

“For what?” asked Kmita.

“Between the antlers, for two ducats, for three! Bring the pistols!”

“Agreed!” cried Kmita. “Let it be three. Zend, get the pistols!”

All began to shout louder and louder, and bargain among themselves; meanwhile Zend went to the antechamber, and soon returned with pistols, a pouch of bullets, and a horn with powder.

Ranitski grasped for a pistol. “Is it loaded?” asked he.

“Loaded.”

“For three, four, five ducats!” blustered Kmita, drunk.

“Quiet! you will miss, you will miss.”

“I shall hit at that skull between the antlers—one! two!”

All eyes were turned to the strong elk-skull fixed in front of Ranitski. He straightened his arm; the pistol turned in his palm.

“Three!” cried Kmita.

The shot sounded; the room was filled with powder smoke.

“He has missed, he has missed! See where the hole is!” cried Kmita, pointing with his hand at the dark wall from which the bullet had torn out a brighter chip.

“Two shots each time!”

“No; give it to me,” cried Kulvyets.

At that moment the astonished servants ran in at the sound of the shot.

“Away! away!” called Kmita. “One! two! three!”

Again the roar of a shot; this time the pieces fell from the bone.

“But give us pistols too!” shouted all at the same time.

And springing up, they began to pound on the shoulders of their attendants, urging them to hurry. Before a quarter of an hour had passed, the whole room was thundering with shots. The smoke hid the light of the candles and the forms of the men shooting. The report of discharges was accompanied by the voice of Zend, who croaked like a raven, screamed like a falcon, howled like a wolf, bellowed like an aurochs. The whistle of bullets interrupted him; bits flew from the skulls, chips from the wall, and portraits from their frames; in the disorder the Billeviches were shot, and Ranitski, falling into fury, slashed them with his sabre.

The servants, astonished and terrified, stood as if bereft of their senses, gazing with startled eyes on that sport which resembled a Tartar invasion. The dogs began to howl and bark. All in the house were on their feet; in the yard groups of people assembled. The girls of the house ran to the windows, and putting their faces to the panes, flattening their noses, gazed at what was passing within.

Zend saw them at last; he whistled so piercingly that it rang in the ears of all, and then shouted, “Mighty lords! titmice are under the window—titmice!”

“Titmice! titmice!”

“Now for a dance!” roared dissonant voices.

The drunken crowd sprang through the anteroom to the porch. The frost did not sober their steaming heads. The girls, screaming in voices that rose to the sky, ran in every direction through the yard; but the men chased them, and brought each one they seized to the room. After a while they began dancing in the midst of smoke, bits of bone, and chips around the table on which spilled wine lay in pools.

In such fashion did Pan Kmita and his wild company revel in Lyubich.

## Chapter IV

For a number of subsequent days Pan Andrei was at Vodokty daily; and each time he returned more in love, and admired more and more his Olenka. He lauded her to the skies, too, before his companions, till on a certain day he said to them—

“My dear lambs, you will go today to beat with the forehead; then, as we have stipulated with the maiden, we will go to Mitruny to have a sleigh-ride through the forests and look at the third estate. She will entertain us there, and do you bear yourselves decently; for I would cut into hash the man who offended her in anything.”

The cavaliers hurried willingly to prepare, and soon four sleighs were bearing the eager young men to Vodokty. Kmita sat in the first sleigh, which was highly ornamented and had the form of a silvery bear. This sleigh was drawn by three captured Kalmuk horses in variegated harness, in ribbons and peacock feathers, according to the Smolensk fashion, borrowed from more distant neighbors. A young fellow sitting in the neck of the bear drove the horses. Pan Andrei was dressed in a green velvet coat buttoned on golden cords and trimmed with sable, and wore a sable cap with a heron’s feather. He was gladsome, joyous, and spoke to Kokosinski sitting at his side—

“Listen, Kokoshko! I suppose we played tricks wild beyond measure on two evenings, and especially the first, when the skulls and the portraits suffered. But the case of the girls was still worse. The Devil always pushes forward that Zend, and then on whom does he pound out the punishment? On me. I am afraid that people will talk, for in this place my reputation is at stake.”

“Hang yourself on your reputation; it is good for nothing else, just like ours.”

“And who is to blame for that, if not you men? Remember, Kokoshko, they held me for a disturbing spirit in Orsha, and tongues were sharpened on me like knives on a whetstone.”

“But who dragged Pan Tumgrat out in the frost with a horse; who cut up that official, who asked whether men walked on two feet in Orsha or on four? Who hacked the Vyzinskis, father and son? Who broke up the last provincial Diet?”

“I broke up the Diet in Orsha, not somewhere else; that was a home affair. Pan Tumgrat forgave me when he was dying; and as to the others, speak not, for a duel may happen to the most innocent.”

“I have not told all yet; I have not spoken of the trials in the army, of which two are still waiting for you.”

“Not for me, but for you men; for I am to blame only for letting you rob the people. But no more of this! Shut your mouth, Kokoshko, and say nothing to Olenka about the duels, and especially nothing of that shooting at the portraits and of the girls. If it is told, I shall lay the blame on you. I have informed the servants and the girls that if a word is said, I will order belts taken out of their skins.”

“Have yourself shod like a horse, Yendrus, if you are in such dread of your maiden. You were another man in Orsha. I see already that you will go in leading-strings, and there is no good in that. Some ancient philosopher says, ‘If you will not manage Kahna, Kahna will manage you.’ You have given yourself to be tied up in all things.”

“You are a fool, Kokoshko! But as to Olenka you will stand on one foot and then on the other when you put eyes on her, for another woman with such proper intent is not to be found. What is good she will praise in a moment, but the bad she will blame without waiting; for she judges according to virtue, and has in herself a ready measure. The late under-chamberlain reared her in that way. Should you wish to boast of warlike daring before her, and say that you trampled on justice, you will soon be ashamed; for at once she will say, ‘An honorable citizen should not do that; it is against the country.’ She will speak so to you that it will be as if someone had slapped you on the face, and you’ll wonder that you did not know these things yourself. *Tfu!* shame! We have raised fearful disorder, and now must stand open-eyed before virtue and innocence. The worst was those girls—”

“By no means the worst. I have heard that in the villages there are girls of the petty nobility like blood and milk, and probably not stubborn at all.”

“Who told you?” asked Kmita, quickly.

“Who told me? Who, if not Zend? Yesterday while trying the roan steed he rode to Volmontovich; he merely rode along the highway, but he saw many titmice, for they were coming from vespers. ‘I thought,’ said he, ‘that I should fly off the horse, they were so handsome and pretty.’ And whenever he looked at any one of them she showed her teeth directly. And no wonder! for all the grown men of the nobles have gone to Rosseyeni, and it is dreary for the titmice alone.”

Kmita punched his companion in the side with his fist. “Let us go, Kokoshko, some time in the evening—pretend we are astray—shall we?”

“But your reputation?”

“Oh, to the Devil! Shut your mouth! Go alone, if that is the way; but better drop the matter. It would not pass without talk, and I want to live in peace with the nobles here, for the late under-chamberlain made them Olenka’s guardians.”

“You have spoken of that, but I would not believe it. How did he have such intimacy with homespuns?”

“Because he went with them to war, and I heard of this in Orsha, when he said that there was honorable blood in those Lauda men. But to tell the truth, Kokoshko, it was an immediate wonder to me, for it is as if he had made them guards over me.”

“You will yield to them and bow to your boots before dishcloths.”

“First may the pestilence choke them! Be quiet, for I am angry! They will bow to me and serve me. Their quota is ready at every call.”

“Someone else will command this quota. Zend says that there is a colonel here among them—I forget his name—Volodyovski or something? He led them at Shklov. They fought well, it appears, but were combed out there.”

“I have heard of a Volodyovski, a famous warrior—But here is Vodokty in sight.”

“Hei, it is well for people in Jmud; for there is stern order. The old man must have been a born manager. And the house—I see how it looks. The enemy brought fire here seldom, and the people could build.”

“I think that she cannot have heard yet of that outburst in Lyubich,” said Kmita, as if to himself. Then he turned to his comrade: “My Kokoshko, I tell you, and do you repeat it to the others, that you must bear yourselves decently here; and if any man permits himself anything, as God is dear to me, I will cut him up like chopped straw.”

“Well, they have saddled you!”

“Saddled, saddled not, I will cut you up!”

“Don’t look at my Kasia or I’ll cut you to pieces,” said Kokosinski, phlegmatically.

“Fire out thy whip!” shouted Kmita to the driver.

The youth standing in the neck of the silvery bear whirled his whip, and cracked it very adroitly; other drivers followed his example, and they drove with a rattling, quick motion, joyous as at a carnival.

Stepping out of the sleighs, they came first to an antechamber as large as a granary, an unpainted room; thence Kmita conducted them to the dining-hall, ornamented as in Lyubich with skulls and antlers of slain beasts. Here they halted, looking carefully and with curiosity at the door of the adjoining room, by which Panna Aleksandra was to enter. Meanwhile, evidently keeping in mind Kmita’s warning, they spoke with one another in subdued tones, as in a church.

“You are a fellow of speech,” whispered Uhlik to Kokosinski, “you will greet her for us all.”

“I was arranging something to say on the road,” answered Kokosinski, “but I know not whether it will be smooth enough, for Yendrus interrupted my ideas.”

“Let it be as it comes, if with spirit. But here she is!”

Panna Aleksandra entered, halting a little on the threshold, as if in wonder at such a large company. Kmita himself stood for a while as if fixed to the floor in admiration of her beauty; for hitherto he had seen her only in the evening, and in the day she seemed still more beautiful. Her eyes had the color of star-thistles; the dark brows above them were in contrast to the forehead as ebony with white, and her yellow hair shone like a crown on the head of a queen. Not dropping her eyes, she had the self-possessed mien of a lady receiving guests in her own house, with clear face seeming still clearer from the black dress trimmed with ermine. Such a dignified and exalted lady the warriors had not seen; they were accustomed to women of another type. So they stood in a rank as if for the enrolling of a company, and shuffling their feet they also bowed together in a row; but Kmita pushed forward, and kissing the hand of the lady a number of times, said—

“See, my jewel, I have brought you fellow soldiers with whom I fought in the last war.”

“It is for me no small honor,” answered Panna Billevich, “to receive in my house such worthy cavaliers, of whose virtue and excellent qualities I have heard from their commander, Pan Kmita.”

When she had said this she took her skirt with the tips of her fingers, and raising it slightly, courtesied with unusual dignity. Kmita bit his lips, but at the same time he was flushed, since his maiden had spoken with such spirit.

The worthy cavaliers continuing to shuffle their feet, all nudged at the same moment Pan Kokosinski: “Well, begin!”

Kokosinski moved forward one step, cleared his throat, and began as follows: “Serene great mighty lady, under-chamberlain’s daughter—”

“Chief-hunter’s daughter,” corrected Kmita.

“Serene great mighty lady, chief-hunter’s daughter, but to us right merciful benefactress,” repeated Kokosinski—“pardon, your ladyship, if I have erred in the title—”

“A harmless mistake,” replied Panna Aleksandra, “and it lessens in no wise such an eloquent cavalier—”

“Serene great mighty lady, chief-hunter’s daughter, benefactress, and our right merciful lady, I know not what becomes me in the name of all Orsha to celebrate more—the extraordinary beauty and virtue of your ladyship, our benefactress, or the unspeakable happiness of the captain and our fellow-soldier, Pan Kmita; for though I were to approach the clouds, though I were to reach the clouds themselves—I say, the clouds—”

“But come down out of those clouds!” cried Kmita.

With that the cavaliers burst into one enormous laugh; but all at once remembering the command of Kmita, they seized their mustaches with their hands.

Kokosinski was confused in the highest degree. He grew purple, and said, “Do the greeting yourselves, pagans, since you confuse me.”

Panna Aleksandra took again, with the tips of her fingers, her skirt. “I could not follow you gentlemen in eloquence,” said she, “but I know that I am unworthy of those homages which you give me in the name of all Orsha.”

And again she made a courtesy with exceeding dignity, and it was somehow out of place for the Orsha roisterers in the presence of that courtly maiden. They strove to exhibit themselves as men of politeness, but it did not become them. Therefore they began to pull their mustaches, to mutter and handle their sabres, till Kmita said—

“We have come here as if in a carnival, with the thought to take you with us and drive to Mitruny through the forest, as was the arrangement yesterday. The snow-road is firm, and God has given frosty weather.”

“I have already sent Aunt Kulvyets to Mitruny to prepare dinner. But now, gentlemen, wait just a little till I put on something warm.”

Then she turned and went out.

Kmita sprang to his comrades. “Well, my dear lambs, isn’t she a princess? Now, Kokosinski, you said that she had saddled me, and why were you as a little boy before her? Where have you seen her like?”

“There was no call to interrupt me; though I do not deny that I did not expect to address such a person.”

“The late under-chamberlain,” said Kmita, “lived with her most of the time in Kyedani, at the court of the prince *voevoda*, or lived with the Hleboviches; and there she acquired those high manners. But her beauty—what of that? You cannot let your breath go yet.”

“We have appeared as fools,” said Ranitski, in anger; “but the biggest fool was Kokosinski.”

“Traitor! why punch me with your elbow? You should have appeared yourself, with your spotted mouth.”

“Harmony, lambs, harmony!” said Kmita; “I will let you admire, but not wrangle.”

“I would spring into the fire for her,” said Rekuts. “Hew me down, Yendrus, but I’ll not deny that.”

Kmita did not think of cutting down; he was satisfied, twisted his mustache, and gazed on his comrades with triumph. Now Panna Aleksandra entered, wearing a marten-skin cap, under which her bright face appeared still brighter. They went out on the porch.

“Then shall we ride in this sleigh?” asked the lady, pointing to the silvery bear. “I have not seen a more beautiful sleigh in my life.”

“I know not who has used it hitherto, for it was captured. It suits me very well, for on my shield is a lady on a bear. There are other Kmitas who have banners on their shield, but they are descended from Filon Kmita of Charnobil; he was not of the same house from which the great Kmitas are descended.”

“And when did you capture this bear sleigh?”

“Lately, in this war. We poor exiles who have fallen away from fortune have only what war gives us in plunder. But as I serve that lady faithfully, she has rewarded me.”

“May God grant a better; for war rewards one, but presses tears from the whole dear fatherland.”

“God and the hetmans will change that.”

Meanwhile Kmita wrapped Panna Aleksandra in the beautiful sleigh robe of white cloth lined with white wolfskin; then taking his own seat, he cried to the driver, “Move on!” and the horses sprang forward at a run.

The cold wind struck their faces with its rush; they were silent, therefore, and nothing was heard save the wheezing of frozen snow under the runners, the snorting of the horses, their tramp, and the cry of the driver.

At last Pan Andrei bent toward Olenka. “Is it pleasant for you?”

“Pleasant,” answered she, raising her sleeve and holding it to her mouth to ward off the rush of air.

The sleigh dashed on like a whirlwind. The day was bright, frosty; the snow sparkled as if someone were scattering sparks on it. From the white roofs of the cottages, which were like piles of snow, rosy smoke curled in high columns. Flocks of crows from among the leafless trees by the roadside flew before the sleighs with shrill cawing.

About eighty rods from Vodokty they came out on a broad road into dark pinewoods which stood gloomy, hoary, and silent as if sleeping under the thick snow-bunches. The trees flitted before the eye, appeared to be fleeing to some place in the rear of the sleigh; but the sleigh flew on, every moment swiftly, more swiftly, as if the horses had wings. From such driving the head turns, and ecstasy seizes one; it seized Panna Aleksandra. She leaned back, closed her eyes, and yielded completely to the impetus. She felt a sweet powerlessness, and it seemed to her that that boyar of Orsha had taken her by violence: that he is rushing away like a whirlwind, and she growing weak has no strength to oppose or to cry—and they are flying, flying each moment more swiftly. Olenka feels that arms are embracing her; then on her cheek as it were a hot burning stamp. Her eyes will not open, as if in a dream; and they fly, fly.

An inquiring voice first roused the sleeping lady: “Do you love me?”

She opened her eyes. “As my own soul.”

“And I for life and death.”

Again the sable cap of Kmita bent over the marten-skin cap of Olenka. She knew not herself which gave her more delight—the kisses or the magic ride.



And they flew farther, but always through pinewoods, through pinewoods. Trees fled to the rear in whole regiments. The snow was wheezing, the horses snorting; but the man and the maiden were happy.

"I would ride to the end of the world in this way," cried Kmita.

"What are we doing? This is a sin!" whispered Olenka.

"What sin? Let us commit it again."

"Impossible! Mitruny is not far."

"Far or near, 'tis all one!"

And Kmita rose in the sleigh, stretched his arms upward, and began to shout as if in a full breast he could not find place for his joy: "Hei-ha! hei-ha!"

"Hei-hop! hoop-ha!" answered the comrades from the sleighs behind.

"Why do you shout so?" asked the lady.

"Oh, so, from delight! And shout you as well!"

"Hei-ha!" was heard the resonant, thin alto voice.

"O thou, my queen! I fall at thy feet."

"The company will laugh."

After the ecstasy a noisy joyousness seized them, as wild as the driving was wild. Kmita began to sing—

"Look thou, my girl! look through the door,  
To the rich fields!  
Oh, knights from the pinewoods are coming, my mother,  
Oh, that's my fate!  
Look not, my daughter! cover thy eyes,  
With thy white hands,  
For thy heart will spring out of thy bosom  
With them to the war."

"Who taught you such lovely songs?" asked Panna Aleksandra.

"War, Olenka. In the camp we sang them to one another to drive away sadness."

Further conversation was interrupted by a loud calling from the rear sleighs: "Stop! stop! Hei there—stop!"

Pan Andrei turned around in anger, wondering how it came to the heads of his comrades to call and stop him. He saw a few tens of steps from the sleigh a horseman approaching at full speed of the horse.

"As God lives, that is my sergeant Soroka; what can have happened?" said Pan Andrei.

That moment the sergeant coming up, reined his horse on his haunches, and began to speak with a panting voice: "Captain!—"

"What is the matter, Soroka?"

"Upita is on fire; they are fighting!"

"Jesus Mary!" screamed Olenka.

"Have no fear!—Who is fighting?"

“The soldiers with the townspeople. There is a fire on the square! The townspeople are enraged, and they have sent to Ponyevyej for a garrison. But I galloped here to your grace. I can barely draw breath.”

During this conversation the sleighs behind caught up; Kokosinski, Ranitski, Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, Uhlik, Rekuts, and Zend, springing out on the snow, surrounded the speakers with a circle.

“What is the matter?” asked Kmita.

“The townspeople would not give supplies for horses or men, because there was no order for it; the soldiers began to take by force. We besieged the mayor and those who barricaded themselves in the square. Firing was begun, and we burned two houses; at present there is terrible violence, and ringing of bells—”

Kmita’s eyes gleamed with wrath.

“We must go to the rescue!” shouted Kokosinski.

“The rabble are oppressing the army!” cried Ranitski, whose whole face was covered at once with red, white, and dark spots. “Check, check! mighty lords!”

Zend laughed exactly as a screech-owl hoots, till the horses were frightened; and Rekuts raised his eyes and piped, “Strike, whoso believes in God! smoke out the ruffians!”

“Be silent!” roared Kmita, till the woods echoed, and Zend, who stood nearest, staggered like a drunken man. “There is no need of you there, no need of slashing! Sit all of you in two sleighs, leave me the third. Drive back to Lyubich; wait there unless I send for succor.”

“How is that?” asked Ranitski, opposing.

But Pan Andrei laid a hand on his throat, and his eyes gleamed more terribly. “Not a breath out of you!” said he, threateningly.

They were silent; evidently they feared him, though usually on such familiar footing.

“Go back, Olenka, to Vodokty,” said Kmita, “or go for your Aunt Kulvyets to Mitruny. Well, our party was not a success. But it will be quieter there soon; only a few heads will fly off. Be in good health and at rest; I shall be quick to return.”

Having said this, he kissed her hand, and wrapped her in the wolfskin; then he took his seat in the other sleigh, and cried to the driver, “To Upita!”

## Chapter V

A number of days passed, and Kmita did not return; but three men of Lauda came to Vodokty with complaints to the lady. Pakosh Gashtovt from Patsuneli came—the same who was entertaining at his house Pan Volodyovski. He was the patriarch of the village, famed for wealth and six daughters, of whom three had married Butryms, and received each one hundred coined dollars as dowry, besides clothing and cattle. The second who came was Kassyan Butrym, who remembered Batory well, and with him the son-in-law of Pakosh, Yuzva Butrym; the latter, though in the prime of life—he was not more than fifty years old—did not go to Rossyeni to the registry of the general militia, for in the Cossack wars a cannonball had torn off his foot. He was called on this account Ankle-foot, or Yuzva Footless. He was a terrible man, with the strength of a bear, and great sense, but harsh, surly, judging men severely. For this reason he was feared somewhat in the capitals, for he could not pardon either himself or others. He was dangerous also when in liquor; but that happened rarely.

These men came, then, to the lady, who received them graciously, though she divined at once that they had come to make complaints, and wanted to hear something from her regarding Pan Kmita.

“We wish to pay our respects to Pan Kmita, but perhaps he has not come back yet from Upita,” said Pakosh; “so we have come to inquire, our dear darling, when it will be possible to see him.”

“I think the only hindrance is that he is not here,” answered the lady. “He will be glad with his whole soul to see you, my guardians, for he has heard much good concerning you—in old times from my grandfather, and lately from me.”

“If only he does not receive us as he received the Domasheviches when they went to him with tidings of the colonel’s death,” muttered Yuzva, sullenly.

The lady listened to the end, and answered at once with animation: “Be not unjust about that. Perhaps he did not receive them politely enough, but he has confessed his fault in this house. It should be remembered too that he was returning from a war in which he endured much toil and suffering. We must not wonder at a soldier, even if he snaps at his own, for warriors have tempers like sharp swords.”

Pakosh Gashtovt, who wished always to be in accord with the whole world, waved his hand and said: “We did not wonder, either. A beast snaps at a beast when it sees one suddenly; why should not a man snap at a man? We will go to old Lyubich to greet Pan Kmita, so that he may live with us, go to war and to the wilderness, as the late under-chamberlain used to do.”

“Well, tell us, dear darling, did he please you or did he not please you?” asked Kassyan Butrym. “It is our duty to ask this.”

“God reward you for your care. Pan Kmita is an honorable cavalier, and even if I had found something against him it would not be proper to speak of it.”

“But have you not seen something, our dearest soul?”

“Nothing! Besides, no one has the right to judge him here, and God save us from showing distrust. Let us rather thank God.”

“Why thank too early? When there will be something to thank for, then thank; if not, then not thank,” answered the sullen Yuzva, who, like a genuine man of Jmud, was very cautious and foreseeing.

“Have you spoken about the marriage?” inquired Kassyan.

Olenka dropped her eyes: “Pan Kmita wishes it as early as possible.”

“That’s it! and why shouldn’t he wish it?” muttered Yuzva; “he is not a fool! What bear is it that does not want honey from a tree? But why hurry? Is it not better to see what kind of man he is? Father Kassyan, tell what you have on your tongue; do not doze like a hare at midday under a ridge.”

“I am not dozing, I am only turning in my head what to say,” answered the old man. “The Lord Jesus has said, ‘As Kuba [Jacob] is to God, so will God be to Kuba.’ We wish no ill to Pan Kmita, if he wishes no ill to us—which God grant, amen.”

“If he will be to our thinking,” said Yuzva.

Panna Billevich frowned with her falcon brows, and said with a certain haughtiness:

“Remember that we are not receiving a servant. He will be master here; and his will must have force, not ours. He will succeed you in the guardianship.”

“Does that mean that we must not interfere?” asked Yuzva.

“It means that you are to be friends with him, as he wishes to be a friend of yours. Moreover he is taking care of his own property here, which each man manages according to his wish. Is not this true, Father Pakosh?”

“The sacred truth,” answered the old man of Patsuneli.

Yuzva turned again to old Butrym. “Do not doze, Father Kassyan!”

“I am not dozing, I am only looking into my mind.”

“Then tell what you see there.”

“What do I see? This is what I see: Pan Kmita is a man of great family, of high blood, and we are small people. Moreover he is a soldier of fame; he alone opposed the enemy when all had dropped their hands—God give as many as possible of such men! But he has a company that is worthless. Pan Pakosh, my neighbor, what have you heard about them from the Domasheviches? That they are all dishonored men, against whom outlawry has been declared, infamous and condemned, with declarations and trials hanging over them, children of the hangman. They were grievous to the enemy, but more grievous to their own people. They burned, they plundered, they rioted; that is what they did. They may have slain people in duels or carried out executions—that happens to honest men; but they have lived in pure Tartar fashion, and long ago would have been rotting in prison but for the protection of Pan Kmita, who is a powerful lord. He favors and protects them, and they cling to him just as flies do in summer to a horse. Now they have come hither, and it is known to all what they are doing. The first day at Lyubich they fired out of pistols—and at what?—at the portraits of the dead Billeviches, which Pan Kmita should not have permitted, for the Billeviches are his benefactors.”

Olenka covered her eyes with her hands. “It cannot be! it cannot be!”

“It can, for it has been. He let them shoot at his benefactors, with whom he was to enter into relationship; and then they dragged the girls of the house into the room for debauchery. *Tfu!* an offence against God! That has never been among us! The first day they began shooting and dissoluteness—the first day!”

Here old Kassyan grew angry, and fell to striking the floor with his staff. On Olenka's face were dark blushes, and Yuzva said—

“And Pan Kmita's troops in Upita, are they better? Like officers, like men. Some people stole Pan Sollohub's cattle; it is said they were Pan Kmita's men. Some persons struck down on the road peasants of Meizagol who were drawing pitch. Who did this? They, the same soldiers. Pan Sollohub went to Pan Hlebovich for satisfaction, and now there is violence in Upita again. All this is in opposition to God. It used to be quiet here as in no other place, and now one must load a gun for the night and stand guard; but why? Because Pan Kmita and his company have come.”

“Father Yuzva, do not talk so,” cried Olenka.

“But how must I talk? If Pan Kmita is not to blame, why does he keep such men, why does he live with such men? Great mighty lady, tell him to dismiss them or give them up to the hangman, for otherwise there will be no peace. Is it a thing heard of to shoot at portraits and commit open debauchery? Why, the whole neighborhood is talking of nothing else.”

“What have I to do?” asked Olenka. “They may be evil men, but he fought the war with them. If he will dismiss them at my request?”

“If he does not dismiss them,” muttered Yuzva, in a low voice, “he is the same as they.”

With this the lady's blood began to boil against those men, murderers and profligates.

“Let it be so. He must dismiss them. Let him choose me or them. If what you say is true—and I shall know today if it is true—I shall not forgive them either the shooting or the debauchery. I am alone and a weak orphan, they are an armed crowd; but I do not fear them.”

“We will help you,” said Yuzva.

“In God's name,” continued Olenka, more and more excited, “let them do what they like, but not here in Lyubich. Let them be as they like—that is their affair, their necks' answer; but let them not lead away Pan Kmita to debauchery. Shame and disgrace! I thought they were awkward soldiers, but now I see that they are vile traitors, who stain both themselves and him. That's the truth! Wickedness was looking out of their eyes; but I, foolish woman, did not recognize it. Well, I thank you, fathers, for opening my eyes on these Judases. I know what it beseems me to do.”

“That's it!” said old Kassyan. “Virtue speaks through you, and we will help you.”

“Do not blame Pan Kmita, for though he has offended against good conduct he is young; and they tempt him, they lead him away, they urge him to license with example, and bring disgrace to his name. This is the condition; as I live, it will not last long.”

Wrath roused Olenka's heart more and more, and indignation at the comrades of Pan Kmita increased as pain increases in a wound freshly given; for terribly wounded in her were the love special to woman and that trust with which she had given her whole unmixed feeling to Pan Andrei. She was ashamed, for his sake and for her own, and anger and internal shame sought above all guilty parties.

The nobles were glad when they saw their colonel's granddaughter so terrible and ready for unyielding war against the disturbers from Orsha.

She spoke on with sparkling eyes: “True, they are to blame; and they must leave not only Lyubich, but the whole countryside.”

“Our heart, we do not blame Pan Kmita,” said old Kassyan. “We know that they tempt him. Not through bitterness nor venom against him have we come, but through regret that he keeps

near his person revellers. It is evident, of course, that being young he is foolish. Even Pan Hlebovich the starosta was foolish when he was young, but now he keeps us all in order.”

“And a dog,” said the mild old man from Patsuneli, with a voice of emotion—“if you go with a young one to the field, won’t the fool instead of running after the game fall about your feet, begin to play, and tug you by the skirts?”

Olenka wanted to say something, but suddenly she burst into tears.

“Do not cry,” said Yuzva Butrym.

“Do not cry, do not cry,” repeated the two old men.

They tried to comfort her, but could not. After they had gone, care, anxiety, and as it were an offended feeling against them and against Pan Andrei remained. It pained the proud lady more and more deeply that she had to defend, justify, and explain him. But the men of that company! The delicate hands of the lady clinched at thought of them. Before her eyes appeared as if present the faces of Pan Kokosinski, Uhlik, Zend, Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, and the others; and she discovered what she had not seen at first, that they were shameless faces, on which folly, licentiousness, and crime had all fixed their stamps in common. A feeling of hatred foreign to Olenka began to seize her as a rattling fire seizes fuel; but together with this outburst offence against Pan Kmita increased every minute.

“Shame, disgrace,” whispered the maiden, with pallid lips, “that yesterday he went from me to house-wenchess!” and she felt herself overborne. A crushing burden stopped the breath in her breast.

It was growing raw out of doors. Panna Aleksandra walked in the room with hurried step, but anger was seething in her soul without ceasing. Hers was not the nature to endure the persecutions of fate without defending herself against them. There was knightly blood in the girl. She wanted straightway to begin a struggle with that band of evil spirits—straightway. But what remained to her? Nothing, save tears and the prayer that Pan Andrei would send to the four winds those shame-bringing comrades. But if he will not do that—And she did not dare to think more of the question.

The meditations of the lady were interrupted by a youth who brought an armful of juniper sticks to the chimney, and throwing them down at the side of the hearth, began to pull out the coals from under the smouldering ashes. Suddenly a decision came to Olenka’s mind.

“Kostek!” said she, “sit on horseback for me at once, and ride to Lyubich. If the master has returned, ask him to come here; but if he is not there, let the manager, old Znikis, mount with thee and come straight to me, and quickly.”

The youth threw some bits of pitch on the coals and covered them with clumps of dry juniper. Bright flames began to crackle and snap in the chimney. It grew somewhat lighter in Olenka’s mind.

“Perhaps the Lord God will change this yet,” thought she to herself, “and maybe it is not so bad as the guardians have said.”

After a while she went to the servants’ room to sit, according to the immemorial custom of the Billeviches, with the maidens to oversee the spinning and sing hymns.

In two hours Kostek entered, chilled from cold. “Znikis is in the antechamber,” said he. “The master is not in Lyubich.”

The lady rose quickly. The manager in the antechamber bowed to her feet. “But how is your health, serene heiress? God give you the best.”

They passed into the dining-hall; Znikis halted at the door.

“What is to be heard among you people?” asked the lady.

The peasant waved his hand. “Well, the master is not there.”

“I know that, because he is in Upita. But what is going on in the house?”

“Well!—”

“Listen, Znikis, speak boldly; not a hair will fall from thy head. People say that the master is good, but his companions wild?”

“If they were only wild, serene lady!—”

“Speak candidly.”

“But, lady, if it is not permitted me—I am afraid—they have forbidden me.”

“Who has forbidden?”

“My master.”

“Has he?” asked the lady.

A moment of silence ensued. She walked quickly in the room, with compressed lips and frowning brow. He followed her with his eyes. Suddenly she stopped before him.

“To whom dost thou belong?”

“To the Billeviches. I am from Vodokty, not from Lyubich.”

“Thou wilt return no more to Lyubich; stay here. Now I command thee to tell all thou knowest.”

The peasant cast himself on his knees at the threshold where he was standing. “Serene lady, I do not want to go back; the day of judgment is there. They are bandits and cutthroats; in that place a man is not sure of the day nor the hour.”

Panna Billevich staggered as if stricken by an arrow. She grew very pale, but inquired calmly, “Is it true that they fired in the room, at the portraits?”

“Of course they fired! And they dragged girls into their rooms, and every day the same debauchery. In the village is weeping, at the house Sodom and Gomorrah. Oxen are killed for the table, sheep for the table. The people are oppressed. Yesterday they killed the stable man without cause.”

“Did they kill the stableman?”

“Of course. And worst of all, they abused the girls. Those at the house are not enough for them; they chase others through the village.”

A second interval of silence followed. Hot blushes came out on the lady’s face, and did not leave it.

“When do they look for the master’s return?”

“They do not know, my lady. But I heard, as they were talking to one another, that they would have to start tomorrow for Upita with their whole company. They gave command to have horses ready. They will come here and beg my lady for attendants and powder, because they need both there.”

“They are to come here? That is well. Go now, Znikis, to the kitchen. Thou wilt return to Lyubich no more.”

“May God give you health and happiness!”

Panna Aleksandra had learned what she wanted, and she knew how it behooved her to act.

The following day was Sunday. In the morning, before the ladies had gone to church, Kokosinski, Uhlik, Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, Ranitski, Rekuts, and Zend arrived, followed by the servants at Lyubich, armed and on horseback, for the cavaliers had decided to march to Upita with succor for Kmita.

The lady went out to meet them calmly and haughtily, altogether different from the woman who had greeted them for the first time a few days before. She barely motioned with her head in answer to their humble bows; but they thought that the absence of Pan Kmita made her cautious, and took no note of the real situation.

Kokosinski stepped forward more confidently than the first time, and said—

“Serene great mighty lady, chief-hunter’s daughter, benefactress; we have come in here on our way to Upita to fall at the feet of our lady benefactress and beg for assistance, such as powder, and that you would permit your servants to mount their horses and go with us. We will take Upita by storm, and let out a little blood for the basswood-barks.”

“It is a wonder to me,” answered Panna Billevich, “that you are going to Upita, when I heard myself how Pan Kmita commanded you to remain quietly in Lyubich, and I think that it beseems him to command and you to obey, as subordinates.”

The cavaliers hearing these words looked at one another in astonishment. Zend pursed out his lips as if about to whistle in bird fashion. Kokosinski began to draw his broad palm over his head.

“As true as life,” said he, “a man would think that you were speaking to Pan Kmita’s baggage-boys. It is true that we were to sit at home; but since the fourth day is passing and Yendrus has not come, we have reached the conviction that some serious tumult may have risen, in which our sabres, too, would be of service.”

“Pan Kmita did not go to a battle, but to punish turbulent soldiers, and punishment may meet you also if you go against orders. Besides, a tumult and slashing might come to pass more quickly if you were there.”

“It is hard to deliberate with your ladyship. We ask only for powder and men.”

“Men and powder I will not give. Do you hear me, sirs!”

“Do I hear correctly?” asked Kokosinski. “How is this? You will not give? You will spare in the rescue of Kmita, of Yendrus? Do you prefer that some evil should meet him?”

“The greatest evil that can meet him is your company.”

Here the maiden’s eyes began to flash lightning, and raising her head she advanced some steps toward the cutthroats, and they pushed back before her in astonishment.

“Traitors!” said she, “you, like evil spirits, tempt him to sin; you persuade him on. But I know you—your profligacy, your lawless deeds. Justice is hunting you; people turn away from you, and on whom does the shame fall? On him, through you who are outlaws, and infamous.”

“Hei, by God’s wounds, comrades, do you hear?” cried Kokosinski. “Hei, what is this? Are we not sleeping, comrades?”

Panna Billevich advanced another step, and pointing with her hand to the door, said, “Be off out of here!”



The ruffians grew as pale as corpses, and no one of them found a word in answer. But their teeth began to gnash, their hands to quiver toward their sword-hilts, and their eyes to shoot forth malign gleams. After a moment, however, their spirits fell through alarm. That house too was under the protection of the powerful Kmita; that insolent lady was his betrothed. In view of this they gnawed their rage in silence, and she stood unflinchingly with flashing eyes pointing to the door with her finger.

At last Kokosinski spoke in a voice broken with rage: "Since we are received here so courteously, nothing remains to us but to bow to the polished lady and go—with thanks for the entertainment."

Then he bowed, touching the floor with his cap in purposed humility; after him all the others bowed, and went out in order. When the door closed after the last man, Olenka fell exhausted into the armchair, panting heavily, for she had not so much strength as daring.

They assembled in counsel in front of the entrance near their horses, but no man wanted to speak first. At last Kokosinski said, "Well, dear lambs, what's that?"

"Do you feel well?"

"Do you?"

"*Ei!* but for Kmita," said Ranitski, rubbing his hands convulsively, "we would revel with this lady here in our own fashion."

"Go meet Kmita," piped Rekuts.

Ranitski's face was covered completely with spots, like the skin of a leopard. "I'll meet him and you too, you reveller, wherever it may please you!"

"That's well!" cried Rekuts.

Both rushed to their sabres, but the gigantic Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus thrust himself between. "See this fist!" said he, shaking as it were a loaf of bread; "see this fist!" repeated he. "I'll smash the head of the first man who draws his sabre." And he looked now at one and now at the other, as if asking in silence who wished to try first; but they, addressed in such fashion, were quiet at once.

"Kulvyets is right," said Kokosinski. "My dear lambs, we need agreement now more than ever. I would advise to go with all speed to Kmita, so that she may not see him first, for she would describe us as devils. It is well that none of us snarled at her, though my own hands and tongue were itching. If she is going to rouse him against us, it is better for us to rouse him first. God keep him from leaving us! Straightway the people here would surround us, hunt us down like wolves."

"Nonsense!" said Ranitski. "They will do nothing to us. There is war now; are there few men straggling through the world without a roof, without bread? Let us collect a party for ourselves, dear comrades, and let all the tribunals pursue us. Give your hand, Rekuts, I forgive you."

"I should have cut off your ears," piped Rekuts; "but let us be friends, a common insult has met us."

"To order out cavaliers like us!" said Kokosinski.

"And me, in whom is senatorial blood!" added Ranitski.

"Honorable people, men of good birth!"

"Soldiers of merit!"

“And exiles!”

“Innocent orphans!”

“I have boots lined with wool, but my feet are freezing,” said Kulvyets. “Shall we stand like minstrels in front of this house? They will not bring us out heated beer. We are of no use here; let us mount and ride away. Better send the servants home, for what good are they without guns and weapons? We will go on alone.”

“To Upita!”

“To Yendrus, our worthy friend! We will make complaint before him.”

“If only we do not miss him.”

“To horse, comrades, to horse!”

They mounted, and moved on at a walk, chewing their anger and shame. Outside the gate Ranitski, whom rage still held as it were by the throat, turned and threatened the house with his fist. “*Ei!* I want blood! I want blood!”

“If we can only raise a quarrel between her and Kmita,” said Kokosinski, “we shall go through this place yet with fire.”

“That may happen.”

“God aid us!” added Uhlik.

“Oh, pagan’s daughter, mad heath-hen!”

Railing thus, and enraged at the lady, snarling sometimes too at themselves, they reached the forest. They had barely passed the first trees when an enormous flock of crows whirled above their heads. Zend began at once to croak in a shrill voice; thousands of voices answered him from above. The flock came down so low that the horses began to be frightened at the sound of their wings.

“Shut your mouth!” cried Ranitski to Zend. “You’ll croak out misfortune on us yet. Those crows are circling over us as over carrion.”

The others laughed. Zend croaked continually. The crows came down more and more, and the party rode as if in the midst of a storm. Fools! they could not see the ill omen.

Beyond the forest appeared Volmontovichi, toward which the cavaliers moved at a trot, for the frost was severe; they were very cold, and it was still a long way to Upita, but they had to lessen their speed in the village itself. In the broad road of the village the space was full of people, as is usual on Sundays. The Butryms, men and women, were returning on foot and in sleighs from Mitruny after receiving indulgence. The nobles looked on these unknown horsemen, half guessing who they were. The young women, who had heard of their license in Lyubich and of the notorious public sinners whom Pan Kmita had brought, looked at them with still greater curiosity. But they rode proudly in imposing military posture, with velvet coats which they had captured, in panther-skin caps, and on sturdy horses. It was to be seen that they were soldiers by profession—their gestures frequent and haughty, their right hands resting on their hips, their heads erect. They gave the way to no man, advancing in a line and shouting from time to time, “Out of the road!” One or another of the Butryms looked at them with a frown, but yielded; the party chatted among themselves about the village.

“See, gentlemen,” said Kokosinski, “what sturdy fellows there are here; one after another like an aurochs, and each with the look of a wolf.”

“If it were not for their stature and swords, they might be taken for common trash.”

“Just look at those sabres—regular tearers, as God is dear to me!” remarked Ranitski. “I would like to make a trial with some of those fellows.” Here he began to fence with his hand: “He thus, I thus! He thus, I thus—and check!”

“You can easily have that delight for yourself,” said Rekuts. “Not much is needed with them for a quarrel.”

“I would rather engage with those girls over there,” said Zend, all at once.

“They are candles, not girls!” cried Rekuts, with enthusiasm.

“What do you say—candles? Pine-trees! And each one has a face as if painted with crocus.”

“It is hard to sit on a horse at such a sight.”

Talking in this style, they rode out of the village and moved on again at a trot. After half an hour’s ride they came to a public house called Dola, which was halfway between Volmontovich and Mitruny. The Butryms, men and women, generally stopped there going to and returning from church, in order to rest and warm themselves in frosty weather. So the cavaliers saw before the door a number of sleighs with pea-straw spread in them, and about the same number of saddle-horses.

“Let us drink some *gorailka*, for it is cold,” said Kokosinski.

“It wouldn’t hurt,” answered the others, in a chorus.

They dismounted, left their horses at the posts, and entered the drinking-hall, which was enormous and dark. They found there a crowd of people—nobles sitting on benches or standing in groups before the water-pail, drinking warmed beer, and some of them a punch made of mead, butter, *vudka*, and spice. Those were the Butryms themselves, stalwart and gloomy; so sparing of speech that in the room scarcely any conversation was heard. All were dressed in gray overcoats of homemade or coarse cloth from Rossyeni, lined with sheepskin; they had leather belts, with sabres in black iron scabbards. By reason of that uniformity of dress they had the appearance of soldiers. But they were old men of sixty or youths under twenty. These had remained at home for the winter threshing; the others, men in the prime of life, had gone to Rossyeni.

When they saw the cavaliers of Orsha, they drew back from the water-bucket and began to examine them. Their handsome soldierly appearance pleased that warlike nobility; after a while, too, someone dropped the word—

“Are they from Lyubich?”

“Yes, that is Pan Kmita’s company!”

“Are these they?”

“Of course.”

The cavaliers drank *gorailka*, but the punch had a stronger odor. Kokosinski caught it first, and ordered some. They sat around a table then; and when the steaming kettle was brought they began to drink, looking around the room at the men and blinking, for the place was rather dark. The snow had blocked the windows; and the broad, low opening of the chimney in which the fire was burning was hidden completely by certain figures with their backs to the crowd.

When the punch had begun to circulate in the veins of the cavaliers, bearing through their bodies an agreeable warmth, their cheerfulness, depressed by the reception at Vodokty,

sprang up again; and all at once Zend fell to cawing like a crow, so perfectly that all faces were turned toward him.

The cavaliers laughed, and the nobles, enlivened, began to approach, especially the young men—powerful fellows with broad shoulders and plump cheeks. The figures sitting at the chimney turned their faces to the room, and Rekuts was the first to see that they were women.

Zend closed his eyes and cawed, cawed. Suddenly he stopped, and in a moment those present heard the cry of a hare choked by a dog; the hare cried in the last agony, weaker and lower, then screamed in despair, and was silent for the ages; in place of it was heard the deep bellow of a furious stag as loud as in springtime.

The Butryms were astonished. Though Zend had stopped, they expected to hear something again; but they heard only the piping voice of Rekuts—

“Those are titmice sitting near the chimney!”

“That is true!” replied Kokosinski, shading his eyes with his hand.

“As true as I live!” added Uhlik, “but it is so dark in the room that I could not see them.”

“I am curious. What are they doing?”

“Maybe they have come to dance.”

“But wait; I will ask,” said Kokosinski. And raising his voice, he asked, “My dear women, what are you doing there at the chimney?”

“We are warming our feet,” answered thin voices.

Then the cavaliers rose and approached the hearth. There were sitting at it, on a long bench, about ten women, old and young, holding their bare feet on a log lying by the fire. On the other side of the log their shoes wet from the snow were drying.

“So you are warming your feet?” asked Kokosinski.

“Yes, for they are cold.”

“Very pretty feet,” piped Rekuts, inclining toward the log.

“But keep at a distance,” said one of the women.

“I prefer to come near. I have a sure method, better than fire, for cold feet; which is—only dance with a will, and the cold flies away.”

“If to dance, then dance,” said Uhlik. “We want neither fiddles nor bass-viols. I will play for you on the flageolet.”

Taking from its leather case which hung near his sabre the ever-present flageolet, he began to play; and the cavaliers, pushing forward with dancing movement to the maidens, sought to draw them from the benches. The maidens appeared to defend themselves, but more with their voices than their hands, for in truth they were not greatly opposed. Maybe the men, too, would have been willing in their turn; for against dancing on Sunday after Mass and during the carnival no one would protest greatly. But the reputation of the “company” was already too well known in Volmontovichi; therefore first the gigantic Yuzva Butrym, he who had but one foot, rose from the bench, and approaching Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, caught him by the breast, held him, and said with sullen voice—

“If your grace wants dancing, then dance with me.”

Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus blinked, and began to move his mustaches convulsively. "I prefer a girl," said he; "I can attend to you afterward."

Meanwhile Ranitski ran up with face already spotted, for he sniffed a quarrel. "Who are you, road-blocker?" asked he, grasping his sabre.

Uhlik stopped playing, and Kokosinski shouted, "Hei, comrades! together, together!"

But the Butryms were already behind Yuzva; sturdy old men and great youths began to assemble, growling like bears.

"What do you want? Are you looking for bruises?" asked Kokosinski.

"No talk! Be off out of here!" said Yuzva, stolidly.

Then Ranitski, whose interest it was that an hour should not pass without a fight, struck Yuzva with the hilt of his sword in the breast, so that it was heard in the whole room, and cried, "Strike!"

Rapiers glittered; the scream of women was heard, the clatter of sabres, uproar and disturbance. Then the gigantic Yuzva pushed out of the crowd, took a roughly hewn bench from beside a table, and raising it as though it were a light strip of wood, shouted, "Make way! make way!"

Dust rose from the floor and hid the combatants; but in the confusion groans were soon heard.

## Chapter VI

In the evening of that same day Pan Kmita came to Vodokty, at the head of a hundred and some tens of men whom he had brought from Upita so as to send them to Kyedani; for he saw himself that there were no quarters in such a small place for a large number of soldiers, and when the townspeople had been brought to hunger the soldiers would resort to violence, especially soldiers who could be held in discipline only by fear of a leader. A glance at Kmita's volunteers was enough to convince one that it would be difficult to find men of worse character in the whole Commonwealth. Kmita could not have others. After the defeat of the grand hetman, the enemy deluged the whole country. The remnants of the regular troops of the Lithuanian quota withdrew for a certain time to Birji and Kyedani, in order to rally there. The nobility of Smolensk, Vityebsk, Polotsk, Mstislavsk, and Minsk either followed the army or took refuge in the provinces still unoccupied. Men of superior courage among the nobility assembled at Grodno around the under-treasurer, Pan Gosyevski; for the royal proclamation summoning the general militia appointed that as the place of muster. Unfortunately few obeyed the proclamation, and those who followed the voice of duty assembled so negligently that for the time being no one offered real resistance save Kmita, who fought on his own account, animated more by knightly daring than patriotism. It is easy to understand that in the absence of regular troops and nobility he took such men as he could find, consequently men who were not drawn by duty to the hetmans and who had nothing to lose. Therefore there gathered around him vagrants without a roof and without a home, men of low rank, runaway servants from the army, foresters grown wild, serving-men from towns, or scoundrels pursued by the law. These expected to find protection under a flag and win profit from plunder. In the iron hands of Kmita they were turned into daring soldiers, daring even to madness; and if Kmita had been prudent he might have rendered high service to the Commonwealth. But Kmita was insubordinate himself, his spirit was always seething; besides, whence could he take provisions and arms and horses, since being a partisan he did not hold even a commission, and could not look for any aid from the treasury of the Commonwealth? He took therefore with violence—often from the enemy, often from his own—could suffer no opposition, and punished severely for the least cause.

In continual raids, struggles, and attacks he had grown wild, accustomed to bloodshed in such a degree that no common thing could move the heart within him, which however was good by nature. He was in love with people of unbridled temper who were ready for anything. Soon his name had an ominous sound. Smaller divisions of the enemy did not dare to leave the towns and the camps in those regions where the terrible partisan was raging. But the townspeople ruined by war feared his men little less than they did the enemy, especially when the eye of Kmita in person was not resting on them. When command was taken by his officers, Kokosinski, Uhlik, Kulvyets, Zend, and particularly by Ranitski—the wildest and most cruel of them all, though a man of high lineage—it might always be asked, Are those defenders or ravagers? Kmita at times punished his own men without mercy when something happened not according to his humor; but more frequently he took their part, regardless of the rights, tears, and lives of people. His companions with the exception of Rekuts, on whom innocent blood was not weighing, persuaded the young leader to give the reins more and more to his turbulent nature. Such was Kmita's army. Just then he had taken his rabble from Upita to send it to Kyedani.

When they stopped in front of the house at Vodokty, Panna Aleksandra was frightened as she saw them through the window, they were so much like robbers. Each one had a different

outfit: some were in helmets taken from the enemy; others in Cossack caps, in hoods and Polish caps; some in faded overcoats, others in sheepskin coats; their arms were guns, spears, bows, battle-axes; their horses, poor and worn, were covered with trappings, Polish, Russian, or Turkish.

Olenka was set at rest only when Pan Andrei, gladsome and lively as ever, entered the room and rushed straight to her hands with incredible quickness.

And she, though resolved in advance to receive him with dignity and coldness, was still unable to master the joy which his coming had caused her. Feminine cunning too may have played a certain part, for it was necessary to tell Pan Andrei about turning his comrades out of doors; therefore the clever girl wished to incline him first to her side. And in addition he greeted her so sincerely, so lovingly that the remnant of her offended feeling melted like snow before a blaze.

“He loves me! there is no doubt about that,” thought she.

And he said: “I so longed for you that I was ready to burn all Upita if I could only fly to you the sooner. May the frost pinch them, the basswood barks!”

“I too was uneasy lest it might come to a battle there. Praise be to God that you have returned!”

“And such a battle! The soldiers had begun to pull around the basswood barks a little—”

“But you quieted them?”

“This minute I will tell you how it all happened, my jewel; only let me rest a little, for I am wearied. *Ei!* it is warm here. It is delightful in this Vodokty, just as in paradise. A man would be glad to sit here all his life, look in those beautiful eyes, and never go away—But it would do no harm, either, to drink something warm, for there is terrible frost outside.”

“Right away I will have wine heated, with eggs, and bring it myself.”

“And give my gallows’ birds some little keg of *gorailka*, and give command to let them into the stable, so that they may warm themselves a little even from the breath of the cattle. They have coats lined with wind, and are terribly chilled.”

“I will spare nothing on them, for they are your soldiers.”

While speaking she smiled, so that it grew bright in Kmita’s eyes, and she slipped out as quietly as a cat to have everything prepared in the servants’ hall.

Kmita walked up and down in the room, rubbing the top of his head, then twirling his young mustache, thinking how to tell her of what had been done in Upita.

“The pure truth must be told,” muttered he; “there is no help for it, though the company may laugh because I am here in leading-strings.” And again he walked, and again he pushed the foretop on his forehead; at last he grew impatient that the maiden was so long in returning.

Meanwhile a boy brought in a light, bowed to the girdle, and went out. Directly after the charming lady of the house entered, bringing with both hands a shining tin tray, and on it a small pot, from which rose the fragrant steam of heated Hungarian, and a goblet of cut glass with the escutcheon of the Kmitas. Old Billevich got this goblet in his time from Andrei’s father, when at his house as a guest.

Pan Andrei when he saw the lady sprang toward her. “Hei!” cried he, “both hands are full, you will not escape me.”

He bent over the tray, and she drew back her head, which was defended only by the steam which rose from the pot. "Traitor! desist, or I will drop the drink."

But he feared not the threat; afterward he cried, "As God is in heaven, from such delight a man might lose his wits!"

"Then you lost your wit long ago. Sit down."

He sat down obediently; she poured the drink into the goblet.

"Tell me how you sentenced the guilty in Upita."

"In Upita? Like Solomon!"

"Praise to God for that! It is on my heart that all in this region should esteem you as a steady and just man. How was it then?"

Kmita took a good draught of the drink, drew breath, and began—

"I must tell from the beginning. It was thus: The townspeople with the mayor spoke of an order for provisions from the grand hetman or the under-treasurer. 'You gentlemen,' said they to the soldiers, 'are volunteers, and you cannot levy contributions. We will give you quarters for nothing, and provisions we will give when it is shown that we shall be paid.'"

"Were they right, or were they not?"

"They were right according to law; but the soldiers had sabres, and in old fashion whoever has a sabre has the best argument. They said then to the basswood barks, 'We will write orders on your skins immediately.' And straightway there rose a tumult. The mayor and the people barricaded themselves in the street, and my men attacked them; it did not pass without firing. The soldiers, poor fellows, burned a couple of barns to frighten the people, and quieted a few of them also."

"How did they quiet them?"

"Whoso gets a sabre on his skull is as quiet as a coward."

"As God lives, that is murder!"

"That is just why I went there. The soldiers ran to me at once with complaints and outcries against the oppression in which they were living, being persecuted without cause. 'Our stomachs are empty,' said they, 'what are we to do?' I commanded the mayor to appear. He hesitated long, but at last came with three other men. They began: 'Even if the soldiers had not orders, why did they beat us, why burn the place? We should have given them to eat and to drink for a kind word; but they wanted ham, mead, dainties, and we are poor people, we have not these things for ourselves. We will seek defence at law, and you will answer before a court for your soldiers.'"

"God will bless you," cried Olenka, "if you have rendered justice as was proper."

"If I have." Here Pan Andrei wriggled like a student who has to confess his fault, and began to collect the forelock on his forehead with his hand. "My queen!" cried he at last, in an imploring voice, "my jewel, be not angry with me!"

"What did you do then?" asked Olenka, uneasily.

"I commanded to give one hundred blows apiece to the mayor and the councillors," said Kmita, at one breath.

Olenka made no answer; she merely rested her hands on her knees, dropped her head on her bosom, and sank into silence.



“Cut off my head!” cried Kmita, “but do not be angry! I have not told all yet!”

“Is there more?” groaned the lady.

“There is, for they sent then to Ponyevyej for aid. One hundred stupid fellows came with officers. These men I frightened away, but the officers—for God’s sake be not angry!—I ordered to be chased and flogged with braided whips, naked over the snow, as I once did to Pan Tumgrat in Orsha.”

Panna Billevich raised her head; her stern eyes were flashing with indignation, and purple came out on her cheeks. “You have neither shame nor conscience!” said she.

Kmita looked at her in astonishment, he was silent for a moment, then asked with changed voice, “Are you speaking seriously or pretending?”

“I speak seriously; that deed is becoming a bandit and not a cavalier. I speak seriously, since your reputation is near my heart; for it is a shame to me that you have barely come here, when all the people look on you as a man of violence and point at you with their fingers.”

“What care I for the people? One dog watches ten of their cabins, and then has not much to do.”

“There is no infamy on those modest people, there is no disgrace on the name of one of them. Justice will pursue no man here except you.”

“Oh, let not your head ache for that. Every man is lord for himself in our Commonwealth, if he has only a sabre in his hand and can gather any kind of party. What can they do to me? Whom fear I here?”

“If you fear not man, then know that I fear God’s anger, and the tears of people; I fear wrongs also. And moreover I am not willing to share disgrace with anyone; though I am a weak woman, still the honor of my name is dearer to me than it is to a certain one who calls himself a cavalier.”

“In God’s name, do not threaten me with refusal, for you do not know me yet.”

“I think that my grandfather too did not know you.”

Kmita’s eyes shot sparks; but the Billevich blood began to play in her.

“Oh, gesticulate and grit your teeth,” continued she, boldly; “but I fear not, though I am alone and you have a whole party of robbers—my innocence defends me. You think that I know not how you fired at the portraits in Lyubich and dragged in the girls for debauchery. You do not know me if you suppose that I shall humbly be silent. I want honesty from you, and no will can prevent me from exacting it. Nay, it was the will of my grandfather that I should be the wife of only an honest man.”

Kmita was evidently ashamed of what had happened at Lyubich; for dropping his head, he asked in a voice now calmer, “Who told you of this shooting?”

“All the nobles in the district speak of it.”

“I will pay those homespun, the traitors, for their good will,” answered Kmita, sullenly. “But that happened in drink—in company—for soldiers are not able to restrain themselves. As for the girls I had nothing to do with them.”

“I know that those brazen ruffians, those murderers, persuade you to everything.”

“They are not murderers, they are my officers.”

“I commanded those officers of yours to leave my house.”

Olenka looked for an outburst; but she saw with greatest astonishment that the news of turning his comrades out of the house made no impression on Kmita; on the contrary, it seemed to improve his humor.

“You ordered them to go out?” asked he.

“I did.”

“And they went?”

“They did.”

“As God lives, you have the courage of a cavalier. That pleases me greatly, for it is dangerous to quarrel with such people. More than one man has paid dearly for doing so. But they observe manners before Kmita! You saw they bore themselves obediently as lambs; you saw that—but why? Because they are afraid of me.”

Here Kmita looked boastfully at Olenka, and began to twirl his mustache. This fickleness of humor and inopportune boastfulness enraged her to the last degree; therefore she said haughtily and with emphasis, “You must choose between me and them; there is no other way.”

Kmita seemed not to note the decision with which she spoke, and answered carelessly, almost gayly: “But why choose when I have you and I have them? You may do what you like in Vodokty; but if my comrades have committed no wrong, no license here, why should I drive them away? You do not understand what it is to serve under one flag and carry on war in company. No relationship binds like service in common. Know that they have saved my life a thousand times at least. I must protect them all the more because they are pursued by justice. They are almost all nobles and of good family, except Zend, who is of uncertain origin; but such a horse-trainer as he there is not in the whole Commonwealth. And if you could hear how he imitates wild beasts and every kind of bird, you would fall in love with him yourself.”

Here Kmita laughed as if no anger, no misunderstanding, had ever found place between them; and she was ready to wring her hands, seeing how that whirlwind of a nature was slipping away from her grasp. All that she had said of the opinions of men, of the need of sedateness, of disgrace, slipped along on him like a dart on steel armor. The unroused conscience of this soldier could give no response to her indignation at every injustice and every dishonorable deed of license. How was he to be touched, how addressed?

“Let the will of God be done,” said she at last; “since you will resign me, then go your way. God will remain with the orphan.”

“I resign you?” asked Kmita, with supreme astonishment.

“That is it!—if not in words, then in deeds; if not you me, then I you. For I will not marry a man weighted by the tears and blood of people, whom men point at with their fingers, whom they call an outlaw, a robber, and whom they consider a traitor.”

“What, traitor! Do not bring me to madness, lest I do something for which I should be sorry hereafter. May the thunderbolts strike me this minute, may the devils flay me, if I am a traitor—I, who stood by the country when all hands had dropped!”

“You stand by the country and act like an enemy, for you trample on it. You are an executioner of the people, regarding the laws neither of God nor man. No! though my heart should be rent, I will not marry you; being such a man, I will not!”

“Do not speak to me of refusal, for I shall grow furious. Save me, ye angels! If you will not have me in goodwill, then I’ll take you without it, though all the rabble from the villages

were here, though the Radzivils themselves were here, the very king himself and all the devils with their horns stood in the way, even if I had to sell my soul to the Devil!”

“Do not summon evil spirits, for they will hear you,” cried Olenka, stretching forth her hands.

“What do you wish of me?”

“Be honest!”

Both ceased speaking, and silence followed; only the panting of Pan Andrei was heard. The last words of Olenka had penetrated, however, the armor covering his conscience. He felt himself conquered; he knew not what to answer, how to defend himself. Then he began to go with swift steps through the room. She sat there motionless. Above them hung disagreement, dissension, and regret. They were oppressive to each other, and the long silence became every instant more unendurable.

“Farewell!” said Kmita, suddenly.

“Go, and may God give you a different inspiration!” answered Olenka.

“I will go! Bitter was your drink, bitter your bread. I have been treated here to gall and vinegar.”

“And do you think you have treated me to sweetness?” answered she, in a voice in which tears were trembling.

“Be well.”

“Be well.”

Kmita, advancing toward the door, turned suddenly, and springing to her, seized both her hands and said, “By the wounds of Christ! do you wish me to drop from the horse a corpse on the road?”

That moment Olenka burst into tears; he embraced her and held her in his arms, all quivering, repeating through her set teeth, “Whoso believes in God, kill me! kill, do not spare!”

At last he burst out: “Weep not, Olenka; for God’s sake, do not weep! In what am I guilty before you? I will do all to please you. I’ll send those men away, I’ll come to terms in Upita, I will live differently—for I love you. As God lives, my heart will burst! I will do everything; only do not cry, and love me still.”

And so he continued to pacify and pet her; and she, when she had cried to the end, said: “Go now. God will make peace between us. I am not offended, only sore at heart.”

The moon had risen high over the white fields when Pan Andrei pushed out on his way to Lyubich, and after him clattered his men, stretching along the broad road like a serpent. They went through Volmontovichi, but by the shortest road, for frost had bound up the swamps, which might therefore be crossed without danger.

The sergeant Soroka approached Pan Andrei. “Captain,” inquired he, “where are we to find lodgings in Lyubich?”

“Go away!” answered Kmita.

And he rode on ahead, speaking to no man. In his heart rose regret, at moments anger, but above all, vexation at himself. That was the first night in his life in which he made a reckoning with conscience, and that reckoning weighed him down more than the heaviest armor. Behold, he had come into this region with a damaged reputation, and what had he done to repair it? The first day he had permitted shooting and excess in Lyubich, and thought

that he did not belong to it, but he did; then he permitted it every day. Further, his soldiers wronged the townspeople, and he increased those wrongs. Worse, he attacked the Ponyevyej garrison, killed men, sent naked officers on the snow. They will bring an action against him; he will lose it. They will punish him with loss of property, honor, perhaps life. But why can he not, after he has collected an armed party of the rabble, scoff at the law as before? Because he intends to marry, settle in Vodokty, serve not on his own account, but in the contingent; there the law will find him and take him. Besides, even though these deeds should pass unpunished, there is something vile in them, something unworthy of a knight. Maybe this violence can be atoned for; but the memory of it will remain in the hearts of men, in his own conscience, and in the heart of Olenka.

When he remembered that she had not rejected him yet, that when he was going away he read in her eyes forgiveness, she seemed to him as kind as the angels of heaven. And behold the desire was seizing him to go, not tomorrow, but straightway, as fast as the horse could spring, fall at her feet, beg forgetfulness, and kiss those sweet eyes which today had moistened his face with tears. Then he wished to roar with weeping, and felt that he loved that girl as he had never in his life loved anyone. "By the Most Holy Lady!" thought he, in his soul, "I will do what she wishes; I will provide for my comrades bountifully, and send them to the end of the world; for it is true that they urge me to evil."

Then it entered his head that on coming to Lyubich he would find them most surely drunk or with girls; and such rage seized him that he wanted to slash somebody with a sabre, even those soldiers whom he was leading, and cut them up without mercy.

"I'll give it to them!" muttered he, twirling his mustache. "They have not yet seen me as they will see me."

Then from madness he began to prick the horse with his spurs, to pull and drag at the reins till the steed grew wild. Soroka, seeing this, muttered to the soldiers—

"The captain is mad. God save us from falling under his hand!"

Pan Andrei had become mad in earnest. Round about there was great calm. The moon shone mildly, the heavens were glittering with thousands of stars, not the slightest breeze was moving the limbs on the trees; but in the heart of the knight a tempest was raging. The road to Lyubich seemed to him longer than ever before. A certain hitherto unknown alarm began to play upon him from the gloom of the forest depths, and from the fields flooded with a greenish light of the moon. Finally weariness seized Pan Andrei—for, to tell the truth, the whole night before he had passed in drinking and frolicking in Upita; but he wished to overcome toil with toil, and rouse himself from unquiet by swift riding; he turned therefore to the soldiers and commanded—

"Forward!"

He shot ahead like an arrow, and after him the whole party. And in those woods and along those empty fields they flew on like that hellish band of knights of the cross of whom people tell in Jmud—how at times in the middle of bright moonlight nights they appear and rush through the air, announcing war and uncommon calamities. The clatter flew before them and followed behind, from the horses came steam, and only when at the turn of the road the roofs of Lyubich appeared did they slacken their speed.

The swinging gate stood open. It astonished Kmita that when the yard was crowded with his men and horses no one came out to see or inquire who they were. He expected to find the windows gleaming with lights, to hear the sound of Uhlik's flageolet, of fiddles, or the joyful shouts of conversation. At that time in two windows of the dining-hall quivered an uncertain

light; all the rest of the house was dark, quiet, silent. The sergeant Soroka sprang first from his horse to hold the stirrup for the captain.

“Go to sleep,” said Kmita; “whoever can find room in the servants’ hall, let him sleep there, and others in the stable. Put the horses in the cattle-houses and in the barns, and bring them hay from the shed.”

“I hear,” answered the sergeant.

Kmita came down from the horse. The door of the entrance was wide open, and the entrance cold.

“Hei! Is there anyone here?” cried Kmita.

No one answered.

“Hei there!” repeated he, more loudly.

Silence.

“They are drunk!” muttered Pan Andrei.

And such rage took possession of him that he began to grit his teeth. While riding he was agitated with anger at the thought that he should find drinking and debauchery; now this silence irritated him still more.

He entered the dining-hall. On an enormous table was burning a tallow lamp-pot with a reddish smoking light. The force of the wind which came in from the antechamber deflected the flame so that for a time Pan Andrei could not see anything. Only when the quivering had ceased did he distinguish a row of forms lying just at the wall.

“Have they made themselves dead drunk or what?” muttered he, unquietly.

Then he drew near with impatience to the side of the first figure. He could not see the face, for it was hidden in the shadow; but by the white leather belt and the white sheath of the flageolet he recognized Pan Uhlik, and began to shake him unceremoniously with his foot.

“Get up, such kind of sons! get up!”

But Pan Uhlik lay motionless, with his hands fallen without control at the side of his body, and beyond him were lying others. No one yawned, no one quivered, no one woke, no one muttered. At the same moment Kmita noticed that all were lying on their backs in the same position, and a certain fearful presentiment seized him by the heart. Springing to the table, he took with trembling hand the light and thrust it toward the faces of the prostrate men.

The hair stood on his head, such a dreadful sight met his eyes. Uhlik he was able to recognize only by his white belt, for his face and his head presented one formless, foul, bloody mass, without eyes, without nose or mouth—only the enormous mustaches were sticking out of the dreadful pool. Kmita pushed the light farther. Next in order lay Zend, with grinning teeth and eyes protruding, in which in glassy fixedness was terror before death. The third in the row, Ranitski, had his eyes closed, and over his whole face were spots, white, bloody, and dark. Kmita took the light farther. Fourth lay Kokosinski—the dearest to Kmita of all his officers, being his former near neighbor. He seemed to sleep quietly, but in the side of his neck was to be seen a large wound surely given with a thrust. Fifth in the row lay the gigantic Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, with the vest torn on his bosom and his face slashed many times. Kmita brought the light near each face; and when at last he brought it to the sixth, Rekuts, it seemed that the lids of the unfortunate victim quivered a little from the gleam.

Kmita put the light on the floor and began to shake the wounded man gently. After the eyelids the face began to move, the eyes and mouth opened and closed in turn.

“Rekuts, Rekuts, it is I!” said Kmita.

The eyes of Rekuts opened for a moment; he recognized the face of his friend, and groaned in a low voice, “Yendrus—a priest—”

“Who killed you?” cried Kmita, seizing himself by the hair.

“Bu-try-my—” (The Butryms), answered he, in a voice so low that it was barely audible. Then he stretched himself, grew stiff, his open eyes became fixed, and he died.

Kmita went in silence to the table, put the tallow lamp upon it, sat down in an armchair, and began to pass his hands over his face like a man who waking from sleep does not know yet whether he is awake or still sees dream figures before his eyes. Then he looked again on the bodies lying in the darkness. Cold sweat came out on his forehead, the hair rose on his head, and suddenly he shouted so terribly that the panes rattled in the windows—

“Come hither, every living man! come hither!”

The soldiers, who had disposed themselves in the servants’ hall, heard that cry and fell into the room with a rush. Kmita showed them with his hand the corpses at the wall.

“Murdered! murdered!” repeated he, with hoarse voice.

They ran to look; some came with a taper, and held it before the eyes of the dead men. After the first moment of astonishment came noise and confusion. Those hurried in who had found places in the stables and barns. The whole house was bright with light, swarming with men; and in the midst of all that whirl, shouting, and questioning, the dead lay at the wall unmoved and quiet, indifferent to everything, and, in contradiction to their own nature, calm. The souls had gone out of them, and their bodies could not be raised by the trumpet to battle, or the sound of the goblets to feasting.

Meanwhile in the din of the soldiers shouts of threatening and rage rose higher and higher each instant. Kmita, who till that moment had been as it were unconscious, sprang up suddenly and shouted, “To horse!”

Everything living moved toward the door. Half an hour had not passed when more than one hundred horsemen were rushing with breakneck speed over the broad snowy road, and at the head of them flew Pan Andrei, as if possessed of a demon, bareheaded and with a naked sabre in his hand. In the still night was heard on every side the wild shouts: “Slay! kill!”

The moon had reached just the highest point on its road through the sky, when suddenly its beams began to be mingled and mixed with a rosy light, rising as it were from under the ground; gradually the heavens grew red and still redder as if from the rising dawn, till at last a bloody glare filled the whole neighborhood. One sea of fire raged over the gigantic village of the Butryms; and the wild soldiers of Kmita, in the midst of smoke, burning, and sparks bursting in columns to the sky, cut down the population, terrified and blinded from fright.

The inhabitants of the nearer villages sprang from their sleep. The greater and smaller companies of the Smoky Gostsyeviches and Stakyans, Gashtovts and Domasheviches, collected on the road before their houses, and looking in the direction of the fire, gave alarm from mouth to mouth: “It must be that an enemy has broken in and is burning the Butryms—that is an unusual fire!”

The report of muskets coming at intervals from the distance confirmed this supposition.

“Let us go to assist them!” cried the bolder; “let us not leave our brothers to perish!”

And when the older ones spoke thus, the younger, who on account of the winter threshing had not gone to Rossyeni, mounted their horses. In Krakin and in Upita they had begun to ring the church bells.

In Vodokty a quiet knocking at the door roused Panna Aleksandra.

“Olenka, get up!” cried Panna Kulvyets.

“Come in, Aunt, what is the matter?”

“They are burning Volmontovichi!”

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

“Shots are heard, there is a battle! God have mercy on us!”

Olenka screamed terribly; then she sprang out of bed and began to throw on her clothes hurriedly. Her body trembled as in a fever. She alone guessed in a moment what manner of enemy had attacked the ill-fated Butryms.

After a while the awakened women of the whole house rushed into the room with crying and sobbing. Olenka threw herself on her knees before an image; they followed her example, and all began to repeat aloud the litany for the dying.

They had scarcely gone through half of it when a violent pounding shook the door of the antechamber. The women sprang to their feet; a cry of alarm was rent from their breasts.

“Do not open! do not open!”

The pounding was heard with redoubled force; it seemed that the door would spring from its hinges. That moment the youth Kostek rushed into the midst of the assembled women.

“Panna!” cried he, “some man is knocking; shall I open or not?”

“Is he alone?”

“Alone.”

“Go open.”

The youth hurried away. She, taking a light, passed into the dining-room; after her, Panna Kulvyets and all the spinning-women.

She had barely put the light on the table when in the antechamber was heard the rattle of iron bolts, the creak of the opening door; and before the eyes of the women appeared Pan Kmita, terrible, black from smoke, bloody, panting, with madness in his eyes.

“My horse has fallen at the forest,” cried he; “they are pursuing me!”

Panna Aleksandra fixed her eyes on him: “Did you burn Volmontovichi?”

“I—I—”

He wanted to say something more, when from the side of the road and the woods came the sound of voices and the tramp of horses approaching with uncommon rapidity.

“The devils are after my soul; let them have it!” cried Kmita, as if in a fever.

Panna Aleksandra that moment turned to the women. “If they ask, say there is no one here; and now go to the servants’ hall and come here at daylight!” Then to Kmita: “Go in there,” said she, pointing to an adjoining room; and almost by force she pushed him through the open door, which she shut immediately.

Meanwhile armed men filled the front yard; and in the twinkle of an eye the Butryms, Gostsyeviches, Domasheviches, with others, burst into the house. Seeing the lady, they halted in the dining-room; but she, standing with a light in her hand, stopped with her person the passage to doors beyond.

“Men, what has happened? What do you want?” asked she, without blinking an eye before the terrible looks and the ominous gleam of drawn sabres.

“Kmita has burned Volmontovichi!” cried the nobles, in a chorus. “He has slaughtered men, women, children—Kmita did this.”

“We have killed his men,” said Yuzva Butrym; “now we are seeking his own head.”

“His head, his blood! Cut down the murderer!”

“Pursue him!” cried the lady. “Why do you stand here? Pursue him!”

“Is he not hidden here? We found his horse at the woods.”

“He is not here! The house was closed. Look for him in the stables and barns.”

“He has gone off to the woods!” cried some noble. “Come, brothers.”

“Be silent!” roared with powerful voice Yuzva Butrym. “My lady,” said he, “do not conceal him! That is a cursed man!”

Olenka raised both hands above her head: “I join you in cursing him!”

“Amen!” shouted the nobles. “To the buildings, to the woods! We will find him! After the murderer!”

“Come on! come on!”

The clatter of sabres and tramp of feet was heard again. The nobles hurried out through the porch, and mounted with all speed. A part of them searched still for a time in the stables, the cow-houses, and hay-shed; then their voices began to retreat toward the woods.

Panna Aleksandra listened till they had ceased altogether; then she tapped feverishly at the door of the room in which she had hidden Kmita. “There is no one here now, come out.”

Pan Andrei pushed himself forth from the room as if drunk. “Olenka!” he began.

She shook her loosened tresses, which then covered her face like a veil. “I wish not to see you or know you. Take a horse and flee hence!”

“Olenka!” groaned Kmita, stretching forth his hands.

“There is blood on your hands, as on Cain’s!” screamed she, springing back as if at the sight of a serpent. “Be gone, for the ages!”



## Chapter VII

The day rose gray, and lighted a group of ruins in Volmontovichi—the burned remnants of houses, outbuildings, bodies of people and horses burned or slain with swords. In the ashes amidst dying embers crowds of pale people were seeking for the bodies of the dead or the remains of their property. It was a day of mourning and misfortune for all Lauda. The numerous nobility had obtained, it is true, a victory over Kmita's men, but a grievous and bloody one. Besides the Butryms, who had fallen in greater numbers than the others, there was not a village in which widows were not bewailing husbands, parents sons, or children their fathers. It was the more difficult for the Lauda people to finish the invaders, since the strongest were not at home; only old men or youths of early years took part in the battle. But of Kmita's soldiers not one escaped. Some yielded their lives in Volmontovichi, defending themselves with such rage that they fought after they were wounded; others were caught next day in the woods and killed without mercy. Kmita himself was as if he had dropped into water. The people were lost in surmising what had become of him. Some insisted that he had reached the wilderness of Zyelonka and gone thence to Rogovsk, where the Domasheviches alone might find him. Many too asserted that he had gone over to Hovanski and was bringing the enemy; but these were the fewest, their fears were untimely.

Meanwhile the surviving Butryms marched to Vodokty, and disposed themselves as in a camp. The house was full of women and children. Those who could not find a place there went to Mitruny, which Panna Aleksandra gave up to those whose homes had been burned. There were, besides, in Vodokty for defence about a hundred armed men in parties which relieved one another regularly, thinking that Kmita did not consider the affair ended, but might any day make an attempt on the lady with armed hand. The most important houses in the neighborhood, such as the Schyllings, the Sollohubs, and others, sent their attendant Cossacks and haiduks. Vodokty looked like a place awaiting a siege. And Panna Aleksandra went among the armed men, the nobles, the crowds of women, mournful, pale, suffering, hearing the weeping of people, and the curses of men against Pan Kmita—which pierced her heart like swords, for she was the mediate cause of all the misfortune. For her it was that that frenzied man had come to the neighborhood, disturbed the peace, and left the memory of blood behind, trampled on laws, killed people, visited villages with fire and sword like an infidel, till it was a wonder that one man could commit so much evil in such a short time, and he a man neither entirely wicked nor entirely corrupt. If there was anyone who knew this best, it was Panna Aleksandra, who had become acquainted with him most intimately. There was a precipice between Pan Kmita himself and his deeds. But it was for this reason precisely that so much pain was caused Panna Aleksandra by the thought that that man whom she had loved with the whole first impulse of a young heart might be different, that he possessed qualities to make him the model of a knight, of a cavalier, of a neighbor, worthy to receive the admiration and love of men instead of their contempt, and blessings instead of curses.

At times, therefore, it seemed to the lady that some species of misfortune, some kind of power, great and unclean, impelled him to all those deeds of violence; and then a sorrow really measureless possessed her for that unfortunate man, and unextinguished love rose anew in her heart, nourished by the fresh remembrance of his knightly form, his words, his imploring, his loving.

Meanwhile a hundred complaints were entered against him in the town, a hundred actions threatened, and the starosta, Pan Hlebovich, sent men to seize the criminal. The law was bound to condemn him.

Still, from sentences to their execution the distance was great, for disorder increased every hour in the Commonwealth. A terrible war was hanging over the land, and approaching Jmud with bloody steps. The powerful Radzivill of Birji, who was able alone to support the law with arms, was too much occupied with public affairs and still more immersed in great projects touching his own house, which he wished to elevate above all others in the country, even at the cost of the common weal. Other magnates too were thinking more of themselves than of the State. All the bonds in the strong edifice of the Commonwealth had burst from the time of the Cossack war.

A country populous, rich, filled with a valiant knighthood, had become the prey of neighbors; and straightway arbitrariness and license raised their heads more and more, and insulted the law, so great was the power which they felt behind them. The oppressed could find the best and almost the only defence against the oppressor in their own sabres; therefore all Lauda, while protesting in the courts against Kmita, did not dismount for a long time, ready to resist force with force.

But a month passed, and no tidings of Kmita. People began to breathe with greater freedom. The more powerful nobility withdrew the armed servants whom they had sent to Vodokty as a guard. The lesser nobles were yearning for their labors and occupations at home, and they too dispersed by degrees. But when warlike excitement calmed down, as time passed, an increased desire came to that indigent nobility to overcome the absent man with law and to redress their wrongs before the tribunals. For although decisions could not reach Kmita himself, Lyubich remained a large and handsome estate, a ready reward and a payment for losses endured. Meanwhile Panna Aleksandra restrained with great zeal the desire for lawsuits in the Lauda people. Twice did the elders of Lauda meet at her house for counsel; and she not only took part in these deliberations but presided over them, astonishing all with her woman's wit and keen judgment, so that more than one lawyer might envy her. The elders of Lauda wanted to occupy Lyubich with armed hand and give it to the Butryms, but "the lady" advised against this firmly.

"Do not return violence for violence," said she; "if you do, your case will be injured. Let all the innocence be on your side. He is a powerful man and has connections, he will find too in the courts adherents, and if you give the least pretext you may suffer new wrongs. Let your case be so clear that any court, even if made up of his brothers, could not decide otherwise than in your favor. Tell the Butryms to take neither tools nor cattle, and to leave Lyubich completely in peace. Whatever they need I will give them from Mitruny, where there is more than all the property that was at any time in Volmontovichi. And if Pan Kmita should appear here again, leave him in peace till there is a decision, let them make no attempt on his person. Remember that only while he is alive have you someone from whom to recover for your wrongs."

Thus spoke the wise lady with prudent intent, and they applauded her wisdom, not seeing that delay might benefit also Pan Andrei, and especially in this that it secured his life. Perhaps too Olenka wished to guard that unfortunate life against sudden attack. But the nobility obeyed her, for they were accustomed from very remote times to esteem as gospel every word that came from the mouth of a Billevich. Lyubich remained intact, and had Pan Andrei appeared he might have settled there quietly for a time. He did not appear, but a month and a half later a messenger came to the lady with a letter. He was some strange man, known to no one. The letter was from Kmita, written in the following words:—

*"Beloved of my heart, most precious, unrelinquished Olenka! It is natural for all creatures and especially for men, even the lowest, to avenge wrongs done them, and when a man has suffered evil he will pay it back gladly in kind to the one who inflicted it. If I cut down those*

*insolent nobles, God sees that I did so not through cruelty, but because they murdered my officers in defiance of laws human and divine, without regard to their youth and high birth, with a death so pitiless that the like could not be found among Cossacks or Tartars. I will not deny that wrath more than human possessed me; but who will wonder at wrath which had its origin in the blood of one's friends? The spirits of Kokosinski, Ranitski, Uhlik, Rekuts, Kulvyets, and Zend, of sacred memory; slain in the flower of their age and repute, slain without reason, put arms in my hands when I was just thinking—and I call God to witness—just thinking of peace and friendship with the nobles of Lauda, wishing to change my life altogether according to your pleasant counsels. While listening to complaints against me, do not forget my defence, and judge justly. I am sorry now for those people in the village. The innocent may have suffered; but a soldier avenging the blood of his brothers cannot distinguish the innocent from the guilty, and respects no one. God grant that nothing has happened to injure me in your eyes. Atonement for other men's sins and faults and my own just wrath is most bitter to me, for since I have lost you I sleep in despair and I wake in despair, without power to forget either you or my love. Let the tribunals pass sentence on me, unhappy man; let the diets confirm the sentences, let them trumpet me forth to infamy, let the ground open under my feet, I will endure everything, suffer everything, only, for God's sake, cast me not out of your heart! I will do all that they ask, give up Lyubich, give up my property in Orsha—I have captured rubles buried in the woods, let them take those—if you will promise to keep faith with me as your late grandfather commands from the other world. You have saved my life, save also my soul; let me repair wrongs, let me change my life for the better; for I see that if you will desert me God will desert me, and despair will impel me to still worse deeds.”*

How many voices of pity rose in the soul of Olenka in defence of Pan Andrei, who can tell! Love flies swiftly, like the seed of a tree borne on by the wind; but when it grows up in the heart like a tree in the ground, you can pluck it out only with the heart. Panna Billevich was of those who love strongly with an honest heart, therefore she covered that letter of Kmita's with tears. But still she could not forget everything, forgive everything after the first word. Kmita's compunction was certainly sincere, but his soul remained wild and his nature untamed; surely it had not changed so much through those events that the future might be thought of without alarm. Not words, but deeds were needed for the future on the part of Pan Andrei. Finally, how could she say to a man who had made the whole neighborhood bloody, whose name no one on either bank of the Lauda mentioned without curses, “Come! in return for the corpses, the burning, the blood, and the tears, I will give you my love and my hand”? Therefore she answered him otherwise:—

*“Since I have told you that I do not wish to know you or see you, I remain in that resolve, even though my heart be rent. Wrongs such as you have inflicted on people here are not righted either with property or money, for it is impossible to raise the dead. You have not lost property only, but reputation. Let these nobles whose houses you have burned and whom you have killed forgive you, then I will forgive you; let them receive you, and I will receive you; let them rise up for you first, then I will listen to their intercession. But as this can never be, seek happiness elsewhere; and seek the forgiveness of God before that of man, for you need it more.”*

Panna Aleksandra poured tears on every word of the letter; then she sealed it with the Billevich seal and took it herself to the messenger.

“Whence art thou?” asked she, measuring with her glance that strange figure, half peasant, half servant.

“From the woods, my lady.”

“And where is thy master?”

“That is not permitted me to say. But he is far from here; I rode five days, and wore out my horse.”

“Here is a thaler!” said Olenka. “And thy master is well?”

“He is as well, the young hero, as an aurochs.”

“And he is not in hunger or poverty?”

“He is a rich lord.”

“Go with God.”

“I bow to my lady’s feet.”

“Tell thy master—wait—tell thy master—may God aid him!”

The peasant went away; and again began to pass days, weeks, without tidings of Kmita, but tidings of public affairs came worse and worse. The armies of Moscow under Hovanski spread more and more widely over the Commonwealth. Without counting the lands of the Ukraine, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania alone, the provinces of Polotsk, Smolensk, Vitebsk, Mstislavsk, Minsk, and Novgorodek were occupied; only a part of Vilna, Brest-Litovsk, Trotsk, and the starostaship of Jmud breathed yet with free breast, but even these expected guests from day to day.

The Commonwealth had descended to the last degree of helplessness, since it was unable to offer resistance to just those forces which hitherto had been despised and which had always been beaten. It is true that those forces were assisted by the unextinguished and re-arisen rebellion of Hmelnitski, a genuine hundred-headed hydra; but in spite of the rebellion, in spite of the exhaustion of forces in preceding wars, both statesmen and warriors gave assurance that the Grand Duchy alone might be and was in a condition not only to hurl back attack, but to carry its banners victoriously beyond its own borders. Unfortunately internal dissension stood in the way of that strength, paralyzing the efforts even of those citizens who were willing to sacrifice their lives and fortunes.

Meanwhile thousands of fugitives had taken refuge in the lands still unoccupied—both nobles and common people. Towns, villages, and hamlets in Jmud were filled with men brought by the misfortunes of war to want and despair. The inhabitants of the towns were unable either to give lodgings to all or to give them sufficient food; therefore people died not infrequently of hunger—namely, those of low degree. Not seldom they took by force what was refused them; hence tumults, battles, and robbery became more and more common.

The winter was excessive in its severity. At last April came, and deep snow was lying not only in the forests but on the fields. When the supplies of the preceding year were exhausted and there were no new ones yet, *Famine*, the brother of War, began to rage, and extended its rule more and more widely. It was not difficult for the wayfarer to find corpses of men lying in the field, at the roadside, emaciated, gnawed by wolves, which having multiplied beyond example approached the villages and hamlets in whole packs. Their howling was mingled with the cries of people for charity; for in the woods, in the fields, and around the many villages as well, there gleamed in the nighttime fires at which needy wretches warmed their chilled limbs; and when any man rode past they rushed after him, begging for a copper coin, for bread, for alms, groaning, cursing, threatening all at the same time. Superstitious dread seized the minds of men. Many said that those wars so disastrous, and those misfortunes till then unexampled, were coupled with the name of the king; they explained readily that the letters “J.C.K.” stamped on the coins signified not only *Joannes Casimirus Rex*, but

also *Initium Calamitatis Regni* (beginning of calamity for the kingdom). And if in the provinces, which were not yet occupied by war, such terror rose with disorder, it is easy to understand what happened in those which were trampled by the fiery foot of war. The whole Commonwealth was distracted, torn by parties, sick and in a fever, like a man before death. New wars were foretold, both foreign and domestic. In fact, motives were not wanting. Various powerful houses in the Commonwealth, seized by the storm of dissension, considered one another as hostile States, and with them entire lands and districts formed hostile camps. Precisely such was the case in Lithuania, where the fierce quarrel between Yanush Radzivill, the grand hetman, and Gosyevski, full hetman, and also under-treasurer of Lithuania, became almost open war. On the side of the under-treasurer stood the powerful Sapyeha, to whom the greatness of the house of Radzivill had long been as salt in the eye. These partisans loaded the grand hetman with heavy reproaches indeed—that wishing glory for himself alone, he had destroyed the army at Shklov and delivered the country to plunder; that he desired more than the fortune of the Commonwealth, the right for his house of sitting in the diets of the German Empire; that he even imagined for himself an independent crown, and that he persecuted the Catholics.

It came more than once to battles between the partisans of both sides, as if without the knowledge of their patrons; and the patrons made complaints against one another in Warsaw. Their quarrels were fought out in the diets; at home license was let loose and disobedience established. Such a man as Kmita might be sure of the protection of one of those magnates the moment he stood on his side against his opponent.

Meanwhile the enemy were stopped only here and there by a castle; everywhere else the advance was free and without opposition. Under such circumstances all in the Lauda region had to be on the alert and under arms, especially since there were no hetmans near by, for both hetmans were struggling with the troops of the enemy without being able to effect much, it is true, but at least worrying them with attacks and hindering approach to the provinces still unoccupied. Especially did Pavel Sapyeha show resistance and win glory. Yanush Radzivill, a famous warrior, whose name up to the defeat at Shklov had been a terror to the enemy, gained however a number of important advantages. Gosyevski now fought, now endeavored to restrain the advance of the enemy by negotiations; both leaders assembled troops from winter quarters and whencesoever they could, knowing that with spring war would blaze up afresh. But troops were few, and the treasury empty; the general militia in the provinces already occupied could not assemble, for the enemy prevented them. “It was necessary to think of that before the affair at Shklov,” said the partisans of Grosyevski; “now it is too late.” And in truth it was too late. The troops of the kingdom could not give aid, for they were all in the Ukraine and had grievous work against Hmelnitski, Sheremetyeff, and Buturlin.

Tidings from the Ukraine of heroic battles, of captured towns, of campaigns without parallel, strengthened failing hearts somewhat, and gave courage for defence. The names of the hetmans of the kingdom thundered with a loud glory, and with them the name of Stefan Charnetski was heard more and more frequently in the mouths of men; but glory could not take the place of troops nor serve as an auxiliary. The hetmans of Lithuania therefore retreated slowly, without ceasing to fight among themselves.

At last Radzivill was in Jmud. With him came momentary peace in Lauda. But the Calvinists, emboldened by the vicinity of their chief, raised their heads in the towns, inflicting wrongs and attacking Catholic churches. As an offset, the leaders of various volunteer bands and parties—it is unknown whose—who under the colors of Radzivill, Grosyevski, and Sapyeha had been ruining the country, vanished in the forests, discharged their ruffians, and let people breathe more freely.

Since it is easy to pass from despair to hope, a better feeling sprang up at once in Lauda. Panna Aleksandra lived quietly in Vodokty. Pan Volodyovski, who dwelt continually in Patsuneli, and just now had begun to return gradually to health, gave out the tidings that the king with newly levied troops would come in the spring, when the war would take another turn. The encouraged nobles began to go out to the fields with their ploughs. The snows too had melted, and on the birch-trees the first buds were opening. Lauda River overflowed widely. A milder sky shone over that region, and a better spirit entered the people.

Meanwhile an event took place which disturbed anew the quiet of Lauda, tore away hands from the plough, and let not the sabres be stained with red rust.

## Chapter VIII

Pan Volodyovski—a famous and seasoned soldier, though a young man—was living, as we have said, in Patsuneli with the patriarch of the place, Pakosh Gashtovt, who had the reputation of being the wealthiest noble among all the small brotherhood of Lauda. In fact, he had dowered richly with good silver his three daughters who had married Butryms, for he gave to each one a hundred thalers, besides cattle, and an outfit so handsome that not one noble woman or family had a better. The other three daughters were at home unmarried; and they nursed Volodyovski, whose arm was well at one time and sore at another, when wet weather appeared in the world. All the Lauda people were occupied greatly with that arm, for Lauda men had seen it working at Shklov and Sepyel, and in general they were of the opinion that it would be difficult to find a better in all Lithuania. The young colonel, therefore, was surrounded with exceeding honor in all the neighborhoods. The Gashtovts, the Domasheviches, the Gostsyeviches, the Stakyans, and with them others, sent faithfully to Patsuneli fish, mushrooms, and game for Volodyovski, and hay for his horses, so that the knight and his servants might want for nothing. Whenever he felt worse they vied with one another in going to Ponyevyej for a barber;<sup>10</sup> in a word, all strove to be first in serving him.

Pan Volodyovski was so much at ease that though he might have had more comforts in Kyedani and a noted physician at his call, still he remained in Patsuneli. Old Gashtovt was glad to be his host, and almost blew away the dust from before him, for it increased his importance extremely in Lauda that he had a guest so famous that he might have added to the importance of Radzivill himself.

After the defeat and expulsion of Kmita, the nobility, in love with Volodyovski, searched in their own heads for counsel, and formed the project of marrying him to Panna Aleksandra. “Why seek a husband for her through the world?” said the old men at a special meeting at which they discussed this question. “Since that traitor has so befouled himself with infamous deeds that if he is now alive he should be delivered to the hangman, the lady must cast him out of her heart, for thus was provision made in the will by a special clause. Let Pan Volodyovski marry her. As guardians we can permit that, and she will thus find an honorable cavalier, and we a neighbor and leader.”

When this proposition was adopted unanimously, the old men went first to Volodyovski, who, without thinking long, agreed to everything, and then to “the lady,” who with still less hesitation opposed it decisively. “My grandfather alone had the right to dispose of Lyubich,” said she, “and the property cannot be taken from Pan Kmita until the courts punish him with loss of life; and as to my marrying, do not even mention it. I have too great sorrow on my mind to be able to think of such a thing. I have cast that man out of my heart; but this one, even though the most worthy, bring not hither, for I will not receive him.”

There was no answer to such a resolute refusal, and the nobles returned home greatly disturbed. Less disturbed was Pan Volodyovski, and least of all the young daughters of Gashtovt—Terka, Maryska, and Zonia. They were well-grown, blooming maidens, with hair like flax, eyes like violets, and broad shoulders. In general the Patsuneli girls were famed for beauty; when they went in a flock to church, they were like flowers of the field. Besides, old Gashtovt spared no expense on the education of his daughters. The organist from Mitruny had taught them reading and church hymns, and the eldest, Terka, to play on the lute. Having

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<sup>10</sup> A barber in those parts at that time did duty for a surgeon.

kind hearts, they nursed Volodyovski sedulously, each striving to surpass the others in watchfulness and care. People said that Maryska was in love with the young knight; but the whole truth was not in that talk, for all three of them, not she alone, were desperately in love with Pan Michael. He loved them too beyond measure, especially Maryska and Zonia, for Terka had the habit of complaining too much of the faithlessness of men.

It happened often in the long winter evenings that old Gashtovt, after drinking his punch, went to bed, and the maidens with Pan Michael sat by the chimney; the charming Terka spinning flax, mild Maryska amusing herself with picking down, and Zonia reeling thread from the spindle into skeins. But when Volodyovski began to tell of the wars or of wonders which he had seen in the great houses of magnates, work ceased, the girls gazed at him as at a rainbow, and one would cry out in astonishment, "Oh! I do not live in the world! Oh, my dears!" and another would say, "I shall not close an eye the whole night!"

Volodyovski, as he returned to health and began at times to use his sword with perfect freedom, was more joyous and told stories more willingly. A certain evening they were sitting as usual, after supper, in front of the chimney, from beneath which the light fell sharply on the entire dark room. They began to chat; the girls wanted stories, and Volodyovski begged Terka to sing something with the lute.

"Sing something yourself," answered she, pushing away the instrument which Volodyovski was handing her; "I have work. Having been in the world, you must have learned many songs."

"True, I have learned some. Let it be so today; I will sing first, and you afterward. Your work will not run away. If a woman had asked, you would not have refused; you are always opposed to men."

"For they deserve it."

"And do you disdain me too?"

"Oh, why should I? But sing something."

Volodyovski touched the lute; he assumed a comic air, and began to sing in falsetto—

"I have come to such places  
Where no girl will have me!—"

"Oh, that is untrue for you," interrupted Maryska, blushing as red as a raspberry.

"That's a soldier's song," said Volodyovski, "which we used to sing in winter quarters, wishing some good soul to take pity on us."

"I would be the first to take pity on you."

"Thanks to you. If that is true, then I have no reason to sing longer, and I will give the lute into worthier hands."

Terka did not reject the instrument this time, for she was moved by Volodyovski's song, in which there was more cunning indeed than truth. She struck the strings at once, and with a simpering mien began—

"For berries of elder go not to the green wood.  
Trust not a mad dog, believe not a young man.  
Each man in his heart bears rank poison;  
If he says that he loves thee, say No."



Volodyovski grew so mirthful that he held his sides from laughter, and cried out: "All the men are traitors? But the military, my benefactress!"

Panna Terka opened her mouth wider and sang with redoubled energy—

"Far worse than mad dogs are they, far worse, oh, far worse!"

"Do not mind Terka; she is always that way," said Marysia.<sup>11</sup>

"Why not mind," asked Volodyovski, "when she speaks so ill of the whole military order that from shame I know not whither to turn my eyes?"

"You want me to sing, and then make sport of me and laugh at me," said Terka, pouting.

"I do not attack the singing, but the cruel meaning of it for the military," answered the knight.

"As to the singing I must confess that in Warsaw I have not heard such remarkable trills. All that would be needed is to dress you in trousers. You might sing at St. Yan's, which is the cathedral church, and in which the king and queen have their box."

"Why dress her in trousers?" asked Zonia, the youngest, made curious by mention of Warsaw, the king, and the queen.

"For in Warsaw women do not sing in the choir, but men and young boys—the men with voices so deep that no aurochs could bellow like them, and the boys with voices so thin that on a violin no sound could be thinner. I heard them many a time when we came, with our great and lamented *voevoda* of Rus, to the election of our present gracious lord. It is a real wonder, so that the soul goes out of a man. There is a host of musicians there: Forster, famous for his subtle trills, and Kapula, and Gian Battista, and Elert, a master at the lute, and Marek, and Myelchevski—beautiful composers. When all these are performing together in the church, it is as if you were listening to choirs of seraphim in the flesh."

"Oh, that is as true as if living!" said Marysia, placing her hands together.

"And the king—have you seen him often?" asked Zonia.

"I have spoken with him as with you. After the battle of Berestechko he pressed my head. He is a valiant lord, and so kind that whoso has once seen him must love him."

"We love him without having seen him. Has he the crown always on his head?"

"If he were to go around every day in the crown, his head would need to be iron. The crown rests in the church, from which its importance increases; but his Grace the King wears a black cap studded with diamonds from which light flashes through the whole castle."

"They say that the castle of the king is even grander than that at Kyedani?"

"That at Kyedani! The Kyedani castle is a mere plaything in comparison. The king's castle is a tremendous building, all walled in so that you cannot see a stick of wood. Around are two rows of chambers, one more splendid than the other. In them you can see different wars and victories painted with brushes on the wall—such as the battles of Sigismund III and Vladislav; a man could not satisfy himself with looking at them, for everything is as if living. The wonder is that they do not move, and that those who are fighting do not shout. But not even the best artist can paint men to shout. Some chambers are all gold; chairs and benches covered with brocade or cloth of gold, tables of marble and alabaster, and the caskets, bottle-cases, clocks showing the hour of day and night, could not be described on an ox-hide. The

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<sup>11</sup> Marysia and Maryska are both diminutives of Marya = Maria or Mary, and are used without distinction by the author. There are in Polish eight or ten other variants of the same name.

king and queen walk through those chambers and delight themselves in plenty; in the evening they have a theatre for their still greater amusement—”

“What is a theatre?”

“How can I tell you? It is a place where they play comedies and exhibit Italian dances in a masterly manner. It is a room so large that no church is the equal of it, all with beautiful columns. On one side sit those who wish to see, and on the other the arts are exhibited. Curtains are raised and let down; some are turned with screws to different sides. Darkness and clouds are shown at one moment; at another pleasant light. Above is the sky with the sun or the stars; below you may see at times hell dreadful—”

“Oh, God save us!” cried the girls.

“—with devils. Sometimes the boundless sea; on it ships and sirens. Some persons come down from the skies; others rise out of the earth.”

“But I should not like to see hell,” cried Zonia, “and it is a wonder to me that people do not run away from such a terrible sight.”

“Not only do they not run away, but they applaud from pleasure,” said Volodyovski; “for it is all pretended, not real, and those who take farewell do not go away. There is no evil spirit in the affair, only the invention of men. Even bishops come with his Grace the King, and various dignitaries who go with the king afterward and sit down to a feast before sleeping.”

“And what do they do in the morning and during the day?”

“That depends on their wishes. When they rise in the morning they take a bath. There is a room in which there is no floor, only a tin tank shining like silver, and in the tank water.”

“Water, in a room—have you heard?”

“It is true; and it comes and goes as they wish. It can be warm or altogether cold; for there are pipes with spigots, running here and there. Turn a spigot and the water runs till it is possible to swim in the room as in a lake. No king has such a castle as our gracious lord, that is known, and foreign proverbs tell the same. Also no king reigns over such a worthy people; for though there are various polite nations on earth, still God in his mercy has adorned ours beyond others.”

“Our king is happy!” sighed Terka.

“It is sure that he would be happy were it not for unfortunate wars which press down the Commonwealth in return for our discords and sins. All this rests on the shoulders of the king, and besides at the diets they reproach him for our faults. And why is he to blame because people will not obey him? Grievous times have come on the country—such grievous times as have not been hitherto. Our most despicable enemy now despises us—us who till recently carried on victorious wars against the Emperor of Turkey. This is the way that God punishes pride. Praise be to Him that my arm works well in its joints—for it is high time to remember the country and move to the field. ’Tis a sin to be idle in time of such troubles.”

“Do not mention going away.”

“It is difficult to do otherwise. It is pleasant for me here among you; but the better it is, the worse it is. Let men in the Diet give wise reasons, but a soldier longs for the field. While there is life there is service. After death God, who looks into the heart, will reward best those who serve not for advancement, but through love of the country; and indeed the number of such is decreasing continually, and that is why the black hour has come.”

Marysia's eyes began to grow moist; at last they were filled with tears which flowed down her rosy cheeks. "You will go and forget us, and we shall pine away here. Who in this place will defend us from attack?"

"I go, but I shall preserve my gratitude. It is rare to find such honest people as in Patsuneli. Are you always afraid of this Kmita?"

"Of course. Mothers frighten their children with him as with a werewolf."

"He will not come back, and even if he should he will not have with him those wild fellows, who, judging from what people say, were worse than he. It is a pity indeed that such a good soldier stained his reputation and lost his property."

"And the lady."

"And the lady. They say much good in her favor."

"Poor thing! for whole days she just cries and cries."

"H'm!" said Volodyovski; "but is she not crying for Kmita?"

"Who knows?" replied Marysia.

"So much the worse for her, for he will not come back. The hetman sent home a part of the Lauda men, and those forces are here now. We wanted to cut him down at once without the court. He must know that the Lauda men have returned, and he will not show even his nose."

"Likely our men must march again," said Terka, "for they received only leave to come home for a short time."

"Eh!" said Volodyovski, "the hetman let them come, for there is no money in the treasury. It is pure despair! When people are most needed they have to be sent away. But good night! it is time to sleep, and let none of you dream of Pan Kmita with a fiery sword."

Volodyovski rose from the bench and prepared to leave the room, but had barely made a step toward the closet when suddenly there was a noise in the entrance and a shrill voice began to cry outside the door—

"Hei there! For God's mercy! open quickly, quickly!"

The girls were terribly frightened. Volodyovski sprang for his sabre to the closet, but had not been able to get it when Terka opened the door. An unknown man burst into the room and threw himself at the feet of the knight.

"Rescue, serene Colonel!—The lady is carried away!"

"What lady?"

"In Vodokty."

"Kmita!" cried Volodyovski.

"Kmita!" screamed the girls.

"Kmita!" repeated the messenger.

"Who art thou?" asked Volodyovski.

"The manager in Vodokty."

"We know him," said Terka; "he brought herbs for you."

Meanwhile the drowsy old Gashtovt came forth from behind the stove, and in the door appeared two attendants of Pan Volodyovski whom the uproar had drawn to the room.

“Saddle the horses!” cried Volodyovski. “Let one of you hurry to the Butryms, the other give a horse to me!”

“I have been already at the Butryms,” said the manager, “for they are nearer to us; they sent me to your grace.”

“When was the lady carried away?” asked Volodyovski.

“Just now—the servants are fighting yet—I rushed for a horse.”

Old Gashtovt rubbed his eyes. “What’s that? The lady carried off?”

“Yes; Kmita carried her off,” answered Volodyovski. “Let us go to the rescue!” Then he turned to the messenger: “Hurry to the Domasheviches; let them come with muskets.”

“Now, my kids,” cried the old man suddenly to his daughters, “hurry to the village, wake up the nobles, let them take their sabres! Kmita has carried off the lady—is it possible—God forgive him, the murderer, the ruffian! Is it possible?”

“Let us go to rouse them,” said Volodyovski; “that will be quicker! Come; the horses are ready, I hear them.”

In a moment they mounted, as did also the two attendants, Ogarek and Syruts. All pushed on their way between the cottages of the village, striking the doors and windows, and crying with sky-piercing voices: “To your sabres, to your sabres! The lady of Vodokty is carried away! Kmita is in the neighborhood!”

Hearing these cries, this or that man rushed forth from his cottage, looked to see what was happening, and when he had learned what the matter was, fell to shouting himself, “Kmita is in the neighborhood; the lady is carried away!” And shouting in this fashion, he rushed headlong to the outbuildings to saddle his horse, or to his cottage to feel in the dark for his sabre on the wall. Every moment more voices cried, “Kmita is in the neighborhood!” There was a stir in the village, lights began to shine, the cry of women was heard, the barking of dogs. At last the nobles came out on the road—some mounted, some on foot. Above the multitude of heads glittered in the night sabres, pikes, darts, and even iron forks.

Volodyovski surveyed the company, sent some of them immediately in different directions, and moved forward himself with the rest.

The mounted men rode in front, those on foot followed, and they marched toward Volmontovichi to join the Butryms. The hour was ten in the evening, and the night clear, though the moon had not risen. Those of the nobles whom the grand hetman had sent recently from the war dropped into ranks at once; the others, namely the infantry, advanced with less regularity, making a clatter with their weapons, talking and yawning aloud, at times cursing that devil of a Kmita who had robbed them of pleasant rest. In this fashion they reached Volmontovichi, at the edge of which an armed band pushed out to meet them.

“Halt! who goes?” called voices from that band.

“The Gashtovts!”

“We are the Butryms. The Domasheviches have come already.”

“Who is leading you?” asked Volodyovski.

“Yuzva the Footless at the service of the colonel.”

“Have you news?”

“He took her to Lyubich. They went through the swamp to avoid Volmontovichi.”

“To Lyubich?” asked Volodyovski, in wonder. “Can he think of defending himself there? Lyubich is not a fortress, is it?”

“It seems he trusts in his strength. There are two hundred with him. No doubt he wants to take the property from Lyubich; they have wagons and a band of led horses. It must be that he did not know of our return from the army, for he acts very boldly.”

“That is good for us!” said Volodyovski. “He will not escape this time. How many guns have you?”

“We, the Butryms, have thirty; the Domasheviches twice as many.”

“Very good. Let fifty men with muskets go with you to defend the passage in the swamps, quickly; the rest will come with me. Remember the axes.”

“According to command.”

There was a movement; the little division under Yuzva the Footless went forward at a trot to the swamp. A number of tens of Butryms who had been sent for other nobles now came up.

“Are the Gostsyeviches to be seen?” asked Volodyovski.

“Yes, Colonel. Praise be to God!” cried the newly arrived. “The Gostsyeviches are coming; they can be heard through the woods. You know that they carried her to Lyubich?”

“I know. He will not go far with her.”

There was indeed one danger to his insolent venture on which Kmita had not reckoned; he knew not that a considerable force of the nobles had just returned home. He judged that the villages were as empty as at the time of his first stay in Lyubich; while on the present occasion counting the Gostsyeviches, without the Stakyans, who could not come up in season, Volodyovski was able to lead against him about three hundred sabres held by men accustomed to battle and trained.

In fact, more and more nobles joined Volodyovski as he advanced. At last came the Gostsyeviches, who had been expected till that moment. Volodyovski drew up the division, and his heart expanded at sight of the order and ease with which the men stood in ranks. At the first glance it was clear that they were soldiers, not ordinary untrained nobles. Volodyovski rejoiced for another reason; he thought to himself that soon he would lead them to more distant places.

They moved then on a swift march toward Lyubich by the pinewoods through which Kmita had rushed the winter before. It was well after midnight. The moon sailed out at last in the sky, and lighting the woods, the road, and the marching warriors, broke its pale rays on the points of the pikes, and was reflected on the gleaming sabres. The nobles talked in a low voice of the unusual event which had dragged them from their beds.

“Various people have been going around here,” said one of the Domasheviches; “we thought they were deserters, but they were surely his spies.”

“Of course. Every day strange minstrels used to visit Vodokty as if for alms,” said others.

“And what kind of soldiers has Kmita?”

“The servants in Vodokty say they are Cossacks. It is certain that Kmita has made friends with Hovanski or Zolotarenko. Hitherto he was a murderer, now he is an evident traitor.”

“How could he bring Cossacks thus far?”

“With such a great band it is not easy to pass. Our first good company would have stopped him on the road.”

“Well, they might go through the forests. Besides, are there few lords travelling with domestic Cossacks? Who can tell them from the enemy? If these men are asked they will say that they are domestic Cossacks.”

“He will defend himself,” said one of the Gostsyeviches, “for he is a brave and resolute man; but our colonel will be a match for him.”

“The Butryms too have vowed that even if they have to fall one on the other, he will not leave there alive. They are the most bitter against him.”

“But if we kill him, from whom will they recover their losses? Better take him alive and give him to justice.”

“What is the use in thinking of courts now when all have lost their heads? Do you know that people say war may come from the Swedes?”

“May God preserve us from that! The Moscow power and Hmelnitski at present; only the Swedes are wanting, and then the last day of the Commonwealth.”

At this moment Volodyovski riding in advance turned and said, “Quiet there, gentlemen!”

The nobles grew silent, for Lyubich was in sight. In a quarter of an hour they had come within less than forty rods of the building. All the windows were illuminated; the light shone into the yard, which was full of armed men and horses. Nowhere sentries, no precautions—it was evident that Kmita trusted too much in his strength. When he had drawn still nearer, Pan Volodyovski with one glance recognized the Cossacks against whom he had warred so much during the life of the great Yeremi, and later under Radzivill.

“If those are strange Cossacks, then that ruffian has passed the limit.”

He looked farther; brought his whole party to a halt. There was a terrible bustle in the court. Some Cossacks were giving light with torches; others were running in every direction, coming out of the house and going in again, bringing out things, packing bags into the wagons; others were leading horses from the stable, driving cattle from the stalls. Cries, shouts, commands, crossed one another in every direction. The gleam of torches lighted as it were the moving of a tenant to a new estate on St. John’s Eve.

Kryshtof, the oldest among the Domasheviches, pushed up to Volodyovski and said, “They want to pack all Lyubich into wagons.”

“They will take away,” answered Volodyovski, “neither Lyubich nor their own skins. I do not recognize Kmita, who is an experienced soldier. There is not a single sentry.”

“Because he has great force—it seems to me more than three hundred strong. If we had not returned he might have passed with the wagons through all the villages.”

“Is this the only road to the house?” asked Volodyovski.

“The only one, for in the rear are ponds and swamps.”

“That is well. Dismount!”

Obedient to this command, the nobles sprang from their saddles. The rear ranks of infantry deployed in a long line, and began to surround the house and the buildings. Volodyovski with the main division advanced directly on the gate.

“Wait the command!” said he, in a low voice. “Fire not before the order.”

A few tens of steps only separated the nobles from the gate when they were seen at last from the yard. Men sprang at once to the fence, bent forward, and peering carefully into the darkness, called threateningly, "Hei! Who are there?"

"Halt!" cried Volodyovski; "fire!"

Shots from all the guns which the nobles carried thundered together; but the echo had not come back from the building when the voice of Volodyovski was heard again: "On the run!"

"Kill! slay!" cried the Lauda men, rushing forward like a torrent.

The Cossacks answered with shots, but they had not time to reload. The throng of nobles rushed against the gate, which soon fell before the pressure of armed men. A struggle began to rage in the yard, among the wagons, horses, and bags. The powerful Butryms, the fiercest in hand-to-hand conflict and the most evened against Kmita, advanced in line. They went like a herd of stags bursting through a growth of young trees, breaking, trampling, destroying, and cutting wildly. After them rolled the Domasheviches and the Gostsyeviches.

Kmita's Cossacks defended themselves manfully from behind the wagons and packs; they began to fire too from all the windows of the house and from the roof—but rarely, for the trampled torches were quenched, and it was difficult to distinguish their own from the enemy. After a while the Cossacks were pushed from the yard and the house to the stables; cries for quarter were heard. The nobles had triumphed.

But when they were alone in the yard, fire from the house increased at once. All the windows were bristling with muskets, and a storm of bullets began to fall on the yard. The greater part of the Cossacks had taken refuge in the house.

"To the doors!" cried Volodyovski.

In fact, the discharges from the windows and from the roof could not injure those at the very walls. The position, however, of the besiegers was difficult. They could not think of storming the windows, for fire would greet them straight in the face. Volodyovski therefore commanded to hew down the doors. But that was not easy, for they were bolts rather than doors, made of oak pieces fixed crosswise and fastened with many gigantic nails, on the strong heads of which axes were dented without breaking the doors. The most powerful men pushed then from time to time with their shoulders, but in vain. Behind the doors wore iron bars, and besides they were supported inside by props. But the Butryms hewed with rage. At the doors of the kitchen leading also to the storehouse the Domasheviches and Gashtovts were storming.

After vain efforts of an hour the men at the axes were relieved. Some crosspieces had fallen, but in place of them appeared gun-barrels. Shots sounded again. Two Butryms fell to the ground with pierced breasts. The others, instead of being put to disorder, hewed still more savagely.

By command of Volodyovski the openings were stopped with bundles of coats. Now in the direction of the road new shouts were heard from the Stakyans, who had come to the aid of their brethren; and following them were armed peasants from Vodokty.

The arrival of these reinforcements had evidently disturbed the besieged, for straightway a voice behind the door called loudly: "Stop there! do not hew! listen! Stop, a hundred devils take you! let us talk."

Volodyovski gave orders to stop the work and asked; "Who is speaking?"

"The banneret of Orsha, Kmita; and with whom am I speaking?"

“Col. Michael Volodyovski.”

“With the forehead!” answered the voice from behind the door.

“There is no time for greetings. What is your wish?”

“It would be more proper for me to ask what you want. You do not know me, nor I you; why attack me?”

“Traitor!” cried Volodyovski. “With me are the men of Lauda who have returned from the war, and they have accounts with you for robbery, for blood shed without cause and for the lady whom you have carried away. But do you know what *raptus puellæ* means? You must yield your life.”

A moment of silence followed.

“You would not call me traitor a second time,” said Kmita, “were it not for the door between us.”

“Open it, then! I do not hinder.”

“More than one dog from Lauda will cover himself with his legs before it is open. You will not take me alive.”

“Then we will drag you out dead, by the hair. All one to us!”

“Listen with care, note what I tell you! If you do not let us go, I have a barrel of powder here, and the match is burning already. I’ll blow up the house and all who are in it with myself, so help me God! Come now and take me!”

This time a still longer silence followed. Volodyovski sought an answer in vain. The nobles began to look at one another in fear. There was so much wild energy in the words of Kmita that all believed his threat. The whole victory might be turned into dust by one spark, and Panna Billevich lost forever.

“For God’s sake!” muttered one of the Butryms, “he is a madman. He is ready to do what he says.”

Suddenly a happy thought came to Volodyovski, as it seemed to him. “There is another way!” cried he. “Meet me, traitor, with a sabre. If you put me down, you will go away in freedom.”

For a time there was no answer. The hearts of the Lauda men beat unquietly.

“With a sabre?” asked Kmita, at length. “Can that be?”

“If you are not afraid, it will be.”

“The word of a cavalier that I shall go away in freedom?”

“The word—”

“Impossible!” cried a number of voices among the Butryms.

“Quiet, a hundred devils!” roared Volodyovski; “if not, then let him blow you up with himself.”

The Butryms were silent; after a while one of them said, “Let it be as you wish.”

“Well, what is the matter there?” asked Kmita, derisively. “Do the gray coats agree?”

“Yes, and they will take oath on their swords, if you wish.”

“Let them take oath.”



“Come together, gentlemen, come together!” cried Volodyovski to the nobles who were standing under the walls and surrounding the whole house.

After a while all collected at the main door, and soon the news that Kmita wanted to blow himself up with powder spread on every side. They were as if petrified with terror. Meanwhile Volodyovski raised his voice and said amid silence like that of the grave—

“I take you all present here to witness that I have challenged Pan Kmita, the banneret of Orsha, to a duel, and I have promised that if he puts me down he shall go hence in freedom, without obstacle from you; to this you must swear on your sword-hilts, in the name of God and the holy cross—”

“But wait!” cried Kmita—“in freedom with all my men, and I take the lady with me.”

“The lady will remain here,” answered Volodyovski, “and the men will go as prisoners to the nobles.”

“That cannot be.”

“Then blow yourself up with powder! We have already mourned for her; as to the men, ask them what they prefer.”

Silence followed.

“Let it be so,” said Kmita, after a time. “If I do not take her today, I will in a month. You will not hide her under the ground! Take the oath!”

“Take the oath!” repeated Volodyovski.

“We swear by the Most High God and the Holy Cross. Amen!”

“Well, come out, come out!” cried Volodyovski.

“You are in a hurry to the other world?”

“No matter, no matter, only come out quickly.”

The iron bars holding the door on the inside began to groan.

Volodyovski pushed back, and with him the nobles, to make room. Soon the door opened, and in it appeared Pan Andrei, tall, straight as a poplar. The dawn was already coming, and the first pale light of day fell on his daring, knightly, and youthful face. He stopped in the door, looked boldly on the crowd of nobles, and said—

“I have trusted in you. God knows whether I have done well, but let that go. Who here is Pan Volodyovski?”

The little colonel stepped forward. “I am!” answered he.

“Oh! you are not like a giant,” said Kmita, with sarcastic reference to Volodyovski’s stature, “I expected to find a more considerable figure, though I must confess you are evidently a soldier of experience.”

“I cannot say the same of you, for you have neglected sentries. If you are the same at the sabre as at command, I shall not have work.”

“Where shall we fight?” asked Kmita, quickly.

“Here—the yard is as level as a table.”

“Agreed! Prepare for death.”

“Are you so sure?”

“It is clear that you have never been in Orsha, since you doubt. Not only am I sure, but I am sorry, for I have heard of you as a splendid soldier. Therefore I say for the last time, let me go! We do not know each other; why should we stand the one in the way of the other? Why attack me? The maiden is mine by the will, as well as this property; and God knows I am only seeking my own. It is true that I cut down the nobles in Volmontovichi, but let God decide who committed the first wrong. Whether my officers were men of violence or not, we need not discuss; it is enough that they did no harm to anyone here, and they were slaughtered to the last man because they wanted to dance with girls in a public house. Well, let blood answer blood! After that my soldiers were cut to pieces. I swear by the wounds of God that I came to these parts without evil intent, and how was I received? But let wrong balance wrong, I will still add from my own and make losses good in neighbor fashion. I prefer that to another way.”

“And what kind of people have you here? Where did you get these assistants?” asked Volodyovski.

“Where I got them I got them. I did not bring them against the country, but to obtain my own rights.”

“Is that the kind of man you are? So for private affairs you have joined the enemy. And with what have you paid him for this service, if not with treason? No, brother, I should not hinder you from coming to terms with the nobles, but to call in the enemy is another thing. You will not creep out. Stand up now, stand up, or I shall say that you are a coward, though you give yourself out as a master from Orsha.”

“You would have it,” said Kmita, taking position.

But Volodyovski did not hurry, and not taking his sabre out yet, he looked around on the sky. Day was already coming in the east. The first golden and azure stripes were extended in a belt of light, but in the yard it was still gloomy enough, and just in front of the house complete darkness reigned.

“The day begins well,” said Volodyovski, “but the sun will not rise soon. Perhaps you would wish to have light?”

“It is all one to me.”

“Gentlemen!” cried Volodyovski, turning to the nobles, “go for some straw and for torches; it will be clearer for us in this Orsha dance.”

The nobles, to whom this humorous tone of the young colonel gave wonderful consolation, rushed quickly to the kitchen. Some of them fell to collecting the torches trampled at the time of the battle, and in a little while nearly fifty red flames were gleaming in the semidarkness of the early morning.

Volodyovski showed them with his sabre to Kmita. “Look, a regular funeral procession!”

And Kmita answered at once: “They are burying a colonel, so there must be parade.”

“You are a dragon!”

Meanwhile the nobles formed in silence a circle around the knights, and raised the burning torches aloft; behind them others took their places, curious and disquieted; in the centre the opponents measured each other with their eyes. A grim silence began; only burned coals fell with a crackle to the ground. Volodyovski was as lively as a goldfinch on a bright morning.

“Begin!” said Kmita.

The first clash raised an echo in the heart of every onlooker. Volodyovski struck as if unwillingly; Kmita warded and struck in his turn; Volodyovski warded. The dry clash grew more rapid. All held breath. Kmita attacked with fury. Volodyovski put his left hand behind his back and stood quietly, making very careless, slight, almost imperceptible movements; it seemed that he wished merely to defend himself, and at the same time spare his opponent. Sometimes he pushed a short step backward, again he advanced; apparently he was studying the skill of Kmita. Kmita was growing heated; Volodyovski was cool as a master testing his pupil, and all the time calmer and calmer. At last, to the great surprise of the nobles, he said—

“Now let us talk; it will not last long. Ah, ha! is that the Orsha method? ’Tis clear that you must have threshed peas there, for you strike like a man with a flail. Terrible blows! Are they really the best in Orsha? That thrust is in fashion only among tribunal police. This is from Courland, good to chase dogs with. Look to the end of your sabre! Don’t bend your hand so, for see what will happen! Raise your sabre!”

Volodyovski pronounced the last words with emphasis; at the same time he described a half-circle, drew the hand and sabre toward him, and before the spectators understood what “raise” meant, Kmita’s sabre, like a needle pulled from a thread, flew above Volodyovski’s head and fell behind his shoulders; then he said—

“That is called shelling a sabre.”

Kmita stood pale, wild-eyed, staggering, astonished no less than the nobles of Lauda; the little colonel pushed to one side, and repeated again—

“Take your sabre!”

For a time it seemed as if Kmita would rush at him with naked hands. He was just ready for the spring, when Volodyovski put his hilt to his own breast, presenting the point. Kmita rushed to take his own sabre, and fell with it again on his terrible opponent.

A loud murmur rose from the circle of spectators, and the ring grew closer and closer. Kmita’s Cossacks thrust their heads between the shoulders of the nobles, as if they had lived all their lives in the best understanding with them. Involuntarily shouts were wrested from the mouths of the onlookers; at times an outburst of unrestrained, nervous laughter was heard; all acknowledged a master of masters.

Volodyovski amused himself cruelly like a cat with a mouse, and seemed to work more and more carelessly with the sabre. He took his left hand from behind his back and thrust it into his trousers’ pocket. Kmita was foaming at the mouth, panting heavily; at last hoarse words came from his throat through his set lips—

“Finish—spare the shame!”

“Very well!” replied Volodyovski.

A short terrible whistle was heard, then a smothered cry. At the same moment Kmita threw open his arms, his sabre dropped to the ground, and he fell on his face at the feet of the colonel.

“He lives!” said Volodyovski; “he has not fallen on his back!” And doubling the skirt of Kmita’s coat, he began to wipe his sabre.

The nobles shouted with one voice, and in those shouts thundered with increasing clearness: “Finish the traitor! finish him! cut him to pieces!”

A number of Butryms ran up with drawn sabres. Suddenly something wonderful happened—and one would have said that little Volodyovski had grown tall before their eyes: the sabre of the nearest Butrym flew out of his hand after Kmita's, as if a whirlwind had caught it, and Volodyovski shouted with flashing eyes—

“Stand back, stand back! He is mine now, not yours! Be off!”

All were silent, fearing the anger of that man; and he said: “I want no shambles here! As nobles you should understand knightly customs, and not slaughter the wounded. Enemies do not do that, and how could a man in a duel kill his prostrate opponent?”

“He is a traitor!” muttered one of the Butryms. “It is right to kill such a man.”

“If he is a traitor he should be given to the hetman to suffer punishment and serve as an example to others. But as I have said, he is mine now, not yours. If he recovers you will be free to get your rights before a court, and it will be easier to obtain satisfaction from a living than a dead man. Who here knows how to dress wounds?”

“Krysh Domashevich. He has attended to all in Lauda for years.”

“Let him dress the man at once, then take him to bed, and I will go to console the ill-fated lady.”

So saying, Volodyovski put his sabre into the scabbard. The nobles began to seize and bind Kmita's men, who henceforth were to plough land in the villages. They surrendered without resistance; only a few who had escaped through the rear windows of the house ran toward the ponds, but they fell into the hands of the Stakyans who were stationed there. At the same time the nobles fell to plundering the wagons, in which they found quite a plentiful booty; some of them gave advice to sack the house, but they feared Pan Volodyovski, and perhaps the presence of Panna Billevich restrained the most daring. Their own killed, among whom were three Butryms and two Domasheviches, the nobles put into wagons, so as to bury them according to Christian rites. They ordered the peasants to dig a ditch for Kmita's dead behind the garden.

Volodyovski in seeking the lady burst through the whole house, and found her at last in the treasure-chamber situated in a corner to which a low and narrow door led from the sleeping-room. It was a small chamber, with narrow, strongly barred windows, built in a square and with such mighty walls, that Volodyovski saw at once that even if Kmita had blown up the house with powder that room would have surely remained unharmed. This gave him a better opinion of Kmita. The lady was sitting on a chest not far from the door, with her head drooping, and her face almost hidden by her hair. She did not raise it when she heard the knight coming. She thought beyond doubt that it was Kmita himself or some one of his people. Pan Volodyovski stood in the door, coughed once, a second time, and seeing no result from that, said—

“My lady, you are free!”

“From under the drooping hair blue eyes looked at the knight, and then a comely face appeared, though pale and as it were not conscious. Volodyovski was hoping for thanks, an outburst of gladness; but the lady sat motionless, distraught, and merely looked at him. Therefore the knight spoke again—

“Come to yourself, my lady! God has regarded innocence—you are free, and can return to Vodokty.”

This time there was more consciousness in the look of Panna Billevich. She rose from the chest, shook back her hair, and asked, “Who are you?”

“Michael Volodyovski, colonel of dragoons with the *voevoda* of Vilna.”

“Did I hear a battle—shots? Tell me.”

“Yes. We came to save you.”

She regained her senses completely. “I thank you,” said she hurriedly, with a low voice, through which a mortal disquiet was breaking. “But what happened to him?”

“To Kmita? Fear not, my lady! He is lying lifeless in the yard; and without praising myself I did it.”

Volodyovski uttered this with a certain boastfulness; but if he expected admiration he deceived himself terribly. She said not a word, but tottered and began to seek support behind with her hands. At last she sat heavily on the same chest from which she had risen a moment before.

The knight sprang to her quickly: “What is the matter, my lady?”

“Nothing, nothing—wait, permit me. Then is Pan Kmita killed?”

“What is Pan Kmita to me?” interrupted Volodyovski; “it is a question here of you.”

That moment her strength came back; for she rose again, and looking him straight in the eyes, screamed with anger, impatience, and despair: “By the living God, answer! Is he killed?”

“Pan Kmita is wounded,” answered the astonished Volodyovski.

“Is he alive?”

“He is alive.”

“It is well! I thank you.”

And with step still tottering she moved toward the door. Volodyovski stood for a while moving his mustaches violently and shaking his head; then he muttered to himself, “Does she thank me because Kmita is wounded, or because he is alive?”

He followed Olenka, and found her in the adjoining bed room standing in the middle of it as if turned to stone. Four nobles were bearing in at that moment Pan Kmita; the first two advancing sidewise appeared in the door, and between them hung toward the floor the pale head of Pan Andrei, with closed eyes, and clots of black blood in his hair.

“Slowly,” said Krysh Domashevich, walking behind, “slowly across the threshold. Let someone hold his head. Slowly!”

“With what can we hold it when our hands are full?” answered those in front.

At that moment Panna Aleksandra approached them, pale as was Kmita himself, and placed both hands under his lifeless head.

“This is the lady,” said Krysh Domashevich.

“It is I. Be careful!” answered she, in a low voice.

Volodyovski looked on, and his mustaches quivered fearfully.

Meanwhile they placed Kmita on the bed. Krysh Domashevich began to wash his head with water; then he fixed a plaster previously prepared to the wound, and said—

“Now let him lie quietly. Oh, that’s an iron head not to burst from such a blow! He may recover, for he is young. But he got it hard.”

Then he turned to Olenka: "Let me wash your hands—here is water. A kind heart is in you that you were not afraid to put blood on yourself for that man."

Speaking thus, he wiped her palms with a cloth; but she grew pale and changed in the eyes.

Volodyovski sprang to her again: "There is nothing here for you, my lady. You have shown Christian charity to an enemy; return home." And he offered her his arm.

She however, did not look at him, but turning to Krysh Domashevich, said, "Pan Kryshtof, conduct me."

Both went out, and Volodyovski followed them. In the yard the nobles began to shout at sight of her, and cry, "Vivat!" But she went forward, pale, staggering, with compressed lips, and with fire in her eyes.

"Long life to our lady! Long life to our colonel!" cried powerful voices.

An hour later Volodyovski returned at the head of the Lauda men toward the villages. The sun had risen already; the early morning in the world was gladsome, a real spring morning. The Lauda men clattered forward in a formless crowd along the highway, discussing the events of the night and praising Volodyovski to the skies; but he rode on thoughtful and silent. Those eyes looking from behind the dishevelled hair did not leave his mind, nor that slender form, imposing though bent by grief and pain.

"It is a marvel what a wonder she is," said he to himself—"a real princess! I have saved her honor and surely her life, for though the powder would not have blown up the treasure-room she would have died of pure fright. She ought to be grateful. But who can understand a fair head? She looked on me as on some serving-lad, I know not whether from haughtiness or perplexity."

## Chapter IX

These thoughts did not let Volodyovski sleep on the night following. For a number of days he was thinking continually of Panna Aleksandra, and saw that she had dropped deeply into his heart. Besides, the Lauda nobles wished to bring about a marriage between them. It is true that she had refused him without hesitation, but at that time she neither knew him nor had seen him. Now it was something quite different. He had wrested her in knightly fashion from the hands of a man of violence, had exposed himself to bullets and sabres, had captured her like a fortress. Whose is she, if not his? Can she refuse him anything, even her hand? Well, shall he not try? Perhaps affection has begun in her from gratitude, since it happens often in the world that the rescued lady gives straightway her hand to her rescuer. If she has not conceived an affection for him as yet, it behooves him all the more to exert himself in the matter.

“But if she remembers and loves the other man still?”

“It cannot be,” repeated Volodyovski to himself; “if she had not rejected him, he would not have taken her by force. She showed, it is true, uncommon kindness to him; but it is a woman’s work to take pity on the wounded, even if they are enemies. She is young, without guardianship; it is time for her to marry. It is clear that she has no vocation for the cloister, or she would have entered one already. There has been time enough. Men will annoy such a comely lady continually—some for her fortune, others for her beauty, and still others for her high blood. Oh, a defence the reality of which she can see with her own eyes will be dear to her. It is time too for thee to settle down, my dear Michael!” said Volodyovski to himself. “Thou art young yet, but the years hurry swiftly. Thou wilt win not fortune in service, but rather more wounds in thy skin, and to thy giddy life will come an end.”

Here through the memory of Pan Volodyovski passed a whole line of young ladies after whom he had sighed in his life. Among them were some very beautiful and of high blood, but one more charming and distinguished there was not. Besides, the people of these parts exalted that family and that lady, and from her eyes there looked such honesty that may God give no worse wife to the best man.

Pan Volodyovski felt that a prize was meeting him which might not come a second time, and this the more since he had rendered the lady such uncommon service. “Why delay?” said he to himself. “What better can I wait for? I must try.”

Pshaw! but war is at hand. His arm was well. It was a shame for a knight to go courting when his country was stretching forth its hands imploring deliverance. Pan Michael had the heart of an honest soldier; and though he had served almost from boyhood, though he had taken part in nearly all the wars of his time, he knew what he owed his country, and he dreamed not of rest.

Precisely because he had served his country not for gain, reward, or praise, but from his soul, had he in that regard a clean conscience, he felt his worth, and that gave him solace. “Others were frolicking, but I was fighting,” thought he. “The Lord God will reward the little soldier, and will help him this time.”

But he saw that soon there would be no time for courting; there was need to act promptly, and put everything on the hazard at once—to make a proposal on the spot, and either marry after

short bans or eat a watermelon.<sup>12</sup> “I have eaten more than one; I’ll eat another this time,” muttered Volodyovski, moving his yellow mustaches. “What harm will it do?”

But there was one side to this sudden decision which did not please him. He put the question to himself if going with a visit so soon after saving the lady he would not be like an importunate creditor who wishes a debt to be paid with usury and as quickly as possible. Perhaps it will not be in knightly fashion? Nonsense! for what can gratitude be asked, if not for service? And if this haste does not please the heart of the lady, if she looks askance at him, why, he can say to her, “Gracious lady, I would have come courting one year, and gazed at you as if I were nearsighted; but I am a soldier, and the trumpets are sounding for battle!”

“So I’ll go,” said Pan Volodyovski.

But after a while another thought entered his head: if she says, “Go to war, noble soldier, and after the war you will visit me during one year and look at me like a nearsighted man, for I will not give in a moment my soul and my body to one whom I know not!”

Then all will be lost! That it would be lost Pan Volodyovski felt perfectly; for leaving aside the lady whom in the interval some other man might marry, Volodyovski was not sure of his own constancy. Conscience declared that in him love was kindled like straw, but quenched as quickly.

Then all will be lost! And then wander on farther, thou soldier, a vagrant from one camp to another, from battle to battle, with no roof in the world, with no living soul of thy kindred! Search the four corners of earth when the war will be over, not knowing a place for thy heart save the barracks!

At last Volodyovski knew not what to do. It had become in a certain fashion narrow and stifling for him in the Patsuneli house; he took his cap therefore to go out on the road and enjoy the May sun. On the threshold he came upon one of Kmita’s men taken prisoner, who in the division of spoils had come to old Pakosh. The Cossack was warming himself in the sun and playing on a bandura.

“What art thou doing here?” asked Volodyovski.

“I am playing,” answered the Cossack, raising his thin face,

“Whence art thou?” asked Volodyovski, glad to have some interruption to his thoughts.

“From afar, from the Viahla.”

“Why not run away like the rest of thy comrades? Oh, such kind of sons! The nobles spared your lives in Lyubich so as to have laborers, and your comrades all ran away as soon as the ropes were removed.”

“I will not run away. I’ll die here like a dog.”

“So it has pleased thee here?”

“He runs away who feels better in the field; it is better for me here. I had my leg shot through, and the old man’s daughter here dressed it, and she spoke a kind word. Such a beauty I have not seen before with my eyes. Why should I go away?”

“Which one pleased thee so?”

“Maryska.”

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<sup>12</sup> It is the custom to put a watermelon in the carriage of an undesirable suitor—a refusal without words.



“And so thou wilt remain?”

“If I die, they will carry me out; if not, I will remain.”

“Dost thou think to earn Pakosh’s daughter?”

“I know not.”

“He would give death to such a poor fellow before he would his daughter.”

“I have gold pieces buried in the woods,” said the Cossack—“two purses.”

“From robbery?”

“From robbery.”

“Even if thou hadst a pot of gold, thou art a peasant and Pakosh is a noble.”

“I am an attendant boyar.”

“If thou art an attendant boyar, thou art worse than a peasant, for thou’rt a traitor. How couldst thou serve the enemy?”

“I did not serve the enemy.”

“And where did Pan Kmita find thee and thy comrades?”

“On the road. I served with the full hetman; but the squadron went to pieces, for we had nothing to eat. I had no reason to go home, for my house was burned. Others went to rob on the road, and I went with them.”

Volodyovski wondered greatly, for hitherto he had thought that Kmita had attacked Olenka with forces obtained from the enemy.

“So Pan Kmita did not get thee from Trubetskoi?”

“Most of the other men had served before with Trubetskoi and Hovanski, but they had run away too and taken to the road.”

“Why did you go with Pan Kmita?”

“Because he is a splendid ataman. We were told that when he called on anyone to go with him, thalers as it were flowed out of a bag, to that man. That’s why we went. Well, God did not give us good luck!”

Volodyovski began to rack his head, and to think that they had blackened Kmita too much; then he looked at the pale attendant boyar and again racked his head.

“And so thou art in love with her?”

“Oi, so much!”

Volodyovski walked away, and while going he thought: “That is a resolute man. He did not break his head; he fell in love and remained. Such men are best. If he is really an attendant boyar, he is of the same rank as the village nobles. When he digs up his gold pieces, perhaps the old man will give him Maryska. And why? Because he did not go to drumming with his fingers, but made up his mind that he would get her. I’ll make up my mind too.”

Thus meditating, Volodyovski walked along the road in the sunshine. Sometimes he would stop, fix his eyes on the ground or raise them to the sky, then again go farther, till all at once he saw a flock of wild ducks flying through the air. He began to soothsay whether he should go or not. It came out that he was to go.

“I will go; it cannot be otherwise.”

When he had said this he turned toward the house; but on the way he went once more to the stable, before which his two servants were playing dice.

“Syruts, is Basior’s mane plaited?”

“Plaited, Colonel!”

Volodyovski went into the stable. Basior neighed at him from the manger; the knight approached the horse, patted him on the side, and then began to count the braids on his neck. “Go—not go—go.” Again the soothsaying came out favorably.

“Saddle the horse and dress decently,” commanded Volodyovski.

Then he went to the house quickly, and began to dress. He put on high cavalry boots, yellow, with gilded spurs, and a new red uniform, besides a rapier with steel scabbard, the hilt ornamented with gold; in addition a half breastplate of bright steel covering only the upper part of the breast near the neck. He had also a lynx-skin cap with a beautiful heron feather; but since that was worn only with a Polish dress, he left it in the trunk, put on a Swedish helmet with a vizor, and went out before the porch.

“Where is your grace going?” asked old Pakosh, who was sitting on the railing.

“Where am I going? It is proper for me to go and inquire after the health of your lady; if not, she might think me rude.”

“From your grace there is a blaze like fire. Every bulfinch is a fool in comparison! Unless the lady is without eyes, she will fall in love in a minute.”

Just then the two youngest daughters of Pakosh hurried up on their way home from the forenoon milking, each with a pail of milk. When they saw Volodyovski they stood as if fixed to the earth from wonder.

“Is it a king or not?” asked Zonia.

“Your grace is like one going to a wedding,” added Marysia.

“Maybe there will be a wedding,” laughed old Pakosh, “for he is going to see our lady.”

Before the old man had stopped speaking the full pail dropped from the hand of Marysia, and a stream of milk flowed along till it reached the feet of Volodyovski.

“Pay attention to what you are holding!” said Pakosh, angrily. “Giddy thing!”

Marysia said nothing; she raised the pail and walked off in silence.

Volodyovski mounted his horse; his two servants followed him, riding abreast, and the three moved on toward Vodokty. The day was beautiful. The May sun played on the breastplate and helmet of the colonel, so that when at a distance he was gleaming among the willows it seemed that another sun was pushing along the road.

“I am curious to know whether I shall come back with a ring or a melon?” said the knight to himself.

“What is your grace saying?” asked Syruts.

“Thou art a blockhead!”

Syruts reined in his horse, and Volodyovski continued: “The whole luck of the matter is that it is not the first time!”

This idea gave him uncommon comfort.

When he arrived at Vodokty, Panna Aleksandra did not recognize him at the first moment, and he had to repeat his name. She greeted him heartily, but ceremoniously and with a certain constraint; but he presented himself befittingly—for though a soldier, not a courtier, he had still lived long at great houses, had been among people. He bowed to her therefore with great respect, and placing his hand on his heart spoke as follows:—

“I have come to inquire about the health of my lady benefactress, whether some pain has not come from the fright. I ought to have done this the day after, but I did not wish to give annoyance.”

“It is very kind of you to keep me in mind after having saved me from such straits. Sit down, for you are a welcome guest.”

“My lady,” replied Volodyovski, “had I forgotten you I should not have deserved the favor which God sent when he permitted me to give aid to so worthy a person.”

“No, I ought to thank first God, and then you.”

“Then let us both thank; for I implore nothing else than this—that he grant me to defend you as often as need comes.”

Pan Michael now moved his waxed mustaches, which curled up higher than his nose, for he was satisfied with himself for having gone straight in *medias res* and placed his sentiments, so to speak, on the table. She sat embarrassed and silent, but beautiful as a spring day. A slight flush came on her cheeks, and she covered her eyes with the long lashes from which shadows fell on the pupils.

“That confusion is a good sign,” thought Volodyovski; and coughing he proceeded: “You know, I suppose, that I led the Lauda men after your grandfather?”

“I know,” answered Olenka. “My late grandfather was unable to make the last campaign, but he was wonderfully glad when he heard whom the *voevoda* of Vilna had appointed to the command, and said that he knew you by reputation as a splendid soldier.”

“Did he say that?”

“I myself heard how he praised you to the skies, and how the Lauda men did the same after the campaign.”

“I am a simple soldier, not worthy of being exalted to the skies, nor above other men. Still I rejoice that I am not quite a stranger, for you do not think now that an unknown and uncertain guest has fallen with the last rain from the clouds. Many people are wandering about who call themselves persons of high family and say they are in office, and God knows who they are; perhaps often they are not even nobles.”

Pan Volodyovski gave the conversation this turn with the intent to speak of himself and of what manner of man he was. Olenka answered at once—

“No one would think that of you, for there are nobles of the same name in Lithuania.”

“But they have the seal Ossorya, while I am a Korchak Volodyovski and we take our origin from Hungary from a certain noble, Atylla, who while pursued by his enemies made a vow to the Most Holy Lady that he would turn from Paganism to the Catholic faith if he should escape with his life. He kept this vow after he had crossed three rivers in safety—the same rivers that we bear on our shield.”

“Then your family is not from those parts?”

“No, my lady, I am from the Ukraine of the Russian Volodyovskis, and to this time I own villages there which the enemy have occupied; but I serve in the army from youth, thinking less of land than of the harm inflicted on our country by strangers. I have served from the earliest years with the *voevoda* of Rus, our not sufficiently lamented Prince Yeremi, with whom I have been in all his wars. I was at Mahnovka and at Konstantinoff; I endured the hunger of Zbaraj, and after Berestechko our gracious lord the king pressed my head. God is my witness that I have not come here to praise myself, but desire that you might know, my lady, that I am no hanger-on, whose work is in shouting and who spares his own blood, but that my life has been passed in honorable service in which some little fame was won, and my conscience stained in nothing, so God be my aid! And to this worthy people can give testimony.”

“Would that all were like you!” sighed Olenka.

“Surely you have now in mind that man of violence who dared to raise his godless hand against you.”

Panna Aleksandra fixed her eyes on the floor, and said not a word.

“He has received pay for his deeds,” continued Volodyovski, “though it is said that he will recover, still he will not escape punishment. All honorable people condemn him, and even too much; for they say that he had relations with the enemy so as to obtain reinforcements—which is untrue, for those men with whom he attacked you did not come from the enemy, but were collected on the highway.”

“How do you know that?” asked the lady, raising her blue eyes to Volodyovski.

“From the Cossacks themselves. He is a wonderful man, that Kmita; for when I accused him of treason before the duel he made no denial, though I accused him unjustly. It is clear that there is a devilish pride in him.”

“And have you said everywhere that he is not a traitor?”

“I have not, for I did not know that he was not a traitor; but now I will say so. It is wrong to cast such a calumny even on our own greatest enemy.”

Panna Aleksandra’s eyes rested a second time on the little knight with an expression of sympathy and gratitude. “You are so honorable a man that your equal is rare.”

Volodyovski fell to twitching his mustaches time after time with contentment. “To business, Michael dear!” said he, mentally. Then aloud to the lady: “I will say more: I blame Pan Kmita’s method, but I do not wonder that he tried to obtain you, my lady, in whose service Venus herself might act as a maid. Despair urged him on to an evil deed, and will surely urge him a second time, should opportunity offer. How will you remain alone, with such beauty and without protection? There are more men like Kmita in the world; you will rouse more such ardors, and will expose your honor to fresh perils. God sent me favor that I was able to free you, but now the trumpets of Gradivus call me. Who will watch over you? My gracious lady, they accuse soldiers of fickleness, but unjustly. Neither is my heart of rock, and it cannot remain indifferent to so many excellent charms.”

Here Volodyovski fell on both knees before Olenka. “My gracious lady,” said he, while kneeling, “I inherited the command after your grandfather; let me inherit the granddaughter too. Give me guardianship over you; let me enjoy the bliss of mutual affection. Take me as a perpetual protection, and you will be at rest and free from care, for though I go to the war my name itself will defend you.”

The lady sprang from the chair and heard Pan Volodyovski with astonishment; but he still spoke on:—

“I am a poor soldier, but a noble, and a man of honor. I swear to you that on my shield and on my conscience not the slightest stain can be found. I am at fault perhaps in this haste; but understand too that I am called by the country, which will not yield even for you. Will you not comfort me—will you not give me solace, will you not say a kind word?”

“You ask the impossible. As God lives, that cannot be!” answered Olenka, with fright.

“It depends on your will.”

“For that reason I say no to you promptly.” Here she frowned. “Worthy sir, I am indebted to you much, I do not deny it. Ask what you like, I am ready to give everything except my hand.”

Pan Volodyovski rose. “Then you do not wish me, my lady? Is that true?”

“I cannot.”

“And that is your last word?”

“The last and irrevocable word.”

“Perhaps the haste only has displeased you. Give me some hope.”

“I cannot, I cannot.”

“Then there is no success for me here, as elsewhere there was none. My worthy lady, offer not pay for services, I have not come for that; and if I ask your hand it is not as pay, but from your own goodwill. Were you to say that you give it because you must, I would not take it. Where there is no freedom there is no happiness. You have disdained me. God grant that a worse do not meet you. I go from this house as I entered, save this that I shall not come here again. I am accounted here as nobody. Well, let it be so. Be happy even with that very Kmita, for perhaps you are angry because I placed a sabre between you. If he seems better to you, then in truth you are not for me.”

Olenka seized her temples with her hands, and repeated a number of times: “O God! O God! O God!”

But that pain of hers made no impression on Volodyovski, who, when he had bowed, went out angry and wrathful; then he mounted at once and rode off.

“A foot of mine shall never stand there again!” said he, aloud.

His attendant Syruts riding behind pushed up at once. “What does your grace say?”

“Blockhead!” answered Volodyovski.

“You told me that when we were coming hither.”

Silence followed; then Volodyovski began to mutter again: “Ah, I was entertained there with ingratitude, paid for affection with contempt. It will come to me surely to serve in the cavalry till death; that is fated. Such a devil of a lot fell to me—every move a refusal! There is no justice on earth. What did she find against me?”

Here Pan Michael frowned, and began to work mightily with his brain; all at once he slapped his leg with his hand. “I know now,” shouted he; “she loves that fellow yet—it cannot be otherwise.”

But this idea did not clear his face. "So much the worse for me," thought he, after a while; "for if she loves him yet, she will not stop loving him. He has already done his worst. He may go to war, win glory, repair his reputation. And it is not right to hinder him; he should rather be aided, for that is a service to the country. He is a good soldier, 'tis true. But how did he fascinate her so? Who can tell? Some have such fortune that if one of them looks on a woman she is ready to follow him into fire. If a man only knew how this is done or could get some captive spirit, perhaps he might effect something. Merit has no weight with a fair head. Pan Zagloba said wisely that a fox and a woman are the most treacherous creatures alive. But I grieve that all is lost. Oh, she is a terribly beautiful woman, and honorable and virtuous, as they say; ambitious as the devil—that's evident. Who knows that she will marry him though she loves him, for he has offended and disappointed her sorely. He might have won her in peace, but he chose to be lawless. She is willing to resign everything—marriage and children. It is grievous for me, but maybe it is worse for her, poor thing!"

Here Volodyovski fell into a fit of tenderness over the fate of Olenka, and began to rack his brain and smack his lips. At last he said—

"May God aid her! I have no ill feeling against her! It is not the first refusal for me, but for her it is the first suffering. The poor woman can scarcely recover now from sorrows. I have put out her eyes with this Kmita, and besides have given her gall to drink. It was not right to do that, and I must repair the wrong. I wish bullets had struck me, for I have acted rudely. I will write a letter asking forgiveness, and then help her in what way I can."

Further thoughts concerning Pan Kmita were interrupted by the attendant Syruts, who riding forward again said: "Pardon, but over there on the hill is Pan Kharlamp riding with someone else."

"Where?"

"Over there!"

"It is true that two horsemen are visible, but Pan Kharlamp remained with the prince *voevoda* of Vilna. How dost thou know him so far away?"

"By his cream-colored horse. The whole array knows that horse anywhere."

"As true as I live, there is a cream-colored horse in view, but it may be some other man's horse."

"When I recognize the gait, it is surely Pan Kharlamp."

They spurred on; the other horsemen did the same, and soon Volodyovski saw that Pan Kharlamp was in fact approaching.

Pan Kharlamp was the lieutenant of a light-horse squadron in the Lithuanian quota. Pan Volodyovski's acquaintance of long standing, an old soldier and a good one. Once he and the little knight had quarrelled fiercely, but afterward while serving together and campaigning they acquired a love for each other. Volodyovski sprang forward quickly, and opening his arms cried—

"How do you prosper, O Great-nose? Whence do you come?"

The officer—who in truth deserved the nickname of Great-nose, for he had a mighty nose—fell into the embraces of the colonel, and greeted him joyously; then after he had recovered his breath, he said, "I have come to you with a commission and money."

"But from whom?"

“From the prince *voevoda* of Vilna, our hetman. He sends you a commission to begin a levy at once, and another commission to Pan Kmita, who must be in this neighborhood.”

“To Pan Kmita also? How shall we both make a levy in one neighborhood?”

“He is to go to Troki, and you to remain in these parts.”

“How did you know where to look for me?”

“The hetman himself inquired carefully till the people from this place who have remained near him told where to find you. I came with sure information. You are in great and continual favor there. I have heard the prince himself say that he had not hoped to inherit anything from Prince Yeremi, but still he did inherit the greatest of knights.”

“May God grant him to inherit the military success of Yeremi! It is a great honor for me to conduct a levy. I will set about it at once. There is no lack of warlike people here, if there was only something with which to give them an outfit. Have you brought much money?”

“You will count it at Patsuneli.”

“So you have been there already? But be careful; for there are shapely girls in Patsuneli, like poppies in a garden.”

“Ah, that is why stopping there pleased you! But wait, I have a private letter from the hetman to you.”

“Then give it.”

Kharlamp drew forth a letter with the small seal of the Radzivills. Volodyovski opened it and began to read:—

*Worthy Colonel Pan Volodyovski—Knowing your sincere wish to serve the country, I send you a commission to make a levy, and not as is usually done, but with great haste, for periculum in mora (there is danger in delay). If you wish to give us joy, then let the squadron be mustered and ready for the campaign by the end of July, or the middle of August at the latest. We are anxious to know how you can find good horses, especially since we send money sparingly, for more we could not hammer from the under-treasurer, who after his old fashion is unfriendly to us. Give one half of this money to Pan Kmita, for whom Pan Kharlamp has also a commission. We hope that he will serve us zealously. But tidings have come to our ears of his violence in Upita, therefore it is better for you to take the letter directed to him from Kharlamp, and discover yourself whether to deliver it to him or not. Should you consider the accusations against him too great, and creating infamy, then do not give it, for we are afraid lest our enemies—such as the under-treasurer, and the voevoda of Vityebsk—might raise outcries against us because we commit such functions to unworthy persons. But if you give the letter after having found that there is nothing important, let Pan Kmita endeavor to wipe away his faults by the greatest exertion in service, and in no case to appear in the courts, for he belongs to our hetman’s jurisdiction—we and no one else will judge him. Pay attention to our charge at once, in view of the confidence which we have in your judgment and faithful service.*

*Yanush Radzivill,*

*Prince in Birji and Dubinki, Voevoda of Vilna.*

“The hetman is terribly anxious about horses for you,” said Kharlamp, when the little knight had finished reading.

“It will surely be difficult in the matter of horses,” answered Volodyovski. “A great number of the small nobility here will rally at the first summons, but they have only wretched little

Jmud ponies, not very capable of service. For a good campaign it would be needful to give them all fresh horses.”

“Those are good horses; I know them of old, wonderfully enduring and active.”

“Bah!” responded Volodyovski, “but small, and the men here are large. If they should form in line on such horses, you would think them a squadron mounted on dogs. There is where the rub is. I will work with zeal, for I am in haste myself. Leave Kmita’s commission with me, as the hetman commands; I will give it to him. It has come just in season.”

“But why?”

“For he has acted here in Tartar fashion and taken a lady captive. There are as many lawsuits and questions hanging over him as he has hairs on his head. It is not a week since I had a sabre-duel with him.”

“*Ai!*” cried Kharlamp. “If you had a sabre-duel with him, he is in bed at this moment.”

“But he is better already. In a week or two he will be well. What is to be heard *de publicis*?”

“Evil in the old fashion. The under-treasurer, Pan Gosyevski, the full hetman, is ever quarrelling with the prince; and as the hetmans do not agree, affairs do not move in harmony. Still we have improved a little, and I think that if we had concord we might manage the enemy. God will permit us yet to ride on their necks to their own land. Gosyevski is to blame for all.”

“But others say it is specially the grand hetman, Prince Radzivill.”

“They are traitors. The *voevoda* of Vityebsk talks that way, for he and the under-treasurer are cronies this long time.”

“The *voevoda* of Vityebsk is a worthy citizen.”

“Are you on the side of Sapyeha against the Radzivills?”

“I am on the side of the country, on whose side all should be. In this is the evil—that even soldiers are divided into parties, instead of fighting. That Sapyeha is a worthy citizen, I would say in the presence of the prince himself, even though I serve under him.”

“Good people have striven to bring about harmony, but with no result,” said Kharlamp.

“There is a terrible movement of messengers from the king to our prince. They say that something is hatching. We expected with the visit of the king a call of the general militia; it has not come! They say that it may be necessary in some places.”

“In the Ukraine, for instance.”

“I know. But once Lieutenant Brohovich told what he heard with his own ears. Tyzenhauz came from the king to our hetman, and when they had shut themselves in they talked a long time about something which Brohovich could not overhear; but when they came out, with his own ears he heard the hetman say, ‘From this a new war may come.’ We racked our heads greatly to find what this could mean.”

“Surely he was mistaken. With whom could there be a new war? The emperor is more friendly to us now than to our enemies, since it is proper for him to take the side of a civilized people. With the Swedes the truce is not yet at an end, and will not be for six years; the Tartars are helping us in the Ukraine, which they would not do without the will of Turkey.”

“Well, we could not get at anything.”

“For there was nothing. But, praise God, I have fresh work; I began to yearn for war.”



“Do you wish to carry the commission yourself to Kmita?”

“I do, because, as I have told you, the hetman has so ordered. It is proper for me to visit Kmita now according to knightly custom, and having the commission I shall have a still better chance to talk with him. Whether I give the commission is another thing; I think that I shall, for it is left to my discretion.”

“That suits me; I am in such haste for the road. I have a third commission to Pan Stankyeovich. Next I am commanded to go to Kyedani, to remove the cannon which are there; then to inspect Birji and see if everything is ready for defence.”

“And to Birji too?”

“Yes.”

“That is a wonder to me. The enemy have won no new victories, and it is far for them to go to Birji on the boundary of Courland. And since, as I see, new squadrons are being formed, there will be men to defend even those parts which have fallen under the power of the enemy. The Courlanders do not think of war with us. They are good soldiers, but few; and Radzivill might put the breath out of them with one hand.”

“I wonder too,” answered Kharlamp, “all the more that haste is enjoined on me, and instructions given that if I find anything out of order I am to inform quickly Prince Boguslav Radzivill, who is to send Peterson the engineer.”

“What can this mean? I hope ’tis no question of domestic war. May God preserve us from that! But when Prince Boguslav touches an affair the devil will come of the amusement.”

“Say nothing against him; he is a valiant man.”

“I say nothing against his valor, but there is more of the German or Frenchman in him than the Pole. And of the Commonwealth he never thinks; his only thought is how to raise the house of Radzivill to the highest point and lower all others. He is the man who rouses pride in the *voevoda* of Vilna, our hetman, who of himself has no lack of it; and those quarrels with Sapyeha and Gosyevski are the tree and the fruit of Prince Boguslav’s planting.”

“I see that you are a great statesman. You should marry, Michael dear, as soon as possible, so that such wisdom is not lost.”

Volodyovski looked very attentively at his comrade. “Marry—why is that?”

“Maybe you are going courting, for I see that you are dressed as on parade.”

“Give us peace!”

“Oh, own up!”

“Let each man eat his own melons, not inquire about those of other men. You too have eaten more than one. It is just the time now to think of marriage when we have a levy on our hands!”

“Will you be ready in July?”

“At the end of July, even if I have to dig horses out of the ground. Thank God that this task has come, or melancholy would have devoured me.”

So tidings from the hetman and the prospect of heavy work gave great consolation to Pan Michael; and before he reached Patsuneli, he had scarcely a thought of the rebuff which had met him an hour before. News of the commission flew quickly through the whole village. The nobles came straightway to inquire if the news was true; and when Volodyovski

confirmed it, his words made a great impression. The readiness was universal, though some were troubled because they would have to march at the end of July before harvest.

Volodyovski sent messengers to other neighborhoods—to Upita, and to the most considerable noble houses. In the evening a number of Butryms, Stakyans, and Domasheviches came.

They began to incite one another, show greater readiness, threaten the enemy, and promise victory to themselves. The Butryms alone were silent; but that was not taken ill, for it was known that they would rise as one man. Next day it was as noisy in all the villages as in beehives. People talked no more of Pan Kmita and Panna Aleksandra, but of the future campaign. Volodyovski also forgave Olenka sincerely the refusal, comforting himself meanwhile in his heart that that was not the last one, as the love was not the last. At the same time he pondered somewhat on what he had to do with the letter to Kmita.

## Chapter X

A time of serious labor began now for Volodyovski—of letter-writing and journeying. The week following he transferred his headquarters to Upita, where he began the levy. The nobles flocked to him willingly, both great and small, for he had a wide reputation. But especially came the Lauda men, for whom horses had to be provided. Volodyovski hurried around as if in boiling water; but since he was active and spared no pains, everything went on successfully enough. Meanwhile he visited in Lyubich Pan Kmita, who had advanced considerably toward health; and though he had not risen yet from his bed, it was known that he would recover.

Kmita recognized the knight at once, and turned a little pale at sight of him. Even his hand moved involuntarily toward the sabre above his head; but he checked himself when he saw a smile on the face of his guest, put forth his thin hand, and said—

“I thank you for the visit. This is courtesy worthy of such a cavalier.”

“I have come to inquire if you cherish ill feeling against me,” said Pan Michael.

“I have no ill feeling; for no common man overcame me, but a swordsman of the first degree. Hardly have I escaped.”

“And how is your health?”

“It is surely a wonder to you that I have come out alive. I confess myself that it is no small exploit.” Here Kmita laughed. “Well, the affair is not lost. You may finish me at your pleasure.”

“I have not come with such intent—”

“You must be the devil,” interrupted Kmita, “or must have a captive spirit. God knows I am far from self-praise at this moment, for I am returning from the other world; but before meeting you I thought, ‘If I am not the best sabre in the Commonwealth, I am the second.’ But I could not have warded off the first blow if you had not wished it. Tell me where did you learn so much?”

“I had some little innate capacity, and my father taught me from boyhood. He said many a time, ‘God has given you insignificant stature; if men do not fear you, they will laugh at you.’ Later on, while serving with the *voevoda* of Rus, I finished my course. With him were a few men who could stand boldly before me.”

“But could there be such?”

“There could, for there were. There was Pan Podbipienta, a Lithuanian of high birth, who fell at Zbaraj—the Lord light his soul!—a man of such strength that there were no means to stop him, for he could cut through opponent and weapons. Then there was Skshetuski, my heartfelt friend and confidant, of whom you must have heard.”

“Of course! He came out of Zbaraj, and burst through the Cossacks. So you are of such a brace, and a man of Zbaraj! With the forehead! with the forehead! Wait a moment; I have heard of you at the castle of Radzivill, *voevoda* of Vilna. Your name is Michael?”

“Exactly; I am Michael. My first name is Yerzi; but since Saint Michael leads the whole host of heaven, and has gamed so many victories over the banners of hell, I prefer him as a patron.”

“It is sure that Yerzi is not equal to Michael. Then you are that same Volodyovski of whom it is said that he cut up Bogun?”

“I am he.”

“Well, to receive a slash on the head from such a man is not a misfortune. If God would grant us to be friends! You called me a traitor, ’tis true, but you were mistaken.” When he said this, Kmita frowned as if his wound caused him pain again.

“I confess my mistake,” answered Volodyovski. “I do not learn that from you; your men told me. And know that if I had not learned it I should not have come here.”

“Tongues have cut me and cut me,” said Kmita, with bitterness. “Let come what may, I confess more than one mark is against me; but in this neighborhood men have received me ungraciously.”

“You injured yourself most by burning Volmontovich, and by the last seizure.”

“Now they are crushing me with lawsuits. I am summoned to courts. They will not give a sick man time to recover. I burned Volmontovich, ’tis true, and cut down some people; but let God judge me if I did that from caprice. The same night, before the burning I made a vow to live with all men in peace, to attract to myself these homespuns around here, to satisfy the basswood barks in Upita, for there I really played the tyrant. I returned to my house, and what did I find? I found my comrades cut up like cattle, lying at the wall. When I learned that the Butryms had done this, the devil entered me, and I took stern vengeance. Would you believe why they were cut up, why they were slaughtered? I learned myself later from one of the Butryms, whom I found in the woods. Behold, it was for this—that they wanted to dance with the women of the nobles in a public house! Who would not have taken vengeance?”

“My worthy sir,” answered Volodyovski, “it is true that they acted severely with your comrades; but was it the nobles who killed them? No; their previous reputation killed them—that which they brought with them; for if orderly soldiers had wished to dance, surely they would not have slain them.”

“Poor fellows!” said Kmita, following his own thoughts, “while I was lying here now in a fever, they came in every evening through that door from the room outside. I saw them around this bed as if living, blue, hacked up, and groaning continually, ‘Yendrus! give money to have a Mass for our souls; we are in torments!’ Then I tell you the hair stood on my head, for the smell of sulphur from them was in the room. I gave money for a Mass. Oh, may it help them!”

A moment of silence then followed.

“As to the carrying off,” continued Kmita, “no one could have told you about that; for in truth she saved my life when the nobles were hunting me, but afterward she ordered me to depart and not show myself before her eyes. What was there left for me after that?”

“Still it was a Tartar method.”

“You know not what love is, and to what despair it may bring a man when he loses that which he prizes most dearly.”

“I know not what love is?” cried Volodyovski, with excitement. “From the time that I began to carry a sabre I was in love. It is true that the object changed, for I was never rewarded with a return. Were it not for that, there could have been no Troilus more faithful than I.”

“What kind of love can that be when the object is changing?” said Kmita.

“I will tell you something else which I saw with my own eyes. In the first period of the Hmelnitski affair, Bogun, the same who next to Hmelnitski has now the highest respect of the Cossacks, carried off Princess Kurtsevich, a maiden loved by Skshetuski above all things. That was a love! The whole army was weeping in view of Skshetuski’s despair; for his beard at some years beyond twenty grew gray, and can you guess what he did?”

“I have no means of knowing.”

“Well, because the country was in need, in humiliation, because the terrible Hmelnitski was triumphing, he did not go to seek the girl. He offered his suffering to God, and fought under Prince Yeremi in all the battles, including Zbaraj, and covered himself with such glory that today all repeat his name with respect. Compare his action with your own and see the difference.”

Kmita was silent, gnawed his mustache. Volodyovski continued—

“Then God rewarded and gave him the maiden. They married immediately after Zbaraj, and now have three children, though he has not ceased to serve. But you by making disturbance have given aid to the enemy and almost lost your own life, not to mention that a few days ago you might have lost the lady forever.”

“How is that?” asked Kmita, sitting up in the bed; “what happened to her?”

“Nothing; but there was found a man who asked for her hand and wanted to marry her.”

Kmita grew very pale; his hollow eyes began to shoot flames. He wanted to rise, even struggled for a moment; then cried, “Who was this devil’s son? By the living God, tell me!”

“I,” said Pan Volodyovski.

“You—you?” asked Kmita, with astonishment, “Is it possible?”

“It is.”

“Traitor! that will not go with you! But she—what—tell me everything. Did she accept?”

“She refused me on the spot, without thinking.”

A moment of silence followed. Kmita breathed heavily, and fixed his eyes on Volodyovski, who said—

“Why call me traitor? Am I your brother or your best man? Have I broken faith with you? I conquered you in battle, and could have done what I liked.”

“In old fashion one of us would seal this with his blood—if not with a sabre, with a gun. I would shoot you; then let the devils take me.”

“Then you would have shot me, for if she had not refused I should not have accepted a second duel. What had I to fight for? Do you know why she refused me?”

“Why?” repeated Kmita, like an echo.

“Because she loves you.”

That was more than the exhausted strength of the sick man could bear. His head fell on the pillows, a copious sweat came out on his forehead, and he lay there in silence.

“I am terribly weak,” said he, after a while. “How do you know that she loves me?”

“Because I have eyes and see, because I have reason and observe; just after I had received the refusal my head became clear. To begin with, when after the duel I came to tell her that she was free, for I had slain you, she was dazed, and instead of showing gratitude she ignored me

entirely; second, when the Domasheviches were bringing you in, she carried your head like a mother; and third, because when I visited her, she received me as if someone were giving me a slap in the face. If these explanations are not sufficient, it is because your reason is shaken and your mind impaired.”

“If that is true,” said Kmita, with a feeble voice, “many plasters are put on my wounds; better balsam than your words there could not be.”

“But a traitor applies this balsam.”

“Oh, forgive me! Such happiness cannot find place in my mind, that she has a wish for me still.”

“I said that she loves you; I did not say that she has a wish for you—that is altogether different.”

“If she has no wish for me, I will break my head against the wall; I cannot help it.”

“You might if you had a sincere desire of effacing your faults. There is war now; you may go, you may render important services to our dear country, you may win glory with bravery, and mend your reputation. Who is without fault? Who has no sin on his conscience? Everyone has. But the road to penance and correction is open to all. You sinned through violence, then avoid it henceforth; you offended against the country by raising disturbance in time of war, save the country now; you committed wrongs against men, make reparation for them. This is a better and a surer way for you than breaking your head.”

Kmita looked attentively at Volodyovski; then said, “You speak like a sincere friend of mine.”

“I am not your friend, but in truth I am not your enemy; and I am sorry for that lady, though she refused me and I said a sharp word to her in parting. I shall not hang myself by reason of the refusal; it is not the first for me, and I am not accustomed to treasure up offences. If I persuade you to the right road, that will be to the country a service on my part, for you are a good and experienced soldier.”

“Is there time for me to return to this road? How many summonses are waiting for me? I shall have to go from the bed to the court—unless I flee hence, and I do not wish to do that. How many summonses, and every case a sure sentence of condemnation!”

“Look, here is a remedy!” said Volodyovski, taking out the commission.

“A commission!” cried Kmita; “for whom?”

“For you! You need not appear at any court, for you are in the hetman’s jurisdiction. Hear what the prince *voevoda* writes me.”

Volodyovski read to Kmita the private letter of Radzivill, drew breath, moved his mustaches, and said, “Here, as you see, it depends on me either to give you the commission or to retain it.”

Uncertainty, alarm, and hope were reflected on Kmita’s face. “What will you do?” asked he, in a low voice.

“I will give the commission,” said Volodyovski.

Kmita said nothing at first; he dropped his head on the pillow, and looked some time at the ceiling. Suddenly his eyes began to grow moist; and tears, unknown guests in those eyes, were hanging on the lashes.

“May I be torn with horses,” said he at last, “may I be pulled out of my skin, if I have seen a more honorable man! If through me you have received a refusal—if Olenka, as you say, loves me—another would have taken vengeance all the more, would have pushed me down deeper; but you give your hand and draw me forth as it were from the grave.”

“Because I will not sacrifice to personal interests the country, to which you may render notable service. But I say that if you had obtained those Cossacks from Trubetskoi or Hovanski, I should have kept the commission. It is your whole fortune that you did not do that.”

“It is for others to take an example from you,” said Kmita. “Give me your hand. God permit me to repay you with some good, for you have bound me in life and in death.”

“Well, we will speak of that later. Now listen! There is no need of appearing before any court, but go to work. If you will render service to the Commonwealth, these nobles will forgive you, for they are very sensitive to the honor of the State. You may blot out your offences yet, win reputation, walk in glory as in sunlight, and I know of one lady who will give you a lifelong reward.”

“Hei!” cried Kmita, in ecstasy, “why should I rot here in bed when the enemy is trampling the country? Hei! is there anyone there? Come, boy, give me my boots; come hither! May the thunderbolts strike me in this bed if I stay here longer in uselessness!”

Volodyovski smiled with satisfaction and said, “Your spirit is stronger than your body, for the body is not able to serve you yet.”

When he had said this he began to take farewell; but Kmita would not let him go, thanked him, and wished to treat him with wine. In fact, it was well toward evening when the little knight left Lyubich and directed his course to Vodokty.

“I will reward her in the best fashion for her sharp word,” said he to himself, “when I tell her that Kmita will rise, not only from his bed, but from evil fame. He is not ruined yet, only very passionate. I shall comfort her wonderfully too, and I think she will meet me better this time than when I offered myself to her.”

Here our honest Pan Michael sighed and muttered: “Could it be known that there is one in the world predestined to me?”

In the midst of such meditations he came to Vodokty. The towheaded man of Jmud ran out to the gate, but made no hurry to open; he only said—

“The heiress is not at home.”

“Has she gone away?”

“She has gone away.”

“Whither?”

“Who knows?”

“When will she come back?”

“Who knows?”

“Speak in human fashion. Did she not say when she would return?”

“Maybe she will not return at all, for she went away with wagons and bags. From that I think she has gone far for a long time.”

“Is that true?” muttered Pan Michael. “See what I have done!”

## Chapter XI

Usually when the warm rays of the sun begin to break through the wintry veil of clouds, and when the first buds appear on the trees and the green fleece spreads over the damp fields, a better hope enters the hearts of men. But the spring of 1655 brought not the usual comfort to the afflicted inhabitants of the Commonwealth. The entire eastern boundary, from the north to the wilderness on the south, was bound as it were by a border of flame; and the spring torrents could not quench the conflagration, but that border grew wider continually and occupied broader regions. And besides there appeared in the sky signs of evil omen, announcing still greater defeats and misfortunes. Time after time from the clouds which swept over the heavens were formed as it were lofty towers like the flanks of fortresses, which afterward rolled down with a crash. Thunderbolts struck the earth while it was still covered with snow, pinewoods became yellow, and the limbs of trees crossed one another in strange sickly figures; wild beasts and birds fell down and died from unknown diseases. Finally, strange spots were seen on the sun, having the form of a hand holding an apple, of a heart pierced through, and a cross. The minds of men were disturbed more and more; monks were lost in calculating what these signs might mean. A wonderful kind of disquiet seized all hearts.

New and sudden wars were foretold, God knows from what source. An ominous report began to circulate from mouth to mouth in villages and towns that a tempest was coming from the side of the Swedes. Apparently nothing seemed to confirm this report, for the truce concluded with Sweden had six years yet to run; and still people spoke of the danger of war, even at the Diet, which Yan Kazimir the king had called on May 19 in Warsaw.

Anxious eyes were turned more and more to Great Poland, on which the storm would come first. Leshchynski, the *voevoda* of Lenchytsk, and Narushevich, chief secretary of Lithuania, went on an embassy to Sweden; but their departure, instead of quieting the alarmed, increased still more the disquiet.

“That embassy smells of war,” wrote Yanush Radzivill.

“If a storm were not threatening from that direction, why were they sent?” asked others.

Kanazyl, the first ambassador, had barely returned from Stockholm; but it was to be seen clearly that he had done nothing, since immediately after him important senators were sent.

However people of more judgment did not believe yet in the possibility of war. “The Commonwealth,” said they, “has given no cause, and the truce endures in full validity. How could oaths be broken, the most sacred agreements violated, and a harmless neighbor attacked in robber fashion? Besides, Sweden remembers the wounds inflicted by the Polish sabre at Kirchholm and Putsk; and Gustavus Adolphus, who in western Europe found not his equal, yielded a number of times to Pan Konyetspolski. The Swedes will not expose such great military glory won in the world to uncertain hazard before an opponent against whom they have never been able to stand in the field. It is true that the Commonwealth is exhausted and weakened by war; but Prussia and Great Poland, which in the last wars did not suffer at all, will of themselves be able to drive that hungry people beyond the sea to their barren rocks. There will be no war.”

To this alarmists answered again that even before the Diet at Warsaw counsel was taken by advice of the king at the provincial diet in Grodno concerning the defence of the boundary of



Great Poland, and taxes and soldiers assigned, which would not have been done unless danger was near.

And so minds were wavering between fear and hope; a grievous uncertainty weighed down the spirits of people, when suddenly an end was put to it by the proclamation of Boguslav Leshchynski, commander in Great Poland, summoning the general militia of the provinces of Poznan and Kalisk for the defence of the boundaries against the impending Swedish storm.

Every doubt vanished. The shout, "War!" was heard throughout Great Poland and all the lands of the Commonwealth.

That was not only a war, but a new war. Hmelnitski, reinforced by Buturlin, was raging in the south and the east; Hovanski and Trubetskoi on the north and east; the Swede was approaching from the west! The fiery border had become a fiery wheel.

The country was like a besieged camp; and in the camp evil was happening. One traitor, Radzeyovski, had fled from it, and was in the tent of the invaders. He was guiding them to ready spoil, he was pointing out the weak sides; it was his work to tempt the garrisons. And in addition there was no lack of ill will and envy—no lack of magnates quarrelling among themselves or angry with the king by reason of offices refused, and ready at any moment to sacrifice the cause of the nation to their own private profit; there was no lack of dissidents wishing to celebrate their own triumph even on the grave of the fatherland; and a still greater number was there of the disorderly, the heedless, the slothful, and of those who were in love with themselves, their own ease and well being.

Still Great Poland, a country wealthy and hitherto untouched by war, did not spare at least money for defence. Towns and villages of nobles furnished as many infantry as were assigned to them; and before the nobles moved in their own persons to the camp many-colored regiments of land infantry had moved thither under the leadership of captains appointed by the provincial diet from among men experienced in the art of war.

Tan Stanislav Dembinski led the land troops of Poznan, Pan Vladyslav Vlostovski those of Kotsian, and Pan Golts, a famous soldier and engineer, those of Valets. The peasants of Kalisk were commanded by Pan Stanislav Skshetuski, from a stock of valiant warriors, a cousin of the famous Yan from Zbaraj. Pan Katsper Jyhliniski led the millers and bailiffs of Konin. From Pyzdri marched Pan Stanislav Yarachevski, who had spent his youth in foreign wars; from Ktsyna, Pan Pyotr Skorashevski, and from Naklo, Pan Kosletski. But in military experience no one was equal to Pan Vladyslav Skorashevski, whose voice was listened to even by the commander in Great Poland himself and the *voevodas*.

In three places—at Pila, Uistsie, Vyelunie—had the captains fixed the lines on the Notets, waiting for the arrival of the nobles summoned to the general militia. The infantry dug trenches from morning till evening, looking continually toward the rear to see if the wished for cavalry were coming.

The first dignitary who came was Pan Andrei Grudzinski, *voevoda* of Kalisk. He lodged in the house of the mayor, with a numerous retinue of servants arrayed in white and blue colors. He expected that the nobles of Kalisk would gather round him straightway; but when no one appeared he sent for Captain Stanislav Skshetuski, who was occupied in digging trenches at the river.

"Where are my men?" asked he, after the first greetings of the captain, whom he had known from childhood.

"What men?" asked Pan Stanislav.

“The general militia of Kalisk.”

A smile of pain mingled with contempt appeared on the swarthy face of the soldier.

“Serene great mighty *voevoda*,” said he, “this is the time for shearing sheep, and in Dantzic they will not pay for badly washed wool. Every noble is now at a pond washing or weighing, thinking correctly that the Swedes will not run away.”

“How is that?” asked the troubled *voevoda*; “is there no one here yet?”

“Not a living soul, except the land infantry. And, besides, the harvest is near. A good manager will not leave home at such a season.”

“What do you tell me?”

“But the Swedes will not run away, they will only come nearer,” repeated the captain.

The pock-pitted face of the *voevoda* grew suddenly purple. “What are the Swedes to me? But this will be a shame for me in the presence of the other lords if I am here alone like a finger.”

Pan Stanislav laughed again: “Your grace will permit me to remark,” said he, “that the Swedes are the main thing here, and shame afterward. Besides, there will be no shame; for not only the nobles of Kalisk, but all other nobles, are absent.”

“They have run mad!” exclaimed Grudzinski.

“No; but they are sure of this—if they will not go to the Swedes, the Swedes will not fail to come to them.”

“Wait!” said the *voevoda*. And clapping his hands for an attendant, he gave command to bring ink, pen, and paper; then he sat down and began to write. In half an hour he had covered the paper; he struck it with his hand, and said—

“I will send another call for them to be here at the latest *pro die 27 praesentis* (on the 27th of the present month), and I think that surely they will wish at this last date *non deesse patriæ* (not to fail the country). And now tell me have you any news of the enemy?”

“We have. Wittemberg is mustering his troops on the fields at Dama.”

“Are there many?”

“Some say seventeen thousand, others more.”

“H’m! then there will not be so many of ours. What is your opinion? Shall we be able to oppose them?”

“If the nobles do not appear, there is nothing to talk about.”

“They will come; why should they not come? It is a known fact that the general militia always delay. But shall we be able to succeed with the aid of the nobles?”

“No,” replied Pan Stanislav, coolly. “Serene great mighty *voevoda*, we have no soldiers.”

“How no soldiers?”

“Your grace knows as well as I that all the regular troops are in the Ukraine. Not even two squadrons were sent here, though at this moment God alone knows which storm is greater.”

“But the infantry, and the general militia?”

“Of twenty peasants scarcely one has seen war; of ten, one knows how to hold a gun. After the first war they will be good soldiers, but they are not soldiers now. And as to the general militia let your grace ask any man who knows even a little about war whether the general

militia can stand before regulars, and besides such soldiers as the Swedes, veterans of the whole Lutheran war, and accustomed to victory.”

“Do you exalt the Swedes, then, so highly above your own?”

“I do not exalt them above my own; for if there were fifteen thousand such men here as were at Zbaraj, quarter soldiers and cavalry, I should have no fear. But with such as we have God knows whether we can do anything worth mention.”

The *voevoda* placed his hands on his knees, and looked quickly into the eyes of Pan Stanislaw, as if wishing to read some hidden thought in them. “What have we come here for, then? Do you not think it better to yield?”

Pan Stanislaw spat in answer, and said: “If such a thought as that has risen in my head, let your grace give command to impale me on a stake. To the question do I believe in victory I answer, as a soldier, that I do not. But why we have come here—that is another question, to which as a citizen I will answer. To offer the enemy the first resistance, so that by detaining them we shall enable the rest of the country to make ready and march, to restrain the invasion with our bodies until we fall one on the other.”

“Your intention is praiseworthy,” answered the *voevoda*, coldly; “but it is easier for you soldiers to talk about death than for us, on whom will fall all the responsibility for so much noble blood shed in vain.”

“What is noble blood for unless to be shed?”

“That is true, of course. We are ready to die, for that is the easiest thing of all. But duty commands us, the men whom providence has made leaders, not to seek our own glory merely, but also to look for results. War is as good as begun, it is true; but still Carolus Gustavus is a relative of our king, and must remember this fact. Therefore it is necessary to try negotiations, for sometimes more can be effected by speech than by arms.”

“That does not pertain to me,” said Pan Stanislaw, dryly.

Evidently the same thought occurred to the *voevoda* at that moment, for he nodded and dismissed the captain.

Pan Stanislaw, however, was only half right in what he said concerning the delay of the nobles summoned to the general militia. It was true that before sheepshearing was over few came to the camp between Pila and Uistsie; but toward the 27th of June—that is, the date mentioned in the second summons—they began to assemble in numbers considerable enough.

Every day clouds of dust, rising by reason of the dry and settled weather, announced the approach of fresh reinforcements one after another. And the nobles travelled noisily on horses, on wheels, and with crowds of servants, with provisions, with wagons, and abundance on them of every kind of thing, and so loaded with weapons that many a man carried arms of every description for three lances, muskets, pistols, sabres, double-handed swords and hussar hammers, out of use even in that time, for smashing armor. Old soldiers recognized at once by these weapons men unaccustomed to war and devoid of experience.

Of all the nobles inhabiting the Commonwealth just those of Great Poland were the least warlike. Tartars, Turks, and Cossacks had never trampled those regions which from the time of the Knights of the Cross had almost forgotten how war looked in the country. Whenever a noble of Great Poland felt the desire for war he joined the armies of the kingdom, and fought there as well as the best; but those who preferred to stay at home became real householders, in love with wealth and with ease—real agriculturists, filling with their wool and especially with their wheat the markets of Prussian towns. But now when the Swedish storm swept them

away from their peaceful pursuits, they thought it impossible to pile up too many arms, provide too great supplies, or take too many servants to protect the persons and goods of the master.

They were marvellous soldiers, whom the captains could not easily bring to obedience. For example, one would present himself with a lance nineteen feet long, with a breastplate on his breast, but with a straw hat on his head “for coolness;” another in time of drill would complain of the heat; a third would yawn, eat, or drink; a fourth would call his attendant; and all who were in the ranks thought it nothing out of the way to talk so loudly that no man could hear the command of an officer. And it was difficult to introduce discipline, for it offended the brotherhood terribly, as being opposed to the dignity of a citizen. It is true that “articles” were proclaimed, but no one would obey them.

An iron ball on the feet of this army was the innumerable legion of wagons, of reserve and draft horses, of cattle intended for food, and especially of the multitude of servants guarding the tents, utensils, millet, grits, hash, and causing on the least occasion quarrels and disturbance.

Against such an army as this was advancing from the side of Stettin and the plains on the Oder, Arwid Wittemberg, an old leader, whose youth had been passed in the thirty years’ war; he came at the head of seventeen thousand veterans bound together by iron discipline.

On one side stood the disordered Polish camp, resembling a crowd at a country fair, vociferous, full of disputes, discussions about the commands of leaders, and of dissatisfaction; composed of worthy villagers turned into prospective infantry, and nobles taken straight from sheepshearing. From the other side marched terrible, silent quadrangles, which at one beck of their leaders turned, with the precision of machines, into lines and half-circles, unfolding into wedges and triangles as regularly as a sword moves in the hands of a fencer, bristling with musket-barrels and darts: genuine men of war, cool, calm; real masters who had attained perfection in their art. Who among men of experience could doubt the outcome of the meeting and on whose side the victory must fall?

The nobles, however, were assembling in greater and greater numbers; and still earlier the dignitaries of Great Poland and other provinces began to meet, bringing bodies of attendant troops and servants. Soon after the arrival of Pan Grudzinski at Pila came Pan Kryshtof Opalinski, the powerful *voevoda* of Poznan. Three hundred haiduks in red and yellow uniforms and armed with muskets went before the carriage of the *voevoda*; a crowd of attendant nobles surrounded his worthy person; following them in order of battle came a division of horsemen with uniforms similar to those of the haiduks; the *voevoda* himself was in a carriage attended by a jester, Staha Ostrojka, whose duty it was to cheer his gloomy master on the road.

The entrance of such a great dignitary gave courage and consolation to all; for those who looked on the almost kingly majesty of the *voevoda*, on that lordly face in which under the lofty vaulting of the forehead there gleamed eyes wise and severe, and on the senatorial dignity of his whole posture, could hardly believe that any evil fate could come to such power.

To those accustomed to give honor to office and to person it seemed that even the Swedes themselves would not dare to raise a sacrilegious hand against such a magnate. Even those whose hearts were beating in their breasts with alarm felt safer at once under his wing. He was greeted therefore joyfully and warmly; shouts thundered along the street through which the retinue pushed slowly toward the house of the mayor, and all heads inclined before the *voevoda*, who was as visible as on the palm of the hand through the windows of the

gilded carriage. To these bows Ostrojka answered, as well as the *voevoda*, with the same importance and gravity as if they had been given exclusively to him.

Barely had the dust settled after the passage of Opalinski when couriers rushed in with the announcement that his cousin was coming, the *voevoda* of Podlyasye, Pyotr Opalinski, with his brother-in-law Yakob Rozdrajevski, the *voevoda* of Inovratslav. These brought each a hundred and fifty armed men, besides nobles and servants. Then not a day passed without the arrival of dignitaries such as Sendzivoi Charnkovski, the brother-in-law of Krishtof Opalinski, and himself castellan of Kalisk; Maksymilian Myaskovski, the castellan of Kryvinsk; and Pavel Gembitski, the lord of Myendzyrechka. The town was so filled with people that houses failed for the lodging even of nobles. The neighboring meadows were many-colored with the tents of the general militia. One might say that all the various colored birds had flown to Pila from the entire Commonwealth. Red, green, blue, azure, white were gleaming on the various coats and garments; for leaving aside the general militia, in which each noble wore a dress different from his neighbor, leaving aside the servants of the magnates, even the infantry of each district were dressed in their own colors.

Shopkeepers came too, who, unable to find places in the market-square, built a row of booths by the side of the town, on these they sold military supplies, from clothing to arms and food. Field-kitchens were steaming day and night, bearing away in the steam the odor of hash, roast meat, millet; in some liquors were sold. Nobles swarmed in front of the booths, armed not only with swords but with spoons, eating, drinking, and discussing, now the enemy not yet to be seen, and now the incoming dignitaries, on whom nicknames were not spared.

Among the groups of nobles walked Ostrojka, in a dress made of particolored rags, carrying a sceptre ornamented with bells, and with the mien of a simple rogue. Wherever he showed himself men came around in a circle, and he poured oil on the fire, helped them to backbite the dignitaries, and gave riddles over which the nobles held their sides from laughter, the more firmly the more biting the riddles.

On a certain midday the *voevoda* of Poznan himself came to the bazaar, speaking courteously with this one and that, or blaming the king somewhat because in the face of the approaching enemy he had not sent a single squadron of soldiers.

“They are not thinking of us, worthy gentlemen,” said he, “and leave us without assistance. They say in Warsaw that even now there are too few troops in the Ukraine, and that the hetmans are not able to make head against Hmelnitski. Ah, it is difficult! It is pleasanter to see the Ukraine than Great Poland. We are in disfavor, worthy gentlemen, in disfavor! They have delivered us here as it were to be slaughtered.”

“And who is to blame?” asked Pan Shlihtyng, the judge of Vskov.

“Who is to blame for all the misfortunes of the Commonwealth,” asked the *voevoda*—“who, unless we brother nobles who shield it with our breasts?”

The nobles, hearing this, were greatly flattered that the “Count in Bnino and Opalenitsa” put himself on an equality with them, and recognized himself in brotherhood; hence Pan Koshutski answered—

“Serene great mighty *voevoda*, if there were more such counsellors as your grace near his Majesty, of a certainty we should not be delivered to slaughter here; but probably those give counsel who bow lower.”

“I thank you, brothers, for the good word. The fault is his who listens to evil counsellors. Our liberties are as salt in the eye to those people. The more nobles fall, the easier will it be to introduce *absolutum dominium* (absolute rule).”

“Must we die, then, that our children may groan in slavery?”

The *voevoda* said nothing, and the nobles began to look at one another and wonder.

“Is that true then?” cried many. “Is that the reason why they sent us here under the knife? And we believe! This is not the first day that they are talking about *absolutum dominium*. But if it comes to that, we shall be able to think of our own heads.”

“And of our children.”

“And of our fortunes, which the enemy will destroy *igne et ferro* (with fire and sword).”

The *voevoda* was silent. In a marvellous manner did this leader add to the courage of his soldiers.

“The king is to blame for all!” was shouted more and more frequently.

“But do you remember, gentlemen, the history of Yan Olbracht?” asked the *voevoda*.

“The nobles perished for King Olbracht. Treason, brothers!”

“The king is a traitor!” cried some bold voices.

The *voevoda* was silent.

Now Ostrojka, standing by the side of the *voevoda*, struck himself a number of times on the legs, and crowed like a cock with such shrillness that all eyes were turned to him. Then he shouted, “Gracious lords! brothers, dear hearts! listen to my riddle.”

With the genuine fickleness of March weather, the stormy militia changed in one moment to curiosity and desire to hear some new stroke of wit from the jester.

“We hear! we hear!” cried a number of voices.

The jester began to wink like a monkey and to recite in a squeaking voice—

“After his brother he solaced himself with a crown and a wife,  
But let glory go down to the grave with his brother.  
He drove out the vice-chancellor; hence now has the fame  
Of being vice-chancellor to—the vice-chancellor’s wife.”

“The king! the king! As alive! Yan Kazimir!” they began to cry from every side; and laughter, mighty as thunder, was heard in the crowd.

“May the bullets strike him, what a masterly explanation!” cried the nobles.

The *voevoda* laughed with the others, and when it had grown somewhat calm he said, with increased dignity: “And for this affair we must pay now with our blood and our heads. See what it has come to! Here, jester, is a ducat for thy good verse.”

“Kryshtofek! Krysh dearest!” said Ostrojka, “why attack others because they keep jesters, when thou not only keepest me, but payest separately for riddles? Give me another ducat and I’ll tell thee another riddle.”

“Just as good?”

“As good, only longer. Give me the ducat first.”

“Here it is!”

The jester slapped his sides with his hands, as a cock with his wings, crowed again, and cried out, “Gracious gentlemen, listen! Who is this?”

“He complains of self-seeking, stands forth as a Cato;  
Instead of a sabre he took a goose’s tail-feather  
He wanted the legacy of a traitor, and not getting that  
He lashed the whole Commonwealth with a biting rhyme.

“God grant him love for the sabre! less woe would it bring.  
Of his satire the Swedes have no fear.  
But he has barely tasted the hardships of war  
When following a traitor he is ready to betray his king.”

All present guessed that riddle as well as the first. Two or three laughs, smothered at the same instant, were heard in the assembly; then a deep silence fell.

The *voevoda* grew purple, and he was the more confused in that all eyes were fixed on him at that moment. But the jester looked on one noble and then on another; at last he said, “None of you gentlemen can guess who that is?”

When silence was the only answer, he turned with the most insolent mien to the *voevoda*:  
“And thou, dost thou too not know of what rascal the speech is? Dost thou not know? Then pay me a ducat.”

“Here!” said the *voevoda*.

“God reward thee. But tell me, Krysh, hast thou not perchance tried to get the vice-chancellorship after Radzeyovski?”

“No time for jests,” replied Opalinski; and removing his cap to all present: “With the forehead, gentlemen! I must go to the council of war.”

“To the family council thou didst wish to say, Krysh,” added Ostrojka; “for there all thy relatives will hold council how to be off.” Then he turned to the nobles and imitating the *voevoda* in his bows, he added, “And to you, gentlemen, that’s the play.”

Both withdrew; but they had barely gone a few steps when an immense outburst of laughter struck the ears of the *voevoda*, and thundered long before it was drowned in the general noise of the camp.

The council of war was held in fact, and the *voevoda* of Poznan presided. That was a strange council! Those very dignitaries took part in it who knew nothing of war; for the magnates of Great Poland did not and could not follow the example of those “kinglets” of Lithuania or the Ukraine who lived in continual fire like salamanders.

In Lithuania or the Ukraine whoever was a *voevoda* or a chancellor was a leader whose armor pressed out on his body red stripes which never left it, whose youth was spent in the steppes or the forests on the eastern border, in ambushes, battles, struggles, pursuits, in camp or in tabors. In Great Poland at this time dignitaries were in office who, though they had marched in times of necessity with the general militia, had never held positions of command in time of war. Profound peace had put to sleep the military courage of the descendants of those warriors, before whom in former days the iron legions of the Knights of the Cross were unable to stand, and turned them into civilians, scholars, and writers. Now the stern school of Sweden was teaching them what they had forgotten.

The dignitaries assembled in council looked at one another with uncertain eyes, and each feared to speak first, waiting for what “Agamemnon,” *voevoda* of Poznan, would say.

But “Agamemnon” himself knew simply nothing, and began his speech again with complaints of the ingratitude and sloth of the king, of the frivolity with which all Great

Poland and they were delivered to the sword. But how eloquent was he; what a majestic figure did he present, worthy in truth of a Roman senator! He held his head erect while speaking; his dark eyes shot lightnings, his mouth thunderbolts; his iron-gray beard trembled with excitement when he described the future misfortunes of the land.

“For in what does the fatherland suffer,” said he, “if not in its sons? and we here suffer, first of all. Through our private lands, through our private fortunes won by the services and blood of our ancestors, will advance the feet of those enemies who now like a storm are approaching from the sea. And why do we suffer? For what will they take our herds, trample our harvests, burn our villages built by our labor? Have we wronged Radzeyovski, who, condemned unjustly, hunted like a criminal, had to seek the protection of strangers? No! Do we insist that that empty title ‘King of Sweden,’ which has cost so much blood already, should remain with the signature of our Yan Kazimir? No! Two wars are blazing on two boundaries; was it needful to call forth a third? Who was to blame, may God, may the country judge him! We wash our hands, for we are innocent of the blood which will be shed.”

And thus the *voevoda* thundered on further; but when it came to the question in hand he was not able to give the desired advice.

They sent then for the captains leading the land infantry, and specially for Vladyslav Skorashevski, who was not only a famous and incomparable knight, but an old, practised soldier, knowing war as he did the Lord’s Prayer. In fact, genuine leaders listened frequently to his advice; all the more eagerly was it sought for now.

Pan Skorashevski advised then to establish three camps—at Pila, Vyelunie, and Uistsie—so near one another that in time of attack they might give mutual aid, and besides this to cover with trenches the whole extent of the riverbank occupied by a half-circle of camps which were to command the passage.

“When we know,” said Skorashevski, “the place where the enemy will attempt the crossing, we shall unite from all three camps and give him proper resistance. But I with the permission of your great mighty lordships, will go with a small party to Chaplinko. That is a lost position, and in time I shall withdraw from it; but there I shall first get knowledge of the enemy, and then will inform your great mighty lordships.”

All accepted this counsel, and men began to move around somewhat more briskly in the camp. At last the nobles assembled to the number of fifteen thousand. The land infantry dug trenches over an extent of six miles. Uistsie, the chief position, was occupied by the *voevoda* of Poznan and his men. A part of the knights remained in Vyelunie, a part in Pila, and Vladyslav Skorashevski went to Chaplinko to observe the enemy.

July began; all the days were clear and hot. The sun burned on the plains so violently that the nobles hid in the woods between the trees, under the shade of which some of them gave orders to set up their tents. There also they had noisy and boisterous feasts; and still more of an uproar was made by the servants, especially at the time of washing and watering the horses which, to the number of several thousand at once, were driven thrice each day to the Notets and Berda, quarrelling and fighting for the best approach to the bank. But in the beginning there was a good spirit in the camp; only the *voevoda* of Poznan himself acted rather to weaken it.

If Wittemberg had come in the first days of July, it is likely that he would have met a mighty resistance, which in proportion as the men warmed to battle might have been turned into an invincible rage, of which there were often examples. For still there flowed knightly blood in the veins of these people, though they had grown unaccustomed to war.



Who knows if another Yeremi Vishnyevetski might not have changed Uistsie into another Zbaraj, and described in those trenches a new illustrious career of knighthood? Unfortunately the *voevoda* of Poznan was a man who could only write; he knew nothing of war.

Wittemberg, a leader knowing not merely war but men, did not hasten, perhaps on purpose. Experience of long years had taught him that a newly enrolled soldier is most dangerous in the first moments of enthusiasm, and that often not bravery is lacking to him, but soldierly endurance, which practice alone can develop. More than once have new soldiers struck like a storm on the oldest regiments, and passed over their corpses. They are iron which while it is hot quivers, lives, scatters sparks, burns, destroys, but which when it grows cold is a mere lifeless lump.

In fact, when a week had passed, a second, and the third had come, long inactivity began to weigh upon the general militia. The heat became greater each day. The nobles would not go to drill, and gave as excuse that their horses tormented by flies would not stand in line, and as to marshy places they could not live from mosquitoes. Servants raised greater and greater quarrels about shady places, concerning which it came to sabres among their masters. This or that one coming home in the evening from the water rode off to one side from the camp not to return.

Evil example from above was also not wanting. Pan Skorashevski had given notice from Chaplinko that the Swedes were not distant, when at the military council Zygmunt Grudzinski got leave to go home; on this leave his uncle Andrei Grudzinski, *voevoda* of Kalisk, had greatly insisted. "I have to lay down my head and my life here," said he; "let my nephew inherit after me my memory and glory, so that my services may not be lost." Then he grew tender over the youth and innocence of his nephew, praising the liberality with which he had furnished one hundred very choice soldiers; and the military council granted the prayer of the uncle.

On the morning of July 16, Zygmunt with a few servants left the camp openly for home, on the eve almost of a siege and a battle. Crowds of nobles conducted him amid jeering cries to a distance beyond the camp. Ostrojka led the party, and shouted from afar after the departing—

"Worthy Pan Zygmunt, I give thee a shield, and as third name Deest!"<sup>13</sup>

"Vivat Deest-Grudzinski!"

"But weep not for thy uncle," continued Ostrojka. "He despises the Swedes as much as thou; and let them only show themselves, he will surely turn his back on them."

The blood of the young magnate rushed to his face, but he pretended not to hear the insults. He put spurs to his horse, however, and pushed aside the crowds, so as to be away from the camp and his persecutors as soon as possible, who at last, without consideration for the birth and dignity of the departing, began to throw clods of earth at him and to cry—

"Here is a *gruda*, Grudzinski!"<sup>14</sup> You hare, you coward!"

They made such an uproar that the *voevoda* of Poznan hastened up with a number of captains to quiet them, and explain that Grudzinski had taken leave only for a week on very urgent affairs.

Still the evil example had its effect; and that same day there were several hundred nobles who did not wish to be worse than Grudzinski, though they slipped away with less aid and more quietly. Stanislav Skshetuski, a captain from Kalisk and cousin of the famous Yan of Zbaraj,

<sup>13</sup> *Deest* = lacking.

<sup>14</sup> The name Grudzinski is derived from *gruda* = clod.

tore the hair on his head; for his land infantry, following the example of “officers,” began to desert from the camp. A new council of war was held in which crowds of nobles refused absolutely to take part. A stormy night followed, full of shouts and quarrels. They suspected one another of the intention to desert. Cries of “Either all or none!” flew from mouth to mouth.

Every moment reports were given out that the *voevodas* were departing, and such an uproar prevailed that the *voevodas* had to show themselves several times to the excited multitude. A number of thousands of men were on their horses before daybreak. But the *voevoda* of Poznan rode between the ranks with uncovered head like a Roman senator, and repeated from moment to moment the great words—

“Worthy gentlemen, I am with you to live and die.”

He was received in some places with vivats; in others shouts of derision were thundering. The moment he had pacified the crowd he returned to the council, tired, hoarse, carried away by the grandeur of his own words, and convinced that he had rendered inestimable service to his country that night. But at the council he had fewer words in his mouth, twisted his beard, and pulled his foretop from despair, repeating—

“Give counsel if you can; I wash my hands of the future, for it is impossible to make a defence with such soldiers.”

“Serene great mighty *voevoda*,” answered Stanislav Skshetuski, “the enemy will drive away that turbulence and uproar. Only let the cannon play, only let it come to defence, to a siege, these very nobles in defence of their own lives must serve on the ramparts and not be disorderly in camp. So it has happened more than once.”

“With what can we defend ourselves? We have no cannon, nothing but saluting pieces good to fire off in time of a feast.”

“At Zbaraj Hmelnitski had seventy cannon, and Prince Yeremi only a few eight-pounders and mortars.”

“But he had an army, not militia—his own squadrons famed in the world, not country nobles fresh from sheepshearing.”

“Send for Pan Skorashevski,” said the castellan of Poznan. “Make him commander of the camp. He is at peace with the nobles, and will be able to keep them in order.”

“Send for Skorashevski. Why should he be in Drahim or Chaplinko?” repeated Yendrei Grudzinski, the *voevoda* of Kalisk.

“Yes, that is the best counsel!” cried other voices.

A courier was despatched for Skorashevski. No other decisions were taken at the council; but they talked much, and complained of the king, the queen, the lack of troops, and negligence.

The following morning brought neither relief nor calm spirits. The disorder had become still greater. Some gave out reports that the dissidents, namely the Calvinists, were favorable to the Swedes, and ready on the first occasion to go over to the enemy. What was more, this news was not contradicted by Pan Shlihtyng nor by Edmund and Yatsck Kurnatovski, also Calvinists, but sincerely devoted to the country. Besides they gave final proof that the dissidents formed a separate circle and consulted with one another under the lead of a noted disturber and cruel man. Pan Rei, who serving in Germany during his youth as a volunteer on the Lutheran side, was a great friend of the Swedes. Scarcely had this suspicion gone out

among the nobles when several thousand sabres were gleaming, and a real tempest rose in the camp.

“Let us punish the traitors, punish the serpents, ready to bite the bosom of their mother!” cried the nobles.

“Give them this way!”

“Cut them to pieces! Treason is most infectious, worthy gentlemen. Tear out the cockle or we shall all perish!”

The *voevodas* and captains had to pacify them again, but this time it was more difficult than the day before. Besides, they were themselves convinced that Rei was ready to betray his country in the most open manner; for he was a man completely foreignized, and except his language had nothing Polish in him. It was decided therefore to send him out of the camp, which at once pacified somewhat the angry multitude. Still shouts continued to burst forth for a long time—

“Give them here! Treason, treason!”

Wonderful conditions of mind reigned finally in the camp. Some fell in courage and were sunk in grief; others walked in silence, with uncertain steps, along the ramparts, casting timid and gloomy glances along the plains over which the enemy had to approach, or communicated in whispers worse and worse news. Others were possessed of a sort of desperate, mad joy and readiness for death. In consequence of this readiness they arranged feasts and drinking-bouts so as to pass the last days of life in rejoicing. Some thought of saving their souls, and spent the nights in prayer. But in that whole throng of men no one thought of victory, as if it were altogether beyond reach. Still the enemy had not superior forces; they had more cannon, better trained troops, and a leader who understood war.

And while in this wise on one side the Polish camp was seething, shouting, and feasting, rising up with a roar, dropping down to quiet, like a sea lashed by a whirlwind, while the general militia were holding diets as in time of electing a king, on the other side, along the broad green meadows of the Oder, pushed forward in calmness the legions of Sweden.

In front marched a brigade of the royal guard, led by Benedykt Horn, a terrible soldier, whose name was repeated in Germany with fear. The soldiers were chosen men, large, wearing lofty helmets with rims covering their ears, in yellow leather doublets, armed with rapiers and muskets; cool and constant in battle, ready at every beck of the leader.

Karl Schedding, a German, led the West Gothland brigade, formed of two regiments of infantry and one of heavy cavalry, dressed in armor without shoulder-pieces. Half of the infantry had muskets; the others spears. At the beginning of a battle the musketeers stood in front, but in case of attack by cavalry they stood behind the spearmen, who, placing each the butt of his spear in the ground, held the point against the onrushing horses. At a battle in the time of Sigismund III one squadron of hussars cut to pieces with their sabres and with hoofs this same West Gothland brigade, in which at present Germans served mainly.

The two Smaland brigades were led by Irwin, surnamed Handless, for he had lost his right hand on a time while defending his flag; but to make up for this loss he had in his left such strength that with one blow he could hew off the head of a horse. He was a gloomy warrior, loving battles and bloodshed alone, stern to himself and to soldiers. While other captains trained themselves in continual wars into followers of a craft, and loved war for its own sake, he remained the same fanatic, and while slaying men he sang psalms to the Lord.

The brigade of Westmanland marched under Drakenborg; and that of Helsingor, formed of sharpshooters famed through the world, under Gustav Oxenstiern, a relative of the renowned chancellor—a young soldier who roused great hopes. Fersen commanded the East Gothland brigade; the Nerik and Werland brigades were directed by Wittemberg himself, who at the same time was supreme chief of the whole army.

Seventy-two cannon pounded out furrows in the moist meadows; of soldiers there were seventeen thousand, the fierce plunderers of all Germany, and in battle they were so accurate, especially the infantry, that the French royal guard could hardly compare with them. After the regiments followed the wagons and tents. The regiments marched in line, ready each moment for battle. A forest of lances was bristling above the mass of heads, helmets, and hats; and in the midst of that forest flowed on toward the frontier of Poland the great blue banners with white crosses in the centre. With each day the distance decreased between the two armies.

At last on July 27, in the forest at the village of Heinrichsdorf, the Swedish legions beheld for the first time the boundary pillar of Poland. At sight of this the whole army gave forth a mighty shout; trumpets and drums thundered, and all the flags were unfurled. Wittemberg rode to the front attended by a brilliant staff, and all the regiments passed before him, presenting arms—the cavalry with drawn rapiers, the cannon with lighted matches. The time was midday; the weather glorious. The forest breeze brought the odor of resin.

The gray road, covered with the rays of the sun—the road over which the Swedish regiments had passed—bending out of the Heinrichsdorf forest, was lost on the horizon. When the troops marching by it had finally passed the forest, their glances discovered a gladsome land, smiling, shining with yellow fields of every kind of grain, dotted in places with oak groves, in places green from meadows. Here and there out of groups of trees, behind oak groves and far away rose bits of smoke to the sky; on the grass herds were seen grazing. Where on the meadows the water gleamed widely spread, walked storks at their leisure.

A certain calm and sweetness was spread everywhere over that land flowing with milk and honey, and it seemed to open its arms ever wider and wider before the army, as if it greeted not invaders but guests coming with God.

At this sight a new shout was wrested from the bosoms of all the soldiers, especially the Swedes by blood, who were accustomed to the bare, poor, wild nature of their native land. The hearts of a plundering and needy people rose with desire to gather those treasures and riches which appeared before their eyes. Enthusiasm seized the ranks.

But the soldiers, tempered in the fire of the Thirty Years' War, expected that this would not come to them easily; for that grainland was inhabited by a numerous and a knightly people, who knew how to defend it. The memory was still living in Sweden of the terrible defeat of Kirchholm, where three thousand cavalry under Hodkyevich ground into dust eighteen thousand of the best troops of Sweden. In the cottages of West Gothland, Smaland, or Delakarlia they told tales of those winged knights, as of giants from a saga. Fresher still was the memory of the struggles in the time of Gustavus Adolphus, for the warriors were not yet extinct who had taken part in them. But that eagle of Scandinavia, ere he had flown twice through all Germany, broke his talons on the legions of Konyetpski.

Therefore with the gladness there was joined in the hearts of the Swedes a certain fear, of which the supreme chief, Wittemberg himself, was not free. He looked on the passing regiments of infantry and cavalry with the eye with which a shepherd looks on his flock; then he turned to the rear man, who wore a hat with a feather, and a light-colored wig falling to his shoulders.

“Your grace assures me,” said he, “that with these forces it is possible to break the army occupying Uistsie?”

The man with the light wig smiled and answered: “Your grace may rely completely on my words, for which I am ready to pledge my head. If at Uistsie there were regular troops and some one of the hetmans, I first would give counsel not to hasten, but to wait till his royal Grace should come with the whole army; but against the general militia and those gentlemen of Great Poland our forces will be more than sufficient.”

“But have not reinforcements come to them?”

“Reinforcements have not come for two reasons—first, because all the regular troops, of which there are not many, are occupied in Lithuania and the Ukraine; second, because in Warsaw neither the King Yan Kazimir, the chancellor, nor the senate will believe to this moment that his royal Grace Karl Gustav has really begun war in spite of the truce, and notwithstanding the last embassies and his readiness to compromise. They are confident that peace will be made at the last hour—ha, ha!”

Here the rear man removed his hat, wiped the sweat from his red face, and added: “Trubetskoi and Dolgoruki in Lithuania, Hmelnitski in the Ukraine, and we entering Great Poland—behold what the government of Yan Kazimir has led to.”

Wittemberg gazed on him with a look of astonishment, and asked, “But, your grace, do you rejoice at the thought?”

“I rejoice at the thought, for my wrong and my innocence will be avenged; and besides I see, as on the palm of my hand, that the sabre of your grace and my counsels will place that new and most beautiful crown in the world on the head of Karl Gustav.”

Wittemberg turned his glance to the distance, embraced with it the oak-groves, the meadows, the grainfields, and after a while said: “True, it is a beautiful country and fertile. Your grace may be sure that after the war the king will give the chancellorship to no one else but you.”

The man in the rear removed his cap a second time. “And I, for my part, wish to have no other lord,” added he, raising his eyes to heaven.

The heavens were clear and fair; no thunderbolt fell and crashed to the dust the traitor who delivered his country, groaning under two wars already and exhausted, to the power of the enemy on that boundary.

The man conversing with Wittemberg was Hieronim Kailzeyovski, late under-chancellor of the Crown, now sold to Sweden in hostility to his country.

They stood a time in silence. Meanwhile the last two brigades, those of Nerik and Wermland, passed the boundary; after them others began to draw in the cannon; the trumpets still played unceasingly; the roar and rattle of drums outsounded the tramp of the soldiers, and filled the forest with ominous echoes. At last the staff moved also. Radzeyovski rode at the side of Wittemberg.

“Oxenstiern is not to be seen,” said Wittemberg. “I am afraid that something may have happened to him. I do not know whether it was wise to send him as a trumpeter with letters to Uistsie.”

“It was wise,” answered Radzeyovski, “for he will look at the camp, will see the leaders, and learn what they think there; and this any kind of camp-follower could not do.”

“But if they recognize him?”

“Rei alone knows him, and he is ours. Besides, even if they should recognize him, they will do him no harm, but will give him supplies for the road and reward him. I know the Poles, and I know they are ready for anything, merely to show themselves polite people before strangers. Our whole effort is to win the praise of strangers. Your grace may be at rest concerning Oxenstiern, for a hair will not fall from his head. He has not come because it is too soon for his return.”

“And does your grace think our letters will have any effect?”

Radzeyovski laughed. “If your grace permits, I will foretell what will happen. The *voevoda* of Poznan is a polished and learned man, therefore he will answer us very courteously and very graciously; but because he loves to pass for a Roman, his answer will be terribly Roman. He will say, to begin with, that he would rather shed the last drop of his blood than surrender, that death is better than dishonor, and the love which he bears his country directs him to fall for her on the boundary.”

Radzeyovski laughed still louder. The stern face of Wittemberg brightened also.

“Your grace does not think that he will be ready to act as he writes?” asked Wittemberg.

“He?” answered Radzeyovski. “It is true that he nourishes a love for his country, but with ink; and that is not over-strong food. His love is in fact more scant than that of his jester who helps him to put rhymes together. I am certain that after that Roman answer will come good wishes for health, success, offers of service, and at last a request to spare his property and that of his relatives, for which again he with all his relatives will be thankful.”

“And what at last will be the result of our letters?”

“The courage of the other side will weaken to the last degree, senators will begin to negotiate with us, and we shall occupy all Great Poland after perhaps a few shots in the air.”

“Would that your grace be a true prophet!”

“I am certain that it will be as I say, for I know these people. I have friends and adherents in the whole country, and I know how to begin. And that I shall neglect nothing is made sure by the wrong which I endure from Yan Kazimir, and my love for Karl Gustav. People with us are more tender at present about their own fortunes than the integrity of the Commonwealth. All those lands upon which we shall now march are the estates of the Opalinskis, the Charnkovskis, the Grudzinskis; and because they are at Uistsie in person they will be milder in negotiating. As to the nobles, if only their freedom of disputing at the diets is guaranteed, they will follow the *voevodas*.”

“By knowledge of the country and the people your grace renders the king unexampled service, which cannot remain without an equally noteworthy reward. Therefore from what you say I conclude that I may look on this land as ours.”

“You may, your grace, you may, you may,” repeated Radzeyovski hurriedly, a number of times.

“Therefore I occupy it in the name of his Royal Grace Karl Gustav,” answered Wittemberg, solemnly.

While the Swedish troops were thus beginning beyond Heinrichsdorf to walk on the land of Great Poland, and even earlier, for it was on July 18, a Swedish trumpeter arrived at the Polish camp with letters from Radzeyovski and Wittemberg to the *voevodas*.

Vladyslav Skoraszewski himself conducted the trumpeter to the *voevoda* of Poznan, and the nobles of the general militia gazed with curiosity on the “first Swede,” wondering at his

valiant bearing, his manly face, his blond mustaches, the ends combed upward in a broad brush, and his really lordlike mien. Crowds followed him to the *voevoda*; acquaintances called to one another, pointing him out with their fingers, laughed somewhat at his boots with enormous round legs, and at the long straight rapier, which they called a spit, hanging from a belt richly worked with silver. The Swede also cast curious glances from under his broad hat, as if wishing to examine the camp and estimate the forces, and then looked repeatedly at the crowd of nobles whose oriental costumes were apparently novel to him. At last he was brought to the *voevoda*, around whom were grouped all the dignitaries in the camp.

The letters were read immediately, and a council held. The *voevoda* committed the trumpeter to his attendants to be entertained in soldier fashion; the nobles took him from the attendants, and wondering at the man as a curiosity, began to drink for life and death with him.

Pan Skorashevski looked at the Swede with equal scrutiny; but because he suspected him to be some officer in disguise, he went in fact to convey that idea in the evening to the *voevoda*. The latter, however, said it was all one, and did not permit his arrest.

“Though he were Wittemberg himself, he has come hither as an envoy and should go away unmolested. In addition I command you to give him ten ducats for the road.”

The trumpeter meanwhile was talking in broken German with those nobles who, through intercourse with Prussian towns, understood that language. He told them of victories won by Wittemberg in various lands, of the forces marching against Uistsie, and especially of the cannon of a range hitherto unknown and which could not be resisted. The nobles were troubled at this, and no small number of exaggerated accounts began to circulate through the camp.

That night scarcely anyone slept in Uistsie. About midnight those men came in who had stood hitherto in separate camps, at Pila and Vyelunie. The dignitaries deliberated over their answer to the letters till daylight, and the nobles passed the time in stories about the power of the Swedes.

With a certain feverish curiosity they asked the trumpeter about the leaders of the army, the weapons, the method of fighting; and every answer of his was given from mouth to mouth. The nearness of the Swedish legions lent unusual interest to all the details, which were not of a character to give consolation.

About daylight Stanislav Skshetuski came with tidings that the Swedes had arrived at Valch, one day's march from the Polish camp. There rose at once a terrible hubbub; most of the horses with the servants were at pasture on the meadows. They were sent for then with all haste. Districts mounted and formed squadrons. The moment before battle was for the untrained soldier the most terrible; therefore before the captains were able to introduce any kind of system there reigned for a long time desperate disorder.

Neither commands nor trumpets could be heard; nothing but voices crying on every side: “Yan! Pyotr! Onufri! This way! I wish thou wert killed! Bring the horses! Where are my men? Yan! Pyotr!” If at that moment one cannon-shot had been heard, the disorder might easily have been turned to a panic.

Gradually, however, the districts were ranged in order. The inborn capacity of the nobles for war made up for the want of experience, and about midday the camp presented an appearance imposing enough. The infantry stood on the ramparts looking like flowers in their many-colored coats, smoke was borne away from the lighted matches, and outside the ramparts under cover of the guns the meadows and plain were swarming with the district squadrons of

cavalry standing in line on sturdy horses, whose neighing roused an echo in the neighboring forests and filled all hearts with military ardor.

Meanwhile the *voevoda* of Poznan sent away the trumpeter with an answer to the letter reading more or less as Radzeyovski had foretold, therefore both courteous and Roman; then he determined to send a party to the northern bank of the Notets to seize an informant from the enemy.

Pyotr Opalinski, *voevoda* of Podlyasye, a cousin of the *voevoda* Poznan, was to go in person with a party together with his own dragoons, a hundred and fifty of whom he had brought to Uistsie; and besides this it was given to Captains Skorashevski and Skshetuski to call out volunteers from the nobles of the general militia, so that they might also look in the eyes of the enemy.

Both rode before the ranks, delighting the eye by manner and posture—Pan Stanislav black as a beetle, like all the Skshetuskis, with a manly face, stern and adorned with a long sloping scar which remained from a sword-blow, with raven black beard blown aside by the wind; Pan Vladyslav portly, with long blond mustaches, open under lip, and eyes with red lids, mild and honest, reminding one less of Mars—but none the less a genuine soldier spirit, as glad to be in fire as a salamander—a knight knowing war as his ten fingers, and of incomparable daring. Both, riding before the ranks extended in a long line, repeated from moment to moment—

“Now, gracious gentlemen, who is the volunteer against the Swedes? Who wants to smell powder? Well, gracious gentlemen, volunteer!”

And so they continued for a good while without result, for no man pushed forward from the ranks. One looked at another. There were those who desired to go and had no fear of the Swedes, but indecision restrained them. More than one nudged his neighbor and said, “Go you, and then I’ll go.” The captains were growing impatient, till all at once, when they had ridden up to the district of Gnyezno, a certain man dressed in many colors sprang forth on a hoop, not from the line but from behind the line, and cried—

“Gracious gentlemen of the militia, I’ll be the volunteer and ye will be jesters!”

“Ostrojka! Ostrojka!” cried the nobles.

“I am just as good a noble as any of you!” answered the jester.

“*Tfu!* to a hundred devils!” cried Pan Rosinski; under-judge, “a truce to jesting! I will go.”

“And I! and I!” cried numerous voices.

“Once my mother bore me, once for me is death!”

“As good as thou will be found!”

“Freedom to each. Let no man here exalt himself above others.”

And as no one had come forth before, so now nobles began to rush out from every district, spurring forward their horses, disputing with one another and fighting to advance. In the twinkle of an eye there were five hundred horsemen, and still they were riding forth from the ranks. Pan Skorashevski began to laugh with his honest, open laugh.

“Enough, worthy gentlemen, enough! We cannot all go.”

Then the two captains put the men in order and marched.



The *voevoda* of Podlyasye joined the horsemen as they were riding out of camp. They were seen as on the palm of the hand crossing the Notets; after that they glittered some time on the windings of the road, then vanished from sight.

At the expiration of half an hour the *voevoda* of Poznan ordered the troops to their tents, for he saw that it was impossible to keep them in the ranks when the enemy were still a day's march distant. Numerous pickets were thrown out, however; it was not permitted to drive horses to pasture, and the order was given that at the first low sound of the trumpet through the mouthpiece all were to mount and be ready.

Expectation and uncertainty had come to an end, quarrels and disputes were finished at once, for the nearness of the enemy had raised their courage as Pan Skshetuski had predicted. The first successful battle might raise it indeed very high; and in the evening an event took place which seemed of happy omen.

The sun was just setting—lighting with enormous glitter, dazzling the eyes, the Notets, and the pinewoods beyond—when on the other side of the river was seen first a cloud of dust, and then men moving in the cloud. All that was living went out on the ramparts to see what manner of guests these were. At that moment a dragoon of the guards rushed in from the squadron of Pan Grudzinski with intelligence that the horsemen were returning.

“The horsemen are returning with success! The Swedes have not eaten them!” was repeated from mouth to mouth.

Meanwhile they in bright rolls of dust approached nearer and nearer, coming slowly; then they crossed the Notets.

The nobles with their hands over their eyes gazed at them; for the glitter became each moment greater, and the whole air was filled with gold and purple light.

“Hei! the party is somewhat larger than when it went out,” said Shlihtyng.

“They must be bringing prisoners, as God is dear to me!” cried a noble, apparently without confidence and not believing his eyes.

“They are bringing prisoners! They are bringing prisoners!”

They had now come so near that their faces could be recognized. In front rode Skoraszewski, nodding his head as usual and talking joyously with Skshetuski; after them the strong detachment of horse surrounded a few tens of infantry wearing round hats. They were really Swedish prisoners.

At this sight the nobles could not contain themselves; and ran forward with shouts: “Vivat Skoraszewski! Vivat Skshetuski!”

A dense crowd surrounded the party at once. Some looked at the prisoners; some asked, “How was the affair?” others threatened the Swedes.

“Ah-hu! Well now, good for you, ye dogs! Ye wanted to war with the Poles? Ye have the Poles now!”

“Give them here! Sabre them, make mincemeat of them!”

“Ha, broad-breeches! ye have tried the Polish sabres?”

“Gracious gentlemen, don't shout like little boys, for the prisoners will think that this is your first war,” said Skoraszewski; “it is a common thing to take prisoners in time of war.”

The volunteers who belonged to the party looked with pride on the nobles who overwhelmed them with questions: "How was it? Did they surrender easily? Had you to sweat over them? Do they fight well?"

"They are good fellows," said Rosinski, "they defended themselves well; but they are not iron—a sabre cuts them."

"So they couldn't resist you, could they?"

"They could not resist the impetus."

"Gracious gentlemen, do you hear what is said—they could not resist the impetus. Well, what does that mean? Impetus is the main thing."

"Remember if only there is impetus!—that is the best method against the Swedes."

If at that moment those nobles had been commanded to rush at the enemy, surely impetus would not have been lacking; but it was well into the night when the sound of a trumpet was heard before the forepost. A trumpeter arrived with a letter from Wittemberg summoning the nobles to surrender. The crowds hearing of this wanted to cut the messenger to pieces; but the *voevodas* took the letter into consideration, though the substance of it was insolent.

The Swedish general announced that Karl Gustav sent his troops to his relative Yan Kazimir, as reinforcements against the Cossacks, that therefore the people of Great Poland should yield without resistance. Pan Grudzinski on reading this letter could not restrain his indignation, and struck the table with his fist; but the *voevoda* of Poznan quieted him at once with the question—

"Do you believe in victory? How many days can we defend ourselves? Do you wish to take the responsibility for so much noble blood which may be shed tomorrow?"

After a long deliberation it was decided not to answer, and to wait for what would happen. They did not wait long. On Saturday, July 24, the pickets announced that the whole Swedish army had appeared before Pila. There was as much bustle in camp as in a beehive on the eve of swarming.

The nobles mounted their horses; the *voevodas* hurried along the ranks, giving contradictory commands till Vladyslav Skoraszewski took everything in hand; and when he had established order he rode out at the head of a few hundred volunteers to try skirmishing beyond the river and accustom the men to look at the enemy.

The cavalry went with him willingly enough, for skirmishing consisted generally of struggles carried on by small groups or singly, and such struggles the nobles trained to sword exercise did not fear at all. They went out therefore beyond the river, and stood before the enemy, who approached nearer and nearer, and blackened with a long line the horizon, as if a grove had grown freshly from the ground. Regiments of cavalry and infantry deployed, occupying more and more space.

The nobles expected that skirmishers on horseback might rush against them at any moment. So far they were not to be seen; but on the low hills a few hundred yards distant small groups halted, in which were to be seen men and horses, and they began to turn around on the place. Seeing this, Skoraszewski commanded without delay, "To the left! to the rear!"

But the voice of command had not yet ceased to sound when on the hills long white curls of smoke bloomed forth, and as it were birds of some kind flew past with a whistle among the nobles; then a report shook the air, and at the same moment were heard cries and groans of a few wounded.

“Halt!” cried Skorashevski.

The birds flew past a second and a third time; again groans accompanied the whistle. The nobles did not listen to the command of the chief, but retreated at increased speed, shouting, and calling for the aid of heaven. Then the division scattered, in the twinkling of an eye, over the plain, and rushed on a gallop to the camp. Skorashevski was cursing, but that did no good.

Wittemberg, having dispersed the skirmishers so easily, pushed on farther, till at last he stood in front of Uistsie, straight before the trenches defended by the nobles of Kalish. The Polish guns began to play, but at first no answer was made from the Swedish side. The smoke fell away quietly in the clear air in long streaks stretching between the armies, and in the spaces between them the nobles saw the Swedish regiments, infantry and cavalry, deploying with terrible coolness as if certain of victory.

On the hills the cannon were fixed, trenches raised; in a word, the enemy came into order without paying the least attention to the balls which, without reaching them, merely scattered sand and earth on the men working in the trenches.

Pan Skshetuski led out once more two squadrons of the men of Kalish, wishing by a bold attack to confuse the Swedes. But they did not go willingly; the division fell at once into a disorderly crowd, for when the most daring urged their horses forward the most cowardly held theirs back on purpose. Two regiments of cavalry sent by Wittemberg drove the nobles from the field after a short struggle, and pursued them to the camp. Now dusk came, and put an end to the bloodless strife.

There was firing from cannon till night, when firing ceased; but such a tumult rose in the Polish camp that it was heard on the other bank of the Notets. It rose first for the reason that a few hundred of the general militia tried to slip away in the darkness. Others, seeing this, began to threaten and detain them. Sabres were drawn. The words “Either all or none” flew again from mouth to mouth. At every moment it seemed most likely that all would go. Great dissatisfaction burst out against the leaders: “They sent us with naked breasts against cannon,” cried the militia.

They were enraged in like degree against Wittemberg, because without regard to the customs of war he had not sent skirmishers against skirmishers, but had ordered to fire on them unexpectedly from cannon. “Everyone will do for himself what is best,” said they; “but it is the custom of a swinish people not to meet face to face.” Others were in open despair. “They will smoke us out of this place like badgers out of a hole,” said they. “The camp is badly planned, the trenches are badly made, the place is not fitted for defence.” From time to time voices were heard: “Save yourselves, brothers!” Still others cried: “Treason! treason!”

That was a terrible night: confusion and relaxation increased every moment; no one listened to commands. The *voevodas* lost their heads, and did not even try to restore order; and the imbecility of the general militia appeared as clearly as on the palm of the hand. Wittemberg might have taken the camp by assault on that night with the greatest ease.

Dawn came. The day broke pale, cloudy, and lighted a chaotic gathering of people fallen in courage, lamenting, and the greater number drunk, more ready for shame than for battle. To complete the misfortune, the Swedes had crossed the Notets at Dzyembovo and surrounded the Polish camp.

At that side there were scarcely any trenches, and there was nothing from behind which they could defend themselves. They should have raised breastworks without delay. Skorashevski and Skshetuski had implored to have this done, but no one would listen to anything.

The leaders and the nobles had one word on their lips, "Negotiate!" Men were sent out to parley. In answer there came from the Swedish camp a brilliant party, at the head of which rode Radzeyovski and General Wirtz, both with green branches.

They rode to the house in which the *voevoda* of Poznan was living; but on the way Radzeyovski stopped amid the crowd of nobles, bowed with the branch, with his hat, laughed, greeted his acquaintances, and said in a piercing voice—

"Gracious gentlemen, dearest brothers, be not alarmed! Not as enemies do we come. On you it depends whether a drop of blood more will be shed. If you wish instead of a tyrant who is encroaching on your liberties, who is planning for absolute power, who has brought the country to final destruction—if you wish, I repeat, a good ruler, a noble one, a warrior of such boundless glory that at bare mention of his name all the enemies of the Commonwealth will flee—give yourselves under the protection of the most serene Karl Gustav. Gracious gentlemen, dearest brothers, behold, I bring to you the guarantee of all your liberties, of your freedom, of your religion. On yourselves your salvation depends. Gracious gentlemen, the most serene Swedish king undertakes to quell the Cossack rebellion, to finish the war in Lithuania; and only he can do that. Take pity on the unfortunate country if you have no pity on yourselves."

Here the voice of the traitor quivered as if stopped by tears. The nobles listened with astonishment; here and there scattered voices cried, "Vivat Radzeyovski, our vice-chancellor!" He rode farther, and again bowed to new throngs, and again was heard his trumpet-like voice: "Gracious gentlemen, dearest brothers!" And at last he and Wirtz with the whole retinue vanished in the house of the *voevoda* of Poznan.

The nobles crowded so closely before the house that it would have been possible to ride on their heads, for they felt and understood that there in that house men were deciding the question not only of them but of the whole country. The servants of the *voevodas*, in scarlet colors, came out and began to invite the more important personages to the council. They entered quickly, and after them burst in a few of the smaller; but the rest remained at the door, they pressed to the windows, put their ears even to the walls.

A deep silence reigned in the throng. Those standing nearest the windows heard from time to time the sound of shrill voices from within the chamber, as it were the echo of quarrels, disputes, and fights. Hour followed hour, and no end to the council.

Suddenly the doors were thrown open with a crash, and out burst Vladyslav Skorashevski. Those present pushed back in astonishment. That man, usually so calm and mild, of whom it was said that wounds might be healed under his hand, had that moment a terrible face. His eyes were red, his look wild, his clothing torn open on his breast; both hands were grasping his hair, and he rushed out like a thunderbolt among the nobles, and cried with a piercing voice—

"Treason! murder! shame! We are Sweden now, and Poland no longer!"

He began to roar with an awful voice, with a spasmodic cry, and to tear his hair like a man who is losing his reason. A silence of the grave reigned all around. A certain fearful foreboding seized all hearts.

Skorashevski sprang away quickly, began to run among the nobles and cry with a voice of the greatest despair: "To arms, to arms, whoso believes in God! To arms, to arms!"

Then certain murmurs began to fly through the throngs—certain momentary whispers, sudden and broken, like the first beatings of the wind before a storm. Hearts hesitated, minds

hesitated, and in that universal distraction of feelings the tragic voice was calling continually, "To arms, to arms!"

Soon two other voices joined his—those of Pyotr Skorashevski and Stanislav Shshetuski. After them ran up Klodzinski, the gallant captain of the district of Pozpan. An increasing circle of nobles began to surround them. A threatening murmur was heard round about; flames ran over the faces and shot out of the eyes; sabres rattled. Vladyslav Skorashevski mastered the first transport, and began to speak, pointing to the house in which the council was being held—

"Do you hear, gracious gentlemen? They are selling the country there like Judases, and disgracing it. Do you know that we belong to Poland no longer? It was not enough for them to give into the hands of the enemy all of you—camp, army, cannon. Would they were killed! They have affirmed with their own signatures and in your names that we abjure our ties with the country, that we abjure our king; that the whole land—towns, towers, and we all—shall belong forever to Sweden. That an army surrenders happens, but who has the right to renounce his country and his king? Who has the right to tear away a province, to join strangers, to go over to another people, to renounce his own blood? Gracious gentlemen, this is disgrace, treason, murder, parricide! Save the fatherland, brothers! In God's name, whoever is a noble, whoever has virtue, let him save our mother. Let us give our lives, let us shed our blood! We do not want to be Swedes; we do not, we do not! Would that he had never been born who will spare his blood now! Let us rescue our mother!"

"Treason!" cried several hundred voices, "treason! Let us cut them to pieces."

"Join us, whoever has virtue!" cried Skshetuski.

"Against the Swedes till death!" added Klodzinski.

And they went along farther in the camp, shouting: "Join us! Assemble! There is treason!" and after them moved now several hundred nobles with drawn sabres.

But an immense majority remained in their places; and of those who followed some, seeing that they were not many, began to look around and stand still.

Now the door of the council-house was thrown open, and in it appeared the *voevoda* of Poznan, Pan Opalinski, having on his right side General Wirtz, and on the left Radzeyovski. After them came Andrei Grudzinski, *voevoda* of Kalisk; Myaskovski, castellan of Kryvinsk; Gembitski, castellan of Myendzyrechka, and Andrei Slupski.

Pan Opalinski had in his hand a parchment with seals appended; he held his head erect, but his face was pale and his look uncertain, though evidently he was trying to be joyful. He took in with his glance the crowds, and in the midst of a deathlike silence began to speak with a piercing though somewhat hoarse voice—

"Gracious gentlemen, this day we have put ourselves under the protection of the most serene King of Sweden. Vivat Carolus Gustavus Rex!"

Silence gave answer to the *voevoda*; suddenly some loud voice thundered, "Veto!"

The *voevoda* turned his eyes in the direction of the voice and said: "This is not a provincial diet, therefore a veto is not in place. And whoever wishes to veto let him go against the Swedish cannon turned upon us, which in one hour could make of this camp a pile of ruins."

Then he was silent, and after a while inquired, "Who said Veto?"

No one answered.

The *voevoda* again raised his voice, and began still more emphatically: “All the liberties of the nobles and the clergy will be maintained; taxes will not be increased, and will be collected in the same manner as hitherto; no man will suffer wrongs or robbery. The armies of his royal Majesty have not the right to quarter on the property of nobles nor to other exactions, unless to such as the quota of the Polish squadrons enjoy.”

Here he was silent, and heard an anxious murmur of the nobles, as if they wished to understand his meaning; then he beckoned with his hand.

“Besides this, we have the word and promise of General Wirtz, given in the name of his royal Majesty, that if the whole country will follow our saving example, the Swedish armies will move promptly into Lithuania and the Ukraine, and will not cease to war until all the lands and all the fortresses of the Commonwealth are won back. Vivat Carolus Gustavus Rex!”

“Vivat Carolus Gustavus Rex!” cried hundreds of voices. “Vivat Carolus Gustavus Rex!” thundered still more loudly in the whole camp.

Here, before the eyes of all, the *voevoda* of Poznan turned to Radzeyovski and embraced him heartily; then he embraced Wirtz; then all began to embrace one another. The nobles followed the example of the dignitaries, and joy became universal. They gave vivats so loud that the echoes thundered throughout the whole region. But the *voevoda* of Poznan begged yet the beloved brotherhood for a moment of quiet, and said in a tone of cordiality—

“Gracious gentlemen! General Wittemberg invites us today to a feast in his camp, so that at the goblets a brotherly alliance may be concluded with a manful people.”

“Vivat Wittemberg! vivat! vivat! vivat!”

“And after that, gracious gentlemen,” added the *voevoda*, “let us go to our homes, and with the assistance of God let us begin the harvest with the thought that on this day we have saved the fatherland.”

“Coming ages will render us justice,” said Radzeyovski.

“Amen!” finished the *voevoda* of Poznan.

Meanwhile he saw that the eyes of many nobles were gazing at and scanning something above his head. He turned and saw his own jester, who, holding with one hand to the frame above the door, was writing with a coal on the wall of the council-house over the door: *Mene Tekel-Peres*.<sup>15</sup>

In the world the heavens were covered with clouds, and a tempest was coming.

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<sup>15</sup> See Daniel 5:25–28.

## Chapter XII

In the district of Lukovo, on the edge of Podlyasye, stood the village of Bujets, owned by the Skshetuskis. In a garden between the mansion and a pond an old man was sitting on a bench; and at his feet were two little boys—one five, the other four years old—dark and sunburned as gypsies, but rosy and healthy. The old man, still fresh, seemed as sturdy as an aurochs. Age had not bent his broad shoulders; from his eyes—or rather from his eye, for he had one covered with a cataract—beamed health and good-humor; he had a white beard, but a look of strength and a ruddy face, ornamented on the forehead with a broad scar, through which his skull-bone was visible.

The little boys, holding the straps of his bootleg, were pulling in opposite directions; but he was gazing at the pond, which gleamed with the rays of the sun—at the pond, in which fish were springing up frequently, breaking the smooth surface of the water.

“The fish are dancing,” muttered he to himself. “Never fear, ye will dance still better when the floodgate is open, or when the cook is scratching you with a knife.” Then he turned to the little boys: “Get away from my bootleg, for when I catch one of your ears, I’ll pull it off. Just like mad horseflies! Go and roll balls there on the grass and let me alone! I do not wonder at Longinek, for he is young; but Yaremka ought to have sense by this time. Ah, torments! I’ll take one of you and throw him into the pond.”

But it was clear that the old man was in terrible subjection to the boys, for neither had the least fear of his threats; on the contrary, Yaremka, the elder, began to pull the bootleg still harder, bracing his feet and repeating—

“Oh, Grandfather, be Bogun and steal away Longinek.”

“Be off, thou beetle, I say, thou rogue, thou cheese-roll!”

“Oh, Grandfather, be Bogun!”

“I’ll give thee Bogun; wait till I call thy mother!”

Yaremka looked toward the door leading from the house to the garden, but finding it closed, and seeing no sign of his mother, he repeated the third time, pouting, “Grandfather, be Bogun!”

“Ah, they will kill me, the rogues; it cannot be otherwise. Well, I’ll be Bogun, but only once. Oh, it is a punishment of God! Mind ye do not plague me again!”

When he had said this, the old man groaned a little, raised himself from the bench, then suddenly grabbed little Longinek, and giving out loud shouts, began to carry him off in the direction of the pond.

Longinek, however, had a valiant defender in his brother, who on such occasions did not call himself Yaremka, but Pan Michael Volodyovski, captain of dragoons.

Pan Michael, then, armed with a basswood club, which took the place of a sabre in this sudden emergency, ran swiftly after the bulky Bogun, soon caught up with him, and began to beat him on the legs without mercy.

Longinek, playing the role of his mamma, made an uproar, Bogun made an uproar, Yaremka-Volodyovski made an uproar; but valor at last overcame even Bogun, who, dropping his

victim, began to make his way back to the linden-tree. At last he reached the bench, fell upon it, panting terribly and repeating—

“Ah, ye little stumps! It will be a wonder if I do not suffocate.”

But the end of his torment had not come yet, for a moment later Yaremka stood before him with a ruddy face, floating hair, and distended nostrils, like a brisk young falcon, and began to repeat with greater energy—

“Grandfather, be Bogun!”

After much teasing and a solemn promise given to the two boys that this would surely be the last time, the story was repeated in all its details; then they sat three in a row on the bench and Yaremka began—

“Oh, Grandfather, tell who was the bravest.”

“Thou, thou!” said the old man.

“And shall I grow up to be a knight?”

“Surely thou wilt, for there is good soldier blood in thee. God grant thee to be like thy father; for if brave thou wilt not tease so much—understand me?”

“Tell how many men has Papa killed?”

“It’s little if I have told thee a hundred times! Easier for thee to count the leaves on this linden-tree than all the enemies which thy father and I have destroyed. If I had as many hairs on my head as I myself have put down, the barbers in Lukovsk would make fortunes just in shaving my temples. I am a rogue if I li—”

Here Pan Zagloba—for it was he—saw that it did not become him to adjure or swear before little boys, though in the absence of other listeners he loved to tell even the children of his former triumphs; he grew silent this time especially because the fish had begun to spring up in the pond with redoubled activity.

“We must tell the gardener,” said he, “to set the net for the night; a great many fine fish are crowding right up to the bank.”

Now that door of the house which led into the garden opened, and in it appeared a woman beautiful as the midday sun, tall, firm, black-haired, with bloom on her brunette face, and eyes like velvet. A third boy, three years old, dark as an agate ball, hung to her skirt. She, shading her eyes with her hand, looked in the direction of the linden-tree. This was Pani Helena Skshetuski, of the princely house of Bulyga-Kurtsevich.

Seeing Pan Zagloba with Yaremka and Longinek under the tree, she went forward a few steps toward the ditch, full of water, and called: “Come here, boys! Surely you are plaguing Grandfather?”

“How plague me! They have acted nicely all the time,” said the old man.

The boys ran to their mother; but she asked Zagloba, “What will Father drink today—*dembniak* or mead?”

“We had pork for dinner; mead will be best.”

“I’ll send it this minute; but Father must not fall asleep in the air, for fever is sure to come.”

“It is warm today, and there is no wind. But where is Yan, Daughter?”

“He has gone to the barns.”



Pani Skshetuski called Zagloba father, and he called her daughter, though they were in no way related. Her family dwelt beyond the Dnieper, in the former domains of Vishnyevetski; and as to him God alone knew his origin, for he told various tales about it himself. But Zagloba had rendered famous services to Pani Skshetuski when she was still a maiden, and he had rescued her from terrible dangers; therefore she and her husband treated him as a father, and in the whole region about he was honored beyond measure by all, as well for his inventive mind as for the uncommon bravery of which he had given many proofs in various wars, especially in those against the Cossacks. His name was known in the whole Commonwealth. The king himself was enamored of his stories and wit; and in general he was more spoken of than even Pan Skshetuski, though the latter in his time had burst through besieged Zbaraj and all the Cossack armies.

Soon after Pani Skshetuski had gone into the house a boy brought a decanter and glass to the linden-tree. Zagloba poured out some mead, then closed his eyes and began to try it diligently.

“The Lord God knew why he created bees,” said he, with a nasal mutter. And he fell to drinking slowly, drawing deep breaths at the same time, while gazing at the pond and beyond the pond, away to the dark and blue pinewoods stretching as far as the eye could reach on the other side. The time was past one in the afternoon, and the heavens were cloudless. The blossoms of the linden were falling noiselessly to the earth, and on the tree among the leaves were buzzing a whole choir of bees, which soon began to settle on the edge of the glass and gather the sweet fluid on their shaggy legs.

Above the great pond, from the far-off reeds obscured by the haze of distance, rose from time to time flocks of ducks, teal, or wild geese, and moved away swiftly in the blue ether like black crosses; sometimes a row of cranes looked dark high in the air, and gave out a shrill cry. With these exceptions all around was quiet, calm, sunny, and gladsome, as is usual in the first days of August, when the grain has ripened, and the sun is scattering as it were gold upon the earth.

The eyes of the old man were raised now to the sky, following the flocks of birds, and now they were lost in the distance, growing more and more drowsy, as the mead in the decanter decreased; his lids became heavier and heavier—the bees buzzed their song in various tones as if on purpose for his after-dinner slumber.

“True, true, the Lord God has given beautiful weather for the harvest,” muttered Zagloba. “The hay is well gathered in, the harvest will be finished in a breath. Yes, yes—”

Here he closed his eyes, then opened them again for a moment, muttered once more, “The boys have tormented me,” and fell asleep in earnest.

He slept rather long, but after a certain time he was roused by a light breath of cooler air, together with the conversation and steps of two men drawing near the tree rapidly. One of them was Yan Skshetuski, the hero of Zbaraj, who about a month before had returned from the hetmans in the Ukraine to cure a stubborn fever; Pan Zagloba did not know the other, though in stature and form and even in features he resembled Yan greatly.

“I present to you, dear father,” said Yan, “my cousin Pan Stanislav Skshetuski, the captain of Kalish.”

“You are so much like Yan,” answered Zagloba, blinking and shaking the remnants of sleep from his eyelids, “that had I met you anywhere I should have said at once, ‘Skshetuski!’ Hei, what a guest in the house!”

“It is dear to me to make your acquaintance, my benefactor,” answered Stanislav, “the more since the name is well known to me, for the knighthood of the whole Commonwealth repeat it with respect and mention it as an example.”

“Without praising myself, I did what I could, while I felt strength in my bones. And even now one would like to taste of war, for *consuetudo altera natura* (habit is a second nature). But why, gentlemen, are you so anxious, so that Yan’s face is pale?”

“Stanislav has brought dreadful news,” answered Yan. “The Swedes have entered Great Poland, and occupied it entirely.”

Zagloba sprang from the bench as if forty years had dropped from him, opened wide his eyes, and began involuntarily to feel at his side, as if he were looking for a sabre.

“How is that?” asked he, “how is that? Have they occupied all of it?”

“Yes, for the *voevoda* of Poznan and others at Uistsie have given it into the hands of the enemy,” answered Stanislav.

“For God’s sake! What do I hear? Have they surrendered?”

“Not only have they surrendered, but they have signed a compact renouncing the King and the Commonwealth. Henceforth Sweden, not Poland, is to be there.”

“By the mercy of God, by the wounds of the Crucified! Is the world coming to an end? What do I hear! Yesterday Yan and I were speaking of this danger from Sweden, for news had come that they were marching; but we were both confident that it would end in nothing, or at most in the renunciation of the title of King of Sweden by our lord, Yan Kazimir.”

“But it has begun with the loss of a province, and will end with God knows what.”

“Stop, for the blood will boil over in me! How was it? And you were at Uistsie and saw all this with your own eyes? That was simply treason the most villanous, unheard of in history.”

“I was there and looked on, and whether it was treason you will decide when you hear all. We were at Uistsie, the general militia and the land infantry, fifteen thousand men in all, and we formed our lines on the *Notets ab incursione hostili* (against hostile invasion). True the army was small, and as an experienced soldier you know best whether the place of regular troops can be filled by general militia, especially that of Great Poland, where the nobles have grown notably unused to war. Still, if a leader had been found, they might have shown opposition to the enemy in old fashion, and at least detained them till the Commonwealth could find reinforcements. But hardly had Wittemberg shown himself when negotiations were begun before a drop of blood had been shed. Then Radzeyovski came up, and with his persuasions brought about what I have said—that is, misfortune and disgrace, the like of which has not been hitherto.”

“How was that? Did no one resist, did no one protest? Did no one hurl treason in the eyes of those scoundrels? Did all agree to betray the country and the king?”

“Virtue is perishing, and with it the Commonwealth, for nearly all agreed. I, the two Skoraszewskis, Pan Tsisvitski, and Pan Klodzinski did what we could to rouse a spirit of resistance among the nobles. Pan Vladyslav Skoraszewski went almost frantic. We flew through the camp from the men of one district to those of another, and God knows there was no beseeching that we did not use. But what good was it when the majority chose to go in bonds to the banquet which Wittemberg promised, rather than with sabres to battle? Seeing that the best went in every direction—some to their homes, others to Warsaw—the Skoraszewskis went to Warsaw, and will bring the first news to the king; but I, having neither

wife nor children, came here to my cousin, with the idea that we might go together against the enemy. It was fortunate that I found you at home.”

“Then you are directly from Uistsie?”

“Directly. I rested on the road only as much as my horses needed, and as it was I drove one of them to death. The Swedes must be in Poznan at present, and thence they will quickly spread over the whole country.”

Here all grew silent. Yan sat with his palms on his knees, his eyes fixed on the ground, and he was thinking gloomily. Pan Stanislav sighed; and Zagloba, not having recovered, looked with a staring glance, now on one, now on the other.

“Those are evil signs,” said Yan at last, gloomily. “Formerly for ten victories there came one defeat, and we astonished the world with our valor. Now not only defeats come, but treason—not merely of single persons, but of whole provinces. May God pity the country!”

“For God’s sake,” said Zagloba, “I have seen much in the world. I can hear, I can reason, but still belief fails me.”

“What do you think of doing, Yan?” asked Stanislav.

“It is certain that I shall not stay at home, though fever is shaking me yet. It will be necessary to place my wife and children somewhere in safety. Pan Stabrovski, my relative, is huntsman of the king in the wilderness of Byalovyej, and lives in Byalovyej. Even if the whole Commonwealth should fall into the power of the enemy, they would not touch that region. Tomorrow I will take my wife and children straight there.”

“And that will not be a needless precaution,” said Stanislav; “for though ’tis far from Great Poland to this place, who knows whether the flame may not soon seize these regions also?”

“The nobles must be notified,” said Yan, “to assemble and think of defence, for here no one has heard anything yet.” Here he turned to Zagloba: “And, Father, will you go with us, or do you wish to accompany Helena to the wilderness?”

“I?” answered Zagloba, “will I go? If my feet had taken root in the earth, I might not go; but even then I should ask someone to dig me out. I want to try Swedish flesh again, as a wolf does mutton. Ha! the rascals, trunk-breeches, long-stockings! The fleas make raids on their calves, their legs are itching, and they can’t sit at home, but crawl into foreign lands. I know them, the sons of such a kind, for when I was under Konyetspolski I worked against them; and, gentlemen, if you want to know who took Gustavus Adolphus captive, ask the late Konyetspolski. I’ll say no more! I know them, but they know me too. It must be that the rogues have heard that Zagloba has grown old. Isn’t that true? Wait! you’ll see him yet! O Lord! O Lord, all-Powerful! why hast thou unfenced this unfortunate Commonwealth, so that all the neighboring swine are running into it now, and they have rooted up three of the best provinces? What is the condition? *Ba!* but who is to blame, if not traitors? The plague did not know whom to take; it took honest men, but left the traitors. O Lord, send thy pest once more on the *voevoda* of Poznan and on him of Kalish, but especially on Radzeyovski and his whole family. But if ’tis thy will to favor hell with more inhabitants, send thither all those who signed the pact at Uistsie. Has Zagloba grown old? has he grown old? You will find out! Yan, let us consider quickly what to do, for I want to be on horseback.”

“Of course we must know whither to go. It is difficult to reach the hetmans in the Ukraine, for the enemy has cut them off from the Commonwealth and the road is open only to the Crimea. It is lucky that the Tartars are on our side this time. According to my head it will be necessary for us to go to Warsaw to the king, to defend our dear lord.”

“If there is time,” remarked Stanislav. “The king must collect squadrons there in haste, and will march on the enemy before we can come, and perhaps the engagement is already taking place.”

“And that may be.”

“Let us go then to Warsaw, if we can go quickly,” said Zagloba. “Listen, gentlemen! It is true that our names are terrible to the enemy, but still three of us cannot do much, therefore I should give this advice: Let us summon the nobles to volunteer; they will come in such numbers that we may lead even a small squadron to the king. We shall persuade them easily, for they must go anyhow when the call comes for the general militia—it will be all one to them—and we shall tell them that whoever volunteers before the call will do an act dear to the king. With greater power we can do more, and they will receive us (in Warsaw) with open arms.”

“Wonder not at my words,” said Pan Stanislav, “but from what I have seen I feel such a dislike to the general militia that I choose to go alone rather than with a crowd of men who know nothing of war.”

“You have no acquaintance with the nobles of this place. Here a man cannot be found who has not served in the army; all have experience and are good soldiers.”

“That may be.”

“How could it be otherwise? But wait! Yan knows that when once I begin to work with my head I have no lack of resources. For that reason I lived in great intimacy with the *voevoda* of Rus, Prince Yeremi. Let Yan tell how many times that greatest of warriors followed my advice, and thereby was each time victorious.”

“But tell us, Father, what you wish to say, for time is precious.”

“What I wish to say? This is it: not he defends the country and the king who holds to the king’s skirts, but he who beats the enemy; and he beats the enemy best who serves under a great warrior. Why go on uncertainties to Warsaw, when the king himself may have gone to Krakow, to Lvoff or Lithuania? My advice is to put ourselves at once under the banners of the grand hetman of Lithuania, Prince Yanush Radzivill. He is an honest man and a soldier. Though they accuse him of pride, he of a certainty will not surrender to Swedes. He at least is a chief and a hetman of the right kind. It will be close there, ’tis true, for he is working against two enemies; but as a recompense we shall see Pan Michael Volodyovski, who is serving in the Lithuanian quota, and again we shall be together as in old times. If I do not counsel well, then let the first Swede take me captive by the sword-strap.”

“Who knows, who knows?” answered Yan, with animation. “Maybe that will be the best course.”

“And besides we shall take Halshka<sup>16</sup> with the children, for we must go right through the wilderness.”

“And we shall serve among soldiers, not among militia,” added Stanislav.

“And we shall fight, not debate, nor eat chickens and cheese in the villages.”

“I see that not only in war, but in council you can hold the first place,” said Stanislav.

“Well, are you satisfied?”

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<sup>16</sup> Helena.

“In truth, in truth,” said Yan, “that is the best advice. We shall be with Michael as before; you will know, Stanislaw, the greatest soldier in the Commonwealth, my true friend, my brother. We will go now to Halshka, and tell her so that she too may be ready for the road.”

“Does she know of the war already?” asked Zagloba.

“She knows, she knows, for in her presence Stanislaw told about it first. She is in tears, poor woman! But if I say to her that it is necessary to go, she will say straightway. Go!”

“I would start in the morning,” cried Zagloba.

“We will start in the morning and before daybreak,” said Yan. “You must be terribly tired after the road, Stanislaw, but you will rest before morning as best you can. I will send horses this evening with trusty men to Byala, to Lostsi, to Drohichyn and Byelsk, so as to have relays everywhere. And just beyond Byelsk is the wilderness. Wagons will start today also with supplies. It is too bad to go into the world from the dear corner, but ’tis God’s will! This is my comfort: I am safe as to my wife and children, for the wilderness is the best fortress in the world. Come to the house, gentlemen; it is time for me to prepare for the journey.”

They went in. Pan Stanislaw, greatly road-weary, had barely taken food and drink when he went to sleep straightway; but Pan Yan and Zagloba were busied in preparations. And as there was great order in Pan Yan’s household the wagons and men started that evening for an all-night journey, and next morning at daybreak the carriage followed in which sat Helena with the children and an old maid, a companion. Pan Stanislaw and Pan Yan with five attendants rode on horseback near the carriage. The whole party pushed forward briskly, for fresh horses were awaiting them.

Travelling in this manner and without resting even at night, they reached Byelsk on the fifth day, and on the sixth they sank in the wilderness from the side of Hainovshyna.

They were surrounded at once by the gloom of the gigantic pine-forest, which at that period occupied a number of tens of square leagues, joining on one side with an unbroken line the wilderness of Zyelonka and Rogovsk, and on the other the forests of Prussia.

No invader had ever trampled with a hoof those dark depths in which a man who knew them not might go astray and wander till he dropped from exhaustion or fell a prey to ravenous beasts. In the night were heard the bellowing of the aurochs, the growling of bears, with the howling of wolves and the hoarse screams of panthers. Uncertain roads led through thickets or clean-trunked trees, along fallen timber, swamps, and terrible stagnant lakes to the scattered villages of guards, pitch-burners, and hunters, who in many cases did not leave the wilderness all their lives. To Byalovyej itself a broader way led, continued by the Suha road, over which the kings went to hunt. By that road also the Skshetuskis came from the direction of Byelsk and Hainovshyna.

Pan Stabrovski, chief-hunter of the king, was an old hermit and bachelor, who like an aurochs stayed always in the wilderness. He received the visitors with open arms, and almost smothered the children with kisses. He lived with beaters-in, never seeing the face of a noble unless when the king went to hunt. He had the management of all hunting matters and all the pitch-making of the wilderness. He was greatly disturbed by news of the war, of which he heard first from Pan Yan.

Often did it happen in the Commonwealth that war broke out or the king died and no news came to the wilderness; the chief-hunter alone brought news when he returned from the treasurer of Lithuania, to whom he was obliged to render account of his management of the wilderness each year.

“It will be dreary here, dreary,” said Stabrovski to Helena, “but safe as nowhere else in the world. No enemy will break through these walls, and even if he should try the beaters-in would shoot down all his men. It would be easier to conquer the whole Commonwealth—which may God not permit!—than the wilderness. I have been living here twenty years, and even I do not know it all, for there are places where it is impossible to go, where only wild beasts live and perhaps evil spirits have their dwelling, from whom men are preserved by the sound of church-bells. But we live according to God’s law, for in the village there is a chapel to which a priest from Byelsk comes once a year. You will be here as if in heaven, if tedium does not weary you. As a recompense there is no lack of firewood.”

Pan Yan was glad in his whole soul that he had found for his wife such a refuge; but Pan Stabrovski tried in vain to delay him awhile and entertain him.

Halting only one night, the cavaliers resumed at daybreak their journey across the wilderness. They were led through the forest labyrinths by guides whom the hunter sent with them.

## Chapter XIII

When Pan Skshetuski with his cousin Stanislav and Zagloba, after a toilsome journey from the wilderness, came at last to Upita, Pan Volodyovski went almost wild from delight, especially since he had long had no news of them; he thought that Yan was with a squadron of the king which he commanded under the hetmans in the Ukraine.

Pan Michael took them in turn by the shoulders, and after he had pressed them once he pressed them again and rubbed his hands. When they told him of their wish to serve under Radzivill, he rejoiced still more at the thought that they would not separate soon.

"Praise God that we shall be together, old comrades of Zbaraj!" said he. "A man has greater desire for war when he feels friends near him."

"That was my idea," said Zagloba; "for they wanted to fly to the king. But I said, 'Why not remember old times with Pan Michael? If God will give us such fortune as he did with Cossacks and the Tartars, we shall soon have more than one Swede on our conscience.'"

"God inspired you with that thought," said Pan Michael.

"But it is a wonder to me," added Yan, "how you know already of the war. Stanislav came to me with the last breath of his horse, and we in that same fashion rode hither, thinking that we should be first to announce the misfortune."

"The tidings must have come through the Jews," said Zagloba; "for they are first to know everything, and there is such communication between them that if one sneezes in Great Poland in the morning, others will call to him in the evening from Lithuania and the Ukraine, 'To thy health!'"

"I know not how it was, but we heard of it two days ago," said Pan Michael, "and there is a fearful panic here. The first day we did not credit the news greatly, but on the second no one denied it. I will say more; before the war came, you would have said that the birds were singing about it in the air, for suddenly and without cause all began to speak of war. Our prince *voevoda* must also have looked for it and have known something before others, for he was rushing about like a fly in hot water, and during these last hours he has hastened to Kyedani. Levies were made at his order two months ago. I assembled men, as did also Stankyevich and a certain Kmita, the banneret of Orsha, who, as I hear, has already sent a squadron to Kyedani. Kmita was ready before the rest of us."

"Michael, do you know Prince Radzivill well?" asked Yan.

"Why should I not know him, when I have passed the whole present war<sup>17</sup> under his command?"

"What do you know of his plans? Is he an honest man?"

"He is a finished warrior; who knows if after the death of Prince Yeremi he is not the greatest in the Commonwealth? He was defeated in the last battle, it is true; but against eighteen thousand he had six thousand men. The treasurer and the *voevoda* of Vityebsk blame him terribly for this, saying that with small forces he rushed against such a disproportionate power to avoid sharing victory with them. God knows how it was! But he stood up manfully and did not spare his own life. And I who saw it all, say only this, that if we had had troops and

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<sup>17</sup> The war against Russia.

money enough, not a foot of the enemy would have left the country. So I think that he will begin at the Swedes more sharply, and will not wait for them here, but march on Livonia.”

“Why do you think that?”

“For two reasons—first, because he will wish to improve his reputation, shattered a little after the battle of Tsybihova; and second, because he loves war.”

“That is true,” said Zagloba. “I know him, for we were at school together and I worked out his tasks for him. He was always in love with war, and therefore liked to keep company with me rather than others, for I too preferred a horse and a lance to Latin.”

“It is certain that he is not like the *voevoda* of Poznan; he is surely a different kind of man altogether,” said Pan Stanislav.

Volodyovski inquired about everything that had taken place at Uistsie, and tore his hair as he listened to the story. At last, when Pan Stanislav had finished, he said—

“You are right! Our Radzivill is incapable of such deeds. He is as proud as the devil, and it seems to him that in the whole world there is not a greater family than the Radzivils. He will not endure opposition, that is true; and at the treasurer, Pan Gosyevski, an honest man, he is angry because the latter will not dance when Radzivill plays. He is displeased also with his Grace the king, because he did not give him the grand baton of Lithuania soon enough. All true, as well as this—that he prefers to live in the dishonorable error of Calvinism rather than turn to the true faith, that he persecutes Catholics where he can, that he founds societies of heretics. But as recompense for this, I will swear that he would rather shed the last drop of his proud blood than sign a surrender like that at Uistsie. We shall have war to wade in; for not a scribe, but a warrior, will lead us.”

“That’s my play,” said Zagloba, “I want nothing more. Pan Opalinski is a scribe, and he showed soon what he was good for. They are the meanest of men! Let but one of them pull a quill out of a goose’s tail and he thinks straightway that he has swallowed all wisdom. He will say to others, ‘Son of a such kind,’ and when it comes to the sabre you cannot find him. When I was young myself, I put rhymes together to captivate the hearts of fair heads, and I might have made a goat’s horn of Pan Kohanovski with his silly verses, but later on the soldier nature got the upper hand.”

“I will add, too,” continued Volodyovski, “that the nobles will soon move hither. A crowd of people will come, if only money is not lacking, for that is most important.”

“In God’s name I want no general militia!” shouted Pan Stanislav. “Yan and Pan Zagloba know my sentiments already, and to you I say now that I would rather be a camp-servant in a regular squadron than hetman over the entire general militia.”

“The people here are brave,” answered Volodyovski, “and very skilful. I have an example from my own levy. I could not receive all who came, and among those whom I accepted there is not a man who has not served before. I will show you this squadron, gentlemen, and if you had not learned from me you would not know that they are not old soldiers. Everyone is tempered and hammered in fire, like an old horseshoe, and stands in order like a Roman legionary. It will not be so easy for the Swedes with them, as with the men of Great Poland at Uistsie.”

“I have hope that God will change everything,” said Pan Yan. “They say that the Swedes are good soldiers, but still they have never been able to stand before our regular troops. We have beaten them always—that is a matter of trial; we have beaten them even when they were led by the greatest warrior they have ever had.”



“In truth I am very curious to know what they can do,” answered Volodyovski; “and were it not that two other wars are now weighing on the country, I should not be angry a whit about the Swedes. We have tried the Turks, the Tartars, the Cossacks, and God knows whom we have not tried; it is well now to try the Swedes. The only trouble in the kingdom is that all the troops are occupied with the hetmans in the Ukraine. But I see already what will happen here. Prince Radzivill will leave the existing war to the treasurer and full hetman Pan Gosyevski, and will go himself at the Swedes in earnest. It will be heavy work, it is true. But we have hope that God will assist us.”

“Let us go, then, without delay to Kyedani,” said Pan Stanislav.

“I received an order to have the squadron ready and to appear in Kyedani myself in three days,” answered Pan Michael. “But I must show you, gentlemen this last order, for it is clear from it that the prince is thinking of the Swedes.”

When he had said this, Volodyovski unlocked a box standing on a bench under the window, took out a paper folded once, and opening it began to read:—

*Colonel Volodyovski:*

*Gracious Sir—We have read with great delight your report that the squadron is ready and can move to the campaign at any moment. Keep it ready and alert, for such difficult times are coming as have not been yet; therefore come yourself as quickly as possible to Kyedani, where we shall await you with impatience. If any reports come to you, believe them not till you have heard everything from our lips. We act as God himself and our conscience command, without reference to what malice and the ill will of man may invent against us. But at the same time we console ourselves with this—that times are coming in which it will be shown definitely who is a true and real friend of the house of Radzivill and who even in rebus adversis is willing to serve it. Kmita, Nyevyarovski, and Stankyevich have brought their squadrons here already; let yours remain in Upita, for it may be needed there, and it may have to march to Podlyasye under command of my cousin Prince Boguslav, who has considerable bodies of our troops under his command there. Of all this you will learn in detail from our lips; meanwhile we confide to your loyalty the careful execution of orders, and await you in Kyedani.*

*Yanush Radzivill,*

*Prince in Birji and Dubinki, vovoda of Vilna, grand hetman of Lithuania.*

“Yes, a new war is evident from this letter,” said Zagloba.

“And the prince’s statement that he will act as God commands him, means that he will fight the Swedes,” added Stanislav.

“Still it is a wonder to me,” said Pan Yan, “that he writes about loyalty to the house of Radzivill, and not to the country, which means more than the Radzivills, and demands prompter rescue.”

“That is their lordly manner,” answered Volodyovski; “though that did not please me either at first, for I too serve the country and not the Radzivills.”

“When did you receive this letter?” asked Pan Yan.

“This morning, and I wanted to start this afternoon. You will rest tonight after the journey; tomorrow I shall surely return, and then we will move with the squadron wherever they command.”

“Perhaps to Podlyasye?” said Zagloba.

“To Prince Boguslav,” added Pan Stanislav.

“Prince Boguslav is now in Kyedani,” said Volodyovski. “He is a strange person, and do you look at him carefully. He is a great warrior and a still greater knight, but he is not a Pole to the value of a copper. He wears a foreign dress, and talks German or French altogether; you might think he was cracking nuts, might listen to him a whole hour, and not understand a thing.”

“Prince Boguslav at Berestechko bore himself well,” said Zagloba, “and brought a good number of German infantry.”

“Those who know him more intimately do not praise him very highly,” continued Volodyovski, “for he loves only the Germans and French. It cannot be otherwise, since he was born of a German mother, the daughter of the elector of Brandenburg, with whom his late father not only received no dowry, but, since those small princes (the electors) as may be seen have poor housekeeping, he had to pay something. But with the Radzivils it is important to have a vote in the German Empire, of which they are princes, and therefore they make alliances with the Germans. Pan Sakovich, an old client of Prince Boguslav, who made him starosta of Oshmiani, told me about this. He and Pan Nyevyarovski, a colonel, were abroad with Prince Boguslav in various foreign lands, and acted always as seconds in his duels.”

“How many has he fought?” asked Zagloba.

“As many as he has hairs on his head! He cut up various princes greatly and foreign counts, French and German, for they say that he is very fiery, brave, and daring, and calls a man out for the least word.”

Pan Stanislav was roused from his thoughtfulness and said: “I too have heard of this Prince Boguslav, for it is not far from us to the elector, with whom he lives continually. I have still in mind how my father said that when Prince Boguslav’s father married the elector’s daughter, people complained that such a great house as that of the Radzivils made an alliance with strangers. But perhaps it happened for the best; the elector as a relative of the Radzivils ought to be very friendly now to the Commonwealth, and on him much depends at present. What you say about their poor housekeeping is not true. It is certain, however, that if anyone were to sell all the possessions of the Radzivils, he could buy with the price of them the elector and his whole principality; but the present *kurfürst*, Friedrich Wilhelm, has saved no small amount of money, and has twenty thousand very good troops with whom he might boldly meet the Swedes—which as a vassal of the Commonwealth he ought to do if he has God in his heart, and remembers all the kindness which the Commonwealth has shown his house.”

“Will he do that?” asked Pan Yan.

“It would be black ingratitude and faith-breaking on his part if he did otherwise,” answered Pan Stanislav.

“It is hard to count on the gratitude of strangers, and especially of heretics,” said Zagloba. “I remember this *kurfürst* of yours when he was still a stripling. He was always sullen; one would have said that he was listening to what the devil was whispering in his ear. When I was in Prussia with the late Konyetspolski, I told the *kurfürst* that to his eyes—for he is a Lutheran, the same as the King of Sweden. God grant that they make no alliance against the Commonwealth!”

“Do you know, Michael,” said Pan Yan, suddenly, “I will not rest here; I will go with you to Kyedani. It is better at this season to travel in the night, for it is hot in the daytime, and I am

eager to escape from uncertainty. There is resting-time ahead, for surely the prince will not march tomorrow.”

“Especially as he has given orders to keep the squadron in Upita,” answered Pan Michael.

“You speak well!” cried Zagloba; “I will go too.”

“Then we will all go together,” said Pan Stanislav.

“We shall be in Kyedani in the morning,” said Pan Michael, “and on the road we can sleep sweetly in our saddles.”

Two hours later, after they had eaten and drunk somewhat, the knights started on their journey, and before sundown reached Krakin.

On the road Pan Michael told them about the neighborhood, and the famous nobles of Lauda, of Kmita, and of all that had happened during a certain time. He confessed also his love for Panna Billevich, unrequited as usual.

“It is well that war is near,” said he, “otherwise I should have suffered greatly, when I think at times that such is my misfortune, and that probably I shall die in the single state.”

“No harm will come to you from that,” said Zagloba, “for it is an honorable state and pleasing to God. I have resolved to remain in it to the end of my life. Sometimes I regret that there will be no one to leave my fame and name to; for though I love Yan’s children as if they were my own, still the Skshetuskis are not the Zaglobas.”

“Ah, evil man! You have made this choice with a feeling like that of the wolf when he vowed not to kill sheep after all his teeth were gone.”

“But that is not true,” said Zagloba. “It is not so long, Michael, since you and I were in Warsaw at the election. At whom were all the women looking if not at me? Do you not remember how you used to complain that not one of them was looking at you? But if you have such a desire for the married state, then be not troubled; your turn will come too. This seeking is of no use; you will find just when you are not seeking. This is a time of war, and many good cavaliers perish every year. Only let this Swedish war continue, the girls will be alone, and we shall find them in market by the dozen.”

“Perhaps I shall perish too,” said Pan Michael. “I have had enough of this battering through the world. Never shall I be able to tell you, gentlemen, what a worthy and beautiful lady Panna Billevich is. And if it were a man who had loved and petted her in the tenderest way—No! the devils had to bring this Kmita. It must be that he gave her something, it cannot be otherwise; for if he had not, surely she would not have let me go. There, look! Just beyond the hills Vodokty is visible; but there is no one in the house. She has gone God knows whither. The bear has his den, the pig his nest, but I have only this crowbait and this saddle on which I sit.”

“I see that she has pierced you like a thorn,” said Zagloba.

“True, so that when I think of myself or when riding by I see Vodokty, I grieve still. I wanted to strike out the wedge with a wedge,<sup>18</sup> and went to Pan Schilling, who has a very comely daughter. Once I saw her on the road at a distance, and she took my fancy greatly. I went to his house, and what shall I say, gentlemen? I did not find the father at home, but the daughter Panna Kahna thought that I was not Pan Volodyovski, but only Pan Volodyovski’s attendant. I took the affront so to heart that I have never shown myself there again.”

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<sup>18</sup> This Polish saying of striking out a wedge with a wedge means here, of course, to cure one love with another.

Zagloba began to laugh. "God help you, Michael! The whole matter is this—you must find a wife of such stature as you are yourself. But where did that little rogue go to who was in attendance on Princess Vishnyevetski, and whom the late Pan Podbipienta—God light his soul!—was to marry? She was just your size, a regular peach-stone, though her eyes did shine terribly."

"That was Anusia Borzabogati," said Pan Yan. "We were all in love with her in our time—Michael too. God knows where she is now!"

"I might seek her out and comfort her," said Pan Michael. "When you mention her it grows warm around my heart. She was a most respectable girl. Ah, those old days of Lubni were pleasant, but never will they return. They will not, for never will there be such a chief as our Prince Yeremi. A man knew that every battle would be followed by victory. Radzivill was a great warrior, but not such, and men do not serve him with such heart, for he has not that fatherly love for soldiers, and does not admit them to confidence, having something about him of the monarch, though the Vishnyevetskis were not inferior to the Radzivills."

"No matter," said Pan Yan. "The salvation of the country is in his hands now, and because he is ready to give his life for it, God bless him!"

Thus conversed the old friends, riding along in the night. They called up old questions at one time; at another they spoke of the grievous days of the present, in which three wars at once had rolled on the Commonwealth. Later they repeated "Our Father" and the litany; and when they had finished, sleep wearied them, and they began to doze and nod on the saddles.

The night was clear and warm; the stars twinkled by thousands in the sky. Dragging on at a walk, they slept sweetly till, when day began to break. Pan Michael woke.

"Gentlemen, open your eyes; Kyedani is in sight!" cried he.

"What, where?" asked Zagloba. "Kyedani, where?"

"Off there! The towers are visible."

"A respectable sort of place," said Pan Stanislav.

"Very considerable," answered Volodyovski; "and of this you will be able to convince yourselves better in the daytime."

"But is this the inheritance of the prince?"

"Yes. Formerly it belonged to the Kishkis, from whom the father of the present prince received it as dowry with Panna Anna Kishki, daughter of the *voevoda* of Vityebsk. In all Jmud there is not such a well-ordered place, for the Radzivills do not admit Jews, save by permission to each one. The meads here are celebrated."

Zagloba opened his eyes.

"But do people of some politeness live here? What is that immensely great building on the eminence?"

"That is the castle just built during the rule of Yanush."

"Is it fortified?"

"No, but it is a lordly residence. It is not fortified, for no enemy has ever entered these regions since the time of the Knights of the Cross. That pointed steeple in the middle of the town belongs to the parish church built by the Knights of the Cross in pagan times; later it was given to the Calvinists, but the priest Kobylinski won it back for the Catholics through a lawsuit with Prince Krishtof."

“Praise be to God for that!”

Thus conversing they arrived near the first cottages of the suburbs. Meanwhile it grew brighter and brighter in the world, and the sun began to rise. The knights looked with curiosity at the new place, and Pan Volodyovski continued to speak—

“This is Jew street, in which dwell those of the Jews who have permission to be here. Following this street, one comes to the market. Oho! people are up already, and beginning to come out of the houses. See, a crowd of horses before the forges, and attendants not in the Radzivill colors! There must be some meeting in Kyedani. It is always full of nobles and high personages here, and sometimes they come from foreign countries, for this is the capital for heretics from all Jmud, who under the protection of the Radzivills carry on their sorcery and superstitious practices. That is the market-square. See what a clock is on the town-house! There is no better one to this day in Dantzig. And that which looks like a church with four towers is a Helvetic (Calvinistic) meetinghouse, in which every Sunday they blaspheme God; and farther on the Lutheran church. You think that the townspeople are Poles or Lithuanians—not at all. Real Germans and Scots, but more Scots. The Scots are splendid infantry, and cut terribly with battle-axes. The prince has also one Scottish regiment of volunteers of Kyedani. *Ei*, how many wagons with packs on the market-square! Surely there is some meeting. There are no inns in the town; acquaintances stop with acquaintances, and nobles go to the castle, in which there are rooms tens of ells long, intended for guests only. There they entertain, at the prince’s expense, everyone honorably, even if for a year; there are people who stay there all their lives.”

“It is a wonder to me that lightning has not burned that Calvinistic meetinghouse,” said Zagloba.

“But do you not know that that has happened? In the centre between the four towers was a cap-shaped cupola; on a time such a lightning-flash struck this cupola that nothing remained of it. In the vault underneath lies the father of Prince Boguslav, Yanush—he who joined the mutiny against Sigismund III. His own haiduk laid open his skull, so that he died in vain, as he had lived in sin.”

“But what is that broad building which looks like a walled tent?” asked Pan Yan.

“That is the paper-mill founded by the prince; and at the side of it is a printing-office, in which heretical books are printed.”

“*Tfu!*” said Zagloba; “a pestilence on this place, where a man draws no air into his stomach but what is heretical! Lucifer might rule here as well as Radzivill.”

“Gracious sir,” answered Volodyovski, “abuse not Radzivill, for perhaps the country will soon owe its salvation to him.”

They rode farther in silence, gazing at the town and wondering at its good order; for the streets were all paved with stone, which was at that period a novelty.

After they had ridden through the market-square and the street of the castle, they saw on an eminence the lordly residence recently built by Prince Yanush—not fortified, it is true, but surpassing in size not only palaces but castles. The great pile was on a height, and looked on the town lying, as it were, at its feet. From both sides of the main building extended at right angles two lower wings, which formed a gigantic courtyard, closed in front with an iron railing fastened with long links. In the middle of the railing towered a strong walled gate; on it the arms of the Radzivills and the arms of the town of Kyedani, representing an eagle’s foot with a black wing on a golden field, and at the foot a horseshoe with three red crosses. In front of the gate were sentries and Scottish soldiers keeping guard for show, not for defence.

The hour was early, but there was movement already in the yard; for before the main building a regiment of dragoons in blue jackets and Swedish helmets was exercising. Just then the long line of men was motionless, with drawn rapiers; an officer riding in front said something to the soldiers. Around the line and farther on near the walls, a number of attendants in various colors gazed at the dragoons, making remarks and giving opinions to one another.

“As God is dear to me,” said Pan Michael, “that is Kharlamp drilling the regiment!”

“How!” cried Zagloba; “is he the same with whom you were going to fight a duel at Lipkovo?”

“The very same; but since that time we have lived in close friendship.”

“’Tis he,” said Zagloba; “I know him by his nose, which sticks out from under his helmet. It is well that visors have gone out of fashion, for that knight could not close any visor; he would need a special invention for his nose.”

That moment Pan Kharlamp, seeing Volodyovski, came to him at a trot. “How are you, Michael?” cried he. “It is well that you have come.”

“It is better that I meet you first. See, here is Pan Zagloba, whom you met in Lipkovo—no, before that in Syennitsy; and these are the Skshetuskis—Yan, captain of the king’s hussars, the hero of Zbaraj—”

“I see, then, as God is true, the greatest knight in Poland!” cried Kharlamp. “With the forehead, with the forehead!”

“And this is Stanislaw Skshetuski, captain of Kalisk, who comes straight from Uistsie.”

“From Uistsie? So you saw a terrible disgrace. We know already what has happened.”

“It is just because such a thing happened that I have come, hoping that nothing like it will happen in this place.”

“You may be certain of that; Radzivill is not Opalinski.”

“We said the same at Upita yesterday.”

“I greet you, gentlemen, most joyfully in my own name and that of the prince. The prince will be glad to see such knights, for he needs them much. Come with me to the barracks, where my quarters are. You will need, of course, to change clothes and eat breakfast. I will go with you, for I have finished the drill.”

Pan Kharlamp hurried again to the line, and commanded in a quick, clear voice: “To the left! face—to the rear!”

Hoofs sounded on the pavement. The line broke into two; the halves broke again till there were four parts, which began to recede with slow step in the direction of the barracks.

“Good soldiers,” said Skshetuski, looking with skilled eye at the regular movements of the dragoons.

“Those are petty nobles and attendant boyars who serve in that arm,” answered Volodyovski.

“Oh, you could tell in a moment that they are not militia,” cried Pan Stanislaw.

“But does Kharlamp command them,” asked Zagloba, “or am I mistaken? I remember that he served in the light-horse squadron and wore silver loops.”

“True,” answered Volodyovski; “but it is a couple of years since he took the dragoon regiment. He is an old soldier, and trained.”

Meanwhile Kharlamp, having dismissed the dragoons, returned to the knights. "I beg you, gentlemen, to follow me. Over there are the barracks, beyond the castle."

Half an hour later the five were sitting over a bowl of heated beer, well whitened with cream, and were talking about the impending war.

"And what is to be heard here?" asked Pan Michael.

"With us something new may be heard every day, for people are lost in surmises and give out new reports all the time," said Kharlamp. "But in truth the prince alone knows what is coming. He has something on his mind, for though he simulates gladness and is kind to people as never before, he is terribly thoughtful. In the night, they say, he does not sleep, but walks with heavy tread through all the chambers, talking audibly to himself, and in the daytime takes counsel for whole hours with Harasimovich."

"Who is Harasimovich?" asked Volodyovski.

"The manager from Zabłudovo in Podlyasye—a man of small stature, who looks as though he kept the devil under his arm; but he is a confidential agent of the prince, and probably knows all his secrets. According to my thinking, from these counsellings a terrible and vengeful war with Sweden will come, for which war we are all sighing. Meanwhile letters are flying hither from the Prince of Courland, from Hovanski, and from the Elector of Brandenburg. Some say that the prince is negotiating with Moscow to join the league against Sweden; others say the contrary; but it seems there will be a league with no one, but a war, as I have said, with these and those. Fresh troops are coming continually; letters are sent to nobles most faithful to the Radzivils, asking them to assemble. Every place is full of armed men. *Ei*, gentlemen, on whomsoever they put the grain, on him will it be ground; but we shall have our hands red to the elbows, for when Radzivil moves to the field, he will not negotiate."

"That's it, that's it!" said Zagloba, rubbing his palms. "No small amount of Swedish blood has dried on my hands, and there will be more of it in future. Not many of those old soldiers are alive yet who remember me at Putsk and Tjtsianna; but those who are living will never forget me."

"Is Prince Boguslav here?" asked Volodyovski.

"Of course. Besides him we expect today some great guests, for the upper chambers are made ready, and there is to be a banquet in the evening. I have my doubts, Michael, whether you will reach the prince today."

"He sent for me himself yesterday."

"That's nothing; he is terribly occupied. Besides, I don't know whether I can speak of it to you—but in an hour everybody will know of it, therefore I will tell you—something or another very strange is going on."

"What is it, what is it?" asked Zagloba.

"It must be known to you, gentlemen, that two days ago Pan Yudytski came, a knight of Malta, of whom you must have heard."

"Of course," said Yan; "he is a great knight."

"Immediately after him came the full hetman and treasurer. We were greatly astonished, for it is known in what rivalry and enmity Pan Gosyevski is with our prince. Some persons were rejoiced therefore that harmony had come between the lords, and said that the Swedish invasion was the real cause of this. I thought so myself; then yesterday the three shut

themselves up in counsel, fastened all the doors, no one could hear what they were talking about; but Pan Krepshtul, who guarded the door, told us that their talk was terribly loud, especially the talk of Pan Gosyevski. Later the prince himself conducted them to their sleeping-chambers, and in the night—imagine to yourselves” (here Kharlamp lowered his voice)—“guards were placed at the door of each chamber.”

Volodyovski sprang up from his seat. “In God’s name! impossible!”

“But it is true. At the doors of each Scots are standing with muskets, and they have the order to let no one in or out under pain of death.”

The knights looked at one another with astonishment; and Kharlamp was no less astonished at his own words, and looked at his companions with staring eyes, as if awaiting the explanation of the riddle from them.

“Does this mean that Pan Gosyevski is arrested? Has the grand hetman arrested the full hetman?” asked Zagloba; “what does this mean?”

“As if I know, and Yudytski such a knight!”

“But the officers of the prince must speak with one another about it and guess at causes. Have you heard nothing?”

“I asked Harasimovich last night.”

“What did he say?” asked Zagloba.

“He would explain nothing, but he put his finger on his mouth and said, ‘They are traitors!’”

“How traitors?” cried Volodyovski, seizing his head. “Neither the treasurer nor Pan Yudytski is a traitor. The whole Commonwealth knows them as honorable men and patriots.”

“At present ’tis impossible to have faith in any man,” answered Pan Stanislaw, gloomily. “Did not Pan Opalinski pass for a Cato? Did he not reproach others with defects, with offences, with selfishness? But when it came to do something, he was the first to betray, and brought not only himself, but a whole province to treason.”

“I will give my head for the treasurer and Pan Yudytski!” cried Volodyovski.

“Do not give your head for any man, Michael dear,” said Zagloba. “They were not arrested without reason. There must have been some conspiracy; it cannot be otherwise—how could it be? The prince is preparing for a terrible war, and every aid is precious to him. Whom, then, at such a time can he put under arrest, if not those who stand in the way of war? If this is so, if these two men have really stood in the way, then praise be to God that Radzivill has anticipated them. They deserve to sit under ground. Ah, the scoundrels!—at such a time to practise tricks, communicate with the enemy, rise against the country, hinder a great warrior in his undertaking! By the Most Holy Mother, what has met them is too little, the rascals!”

“These are wonders—such wonders that I cannot put them in my head,” said Kharlamp; “for letting alone that they are such dignitaries, they are arrested without judgment, without a diet, without the will of the whole Commonwealth—a thing which the king himself has not the right to do.”

“As true as I live,” cried Pan Michael.

“It is evident that the prince wants to introduce Roman customs among us,” said Pan Stanislaw, “and become dictator in time of war.”

“Let him be dictator if he will only beat the Swedes,” said Zagloba; “I will be the first to vote for his dictatorship.”



Pan Yan fell to thinking, and after a while said, "Unless he should wish to become protector, like that English Cromwell who did not hesitate to raise his sacrilegious hand on his own king."

"Nonsense! Cromwell? Cromwell was a heretic!" cried Zagloba.

"But what is the prince *voevoda*?" asked Pan Yan, seriously.

At this question all were silent, and considered the dark future for a time with fear; but Kharlamp looked angry and said—

"I have served under the prince from early years, though I am little younger than he; for in the beginning, when I was still a stripling, he was my captain, later on he was full hetman, and now he is grand hetman. I know him better than anyone here; I both love and honor him; therefore I ask you not to compare him with Cromwell, so that I may not be forced to say something which would not become me as host in this room."

Here Kharlamp began to twitch his mustaches terribly, and to frown a little at Pan Yan; seeing which, Volodyovski fixed on Kharlamp a cool and sharp look, as if he wished to say, "Only growl, only growl!"

Great Mustache took note at once, for he held Volodyovski in unusual esteem, and besides it was dangerous to get angry with him; therefore he continued in a far milder tone—

"The prince is a Calvinist; but he did not reject the true faith for errors, for he was born in them. He will never become either a Cromwell, a Radzeyovski, or an Opalinski, though Kyedani had to sink through the earth. Not such is his blood, not such his stock."

"If he is the devil and has horns on his head," said Zagloba, "so much the better, for he will have something to gore the Swedes with."

"But that Pan Gosyevski and Pan Yudytski are arrested, well, well!" said Volodyovski, shaking his head. "The prince is not very amiable to guests who have confided in him."

"What do you say, Michael?" answered Kharlamp. "He is amiable as he has never been in his life. He is now a real father to the knights. Think how some time ago he had always a frown on his forehead, and on his lips one word, 'Service.' A man was more afraid to go near his majesty than he was to stand before the king; and now he goes every day among the lieutenants and the officers, converses, asks each one about his family, his children, his property, calls each man by name, and inquires if injustice has been done to anyone in service. He who among the highest lords will not own an equal, walked yesterday arm-in-arm with young Kmita. We could not believe our eyes; for though the family of Kmita is a great one, he is quite young, and likely many accusations are weighing on him. Of this you know best."

"I know, I know," replied Volodyovski. "Has Kmita been here long?"

"He is not here now, for he went yesterday to Cheykishki for a regiment of infantry stationed there. No one is now in such favor with the prince as Kmita. When he was going away the prince looked after him awhile and said, 'That man is equal to anything, and is ready to seize the devil himself by the tail if I tell him!' We heard this with our own ears. It is true that Kmita brought a squadron that has not an equal in the whole army—men and horses like dragons!"

"There is no use in talking, he is a valiant soldier, and in truth ready for everything," said Pan Michael. "He performed wonders in the last campaign, till a price was set on his head, for he led volunteers and carried on war himself."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a new figure. This was a noble about forty years of age, small, dry, alert, wriggling like a mudfish, with a small face, very thin lips, a scant mustache, and very crooked eyes. He was dressed in a ticking-coat, with such long sleeves that they covered his hands completely. When he had entered he bent double, then he straightened himself as suddenly as if moved by a spring, again he inclined with a low bow, turned his head as if he were taking it out of his own armpits, and began to speak hurriedly in a voice which recalled the squeaking of a rusty weathercock—

“With the forehead, Pan Kharlamp, with the forehead. Ah! with the forehead, Pan Colonel, most abject servant!”

“With the forehead, Pan Harasimovich,” answered Kharlamp; “and what is your wish?”

“God gave guests, distinguished guests. I came to offer my services and to inquire their rank.”

“Did they come to you, Pan Harasimovich?”

“Certainly not to me, for I am not worthy of that; but because I take the place of the absent marshal. I have come to greet them profoundly.”

“It is far from you to the marshal,” said Kharlamp; “for he is a personage with inherited land, while you with permission are under-starosta of Zabłudovo.”

“A servant of the servants of Radzivill. That is true, Pan Kharlamp, I make no denial; God preserve me therefrom. But since the prince has heard of the guests, he has sent me to inquire who they are; therefore you will answer, Pan Kharlamp, if I were even a haiduk and not the under-starosta of Zabłudovo.”

“Oh, I would answer even a monkey if he were to come with an order,” said Big Nose.

“Listen now, and calk these names into yourself if your head is not able to hold them. This is Pan Skshetuski, that hero of Zbaraj; and this is his cousin Stanislav.”

“Great God! what do I hear?” cried Harasimovich.

“This is Pan Zagloba.”

“Great God! what do I hear?”

“If you are so confused at hearing my name,” said Zagloba, “think of the confusion of the enemy in the field.”

“And this is Colonel Volodyovski,” finished Kharlamp.

“And he has a famous sabre, and besides is a Radzivill man,” said Harasimovich, with a bow.

“The prince’s head is splitting from labor; but still he will find time for such knights, surely he will find it. Meanwhile with what can you be served? The whole castle is at the service of such welcome guests, and the cellars as well.”

“We have heard of the famous meads of Kyedani,” said Zagloba, hurriedly.

“Indeed!” answered Harasimovich, “there are glorious meads in Kyedani, glorious. I will send some hither for you to choose from right away. I hope that my benefactors will stay here long.”

“We have come hither,” said Pan Stanislav, “not to leave the side of the prince.”

“Praiseworthy is your intention, the more so that trying times are at hand.”

When he had said this, Harasimovich wriggled and became as small as if an ell had been taken from his stature.

“What is to be heard?” asked Kharlamp. “Is there any news?”

“The prince has not closed an eye all night, for two envoys have come. Evil are the tidings, increasingly evil. Karl Gustav has already entered the Commonwealth after Wittemberg; Poznan is now occupied, all Great Poland is occupied, Mazovia will be occupied soon; the Swedes are in Lovich, right at Warsaw. Our king has fled from Warsaw, which he left undefended. Today or tomorrow the Swedes will enter. They say that the king has lost a considerable battle, that he thinks of escaping to Krakow, and thence to foreign lands to ask aid. Evil, gracious gentlemen, my benefactors! Though there are some who say that it is well; for the Swedes commit no violence, observe agreements sacredly, collect no imposts, respect liberties, do not hinder the faith. Therefore all accept the protection of Karl Gustav willingly. For our king, Yan Kazimir, is at fault, greatly at fault. All is lost, lost for him! One would like to weep, but all is lost, lost!”

“Why the devil do you wriggle like a mudfish going to the pot,” howled Zagloba, “and speak of a misfortune as if you were glad of it?”

Harasimovich pretended not to hear, and raising his eyes to heaven he repeated yet a number of times: “All is lost, lost for the ages! The Commonwealth cannot stand against three wars. Lost! The will of God, the will of God! Our prince alone can save Lithuania.”

The ill-omened words had not yet ceased to sound when Harasimovich vanished behind the door as quickly as if he had sunk through the earth, and the knights sat in gloom bent by the weight of terrible thoughts.

“We shall go mad!” cried Volodyovski at last.

“You are right,” said Stanislav. “God give war, war at the earliest—war in which a man does not ruin himself in thinking, nor yield his soul to despair, but fights.”

“We shall regret the first period of Hmelnitski’s war,” said Zagloba; “for though there were defeats then, there were no traitors.”

“Three such terrible wars, when in fact there is a lack of forces for one,” said Stanislav.

“Not a lack of forces, but of spirit. The country is perishing through viciousness. God grant us to live to something better!” said Pan Yan, gloomily.

“We shall not rest till we are in the field,” said Stanislav.

“If we can only see this prince soon!” cried Zagloba.

Their wishes were accomplished directly; for after an hour’s time Harasimovich came again, with still lower bows, and with the announcement that the prince was waiting anxiously to see them.

They sprang up at once, for they had already changed uniforms, and went. Harasimovich, in conducting them from the barracks, passed through the courtyard, which was full of soldiers and nobles. In some places they were conversing in crowds, evidently over the same news which the under-starosta of Zabłudovo had brought the knights. On all faces were depicted lively alarm and a certain feverish expectation. Isolated groups of officers and nobles were listening to the speakers, who standing in the midst of them gesticulated violently. On the way were heard the words: “Vilna is burning, Vilna is burned!—No trace of it, nor the ashes! Warsaw is taken!—Untrue, not taken yet!—The Swedes are in Little Poland! The people of Syeradz will resist!—They will not resist, they will follow the example of Great Poland!—Treason! misfortune! O God, God! It is unknown where to put sabre or hand!”

Such words as these, more and more terrible, struck the ears of the knights; but they went on pushing after Harasimovich through the soldiers and nobles with difficulty. In places acquaintances greeted Volodyovski: "How is your health, Michael? 'Tis evil with us; we are perishing! With the forehead, brave Colonel! And what guests are these whom you are taking to the prince?" Pan Michael answered not, wishing to escape delay; and in this fashion they went to the main body of the castle, in which the janissaries of the prince, in chain-mail and gigantic white caps, were on guard.

In the antechamber and on the main staircase, set around with orange-trees, the throng was still greater than in the courtyard. They were discussing there the arrest of Gosyevski and Yudytski; for the affair had become known, and roused the minds of men to the utmost. They were astonished and lost in surmises, they were indignant or praised the foresight of the prince; but all hoped to hear the explanation of the riddle from Radzivill himself, therefore a river of heads was flowing along the broad staircase up to the hall of audience, in which at that time the prince was to receive colonels and the most intimate nobility. Soldiers disposed along the stone banisters to see that the throng was not too dense, repeated, from moment to moment, "Slowly, gracious gentlemen, slowly!" And the crowd pushed forward or halted for a moment, when a soldier stopped the way with a halbert so that those in front might have time to enter the hall.

At last the blue vaultings of the hall gleamed before the open door, and our acquaintances entered. Their glances fell first on an elevation, placed in the depth of the hall, occupied by a brilliant retinue of knights and lords in rich, many-colored dresses. In front stood an empty armchair, pushed forward beyond the others. This chair had a lofty back, ending with the gilded coronet of the prince, from beneath which flowed downward orange-colored velvet trimmed with ermine.

The prince was not in the hall yet; but Harasimovich, conducting the knights without interruption, pushed through the nobility till he reached a small door concealed in the wall at the side of the elevation. There he directed them to remain, and disappeared through the door.

After a while he returned with the announcement that the prince asked them to enter.

The two Skshetuskis, with Zagloba and Volodyovski, entered a small but very well-lighted room, having walls covered with leather stamped in flowers, which were gilded. The officers halted on seeing in the depth of the room, at a table covered with papers, two men conversing intently. One of them, still young, dressed in foreign fashion, wearing a wig with long locks falling to his shoulders, whispered something in the ear of his elder companion; the latter heard him with frowning brow, and nodded from time to time. So much was he occupied with the subject of the conversation that he did not turn attention at once to those who had entered.

He was a man somewhat beyond forty years, of gigantic stature and great shoulders. He wore a scarlet Polish coat, fastened at the neck with costly brooches. He had an enormous face, with features expressing pride, importance, and power. It was at once the face of an angry lion, of a warrior, and a ruler. Long pendent mustaches lent it a stern expression, and altogether in its strength and size it was as if struck out of marble with great blows of a hammer. The brows were at that moment frowning from intense thought; but it could easily be seen that when they were frowning from anger, woe to those men and those armies on whom the thunders of that anger should fall.

There was something so great in the form that it seemed to those knights that not only the room, but the whole castle was too narrow for it; in fact, their first impression had not deceived them, for sitting in their presence was Yanush Radzivill, prince at Birji and Dubinki, *voevoda* of Vilna and grand hetman of Lithuania—a man so powerful and proud

that in all his immense estates, in all his dignities, nay, in Jmud and in Lithuania itself, it was too narrow for him.

The younger man in the long wig and foreign dress was Prince Boguslav, the cousin of Yanush. After a while he whispered something more in the ear of the hetman, and at last said audibly—

“I will leave, then, my signature on the document and go.”

“Since it cannot be otherwise, go,” said Yanush, “though I would that you remained, for it is unknown what may happen.”

“You have planned everything properly; henceforth it is needful to look carefully to the cause, and now I commit you to God.”

“May the Lord have in care our whole house and bring it praise.”

“Adieu, *mon frère*.”

“Adieu.”

The two princes shook hands; then Boguslav went out hurriedly, and the grand hetman turned to the visitors.

“Pardon me, gentlemen, that I let you wait,” said he, with a low, deliberate voice; “but now time and attention are snatched from us on every side. I have heard your names, and rejoice in my soul that God sent me such knights in this crisis. Be seated, dear guests. Who of you is Pan Yan Skshetuski?”

“I am, at the service of your highness.”

“Then you are a starosta—pardon me, I forgot.”

“I am not a starosta,” answered Yan.

“How is that?” asked the prince, frowning with his two mighty brows; “they have not made you a starosta for what you did at Zbaraj?”

“I have never asked for the office.”

“But they should have made you starosta without the asking. How is this? What do you tell me? You rewarded with nothing, forgotten entirely? This is a wonder to me. But I am talking at random. It should astonish no man; for in these days only he is rewarded who has the back of a willow, light-bending. You are not a starosta, upon my word! Thanks be to God that you have come hither, for here we have not such short memories, and no service remains unrewarded. How is it with you, worthy Colonel Volodyovski?”

“I have earned nothing yet.”

“Leave that to me, and now take this document, drawn up in Rosseyeni, by which I give you Dydkyemie for life. It is not a bad piece of land, and a hundred ploughs go out to work there every spring. Take even that, for I cannot give more, and tell Pan Skshetuski that Radzivill does not forget his friends, nor those who give their service to the country under his leadership.”

“Your princely highness!” stammered Pan Michael, in confusion.

“Say nothing, and pardon that it is so small; but tell these gentlemen that he who joins his fortune for good and ill with that of Radzivill will not perish. I am not king; but if I were, God is my witness that I would never forget such a Yan Skshetuski or such a Zagloba.”

“That is I!” said Zagloba, pushing himself forward sharply, for he had begun to be impatient that there was no mention of him.

“I thought it was you, for I have been told that you were a man of advanced years.”

“I went to school in company with your highness’s worthy father; and there was such knightly impulse in him from childhood that he took me to his confidence, for I loved the lance before Latin.”

To Pan Stanislaw, who knew Zagloba less, it was strange to hear this, since only the day before, Zagloba said in Upita that he had gone to school, not with the late Prince Kryshstof, but with Yanush himself—which was unlikely, for Prince Yanush was notably younger.

“Indeed,” said the prince; “so then you are from Lithuania by family?”

“From Lithuania!” answered Zagloba, without hesitation.

“Then I know that you need no reward, for we Lithuanians are used to be fed with ingratitude. As God is true, if I should give you your deserts, gentlemen, there would be nothing left for myself. But such is fate! We give our blood, lives, fortunes, and no one nods a head to us. Ah! ’tis hard; but as they sow will they reap. That is what God and justice command. It is you who slew the famous Burlai and cut off three heads at a blow in Zbaraj?”

“I slew Burlai, your highness,” answered Zagloba, “for it was said that no man could stand before him. I wished therefore to show younger warriors that manhood was not extinct in the Commonwealth. But as to cutting off the three heads, it may be that I did that in the thick of battle; but in Zbaraj someone else did it.”

The prince was silent awhile, then continued: “Does not that contempt pain you, gentlemen, with which they pay you?”

“What is to be done, your highness, even if it is disagreeable to a man?” said Zagloba.

“Well, comfort yourselves, for that must change. I am already your debtor, since you have come here; and though I am not king, still with me it will not end with promises.”

“Your princely highness,” said Pan Yan, quickly and somewhat proudly, “we have come hither not for rewards and estates, but because the enemy has invaded the country, and we wish to go with our strength to assist it under the leadership of a famous warrior. My cousin Stanislaw saw at Uistsie fear, disorder, shame, treason, and finally the enemy’s triumph. Here under a great leader and a faithful defender of our country and king we will serve. Here not victories, not triumphs, but defeats and death await the enemy. This is why we have come to offer our service to your highness. We are soldiers; we want to fight, and are impatient for battle.”

“If such is your desire, you will be satisfied,” answered the prince, with importance. “You will not wait long, though at first we shall march on another enemy, for the ashes of Vilna demand vengeance. Today or tomorrow we shall march in that direction, and God grant will redeem the wrongs with interest. I will not detain you longer, gentlemen; you need rest, and work is burning me. But come in the evening to the hall; maybe some proper entertainment will take place before the march, for a great number of fair heads have assembled under our protection at Kyedani before the war. Worthy Colonel Volodyovski, entertain these welcome guests as if in your own house, and remember that what is mine is yours. Pan Harasimovich, tell my brother nobles assembled in the hall, that I will not go out, for I have not the time, and this evening they will learn everything that they wish to know. Be in good health, gentlemen, and be friends of Radzivill, for that is greatly important for him now.”

When he had said this, that mighty and proud lord gave his hand in turn to Zagloba, the two Skshetuskis, Volodyovski, and Kharlamp, as if to equals. His stern face grew radiant with a cordial and friendly smile, and that inaccessibleness usually surrounding him as with a dark cloud vanished completely.

“That is a leader, that is a warrior!” said Stanislav, when on the return they had pushed themselves through the throng of nobles assembled in the audience-hall.

“I would go into fire after him!” cried Zagloba. “Did you notice how he had all my exploits in his memory? It will be hot for the Swedes when that lion roars, and I second him. There is not another such man in the Commonwealth; and of the former men only Prince Yeremi first, and second Konyetspolski, the father, might be compared with him. That is not some mere castellan, the first of his family to sit in a senator’s chair, on which he has not yet smoothed out the wrinkles of his trousers, and still turns up his nose and calls the nobles younger brothers, and gives orders right away to paint his portrait, so that while dining he may have his senatorship before him, since he has nothing to look at behind. Pan Michael, you have come to fortune. It is evident now that if a man rubs against Radzivill he will gild at once his threadbare coat. It is easier to get promotion here, I see, than a quart of rotten pears with us. Stick your hands into the water in this place, and with closed eyes you will catch a pike. For me he is the magnate of magnates! God give you luck, Pan Michael! You are as confused as a young woman just married; but that is nothing! What is the name of your life estate? Dudkovo, or something? Heathen names in this country! Throw nuts against the wall, and you will have in the rattling the proper name of a village or noble. But names are nothing if the income is only good.”

“I am terribly confused, I confess,” said Pan Michael, “because what you say about easy promotion is not true. More than once have I heard old soldiers charge the prince with avarice, but now unexpected favors are showered one after the other.”

“Stick that document behind your belt—do that for me—and if anyone in future complains of the thanklessness of the prince, draw it out and give it to him on the nose. You will not find a better argument.”

“One thing I see clearly: the prince is attracting people to his person, and is forming plans for which he needs help,” said Pan Yan.

“But have you not heard of those plans?” asked Zagloba. “Has he not said that we have to go to avenge the ashes of Vilna? They complained that he had robbed Vilna, but he wants to show that he not only does not need other people’s property, but is ready to give of his own. That is a beautiful ambition, Yan, God give us more of such senators.”

Conversing thus, they found themselves in the courtyard, to which every moment rode in now divisions of mounted troops, now crowds of armed nobles, and now carriages rolled in, bringing persons from the country around, with their wives and children.

Seeing this, Pan Michael drew all with him to the gate to look at those entering.

“Who knows, Michael, this is your fortunate day? Maybe there is a wife for you among these nobles’ daughters,” said Zagloba. “Look! see, there an open carriage is approaching, and in it something white is sitting.”

“That is not a lady, but a man who may marry me to one,” answered the swift-eyed Volodyovski; for from a distance he recognized the bishop Parchevski, coming with Father Byalozor, archdeacon of Vilna.

“If they are priests, how are they visiting a Calvinist?”

“What is to be done? When it’s necessary for public affairs, they must be polite.”

“Oh, it is crowded here! Oh, it is noisy!” cried Zagloba, with delight. “A man grows rusty in the country, like an old key in a lock; here I think of better times. I’m a rascal if I don’t make love to some pretty girl today.”

Zagloba’s words were interrupted by the soldiers keeping guard at the gate, who rushing out from their booths stood in two ranks to salute the bishop; and he rode past, making the sign of the cross with his hand on each side, blessing the soldiers and the nobles assembled near by.

“The prince is a polite man,” said Zagloba, “since he honors the bishop, though he does not recognize the supremacy of the Church. God grant this to be the first step toward conversion!”

“Oh, nothing will come of it! Not few were the efforts of his first wife, and she accomplished nothing, only died from vexation. But why do the Scots not leave the line? It is evident that another dignitary will pass.”

In fact, a whole retinue of armed soldiers appeared in the distance.

“Those are Ganhoff’s dragoons—I know them,” said Volodyovski; “but some carriages are in the middle!”

At that moment the drums began to rattle.

“Oh, it is evident that someone greater than the bishop of Jmud is there!” cried Zagloba.

“Wait, they are here already.”

“There are two carriages in the middle.”

“True. In the first sits Pan Korf, the *voevoda* of Venden.”

“Of course!” cried Pan Yan; “that is an acquaintance from Zbaraj.”

The *voevoda* recognized them, and first Volodyovski, whom he had evidently seen oftener; in passing he leaned from the carriage and cried—

“I greet you, gentlemen, old comrades! See, I bring guests!”

In the second carriage, with the arms of Prince Yanush, drawn by four white horses, sat two gentlemen of lordly mien, dressed in foreign fashion, in broad-brimmed hats, from under which the blond curls of wigs flowed to their shoulders over wide lace collars. One was very portly, wore a pointed light-blond beard, and mustaches bushy and turned up at the ends; the other was younger, dressed wholly in black. He had a less knightly form, but perhaps a higher office, for a gold chain glittered on his neck, with some order at the end. Apparently both were foreigners, for they looked with curiosity at the castle, the people, and the dresses.

“What sort of devils?” asked Zagloba.

“I do not know them, I have never seen them,” answered Volodyovski.

Meanwhile the carriages passed, and began to turn in the yard so as to reach the main entrance of the castle, but the dragoons remained outside the gate. Volodyovski knew the officer leading them.

“Tokarzevich!” called he, “come to us, please.”

“With the forehead, worthy Colonel.”

“And what kind of hedgehogs are you bringing?”

“Those are Swedes.”



“Swedes!”

“Yes, and men of distinction. The portly one is Count Löwenhaupt, and the slender man is Benedikt Schitte, Baron von Duderhoff.”

“Duderhoff?” asked Zagloba.

“What do they want here?” inquired Volodyovski.

“God knows!” answered the officer. “We escorted them from Birji. Undoubtedly they have come to negotiate with our prince, for we heard in Birji that he is assembling a great army and is going to move on Livonia.”

“Ah, rascals! you are growing timid,” cried Zagloba. “Now you are invading Great Poland, now you are deposing the king, and now you are paying court to Radzivill, so that he should not tickle you in Livonia. Wait! you will run away to your Dunderhoff till your stockings are down. We’ll soon dunder with you. Long life to Radzivill!”

“Long life!” repeated the nobles, standing near the gate.

“Defender of the country! Our shield! Against the Swedes, worthy gentlemen, against the Swedes!”

A circle was formed. Every moment nobles collected from the yard; seeing which, Zagloba sprang on the low guard-post of the gate, and began to cry—

“Worthy gentlemen, listen! Whoso does not know me, to him I will say that I am that defender of Zbaraj who with this old hand slew Burlai, the greatest hetman after Hmelnitski; whoso has not heard of Zagloba was shelling peas, it is clear, in the first period of the Cossack war, or feeling hens (for eggs), or herding calves—labors which I do not connect with such honorable cavaliers as you.”

“He is a great knight!” called numerous voices. “There is no greater in the Commonwealth! Hear!”

“Listen, honorable gentlemen. My old bones craved repose; better for me to rest in the bakehouse, to eat cheese and cream, to walk in the gardens and gather apples, or putting my hands behind my back to stand over harvesters or pat a girl on the shoulder. And it is certain that for the enemy it would have been better to leave me at rest; for the Swedes and the Cossacks know that I have a very heavy hand, and God grant that my name is as well known to you, gentlemen, as to the enemy.”

“What kind of rooster is that crowing so loud?” asked some voice in the crowd, suddenly.

“Don’t interrupt! Would you were dead!” cried others.

But Zagloba heard him. “Forgive that cockerel, gentlemen,” said he; “for he knows not yet on which end of him is his tail, nor on which his head.”

The nobles burst into mighty laughter, and the confused disturber pushed quickly behind the crowd, to escape the sneers which came raining on his head.

“I return to the subject,” said Zagloba. “I repeat, rest would be proper for me; but because the country is in a paroxysm, because the enemy is trampling our land, I am here, worthy gentlemen, with you to resist the enemy in the name of that mother who nourished us all. Whoso will not stand by her today, whoso will not run to save her, is not a son, but a stepson; he is unworthy of her love. I, an old man, am going, let the will of God be done; and if it comes to me to die, with my last breath will I cry, ‘Against the Swedes! brothers, against the

Swedes!’ Let us swear that we will not drop the sabre from our hands till we drive them out of the country.”

“We are ready to do that without oaths!” cried numbers of voices. “We will go where our hetman the prince leads us; we will go where ’tis needful.”

“Worthy brothers, you have seen how two stocking-wearers came here in a gilded carriage. They know that there is no trifling with Radzivill. They will follow him from chamber to chamber, and kiss him on the elbows to give them peace. But the prince, worthy gentlemen, with whom I have been advising and from whom I have just returned, has assured me, in the name of all Lithuania, that there will be no negotiations, no parchments, nothing but war and war!”

“War! war!” repeated, as an echo, the voices of the hearers.

“But because the leader,” continued Zagloba, “will begin the more boldly, the surer he is of his soldiers, let us show him, worthy gentlemen, our sentiments. And now let us go under the windows of the prince and shout, ‘Down with the Swedes!’ After me, worthy gentlemen!”

Then he sprang from the post and moved forward, and after him the crowd. They came under the very windows with an uproar increasing each moment, till at last it was mingled in one gigantic shout—“Down with the Swedes! down with the Swedes!”

Immediately Pan Korf, the *voevoda* of Venden, ran out of the antechamber greatly confused; after him Ganhoff; and both began to restrain the nobles, quieting them, begging them to disperse.

“For God’s sake!” said Korf, “in the upper hall the windowpanes are rattling. You gentlemen do not think what an awkward time you have chosen for your shouting. How can you treat envoys with disrespect, and give an example of insubordination? Who roused you to this?”

“I,” said Zagloba. “Your grace, tell the prince, in the name of us all, that we beg him to be firm, that we are ready to remain with him to the last drop of our blood.”

“I thank you, gentlemen, in the name of the hetman, I thank you; but I beg you to disperse. Consider, worthy gentlemen. By the living God, consider that you are sinking the country! Whoso insults an envoy today, renders a bear’s service to the Commonwealth.”

“What do we care for envoys! We want to fight, not to negotiate!”

“Your courage comforts me. The time for fighting will come before long, God grant very soon. Rest now before the expedition. It is time for a drink of spirits and lunch. It is bad to fight on an empty stomach.”

“That is as true as I live!” cried Zagloba, first.

“True, he struck the right spot. Since the prince knows our sentiments, we have nothing to do here!”

And the crowd began to disperse. The greater part flowed on to rooms in which many tables were already spread. Zagloba sat at the head of one of them. Pan Korf and Colonel Ganhoff returned then to the prince, who was sitting at counsel with the Swedish envoys, Bishop Parchevski, Father Byalozor, Pan Adam Komorovski, and Pan Alexander Myerzeyevski, a courtier of Yan Kazimir, who was stopping for the time in Kyedani.

“Who incited that tumult?” asked the prince, from whose lion-like face anger had not yet disappeared.

“It was that noble who has just come here, that famous Zagloba,” answered Pan Korf.

“That is a brave knight,” said the prince, “but he is beginning to manage me too soon.”

Having said this, he beckoned to Colonel Ganhoff and whispered something in his ear.

Zagloba meanwhile, delighted with himself, went to the lower halls with solemn tread, having with him Volodyovski, with Yan and Stanislav Skshetuski.

“Well, friends, I have barely appeared and have roused love for the country in those nobles. It will be easier now for the prince to send off the envoys with nothing, for all he has to do is to call upon us. That will not be, I think, without reward, though it is more a question of honor with me. Why have you halted, Michael, as if turned to stone, with eyes fixed on that carriage at the gate?”

“That is she!” said Volodyovski, with twitching mustaches. “By the living God, that is she herself!”

“Who?”

“Panna Billevich.”

“She who refused you?”

“The same. Look, gentlemen, look! Might not a man wither away from regret?”

“Wait a minute!” said Zagloba, “we must have a closer look.”

Meanwhile the carriage, describing a half-circle, approached the speakers. Sitting in it was a stately noble with gray mustaches, and at his side Panna Aleksandra; beautiful as ever, calm, and full of dignity.

Pan Michael fixed on her a complaining look and bowed low, but she did not see him in the crowd.

“That is some lordly child,” said Zagloba, gazing at her fine, noble features, “too delicate for a soldier. I confess that she is a beauty, but I prefer one of such kind that for the moment you would ask, ‘Is that a cannon or a woman?’”

“Do you know who that is who has just passed?” asked Pan Michael of a noble standing near.

“Of course,” answered the noble; “that is Pan Tomash Billevich, sword-bearer of Rossyeni. All here know him, for he is an old servant and friend of the Radzivils.”

## Chapter XIV

The prince did not show himself to the nobles that day till evening, for he dined with the envoys and some dignitaries with whom he had held previous counsel. But orders had come to the colonels to have the regiments of Radzivill's guard ready, and especially the infantry under foreign officers. It smelt of powder in the air. The castle, though not fortified, was surrounded with troops as if a battle was to be fought at its walls. Men expected that the campaign would begin on the following morning at latest; of this there were visible signs, for the countless servants of the prince were busied with packing into wagons arms, valuable implements, and the treasury of the prince.

Harasimovich told the nobles that the wagons would go to Tykotsin in Podlyasye, for it was dangerous to leave the treasury in the undefended castle of Kyedani. Military stores were also prepared to be sent after the army. Reports went out that Gosyevski was arrested because he would not join his squadrons stationed at Troki with those of Radzivill, thus exposing the whole expedition to evident destruction. Moreover preparations for the march, the movement of troops, the rattle of cannon drawn out of the castle arsenal, and all that turmoil which ever accompanies the first movements of military expeditions, turned attention in another direction, and caused the knights to forget the arrest of Pan Gosyevski and cavalier Yudytski.

The nobles dining in the immense lower halls attached to the castle spoke only of the war, of the fire at Vilna, now burning ten days and burning with ever-growing fury, of news from Warsaw, of the advance of the Swedes, and of the Swedes themselves, against whom, as against faith-breakers attacking a neighbor in spite of treaties still valid for six years, hearts and minds were indignant and souls filled with rancor. News of swift advances, of the capitulation of Uistsie, of the occupation of Great Poland and the large towns, of the threatened invasion of Mazovia and the inevitable capture of Warsaw, not only did not cause alarm, but on the contrary roused daring and a desire for battle. This took place since the causes of Swedish success were evident to all. Hitherto the Swedes had not met a real army once, or a real leader. Radzivill was the first warrior by profession with whom they had to measure strength, and who at the same time roused in the nobility absolute confidence in his military gifts, especially as his colonels gave assurance that they would conquer the Swedes in the open field.

"Their defeat is inevitable!" said Pan Stankyevich, an old and experienced soldier. "I remember former wars, and I know that they always defended themselves in castles, in fortified camps, and in trenches. They never dared to come to the open field, for they feared cavalry greatly, and when trusting in their numbers they did come out, they received a proper drilling. It was not victory that gave Great Poland into their hands, but treason and the imbecility of general militia."

"True," said Zagloba. "The Swedish people are weak, for their land is terribly barren, and they have no bread; they grind pine cones, and of that sort of flour make ash-cakes which smell of resin. Others go to the seashore and devour whatever the waves throw up, besides fighting about it as a tidbit. Terrible destitution! so there are no people more greedy for their neighbors' goods. Even the Tartars have horseflesh in plenty, but these Swedes do not see meat once a year, and are pinched with hunger unless when a good haul of fish comes."

Here Zagloba turned to Stankyevich: "Have you ever made the acquaintance of the Swedes?"

"Under Prince Krishtof, the father of the present hetman."

“And I under Konyetspolski, the father. We gave Gustavus Adolphus many crushing defeats in Prussia, and took no small number of prisoners; there I became acquainted with them through and through, and learned all their methods. Our men wondered at them not a little, for you must know that the Swedes as a people always wading in water and having their greatest income from the sea, are divers *exquisitissimi*. What would you, gentlemen, say to what we made them do? We would throw one of the rascals into a hole in the ice, and he would swim out through another hole with a live herring in his mouth.”

“In God’s name, what do you tell us?”

“May I fall down a corpse on this spot if with my own eyes I have not seen this done at least a hundred times, as well as other wonderful customs of theirs! I remember also that as soon as they fed on Prussian bread, they did not want to go home. Pan Stankyevech says truly that they are not sturdy soldiers. They have infantry which is so-so; but the cavalry—God pity us! for there are no horses in their country, and they cannot train themselves to riding from childhood.”

“Probably we shall not attack them first, but march on Vilna,” said Pan Shchyt.

“True, I gave that advice to the prince myself, when he asked what I thought of this matter,” answered Zagloba. “But when we have finished with the others,<sup>19</sup> we will go against the Swedes. The envoys upstairs must be sweating!”

“They are received politely,” said Pan Zalenski, “but they will not effect the least thing; the best proof of that is that orders are issued to the army.”

“Dear God, dear God!” said Pan Tvarkovski, judge of Rossyeni, “how alacrity comes with danger! We were well-nigh despairing when we had to do with one enemy, but now we have two.”

“Of course,” answered Stankyevech. “It happens not infrequently, that we let ourselves be beaten till patience is lost, and then in a moment vigor and daring appear. Is it little that we have suffered, little endured? We relied on the king and the general militia of the kingdom, not counting on our own force, till we are in a dilemma; now we must either defeat both enemies or perish completely.”

“God will assist us! We have had enough of this delay.”

“They have put the dagger to our throats.”

“We too will put it to theirs; we’ll show the kingdom fellows what sort of soldiers we are! There will be no Uistsie with us, as God is in heaven!”

In the measure of the cups, heads became heated, and warlike ardor increased. At the brink of a precipice the last effort often brings safety; this was understood by those crowds of soldiers and that nobility whom so recently Yan Kazimir had called to Grodno with despairing universals to form the general militia. Now all hearts, all minds were turned to Radzivill; all lips repeated that terrible name, which till recently had ever been coupled with victory. In fact, he had but to collect and move the scattered and drowsy strength of the country, to stand at the head of a power sufficient to end both wars with victory.

After dinner the colonels were summoned to the prince in the following order: Mirski, lieutenant of the armored squadron of the hetman; and after him Stankyevech, Ganhoff, Kharlamp, Volodyovski, and Sollohub. Old soldiers wondered a little that they were asked singly, and not collectively to counsel; but it was a pleasant surprise, for each came out with

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<sup>19</sup> “Others” here = “Russians.”

some reward, with some evident proof of the prince's favor; in return the prince asked only loyalty and confidence, which all offered from heart and soul. The hetman asked anxiously also if Kmita had returned, and ordered that Pan Andrei's arrival be reported to him.

Kmita came, but late in the evening, when the hall was lighted and the guests had begun to assemble. He went first to the barracks to change his uniform; there he found Volodyovski, and made the acquaintance of the rest of the company.

"I am uncommonly glad to see you and your famous friends," said he, shaking the hand of the little knight, "as glad as to see a brother! You may be sure of this, for I am unable to pretend. It is true that you went through my forehead in evil fashion, but you put me on my feet afterward, which I shall not forget till death. In presence of all, I say that had it not been for you I should be at this moment behind the grating. Would more such men were born! Who thinks differently is a fool, and may the devil carry me off if I will not clip his ears."

"Say no more!"

"I will follow you into fire, even should I perish. Let any man come forward who does not believe me!"

Here Pan Andrei cast a challenging look on the officers. But no one contradicted him, for all loved and respected Pan Michael; but Zagloba said—

"This is a sulphurous sort of soldier; give him to the hangman! It seems to me that I shall have a great liking to you for the love you bear Pan Michael, for I am the man to ask first how worthy he is."

"Worthier than any of us!" said Kmita, with his usual abruptness. Then he looked at the Skshetuskis, at Zagloba, and added: "Pardon me, gentlemen, I have no wish to offend anyone, for I know that you are honorable men and great knights; be not angry, for I wish to deserve your friendship."

"There is no harm done," said Pan Yan; "what's in the heart may come to the lip."

"Let us embrace!" cried Zagloba.

"No need to say such a thing twice to me!"

They fell into each other's arms. Then Kmita said, "Today we must drink, it cannot be avoided!"

"No need to say such a thing twice to me!" said Zagloba, like an echo.

"We'll slip away early to the barracks, and I'll make provision."

Pan Michael began to twitch his mustaches greatly. "You will have no great wish to slip out," thought he, looking at Kmita, "when you see who is in the hall tonight." And he opened his mouth to tell Kmita that the sword-bearer of Rossyeni and Olenka had come; but he grew as it were faint at heart, and turned the conversation. "Where is your squadron?" asked he.

"Here, ready for service. Harasimovich was with me, and brought an order from the prince to have the men on horseback at midnight. I asked him if we were all to march; he said not. I know not what it means. Of other officers some have the same order, others have not. But all the foreign infantry have received it."

"Perhaps a part of the army will march tonight and a part in the morning," said Pan Yan.

"In every case I will have a drink here with you, gentlemen. Let the squadron go on by itself; I can come up with it afterward in an hour."

At that moment Harasimovich rushed in. "Serene great mighty banneret of Orsha!" cried he, bowing in the doorway.

"What? Is there a fire? I am here!" said Kmita.

"To the prince! to the prince!"

"Straightway, only let me put on my uniform. Boy, my coat and belt, or I'll kill thee!"

The boy brought the rest of the uniform in a twinkling; and a few minutes later Pan Kmita, arrayed as for a wedding, was hurrying to the prince. He was radiant, he seemed so splendid. He had a vest of silver brocade with star-shaped buttons, from which there was a gleam over his whole figure; the vest was fastened at the neck with a great sapphire. Over that a coat of blue velvet; a white belt of inestimable value, so thin that it might be drawn through a finger-ring. A silver-mounted sword set with sapphires hung from the belt by silk pendants; behind the belt was thrust the baton, which indicated his office. This dress became the young knight wonderfully, and it would have been difficult in that countless throng gathered at Kyedani to find a more shapely man.

Pan Michael sighed while looking at him; and when Kmita had vanished beyond the door of the barracks he said to Zagloba, "With a fair head there is no opposing a man like that."

"But take thirty years from me," answered Zagloba.

When Kmita entered, the prince also was dressed, attended by two negroes; he was about to leave the room. The prince and Pan Andrei remained face to face.

"God give you health for hurrying!" said the hetman.

"At the service of your highness."

"But the squadron?"

"According to order."

"The men are reliable?"

"They will go into fire, to hell."

"That is good! I need such men—and such as you, equal to anything. I repeat continually that on no one more than you do I count."

"Your highness, my services cannot equal those of old soldiers; but if we have to march against the enemy of the country, God sees that I shall not be in the rear."

"I do not diminish the services of the old," said the prince, "though there may come such perils, such grievous junctures, that the most faithful will totter."

"May he perish for nothing who deserts the person of your highness in danger!"

The prince looked quickly into the face of Kmita. "And you will not draw back?"

The young knight flushed. "What do you wish to say, your princely highness? I have confessed to you all my sins, and the sum of them is such that I thank only the fatherly heart of your highness for forgiveness. But in all these sins one is not to be found—ingratitude."

"Nor disloyalty. You confessed to me as to a father; I not only forgave you as a father, but I came to love you as that son—whom God has not given me, for which reason it is often oppressive for me in the world. Be then a friend to me."

When he had said this, the prince stretched out his hand. The young knight seized it, and without hesitation pressed it to his lips.

They were both silent for a long time; suddenly the prince fixed his eyes on the eyes of Kmita and said, "Panna Billevich is here!"

Kmita grew pale, and began to mutter something unintelligible.

"I sent for her on purpose so that the misunderstanding between you might be at an end. You will see her at once, as the mourning for her grandfather is over. Today, too, though God sees that my head is bursting from labor, I have spoken with the sword-bearer of Rossyeni."

Kmita seized his head. "With what can I repay your highness, with what can I repay?"

"I told him emphatically that it is my will that you and she should be married, and he will not be hostile. I commanded him also to prepare the maiden for it gradually. We have time. All depends upon you, and I shall be happy if a reward from my hand goes to you; and God grant you to await many others, for you must rise high. You have offended because you are young; but you have won glory not the last in the field, and all young men are ready to follow you everywhere. As God lives, you must rise high! Small offices are not for such a family as yours. If you know, you are a relative of the Kishkis, and my mother was a Kishki. But you need sedateness; for that, marriage is the best thing. Take that maiden if she has pleased your heart, and remember who gives her to you."

"Your highness, I shall go wild, I believe! My life, my blood belongs to your highness. What must I do to thank you—what? Tell me, command me!"

"Return good for good. Have faith in me, have confidence that what I do I do for the public good. Do not fall away from me when you see the treason and desertion of others, when malice increases, when—" Here the prince stopped suddenly.

"I swear," said Kmita, with ardor, "and give my word of honor to remain by the person of your highness, my leader, father, and benefactor, to my last breath."

Then Kmita looked with eyes full of fire at the prince, and was alarmed at the change which had suddenly come over him. His face was purple, the veins swollen, drops of sweat were hanging thickly on his lofty forehead, and his eyes cast an unusual gleam.

"What is the matter, your highness?" asked the knight, unquietly.

"Nothing! nothing!"

Radzivill rose, moved with hurried step to a kneeling desk, and taking from it a crucifix, said with powerful, smothered voice, "Swear on this cross that you will not leave me till death."

In spite of all his readiness and ardor, Kmita looked for a while at him with astonishment.

"On this passion of Christ, swear!" insisted the hetman.

"On this passion of Christ, I swear!" said Kmita, placing his finger on the crucifix.

"Amen!" said the prince, with solemn voice.

An echo in the lofty chamber repeated somewhere under the arch, "Amen," and a long silence followed. There was to be heard only the breathing of the powerful breast of Radzivill. Kmita did not remove from the hetman his astonished eyes.

"Now you are mine," said the prince, at last.

"I have always belonged to your highness," answered the young knight, hastily; "but be pleased to explain to me what is passing. Why does your highness doubt? Or does anything threaten your person? Has any treason, have any machinations been discovered?"



“The time of trial is approaching,” said the prince, gloomily, “and as to enemies do you not know that Pan Gosyevski, Pan Yudytski, and the *voevoda* of Vityebsk would be glad to bury me in the bottom of the pit? This is the case! The enemies of my house increase, treason spreads, and public defeats threaten. Therefore, I say, the hour of trial draws near.”

Kmita was silent; but the last words of the prince did not disperse the darkness which had settled around his mind, and he asked himself in vain what could threaten at that moment the powerful Radzivill. For he stood at the head of greater forces than ever. In Kyedani itself and in the neighborhood there were so many troops that if the prince had such power before he marched to Shklov the fortune of the whole war would have come out differently beyond doubt.

Gosyevski and Yudytski were, it is true, ill-wishers, but he had both in his hands and under guard, and as to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk he was too virtuous a man, too good a citizen to give cause for fear of any opposition or machinations from his side on the eve of a new expedition against enemies.

“God knows I understand nothing!” cried Kmita, being unable in general to restrain his thoughts.

“You will understand all today,” said Radzivill, calmly. “Now let us go to the hall.”

And taking the young colonel by the arm, he turned with him toward the door. They passed through a number of rooms. From a distance out of the immense hall came the sound of the orchestra, which was directed by a Frenchman brought on purpose by Prince Boguslav. They were playing a minuet which at that time was danced at the French court. The mild tones were blended with the sound of many voices. Prince Radzivill halted and listened.

“God grant,” said he, after a moment, “that all these guests whom I have received under my roof will not pass to my enemies tomorrow.”

“Your highness,” said Kmita, “I hope that there are no Swedish adherents among them.”

Radzivill quivered and halted suddenly.

“What do you wish to say?”

“Nothing, worthy prince, but that honorable soldiers are rejoicing there.”

“Let us go on. Time will show, and God will decide who is honorable. Let us go!”

At the door itself stood twenty pages—splendid lads, dressed in feathers and satin. Seeing the hetman, they formed in two lines. When the prince came near, he asked, “Has her princely highness entered the hall?”

“She has, your highness.”

“And the envoys?”

“They are here also.”

“Open!”

Both halves of the door opened in the twinkling of an eye; a flood of light poured in and illuminated the gigantic form of the hetman, who having behind him Kmita and the pages, went toward the elevation on which were placed chairs for the most distinguished guests.

A movement began in the hall; at once all eyes were turned to the prince, and one shout was wrested from hundreds of breasts: “Long live Radzivill! long live! Long live the hetman! long live!”

The prince bowed with head and hand, then began to greet the guests assembled on the elevation, who rose the moment he entered. Among the best known, besides the princess herself, were the two Swedish envoys, the envoy of Moscow, the *voevoda* of Venden, Bishop Parchevski, the priest Byalozor, Pan Komorovski, Pan Myerzeyevski, Pan Hlebovich, starosta of Jmud, brother-in-law of the hetman, a young Pats, Colonel Ganhoff, Colonel Mirski, Weisenhoff, the envoy of the Prince of Courland, and ladies in the suite of the princess.

The hetman, as was proper for a welcoming host, began by greeting the envoys, with whom he exchanged a few friendly words; then he greeted others, and when he had finished he sat on the chair with a canopy of ermine, and gazed at the hall in which shouts were still sounding: "May he live! May he be our hetman! May he live!"

Kmita, hidden behind the canopy, looked also at the throng. His glance darted from face to face, seeking among them the beloved features of her who at that moment held all the soul and heart of the knight. His heart beat like a hammer.

"She is here! After a while I shall see her, I shall speak to her," said he in thought. And he sought and sought with more and more eagerness, with increasing disquiet. "There! beyond the feathers of a fan some dark brows are visible, a white forehead and blond hair. That is she!" Kmita held his breath, as if fearing to frighten away the picture; then the feathers moved and the face was disclosed. "No! that is not Olenka, that is not that dear one, the dearest." His glance flies farther, embraces charming forms, slips over feathers and satin, faces blooming like flowers, and is mistaken each moment. That is she, not she! Till at last, see! in the depth, near the drapery of the window, something white is moving, and it grew dark in the eyes of the knight; that was Olenka, the dear one, the dearest.

The orchestra begins to play; again throngs pass. Ladies are moving around, shapely cavaliers are glittering; but he, like one blind and deaf, sees nothing, only looks at her as eagerly as if beholding her for the first time. She seems the same Olenka from Vodokty, but also another. In that great hall and in that throng she seems, as it were, smaller, and her face more delicate, one would say childlike. You might take her all in your arms and caress her! And then again she is the same, though different—the very same features, the same sweet lips, the same lashes casting shade on her cheeks, the same forehead, clear, calm, beloved. Here memory, like lightning-flashes, began to bring before the eyes of Pan Andrei that servants' hall in Vodokty where he saw her the first time, and those quiet rooms in which they had sat together. What delight only just to remember! And the sleigh-ride to Mitruny, the time that he kissed her! After that, people began to estrange them, and to rouse her against him.

"Thunderbolts crush it!" cried Kmita, in his mind. "What have I had and what have I lost? How near she has been and how far is she now!"

She sits there far off, like a stranger; she does not even know that he is here. Wrath, but at the same time immeasurable sorrow seized Pan Andrei—sorrow for which he had no expression save a scream from his soul, but a scream that passed not his lips: "O thou Olenka!"

More than once Kmita was so enraged at himself for his previous deeds that he wished to tell his own men to stretch him out and give him a hundred blows, but never had he fallen into such a rage as that time when after long absence he saw her again, still more wonderful than ever, more wonderful indeed than he had imagined. At that moment he wished to torture himself; but because he was among people, in a worthy company, he only ground his teeth, and as if wishing to give himself still greater pain, he repeated in mind: "It is good for thee thus, thou fool! good for thee!"

Then the sounds of the orchestra were silent again, and Pan Andrei heard the voice of the hetman: "Come with me."

Kmita woke as from a dream.

The prince descended from the elevation, and went among the guests. On his face was a mild and kindly smile, which seemed still more to enhance the majesty of his figure. That was the same lordly man who in his time, while receiving Queen Marya Ludwika in Nyeporente, astonished, amazed, and eclipsed the French courtiers, not only by his luxury, but by the polish of his manners—the same of whom Jean La Boureur wrote with such homage in the account of his journey. This time he halted every moment before the most important matrons, the most respectable nobles and colonels, having for each of the guests some kindly word, astonishing those present by his memory and winning in a twinkling all hearts. The eyes of the guests followed him wherever he moved. Gradually he approached the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, Pan Billevich, and said—

"I thank you, old friend, for having come, though I had the right to be angry. Billeviche is not a hundred miles from Kyedani, but you are a *rara avis* (rare bird) under my roof."

"Your highness," answered Pan Billevich, bowing low, "he wrongs the country who occupies your time."

"But I was thinking to take vengeance on you by going myself to Billeviche, and I think still you would have received with hospitality an old comrade of the camp."

Hearing this, Pan Billevich flushed with delight, and the prince continued—

"Time, time is ever lacking! But when you give in marriage your relative, the granddaughter of the late Pan Heraclius, of course I shall come to the wedding, for I owe it to you and to her."

"God grant that as early as possible," answered the sword-bearer.

"Meanwhile I present to you Pan Kmita, the banneret of Orsha, of those Kmitas who are related to the Kishkis and through the Kishkis to the Radzivills. You must have heard his name from Heraclius, for he loved the Kmitas as brothers."

"With the forehead, with the forehead!" repeated the sword-bearer, who was awed somewhat by the greatness of the young cavalier's family, heralded by Radzivill himself.

"I greet the sword-bearer, my benefactor, and offer him my services," said Pan Andrei, boldly and not without a certain loftiness. "Pan Heraclius was a father and a benefactor to me, and though his work was spoiled later on, still I have not ceased to love all the Billeviches as if my own blood were flowing in them."

"Especially," said the prince, placing his hand confidentially on the young man's shoulder, "since he has not ceased to love a certain Panna Billevich, of which fact he has long since informed us."

"And I will repeat it before everyone's face," said Kmita, with vehemence.

"Quietly, quietly!" said the prince. "This you see, worthy sword-bearer, is a cavalier of sulphur and fire, therefore he has made some trouble; but because he is young and under my special protection, I hope that when we petition together we shall obtain a reversal of the sentence from that charming tribunal."

"Your highness will accomplish what you like," answered Pan Billevich. "The maiden must exclaim, as that pagan priestess did to Alexander the Great, 'Who can oppose thee?'"

“And we, like that Macedonian, will stop with that prophecy,” replied the prince, smiling. “But enough of this! Conduct us now to your relative, for I shall be glad to see her. Let that work of Pan Heraclius which was spoiled be mended.”

“I serve your highness—There is the maiden; she is under the protection of Pani Voynilovich, our relative. But I beg pardon if she is confused, for I have not had time to forewarn her.”

The foresight of Pan Billevich was just. Luckily that was not the first moment in which Olenka saw Pan Andrei at the side of the hetman; she was able therefore to collect herself somewhat, but for an instant presence of mind almost left her, and she looked at the young knight as if she were looking at a spirit from the other world. And for a long time she could not believe her eyes. She had really imagined that that unfortunate was either wandering somewhere through forests, without a roof above his head, deserted by all, hunted by the law, as a wild beast is hunted by man, or enclosed in a tower, gazing with despair through the iron grating on the glad world of God. The Lord alone knew what terrible pity sometimes gnawed her heart and her eyes for that lost man; God alone could count the tears which in her solitude she had poured out over his fate, so terrible, so cruel, though so deserved; but now he is in Kyedani, free, at the side of the hetman, proud, splendid, in silver brocade and in velvet, with the baton of a colonel at his belt, with head erect, with commanding, haughty, heroic face, and the grand hetman Radzivill himself places his hand confidentially on his shoulder. Marvellous and contradictory feelings interwove themselves at once in the heart of the maiden; therefore a certain great relief, as if someone had taken a weight from her shoulders, and a certain sorrow as well that so much pity and grief had gone for naught; also the disappointment which every honest soul feels at sight of perfect impunity for grievous offences and sins; also joy, with a feeling of personal weakness, with admiration bordering on terror, before that young hero who was able to swim out of such a whirlpool.

Meanwhile the prince, the sword-bearer, and Kmita had finished conversation and were drawing near. The maiden covered her eyes with her lids and raised her shoulders, as a bird does its wings when wishing to hide its head. She was certain that they were coming to her. Without looking she saw them, felt that they were nearer and nearer, that they were before her. She was so sure of this that without raising her lids, she rose suddenly and made a deep courtesy to the prince.

He was really before her, and said: “By the passion of the Lord! Now I do not wonder at this young man, for a marvellous flower has bloomed here. I greet you, my lady, I greet you with my whole heart and soul, beloved granddaughter of my Billevich. Do you know me?”

“I know your highness,” answered the maiden.

“I should not have known you; you were still a young, unblossomed thing when I saw you last, not in this ornament in which I see you now. But raise those lashes from your eyes. As God lives! fortunate is the diver who gets such a pearl, ill-fated he who had it and lost it. Here he stands before you, so despairing, in the person of this cavalier. Do you know him?”

“I know,” whispered Olenka, without raising her eyes.

“He is a great sinner, and I have brought him to you for confession. Impose on him what penance you like, but refuse not absolution, for despair may bring him to still greater sins.”

Here the prince turned to the sword-bearer and Pani Voynilovich: “Let us leave the young people, for it is not proper to be present at a confession, and also my faith forbids me.”

After a moment Pan Andrei and Olenka were alone. The heart beat in Olenka’s bosom as the heart of a dove over which a falcon is hovering, and he too was moved. His usual boldness,

impulsiveness, and self-confidence had vanished. For a long time both were silent. At last he spoke in a low, stifled voice—

“You did not expect to see me, Olenka?”

“I did not,” whispered the maiden.

“As God is true! you would be less alarmed if a Tartar were standing here near you. Fear not! See how many people are present. No harm will meet you from me. And though we were alone you would have nothing to fear, for I have given myself an oath to respect you. Have confidence in me.”

For a moment she raised her eyes and looked at him, “How can I have confidence?”

“It is true that I sinned, but that is past and will not be repeated. When on the bed and near death, after that duel with Volodyovski, I said to myself: ‘Thou wilt not take her by force, by the sabre, by fire, but by honorable deeds wilt thou deserve her and work out thy forgiveness. The heart in her is not of stone, and her anger will pass; she will see thy reformation and will forgive.’ Therefore I swore to reform, and I will hold to my oath. God blessed me at once, for Volodyovski came and brought me a commission. He had the power not to give it; but he gave it—he is an honorable man! Now I need not appear before the courts, for I am under the hetman’s jurisdiction. I confessed all my offences to the prince, as to a father; he not only forgave me, but promised to settle everything and to defend me against the malice of men. May God bless him! I shall not be an outlaw, I shall come to harmony with people, win glory, serve the country, repair the wrongs I have committed. What will you answer? Will you not say a good word to me?” He gazed at Olenka and put his hands together as if praying to her.

“Can I believe?”

“You can, as God is dear to me; it is your duty to believe. The hetman believed, and Pan Volodyovski too. All my acts are known to them, and they believed me. You see they did. Why should you alone have no trust in me?”

“Because I have seen the result of your deeds—people’s tears, and graves not yet grown over with grass.”

“They will be grown over, and I will moisten them with tears.”

“Do that first.”

“Give me only the hope that when I do that I shall win you. It is easy for you to say, ‘Do that first.’ Well, I do it; meanwhile you have married another. May God not permit such a thing, for I should go wild. In God’s name I implore you, Olenka, to give me assurance that I shall not lose you before I come to terms with your nobles. Do you remember? You have written me of this yourself. I keep the letter, and when my soul is deeply downcast I read it. I ask you only to tell me again that you will wait, that you will not marry another.”

“You know that by the will I am not free to marry another. I can only take refuge in a cloister.”

“Oh, that would be a treat for me! By the living God, mention not the cloister, for the very thought of it makes me shudder. Mention it not, Olenka, or I will fall down here at your feet in the presence of all, and implore you not to do so. You refused Volodyovski, I know, for he told me himself. He urged me to win you by good deeds. But what use in them if you are to take the veil? If you tell me that virtue should be practised for its own sake, I will answer that I love you to distraction, and I will hear of nothing else. When you left Vodokty, I had barely risen from the bed but I began to search for you. When I was enlisting my squadron every

moment was occupied; I had not time to eat food, to sleep at night, but I ceased not to seek you. I was so affected that without you there was neither life for me nor rest. I was so deeply in the toils that I lived only on sighs. At last I learned that you were in Billeviche with the sword-bearer. Then I tell you I wrestled with my thoughts as with a bear. ‘To go or not to go?’ I dared not go, lest I should be treated to gall. I said to myself at last: ‘I have done nothing good yet, I will not go.’ Finally the prince, my dear father, took pity on me, and sent to invite you and your uncle to Kyedani, so that I might fill even my eyes with my love. Since we are going to the war, I do not ask you to marry me tomorrow; but if with God’s favor I hear a good word from you, I shall feel easier—you, my only soul! I have no wish to die; but in battle death may strike any man, and I shall not hide behind others; therefore ’tis your duty to forgive me as a man before death.”

“May God preserve you and guide you,” responded the maiden, in a mild voice, by which Pan Andrei knew at once that his words had produced their effect.

“You, my true gold! I thank you even for that. But you will not go to the cloister?”

“I will not go yet.”

“God bless you!”

And as snow melts in springtime, their mutual distrust was now melting, and they felt nearer to each other than a moment before. Their hearts were easier, and in their eyes it grew clear. But still she had promised nothing, and he had the wit to ask for nothing that time. But she felt herself that it was not right for her to close the road to the reform of which he had spoken so sincerely. Of his sincerity she had no doubt for a moment, for he was not a man who could pretend. But the great reason why she did not repulse him again, why she left him hope, was this—that in the depth of her heart she loved yet that young hero. Love had brought her a mountain of bitterness, disillusion, and pain; but love survived ever ready to believe and forgive without end.

“He is better than his acts,” thought the maiden, “and those are living no longer who urged him to sin; he might from despair permit himself to do something a second time; he must never despair.” And her honest heart was rejoiced at the forgiveness which it had given. On Olenka’s cheeks a flush came forth as fresh as a rose under the morning dew; her eyes had a gleam sweet and lively, and it might be said that brightness issued from them to the hall. People passed and admired the wonderful pair; for in truth such a noble couple it would have been difficult to find in that hall, in which, however, were collected the flower of the nobility.

Besides both, as if by agreement, were dressed in like colors, for she wore silver brocade fastened with sapphire and a sacque of blue Venetian velvet. “Like a brother and sister,” said persons who did not know them; but others said straightway, “Impossible, for his eyes are too ardent toward her.”

Meanwhile in the hall the marshal announced that it was time to be seated at table, and at once there was unusual movement. Count Löwenhaupt, all in lace, went in advance, with the princess on his arm; her train was borne by two very beautiful pages. Next after them Baron Schitte escorted Pani Hlebovich; next followed Bishop Parchevski with Father Byalozor, both looking troubled and gloomy.

Prince Yanush, who in the procession yielded to the guests, but at the table took the highest place next to the princess, escorted Pani Korf, wife of the *voevoda* of Venden, who had been visiting about a week at Kyedani. And so the whole line of couples moved forward, like a hundred-colored serpent, unwinding and changing. Kmita escorted Olenka, who rested her

arm very lightly on his; but he glanced sidewise at the delicate face, was happy, gleaming like a torch—the greatest magnate among those magnates, since he was near the greatest treasure.

Thus moving to the sound of the orchestra, they entered the banqueting-hall, which looked like a whole edifice by itself. The table was set in the form of a horseshoe, for three hundred persons, and was bending under silver and gold. Prince Yanush, as having in himself a portion of kingly majesty and being the blood relative of so many kings, took the highest place, at the side of the princess; and all when passing him, bowed low and took their places according to rank.

But evidently, as it seemed to those present, the hetman remembered that this was the last feast before an awful war in which the destiny of great states would be decided, for his face was not calm. He simulated a smile and joyousness, but he looked as if a fever were burning him. At times a visible cloud settled on his menacing forehead, and those sitting near him could see that that forehead was thickly covered with drops of sweat; at times his glance ran quickly over the assembled faces, and halted questioningly on the features of various colonels; then again those lion brows frowned on a sudden, as if pain had pierced them, or as if this or that face had roused in him wrath. And, a wonderful thing! the dignitaries sitting near the prince, such as the envoys, Bishop Parchevski, Father Byalozor, Pan Komorovski, Pan Myrzeyevski, Pan Hlebovich, the *voevoda* of Venden, and others, were equally distraught and disturbed. The two sides of the immense horseshoe sounded with a lively conversation, and the bustle usual at feasts; but the centre of it was gloomy and silent, whispered rare words, or exchanged wandering and as it were alarmed glances.

But there was nothing wonderful in that, for lower down sat colonels and knights whom the approaching war threatened at most with death. It is easier to fall in a war than to bear the responsibility for it. The mind of the soldier is not troubled, for when he has redeemed his sins with his blood, he flies from the battlefield to heaven; he alone bends his head heavily who in his soul must satisfy God and his own conscience, and who on the eve of the decisive day knows not what chalice the country will give him to drink on the morrow.

This was the explanation which men gave themselves at the lower parts of the table.

“Always before each war he talks thus with his own soul,” said the old Colonel Stankyeovich to Zagloba; “but the gloomier he is the worse for the enemy, for on the day of battle he will be joyful to a certainty.”

“The lion too growls before battle,” said Zagloba, “so as to rouse in himself fierce hatred for the enemy. As to great warriors, each has his custom. Hannibal used to play dice; Scipio Africanus declaimed verses; Pan Konyetspolski the father always conversed about fair heads; and I like to sleep an hour or so before battle, though I am not averse to a glass with good friends.”

“See, gentlemen, Bishop Parchevski is as pale as a sheet of paper!” said Stanislav Skshetuski.

“For he is sitting at a Calvinist table, and may swallow easily something unclean in the food,” explained Zagloba, in a low voice. “To drinks, the old people say, the devil has no approach, and those can be taken everywhere; but food, and especially soups, one should avoid. So it was in the Crimea, when I was there in captivity. The Tartar mullahs or priests knew how to cook mutton with garlic in such a way that whoever tasted it was willing that moment to desert his faith and accept their scoundrel of a prophet.” Here Zagloba lowered his voice still more: “Not through contempt for the prince do I say this, but I advise you, gentlemen, to let the food pass, for God protects the guarded.”

“What do you say? Whoso commends himself to God before eating is safe; with us in Great Poland there is no end of Lutherans and Calvinists, but I have not heard that they bewitched food.”

“With you in Great Poland there is no end of Lutherans, and so they sniffed around at once with the Swedes,” said Zagloba, “and are in friendship with them now. In the prince’s place, I would hunt those envoys away with dogs, instead of filling their stomachs with dainties. But look at that Löwenhaupt; he is eating just as if he were to be driven to the fair with a rope around his leg before the month’s end. Besides, he will stuff his pockets with dried fruit for his wife and children. I have forgotten how that other fellow from over the sea is called. Oh, may thou—”

“Father, ask Michael,” said Yan.

Pan Michael was sitting not far away; but he heard nothing, he saw nothing, for he was between two ladies. On his left sat Panna Syelavski, a worthy maiden about forty years old, and on his right Olenka, beyond whom sat Kmita. Panna Syelavski shook her feather-decked head above the little knight, and narrated something with great rapidity. He looked at her from time to time with a vacant stare, and answered continually, “As true as life, gracious lady!” but understood not a word she said, for all his attention was turned to the other side. He was seizing with his ear the sound of Olenka’s words, the flutter of her silver dress, and from sorrow moving his mustaches in such fashion as if he wished to frighten away Panna Syelavski with them.

“Ah, that is a wonderful maiden! Ah, but she is beautiful!” said he, in his mind. “O God, look down on my misery, for there is no lonelier orphan than I. My soul is piping within me to have my own beloved, and on whomsoever I look another soldier stands quartered there. Where shall I go, ill-fated wanderer?”

“And after the war, what do you think of doing?” inquired Panna Syelavski, all at once pursing up her mouth and fanning herself violently.

“I shall go to a monastery!” said the little knight, testily.

“Who mentions monastery here at the banquet?” cried Kmita, joyously, bending in front of Olenka. “Oh, that is Pan Volodyovski.”

“There is nothing like that in your head,” retorted Pan Michael; “but I think I shall go.”

Then the sweet voice of Olenka sounded in his ear: “Oh, no need to think of that! God will give you a wife beloved of your heart, and honest as you are.”

The good Pan Michael melted at once: “If anyone were to play on a flute to me, it would not be sweeter to my ear.”

The increasing bustle stopped further conversation, for it had come now to the glasses. Excitement increased. Colonels disputed about the coming war, frowning and casting fiery glances.

Pan Zagloba was describing to the whole table the siege of Zbaraj; and the ardor and daring of the hearers rose till the blood went to their faces and hearts. It might seem that the spirit of the immortal “Yarema”<sup>20</sup> was flying above that hall, and had filled the souls of the soldiers with heroic inspiration.

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<sup>20</sup> Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski.



“That was a leader!” said the famous Mirski, who led all Radzivill’s hussars. “I saw him only once, but to the moment of my death I shall remember it.”

“Jove with thunderbolts in his grasp!” cried old Stankyeovich. “It would not have come to this were he alive now!”

“Yes; think of it! Beyond Romni he had forests cut down to open a way for himself to the enemy.”

“The victory at Berestechko was due to him.”

“And in the most serious moment God took him.”

“God took him,” repeated Pan Yan, in a loud voice; “but he left a testament behind him for all coming leaders and dignitaries and for the whole Commonwealth. This is it: to negotiate with no enemy, but to fight them all.”

“Not to negotiate; to fight!” repeated a number of powerful voices, “fight! fight!”

The heat became great in the hall, and the blood was boiling in the warriors; therefore glances began to fall like lightning-flashes, and the heads shaven on the temples and lower forehead began to steam.

“Our prince, our hetman, will be the executioner of that will!” said Mirski.

Just at that moment an enormous clock in the upper part of the hall began to strike midnight, and at the same time, the walls trembled, the windowpanes rattled plaintively, and the thunder of cannon was heard saluting in the courtyard.

Conversation was stopped, silence followed. Suddenly at the head of the table they began to cry: “Bishop Parchevski has fainted! Water!”

There was confusion. Some sprang from their seats to see more clearly what had happened. The bishop had not fainted, but had grown very weak, so that the marshal supported him in his chair by the shoulders, while the wife of the *voevoda* of Venden sprinkled his face with water.

At that moment the second discharge of cannon shook the windowpanes; after it came a third, and a fourth.

“Live the Commonwealth! May its enemies perish!” shouted Zagloba.

But the following discharges drowned his speech. The nobles began to count: “Ten, eleven, twelve!”

Each time the windowpanes answered with a mournful groan. The candles quivered from the shaking.

“Thirteen, fourteen! The bishop is not used to the thunder. With his timidity he has spoiled the entertainment; the prince too is uneasy. See, gentlemen, how swollen he is! Fifteen, sixteen!—Hei, they are firing as if in battle! Nineteen, twenty!”

“Quiet there! the prince wants to speak!” called the guests at once, from various parts of the table. “The prince wishes to speak!”

There was perfect silence; and all eyes were turned to Radzivill, who stood, like a giant, with a cup in his hand. But what a sight struck the eyes of those feasting! The face of the prince was simply terrible at that moment, for it was not pale, but blue and twisted, as if in a convulsion, by a smile which he strove to call to his lips. His breathing, usually short, became still shorter; his broad breast welled up under the gold brocade, his eyes were half covered

with their lids, and there was a species of terror and an iciness on that powerful face such as are usual on features stiffening in the moments before death.

“What troubles the prince? what is taking place here?” was whispered unquietly around; and an ominous foreboding straitened all hearts, startled expectation was on every face.

He began to speak, with a short voice broken by asthma: “Gracious gentlemen! this toast will astonish many among you—or simply it will terrify them—but whoso trusts and believes in me, whoso really wishes the good of the country, whoso is a faithful friend of my house, will drink it with a will, and repeat after me, ‘Vivat Carolus Gustavus Rex, from this day forth ruling over us graciously!’”

“Vivat!” repeated the two envoys, Löwenhaupt and Schitte; then some tens of officers of the foreign command.

But in the hall there reigned deep silence. The colonels and the nobles gazed at one another with astonishment, as if asking whether the prince had not lost his senses. A number of voices were heard at last at various parts of the table: “Do we hear aright? What is it?” Then there was silence again.

Unspeakable horror coupled with amazement was reflected on faces, and the eyes of all were turned again to Radzivill; but he continued to stand, and was breathing deeply, as if he had cast off some immense weight from his breast. The color came back by degrees to his face; then he turned to Pan Komorovski, and said—

“It is time to make public the compact which we have signed this day, so that those present may know what course to take. Read, your grace!”

Komorovski rose, unwound the parchment lying before him, and began to read the terrible compact, beginning with these words:—

“Not being able to act in a better and more proper way in this most stormy condition of affairs, after the loss of all hope of assistance from the Most Serene King, we the lords and estates of the Grand Principality of Lithuania, forced by extremity, yield ourselves to the protection of the Most Serene King of Sweden on these conditions:—

“1. To make war together against mutual enemies, excepting the king and the kingdom of Poland.

“2. The Grand Principality of Lithuania will not be incorporated with Sweden, but will be joined to it in such manner as hitherto with the kingdom of Poland; that is, people shall be equal to people, senate to senate, and knighthood to knighthood in all things.

“3. Freedom of speech at the diets shall not be prohibited to any man.

“4. Freedom of religion is to be inviolable—”

And so Pan Komorovski read on further, amid silence and terror, till he came to the paragraph: “This act we confirm with our signature for ourselves and our descendants, we promise and stipulate—” when a murmur rose in the hall, like the first breath of a storm shaking the pinewoods. But before the storm burst, Pan Stankyevich, gray as a pigeon, raised his voice and began to implore—

“Your highness, we are unwilling to believe our own ears! By the wounds of Christ! must the labor of Vladislav and Sigismund Augustus come to nothing? Is it possible, is it honorable, to desert brothers, to desert the country, and unite with the enemy? Remember the name which you bear, the services which you have rendered the country, the fame of your house, hitherto unspotted; tear and trample on that document of shame. I know that I ask not in my own

name alone, but in the names of all soldiers here present and nobles. It pertains to us also to consider our own fate. Gracious prince, do not do this; there is still time! Spare yourself, spare us, spare the Commonwealth!”

“Do it not! Have pity, have pity!” called hundreds of voices.

All the colonels sprang from their places and went toward him; and the gray Stankyeovich knelt down in the middle of the hall between the two arms of the table, and then was heard more loudly: “Do that not! spare us!”

Radzivill raised his powerful head, and lightnings of wrath began to fly over his forehead; suddenly he burst out—

“Does it become you, gentlemen, first of all to give an example of insubordination? Does it become soldiers to desert their leader, their hetman, and bring forward protests? Do you wish to be my conscience? Do you wish to teach me how to act for the good of the country? This is not a diet, and you are not called here to vote; but before God I take the responsibility!”

And he struck his broad breast with his fist, and looking with flashing glance on the officers, after a while he shouted again: “Whoso is not with me is against me! I knew you, I knew what would happen! But know ye that the sword is hanging over your heads!”

“Gracious prince! our hetman!” implored old Stankyeovich, “spare yourself and spare us!”

But his speech was interrupted by Stanislav Skshetuski, who seizing his own hair with both hands, began to cry with despairing voice: “Do not implore him; that is vain. He has long cherished this dragon in his heart! Woe to thee, O Commonwealth! woe to us all!”

“Two dignitaries at the two ends of the Commonwealth have sold the country!” cried Yan Skshetuski. “A curse on this house, shame and God’s anger!”

Hearing this, Zagloba shook himself free from amazement and burst out: “Ask him how great was the bribe he took from the Swedes? How much have they paid him? How much have they promised him yet? Oh, gentlemen, here is a Judas Iscariot. May you die in despair, may your race perish, may the devil tear out your soul, O traitor, traitor, thrice traitor!”

With this Stankyeovich, in an ecstasy of despair, drew the colonel’s baton from his belt, and threw it with a rattle at the feet of the prince. Mirski threw his next; the third was Yuzefovich; the fourth, Hoshchyts; the fifth, pale as a corpse, Volodyovski; the sixth, Oskyerko—and the batons rolled on the floor. Meanwhile in that den of the lion these terrible words were repeated before the eyes of the lion from more and more mouths every moment: “Traitor! traitor!”

All the blood rushed to the head of the haughty magnate. He grew blue; it seemed that he would tumble next moment a corpse under the table.

“Ganhoff and Kmita, to me!” bellowed he, with a terrible voice.

At that moment four double doors leading to the hall opened with a crash, and in marched divisions of Scottish infantry, terrible, silent, musket in hand. Ganhoff led them from the main door.

“Halt!” cried the prince. Then he turned to the colonels: “Whoso is with me, let him go to the right side of the hall!”

“I am a soldier, I serve the hetman; let God be my judge!” said Kharlamp, passing to the right side.

“And I!” added Myeleshko. “Not mine will be the sin!”

“I protested as a citizen; as a soldier I must obey,” added a third, Nyevyarovski, who, though he had thrown down his baton before, was evidently afraid of Radzivill now.

After them passed over a number of others, and quite a large group of nobles; but Mirski, the highest in office, and Stankyeovich, the oldest in years, Hoshchyts, Volodyovski, and Oskyerko remained where they were, and with them the two Skshetuskis, Zagloba, and a great majority as well of the officers of various heavy and light squadrons as of nobles. The Scottish infantry surrounded them like a wall.

Kmita, the moment the prince proposed the toast in honor of Karl Gustav, sprang up from his seat with all the guests, stared fixedly and stood as if turned to stone, repeating with pallid lips, “God! God! God! what have I done?”

At the same time a low voice, but for his ear distinct, whispered near by, “Pan Andrei!”

He seized suddenly his hair with his hands. “I am cursed for the ages! May the earth swallow me!”

A flame flashed out on Olenka’s face; her eyes bright as stars were fixed on Kmita. “Shame to those who remain with the hetman! Choose! O God, All Powerful!—What are you doing? Choose!”

“Jesus! O Jesus!” cried Kmita.

Meanwhile the hall was filled with cries. Others had thrown their batons at the feet of the prince, but Kmita did not join them; he did not move even when the prince shouted, “Ganhoff and Kmita, to me!” nor when the Scottish infantry entered the hall; and he stood torn with suffering and despair, with wild look, with blue lips.

Suddenly he turned to Panna Billevich and stretched his hands to her. “Olenka! Olenka!” repeated he, with a sorrowful groan, like a child whom some wrong is confronting.

But she drew back with aversion and fear in her face. “Away, traitor!” she answered with force.

At that moment Ganhoff commanded, “Forward!” and the division of Scots surrounding the prisoners moved toward the door.

Kmita began to follow them like one out of his mind, not knowing where he was going or why he was going.

The banquet was ended.

## Chapter XV

That same night the prince held a long consultation with the *voevoda* of Venden and with the Swedish envoys. The result of the treaty had disappointed his expectations, and disclosed to him a threatening future. It was the prince's plan to make the announcement in time of feasting, when minds are excited and inclined to agreement. He expected opposition in every event, but he counted on adherents also; meanwhile the energy of the protest had exceeded his reckoning. Save a few tens of Calvinist nobles and a handful of officers of foreign origin, who as strangers could have no voice in the question, all declared against the treaty concluded with Karl Gustav, or rather with his field-marshal and brother-in-law, Pontus de la Gardie.

The prince had given orders, it is true, to arrest the stubborn officers of the army, but what of that? What will the squadrons say? Will they not think of their colonels? Will they not rise in mutiny to rescue their officers by force? If they do, what will remain to the proud prince beyond a few dragoon regiments and foreign infantry? Then the whole country, all the armed nobles, and Sapyeha, *voevoda* of Vityebsk—a terrible opponent of the house of Radzivill, ready to fight with the whole world in the name of the unity of the Commonwealth? Other colonels whose heads he cannot cut off, and Polish squadrons will go to Sapyeha, who will stand at the head of all the forces of the country, and Prince Radzivill will see himself without an army, without adherents, without significance. What will happen then?

These were terrible questions, for the position was terrible. The prince knew well that if he were deserted the treaty on which he had toiled so much in secret would by the force of events lose all meaning and the Swedes would despise him, or take revenge for the discovered deceit. But he had given them his Birji as a guaranty of his loyalty; by that he had weakened himself the more.

Karl Gustav was ready to scatter rewards and honors with both hands for a powerful Radzivill, but Radzivill weak and deserted by all he would despise; and if the changing wheel of fortune should send victory to Yan Kazimir, final destruction would come to that lord who this day in the morning had no equal in the Commonwealth.

When the envoys and the *voevoda* of Venden had gone, the prince seized with both hands his head weighed down with care, and began to walk with swift steps through the room. From without came the voices of the Scottish guards and the rattle of the departing carriages of the nobles. They drove away quickly and hurriedly, as if a pest had fallen on the lordly castle of Kyedani. A terrible disquiet rent the soul of Radzivill. At times it seemed to him that besides himself there was some other person who walked behind him and whispered in his ear, "Abandonment, poverty, and infamy as well!" But he, the *voevoda* of Vilna and grand hetman, was already trampled upon and humiliated! Who would have admitted yesterday that in all Kyedani, in Lithuania, nay, in the whole world, there could be found a man who would dare to shout before his eyes, "Traitor!" Nevertheless he had heard it, and he lives yet, and they who spoke that word are living too. Perhaps if he were to re-enter that hall of the banquet he would still hear as an echo among the cornices and under the vaults, "Traitor! traitor!"

And wild, mad rage seized at moments the breast of the oligarch. His nostrils dilated, his eyes shot lightnings, veins came out on his forehead. Who here dares to oppose his will? His enraged mind brought before his eyes the picture of punishments and torments for rebels who had the daring not to follow his feet like a dog. And he saw their blood flowing from the axes

of executioners, he heard the crunching of their bones broken by the wheel, and he took delight in and sated himself with visions of blood.

But when more sober judgment reminded him that behind those rebels is an army, that he cannot take their heads with impunity, an unendurable and hellish inquiet came back and filled his soul, and someone whispered anew in his ear, “Abandonment, poverty, judgment, and infamy!”

How is that? Is it not permitted to Radzivill to decide the fate of the country—to retain it for Yan Kazimir or give it to Karl Gustav—to give, to convey, to present, to whom it may please him?

The magnate looked before himself with amazement.

Who then are the Radzivills? Who were they yesterday? What was said everywhere in Lithuania? Was that all deception? Will not Prince Boguslav join the grand hetman with his regiments, after him his uncle the Elector of Brandenburg, and after all three Karl Gustav, the Swedish king, with all his victorious power, before which recently all Germany trembled through the length and the breadth of it? Did not the Polish Commonwealth itself extend its arms to the new master, and yield at the mere report of the approach of the lion of the North? Who will offer resistance to that unrestrained power?

On one side the King of Sweden, the Elector of Brandenburg, the Radzivills, in case of necessity Hmelnitski too, with all his power, and the hospodar of Wallachia, and Rakotsy of Transylvania—almost half Europe; on the other side the *voevoda* of Vityebsk with Mirski, Pan Stankyeovich, and those three nobles who had just come from Lukovo, and also a few rebellious squadrons! What is that?—a jest, an amusement.

Then suddenly the prince began to laugh loudly. “By Lucifer and all the Diet of hell, it must be that I have gone mad! Let them all go to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk!”

But after a while his face had grown gloomy again: “The powerful admit only powerful to alliance. Radzivill casting Lithuania at the feet of the Swedes will be sought for; Radzivill asking aid against Lithuania will be despised. What is to be done?”

The foreign officers will stay with him, but their power is not enough; and if the Polish squadrons go over to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, he will have the fate of the country in his hands. Each foreign officer will carry out commands, it is true; but he will not devote his whole soul to the cause of Radzivill, he will not give himself to it with ardor, not merely as a soldier, but as an adherent. For devotion there is absolute need, not of foreigners, but of men of his own people to attract others by their names, by their bravery, by their reputation, by their daring example and readiness to do everything. He must have adherents in the country, even for show.

Who of his own men responded to the prince? Kharlamp, an old, worn-out soldier, good for service and nothing more; Nyevyarovski, not loved in the army and without influence; besides these a few others of still less distinction; no man of another kind, no man whom an army would follow, no man to be the apostle of a cause.

There remained Kmita, young, enterprising, bold, covered with great knightly glory, bearing a famous name, standing at the head of a powerful squadron, partly fitted out at his own expense—a man as it were created to be the leader of all the bold and restless spirits in Lithuania, and withal full of ardor. If he should take up the cause of Radzivill, he would take it up with the faith which youth gives, he would follow his hetman blindly, and spread the faith in his name; and such an apostle means more than whole regiments, whole divisions of

foreigners. He would be able to pour his faith into the heart of the young knighthood, to attract it and fill the camp of Radzivill with men.

But he too had hesitated evidently. He did not cast his baton, it is true, at the feet of the hetman, but he did not stand at his side in the first moment.

“It is impossible to reckon on anyone, impossible to be sure of any man,” thought the prince, gloomily. “They will all go to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, and no man will wish to share with me.”

“Infamy!” whispered his conscience.

“Lithuania!” answered, on the other hand, pride.

It had grown dim in the room, for the wicks had burned long on the candles, but through the windows flowed in the silver light of the moon. Radzivill gazed at those rays and fell into deep thought. Gradually something began to grow dark in those rays; certain figures rose up each moment, increasing in number, till at last the prince saw as it were an army coming toward him from the upper trails of the sky on the broad road of the moonbeams. Regiments are marching, armored hussars and light horse; a forest of banners are waving; in front rides some man without a helmet, apparently a victor returning from war. Around is quiet, and the prince hears clearly the voice of the army and people, “*Vivat defensor patriae! vivat defensor patriae!* (Live the defender of the country!)” The army approaches, each moment increasing in number; now he can see the face of the leader. He holds the baton in his hand; and by the number of *bunchucks* (horsetails on his standard). Radzivill can see that he is the grand hetman.

“In the name of the Father and the Son!” cries the prince, “that is Sapyeha, that is the *voevoda* of Vityebsk! And where am I, and what is predestined to me?”

“Infamy!” whispers his conscience.

“Lithuania!” answers his pride.

The prince clapped his hands; Harasimovich, watching in the adjoining room, appeared at once in the door and bent double.

“Lights!” said the prince.

Harasimovich snuffed the candles, then went out and returned with a candlestick in his hand.

“Your Highness,” said he, “it is time to repose; the cocks have crowed a second time.”

“I have no wish to sleep,” replied the prince. “I dozed, and the nightmare was suffocating me. What is there new?”

“Some noblemen brought a letter from Nyesvyej from the Prince Michael, but I did not venture to enter unsummoned.”

“Give me the letter at once!”

Harasimovich gave the sealed letter; the prince opened it, and began to read as follows:—

*May God guard and restrain your highness from such plans as might bring eternal infamy and destruction to our house! Set your mind on a hair-shirt rather than on dominion. The greatness of our house lies at my heart also, and the best proof of this is in the efforts which I made in Vienna that we should have a vote in the diets of the Empire. But I will not betray the country nor my king for any reward or earthly power, so as not to gather after such a sowing a harvest of infamy during life and damnation after death. Consider, your highness, the services of your ancestors and their unspotted fame; think of the mercy of God while the time*

*is fitting. The enemy have surrounded me in Nyesvyej, and I know not whether this letter will reach your hands; but though destruction threatens me every moment, I do not ask God to rescue me, but to restrain your highness from those plans and bring you to the path of virtue. Even if something evil is done already, it is possible yet to draw back, and it is necessary to blot out the offences with a swift hand. But do not expect aid from me, for I say in advance that without regard to bonds of blood, I will join my forces with those of Pan Gosyevski and the voevoda of Vityebsk; and a hundred times rather would I turn my arms against your highness than put my hands voluntarily to that infamous treason. I commend your highness to God.*

*Michael Kazimir,*

*Prince in Nyesvyej and Olyta, Chamberlain of the Grand Principality of Lithuania.*

When the hetman had finished the letter he dropped it on his knee, and began to shake his head with a painful smile on his face.

“And he leaves me, my own blood rejects me, because I wished to adorn our house with a glory hitherto unknown! Ah! it is difficult! Boguslav remains, and he will not leave me. With us is the Elector and Karl Gustav; and who will not sow will not reap.”

“Infamy!” whispered his conscience.

“Is your highness pleased to give an answer?” asked Harasimovich.

“There will be no answer.”

“May I go and send the attendants?”

“Wait! Are the guards stationed carefully?”

“They are.”

“Are orders sent to the squadrons?”

“They are.”

“What is Kmita doing?”

“He was knocking his head against the wall and crying about disgrace. He was wriggling like a mudfish. He wanted to run after the Billeviches, but the guards would not let him. He drew his sabre; they had to tie him. He is lying quietly now.”

“Has the sword-bearer of Rossyeni gone?”

“There was no order to stop him.”

“I forgot!” said the prince. “Open the windows, for it is stifling and asthma is choking me. Tell Kharlamp to go to Upita for the squadron and bring it here at once. Give him money, let him pay the men for the first quarter and let them get merry. Tell him that he will receive Dydkyemie for life instead of Volodyovski. The asthma is choking me. Wait!”

“According to order.”

“What is Kmita doing?”

“As I said, your highness, he is lying quietly.”

“True, you told me. Give the order to send him here. I want to speak with him. Have his fetters taken off.”

“Your highness, he is a madman.”



“Have no fear, go!”

Harasimovich went out. The prince took from a Venetian cabinet a case with pistols, opened it, and placed it near at hand on the table by which he sat.

In a quarter of an hour Kmita entered, attended by four Scottish soldiers. The prince ordered the men to withdraw, and remained face to face with Kmita.

There did not seem to be one drop of blood in the visage of the young man, so pale was it, but his eyes were gleaming feverishly; for the rest he was calm, resigned, though apparently sunk in endless despair.

Both were silent for a while. The prince spoke first.

“You took oath on the crucifix not to desert me.”

“I shall be damned if I keep that oath, damned if I break it. It is all one to me!”

“Even if I had brought you to evil, you would not be responsible.”

“A month ago judgments and punishments threatened me for killing; today it seems to me that then I was as innocent as a child.”

“Before you leave this room, you will feel absolved from all your previous sins,” said the prince.

Suddenly, changing his tone, he inquired with a certain confidential kindness, “What do you think it was my duty to do in the face of two enemies, a hundredfold stronger than I, enemies against whom I could not defend this country?”

“To die!” answered Kmita, rudely.

“You soldiers, who can throw off so easily the pressing burden are to be envied. To die! For him who has looked death in the eyes and is not afraid, there is nothing in the world simpler. Your head does not ache over this, and it will occur to the mind of none that if I had roused an envenomed war and had died without making a treaty, not a stone would be left on a stone in this country. May God not permit this, for even in heaven my soul could not rest. *O, terque, quaterque beati* (O thrice and four times blessed) are ye who can die! Do you think that life does not oppress me, that I am not hungry for everlasting sleep and rest? But I must drain the chalice of gall and vinegar to the bottom. It is needful to save this unhappy land, and for its salvation to bend under a new burden. Let the envious condemn me for pride, let them say that I betrayed the country to exalt myself. God has seen me, God is the judge whether I desire this elevation, and whether I would not resign it could matters be otherwise. Find you who desert me means of salvation; point out the road, ye who call me a traitor, and this night I will tear that document and rouse all the squadrons from slumber to move on the enemy.”

Kmita was silent.

“Well, why are you silent?” exclaimed Radzivill, in a loud voice. “I will make you grand hetman in my place and *voevoda* of Vilna. You must not die, for that is no achievement, but save the country. Defend the occupied provinces, avenge the ashes of Vilna, defend Jmud against Swedish invasion, nay, defend the whole Commonwealth, drive beyond the boundaries every enemy! Rush three on a thousand; die not—for that is not permitted—but save the country.”

“I am not hetman and *voevoda* of Vilna,” answered Kmita, “and what does not belong to me is not on my head. But if it is a question of rushing the third against thousands I will go.”

“Listen, then, soldier! Since your head has not to save the country, leave it to mine.”

“I cannot!” said Kmita, with set teeth.

Radzivill shook his head. “I did not count on the others, I looked for what happened; but in you I was deceived. Interrupt not, but listen. I placed you on your feet, I freed you from judgment and punishment, I gathered you to my heart as my own son. Know you why? Because I thought that in you was a daring soul, ready for grand undertakings. I needed such men, I hide it not. Around me was no man who would dare to look at the sun with unflinching eye. There were men of small soul and petty courage. To such never show a path other than that on which they and their fathers have travelled, for they will halt saying that you have sent them on a devious way. And still, where, if not to the precipice, have we all come by these old roads? What is happening to the Commonwealth which formerly could threaten the world?”

Here the prince seized his head in his hands and repeated thrice: “O God! God! God!”

After a while he continued: “The time of God’s anger has come—a time of such misfortunes and of such a fall that with the usual methods we cannot rise from this sickness; and if I wish to use new ones, which alone can bring us salvation, even those desert me on whose readiness I counted, whose duty it was to have confidence, who took oath on the cross to trust me. By the blood and wounds of Christ! Did you think that I submitted to the protection of Karl Gustav forever, that in truth I think to join this country to Sweden, that the treaty, for which I am called a traitor, will last beyond a year? Why do you look with astonished eyes? You will be still more astonished when you hear all. You will be more astonished, for something will happen which no one will think of, no one admit, which the mind of a common man has not power to grasp. But I say to you, Tremble not, for in this is the country’s salvation; do not draw back, for if I find no one to help me, possibly I may perish, but with me will perish the Commonwealth and ye all for the ages. I alone can save, but I must bend and trample all obstacles. Woe to him who opposes me; for God himself will crush him through me, whether he be the *voevoda* of Vityebsk or Pan Gosyevski or the army, or a refractory nobility. I wish to save the Commonwealth; and to me all ways, all methods are good for that end. Rome in times of disaster named dictators—such power, nay, greater and more lasting, is needful to me. Not pride draws me to it—whoso feels equal to this power let him take it instead of me. But if no one does I will take the power, though these walls should fall first on my head!”

Then the prince stretched both his hands upward, as if in fact he wished to support the arches falling upon his head, and there was in him something so gigantic that Kmita opened his eyes and gazed as if he had never seen him before; and at last he asked with changed voice:

“Whither art thou striving, your highness? What do you wish?”

“A crown!” cried Radzivill.

“Jesus, Mary!”

A moment of deep silence followed; but an owl on the tower of the castle began to hoot shrilly.

“Listen,” said the prince, “it is time to tell you all. The Commonwealth is perishing, and must perish. There is no salvation on earth for it. The question is to save first from the ruin this country (Lithuania), this our immediate fatherland, and then—then make the whole Commonwealth rise from its own ashes, as the phoenix rises. I will do this; and the crown, which I desire, I will place as a burden on my head, so as to bring out from this great tomb a new life. Do not tremble! The ground will not open, everything stands on its own place; but new times are coming. I give this country to the Swedes so as to stop with Swedish arms another enemy, to drive him beyond the boundaries, to win back what is lost, and force with the sword a treaty from that enemy in his own capital. Do you hear me? But in rocky, hungry

Sweden there are not men enough, not forces enough, not sabres enough to take possession of this immense Commonwealth. They may defeat our army once and a second time; but to hold us in obedience they cannot. If one Swede were given as a guard to every ten men in this land, there would still be many tens of them without guards. Karl Gustav knows this well, and neither does he wish nor is he able to take the whole Commonwealth. He will occupy Royal Prussia, most of Great Poland, and will be content with that. But to hold in coming time these acquisitions securely, he must break the union of the kingdom with us; otherwise he could not remain in those provinces. What will happen then to this country? To whom will it be given? Well, if I refuse the crown which God and fortune places on my head, it will be given to him who at this moment is in possession. But Karl Gustav is not willing to consent to this act, which would increase a neighboring power too greatly, and create for himself a formidable enemy. But if I refuse the crown, he will be forced to consent. Have I the right, then, to refuse? Can I allow that to take place which would threaten us with final ruin? For the tenth and the hundredth time I ask, Where are there other means of salvation? Let the will of God, then, be done! I take this burden on my shoulders. The Swedes are on my aide; the elector, our relative, promises aid. I will free the country from war! With victories and extension of boundaries will begin the rule of my house. Peace and prosperity will flourish; fire will not burn towns and villages. Thus it will be, thus it must be. So help me God and the holy cross! I feel within me power and strength from heaven, I desire the happiness of this land, and that is not yet the end of my plans. And by those heavenly lights I swear, by those trembling stars, that if only strength and health remain to me, I will build anew all this edifice, now tumbling to ruins; I will make it stronger than ever.”

Fire was flashing from the pupils and eyes of the prince; his whole form shed an uncommon halo.

“Your highness,” cried Kmita, “I cannot grasp that thought; my head is bursting, my eyes fear to look ahead.”

“Besides,” said Radzivill, as if pursuing the further course of his own thoughts, “the Swedes will not deprive Yan Kazimir of the kingdom nor of rule, but will leave him in Mazovia and Little Poland. God has not given him posterity. An election will come in time. Whom will they choose to the throne if they wish a further union with Lithuania? When did the kingdom grow strong and crush the Knights of the Cross? After Vladyslav Yagyello had mounted the throne. It will be the same this time. The Poles can call to the throne only him who will be reigning here. They cannot and will not call another, for they would perish, because the breath would not remain in their breasts between the Germans and the Turks, and as it is, the Cossack cancer is gnawing the kingdom. They can call no one else! Blind is he who does not see this; foolish who does not understand it. Both countries will unite again and become one power in my house. Then I shall see if those kinglets of Scandinavia will remain in their Prussia and Great Poland acquired today. Then I will say to them, *Quos ego!* and with this foot will crush their lean ribs, and create a power such as the world has not seen, such as history has not described; perhaps I may carry the cross with fire and sword to Constantinople, and in peace at home terrify the enemy. Thou great God, who orderest the circuits of the stars, grant me to save this ill-fated land, for thy glory and that of all Christendom; give me men to understand my thought, men to put their hands to salvation. There is where I stand!” Here the prince opened his arms, and raised his eyes aloft: “Thou seest me, thou judgest me!”

“Mighty prince, mighty prince!” cried Kmita.

“Go, desert me, cast the baton at my feet, break your oath, call me traitor! Let no thorn be lacking in that prickly crown which they have put on my head. Destroy ye the country, thrust

it over the precipice, drag away the hand that could save it, and go to the judgment of God! Let him decide between us.”

Kmita cast himself on his knees before Radzivill. “Mighty prince, I am with you to the death! Father of the country, savior!”

Radzivill put both hands on his head, and again followed a moment of silence. Only the owl hooted unceasingly on the tower.

“You will receive all that you have yearned for and wished,” said the prince, with solemnity. “Nothing will miss you, and more will meet you than your father and mother desired. Rise, future grand hetman and *voevoda* of Vilna!”

It had begun to dawn in the sky.

## Chapter XVI

Pan Zagloba had his head mightily full when he hurled the word “traitor” thrice at the eyes of the terrible hetman. At an hour nearer morning, when the wine had evaporated from his bald head, and he found himself with the two Skshetuskis and Pan Michael in a dungeon of Kyedani Castle, he saw, when too late, the danger to which he had exposed his own neck and the necks of his comrades, and was greatly cast down.

“But what will happen now?” asked he, gazing with dazed look on the little knight, in whom he had special trust in great peril.

“May the devil take life! it is all one to me!” answered Volodyovski.

“We shall live to such times and such infamy as the world and this kingdom have not seen hitherto!” said Pan Yan.

“Would that we might live to them!” answered Zagloba; “we could restore virtue in others by our good example. But shall we live? That is the great question.”

“This is a terrible event, passing belief!” said Pan Stanislav. “Where has the like of it happened? Save me, gentlemen, for I feel that there is confusion in my head. Two wars—a third, the Cossack—and in addition treason, like a plague: Radzyovski, Opalinski, Grudzinski, Radzivill! The end of the world is coming, and the day of judgment; it cannot be otherwise! May the earth open under our feet! As God is dear to me, I am losing my mind!”

And clasping his hands at the back of his head, he began to pace the length and width of the cellar, like a wild beast in a cage.

“Shall we begin to pray, or what?” asked he at last. “Merciful God, save us!”

“Be calm!” said Zagloba; “this is not the time to despair.”

Pan Stanislav ground his teeth on a sudden; rage carried him away. “I wish you were killed!” cried he to Zagloba. “It was your thought to come to this traitor. May vengeance reach you and him!”

“Bethink yourself, Stanislav,” said Pan Yan, sternly. “No one could foresee what has happened. Endure, for you are not the only man suffering; and know that our place is here, and not elsewhere. Merciful God! pity, not us, but the ill-fated country.”

Stanislav made no answer, but wrung his hands till the joints were cracking.

They were silent. Pan Michael, however, began to whistle through his teeth, in despair, and feigned indifference to everything happening around him, though, in fact, he suffered doubly—first, for the misfortune of the country, and secondly, because he had violated his obedience to the hetman. The latter was a terrible thing for him, a soldier to the marrow of his bones. He would have preferred to die a thousand times.

“Do not whistle, Pan Michael,” said Zagloba.

“All one to me!”

“How is it? Is no one of you thinking whether there are not means of escape? It is worth while to exercise one’s wits on this. Are we to rot in this cellar, when every hand is needed for the country, when one man of honor must settle ten traitors?”

“Father is right,” said Pan Yan.

“You alone have not become stupid from pain. What do you suppose? What does that traitor think of doing with us? Surely he will not punish us with death?”

Pan Michael burst out in a sudden laugh of despair. “But why not? I am curious to learn! Has he not authority, has he not the sword? Do you not know Radzivill?”

“Nonsense! What right do they give him?”

“Over me, the right of a hetman; over you, force!”

“For which he must answer.”

“To whom—to the King of Sweden?”

“You give me sweet consolation; there is no denying that!”

“I have no thought of consoling you.”

They were silent, and for a time there was nothing to be heard but the measured tread of Scottish infantry at the door of the cellar.

“There is no help here,” said Zagloba, “but stratagem.”

No one gave answer; therefore he began to talk again after a while: “I will not believe that we are to be put to death. If for every word spoken in haste and in drink, a head were cut off, not one noble in this Commonwealth would walk around with his head on his shoulders. But *neminem captivabimus*? Is that a trifle?”

“You have an example in yourself and in us,” answered Stanislav.

“Well, that happened in haste; but I believe firmly that the prince will take a second thought. We are strangers; in no way do we come under his jurisdiction. He must respect opinion, and not begin with violence, so as not to offend the nobles. As true as life, our party is too large to have the heads cut from all of us. Over the officers he has authority, I cannot deny that; but, as I think, he will look to the army, which surely will not fail to remember its own. And where is your squadron, Michael?”

“In Upita.”

“But tell me, are you sure that the men will be true to you?”

“Whence should I know? They like me well enough, but they know that the hetman is above me.”

Zagloba meditated awhile. “Give me an order to them to obey me in everything, as they would you, if I appear among them.”

“You think that you are free!”

“There is no harm in that. I have been in hotter places, and God saved me. Give an order for me and the two Skshetuskis. Whoso escapes first will go straight to the squadron, and bring it to rescue the others.”

“You are raving! It is a pity to lose time in empty talk! Who will escape from this place? Besides, on what can I give an order; have you paper, ink, pen? You are losing your head.”

“Desperation!” cried Zagloba; “give me even your ring.”

“Here it is, and let me have peace!”

Zagloba took the ring, put it on his little finger, and began to walk and meditate.

Meanwhile the smoking candle went out, and darkness embraced them completely; only through the grating of the high window a couple of stars were visible, twinkling in the clear sky. Zagloba's eye did not leave the grating. "If heaven-dwelling Podbipienta were living and with us," muttered the old man, "he would tear out that grating, and in an hour we should see ourselves beyond Kyedani."

"But raise me to the window," said Pan Yan, suddenly.

Zagloba and Pan Stanislav placed themselves at the wall; in a moment Yan was on their shoulders.

"It cracks! As God is dear to me, it cracks!" cried Zagloba.

"What are you talking about, father? I haven't begun to pull it yet."

"Crawl up with your cousin; I'll hold you somehow. More than once I pitied Pan Michael because he was so slender; but now I regret that he is not still thinner, so as to slip through like a snake."

But Yan sprang down from their shoulders. "The Scots are standing on this side!" said he.

"May God turn them into pillars of salt, like Lot's wife!" said Zagloba. "It is so dark here that you might strike a man in the face, and he could not see you. It will soon be daybreak. I think they will bring us food of some kind, for even Lutherans do not put prisoners to a hunger death. Perhaps, too, God will send reflection to the hetman. Often in the night conscience starts up in a man, and the devils pinch sinners. Can it be there is only one entrance to this cellar? I will look in the daytime. My head is somehow heavy, and I cannot think out a stratagem. Tomorrow God will strengthen my wit; but now we will say the Lord's Prayer, and commit ourselves to the Most Holy Lady, in this heretical dungeon."

In fact they began a moment later to say the Lord's Prayer and the litany to the Mother of God; then Yan, Stanislav, and Volodyovski were silent, for their breasts were full of misfortune, but Zagloba growled in a low voice and muttered—

"It must be beyond doubt that tomorrow he will say to us, *aut, aut!* (either, or). 'Join Radzivill and I will pardon everything.' But we shall see who outwits the other. Do you pack nobles into prison, have you no respect for age or services? Very good! To whom the loss, to him the weeping! The foolish will be under, and the wise on top. I will promise what you like, but what I observe would not make a patch for your boot. If you do not hold to the country, he is virtuous who holds not to you. This is certain, that final ruin is coming on the Commonwealth if its foremost dignitaries join the enemy. This has never been in the world hitherto, and surely a man may lose his senses from it. Are there in hell torments sufficient for such traitors? What was wanting to such a Radzivill? Is it little that the country has given him, that he should sell it like a Judas, and in the very time of its greatest misfortunes, in the time of three wars? Just is thy anger, O Lord! only give swiftest punishment. So be it! Amen! If I could only get out of here quickly, I would create partisans for thee, mighty hetman! Thou wilt know how the fruits of treason taste. Thou wilt look on me yet as a friend; but if thou findest no better, do not hunt a bear unless thy skin is not dear to thee."

Thus did Zagloba converse with himself. Meanwhile one hour passed, and a second; at last day began to dawn. The gray light falling through the grating dissipated slowly the darkness in the cellar, and brought out the gloomy figures sitting at the walls. Volodyovski and the Skshetuskis were slumbering from weariness; but when things were more visible, and when from the courtyard came the sounds of soldiers' footsteps, the clatter of arms, the tramp of hoofs, and the sound of trumpets at the gate, the knights sprang to their feet.

“The day begins not too favorably for us,” said Yan.

“God grant it to end more favorably,” answered Zagloba. “Do you know what I have thought in the night? They will surely treat us with the gift of life if we will take service with Radzivill and help him in his treason; we ought to agree to that, so as to make use of our freedom and stand up for the country.”

“May God preserve me from putting my name to treason,” answered Yan; “for though I should leave the traitor afterward, my name would remain among those of traitors as an infamy to my children. I will not do that, I prefer to die.”

“Neither will I!” said Stanislav.

“But I tell you beforehand that I will. No one will think that I did it voluntarily or sincerely. May the devils take that dragon Radzivill! We shall see yet who gets the upper hand.”

Further conversation was stopped by sounds in the yard. Among them were the ominous accents of anger and indignation. At the same time single voices of command, the echo of footsteps of whole crowds, and heavy thunder as of cannon in motion.

“What is going on?” asked Zagloba. “Maybe there is some help for us.”

“There is surely an uncommon uproar,” said Volodyovski. “But raise me to the window, for I shall see right away what it is.”

Yan took Volodyovski and raised him as he would a boy. Pan Michael caught the grating, and looked carefully through the yard.

“There is something going on—there is!” said he, with sudden alertness. “I see the Hungarian castle regiment of infantry which Oskyerko led—they loved him greatly, and he too is arrested; they are demanding him surely. As God lives! they are in order of battle. Lieutenant Stahovich is with them; he is a friend of Oskyerko.”

At that moment the cries grew still louder.

“Ganhoff has ridden up. He is saying something to Stahovich, and what a shout! I see that Stahovich with two officers is walking away from the troops. They are going of course as a deputation to the hetman. As God is dear to me, mutiny is spreading in the army! The cannon are pointed against the Hungarians, and the Scottish regiment is also in order of battle. Men from the Polish squadrons are gathering to the Hungarians. Without them they would not be so daring, for in the infantry there is stern discipline.”

“In God’s name!” cried Zagloba. “In that is salvation for us. Pan Michael, are there many Polish squadrons? If they rise, it will be a rising!”

“Stankyevech’s hussars and Mirski’s mailed squadrons are two days’ march from Kyedani,” answered Volodyovski. “If they had been here, the hetman would not have dared to arrest their commanders. Wait! There are Kharlamp’s dragoons, one regiment, Myeleshko’s another; they are for the prince. Nyevyarovski declared also for the prince, but his regiment is far away—two Scottish regiments.”

“Then there are four with the prince?”

“And the artillery under Korf, two regiments.”

“Oh, that’s a strong force!”

“And Kmita’s squadron, well equipped—six hundred men.”

“And on whose side is Kmita?”



“I do not know.”

“Did you not see him? Did he throw down his baton?”

“We know not.”

“Who are against the prince—what squadrons?”

“First, these Hungarians evidently, two hundred men; then a number of detached men from the commands of Mirski and Stankyeovich; some nobles and Kmita—but he is uncertain.”

“God grant him!—By God’s mercy!—Too few, too few.”

“These Hungarians are as good as two regiments, old soldiers and tried. But wait! They are lighting the matches at the cannon; it looks like a battle!”

Yan and Stanislav were silent; Zagloba was writhing as in a fever—

“Slay the traitors! Slay the dog-brothers! *Ai*, Kmita! Kmita! All depends on him. Is he daring?”

“As the devil—ready for anything.”

“It must be that he will take our side.”

“Mutiny in the army! See to what the hetman has brought things!” cried Volodyovski.

“Who is the mutineer—the army, or the hetman who rose against his own king?” asked Zagloba.

“God will judge that. Wait! Again there is a movement! Some of Kharlamp’s dragoons take the part of the Hungarians. The very best nobles serve in that regiment. Hear how they shout!”

“The colonels! the colonels!” cried threatening voices in the yard.

“Pan Michael! by the wounds of God, cry to them to send for your squadron and for the armored regiment and the hussars.”

“Be silent!”

Zagloba began to shout himself: “But send for the rest of the Polish squadrons, and cut down the traitors!”

“Be silent there!”

Suddenly, not in the yard, but in the rear of the castle, rang forth a sharp salvo of muskets.

“Jesus Mary!” cried Volodyovski.

“Pan Michael, what is that?”

“Beyond doubt they have shot Stahovich and the two officers who went as a deputation,” said Volodyovski, feverishly. “It cannot be otherwise!”

“By the passion of our Lord! Then there is no mercy. It is impossible to hope.”

The thunder of shots drowned further discourse. Pan Michael grasped the grating convulsively and pressed his forehead to it, but for a while he could see nothing except the legs of the Scottish infantry stationed at the window. Salvos of musketry grew more and more frequent; at last the cannon were heard. The dry knocking of bullets against the wall over the cellar was heard distinctly, like hail. The castle trembled to its foundation.

“Jump down, Michael, or you will be killed!” cried Yan.

“By no means. The balls go higher; and from the cannon they are firing in the other direction. I will not jump down for anything.”

And Volodyovski, seizing the grating more firmly, drew himself entirely to the windowsill, where he did not need the shoulder of Pan Yan to hold him. In the cellar it became really dark, for the window was small and Pan Michael though slender filled it completely; but as a recompense the men below had fresh news from the field of battle every minute.

“I see now!” cried Pan Michael. “The Hungarians are resting against the wall and are firing. I was afraid that they would be forced to a corner, then the cannon would destroy them in a moment. Good soldiers, as God is dear to me! Without officers, they know what is needed. There is smoke again! I see nothing—”

The firing began to slacken.

“O merciful God, delay not thy punishment!” cried Zagloba.

“And what, Michael?” asked Yan.

“The Scots are advancing to the attack!”

“Oh, brimstone thunderbolts, that we must sit here!” cried Stanislav.

“They are there already, the halberd-men! The Hungarians meet them with the sabre! Oh, my God! that you cannot look on. What soldiers!”

“Fighting with their own and not with an enemy.”

“The Hungarians have the upper hand. The Scots are falling back on the left. As I love God! Myeleshko’s dragoons are going over to them! The Scots are between two fires. Korf cannot use his cannon, for he would strike the Scots. I see Ganhoff uniforms among the Hungarians. They are going to attack the gate. They wish to escape. They are advancing like a storm—breaking everything!”

“How is that? I wish they would capture this castle!” cried Zagloba.

“Never mind! They will come back tomorrow with the squadrons of Mirski and Stankyeovich—Oh, Kharlamp is killed! No! He rises; he is wounded—they are already at the gate. What is that? Just as if the Scottish guard at the gate were coming over to the Hungarians, for they are opening the gate—dust is rising on the outside; I see Kmita! Kmita is rushing through the gate with cavalry!”

“On whose side is he, on whose side?” cried Zagloba.

For a moment Pan Michael gave no answer; but very soon the clatter of weapons, shrieks, and shouts were heard with redoubled force.

“It is all over with them!” cried Pan Michael, with a shrill voice.

“All over with whom, with whom?”

“With the Hungarians. The cavalry has broken them, is trampling them, cutting them to pieces! Their flag is in Kmita’s hand! The end, the end!”

When he had said this, Volodyovski dropped from the window and fell into the arms of Pan Yan.

“Kill me!” cried he, “kill me, for I had that man under my sabre and let him go with his life; I gave him his commission. Through me he assembled that squadron with which he will fight now against the country. I saw whom he got: dog-brothers, gallows-birds, robbers, ruffians,

such as he is himself. God grant me to meet him once more with the sabre—God! lengthen my life to the death of that traitor, for I swear that he will not leave my hands again.”

Meanwhile cries, the trample of hoofs, and salvos of musketry were thundering yet with full force; after a time, however, they began to weaken, and an hour later silence reigned in the castle of Kyedani, broken only by the measured tread of the Scottish patrols and words of command.

“Pan Michael, look out once more and see what has happened,” begged Zagloba.

“What for?” asked the little knight. “Whoso is a soldier will guess what has happened. Besides, I saw them beaten—Kmita triumphs here!”

“God give him to be torn with horses, the scoundrel, the hell-dweller! God give him to guard a harem for Tartars!”

## Chapter XVII

Pan Michael was right. Kmita had triumphed. The Hungarians and a part of the dragoons of Myeleshko and Kharlamp who had joined them, lay dead close together in the court of Kyedani. Barely a few tens of them had slipped out and scattered around the castle and the town, where the cavalry pursued them. Many were caught; others never stopped of a certainty till they reached the camp of Sapycha, *voevoda* of Vityebsk, to whom they were the first to bring the terrible tidings of the grand hetman's treason, of his desertion to the Swedes, of the imprisonment of the colonels and the resistance of the Polish squadrons.

Meanwhile Kmita, covered with blood and dust, presented himself with the banner of the Hungarians before Radzivill, who received him with open arms. But Pan Andrei was not delighted with the victory. He was as gloomy and sullen as if he had acted against his heart.

"Your highness," said he, "I do not like to hear praises, and would rather a hundred times fight the enemy than soldiers who might be of service to the country. It seems to a man as if he were spilling his own blood."

"Who is to blame, if not those insurgents?" answered the prince. "I too would prefer to send them to Vilna, and I intended to do so. But they chose to rebel against authority. What has happened will not be undone. It was and it will be needful to give an example."

"What does your highness think of doing with the prisoners?"

"A ball in the forehead of every tenth man. Dispose the rest among other regiments. You will go today to the squadrons of Mirski and Stankyeovich, announce my order, to them to be ready for the campaign. I make you commander over those two squadrons, and over the third, that of Volodyovski. The lieutenants are to be subordinate to you and obey you in everything. I wished to send Kharlamp to that squadron at first, but he is useless. I have changed my mind."

"What shall I do in case of resistance? For with Volodyovski are Lauda men who hate me terribly."

"Announce that Mirski, Stankyeovich, and Volodyovski will be shot immediately."

"Then they may come in arms to Kyedani to rescue these officers. All serving under Mirski are distinguished nobles."

"Take a regiment of Scottish infantry and a German regiment. First surround them, then announce the order."

"Such is the will of your highness."

Radzivill rested his hands on his knees and fell to thinking.

"I would gladly shoot Mirski and Stankyeovich were they not respected in the whole country as well as in their own regiments. I fear tumult and open rebellion, an example of which we have just had before our eyes. I am glad, thanks to you, that they have received a good lesson, and each squadron will think twice before rising against us. But it is imperative to act swiftly, so that resisting men may not go to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk."

"Your highness has spoken only of Mirski and Stankyeovich, you have not mentioned Volodyovski and Oskyerko."

“I must spare Oskyerko, too, for he is a man of note and widely related; but Volodyovski comes from Russia<sup>21</sup> and has no relatives here. He is a valiant soldier, it is true. I counted on him—so much the worse that I was deceived. If the devil had not brought hither those wanderers his friends, he might have acted differently; but after what has happened, a bullet in the forehead waits him, as well as those two Skshetuskis and that third fellow, that bull who began first to bellow, ‘Traitor, traitor!’”

Pan Andrei sprang up as if burned with iron: “Your highness, the soldiers say that Volodyovski saved your life at Tsibyhova.”

“He did his duty; therefore I wanted to give him Dydkyemie for life. Now he has betrayed me; hence I give command to shoot him.”

Kmita’s eyes flashed, and his nostrils began to quiver.

“Your highness, that cannot be!”

“How cannot be?” asked Radzivill, frowning.

“I implore your highness,” said Kmita, carried away, “that not a hair fall from Volodyovski. Forgive me, I implore. Volodyovski had the power not to deliver to me the commission, for it was sent to him and left at his disposal. But he gave it. He plucked me out of the whirlpool. Through that act of his I passed into the jurisdiction of your highness. He did not hesitate to save me, though he and I were trying to win the same woman. I owe him gratitude, and I have vowed to repay him. Your highness, grant for my sake that no punishment touch him or his friends. A hair should not fall from the head of either of them, and as God is true, it will not fall while I live. I implore your highness.”

Pan Andrei entreated and clasped his hands, but his words were ringing with anger, threats, and indignation. His unrestrained nature gained the upper hand, and he stood above Radzivill with flashing eyes and a visage like the head of an angry bird of prey. The hetman too had a storm in his face. Before his iron will and despotism everything hitherto in Lithuania and Russia had bent. No one had ever dared to oppose him, no one to beg mercy for those once condemned; but now Kmita’s entreating was merely for show, in reality he presented demands; and the position was such that it was impossible to refuse him.

At the very beginning of his career of treason, the despot felt that he would have to yield more than once to the despotism of men and circumstances, and would be dependent on adherents of far less importance than this one; that Kmita, whom he wished to turn into a faithful dog, would be rather a captive wolf, ready when angry to bite its master’s hand.

All this roused the proud blood of Radzivill. He resolved to resist, for his inborn terrible vengefulness urged him to that.

“Volodyovski and the other three must lose their heads,” said he, with a loud voice.

But to speak thus was to throw powder on fire.

“If I had not dispersed the Hungarians, these are not the men who had lost their heads,” shouted Kmita.

“How is this? Are you renouncing my service already?” asked the hetman, threateningly.

“Your highness,” answered Pan Andrei, with passion, “I am not renouncing; I am begging, imploring. But the harm will not happen. These men are famous in all Poland. It cannot be, it

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<sup>21</sup> Volodyovski was from the Ukraine.

cannot be! I will not be a Judas to Volodyovski. I will follow your highness into fire, but refuse not this favor.”

“But if I refuse?”

“Then give command to shoot me; I will not live! May thunderbolts split me! May devils take me living to hell!”

“Remember, unfortunate, before whom you are speaking.”

“Bring me not to desperation, your highness.”

“To a prayer I may give ear, but a threat I will not consider.”

“I beg—I implore.” Here Pan Andrei threw himself on his knees. “Permit me, your highness, to serve you not from constraint, but with my heart, or I shall go mad.”

Radzivill said nothing. Kmita was kneeling; pallor and flushes chased each other like lightning gleams over his face. It was clear that a moment more and he would burst forth in terrible fashion.

“Rise!” said Radzivill.

Pan Andrei rose.

“To defend a friend you are able. I have the test that you will also be able to defend me and will never desert. But God made you of nitre, not of flesh, and have a care that you run not to fluid. I cannot refuse you anything. Listen to me: Stankyeovich, Mirski, and Oskyerko I will send to the Swedes at Birji; let the two Skshetuski and Volodyovski go with them. The Swedes will not tear off their heads there, and it is better that they sit out the war in quiet.”

“I thank your highness, my father,” cried Andrei.

“Wait,” said the prince. “I have respected your oath already too much; now respect mine. I have recorded death in my soul to that old noble—I have forgotten his name—that bellowing devil who came here with Skshetuski. He is the man who first called me traitor. He mentioned a bribe; he urged on the others, and perhaps there would not have been such opposition without his insolence.” Here the prince struck the table with his fist. “I should have expected death sooner, and the end of the world sooner, than that anyone would dare to shout at me, Radzivill, to my face, ‘Traitor!’ In presence of people! There is not a death, there are not torments befitting such a crime. Do not beg me for him; it is useless.”

But Pan Andrei was not easily discouraged when once he undertook a thing. He was not angry now, nor did he blaze forth. But seizing again the hand of the hetman, he began to cover it with kisses and to entreat with all the earnestness in his soul—

“With no rope or chain could your highness bind my heart as with this favor. Only do it not halfway nor in part, but completely. That noble said yesterday what all thought. I myself thought the same till you opened my eyes—may fire consume me, if I did not! A man is not to blame for being unwise. That noble was so drunk that what he had on his heart he shouted forth. He thought that he was defending the country, and it is hard to punish a man for love of country. He knew that he was exposing his life, and shouted what he had on his mind. He neither warms nor freezes me, but he is to Pan Volodyovski as a brother, or quite as a father. Volodyovski would mourn for him beyond measure, and I do not want that. Such is the nature within me, that if I wish good to a man I would give my soul for him. If anyone has spared me, but killed my friend, may the devil take him for such a favor! Your highness, my father, benefactor, do a perfect kindness—give me this noble, and I will give you all my blood, even tomorrow, this day, this moment!”

Radzivill gnawed his mustaches. "I determined death to him yesterday in my soul."

"What the hetman and *voevoda* of Vilna determined, that can the Grand Prince of Lithuania and, God grant in the future, the King of Poland, as a gracious monarch, efface."

Pan Andrei spoke sincerely what he felt and thought; but had he been the most adroit of courtiers he could not have found a more powerful argument in defence of his friends. The proud face of the magnate grew bright at the sound of those titles which he did not possess yet, and he said—

"You have so understood me that I can refuse you nothing. They will all go to Birji. Let them expiate their faults with the Swedes; and when that has happened of which you have spoken, ask for them a new favor."

"As true as life, I will ask, and may God grant as quickly as possible!" said Kmita.

"Go now, and bear the good news to them."

"The news is good for me, not for them; and surely they will not receive it with gratitude, especially since they did not suspect what threatened them. I will not go, your highness, for it would seem as if I were hurrying to boast of my intercession."

"Do as you please about that, but lose no time in bringing the squadrons of Mirski and Stankyeovich; immediately after there will be another expedition for you, from which surely you will not flee."

"What is that?"

"You will go to ask on my behalf Pan Billevich, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, to come to me here at Kyedani, with his niece, and stay during the war. Do you understand?"

Kmita was confused. "He will not be ready to do that. He went from Kyedani in a great rage."

"I think that the rage has left him already. In every case take men, and if they will not come of their own will put them in a carriage, surround it with dragoons, and bring them. He was as soft as wax when I spoke with him; he blushed like a maiden and bowed to the floor, but he was as frightened at the name of the Swedes as the devil is at holy water, and went away. I want him here for myself and for you; I hope to form out of that wax a candle that I can light when I like and for whom I like. It will be all the better if it happens so; but if not, I will have a hostage. The Billeviches are very powerful in Jmud, for they are related to almost all the nobles. When I have one of them in my hands, and that one the eldest, the others will think twice before they undertake anything against me. Furthermore, behind them and your maiden are all that throng of Lauda men, who, if they were to go to the camp of the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, would be received by him with open arms. That is an important affair, so important that I think to begin with the Billeviches."

"In Volodyovski's squadron are Lauda men only."

"The guardians of your maiden. If that is true, begin by conveying her to Kyedani. Only listen: I will undertake to bring the sword-bearer to our side, but do you win the maiden as you can. When I bring over the sword-bearer, he will help you with the girl. If she is willing, I will have the wedding for you at once. If not, take her to the altar without ceremony. When the storm is over, all will be well. That is the best method with women. She will weep, she will despair, when they drag her to the altar; but next day she will think that the devil is not so terrible as they paint him, and the third day she will be glad. How did you part from her yesterday?"

“As if she had given me a slap in the face.”

“What did she say?”

“She called me a traitor. I was almost struck with paralysis.”

“Is she so furious? When you are her husband, tell her that a distaff is fitter for her than public affairs, and hold her tight.”

“Your highness does not know her. She must have a thing either virtue or vice; according to that she judges, and more than one man might envy her her mind. Before you can look around she has struck the point.”

“She has struck you to the heart. Try to strike her in like manner.”

“If God would grant that, your highness! Once I took her with armed hand, but afterward I vowed to do so no more. And something tells me that were I to take her by force to the altar it would not be to my heart, for I have promised her and myself not to use force again. If her uncle is convinced he will convince her, and then she will look on me differently. Now I will go to Billeviche and bring them both here, for I am afraid that she may take refuge in some cloister. But I tell your highness the pure truth, that though it is a great happiness for me to look on that maiden, I would rather attack the whole Swedish power than stand before her at present, for she does not know my honest intentions and holds me a traitor.”

“If you wish I will send another—Kharlamp or Myeleshko.”

“No, I would rather go myself; besides, Kharlamp is wounded.”

“That is better. I wanted to send Kharlamp yesterday to Volodyovski’s squadron to take command, and if need be force it to obedience; but he is an awkward fellow, and it turns out that he knows not how to hold his own men. I have no service for him. Go first for the sword-bearer and the maiden, and then to those squadrons. In an extreme case do not spare blood, for we must show the Swedes that we have power and are not afraid of rebellion. I will send the colonels away at once under escort; I hope that Pontus de la Gardie will consider this a proof of my sincerity. Myeleshko will take them. The beginning is difficult. I see that half Lithuania will rise against me.”

“That is nothing, your highness. Whoso has a clean conscience fears no man.”

“I thought that all the Radzivills at least would be on my side, but see what Prince Michael writes from Nyesvyej.”

Here the hetman gave Kmita the letter of Kazimir Michael. Pan Andrei cast his eyes over the letter.

“If I knew not the intentions of your highness I should think him right, and the most virtuous man in the world. God give him everything good! He speaks what he thinks.”

“Set out now!” said the prince, with a certain impatience.



## Chapter XVIII

Kmita, however, did not start that day, nor the following, for threatening news began to arrive at Kyedani from every side. Toward evening a courier rushed in with tidings that Mirski's squadron and Stankyeveich's also were marching to the hetman's residence, prepared to demand with armed hand their colonels; that there was terrible agitation among them, and that the officers had sent deputations to all the squadrons posted near Kyedani, and farther on to Podlyasye and Zabłudovo, with news of the hetman's treason, and with a summons to unite in defence of the country. From this it was easy to see that multitudes of nobles would fly to the insurgent squadrons and form an important force, which it would be difficult to resist in unfortified Kyedani, especially since not every regiment which Radzivill had at hand could be relied on with certainty.

This changed all the calculations and plans of the hetman; but instead of weakening, it seemed to rouse his courage still more. He determined to move at the head of his faithful Scottish regiments, cavalry and artillery, against the insurgents, and stamp out the fire at its birth. He knew that the soldiers without colonels were simply an unorganized throng, that would scatter from terror at the mere name of the hetman. He determined also not to spare blood, and to terrify with examples the whole army, all the nobles, nay, all Lithuania, so that it should not dare even to tremble beneath his iron hand. Everything that he had planned must be accomplished, and accomplished with his own forces.

That very day a number of foreign officers went to Prussia to make new enlistments, and Kyedani was swarming with armed men. The Scottish regiments, the foreign cavalry, the dragoons of Myeleshko and Kharlamp, with the "fire people" of Pan Korf, were preparing for the campaign. The prince's haiduks, his servants, and the citizens of Kyedani were obliged to increase the military forces; and it was determined to hasten the transfer of the prisoners to Birji, where it would be safer to keep them than in exposed Kyedani. The prince hoped with reason that to transport the colonels to a remote fortress, in which, according to treaty, there must be a Swedish garrison already, would destroy in the minds of the rebellious soldiers all hope of rescuing them, and deprive the rebellion itself of every basis. Pan Zagloba, the Skshetuskis, and Volodyovski were to share the lot of the others.

It was already evening when an officer with lantern in hand entered the cellar in which they were, and said—

"Prepare, gentlemen, to follow me."

"Whither?" asked Zagloba, with a voice of alarm.

"That will be seen. Hurry, hurry!"

"We come."

They went out. In the corridor Scottish soldiers armed with muskets surrounded them. Zagloba grew more and more alarmed.

"Still they would not lead us to death without a priest, without confession," whispered he in the ear of Volodyovski. Then he turned to the officer; "What is your rank, I pray?"

"What is my rank to you?"

"I have many relatives in Lithuania, and it is pleasant to know with whom one has to do."

“No time for inquiries, but he is a fool who is ashamed of his name. I am Roh Kovalski, if you wish to know.”

“That is an honorable stock! The men are good soldiers, the women are virtuous. My grandmother was a Kovalski, but she made an orphan of me before I came to the world. Are you from the Vyerush, or the Korab Kovalskis?”

“Do you want to examine me as a witness, in the night?”

“Oh, I do this because you are surely a relative of mine, for we have the same build. You have large bones and shoulders, just like mine, and I got my form from my grandmother.”

“Well, we can talk about that on the road. We shall have time!”

“On the road?” said Zagloba; and a great weight fell from his breast. He breathed like a bellows, and gained courage at once.

“Pan Michael,” whispered he, “did I not say that they would not cut our heads off?”

Meanwhile they had reached the courtyard. Night had fallen completely. In places red torches were burning or lanterns gleaming, throwing an uncertain light on groups of soldiers, horse and foot, of various arms. The whole court was crowded with troops. Clearly they were ready to march, for a great movement was manifest on all sides. Here and there in the darkness gleamed lances and gun-barrels; horses’ hoofs clattered on the pavement; single horsemen hurried between the squadrons—undoubtedly officers giving commands.

Kovalski stopped the convoy and the prisoners before an enormous wagon drawn by four horses, and having a box made as it were of ladders.

“Take your places, gentlemen,” said he.

“Someone is sitting there already,” said Zagloba, clambering up. “But our packs?”

“They are under the straw,” said Kovalski; “hurry, hurry!”

“But who are sitting here?” asked Zagloba, looking at dark figures stretched on the straw.

“Mirski, Stankievich, Oskyerko,” answered voices.

“Volodyovski, Yan and Stanislav Skshetuski, and Zagloba,” answered our knights.

“With the forehead, with the forehead!”

“With the forehead! We are travelling in honorable company. And whither are they taking us, do you know, gentlemen?”

“You are going to Birji,” said Kovalski.

When he said this, he gave the command. A convoy of fifty dragoons surrounded the wagon and moved on. The prisoners began to converse in a low voice.

“They will give us to the Swedes,” said Mirski; “I expected that.”

“I would rather sit among enemies than traitors,” answered Stankievich.

“And I would rather have a bullet in my forehead,” said Volodyovski, “than sit with folded arms during such an unfortunate war.”

“Do not blaspheme, Michael,” answered Zagloba, “for from the wagon, should a convenient moment come, you may give a plunge, and from Birji also; but it is hard to escape with a bullet in the forehead. I foresaw that that traitor would not dare to put bullets in our heads.”

“Is there a thing which Radzivill does not dare to do?” asked Mirski. “It is clear that you have come from afar and know him not. On whomsoever he has sworn vengeance, that man is as good as in the grave; and I remember no instance of his forgiving anyone the slightest offence.”

“But still he did not dare to raise hands on me!” answered Zagloba. “Who knows if you have not to thank me for your lives?”

“And how?”

“Because the Khan loves me wonderfully, for I discovered a conspiracy against his life when I was a captive in the Crimea. And our gracious king, Yan Kazimir, loves me too. Radzivill, the son of a such a one, did not wish to break with two such potentates; for they might reach him, even in Lithuania.”

“Ah! what are you saying? He hates the king as the devil does holy water, and would be still more envenomed against you did he know you to be a confidant of the king,” observed Stankyeovich.

“I think this,” said Oskyerko. “To avoid odium the hetman would not stain himself with our blood, but I could swear that this officer is bearing an order to the Swedes in Birji to shoot us on the spot.”

“Oi!” exclaimed Zagloba.

They were silent for a moment; meanwhile the wagon had rolled into the square of Kyedani. The town was sleeping, there were no lights in the windows, only the dogs before the houses snapped angrily at the passing party.

“Well,” said Zagloba, “we have gained time anyhow, and perhaps a chance will serve us, and some stratagem may come to my head.” Here he turned to the old colonels: “Gentlemen, you know me little, but ask my comrades about the hot places in which I have been, and from which I have always escaped. Tell me, what kind of officer is this who commands the convoy? Could he be persuaded not to adhere to a traitor, but take the side of his country and join us?”

“That is Roh Kovalski of the Korab Kovalskis,” answered Oskyerko.

“I know him. You might as well persuade his horse as him; for as God is bountiful I know not which is more stupid.”

“But why did they make him officer?”

“He carried the banner with Myeleshko’s dragoons; for this no wit is needed. But he was made officer because his fist pleased the prince; for he breaks horseshoes, wrestles with tame bears, and the man has not yet been discovered whom he cannot bring to the earth.”

“Has he such strength?”

“That he has such strength is true; but were his superior to order him to batter down a wall with his head he would fall to battering it without a moment’s delay. He is ordered to take us to Birji, and he will take us, even if the earth had to sink.”

“Pon my word,” said Zagloba, who listened to this conversation with great attention, “he is a resolute fellow.”

“Yes, but with him resolution consists in stupidity alone. When he has time, and is not eating, he is sleeping. It is an astonishing thing, which you will not believe; but once he slept forty-eight hours in the barracks, and yawned when they dragged him from the plank bed.”

“This officer pleases me greatly,” said Zagloba, “for I always like to know with whom I have to do.”

When he had said this he turned to Kovalski. “But come this way, please!” cried he, in a patronizing tone.

“What is it?” asked Kovalski, turning his horse.

“Have you *gorailka*?”

“I have.”

“Give it!”

“How give it?”

“You know, gracious Kovalski, if it were not permitted you would have had an order not to give it; but since you have not an order, give it.”

“Ah,” said Kovalski, astonished, “as I live! but that is like forcing.”

“Forcing or not forcing, it is permitted you; and it is proper to assist a blood relative and an older man, who, if he had married your mother, might have been your father as easily as wink.”

“What relative are you of mine?”

“I am, for there are two stocks of Kovalskis—they who use the seal of Vyerush and have a goat painted on their shield, with upraised hind leg; and they who have on their shield the ship in which their ancestor Kovalski sailed from England across the sea to Poland; and these are my relatives, through my grandmother, and this is why I, too, have the ship on my shield.”

“As God lives! you are my relative.”

“Are you a Korab (ship)?”

“A Korab.”

“My own blood, as God is dear to me!” cried Zagloba. “It is lucky that we have met, for in very truth I have come here to Lithuania to see the Kovalskis; and though I am in bonds while you are on horseback and in freedom I would gladly embrace you, for what is one’s own is one’s own.”

“How can I help you? They commanded me to take you to Birji; I will take you. Blood is blood, but service is service.”

“Call me Uncle,” said Zagloba.

“Here is *gorailka* for you, Uncle,” said Kovalski; “I can do that much.”

Zagloba took the flask gladly, and drank to his liking. Soon a pleasant warmth spread through his members. It began to grow clear in his brain, and his mind became bright.

“Come down from the horse,” said he to Kovalski, “and sit here a short time in the wagon; let us talk, for I should like to have you say something about our family. I respect service, but this too is permitted.”

Kovalski did not answer for a while.

“This was not forbidden,” said he, at last.

Soon after he was sitting at the side of Zagloba, and stretched himself gladly on the straw with which the wagon was filled.

Zagloba embraced him heartily.

“How is the health of thy old father?—God help me—I’ve forgotten his name.”

“Roh, also.”

“That’s right, that’s right. Roh begat Roh—that is according to command. You must call your son Roh as well, so that every hoopoo may have his topknot. But are you married?”

“Of course! I am Kovalski, and here is Pani Kovalski; I don’t want any other.”

So saying, the young officer raised to the eyes of Zagloba the hilt of a heavy dragoon sabre, and repeated, “I don’t want any other.”

“Proper!” said Zagloba. “Roh, son of Roh, you are greatly pleasing to me. A soldier is best accommodated when he has no wife save such a one, and I will say more—she will be a widow before you will be a widower. The only pity is that you cannot have young Rohs by her, for I see that you are a keen cavalier, and it would be a sin were such a stock to die out.”

“Oh, no fear of that!” said Kovalski; “there are six brothers of us.”

“And all Rohs?”

“Does Uncle know that if not the first, then the second, has to be Roh?—for Roh is our special patron.”

“Let us drink again.”

“Very well.”

Zagloba raised the bottle; he did not drink all, however, but gave it to the officer and said, “To the bottom, to the bottom! It is a pity that I cannot see you,” continued he. “The night is so dark that you might hit a man in the face, you would not know your own fingers by sight. But hear me, Roh, where was that army going from Kyedani when we drove out?”

“Against the insurgents.”

“The Most High God knows who is insurgent—you or they.”

“I an insurgent? How could that be? I do what my hetman commands.”

“But the hetman does not do what the king commands, for surely the king did not command him to join the Swedes. Would you not rather slay the Swedes than give me, your relative, into their hands?”

“I might; but for every command there is obedience.”

“And Pani Kovalski would rather slay Swedes; I know her. Speaking between us, the hetman has rebelled against the king and the country. Don’t say this to anyone, but it is so; and those who serve him are rebels too.”

“It is not proper for me to hear this. The hetman has his superior, and I have mine; what is his own belongs to the hetman, and God would punish me if I were to oppose him. That is an unheard of thing.”

“You speak honestly; but think, Roh, if you were to happen into the hands of those insurgents, I should be free, and it would be no fault of yours, for *nec Hercules contra plures!*—I do not know where those squadrons are, but you must know, and you see we might turn toward them a little.”

“How is that?”

“As if we went by chance to them? It would not be your fault if they rescued us. You would not have me on your conscience—and to have a relative on a man’s conscience, believe me, is a terrible burden.”

“Oh Uncle, what are you saying! As God lives, I will leave the wagon and sit on my horse. It is not I who will have uncle on my conscience, but the hetman. While I live, nothing will come of this talk.”

“Nothing is nothing!” said Zagloba; “I prefer that you speak sincerely, though I was your uncle before Radzivill was your hetman. And do you know, Roh, what an uncle is?”

“An uncle is an uncle.”

“You have calculated very adroitly; but when a man has no father, the Scriptures say that he must obey his uncle. The power of an uncle is as that of a father, which it is a sin to resist. For consider even this, that whoever marries may easily become a father; but in your uncle flows the same blood as in your mother. I am not in truth the brother of your mother, but my grandmother must have been your grandmother’s aunt. Know then that the authority of several generations rests in me; for like everything else in the world we are mortal, therefore authority passes from one of us to another, and neither the hetman nor the king can ignore it, nor force anyone to oppose it. It is sacred! Has the full hetman or even the grand hetman the right to command not merely a noble or an officer, but any kind of camp-follower, to rise up against his father, his mother, his grandfather, or his blind old grandmother? Answer me that, Roh. Has he the right?”

“What?” asked Kovalski, with a sleepy voice.

“Against his blind old grandmother!” repeated Zagloba. “Who in that case would be willing to marry and beget children, or wait for grandchildren? Answer me that, Roh.”

“I am Kovalski, and this is Pani Kovalski,” said the still sleepier officer.

“If it is your wish, let it be so,” answered Zagloba. “Better indeed that you have no children, there will be fewer fools to storm around in the world. Is it not true, Roh?”

Zagloba held down his ear, but heard nothing—no answer now.

“Roh! Roh!” called he, in a low voice.

Kovalski was sleeping like a dead man.

“Are you sleeping?” muttered Zagloba. “Wait a bit—I will take this iron pot off your head, for it is of no use to you. This cloak is too tight at the throat; it might cause apoplexy. What sort of relative were I, did I not save you?”

Here Zagloba’s hands began to move lightly about the head and neck of Kovalski. In the wagon all were in a deep sleep; the soldiers too nodded in the saddles; some in front were singing in a low voice, while looking out the road carefully—for the night, though not rainy, was exceedingly dark.

After a time, however, the soldier leading Kovalski’s horse behind the wagon saw in the darkness the cloak and bright helmet of his officer. Kovalski, without stopping the wagon, slipped out and nodded to give him the horse. In a moment he mounted.

“Pan Commandant, where shall we stop to feed?” asked the sergeant, approaching him.

Pan Roh gave no word in reply, but moving forward passed slowly those riding in front and vanished in the darkness. Soon there came to the ears of the dragoons the quick tramp of a horse.

“The commandant has gone at a gallop!” said they to one another. “Surely he wants to look around to see if there is some public house near by. It is time to feed the horses—time.”

A half-hour passed, an hour, two hours, and Pan Kovalski seemed to be ahead all the time, for somehow he was not visible. The horses grew very tired, especially those drawing the wagon, and began to drag on slowly. The stars were leaving the sky.

“Gallop to the commandant,” said the sergeant; “tell him the horses are barely able to drag along, and the wagon horses are tired.”

One of the soldiers moved ahead, but after an hour returned alone.

“There is neither trace nor ashes of the commandant,” said the soldier; “he must have ridden five miles ahead.”

The soldiers began to grumble.

“It is well for him he slept through the day, and just now on the wagon; but do thou, soldier, pound through the night with the last breath of thy horse and thyself!”

“There is an inn eighty rods distant,” said the soldier who had ridden ahead. “I thought to find him there, but no! I listened, trying to hear the horse—Nothing to be heard. The devil knows where he is!”

“We will stop at the inn anyhow,” said the sergeant. “We must let the horses rest.”

In fact they halted before the inn. The soldiers dismounted. Some went to knock at the door; others untied bundles of hay, hanging at the saddles, to feed the horses even from their hands.

The prisoners woke when the movement of the wagon ceased.

“But where are we going?” asked old Stankyeovich.

“I cannot tell in the night,” answered Volodyovski, “especially as we are not going to Upita.”

“But does not the load from Kyedani to Birji lie through Upita?” asked Pan Yan.

“It does. But in Upita is my squadron, which clearly the prince fears may resist, therefore he ordered Kovalski to take another road. Just outside Kyedani we turned to Dalnovo and Kroki; from the second place we shall go surely through Beysagoli and Shavli. It is a little out of the way, but Upita and Ponyevyej will remain at the right. On this road there are no squadrons, for all that were there were brought to Kyedani, so as to have them at hand.”

“But Pan Zagloba,” said Stankyeovich, “instead of thinking of stratagems, as he promised, is sleeping sweetly, and snoring.”

“Let him sleep. It is clear that he was wearied from talk with that stupid commandant, relationship with whom he confessed. It is evident that he wanted to capture him, but with no result. Whoso would not leave Radzivill for his country, will surely not leave him for a distant relative.”

“Are they really relatives?” asked Oskyerko.

“They? They are as much relatives as you and I,” answered Volodyovski. “When Zagloba spoke of their common escutcheon, I knew it was not true, for I know well that his is called *wczele* (in the forehead).”

“And where is Pan Kovalski?”

“He must be with the soldiers or in the inn.”

“I should like to ask him to let me sit on some soldier’s horse,” said Mirski, “for my bones are benumbed.”

“He will not grant that,” said Stankyeovich; “for the night is dark, you could easily put spurs to the horse, and be off. Who could overtake?”

“I will give him my word of honor not to attempt escape; besides, dawn will begin directly.”

“Soldier, where is the commandant?” asked Volodyovski of a dragoon standing near.

“Who knows?”

“How, who knows? When I ask thee to call him, call him.”

“We know not ourselves, Colonel, where he is,” said the dragoon. “Since he crawled out of the wagon and rode ahead, he has not come back.”

“Tell him when he comes that we would speak with him.”

“As the Colonel wishes,” answered the soldier.

The prisoners were silent. From time to time only loud yawning was heard on the wagon; the horses were chewing hay at one side. The soldiers around the wagon, resting on the saddles, were dozing; others talked in a low voice, or refreshed themselves each with what he had, for it turned out that the inn was deserted and tenantless.

The night had begun to grow pale. On its eastern side the dark background of the sky was becoming slightly gray; the stars, going out gradually, twinkled with an uncertain, failing light. Then the roof of the inn became hoary; the trees growing near it were edged with silver. The horses and men seemed to rise out of the shade. After a while it was possible to distinguish faces, and the yellow color of the cloaks. The helmets began to reflect the morning gleam.

Volodyovski opened his arms and stretched himself, yawning from ear to ear; then he looked at the sleeping Zagloba. All at once he threw back his arms and shouted—

“May the bullets strike him! In God’s name! Gracious gentlemen, look here!”

“What has happened?” asked the colonels, opening their eyes.

“Look here, look here!” said Volodyovski, pointing at the sleeping form.

The prisoners turned their glances in the direction indicated, and amazement was reflected on every face. Under the burka, and in the cap of Zagloba, slept, with the sleep of the just, Pan Roh Kovalski; but Zagloba was not in the wagon.

“He has escaped, as God is dear to me!” said the astonished Mirski, looking around on every side, as if he did not yet believe his own eyes.

“Oh, he is a finished rogue! May the hangman—” cried Stankyeovich.

“He took the helmet and yellow cloak of that fool, and escaped on his horse.”

“Vanished as if he had dropped into water.”

“He said he would get away by stratagem.”

“They will never see him again!”



“Gentlemen,” said Volodyovski, with delight, “you know not that man; and I swear to you today that he will rescue us yet—I know not how, when, with what means—but I swear that he will.”

“God grant it! One cannot believe his eyesight,” said Pan Stanislaw.

The soldiers now saw what had happened. An uproar rose among them. One crowded ahead of the other to the wagon, stared at their commandant, dressed in a camel’s hair burka and lynx-skin cap, and sleeping soundly.

The sergeant began to shake him without ceremony. “Commandant! commandant!”

“I am Kovalski, and this is Pani Kovalski,” muttered Roh.

“Commandant, a prisoner has fled.”

Kovalski sat up in the wagon and opened his eyes. “What?”

“A prisoner has fled—that bulky noble who was talking with the commandant.”

The officer came to his senses. “Impossible!” cried he, with terrified voice. “How was it? What happened? How did he escape?”

“In the helmet and cloak of the commandant; the soldiers did not know him, the night was dark.”

“Where is my horse?” cried Kovalski.

“The horse is gone. The noble fled on him.”

“On my horse?”

“Yes.”

Kovalski seized himself by the head. “Jesus of Nazareth! King of the Jews!”

After a while he shouted, “Give here that dog-faith, that son of a such a one who gave him the horse!”

“Pan Commandant, the soldier is not to blame. The night was dark, you might have struck a man in the face, and he took your helmet and cloak; rode near me, and I did not know him. If your grace had not sat in the wagon, he could not have done it.”

“Kill me, kill me!” cried the unfortunate officer.

“What is to be done?”

“Kill him, catch him!”

“That cannot be done in any way. He is on your horse—the best horse; ours are terribly road-weary. He fled at the first cockcrow; we cannot overtake him.”

“Hunt for a wind in the field!” said Stankyeovich.

Kovalski, in a rage, turned to the prisoners. “You helped him to escape! I will—”

Here he balled his gigantic fist, and began to approach them. Then Mirski said threateningly, “Shout not, and remember that you are speaking to superiors.”

Kovalski quivered, and straightened himself involuntarily; for really his dignity in presence of such a Mirski was nothing, and all his prisoners were a head above him in rank and significance.

Stankyevich added: "If you have been commanded to take us, take us; but raise no voice, for tomorrow you may be under the command of any one of us."

Kovalski stared and was silent.

"There is no doubt you have fooled away your head, Pan Roh," said Oskyerko. "To say, as you do, that we helped him is nonsense; for, to begin with, we were sleeping, just as you were, and secondly, each one would have helped himself rather than another. But you have fooled away your head. There is no one to blame here but you. I would be the first to order you shot, since being an officer you fell asleep like a badger, and allowed a prisoner to escape in your own helmet and cloak, nay, on your own horse—an unheard of thing, such as has not happened since the beginning of the world."

"An old fox has fooled the young man!" said Mirski. "Jesus, Mary! I have not even the sabre!" cried Kovalski.

"Will not the sabre be of use to him?" asked Stankyevich, laughing. "Pan Oskyerko has said well—you have fooled away your head. You must have had pistols in the holsters too?"

"I had!" said Kovalski, as if out of his mind.

Suddenly he seized his head with both hands: "And the letter of the prince to the commandant of Birji! What shall I, unfortunate man, do now? I am lost for the ages! God give me a bullet in the head!"

"That will not miss you," said Mirski, seriously. "How will you take us to Birji now? What will happen if you say that you have brought us as prisoners, and we, superior in rank, say that you are to be thrown into the dungeon? Whom will they believe? Do you think that the Swedish commandant will detain us for the reason simply that Pan Kovalski will beg him to do so? He will rather believe us, and confine you under ground."

"I am lost!" groaned Kovalski.

"Nonsense!" said Volodyovski.

"What is to be done, Pan Commandant?" asked the sergeant.

"Go to all the devils!" roared Kovalski. "Do I know what to do, where to go? God give thunderbolts to slay thee!"

"Go on, go on to Birji; you will see!" said Mirski.

"Turn back to Kyedani," cried Kovalski.

"If they will not plant you at the wall there and shoot you, may bristles cover me!" said Oskyerko. "How will you appear before the hetman's face? *Tfu!* Infamy awaits you, and a bullet in the head—nothing more."

"For I deserve nothing more!" cried the unfortunate man.

"Nonsense, Pan Roh! We alone can save you," said Oskyerko. "You know that we were ready to go to the end of the world with the hetman, and perish. We have shed our blood more than once for the country, and always shed it willingly; but the hetman betrayed the country—he gave this land to the enemy; he joined with them against our gracious lord, to whom we swore allegiance. Do you think that it came easy to soldiers like us to refuse obedience to a superior, to act against discipline, to resist our own hetman? But whoso today is with the hetman is against the king. Whoso today is with the hetman is a traitor to the king and the Commonwealth. Therefore we cast down our batons at the feet of the hetman; for virtue, duty, faith, and honor so commanded. And who did it? Was it I alone? No! Pan

Mirski, Pan Stankyevich, the best soldiers, the worthiest men. Who remained with the hetman? Disturbers. But why do you not follow men better, wiser, and older than yourself? Do you wish to bring infamy on your name, and be trumpeted forth as a traitor? Enter into yourself; ask your conscience what you should do—remain a traitor with Radzivill, the traitor, or go with us, who wish to give our last breath for the country, shed the last drop of our blood for it. Would the ground had swallowed us before we refused obedience to the hetman; but would that our souls never escaped hell, if we were to betray the king and the country for the profit of Radzivill!”

This discourse seemed to make a great impression on Kovalski. He stared, opened his mouth, and after a while said, “What do you wish of me, gentlemen?”

“To go with us to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, who will fight for the country.”

“But when I have an order to take you to Birji?”

“Talk with him,” said Mirski.

“We want you to disobey the command—to leave the hetman, and go with us; do you understand?” said Oskyerko, impatiently.

“Say what you like, but nothing will come of that. I am a soldier; what would I deserve if I left the hetman? It is not my mind, but his; not my will, but his. When he sins he will answer for himself and for me, and it is my dog-duty to obey him. I am a simple man; what I do not effect with my hand, I cannot with my head. But I know this—it is my duty to obey, and that is the end of it.”

“Do what you like!” cried Mirski.

“It is my fault,” continued Roh, “that I commanded to return to Kyedani, for I was ordered to go to Birji; but I became a fool through that noble, who, though a relative, did to me what a stranger would not have done. I wish he were not a relative, but he is. He had not God in his heart to take my horse, deprive me of the favor of the prince, and bring punishment on my shoulders. That is the kind of relative he is! But, gentlemen, you will go to Birji, let come what may afterward.”

“A pity to lose time, Pan Oskyerko,” said Volodyovski.

“Turn again toward Birji!” cried Kovalski to the dragoons.

They turned toward Birji a second time. Pan Roh ordered one of the dragoons to sit in the wagon; then he mounted that man’s horse, and rode by the side of the prisoners, repeating for a time, “A relative, and to do such a thing!”

The prisoners, hearing this, though not certain of their fate and seriously troubled, could not refrain from laughter; at last Volodyovski said, “Comfort yourself, Pan Kovalski, for that man has hung on a hook persons not such as you. He surpassed Hmelnitski himself in cunning, and in stratagems no one can equal him.”

Kovalski said nothing, but fell away a little from the wagon, fearing ridicule. He was shamefaced in presence of the prisoners and of his own soldiers, and was so troubled that he was pitiful to look at.

Meanwhile the colonels were talking of Zagloba, and of his marvellous escape.

“In truth, ’tis astonishing,” said Volodyovski, “that there are not in the world straits, out of which that man could not save himself. When strength and bravery are of no avail, he escapes through stratagem. Other men lose courage when death is hanging over their heads, or they commit themselves to God, waiting for what will happen; but he begins straightway to work

with his head, and always thinks out something. He is as brave in need as Achilles, but he prefers to follow Ulysses.”

“I would not be his guard, though he were bound with chains,” said Stankyeovich; “for it is nothing that he will escape, but besides, he will expose a man to ridicule.”

“Of course!” said Pan Michael. “Now he will laugh at Kovalski to the end of his life; and God guard a man from coming under his tongue, for there is not a sharper in the Commonwealth. And when he begins, as is his custom, to color his speech, then people are bursting from laughter.”

“But you say that in need he can use his sabre?” asked Stankyeovich.

“Of course! He slew Burlei at Zbaraj, in view of the whole army.”

“Well, God save us!” cried Stankyeovich, “I have never seen such a man.”

“He has rendered us a great service by his escape,” said Oskyerko, “for he took the letters of the hetman, and who knows what was written in them against us? I do not think that the Swedish commandant at Birji will give ear to us, and not to Kovalski. That will not be, for we come as prisoners, and he as commanding the convoy. But certainly they will not know what to do with us. In every case they will not cut off our heads, and that is the main thing.”

“I spoke as I did merely to confuse Kovalski completely,” said Mirski; “but that they will not cut off our heads, as you say, is no great consolation, God knows. Everything so combines that it would be better not to live; now another war, a civil war, will break out, that will be final ruin. What reason have I, old man, to look on these things?”

“Or I, who remember other times?” said Stankyeovich.

“You should not say that, gentlemen; for the mercy of God is greater than the rage of men, and his almighty hand may snatch us from the whirlpool precisely when we least expect.”

“Holy are these words,” said Pan Yan. “And to us, men from under the standard of the late Prince Yeremi, it is grievous to live now, for we were accustomed to victory; and still one likes to serve the country, if the Lord God would give at last a leader who is not a traitor, but one whom a man might trust with his whole heart and soul.”

“Oi! true, true!” said Pan Michael. “A man would fight night and day.”

“But I tell you, gentlemen, that this is the greatest despair,” said Mirski; “for everyone wanders as in darkness, and asks himself what to do, and uncertainty stifles him, like a nightmare. I know not how it is with you, but mental disquiet is rending me. And when I think that I cast my baton at the feet of the hetman, that I was the cause of resistance and mutiny, the remnants of my gray hair stand on my head from terror. So it is! But what is to be done in presence of open treason? Happy are they who do not need to give themselves such questions, and seek for answers in their souls.”

“A leader, a leader; may the merciful Lord give a leader!” said Stankyeovich, raising his eyes toward heaven.

“Do not men say that the *voevoda* of Vityebsk is a wonderfully honest man?” asked Pan Stanislav.

“They do,” replied Mirski; “but he has not the baton of grand or full hetman, and before the king clothes him with the office of hetman, he can act only on his own account. He will not go to the Swedes, or anywhere else; that is certain.”

“Pan Gosyevski, full hetman, is a captive in Kyedani.”

“Yes, for he is an honest man,” said Oskyerko. “When news of that came to me, I was distressed, and had an immediate foreboding of evil.”

Pan Michael fell to thinking, and said after a while: “I was in Warsaw once, and went to the king’s palace. Our gracious lord, since he loves soldiers and had praised me for the Berestechko affair, knew me at once and commanded me to come to dinner. At this dinner I saw Pan Charnyetski, as the dinner was specially for him. The king grew a little merry from wine, pressed Charnyetski’s head, and said at last: ‘Even should the time come in which all will desert me, you will be faithful.’ With my own ears I heard that said, as it were with prophetic spirit. Pan Charnyetski, from emotion, was hardly able to speak. He only repeated: ‘To the last breath! to the last breath!’ And then the king shed tears—”

“Who knows if those were not prophetic words, for the time of disaster had already come,” said Mirski.

“Charnyetski is a great soldier,” replied Stankyeovich. “There are no lips in the Commonwealth which do not repeat his name.”

“They say,” said Pan Yan, “that the Tartars, who are aiding Revera Pototski against Hmelnitski, are so much in love with Charnyetski that they will not go where he is not with them.”

“That is real truth,” answered Oskyerko. “I heard that told in Kyedani before the hetman. We were all praising at that time Charnyetski wonderfully, but it was not to the taste of Radzivill, for he frowned and said, ‘He is quartermaster of the king, but he might be under-starosta with me at Tykotsin.’”

“Envy, it is clear, was gnawing him.”

“It is a well-known fact that an apostate cannot endure the lustre of virtue.”

Thus did the captive colonels converse; then their speech was turned again to Zagloba. Volodyovski assured them that aid might be looked for from him, for he was not the man to leave his friends in misfortune.

“I am certain,” said he, “that he has fled to Upita, where he will find my men, if they are not yet defeated, or taken by force to Kyedani. With them he will come to rescue us, unless they refuse to come, which I do not expect; for in the squadron are Lauda men chiefly, and they are fond of me.”

“But they are old clients of Radzivill,” remarked Mirski.

“True; but when they hear of the surrender of Lithuania to the Swedes, the imprisonment of the full hetman and Pan Yudytski, of you and me, it will turn their hearts away greatly from Radzivill. Those are honest nobles; Pan Zagloba will neglect nothing to paint the hetman with soot, and he can do that better than any of us.”

“True,” said Pan Stanislav; “but meanwhile we shall be in Birji.”

“That cannot be, for we are making a circle to avoid Upita, and from Upita the road is direct as if cut with a sickle. Even were they to start a day later, or two days, they could still be in Birji before us, and block our way. We are only going to Shavli now, and from there we shall go to Birji directly; but you must know that it is nearer from Upita to Birji than to Shavli.”

“As I live, it is nearer, and the road is better,” said Mirski, “for it is a highroad.”

“There it is! And we are not yet in Shavli.”

Only in the evening did they see the hill called Saltuves-Kalnas, at the foot of which Shavli stands. On the road they saw that disquiet was reigning in all the villages and towns through which they passed. Evidently news of the hetman's desertion to the Swedes had run through all Jmud. Here and there the people asked the soldiers if it were true that the country was to be occupied by Swedes; here and there crowds of peasants were leaving the villages with their wives, children, cattle, and effects, and going to the depths of the forest, with which the whole region was thickly covered. In places the aspect of the peasants was almost threatening, for evidently the dragoons were taken for Swedes. In villages inhabited by nobles they were asked directly who they were and where they were going; and when Kovalski, instead of answering, commanded them to leave the road, it came to shouts and threats to such a degree that muskets levelled for firing were barely sufficient to open a passage.

The highway leading from Kovno through Shavli to Mitava was covered with wagons and carriages, in which were the wives and children of nobles wishing to take refuge from war in estates in Courland. In Shavli itself, which was an appanage of the king, there were no private squadrons of the hetman, or men of the quota; but here the captive colonels saw for the first time a Swedish detachment, composed of twenty-five knights, who had come on a reconnoissance from Birji. Crowds of Jews and citizens were staring at the strangers. The colonels too gazed at them with curiosity, especially Volodyovski, who had never before seen Swedes; hence he examined them eagerly with the desiring eyes with which a wolf looks at a flock of sheep.

Pan Kovalski entered into communication with the officer, declared who he was, where he was going, whom he was conveying, and requested him to join his men to the dragoons, for greater safety on the road. But the officer answered that he had an order to push as far as possible into the depth of the country, so as to be convinced of its condition, therefore he could not return to Birji; but he gave assurance that the road was safe everywhere, for small detachments, sent out from Birji, were moving in all directions—some were sent even as far as Kyedani. After he had rested till midnight, and fed the horses, which were very tired, Pan Roh moved on his way, turning from Shavli to the east through Yohavishkyele and Posvut toward Birji, so as to reach the direct highway from Upita and Ponyevyej.

"If Zagloba comes to our rescue," said Volodyovski, about daylight, "it will be easiest to take this road, for he could start right at Upita."

"Maybe he is lurking here somewhere," said Pan Stanislav.

"I had hope till I saw the Swedes," said Stankyeovich, "but now it strikes me that there is no help for us."

"Zagloba has a head to avoid them or to fool them; and he will be able to do so."

"But he does not know the country."

"The Lauda people know it; for some of them take hemp, wainscots, and pitch to Riga, and there is no lack of such men in my squadron."

"The Swedes must have occupied all the places about Birji."

"Fine soldiers, those whom we saw in Shavli, I must confess," said the little knight, "man for man splendid! Did you notice what well-fed horses they had?"

"Those are Livland horses, very powerful," said Mirski. "Our hussar and armored officers send to Livland for horses, since our beasts are small."

“Tell me of the Swedish infantry!” put in Stankyevich. “Though the cavalry makes a splendid appearance, it is inferior. Whenever one of our squadrons, and especially of the important divisions, rushed on their cavalry, the Swedes did not hold out while you could say ‘Our Father’ twice.”

“You have tried them in old times,” said the little knight, “but I have no chance of testing them. I tell you, gentlemen, when I saw them now in Shavli, with their beards yellow as flax, ants began to crawl over my fingers. *Ei*, the soul would to paradise; but sit thou here in the wagon, and sigh.”

The colonels were silent; but evidently not Pan Michael alone was burning with such friendly feeling toward the Swedes, for soon the following conversation of the dragoons surrounding the wagon came to the ears of the prisoners.

“Did you see those pagan dog-faiths?” said one soldier; “we were to fight with them, but now we must clean their horses.”

“May the bright thunderbolts crush them!” muttered another dragoon.

“He quiet, the Swede will teach thee manners with a broom over thy head!”

“Or I him.”

“Thou art a fool! Not such as thou wish to rush at them; thou seest what has happened.”

“We are taking the greatest knights to them, as if into the dog’s mouth. They, the sons of Jew mothers, will abuse these knights.”

“Without a Jew you cannot talk with such trash. The commandant in Shavli had to send for a Jew right away.”

“May the plague kill them!”

Here the first soldier lowered his voice somewhat and said, “They say the best soldiers do not wish to fight against their own king.”

“Of course not! Did you not see the Hungarians, or how the hetman used troops against those resisting. It is unknown yet what will happen. Some of our dragoons too took part with the Hungarians; these men very likely are shot by this time.”

“That is a reward for faithful service!”

“To the devil with such work! A Jew’s service!”

“Halt!” cried, on a sudden, Kovalski riding in front.

“May a bullet halt in thy snout!” muttered a voice near the wagon.

“Who is there?” asked the soldiers of one another.

“Halt!” came a second command.

The wagon stopped. The soldiers held in their horses. The day was pleasant, clear. The sun had risen, and by its rays was to be seen, on the highway ahead, clusters of dust rising as if herds or troops were coming.

Soon the dust began to shine, as if someone were scattering sparks in the bunches of it; and lights glittered each moment more clearly, like burning candles surrounded with smoke.

“Those are spears gleaming!” cried Pan Michael.

“Troops are coming.”

“Surely some Swedish detachment!”

“With them only infantry have spears; but there the dust is moving quickly. That is cavalry—our men!”

“Ours, ours!” repeated the dragoons.

“Form!” thundered Pan Roh.

The dragoons surrounded the wagon in a circle. Pan Volodyovski had flame in his eyes.

“Those are my Lauda men with Zagloba! It cannot be otherwise!”

Now only forty rods divided those approaching from the wagon, and the distance decreased every instant, for the coming detachment was moving at a trot. Finally, from out the dust pushed a strong body of troops moving in good order, as if to attack. In a moment they were nearer. In the first rank, a little from the right side, moved, under a *bunchuck*, some powerful man with a baton in his hand. Scarcely had Volodyovski put eye on him when he cried—

“Pan Zagloba! As I love God, Pan Zagloba!”

A smile brightened the face of Pan Yan. “It is he, and no one else, and under a *bunchuck*! He has already created himself hetman. I should have known him by that whim anywhere. That man will die as he was born.”

“May the Lord God give him health!” said Oskyerko.

Then he put his hands around his mouth and began to call, “Gracious Kovalski! your relative is coming to visit you!”

But Pan Roh did not hear, for he was just forming his dragoons. And it is only justice to declare that though he had a handful of men, and on the other side a whole squadron was rolling against him, he was not confused, nor did he lose courage. He placed the dragoons in two ranks in front of the wagon; but the others stretched out and approached in a half-circle, Tartar fashion, from both sides of the field. But evidently they wished to parley, for they began to wave a flag and cry—

“Stop! stop!”

“Forward!” cried Kovalski.

“Yield!” was cried from the road.

“Fire!” commanded in answer Kovalski.

Dull silence followed—not a single dragoon fired. Pan Roh was dumb for a moment; then he rushed as if wild on his own dragoons.

“Fire, dog-faiths!” roared he, with a terrible voice; and with one blow of his fist he knocked from his horse the nearest soldier.

Others began to draw back before the rage of the man, but no one obeyed the command. All at once they scattered, like a flock of frightened partridges, in the twinkling of an eye.

“Still I would have those soldiers shot!” muttered Mirski.

Meanwhile Kovalski, seeing that his own men had left him, turned his horse to the attacking ranks.

“For me death is there!” cried he, with a terrible voice.

And he sprang at them, like a thunderbolt. But before he had passed half the distance a shot rattled from Zagloba’s ranks.



Pan Roh's horse thrust his nose into the dust and fell, throwing his rider. At the same moment a soldier of Volodyovski's squadron pushed forward like lightning, and caught by the shoulder the officer rising from the ground.

"That is Yuzva Butrym," cried Volodyovski, "Yuzva Footless!"

Pan Roh in his turn seized Yuzva by the skirt, and the skirt remained in his hand; then they struggled like two enraged falcons, for both had gigantic strength. Butrym's stirrup broke; he fell to the ground and turned over, but he did not let Pan Roh go, and both formed as it were one ball, which rolled along the road.

Others ran up. About twenty hands seized Kovalski, who tore and dragged like a bear in a net; he hurled men around, as a wild boar hurls dogs; he raised himself again and did not give up the battle. He wanted to die, but he heard tens of voices repeating the words, "Take him alive! take him alive!" At last his strength forsook him, and he fainted.

Meanwhile Zagloba was at the wagon, or rather on the wagon, and had seized in his embraces Pan Yan, the little knight, Mirski, Stankyeovich, and Oskyerko, calling with panting voice—

"Ha! Zagloba was good for something! Now we will give it to that Radzivill. We are free gentlemen, and we have men. We'll go straightway to ravage his property. Well! did the stratagem succeed? I should have got you out—if not in one way, in another. I am so blown that I can barely draw breath. Now for Radzivill's property, gracious gentlemen, now for Radzivill's property! You do not know yet as much of Radzivill as I do!"

Further outbursts were interrupted by the Lauda men, who ran one after another to greet their colonel. The Butryms, the Smoky Gostsyeviches, the Domasheviches, the Stakyans, the Gashtovts, crowded around the wagon, and powerful throats bellowed continually—

"Vivat! vivat!"

"Gracious gentlemen," said the little knight when it grew somewhat quieter, "most beloved comrades, I thank you for your love. It is a terrible thing that we must refuse obedience to the hetman, and raise hands against him; but since his treason is clear, we cannot do otherwise. We will not desert our country and our gracious king—Vivat Johannes Casimirus Rex!"

"Vivat Johannes Casimirus Rex!" repeated three hundred voices.

"Attack the property of Radzivill!" shouted Zagloba, "empty his larders and cellars!"

"Horses for us!" cried the little knight.

They galloped for horses.

Then Zagloba said, "Pan Michael, I was hetman over these people in place of you, and I acknowledge willingly that they acted with manfulness; but as you are now free, I yield the command into your hands."

"Let your grace take command, as superior in rank," said Pan Michael, turning to Mirski.

"I do not think of it, and why should I?" said the old colonel.

"Then perhaps Pan Stankyeovich?"

"I have my own squadron, and I will not take his from a stranger. Remain in command; ceremony is chopped straw, satisfaction is oats! You know the men, they know you, and they will fight better under you."

"Do so, Michael, do so, for otherwise it would not be well," said Pan Yan.

"I will do so."

So saying, Pan Michael took the baton from Zagloba's hands, drew up the squadron for marching, and moved with his comrades to the head of it.

"And where shall we go?" asked Zagloba.

"To tell the truth, I don't know myself, for I have not thought of that," answered Pan Michael.

"It is worth while to deliberate on what we should do," said Mirski, "and we must begin at once. But may I be permitted first to give thanks to Pan Zagloba in the name of all, that he did not forget us in straits and rescued us so effectually?"

"Well," said Zagloba, with pride, raising his head and twisting his mustache. "Without me you would be in Birji! Justice commands to acknowledge that what no man can think out, Zagloba thinks out. Pan Michael, we were in straits not like these. Remember how I saved you when we were fleeing before the Tartars with Helena?"

Pan Michael might have answered that in that juncture not Zagloba saved him, but he Zagloba; still he was silent, and his mustache began to quiver. The old noble spoke on—

"Thanks are not necessary, since what I did for you today you certainly would not fail to do for me tomorrow in case of need. I am as glad to see you free as if I had gained the greatest battle. It seems that neither my hand nor my head has grown very old yet."

"Then you went straightway to Upita?" asked Volodyovski.

"But where should I go—to Kyedani?—crawl into the wolf's throat? Of course to Upita; and it is certain that I did not spare the horse, and a good beast he was. Yesterday early I was in Upita, and at midday we started for Birji, in the direction in which I expected to meet you."

"And how did my men believe you at once? For, with the exception of two or three who saw you at my quarters, they did not know you."

"To tell the truth, I had not the least difficulty; for first of all, I had your ring, Pan Michael, and secondly, the men had just learned of your arrest and the treason of the hetman. I found a deputation to them from Pan Mirski's squadron and that of Pan Stankyeovich, asking to join them against the hetman, the traitor. When I informed them that you were being taken to Birji, it was as if a man had thrust a stick into an anthill. Their horses were at pasture; boys were sent at once to bring them in, and at midday we started. I took the command openly, for it belonged to me."

"But, father, where did you get the *bunchuck*?" asked Pan Yan. "We thought from a distance that you were the hetman."

"Of course, I did not look worse than he? Where did I get the *bunchuck*? Well, at the same time with the deputations from the resisting squadrons, came also Pan Shchyt with a command to the Lauda men to march to Kyedani, and he brought a *bunchuck* to give greater weight to the command. I ordered his arrest on the spot, and had the *bunchuck* borne above me to deceive the Swedes if I met them."

"As God lives, he thought all out wisely!" cried Oskyerko.

"As Solomon!" added Stankyeovich.

Zagloba swelled up as if he were yeast.

"Let us take counsel at once as to what should be done," said he at last. "If it is agreeable to the company to listen to me with patience, I will tell what I have thought over on the road. I do not advise you to commence war with Radzivill now, and this for two reasons: first,

because he is a pike and we are perches. It is better for perches never to turn head to a pike, for he can swallow them easily, but tail, for then the sharp scales protect them. May the devil fix him on a spit in all haste, and baste him with pitch lest he burn overmuch.”

“Secondly?” asked Mirski.

“Secondly,” answered Zagloba, “if at any time, by any fortune, we should fall into his hands, he would give us such a flaying that all the magpies in Lithuania would have something to scream about. See what was in that letter which Kovalski was taking to the Swedish commandant at Birji, and know the *voevoda* of Vilna, in case he was unknown to you hitherto.”

So saying, he unbuttoned his vest, and taking from his bosom a letter, gave it to Mirski.

“Pshaw! it is in German or Swedish,” said the old colonel. “Who can read this letter?”

It appeared that Pan Stanislav alone knew a little German, for he had gone frequently to Torun (Thorn), but he could not read writing.

“I will tell you the substance of it,” said Zagloba. “When in Upita the soldiers sent to the pasture for their horses, there was a little time. I gave command to bring to me by the locks a Jew whom everyone said was dreadfully wise, and he, with a sabre at his throat, read quickly all that was in the letter and shelled it out to me. Behold the hetman enjoined on the commandant at Birji, and for the good of the King of Sweden directed him, after the convoy had been sent back, to shoot every one of us, without sparing a man, but so to do it that no report might go abroad.”

All the colonels began to clap their hands, except Mirski, who, shaking his head, said—

“It was for me who knew him marvellous, and not find a place in my head, that he would let us out of Kyedani. There must surely be reasons to us unknown, for which he could not put us to death himself.”

“Doubtless for him it was a question of public opinion.”

“Maybe.”

“It is wonderful how venomous he is,” said the little knight; “for without mentioning services, I and Ganhof saved his life not so long ago.”

“And I,” said Stankyeovich, “served under his father and under him thirty-five years.”

“He is a terrible man!” added Pan Stanislav.

“It is better not to crawl into the hands of such a one,” said Zagloba. “Let the devils take him! We will avoid fighting with him, but we will pluck bare these estates of his that lie on our way.”

“Let us go to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, so as to have some defence, some leader; and on the road we will take what can be had from the larders, stables, granaries, and cellars. My soul laughs at the thought, and it is sure that I will let no one surpass me in this work. What money we can take from land-bailiffs we will take. The more noisily and openly we go to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, the more gladly will he receive us.”

“He will receive us gladly as we are,” said Oskyerko. “But it is good advice to go to him, and better can no one think out at present.”

“Will all agree to that?” asked Stankyeovich.

“As true as life!” said Pan Mirski. “So then to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk! Let him be that leader for whom we prayed to God.”

“Amen!” said the others.

They rode some time in silence, till at last Pan Michael began to be uneasy in the saddle. “But could we not pluck the Swedes somewhere on the road?” asked he at last, turning his eyes to his comrades.

“My advice is: if a chance comes, why not?” answered Stankyevich. “Doubtless Radzivill assured the Swedes that he had all Lithuania in his hands, and that all were deserting Yan Kazimir willingly; let it be shown that this is not true.”

“And properly!” said Mirski. “If some detachment crawls into our way, we will ride over it. I will say also: Attack not the prince himself, for we could not stand before him, he is a great warrior! But, avoiding battles, it is worth while to move about Kyedani a couple of days.”

“To plunder Radzivill’s property?” asked Zagloba.

“No, but to assemble more men. My squadron and that of Pan Stankyevich will join us. If they are already defeated—and they may be—the men will come to us singly. It will not pass either without a rally of nobles to us. We will bring Pan Sapyeha fresh forces with which he can easily undertake something.”

In fact, that reckoning was good; and the dragoons of the convoy served as the first example, though Kovalski himself resisted—all his men went over without hesitation to Pan Michael. There might be found more such men in Radzivill’s ranks. It might also be supposed that the first attack on the Swedes would call forth a general uprising in the country.

Pan Michael determined therefore to move that night toward Ponyevyej, assemble whom he could of the Lauda nobles in the vicinity of Upita, and thence plunge into the wilderness of Rogovsk, in which, as he expected, the remnants of the defeated resisting squadrons would be in hiding. Meanwhile he halted for rest at the river Lavecha, to refresh horses and men.

They halted there till night, looking from the density of the forest to the highroad, along which were passing continually new crowds of peasants, fleeing to the woods before the expected Swedish invasion.

The soldiers sent out on the road brought in from time to time single peasants as informants concerning the Swedes; but it was impossible to learn much from them. The peasants were frightened, and each repeated separately that the Swedes were here and there, but no one could give accurate information.

When it had become completely dark, Pan Volodyovski commanded the men to mount their horses; but before they started a rather distinct sound of bells came to their ears.

“What is that?” asked Zagloba, “it is too late for the Angelus.”

Volodyovski listened carefully, for a while. “That is an alarm!” said he.

Then he went along the line. “And does anyone here know what village or town there is in that direction?”

“Klavany, Colonel,” answered one of the Gostsyeviches; “we go that way with potash.”

“Do you hear bells?”

“We hear! That is something unusual.”

Volodyovski nodded to the trumpeter, and in a low note the trumpet sounded in the dark forest. The squadron pushed forward.

The eyes of all were fixed in the direction from which the ringing came each moment more powerful; indeed they were not looking in vain, for soon a red light gleamed on the horizon and increased every moment.

“A fire!” muttered the men in the ranks.

Pan Michael bent toward Skshetuski. “The Swedes!” said he.

“We will try them!” answered Pan Yan.

“It is a wonder to me that they are setting fire.”

“The nobles must have resisted, or the peasants risen if they attacked the church.”

“Well, we shall see!” said Pan Michael. And he was panting with satisfaction.

Then Zagloba clattered up to him. “Pan Michael?”

“What?”

“I see that the odor of Swedish flesh has come to you. There will surely be a battle, will there not?”

“As God gives, as God gives!”

“But who will guard the prisoner?”

“What prisoner?”

“Of course, not me, but Kovalski. Pan Michael, it is a terribly important thing that he should not escape. Remember that the hetman knows nothing of what has happened, and will learn from no one, if Kovalski does not report to him. It is requisite to order some trusty men to guard him; for in time of battle he might escape easily, especially if he takes up some stratagem.”

“He is as capable of stratagems as the wagon on which he is sitting. But you are right; it is necessary to station someone near. Will you have him under your eye during this time?”

“H’m! I am sorry to be away from the battle! It is true that in the night near fire I am as good as blind. If it were in the daytime you would never have persuaded me; but since the public good requires it, let this be so.”

“Very well, I will leave you with five soldiers to assist; and if he tries to escape, fire at his head.”

“I’ll squeeze him like wax in my fingers, never fear!—But the fire is increasing every moment. Where shall I stay with Kovalski?”

“Wherever you like. I’ve no time now!” answered Pan Michael, and he rode on.

The flames were spreading rapidly. The wind was blowing from the fire and toward the squadron, and with the sound of bells brought the report of firearms.

“On a trot!” commanded Volodyovski.

## Chapter XIX

When near the village, the Lauda men slackened their speed, and saw a broad street so lighted by flames that pins might be picked from the ground; for on both sides a number of cottages were burning, and others were catching fire from these gradually, for the wind was strong and carried sparks, nay, whole clusters of them, like fiery birds, to the adjoining roofs. On the street the flames illuminated greater and smaller crowds of people moving quickly in various directions. The cries of men were mingled with the sounds of the church-bells hidden among trees, with the bellowing of cattle, the barking of dogs, and with infrequent discharges of firearms.

After they had ridden nearer, Volodyovski's soldiers saw troopers wearing round hats, not many men. Some were skirmishing with groups of peasants, armed with scythes and forks; firing at them from pistols, and pushing them beyond the cottages, into the gardens; others were driving oxen, cows, and sheep to the road with rapiers; others, whom it was barely possible to distinguish among whole clouds of feathers, had covered themselves with poultry, with wings fluttering in the agonies of death; some were holding horses, each man having two or three belonging to officers who were occupied evidently in plundering the cottages.

The road to the village descended somewhat from a hill in the midst of a birch-grove; so that the Lauda men, without being seen themselves, saw, as it were, a picture representing the enemy's attack on the village, lighted up by flames, in the glare of which could be clearly distinguished foreign soldiers, villagers, women dragged by troopers, and men defending themselves in disordered groups. All were moving violently, like puppets on springs, shouting, cursing, lamenting.

The conflagration shook a full mane of flame over the village, and roared each moment more terribly.

Volodyovski led his men to the open gate, and ordered them to slacken their pace. He might strike, and with one blow wipe out the invaders, who were expecting nothing; but the little knight had determined "to taste the Swedes" in open battle—he had so arranged that they might see him coming.

Some horsemen, standing near the gate, saw the approaching squadron first. One of them sprang to an officer, who stood with drawn rapier in the midst of a considerable group of horsemen, in the middle of the road, and began to speak to him, pointing to where Volodyovski was descending with his men. The officer shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed for a time; then he gave a sign, and at once the sharp sound of a trumpet was heard, mingled with various cries of men and beasts.

And here our knight could admire the regularity of the Swedish soldiers; for barely were the first tones of the trumpet heard, when some of the horsemen rushed out in hot haste from the cottages, others left the plundered articles, the oxen and sheep, and ran to their horses. In the twinkle of an eye they stood in regular line; at sight of which the little knight's heart rose with wonder, so select were the men. All were large, sturdy fellows, dressed in coats, with leather straps over the shoulders, and black hats with rim raised on the left side; all had matched bay horses, and stood in line with rapiers at their shoulders, looking sharply, but calmly, at the road.

An officer stepped forth from the line with a trumpeter, wishing apparently to inquire what sort of men were approaching so slowly. Evidently they were thought to be one of Radzivill's

squadrons, from which no encounter was expected. The officer began to wave his rapier and his hat; the trumpeter sounded continually, as a sign that they wished to parley.

“Let someone fire at him,” said the little knight, “so that he may know what to expect from us.”

The report sounded; but the shot did not reach, for the distance was too great. Evidently the officer thought that there was some misunderstanding, for he began to shout and to wave his hat.

“Let him have it a second time!” cried Volodyovski.

After the second discharge the officer turned and moved, though not too hurriedly, toward his own, who also approached him on a trot.

The first rank of Lauda men were now entering the gate.

The Swedish officer, riding up, shouted to his men; the rapiers, hitherto standing upright by the shoulders of the horsemen, dropped and hung at their belts; but all at the same instant drew pistols from the holsters, and rested them on the pommels of their saddles, holding the muzzle upward.

“Finished soldiers!” muttered Volodyovski, seeing the rapidity of their movements, which were simultaneous and almost mechanical. Then he looked at his own men to see if the ranks were in order, straightened himself in the saddle, and cried—

“Forward!”

The Lauda men bent down to the necks of their horses, and rushed on like a whirlwind.

The Swedes let them come near, and then gave a simultaneous discharge from their pistols; but this did little harm to the Lauda men hidden behind the heads of their horses; only a few dropped the reins and fell backward, the rest rushed on and struck the horsemen, breast to breast.

The Lithuanian light squadrons used lances yet, which in the army of the kingdom the hussars alone used; but Volodyovski expecting a battle at close quarters, had ordered his men to plant their lances at the roadside, therefore it came to sabres at once.

The first impetus was not sufficient to break the Swedes, but it pushed them back, so that they began to retreat, cutting and thrusting with their rapiers; but the Lauda men pushed them furiously along the road. Bodies began to fall thickly. The throng grew denser each moment; the clatter of sabres frightened the peasants out of the broad road, in which the heat from the burning houses was unendurable, though the houses were separated from the road and the fences by gardens.

The Swedes, pressed with increasing vigor, retreated gradually, but still in good order. It was difficult moreover to scatter them, since strong fences closed the road on both sides. At times they tried to stop, but were unable to do so.

It was a wonderful battle, in which, by reason of the relatively narrow place of meeting, only the first ranks fought, those next in order could only push forward those standing in front of them; but just for this reason the struggle was turned into a furious encounter.

Volodyovski, having previously requested the old colonels and Pan Yan to look after the men during the attack, enjoyed himself to the full in the first rank. And every moment some Swedish hat fell before him in the throng, as if it had dived into the ground; sometimes a rapier, torn from the hand of a horseman, flew whistling above the rank, and at the same instant was heard the piercing cry of a man, and again a hat fell; a second took its place, then

a third the place of the second; but Volodyovski pushed ever forward. His eyes glittered like two ill-omened sparks, but he was not carried away and did not forget himself; at moments, when he had no one at sword's length in front of him, he turned his face and blade somewhat to the right or left, and destroyed in the twinkle of an eye a horseman, with a movement apparently trifling; and he was terrible through these slight and lightning movements which were almost not human.

As a woman pulling hemp disappears in it and is hidden completely, but by the falling stalks her road is known easily, so he vanished from the eye for a time in the throng of large men; but where soldiers were falling like stalks under the sickle of the harvester who cuts near the ground, there was Pan Michael. Pan Stanislav and the gloomy Yuzva Butrym, called Footless, followed hard in his track.

At length the Swedish rear ranks began to push out from between the fences to the broad grass-plot before the church and the bell-tower, and after them came the front ranks. Now was heard the command of the officer, who wished evidently to bring all his men into action at once; and the oblong rectangular body of horsemen stretched out, deployed in the twinkle of an eye, into a long line to present its whole front.

But Pan Yan, who directed the battle and led the squadron, did not imitate the Swede; he rushed forward with a dense column which, striking the now weaker line, broke it, as if with a wedge, and turned swiftly to the right toward the church, taking with this movement the rear of one half of the Swedes, while on the other half Mirski and Stankyeovich sprang with the reserve in which were a part of the Lauda men and all of Kovalski's dragoons.

Two battles now began; but they did not last long. The left wing, on which Pan Yan had struck, was unable to form, and scattered first; the right, in which was the commanding officer, resisted longer, but being too much extended, it began to break, to fall into disorder, and at last followed the example of the left wing.

The grass-plot was broad, but unfortunately was enclosed on all sides by a lofty fence; and the church-servants closed and propped the opposite gate when they saw what was taking place.

The scattered Swedes then ran around, but the Lauda men rushed after them. In some places larger groups fought, a number at a time, with sabres and rapiers; in other places the conflict was turned into a series of duels, and man met man, the rapier crossed the sabre, and at times the report of a pistol burst forth. Here and there a Swedish horseman, escaping from one sabre, ran, as if to a trap, under another. Here and there a Swede or a Lithuanian rose from under a fallen horse and fell that moment under the blow of a weapon awaiting him.

Through the grass-plot terrified horses rushed about riderless, with waving mane and nostrils distended from fear; some bit one another; others, blinded from fright, turned their tails to the groups of fighting men and kicked them.

Pan Volodyovski, hurling down Swedes as he went, searched the whole place with his eyes for the officer in command; at last he saw him defending himself against two Butryms, and he sprang toward him.

"Aside!" cried he to the Butryms, "aside!"

The obedient soldiers sprang aside, the little knight rushed on and closed with the Swede, the horses of the two stood on their haunches.

The officer wished evidently to unhorse his opponent with a thrust; but Volodyovski, interposing the hilt of his sabre, described a half-circle like lightning, and the rapier flew



away. The officer bent to his holsters, but, cut through the cheek at that moment, he dropped the reins from his left hand.

“Take him alive!” shouted Volodyovski to the Butryms.

The Lauda men seized the wounded officer and held him tottering in the saddle; the little knight pushed on and rode farther against the Swedes, quenching them before him like candles.

But the Swedes began to yield everywhere before the nobles, who were more adroit in fencing and single combat. Some of the Swedes, seizing their rapier blades, extended the hilts to their opponents; others threw their weapons at their feet; the word “Pardon!” was heard more and more frequently on the field. But no attention was paid to the word, for Pan Michael had commanded to spare but few. The Swedes, seeing this, rushed anew to the struggle, and died as became soldiers after a desperate defence, redeeming richly with blood their own death.

An hour later the last of them were cut down. The peasants ran in crowds from the village to the grass-plot to catch the horses, kill the wounded, and plunder the dead.

Such was the end of the first encounter of Lithuanians with Swedes.

Meanwhile Zagloba, stationed at a distance in the birch-grove with the wagon in which lay Pan Roh, was forced to hear the bitter reproach that, though a relative, he had treated that young man shamefully.

“Uncle, you have ruined me utterly, for not only is a bullet in the head waiting for me at Kyedani, but eternal infamy will fall on my name. Henceforth whoso wants to say, ‘Fool,’ may say, ‘Roh Kovalski!’”

“The truth is that not many will be found to contradict him,” answered Zagloba; “and the best proof of your folly is that you wonder at being hung on a hook by me who moved the Khan of the Crimea as a puppet. Well, did you think to yourself, worthless fellow, that I would let you take me and other men of importance to Birji, and throw us, the ornaments of the Commonwealth, into the jaws of the Swedes?”

“I was not taking you of my own will.”

“But you were the servant of an executioner, and that for a noble is infamy from which you must purify yourself, or I will renounce you and all the Kovalskis. To be a traitor is worse than to be a crab-monger, but to be the servant of someone worse than a crab-monger is the lowest thing.”

“I was serving the hetman.”

“And the hetman the devil. There you have it! You are a fool, Roh: get that into your head once and forever, dispute not, but hold to my skirts, and a man will come of you yet; for know this, that advancement has met more than one personage through me.”

The rattle of shots interrupted further conversation, for the battle was just beginning in the village. Then the discharges stopped, but the noise continued, and shouts reached that retreat in the birch-grove.

“Ah, Pan Michael is working,” said Zagloba. “He is not big, but he bites like a viper. They are shelling out those devils from over the sea like peas. I would rather be there than here, and through you I must listen here. Is this your gratitude? Is this the act of a respectable relative?”

“What have I to be grateful for?” asked Roh.

“For this, that a traitor is not ploughing with you, as with an ox—though you are grandly fitted for ploughing, since you are stupid and strong. Understand me? *Ai!* it is getting hotter and hotter there. Do you hear? That must be the Swedes who are bawling like calves in a pasture.”

Here Zagloba became serious, for he was a little disturbed; on a sudden he asked, looking quickly into Pan Roh’s eyes—

“To whom do you wish victory?”

“To ours, of course.”

“See that! And why not to the Swedes?”

“I would rather pound them. Who are ours, are ours!”

“Conscience is waking up in you. But how could you take your own blood to the Swedes?”

“For I had an order.”

“But now you have no order?”

“True.”

“Your superior is now Pan Volodyovski, no one else.”

“Well, that seems to be true.”

“You must do what Pan Volodyovski commands.”

“I must.”

“He commands you now to renounce Radzivill for the future, and not to serve him, but the country.”

“How is that?” asked Pan Roh, scratching his head.

“A command!” cried Zagloba.

“I obey!” said Kovalski.

“That is right! At the first chance you will thrash the Swedes.”

“If it is the order, it is the order!” answered Kovalski, and breathed deeply, as if a great burden had fallen from his breast.

Zagloba was equally well satisfied, for he had his own views concerning Kovalski. They began then to listen in harmony to the sounds of the battle which came to them, and listened about an hour longer, until all was silent.

Zagloba was more and more alarmed. “If they have not succeeded?” asked he.

“Uncle, you an old warrior and can say such things! If they were beaten they would come back to us in small groups.”

“True! I see thy wit will be of service.”

“Do you hear the tramp, Uncle? They are riding slowly. They must have cut the Swedes to pieces.”

“Oi, if they are only ours! Shall I go forward, or not?”

Saying this, Zagloba dropped his sabre at his side, took his pistol in his hand, and moved forward. Soon he saw before him a dark mass moving slowly along the road; at the same time noise of conversation reached him.

In front rode a number of men talking with one another loudly; soon the well-known voice of Pan Michael struck the ear of Zagloba. "They are good men! I don't know what kind of infantry they have, but the cavalry is perfect."

Zagloba touched his horse with the spurs. "Ah! how is it, how is it? Oh, impatience was tearing me, I wanted to fly into the fire! But is no one wounded?"

"All are sound, praise to God; but we have lost more than twenty good soldiers."

"And the Swedes?"

"We laid them down like a pavement."

"Pan Michael, you must have enjoyed yourself as a dog in a spring. But was it a decent thing to leave me, an old man, on guard? The soul came near going out of me, so much did I want Swedish meat. Oh, I should have gnawed them!"

"You may have a roast now if you like, for a number of them are in the fire."

"Let the dogs eat them. And were prisoners taken?"

"A captain, and seven soldiers."

"What do you think to do with them?"

"I would have them hanged, for like robbers they fell on an innocent village and were killing the people. Yan says, however, that that will not do."

"Listen to me, gentlemen, hear what has come to my head just now: there is no good in hanging them; on the contrary, let them go to Birji as soon as possible."

"What for?"

"You know me as a soldier, know me now as a statesman. We will let the Swedes go, but we will not tell them who we are. We will say that we are Radzivill's men, that we have cut off this detachment at command of the hetman, and in future will cut off whom we meet, for the hetman only pretended, through strategy, to join the Swedes. They will break their heads over this, and thus we will undermine the hetman's credit terribly. Just think, this hits the Swedes and hits Radzivill too. Kyedani is far from Birji, and Radzivill is still farther from Pontus de la Gardie. Before they explain to each other what has happened and how, they will be ready to fight. We will set the traitor against the invaders; and who will gain by this, if not the Commonwealth?"

"This is excellent counsel, and quite worth the victory. May the bullets strike him!" said Stankievich.

"You have the mind of a chancellor," added Mirski, "for this will disturb their plans."

"Surely we should act thus," said Pan Michael. "I will set them free tomorrow; but today I do not wish to know of anything, for I am dreadfully wearied. It was as hot in the village as in an oven! *Uf!* my arms are paralyzed completely. The officer could not go today in any case, for his face is cut."

"But in what language shall we tell them all this? What is your counsel, father?" asked Pan Yan.

"I have been thinking of that too," answered Zagloba. "Kovalski told me that there are two Prussians among his dragoons who know how to jabber German, and are sharp fellows. Let them tell in German—which the Swedes know of course, after fighting so many years in

Germany. Kovalski is ours, soul and body. He is a man in a hundred, and we will have no small profit from him.”

“Well done!” said Volodyovski. “Will some of you, gentlemen, be so kind as to see to this, for I have no voice in my throat from weariness? I have told the men that we shall stay in this grove till morning. The villagers will bring us food, and now to sleep! My lieutenant will see to the watch. ’Pon my word, I cannot see you, for my eyes are closing.”

“Gentlemen,” said Zagloba, “there is a stack of hay just outside the birches; let us go to the stack, we shall sleep like susliks, and to the road on the morrow. We shall not come back to this country, unless with Pan Sapyeha against Radzivill.”

## Chapter XX

In Lithuania a civil war had begun, which, with two invasions of the Commonwealth and the ever more stubborn war of the Ukraine, filled the measure of misfortune.

The army of the Lithuanian quota, though so small in number that alone it could not offer effectual resistance to any of the enemies, was divided into two camps. Some regiments, and specially the foreign ones, remained with Radzivil; others, forming the majority, proclaimed the hetman a traitor, protested in arms against joining Sweden, but without unity, without a leader, without a plan. Sapyeha might be its leader, but he was too much occupied at that time with the defence of Byhovo and with the desperate struggle in the interior of the country, to be able to take his place immediately at the head of the movement against Radzivil.

Meanwhile the invaders, each considering a whole region as his own, began to send threatening messages to the other. From their misunderstandings might rise in time the salvation of the Commonwealth; but before it came to hostile steps between them there reigned the most terrible chaos in all Lithuania. Radzivil, deceived in the army, determined to bring it to obedience through force.

Volodyovski had barely reached Ponyevyej with his squadron, after the battle of Klavany, when news came to him of the destruction, by Radzivil, of Mirski's squadron, and that of Stankyevich. Some of the men were placed by force among Radzivil's troops; others were cut down or scattered to the four winds; the remainder were wandering singly or in small groups through villages and forests, seeking a place to hide their heads from vengeance and pursuit.

Fugitives came daily to Pan Michael's detachment, increasing his force and bringing news the most varied.

The most important item was news of the mutiny of Lithuanian troops stationed in Podlyasye, near Bialystok and Tykotsin. After the armies of Moscow had occupied Vilno the squadrons from that place had to cover the approach to the territories of the kingdom. But hearing of the hetman's treason, they formed a confederation, at the head of which were two colonels, Horotkyevich and Yakub Kmita, a cousin of Andrei, the most trusty assistant of Radzivil.

The name of the latter was repeated with horror by the soldiers. He mainly had caused the dispersion of Stankyevich's squadron and that of Mirski; he shot without mercy the captured officers. The hetman trusted him blindly, and just recently had sent him against Nyevyarovski's squadron, which, disregarding the example of its colonel, refused obedience.

Volodyovski heard the last account with great attention; then he turned to the officers summoned in counsel, and asked—

“What would you say to this—that we, instead of hurrying to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, go to those squadrons which have formed a confederacy in Podlyasye?”

“You have taken that out of my mouth!” said Zagloba. “It is nearer home there, and it is always pleasanter among one's own people.”

“Fugitives mention too a report,” added Pan Yan, “that the king has ordered some squadrons to return from the Ukraine, to oppose the Swedes on the Vistula. If this should prove true, we might be among old comrades instead of pounding from corner to corner.”

“But who is going to command those squadrons? Does anyone know?”

“They say that Charnyetski will,” answered Volodyovski; “but people say this rather than know it, for positive intelligence could not come yet.”

“However it may be,” said Zagloba, “my advice is to hurry to Podlyasye. We can bring to our side those squadrons that have risen against Radzivill, and take them to the king, and that certainly will not be without a reward.”

“Let it be so!” said Oskyerko and Stankyeovich.

“It is not easy,” said the little knight, “to get to Podlyasye, for we shall have to slip through the fingers of the hetman. If fortune meanwhile should grant us to snap up Kmita somewhere on the road, I would speak a couple of words in his ear, from which his skin would grow green.”

“He deserves it,” said Mirski. “That some old soldiers who have served their whole lives under the Radzivills hold to the hetman, is less to be wondered at; but that swaggerer serves only for his own profit, and the pleasure which he finds in betrayal.”

“So then to Podlyasye?” asked Oskyerko.

“To Podlyasye! to Podlyasye!” cried all in one voice.

But still the affair was difficult, as Volodyovski had said; for to go to Podlyasye it was necessary to pass near Kyedani, as near a den in which a lion was lurking.

The roads and lines of forest, the towns and villages were in the hands of Radzivill; somewhat beyond Kyedani was Kmita, with cavalry, infantry, and cannon. The hetman had heard already of the escape of the colonels, the mutiny of Volodyovski’s squadron, and the battle of Klavany; the last brought him to such rage that there was fear for his life, since a terrible attack of asthma had for a time almost stopped his breathing.

In truth he had cause enough for anger, and even for despair, since that battle brought on his head a whole Swedish tempest. People began at once after this battle to cut up here and there small Swedish detachments. Peasants did this, and individual nobles independently; but the Swedes laid it to the account of Radzivill, especially as the officers and men sent by Volodyovski to Birji declared before the commandant that one of Radzivill’s squadrons had fallen upon them at his command.

In a week a letter came to the prince from the commandant at Birji, and ten days later from Pontus de la Gardie himself, the commander-in-chief of the Swedish forces.

“Either your highness has no power and significance,” wrote the latter—“and in such case how could you conclude a treaty in the name of the whole country!—or it is your wish to bring about through artifice the ruin of the king’s army. If that is the case, the favor of my master will turn from your highness, and punishment will come quickly, unless you show obedience and efface your faults by faithful service.”

Radzivill sent couriers at once with an explanation of what had happened and how; but the dart had fastened in his haughty soul, and the burning wound began to rankle more and more. He whose word not long before terrified the country more than all Sweden; he for the half of whose property all the Swedish lords might have been bought; he who stood against his own king, thinking himself the equal of monarchs; he who had acquired fame in the whole world by his victories, and who walked in his own pride as in sunshine—must now listen to the threats of one Swedish general, must hear lectures on obedience and faithfulness. It is true that that general was brother-in-law to the king; but the king himself—who was he? A usurper of the throne belonging by right and inheritance to Yan Kazimir.

Above all, the rage of the hetman was turned against those who were the cause of that humiliation, and he swore to himself to trample Volodyovski and those colonels who were with him and the whole squadron of Lauda. With this object he marched against them; and as hunters to clear out the wolf's nest surround a forest with shares, he surrounded them and began to pursue without rest.

Meanwhile tidings came that Kmita had crushed Nyevyarovski's squadron, cut down or scattered the officers, and joined the men to his own. Radzivill, to strike the more surely, commanded Pan Andrei to send him some of these troops.

"Those men," wrote the hetman, "for whose lives you interceded with us so persistently, and mainly Volodyovski with that other straggler, escaped on the road to Birji. We sent the stupidest officer with them on purpose, so that they might not win him over; but even he either became a traitor, or they fooled him. Now Volodyovski has the whole Lauda squadron, and fugitives are reinforcing him. They cut to pieces one hundred and twenty Swedes at Klavany, saying that they did it at our command, from which great distrust has arisen between us and Pontus. The whole cause may be ruined by those traitors, whose heads, had it not been for your interference, would have been cut off at our command, as God is in heaven. So we have to repent of our mildness, though we hope in God that vengeance will soon overtake them. Tidings have come to us, too, that in Billeviche nobles assemble at the house of the sword-bearer and conspire against us. This must be stopped! You will send all the cavalry to us, and the infantry to Kyedani to guard the castle and the town, for from those traitors anything may be expected. You will go yourself with some tens of horsemen to Billeviche, and bring the sword-bearer and his niece to Kyedani. At present it is important, not only for you, but for us; for whoso has them in hand has the whole Lauda region, in which the nobles, following the example of Volodyovski, are beginning to rise against us. We have sent Harasimovich to Zabludovo with instructions how to begin with those confederates. Of great importance among them is Yakub, your cousin, to whom you will write, if you think you can act on him through a letter. Signifying to you our continual favor, we commit you to the care of God."

When Kmita had read this letter, he was content at heart that the colonels had succeeded in escaping the Swedes, and in secret he wished them to escape Radzivill. Still he carried out all commands of the prince, sent him the cavalry, garrisoned Kyedani with infantry, and began to make trenches along the castle and the town, promising himself to go immediately after this work was done to Billeviche for the sword-bearer and the young woman.

"I will use no force, unless in the last resort," thought he, "and in no case will I urge Olenka. Finally, it is not my will, 'tis the command of the prince. She will not receive me pleasantly, I know; but God grant that in time she will know my intentions, and that I serve Radzivill not against the country, but for its salvation."

Thinking thus, he labored zealously at fortifying Kyedani, which was to be the residence of his Olenka in the future.

Meanwhile Volodyovski was slipping away before the hetman, but the hetman pursued him furiously. It was, however, too narrow for Pan Michael; for from Birji considerable detachments of Swedish troops pushed toward the south, the east of the country was occupied by the legions of the Tsar, and on the road to Kyedani the hetman was lying in wait.

Zagloba was greatly depressed by such a condition of affairs, and he turned with increasing frequency to Pan Michael with questions: "Pan Michael, by the love of God, shall we break through or shall we not break through?"

“There is not even talk of breaking through here,” answered the little knight. “You know that I am not lined with cowardice, and that I attack whom I will, even the devil himself. But I cannot meet the hetman, for I am not equal to him. You have said yourself that he is a pike and we perches. I shall do what is in my power to slip out, but if it comes to a battle, I tell you plainly that he will defeat us.”

“Then he will command to chop us up and throw us to the dogs. As God lives! into any man’s hands save Radzivill’s! But in this case why not turn to Pan Sapyeha?”

“It is too late now, for the hetman’s troops and the Swedes have closed the roads.”

“The devil tempted me when I persuaded Pan Yan and his cousin to go to Radzivill!” said Zagloba, in despair.

But Pan Michael did not lose hope yet, especially since the nobles, and even the peasants, brought him warning of the hetman’s movements; for all hearts were turning from Radzivill. Pan Michael twisted out therefore as he knew how—and he knew how famously, for almost from childhood he had inured himself to war with Tartars and Cossacks. He had been made renowned in the army of Yeremi by descents on Tartar *chambuls*, by scouting expeditions, unexpected attacks, lightning escapes, in which he surpassed other officers.

At present hemmed in between Upita and Rogova on one side and Nyevyaja on the other, he doubled around on the space of a few miles, avoiding battle continually, worrying the Radzivill squadrons, and even plucking them a little as a wolf hunted by dogs slips by often near the hunters, and when the dogs press him too closely, turns and shows his white gleaming teeth.

But when Kmita’s cavalry came up, the hetman closed the narrowest gaps with them, and went himself to see that the two ends of the snare came together.

That was at Nyevyaja.

The regiments of Myeleshko and Ganhoff with two squadrons of cavalry, under the lead of the prince himself, formed as it were a bow, the string of which was the river. Volodyovski with his squadron was in the centre of the bow. He had in front of him, it is true, one ford which led through a swampy stream, but just on the other side of the ford were two Scottish regiments and two hundred of Radzivill’s Cossacks, with six fieldpieces, turned in such manner that even one man could not have reached the other side under the fire of them.

Now the bow began to contract. The middle of it was led by the hetman himself.

Happily for Volodyovski, night and a storm with pouring rain stopped the advance; but for the enclosed men there remained not more than a square half-mile of meadow, grown over with willows, in the middle of the half-ring of Radzivill’s army, and the river guarded on the other side by the Scots.

Next morning when the early dawn was just whitening the tops of the willows, the regiments moved forward to the river and were struck dumb with amazement.

Volodyovski had gone through the earth—there was not a living soul in the willows.

The hetman himself was astounded, and then real thunders fell on the heads of the officers commanding at the ford. And again an attack of asthma seized the prince with such force that those present trembled for his life. But rage overcame even the asthma. Two officers, entrusted with guarding the bank, were to be shot; but Ganhoff prevailed on the prince to have inquiries made first as to how the beast had escaped from the toils.



It appeared in fact that Volodyovski, taking advantage of the darkness and rain, had led his whole squadron out of the willows into the river, and swimming or wading with the current had slipped along Radzivill's right wing, which touched the bank at that point. Some horses, sunk to their bellies in the mud, indicated the place where he had come out on the right bank. From farther tracks it was easy to see that he had moved with all horse-breath in the direction of Kyedani. The hetman guessed at once from this that he wished to make his way to Horotkyevich and Yakub Kmita in Podlyasye.

"But in passing near Kyedani would he not burn the town or try to plunder the castle?"

A terrible fear straitened the heart of the prince. The greater part of his ready money and treasures were in Kyedani. Kmita, it is true, was bound to supply it with infantry; but if he had not done so, the undefended castle would easily become plunder for the insolent colonel. Radzivill felt sure that courage would not be wanting Volodyovski to attack the residence of Kyedani itself. It might be that time would not be wanting, for escaping in the beginning of the night he had left pursuit at least six hours behind.

In every case it was imperative to hasten with all breath to the rescue. The prince left the infantry, and pushed on with the cavalry. When he arrived at Kyedani he did not find Kmita, but he found everything quiet; and the opinion which he had of the young colonel's ability increased doubly at sight of the finished trenches and field-cannon standing on them. That same day he reviewed them in company with Ganhoff, to whom he remarked in the evening—

"He acted thus of his own mind, without my order, and finished those trenches so well that a protracted defence might be made here, even against artillery. If that man does not break his neck too early, he may rise high."

There was another man, at thought of whom the hetman could not restrain a certain kind of admiration, but mingled with rage, for the man was Pan Michael. "I could finish the mutiny soon," said he to Ganhoff, "if I had two such servants. Kmita may be still more alert, but he has not the experience, and the other was brought up in the school of Yeremi, beyond the Dnieper."

"Does your highness give command to pursue him?" asked Ganhoff.

The prince looked at Ganhoff, and said with emphasis, "He would beat you and escape from me." But after a while he frowned, and added, "Everything is quiet here now; but we must move to Podlyasye at once, and finish those there."

"Your highness," said Ganhoff, "as soon as we move a foot out of this place, all will seize arms against the Swedes."

"Which all?"

"The nobles and peasants. And not stopping with the Swedes, they will turn against the dissidents, for they put all the blame of this war on our coreligionists, saying that we sent to the enemy, and in fact brought the enemy in."

"It is a question with me of my cousin Boguslav. I know not whether he is able to hold out against the confederates in Podlyasye."

"It is a question of Lithuania to keep it in obedience to us and the King of Sweden."

The prince began to walk through the room, saying, "If I could in any way get Horotkyevich and Yakub Kmita into my hands! They will devour my property, destroy, plunder it; they will not leave a stone upon a stone."

“Unless we stipulate with General de la Gardie to send hither as many troops as possible, while we are in Podlyasye.”

“With Pontus—never!” answered Radzivill, to whose head a wave of blood rushed. “If with anyone, with the king himself. I do not need to treat with servants when I can treat with their master. If the king were to command Pontus to place two thousand cavalry at my disposal, that would be another thing. But I will not ask Pontus for them. It is needful to send someone to the king; it is time to negotiate with him directly.”

The lean face of Ganhoff flushed slightly, and his eyes were lighted with desire. “If your highness commanded—”

“You would go; but for you to arrive there is another thing. You are a German, and it is dangerous for a foreigner to enter an uprisen country. Who knows where the king is at this moment, and where he will be in half a month or a month? It is necessary to ride through the whole country. Besides, it cannot be! You will not go, for it is necessary to send one of my own people, a man of high family, so as to convince the king that not all the nobles have left me.”

“An inexperienced man might do much harm,” said Ganhoff, timidly.

“An envoy will have no work there except to deliver my letter, and bring back an answer; and any man can explain that it was not I who gave orders to beat the Swedes at Klavany.”

Ganhoff was silent.

The prince began again to walk with unquiet steps through the room; on his forehead was manifest a continual struggle of thought. In truth, he had not known a moment of peace from the time of his treaty with the Swedes. Pride devoured him, his conscience gnawed him, the unexpected resistance of the country and the army gnawed him; the uncertainty of the future, and the threat of ruin terrified him. He struggled, he fought, he passed sleepless nights, he was failing in health. His eyes were sinking, he was growing thin; his face, formerly red, became blue, and almost with every hour silver threads increased in his mustaches and his forelock. In a word, he lived in torment, and bent under the burden.

Ganhoff followed him with his eyes as he walked through the room; he had still a little hope that the prince would bethink himself, and send him.

But the prince halted suddenly, and struck his forehead with his palm. “Two squadrons of cavalry, to horse at once! I will lead them myself.”

Ganhoff looked on him with wonderment. “An expedition?” inquired he, involuntarily.

“Move on!” said the prince. “God grant that it be not too late!”

## Chapter XXI

When Kmita had finished the trenches and secured Kyedani from sudden attack, he was unable to delay further his expedition for the sword-bearer and Olenka, especially since the command of the prince to bring them to Kyedani was imperative. But still Pan Andrei loitered, and when at last he did move at the head of fifty dragoons, he was as unquiet as if going on a forlorn hope. He felt that he would not be thankfully received, and he trembled at the thought that the old man might try to resist, even with armed hand, and in such an event it would be necessary to use force. But he determined first to persuade and entreat. With the intent of stripping his visit of all semblance of armed attack, he left the dragoons at an inn a quarter of a mile from the village, and two from the house, and ordering the carriage to follow a little later, rode ahead himself, with only the sergeant and one attendant.

It was in the afternoon, and the sun was already well inclined toward the west, but after a rainy and stormy night the day was beautiful and the sky pure, only here and there was it variegated on the western side by small rosy clouds which pushed slowly beyond the horizon, like a flock of sheep leaving a field. Kmita rode through the village with throbbing heart and as uneasy as the Tartar who entering a village first, in advance of a *chambul*, looks around on every side to see if he can discover armed men in ambush. But the three horsemen attracted no attention. Barefooted little peasant boys merely jumped out of the road before the horses; peasants seeing the handsome officer, bowed to him, sweeping the ground with their caps. He rode on, and passing the village saw ahead a large dwelling, the old Billevich nest; behind it broad gardens ending far beyond in the flat fields.

Kmita slackened his pace still more, and began to talk with himself, evidently framing answers to questions; and meanwhile he gazed with anxious eye on the buildings rising before him. It was not at all a lordly mansion, but at the first glance it would have been guessed that a noble lived there of more than medium fortune. The house itself, with its back to the gardens and front to the highway, was enormous, but of wood. The pine of the walls had grown so dark with age that the panes in the windows seemed white in contrast. Above the walls rose a gigantic roof with four chimneys in the middle, and two dovecotes at the gables. A whole cloud of white doves were collected on the roof, now flying away with clapping of wings, now dropping, like snowy kerchiefs, on the black ridges, now flapping around the pillars supporting the entrance.

That entrance, adorned with a shield on which the Billevich arms were painted, disturbed the proportions of the house, for it was not in the middle, but toward one side of it. Evidently the house had once been smaller, but new parts were added subsequently from one side, though the added parts had grown so black with the passage of years as not to differ in anything from the old. Two wings, of enormous length, rose on both sides of the house proper, and formed as it were two arms of a horseshoe. In these wings were guest-chambers used in time of great gatherings, kitchens, storehouses, carriage-houses, stables for carriage horses which the masters wished to keep near at hand, rooms for officials, servants, and house Cossacks.

In the middle of the broad yard grew old linden-trees, on them were storks' nests. Among the trees was a bear chained to a pillar. Two well-sweeps at the sides of the yard, a cross with the Passion of the Lord between two spears at the entrance, completed this picture of the residence of a powerful, noble family. At the right of the house, in the middle of frequent linden-trees, rose the straw roofs of stables, cow-houses, sheep-houses, and granaries.

Kmita entered the gate, which was open on both sides; like the arms of a noble awaiting the arrival of a guest. Then two dogs loitering through the yard announced the stranger, and from a wing two boys ran to take the horses.

At the same moment in the door of the main building stood a female figure, in which Kmita recognized Olenka at once. His heart beat more quickly, and throwing the reins to the servant, he went toward the porch with uncovered head, holding in one hand his sabre, and in the other his cap.

She stood before him like a charming vision, shading her eyes with her hand against the setting sun, and then vanished on a sudden, as if frightened by the sight of the approaching guest.

“Bad!” thought Pan Andrei; “she hides from me.”

He was pained, and his pain was all the greater since just before the mild sunset, the view of that house, and the calm so spread around it filled his heart with hope, though perhaps Pan Andrei did not note that.

He cherished as it were an illusion that he was going to his betrothed, who would receive him with eyes gleaming from joy and a blush on her cheeks.

And the illusion was broken. Scarcely had she seen him when she rushed away, as if from an evil spirit; and straightway Pan Tomash came out to meet him with a face at once unquiet and cloudy.

Kmita bowed and said, “I have long wished to express duly my devotion to you, my benefactor; but I was unable to do so sooner in these times of disturbance, though surely there was no lack in me of desire.”

“I am very grateful, and I beg you to enter,” answered the sword-bearer, smoothing the forelock on his head—an act usual with him when confused or uncertain of himself. And he stepped aside from the door to let the guest pass.

Kmita for a while did not wish to enter first, and they bowed to each other on the threshold; at last Pan Andrei took the step before the sword-bearer, and in a moment they were in the room.

They found there two nobles—one, a man in the bloom of life, Pan Dovgird of Plemborg, a near neighbor of the Billeviches; the other, Pan Hudzynski, a tenant in Eyragoly. Kmita noticed that they had barely heard his name when their faces changed and they seemed to act like dogs at sight of a wolf; he looked at them first defiantly, and then feigned not to see them.

A disagreeable silence succeeded.

Pan Andrei grew impatient and gnawed his mustaches; the guests looked at him with a fixed frown, and the sword-bearer stroked his forelock.

“Will you drink a glass of poor nobles’ mead with us?” asked he at last, pointing to a decanter and a glass. “I request you—”

“I will drink with a gentleman!” said Kmita, rather abruptly.

Dovgird and Hudzynski began to puff, taking the answer as an expression of contempt for them; but they would not begin a quarrel at once in a friendly house, and that with a roisterer who had a terrible reputation throughout all Jmud. Still the insult nettled them.

Meanwhile the sword-bearer clapped his hands for a servant, and ordered him to bring a fourth glass; then he filled it, raised his own to his lips, and said, "Into your hands—I am glad to see you in my house."

"I should be sincerely glad were that true."

"A guest is a guest," said the sword-bearer, sententiously.

After awhile, conscious evidently of his duty as a host to keep up the conversation, he asked, "What do you hear at Kyedani? How is the health of the hetman?"

"Not strong," answered Kmita, "and in these unquiet times it cannot be otherwise. The prince has a world of troubles and annoyances."

"I believe that!" said Pan Hudzynski.

Kmita looked at him for a while, then turned to the host and continued—

"The prince, being promised assistance by the Swedish King, expected to move against the enemy at Vilna without delay, and take vengeance for the ashes of that place, which have not yet grown cold. And it must be known also to you that now it is necessary to search for Vilna in Vilna, for it was burning seventeen days. They say that nothing is visible among the ruins but the black holes of cellars from which smoke is still rising continually."

"Misfortune!" said the sword-bearer.

"Of course a misfortune, which if it could not have been prevented should be avenged and similar ruins made of the enemy's capital. In fact, it was coming to this when disturbers, suspecting the best intentions of an honorable man, proclaimed him a traitor, and resisted him in arms instead of aiding him against the enemy. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that the health of the prince totters, since he, whom God predestined to great things, sees that the malice of man is ever preparing new obstacles through which the entire undertaking may come to naught. The best friends of the prince have deceived him; those on whom he counted most have left him, or gone to the enemy."

"So it is," said the sword-bearer, seriously.

"That is very painful," continued Kmita, "and I myself have heard the prince say, 'I know that honorable men pass evil judgments on me; but why do they not come to Kyedani, why do they not tell me to my face what they have against me, and listen to my reasons?'"

"Whom has the prince in mind?" asked the sword-bearer.

"In the first rank you, my benefactor, for whom he has a genuine regard, and he suspects that you belong to the enemy."

The sword-bearer began to smooth his forelock quickly. At last, seeing that the conversation was taking an undesirable turn, he clapped his hands.

A servant appeared in the doorway.

"Seest not that it is growing dark? Bring lights!" cried Pan Tomash.

"God sees," continued Kmita, "that I had intended to lay before you proper assurances of my own devotion separately, but I have come here also at the order of the prince, who would have come in person to Billeviche if the time were more favoring."

"Our thresholds are too lowly," said the sword-bearer.

"Do not say that, since it is customary for neighbors to visit one another; but the prince has no time unoccupied, therefore he said to me, 'Explain in my name to Pan Billevich that I am

not able to visit him, but let him come to me with his niece, and that of course without delay, for tomorrow or the day following I know not where I shall be.' So I have come with a request, and I trust that both of you are in good health; for when I drove in here I saw Panna Aleksandra in the door, but she vanished at once, like mist from the field."

"That is true," said the sword-bearer; "I sent her myself to see who had come."

"I am waiting for your reply, my benefactor," said Kmita.

At that moment the attendant brought in a light and placed it on the table; by the shining of the light it was seen that Billevich was greatly confused.

"This is no small honor for me," said he, "but—I cannot go at once. Be pleased to excuse me to the hetman—you see that I have guests."

"Oh, surely that will not hinder, for these gentlemen will yield to the prince."

"We have our own tongues in our mouths, and can answer for ourselves," said Pan Hudzynski.

"Without waiting for others to make decisions concerning us," added Dovgird.

"You see," continued Kmita, pretending to take in good part the churlish words of the nobles, "I knew that these were polite cavaliers. But to avoid slighting anyone, I invite them also in the name of the prince to come to Kyedani."

"Too much favor," said both; "we have something else to do."

Kmita looked on them with a peculiar expression, and then said coldly, as if speaking to some fourth person, "When the prince invites, it is not permitted to refuse."

At that they rose from their chairs.

"But is that constraint?" asked the sword-bearer.

"Pan Billevich, my benefactor," answered Kmita, quickly, "those gentlemen will go whether they wish or not, for thus it has pleased me; but I desire not to use force with you, and I beg most sincerely that you will deign to gratify the prince. I am on service, and have an order to bring you; but as long as I do not lose hope of effecting something with entreaty, I shall not cease to entreat—and I swear to you that not a hair will fall from your head while there. The prince wishes to talk with you, and wishes you to live in Kyedani during these troubled times, when even peasants collect in crowds and plunder. This is the whole affair! You will be treated with fitting respect in Kyedani, as a guest and a friend; I give my word of honor for that."

"As a noble, I protest," said the sword-bearer, "and the law protects me."

"And sabres!" cried Hudzynski and Dovgird.

Kmita laughed, frowned, and said, "Put away your sabres, gentlemen, or I shall give the order to place you both against the barn and put a bullet into the head of each one of you."

At this they grew timid, and began to look at each other and at Kmita; but the sword-bearer cried—

"The most outrageous violence against the freedom of nobles, against privileges!"

"There will be no violence if you comply of your own will," said Kmita; "and the proof is in this that I left dragoons in the village, and came here alone to invite you as one neighbor another. Do not refuse, for the times are such that it is difficult to pay attention to refusals. The prince himself will excuse you therefore, and know that you will be received as a

neighbor and a friend. Understand, too, that could you be received otherwise, I would a hundred times rather have a bullet in my head than come here for you. Not a hair will fall from any Billevich head while I am alive. Call to mind who I am, remember Heraclius Billevich, remember his will, and consider whether the prince would have selected me did he not intend to deal with you in sincerity.”

“Why then does he use force, why have I to go under constraint? How am I to trust him, when all Lithuania talks of the oppression under which honorable citizens are groaning in Kyedani?”

Kmita drew breath; for, from his words and voice he knew that Billevich was beginning to weaken in his resistance.

“Worthy benefactor,” said he, almost joyously, “constraint among neighbors often rises from affection. And when you order servants to put the carriage-wheel of a welcome guest in the storehouse, or his provision-chest in the larder, is not that constraint? And when you force him to drink, even when wine is flowing out through his nostrils, is not that constraint? And be assured that even had I to bind you and take you bound to Kyedani among dragoons, that would be for your good. Just think, insurgent soldiers are wandering about and committing lawless deeds, peasants are mustering, Swedish troops are approaching, and do you think to save yourself from accident in the uproar, or that some of these will not come today or tomorrow, plunder and burn your property, and attack your person? Is Billevich a fortress? Can you defend yourself here? What does the prince wish for you? Safety; for Kyedani is the only place where you are not in danger. A detachment of the prince’s troops will guard your property here, as the eyes in their heads, from all disorder of soldiers; and if one fork is lost, then take my whole fortune.”

Billevich began to walk through the room. “Can I trust your word?”

At that moment Panna Aleksandra entered the room. Kmita approached her quickly, but suddenly remembered the events of Kyedani, and her cold face fixed him to the floor; he bowed therefore from a distance, in silence.

Pan Billevich stood before her. “We have to go to Kyedani,” said he.

“And for what reason?” asked she.

“For the hetman invites.”

“Very kindly—as a neighbor,” added Kmita.

“Yes, very kindly,” said Billevich, with a certain bitterness; “but if we do not go of our own will, this cavalier has the order to surround us with dragoons and take us by force.”

“God preserve us from that!” said Kmita.

“Have not I told you, Uncle,” asked Panna Aleksandra, “that we ought to flee as far as possible, for they would not leave us here undisturbed? Now my words have come true.”

“What’s to be done, what’s to be done? There is no remedy against force,” cried Billevich.

“True,” answered the lady: “but we ought not to go to that infamous house of our own will. Let murderers take us, bind us, and bear us. Not we alone shall suffer persecution, not us alone will the vengeance of traitors reach; but let them know that we prefer death to infamy.”

Here she turned with an expression of supreme contempt to Kmita: “Bind us, sir officer, or sir executioner, and take us with horses, for in another way we will not go.”

The blood rushed to Kmita's face; it seemed for a time that he would burst forth in terrible anger, but he restrained himself.

"Ah, gracious lady," said he, with a voice stifled from excitement, "I have not favor in your eyes, since you wish to make me a murderer, a traitor, and a man of violence. May God judge who is right—whether I serving the hetman, or you insulting me as a dog. God gave you beauty, but a heart venomous and implacable. You are glad to suffer yourself, that you may inflict still greater pain on another. You exceed the measure—as I live, you exceed it—and nothing will come of that."

"The maiden speaks well," cried Billevich, to whom daring came suddenly; "we will not go of our own will. Take us with dragoons."

But Kmita paid no attention whatever to him, so much was he excited, and so deeply touched.

"You are in love with the sufferings of people," continued he to Olenka, "and you proclaim me a traitor without judgment, without considering a reason, without permitting me to say a word in my own defence. Let it be so. But you will go to Kyedani—of your own will or against your will; it is all one. There my intentions will become evident; there you will know whether you have justly accused me of wrong, there conscience will tell you who of us was whose executioner. I want no other vengeance. God be with you, but I want that vengeance. And I want nothing more of you, for you have bent the bow to the breaking. There is a serpent under your beauty as under a flower."

"We will not go!" repeated Billevich, still more resolutely.

"As true as life we will not!" shouted Hudzynski and Dovgird.

Kmita turned to them; but he was very pale now, for rage was throttling him, and his teeth chattered as in a fever.

"*Ei!* Try now to resist! My horses are to be heard—my dragoons are coming. Will someone say again that he will not go?"

In fact the tramp of numerous horses was heard. All saw that there was no help, and Kmita said—

"Young lady, within the time that a man could repeat the Lord's Prayer twice you must be in the carriage, or your uncle will have a bullet in his head."

And it was evident that the wild frenzy of anger was taking possession more and more of Pan Andrei, for suddenly he shouted till the panes rattled in the windows, "To the road!"

That same instant the door of the front chamber opened quietly, and some strange voice inquired—

"To what place, Cavalier?"

All became as stone from amazement, and every eye was turned to the door, in which stood some small man in armor, and with a naked sabre in his hand.

Kmita retreated a step, as if he had seen an apparition. "Pan Volodyovski!" cried he.

"At your service!" answered the little man. And he advanced into the middle of the chamber; after him entered in a crowd Mirski, Zagloba, Pan Yan, Pan Stanislav, Stankievich, Oskyerko and Roh Kovalski.

"Ha!" cried Zagloba; "the Cossack caught a Tartar, and the Tartar holds him by the head!"



Billevich began to speak: "Whoever you are, gentlemen, save a citizen whom in spite of law, birth, and office they wish to arrest and confine. Save, brothers, the freedom of a noble, whoever you may be."

"Fear not!" answered Volodyovski, "the dragoons of this cavalier are already in fetters, and now he needs rescue himself more than you do."

"But a priest most of all!" added Zagloba.

"Sir Knight," said Volodyovski, turning to Kmita, "you have no luck with me; a second time I stand in your way. You did not expect me?"

"I did not! I thought you were in the hands of the prince."

"I have just slipped out of those hands—this is the road to Podlyasye. But enough! The first time that you bore away this lady I challenged you to sabres, is it not true?"

"True," answered Kmita, reaching involuntarily to his head.

"Now it is another affair. Then you were given to fighting—a thing usual with nobles, and not bringing the last infamy. Today you do not deserve that an honest man should challenge you."

"Why is that?" asked Kmita; and raising his proud head, he looked Volodyovski straight in the eyes.

"You are a traitor and a renegade," answered Volodyovski, "for you have cut down, like an executioner, honest soldiers who stood by their country—for it is through your work that this unhappy land is groaning under a new yoke. Speaking briefly, prepare for death, for as God is in heaven your last hour has come."

"By what right do you judge and execute me?" inquired Kmita.

"Gracious sir," answered Zagloba, seriously, "say your prayers instead of asking us about a right. But if you have anything to say in your defence, say it quickly, for you will not find a living soul to take your part. Once, as I have heard, this lady here present begged you from the hands of Pan Volodyovski; but after what you have done now, she will surely not take your part."

Here the eyes of all turned involuntarily to Panna Aleksandra, whose face at that moment was as if cut from stone; and she stood motionless, with downcast lids, icy-cold, but she did not advance a step or speak a word.

The voice of Kmita broke the silence—"I do not ask that lady for intercession."

Panna Aleksandra was silent.

"This way!" called Volodyovski, turning toward the door.

Heavy steps were heard, followed by the gloomy rattle of spurs; and six soldiers, with Yuzva Butrym in front, entered the room.

"Take him!" commanded Volodyovski, "lead him outside the village and put a bullet in his head."

The heavy hand of Butrym rested on the collar of Kmita, after that two other hands.

"Do not let them drag me like a dog!" said Kmita to Volodyovski. "I will go myself."

Volodyovski nodded to the soldiers, who released him at once, but surrounded him; and he walked out calmly, not speaking to any man, only whispering his prayers.

Panna Aleksandra went out also, through the opposite door, to the adjoining rooms. She passed the first and the second, stretching out her hand in the darkness before her; suddenly her head whirled, the breath failed in her bosom, and she fell, as if dead, on the floor.

Among those who were assembled in the first room a dull silence reigned for some time; at last Billevich broke it. "Is there no mercy for him?" asked he.

"I am sorry for him," answered Zagloba, "for he went manfully to death."

To which Mirski said, "He shot a number of officers out of my squadron, besides those whom he slew in attack."

"And from mine too," added Stankyeovich; "and he cut up almost all of Nyevyarovski's men."

"He must have had orders from Radzivill," said Zagloba.

"Gentlemen," said Billevich, "you bring the vengeance of Radzivill on my head."

"You must flee. We are going to Podlyasye, for there the squadrons have risen against traitors; go with us. There is no other help. You can take refuge in Byalovyej, where a relative of Pan Skshetuski is the king's hunter. There no one will find you."

"But my property will be lost."

"The Commonwealth will restore it to you."

"Pan Michael," said Zagloba, suddenly, "I will gallop off and see if there are not some orders of the hetman on that unfortunate man. You remember what I found on Roh Kovalski."

"Mount a horse. There is time yet; later the papers will be bloody. I ordered them to take him beyond the village, so that the lady might not be alarmed at the rattle of muskets, for women are sensitive and given to fright."

Zagloba went out, and after a while the tramp of the horse on which he rode away was heard. Volodyovski turned to the host.

"What is the lady doing?"

"Beyond doubt she is praying for that soul which must go before God."

"May the Lord give him eternal rest!" said Pan Yan. "Were it not for his willing service with Radzivill, I should be the first to speak in his favor; but if he did not wish to stand by his country, he might at least not have sold his soul to Radzivill."

"That is true!" added Volodyovski.

"He is guilty and deserves what has come upon him," said Pan Stanislaw; "but I would that Radzivill were in his place, or Opalinski—oh, Opalinski!"

"Of how far he is guilty, you have best proof here," put in Oskyerko; "this lady, who was his betrothed, did not find a word in his favor. I saw clearly that she was in torment, but she was silent; for how could she take the part of a traitor."

"She loved him once sincerely, I know that," said Billevich. "Permit me, gentlemen, to go and see what has befallen her, as this is a grievous trial for a woman."

"Make ready for the road!" cried the little knight, "for we shall merely give rest to the horses. We move farther. Kyedani is too near this place, and Radzivill must have returned already."

"Very well!" said the noble, and he left the room.

After a while his piercing cry was heard. The knights sprang toward the sound, not knowing what had happened; the servants also ran in with the lights, and they saw Billevich raising Olenka, whom he had found lying senseless on the floor.

Volodyovski sprang to help him, and together they placed her on the sofa. She gave no sign of life. They began to rub her. The old housekeeper ran in with cordials, and at last the young lady opened her eyes.

"Nothing is the matter," said the old housekeeper; "go ye to that room, we will take care of her."

Billevich conducted his guests. "Would that this had not happened!" said the anxious host. "Could you not take that unfortunate with you, and put him out of the way somewhere on the road, and not on my place? How can I travel now, how flee, when the young woman is barely alive, on the brink of serious illness?"

"The illness is all over now," answered Volodyovski. "We will put the lady in a carriage; you must both flee, for the vengeance of Radzivill spares no man."

"The lady may recover quickly," said Pan Yan.

"A comfortable carriage is ready, with horses attached, for Kmita brought it with him," said Volodyovski. "Go and tell the lady how things are, and that it is impossible to delay flight. Let her collect her strength. We must go, for before tomorrow morning Radzivill's troops may be here."

"True," answered Billevich; "I go!"

He went, and after a while returned with his niece, who had not only collected her strength, but was already dressed for the road. She had a high color on her face, and her eyes were gleaming feverishly.

"Let us go, let us go!" repeated she, entering the room.

Volodyovski went out on the porch for a moment to send men for the carriage; then he returned, and all began to make ready for the road.

Before a quarter of an hour had passed, the roll of wheels was heard outside the windows, and the stamping of horses' hoofs on the pavement with which the space before the entrance was covered.

"Let us go!" said Olenka.

"To the road!" cried the officers.

That moment the door was thrown open, and Zagloba burst into the room like a bomb.

"I have stopped the execution!" cried he.

Olenka from being ruddy became in one moment as white as chalk; she seemed ready to faint again; but no one paid attention to her, for all eyes were turned on Zagloba, who was panting like a whale, trying to catch breath.

"Have you stopped the execution?" inquired Volodyovski. "Why was that?"

"Why?—Let me catch breath. This is why—without Kmita, without that honorable cavalier, we should all of us be hanging on trees at Kyedani. *Uf!* we wanted to kill our benefactor, gentlemen! *Uf!*"

"How can that be?" cried all, at once.

“How can it be? Read this letter; in it is the answer.”

Here Zagloba gave a letter to Volodyovski. He began to read, stopping every moment and looking at his comrades; for it was in fact the letter in which Radzivill reproached Kmita bitterly because by his stubborn persistence he had freed the colonels and Zagloba from death at Kyedani.

“Well, what do you think?” repeated Zagloba, at each interval.

The letter ended, as we know, with the commission for Kmita to bring Billevich and his niece to Kyedani. Pan Andrei had the letter with him, apparently to show it to the sword-bearer in case of necessity, and it had not come to that.

Above all there remained no shadow of doubt that but for Kmita the two Skshetuskis, Volodyovski, and Zagloba would have been killed without mercy in Kyedani, immediately after the famous treaty with Pontus de la Gardie.

“Worthy gentlemen,” said Zagloba, “if you wish now to shoot him, as God is dear to me, I will leave your company and know you no longer.”

“There is nothing more to be said here!” replied Volodyovski.

“Ah!” said Skshetuski, seizing his head with both hands, “what a happiness that father read that letter at once, instead of bringing it to us!”

“They must have fed you with starlings from childhood!” cried Mirski.

“Ha! what do you say to that?” asked Zagloba. “Everyone else would have put a bullet in his head. But the moment they brought me the paper which they found on him, something touched me, because I have by nature a universal curiosity. Two men were going ahead of me with lanterns, and they were already in the field. Said I to them, ‘Give me light here; let me know what is in this!’ I began to read. I tell you, gentlemen, there was darkness before me as if some man had thumped my bald head with his fist. ‘In God’s name!’ said I, ‘why did you not show this letter?’ And he answered, ‘Because it did not suit me!’ Such a haughty fellow, even at the point of death! But didn’t I seize him, embrace him? ‘Benefactor,’ cried I, ‘without you the crows would have eaten us already!’ I gave orders to bring him back and lead him here; and I almost drove the breath out of the horse to tell you what had happened as quickly as possible. *Uf!*”

“That is a wonderful man, in whom it is clear as much good as evil resides,” said Pan Stanislaw. “If such would not—”

But before he had finished, the door opened and the soldiers came in with Kmita.

“You are free,” said Volodyovski, at once; “and while we are alive none of us will attack you. What a desperate man you are, not to show us that letter immediately! We would not have disturbed you.”

Here he turned to the soldiers: “Withdraw, and every man to horse!”

The soldiers withdrew, and Pan Andrei remained alone in the middle of the room. He had a calm face; but it was gloomy, and he looked at the officers standing before him, not without pride.

“You are free!” repeated Volodyovski; “go whithersoever you please, even to Radzivill, though it is painful to see a man of honorable blood aiding a traitor to his country.”

“Reflect well,” answered Kmita, “for I say beforehand that I shall go nowhere else but to Radzivill.”

“Join us; let the thunderbolt crush that tyrant of Kyedani!” cried Zagloba. “You will be to us a friend and dear comrade; the country, your mother, will forgive your offences against her.”

“It is no use,” said Kmita, with energy. “God will decide who serves the country better—you who begin civil war on your own responsibility, or I, serving a lord who alone can save this ill-fated Commonwealth. Go your own way, I will go mine. It is not time to convert you, and the attempt is vain; but I tell you from the depth of my soul that you are ruining the country—you who stand in the way of its salvation. I do not call you traitors, for I know that your intentions are honorable; but this is the position—the country is perishing, Radzivill stretches a hand to it, and you thrust swords into that hand, and in blindness make traitors of him and all those who stand by him.”

“As God is true!” said Zagloba, “if I had not seen how manfully you went to meet death, I should think that terror had disturbed your mind. To whom have you given oath—to Radzivill or Yan Kazimir, to Sweden or the Commonwealth? You have lost your wits!”

“I knew that it would be vain to attempt to convert you. Farewell!”

“But wait,” said Zagloba; “for here is a question of importance. Tell me, did Radzivill promise that he would spare us when you interceded for us in Kyedani?”

“He did,” said Kmita. “You were to remain during the war in Birji.”

“Know now your Radzivill, who betrays not only the country, not only the king, but his own servants.” When he had said this, Zagloba gave the hetman’s letter to Kmita. He took it, and began to run over it with his eyes; and as he read, the blood came to his face, and a blush of shame for his own leader covered his forehead more and more. All at once he crushed the letter in his hand, and threw it on the floor.

“Farewell!” said he. “Better I had perished at your hands!” and he went out of the room.

“Gentlemen,” said Pan Yan, after a moment’s silence, “an affair with that man is difficult, for he believes in his Radzivill as a Turk in Mohammed. I thought myself, as you do, that he was serving him for profit or ambition, but that is not the case. He is not a bad man, only an erring one.”

“If he has had faith in his Mohammed hitherto, I have undermined that faith infernally,” said Zagloba. “Did you see how he threw down the letter as soon as he had read it? There will be no small work between them, for that cavalier is ready to spring at the eyes, not only of Radzivill, but the devil. As God is dear to me, if a man had given me a herd of Turkish horses I should not be so well pleased as I am at having saved him from death.”

“It is true he owes his life to you,” said Billevich; “no one will deny that.”

“God be with him!” said Volodyovski; “let us take counsel what to do.”

“But what? Mount and take the road; the horses have rested a little,” answered Zagloba.

“True, we should go as quickly as possible! Are you going with us?” asked Mirski of the sword-bearer.

“I cannot remain here in peace, I must go. But if you wish to take the road at once, gentlemen, I say sincerely that it is not convenient to tear away now with you. Since that man has left here alive, they will not burn me up immediately, neither will they kill anyone; and before such a journey it is necessary to provide one’s self with this thing and that. God knows when I shall return. It is necessary to make one arrangement and another—to secrete the most valuable articles, send my cattle to the neighbors, pack trunks. I have also a little ready

money which I would take with me. I shall be ready tomorrow at daybreak; but to go now, in seize-grab fashion, I cannot.”

“On our part we cannot wait, for the sword is hanging over our heads,” said Volodyovski.

“And where do you wish to take refuge?”

“In the wilderness, as you advised. At least, I shall leave the maiden there; for I am not yet old, and my poor sabre may be of use to the country and the king.”

“Farewell! God grant us to meet in better times!”

“God reward you, gentlemen, for coming to rescue me. Doubtless we shall see one another in the field.”

“Good health!”

“Happy journey!”

They began to take farewell of one another, and then each came to bow down before Panna Billevich.

“You will see my wife and little boys in the wilderness: embrace them for me, and bloom in good health,” said Pan Yan.

“Remember at times the soldier, who, though he had no success in your eyes, is always glad to bend the skies for you.”

After them others approached, and last Zagloba.

“Receive, charming flower, farewell from an old man too. Embrace Pani Skshetuski and my little stumps. They are boys in a hundred!”

Instead of an answer, Olenka seized his hand, and pressed it in silence to her lips.

## Chapter XXII

That night, at the latest two hours after the departure of Volodyovski's detachment, Radzivill himself came to Billeviche at the head of his cavalry. He came to the assistance of Kmita, fearing lest he might fall into the hands of Volodyovski. When he learned what had happened he took the sword-bearer and Olenka and returned to Kyedani, without even giving rest to the horses.

The hetman was enraged beyond measure when he heard the story from the mouth of the sword-bearer, who told everything in detail, wishing to turn from himself the attention of the terrible magnate. He dared not protest, for the same reason, against the journey to Kyedani, and was glad in his soul that the storm ended thus. Radzivill, on his part, though suspecting Billevich of "practices" (conspiracy), had in fact too many cares to remember the matter at that moment.

The escape of Volodyovski might change affairs in Podlyasye. Horotkyevich and Yakub Kmita, who were there at the head of squadrons confederated against the hetman, were good soldiers, but not important; hence the whole confederacy had no weight. But now with Volodyovski had fled such men as Mirski, Stankyevich, and Oskyerko, without counting the little knight himself—all excellent officers, enjoying universal respect.

But in Podlyasye was Prince Boguslav also, who with the castle squadrons was opposing the confederates, waiting meanwhile for aid from his uncle the elector; but the elector delayed, evidently waiting for events; and the confederated forces were gaining strength, and adherents came to them every day.

For some time the hetman had been wishing to march to Podlyasye himself, and crush the insurgents with one blow, but he was restrained by the thought that let him set foot over the boundary of Jmud the whole country would rise, and the importance of the Radzivills be reduced in the eyes of the Swedes to zero. The prince was meditating whether it were not better to abandon Podlyasye altogether for the time, and bring Prince Boguslav to Jmud.

That was necessary and urgent. On the other hand threatening news came touching the deeds of the *voevoda* of Vityebsk. The hetman had tried to negotiate and bring him over to his plans, but Sapycha sent back the letters unanswered; and besides, as report said, the *voevoda* was selling his effects at auction, disposing of what he could, melting silver into coin, selling his cattle for ready money, pawning tapestry and valuables to the Jews, renting his lands and collecting troops.

The hetman, greedy by nature and incapable of making sacrifices of money, refused to believe, at first, that any man would cast his whole fortune without hesitation on the altar of the country; but time convinced him that this was really the case, for Sapycha's military power increased daily. Fugitives, settled nobles, patriots gathered around him—enemies of the hetman, and still worse, his blood relatives, such as Prince Michael Radzivill, of whom news came that he had ordered all the income of his estates still unoccupied by the enemy to be given to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk.

In this way then did the edifice, built by the pride of Yanush Radzivill, crack from its foundations and totter. The whole Commonwealth was to find a place in that edifice, but now it appeared in advance that it could not contain even Jmud.

The condition was becoming more and more like a vicious circle; for Radzivill might summon against the *voevoda* of Vityebsk Swedish forces which were occupying the country by degrees, but that would be to acknowledge his own weakness. Besides, the relations of the hetman with the generalissimo of the Swedes were strained since the affair at Klavany, thanks to the plan of Zagloba; and in spite of all explanations, irritation and distrust reigned between them.

The hetman, when setting out to aid Kmita, had hope that perhaps he might yet seize Volodyovski and destroy him; therefore, when his reckoning was at fault, he returned to Kyedani angry and frowning. It astonished him too that he did not meet Kmita on the road to Billeviche; this happened because Pan Andrei, whose dragoons Volodyovski did not fail to take with him, returned alone, and therefore chose the shortest road through the forest, avoiding Plemborg and Eyragoly.

After a night spent entirely on horseback the hetman came back to Kyedani on the following day at noon with his troops, and his first question was about Kmita. He was informed that Pan Andrei had returned, but without soldiers. Of that last circumstance the prince knew already; but he was curious to hear from the lips of Kmita himself the story, therefore he gave command to call him at once.

"There was no success for you, as there was none for me," said he, when Kmita stood before him. "The sword-bearer told me that you fell into the hands of that little devil."

"That is true," answered Kmita.

"And my letter saved you?"

"Of what letter are you speaking, your highness? For when they had read themselves the one found on me, they read to me in return another letter, written to the commandant of Birji."

The gloomy face of Radzivill was covered as it were with a bloody skin. "Then do you know?"

"I know!" answered Kmita, emphatically. "Your highness, how could you act so with me? For a common noble it is a shame to break his word, but what is it for a prince and a leader?"

"Silence!" cried Radzivill.

"I will not be silent, for before the eyes of those men I had to take your place. They were urging me to join them; but I would not, and said, 'I serve Radzivill; for with him is justice, with him virtue.' Then they showed me that letter: 'See what a man your Radzivill is!' I had to shut my mouth and gulp shame."

The hetman's lips began to quiver from fury. A wild desire seized him to wring that insolent head from its shoulders, and he was already raising his hands to clap for the servants. Rage closed his eyes, stopped the breath in his breast; and surely Kmita would have paid dearly for his outburst were it not for the sudden attack of asthma which at that moment seized the prince. His face grew black, he sprang up from the chair and began to beat the air with his hands, his eyes were coming out of his head, and from his throat rose a hoarse bellow, in which Kmita barely heard the word, "Choking!"

At the alarm the servants and the castle physicians ran in. They tried to restore the prince, who had lost consciousness. They roused him in about an hour; and when he showed signs of life Kmita left the room.

In the corridor he met Kharlamp, who had recovered from the wounds and bruises received in the battle with Oskyerko's insurgent Hungarians.



“What news?” asked Great Mustache.

“He has come to himself,” answered Kmita.

“H’m! But any day he may not come! Bad for us, Colonel; for when the prince dies they will grind out his deeds on us. My whole hope is in Volodyovski. I trust that he will shield his old comrades; therefore I tell you” (here Kharlamp lowered his voice) “that I am glad he escaped.”

“Was he cornered so closely, then?”

“What, cornered! From that willow grove in which we surrounded him wolves could not have sprung out, and he sprang out. May the bullets strike him! Who knows, who knows that we shall not have to grasp hold of his skirts, for there is something bad about us here. The nobles are turning away terribly from our prince, and all say that they would rather have a real enemy, a Swede, even a Tartar, than a renegade. That is the position. And, besides, the prince gives more and more orders to seize and imprison citizens—which, speaking between us, is against law and liberty. Today they brought in the sword-bearer of Rossyeni.”

“Have they indeed?”

“Yes, with his niece. The lady is a beauty. You are to be congratulated!”

“Where are they lodged?”

“In the right wing. Five rooms are assigned them; they cannot complain, unless of this—that a guard walks before their doors. And when will the wedding be, Colonel?”

“The music is not yet engaged for it. Farewell!” added Kmita.

Pan Andrei went from Kharlamp to his own room. A sleepless night with its stormy events, and his last meeting with the prince had wearied him to such a degree that he was barely able to stand. And as every touch causes pain to a wearied, bruised body, so had he a soul full of anguish. Kharlamp’s simple question “When will the wedding be?” pierced him sorely; for before his eyes at once appeared, as if alive, the icy face of Olenka, and her fixed lips when their silence confirmed the death-sentence against him. Even a word from her would have saved him. Volodyovski would have respected it. All the sorrow and pain which Kmita felt at that moment consisted in this, that she did not say that word. Still she had not hesitated to save him twice before. Such now was the precipice between them, so utterly quenched in her heart was not merely love, but simple kind feeling, which it was possible to have even for a stranger—simple pity, which it is incumbent to have for everyone. The more Kmita thought over this, the more cruel did Olenka seem to him, the greater his complaint against her, and the deeper his wrong. “What have I done of such character,” asked he of himself, “that I am scorned, like one cursed by the church? Even if it were evil to serve Radzivill, still I feel innocent, since I can answer on my conscience, that not for promotion, not for gain, nor for bread do I serve him, but because I see profit to the country from my service. Why am I condemned without trial? Well, well! Let it be so! I will not go to clear myself of uncommitted offences, nor to beg love,” repeated he for the thousandth time.

Still the pain did not cease; it increased. On returning to his quarters Pan Andrei cast himself on the bed and tried to sleep; but he could not, despite all his weariness. After a while he rose and began to walk through the room. From time to time he raised his hands to his forehead and said aloud to himself—

“Oh, the heart of that woman is hard!”

And again—

“I did not expect that of you, young lady—May God reward you!”

In these meditations an hour passed, and a second. At last he tired himself out and began to doze, sitting on the bed; but before he fell asleep an attendant of Radzivill, Pan Skillandz, roused him and summoned him to the prince.

Radzivill felt better already, and breathed more freely, but on his leaden face could be seen a great weakening. He sat in a deep armchair, covered with leather, having before him a physician whom he sent out immediately after Kmita entered.

“I had one foot in the other world and through you,” said he to Pan Andrei.

“Your highness, it was not my fault; I said what I thought.”

“Let no further mention be made of this. But do not add to the weight of the burden which I bear; and know this, that what I have forgiven you I would not forgive another.”

Kmita was silent.

“If I gave order,” added the prince, after a while, “to execute in Birji these men whom at your request I pardoned in Kyedani, it was not because I wanted to deceive you, but to spare you pain. I yielded apparently, because I have a weakness for you. But their death was imperative. Am I an executioner, or do you think that I spill blood merely to feast my eyes on red? But when older you will know that if a man would achieve anything in this world, he is not free to sacrifice great causes to smaller. It was imperative that these men should die here in Kyedani, for see what has happened through your prayers: resistance is increased in the country, civil war begun, friendship with the Swedes is strained, an evil example given to others, from which mutiny is spreading like a plague. More than this, I had to go on a later expedition in my own person, and be filled with confusion in the presence of the whole army; you came near death at their hands, and now they will go to Podlyasye and become chiefs of an uprising. Behold and learn! If they had perished in Kyedani, nothing of all this would have happened; but when imploring for them you were thinking only of your own feelings. I sent them to die at Birji, for I am experienced, I see farther; for I know from practice that whoso in running stumbles, even against a small stone, will easily fall, and whoso falls may not rise again, and the faster he was running the less likely is he to rise. God save us, what harm these people have done!”

“They are not so important as to undo the whole work of your highness.”

“Had they done no more than rouse distrust between me and Pontus, the harm would be incalculable. It has been explained that they, not my men, attacked the Swedes; but the letter with threats which Pontus wrote to me remains, and I do not forgive him that letter. Pontus is brother-in-law of the king, but it is doubtful whether he could become mine, and whether the Radzivill thresholds are not too high for him.”

“Let your highness treat with the king himself, and not with his servant.”

“So I intend to do; and if vexation does not kill me I will teach that little Swede modesty—if troubles do not kill me; and would that that were all, for no one here spares me thorns or pain. It is grievous to me, grievous! Who would believe that I am the man who was at Loyovo, Jechytsa, Mozyr, Turoff, Kiev, Berestechko? The whole Commonwealth gazed at me and Vishnyevetski, as at two suns. Everything trembled before Hmelnitski, but he trembled before me. And the very men whom in time of universal disaster I led from victory to victory, forsake me today and raise their hands against me as against a parricide.”

“But all are not thus, for there are some who believe in your highness yet,” said Kmita, abruptly.

“They believe till they stop,” added Radzivill, with bitterness. “Great is the love of the nobles! God grant that I be not poisoned by it! Stab after stab does each one of you give me, though it occurs not to any that—”

“Consider intentions, not words, your highness.”

“I give thanks for the counsel. Henceforth I will consider carefully what face each common man shows me, and endeavor with care to please all.”

“Those are bitter words, your highness.”

“But is life sweet? God created me for great things, and look at me; I must wear out my powers in district struggles, which village might wage against village. I wanted to measure myself with mighty monarchs, and I have fallen so low that I must hunt some Volodyovski through my own estates. Instead of astonishing the world with my power, I astonish it with my weakness; instead of paying for the ashes of Vilna with the ashes of Moscow, I have to thank you for digging trenches around Kyedani. Oh, it is narrow for me, and I am choking—not alone because the asthma is throttling me; helplessness is killing me, inactivity is killing me! It is narrow for me and heavy for me! Do you understand?”

“I thought myself that affairs would go differently,” answered Kmita, gloomily.

Radzivill began to breathe with effort.

“Before another crown can come to me they have crowned me with thorns. I commanded the minister, Aders, to look at the stars. He made a figure and said that the conjunctions were evil, but that they would pass. Meanwhile I am suffering torments. In the night there is something which will not let me sleep; something walks in the room, faces of some kind stare at me in the bed, and at times a sudden cold comes. This means that death is walking around me. I am suffering. I must be prepared for more treason and apostasy, for I know that there are men still who waver.”

“There are no longer such,” answered Kmita, “for whoso was to go has gone.”

“Do not deceive yourself; you see that the remnant of the Polish people are beginning to take thought.”

Kmita remembered what he had heard from Kharlamp and was silent.

“Never mind!” continued Radzivill, “it is oppressive and terrible, but it is necessary to endure. Tell no one of what you have heard from me. It is well that this attack came today, for it will not be repeated; and especially today I need strength, for I wish to have a feast, and show a glad face to strengthen the courage of people. And do you brighten your face and tell nothing to any man, for what I say to you is for this purpose only, that you at least refrain from tormenting me. Anger carried me away today. Be careful that this happen not again, for it is a question of your head. But I have forgiven you. Of those trenches with which you surrounded Kyedani, Peterson himself would not be ashamed. Go now and send me Myeleshko. They have brought in deserters from his squadron—common soldiers. I shall order them hanged to a man. We need to give an example. Farewell! It must be joyful today in Kyedani.”

## Chapter XXIII

The sword-bearer of Rossyeni had a difficult struggle with Panna Aleksandra before she consented to go to that feast which the hetman had prepared for his people. He had to implore almost with tears the stubborn, bold girl, and swear that it was a question of his head; that all, not only the military, but citizens dwelling in the region of Kyedani, as far as Radzivill's hand reached, were obliged to appear under terror of the prince's wrath: how then could they oppose who were subject to the favor and disfavor of the terrible man? Olenka, not to endanger her uncle, gave way.

The company was really not small, for he had forced many of the surrounding nobles to come with their wives and daughters. But the military were in the majority, and especially officers of the foreign regiments, who remained nearly all with the prince. Before he showed himself to the guests he prepared an affable countenance, as if no care had weighed on him previously; he wished with that banquet to rouse courage, not only in his adherents and the military, but to show that most of the citizens were on his side, and only turbulent people opposed the union with Sweden. He did not spare therefore trouble or outlay to make the banquet lordly, that the echo of it might spread as widely as possible through the land. Barely had darkness covered the country when hundreds of barrels were set on fire along the road leading to the castle and in the courtyard; from time to time cannons were thundering, and soldiers were ordered to give forth joyous shouts.

Carriages and covered wagons followed one another on the road, bringing personages of the neighborhood and the "cheaper" (smaller) nobility. The courtyard was filled with equipages, horses, and servants, who had either come with guests or belonged to the town. Crowds dressed in velvet, brocade, and costly furs filled the so-called "Golden Hall;" and when the prince appeared at last, all glittering from precious stones, and with a welcoming smile on his face, usually gloomy, and besides wrinkled at that time by sickness, the first officers shouted in one voice—

"Long live the prince hetman! Long live the *voevoda* of Vilna!"

Radzivill cast his eyes suddenly on the assembled citizens, wishing to convince himself whether they repeated the cries of the soldiers. In fact a few tens of voices from the most timid breasts repeated the cry; the prince on his part began at once to bow, and to thank them for the sincere and "unanimous" love.

"With you, gracious gentlemen!" said he, "we will manage those who would destroy the country. God reward you! God reward you!"

And he went around through the hall, stopped before acquaintances, not sparing titles in his speech—"Lord brother," "dear neighbor;" and more than one gloomy face grew bright under the warm rays of the magnate's favor.

"But it is not possible," said those who till recently looked on his deeds with dislike, "that such a lord, such a lofty senator should wish ill to his country; either he could not act differently from what he has acted, or there is some secret in this, which will come out for the good of the Commonwealth."

"In fact, we have more rest already from one enemy who does not wish to light about us with the Swedes."

"God grant that all turn out for the best."

Some, however, shook their heads, or said with a look to one another, "We are here because they put the knife to our throats."

But these were silent; meanwhile others, more easily brought over, said in loud voices, to be heard by the prince—

"It is better to change the king than ruin the Commonwealth."

"Let the kingdom think of itself, but we will think of ourselves."

"Besides, who has given us an example, if not Great Poland? *Extrema necessitas, extremis nititur rationibus! Tentanda omnia!*"

"Let us put all confidence in our prince, and trust him in everything. Let him have Lithuania and the government in his hands."

"He deserves both. If he will not save us, we perish—in him is salvation."

"He is nearer to us than Yan Kazimir, for he is our blood."

Radzivill caught with an eager ear those voices, dictated by fear or flattery, and did not consider that they came from the mouths of weak persons, who in danger would be the first to desert him—from the mouths of persons whom every breath of wind might bend as a wave. And he was charmed with those expressions, and tempted himself, or his own conscience, repeating from the maxims he had heard that which seemed to excuse him the most: "*Extrema necessitas, extremis nititur rationibus!*"

But when passing a large group of nobles he heard from the lips of Pan Yujits, "He is nearer to us than Yan Kazimir," his face grew bright altogether. To compare him with the king, and then to prefer him, flattered his pride; he approached Pan Yujits at once and said—

"You are right, brothers, for in Yan Kazimir, in one pot of blood there is a quart of Lithuanian, but in me there is nothing but Lithuanian. If hitherto the quart has commanded the potful, it depends on you, brothers, to change that condition."

"We are ready to drink a potful to your health," answered Pan Yujits.

"You have struck my mind. Rejoice, brothers; I would gladly invite hither all Lithuania."

"It would have to be trimmed still better," said Pan Shchanyetski of Dalново—a bold man, and cutting with the tongue as with the sword.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the prince, fixing his eyes on him.

"That the heart of your highness is wider than Kyedani."

Radzivill gave a forced laugh and went farther.

At this moment the marshal of the castle approached him with the announcement that the banquet was ready. Crowds began to flow, like a river, after the prince to the same hall in which not long before the union with Sweden was declared. The marshal seated the guests according to dignity, calling each one by name and rank. But it was evident that the orders of the prince had been issued in advance on this point, for Kmita's place was between Billevich and Panna Aleksandra.

The hearts jumped in both when they heard their names called in succession, and both hesitated at the first moment; but it occurred to them that to refuse would be to draw on themselves the eyes of all present, therefore they sat side by side. They were angry and ill at ease. Pan Andrei determined to be as indifferent as if a stranger were sitting next him; but soon he understood that he could not be so indifferent, and that his neighbor was not such a

stranger that they could begin an ordinary conversation. But both saw that in that throng of persons of the most varied feelings, interests, and passions, he thinks only of her and she of him. For this very reason it was awkward for them. They would not and could not tell sincerely, clearly, and openly, what lay on their hearts. They had the past, but no future. Recent feelings, confidence, even acquaintance, were all broken. There was nothing between them save the feeling of disappointment and offence. If this link should burst, they would be freer; but time only could bring forgetfulness: it was too soon for that.

For Kmita it was so disagreeable that he almost suffered torments; still he would not have yielded, for anything in the world, the place which the marshal had given him. He caught with his ear the rustle of her dress; he watched every movement of hers—he watched while feigning not to watch; he felt the warmth beating from her, and all this caused him a certain painful delight.

At the same moment he discovered that she too was equally on the alert, though she was as if not paying attention. An unconquerable desire of looking at her drew him on; therefore he glanced sidewise, until he saw her clear forehead, her eyes covered with dark lashes, and her fair face, not touched by paint, as were those of other ladies. For him there had always been something attractive in that face, so that the heart in the poor knight was shivering from sorrow and pain. “To think that such animosity could find a place with such beauty,” thought he. But the offence was too deep; hence he added soon in his soul, “I have nothing to do with you; let some other man take you.”

And he felt suddenly that if that “other” were merely to try to make use of the permission, he would cut him into pieces as small as chopped straw. At the very thought terrible anger seized him; but he calmed himself when he remembered that he was still alone, that no “other” was sitting near her, and that no one, at least at that moment, was trying to win her.

“I will look at her once more and turn to the other side,” thought he.

And again he cast a sidelong glance; but just at that moment she did the same, and both dropped their eyes with all quickness, terribly confused, as if they had been caught in a crime.

Panna Aleksandra too was struggling with herself. From all that had happened, from the action of Kmita at Billeviche, from the words of Zagloba and Pan Yan, she learned that Kmita erred, but that he was not so guilty and did not deserve such contempt, such unreserved condemnation, as she had thought previously. Besides, he had saved those worthy men from death, and there was so much in him of a certain grand pride that when he had fallen into their hands, having a letter on his person sufficient to vindicate him, or at least to save him from execution, he did not show that letter, he said not a word, but went to death with head erect.

Olenka, reared by an old soldier who placed contempt for death above all virtues, worshipped courage with her whole heart; therefore she could not resist an involuntary admiration for that stern knightly daring which could be driven from the body only with the soul.

She understood also that if Kmita served Radzivill he did so in perfect good faith; what a wrong therefore to condemn him for intentional treason! And still she had put that wrong on him, she had spared him neither injustice nor contempt, she would not forgive him even in the face of death.

“Right the wrong,” said her heart; “all is finished between you, but it is thy duty to confess that thou hast judged him unjustly. In this is thy duty to thyself also.”

But there was in this lady no little pride, and perhaps something of stubbornness; therefore it came at once to her mind that that cavalier was not worth such satisfaction, and a flush came to her face.

“If he is not worth it, let him go without it,” said her mind.

But conscience said further that whether the injured one is worth satisfaction or not, it is needful to give it; but on the other side her pride brought forth continually new arguments—

“If—which might be—he was unwilling to listen, she would have to swallow her shame for nothing. And secondly, guilty or not guilty, whether he acts purposely or through blindness, it is enough that he holds with traitors and enemies of the country, and helps them to ruin it. It is the same to the country whether he lacks reason or honesty. God may forgive him; men must and ought to condemn, and the name of traitor will remain with him. That is true! If he is not guilty, is she not right in despising a man who has not the wit to distinguish wrong from right, crime from virtue?”

Here anger began to carry the lady away, and her cheeks flushed.

“I will be silent!” said she to herself. “Let him suffer what he has deserved. Until I see penitence I have the right to condemn him.”

Then she turned her glance to Kmita, as if wishing to be convinced whether penitence was yet to be seen in his face. Just then it was that the meeting of their eyes took place, at which both were so shame-stricken.

Olenka, it may be, did not see penitence in the face of the cavalier, but she saw pain and suffering; she saw that face pale as after sickness; therefore deep pity seized her, tears came perforce to her eyes, and she bent still more over the table to avoid betraying emotion.

Meanwhile the banquet was becoming animated. At first all were evidently under a disagreeable impression, but with the cups came fancy. The bustle increased. At last the prince rose—

“Gracious gentlemen, I ask leave to speak.”

“The prince wishes to speak! The prince wishes to speak!” was called from every side.

“I raise the first toast to the Most Serene King of Sweden, who gives us aid against our enemies, and ruling meanwhile this country, will not leave it till he brings peace. Arise, gentlemen, for that health is drunk standing.”

The guests rose, except ladies, and filled their glasses, but without shouts, without enthusiasm. Pan Shchanyetski of Dalnovo muttered something to his neighbors, and they bit their mustaches to avoid laughter. It was evident that he was jeering at the King of Sweden.

It was only when the prince raised the other toast to his “beloved guests” kind to Kyedani, who had come even from distant places to testify their confidence in the intentions of the host, that they answered him with a loud shout—

“We thank you from our hearts!”

“The health of the prince!”

“Our Hector of Lithuania!”

“May he live! Long life to the prince hetman, our *voevoda*.”

Now Pan Yujits, a little drunk already, cried with all the strength of his lungs, “Long life to Yanush I, Grand Prince of Lithuania!”

Radzivill blushed like a young lady at her betrothal, but remarking that those assembled were stubbornly silent and looking at him with astonishment, he said—

“That is in your power; but your wishes are premature, Pan Yujits, premature.”

“Long live Yanush I, Grand Prince of Lithuania!” repeated Pan Yujits, with the stubbornness of a drunken man.

Pan Shchanyetski rose in his turn and raised his glass. “True,” said he, coolly, “Grand Prince of Lithuania, King of Poland, and Emperor of Germany!”

Again an interval of silence. Suddenly the company burst out into laughter. All were staring, their mustaches were dancing on their reddened faces, and laughter shook their bodies, echoed from the arches of the hall, and lasted long; and as suddenly as it rose so suddenly did it die on the lips of all at sight of the hetman’s face, which was changing like a rainbow.

Radzivill restrained the terrible anger which had seized his breast and said, “Low jests, Pan Shchanyetski.”

The noble pouted, and not at all disconcerted answered: “That also is an elective throne, and we cannot wish your highness too much. If as a noble your highness may become King of Poland, as a prince of the Gorman Empire you might be raised to the dignity of Emperor. It is as far or near for you to the one as to the other; and who does not wish this to you, let him rise. I will meet him with the sabre.” Here he turned to the company: “Rise, whoso does not wish the crown of the German Empire to the *voevoda* of Vilna!”

Of course no one rose. They did not laugh either, for in the voice of Pan Shchanyetski there was so much insolent malice that an involuntary disquiet came upon all as to what would happen.

Nothing happened, save that relish for the banquet was spoiled. In vain did the servants of the castle fill the glasses every moment. Wine could not scatter gloomy thoughts in the minds of the banqueters, nor the disquiet increasing every moment. Radzivill concealed his anger with difficulty, for he felt that, thanks to the toasts of Pan Shchanyetski, he was belittled in the eyes of the assembled nobles, and that, intentionally or not, that man had forced the conviction on those present that the *voevoda* of Vilna was no nearer the throne of grand prince than the crown of Germany. Everything was turned into jests, into ridicule, while the banquet was given mainly to accustom men’s minds to the coming rule of the Radzivills. What is more, Radzivill was concerned lest this ridicule of his hopes should make a bad impression on the officers, admitted to the secret of his plans. In fact, deep dissatisfaction was depicted on their faces.

Ganhoff filled glass after glass, and avoided the glance of the prince. Kmita, however, did not drink, but looked at the table before him with frowning brow, as if he were thinking of something, or lighting an internal battle. Radzivill trembled at the thought that a light might flash into that mind any moment, and bring forth truth from the shadows, and then that officer, who furnished the single link binding the remnants of the Polish squadrons with the cause of Radzivill, would break the link, even if he had at the same time to drag the heart out of his own breast.

Kmita had annoyed Radzivill already over much; and without the marvellous significance given him by events, he would long since have fallen a victim to his own impetuosity and the wrath of the hetman. But the prince was mistaken in suspecting him of a hostile turn of thought, for Pan Andrei was occupied wholly with Olenka and that deep dissension which separated them.



At times it seemed to him that he loved that woman sitting at his side beyond the whole world; then again he felt such hatred that he would give death to her if he could but give it to himself as well.

Life had become so involved that for his simple nature it was too difficult, and he felt what a wild beast feels when entangled in a net from which it cannot escape.

The unquiet and gloomy humor of the whole banquet irritated him in the highest degree. It was simply unendurable.

The banquet became more gloomy every moment. It seemed to those present that they were feasting under a leaden roof resting on their heads.

At that time a new guest entered the hall. The prince, seeing him, exclaimed—

“That is Pan Suhanyets, from Cousin Boguslav! Surely with letters!”

The newly arrived bowed profoundly. “True, Most Serene Prince, I come straight from Podlyasye.”

“But give me the letters, and sit at the table yourself. The worthy guests will pardon me if I do not defer the reading, though we are sitting at a banquet, for there may be news which I shall need to impart to you. Sir Marshal, pray think of the welcome envoy there.”

Speaking thus, he took from the hands of Pan Suhanyets a package of letters, and broke the seal of the first in haste.

All present fixed curious eyes on his face, and tried to divine the substance of the letter. The first letter did not seem to announce anything favorable, for the face of the prince was filled with blood, and his eyes gleamed with wild anger.

“Brothers!” said the hetman, “Prince Boguslav reports to me that those men who have chosen to form a confederation rather than march against the enemy at Vilna, are ravaging at this moment my villages in Podlyasye. It is easier of course to wage war with peasant women in villages. Worthy knights, there is no denying that!—Never mind! Their reward will not miss them.”

Then he took the second letter, but had barely cast his eyes on it when his face brightened with a smile of triumph and delight—

“The province of Syeradz has yielded to the Swedes!” cried he, “and following Great Poland, has accepted the protection of Karl Gustav.”

And after a while another—

“This is the latest dispatch. Good for us, worthy gentlemen, Yan Kazimir is beaten at Vidava and Jarnov. The army is leaving him! He is retreating on Krakow; the Swedes are pursuing. My cousin writes that Krakow too must fall.”

“Let us rejoice, gracious gentlemen,” said Shchanyetski, with a strange voice.

“Yes, let us rejoice!” repeated the hetman, without noticing the tone in which Shchanyetski had spoken. And delight issued from the whole person of the prince, his face became in one moment as it were younger, his eyes gained lustre; with hands trembling from happiness, he broke the seal of the last letter, looked, became all radiant as the sun, and cried—

“Warsaw is taken! Long life to Karl Gustav!”

Here he first noticed that the impression which these tidings produced on those present was entirely different from that which he felt himself. For all sat in silence, looking forward with

uncertain glance. Some frowned; others covered their faces with their hands. Even courtiers of the hetman, even men of weak spirit, did not dare to imitate the joy of the prince at the tidings that Warsaw was taken, that Krakow must fall, and that the provinces, one after the other, would leave their legal king and yield to the enemy. Besides, there was something monstrous in the satisfaction with which the supreme leader of half the armies of the Commonwealth, and one of its most exalted senators, announced its defeats. The prince saw that it was necessary to soften the impression.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “I should be the first to weep with you, if harm were coming to the Commonwealth; but here the Commonwealth suffers no harm, it merely changes kings. Instead of the ill-fated Yan Kazimir we shall have a great and fortunate warrior. I see all wars now finished, and enemies vanquished.”

“Your highness is right,” answered Shchanyetski. “Cup for cup, the same thing that Radzeyovski and Opalinski held forth at Uistsie. Let us rejoice, gracious gentlemen! Death to Yan Kazimir!”

When he had said this, Shchanyetski pushed back his chair with a rattle, and walked out of the hall.

“The best of wines that are in the cellar!” cried the prince.

The marshal hastened to carry out the order. In the hall it was as noisy as in a hive. When the first impression had passed, the nobles began to talk of the news and discuss. They asked Pan Suhanyets for details from Podlyasye, and adjoining Mazovia, which the Swedes had already occupied.

After a while pitchy kegs were rolled into the hall and opened. Spirits began to grow brighter and improve by degrees.

More and more frequently voices were heard to repeat: “All is over! perhaps it is for the best!” “We must bend to fortune!” “The prince will not let us be wronged.” “It is better for us than for others. Long life to Yanush Radzivill, our *voevoda*, hetman, and prince!”

“Grand Prince of Lithuania!” cried again Pan Yujits.

But at this time neither silence nor laughter answered him; but a number of tens of hoarse throats roared at once—

“That is our wish—from heart and soul our wish! Long life to him! May he rule!”

The magnate rose with a face as red as purple. “I thank you, brothers,” said he, seriously.

In the hall it had become as suffocating and hot, from lights and the breath of people, as in a bath.

Panna Aleksandra bent past Kmita to her uncle. “I am weak,” said she; “let us leave here.”

In truth her face was pale, and on her forehead glittered drops of perspiration; but the sword-bearer of Rossyeni cast an unquiet glance at the hetman, fearing lest it be taken ill of him to leave the table. In the field he was a gallant soldier, but he feared Radzivill with his whole soul.

At that moment, to complete the evil, the hetman said—

“He is my enemy who will not drink all my toasts to the bottom, for I am joyful today.”

“You have heard?” asked Billevich.

“Uncle, I cannot stay longer, I am faint,” said Olenka, with a beseeching voice.

“Then go alone,” answered Pan Tomash.

The lady rose, wishing to slip away unobserved; but her strength failed, and she caught the side of the chair in her weakness.

Suddenly a strong knightly arm embraced her, and supported the almost fainting maiden.

“I will conduct you,” said Pan Andrei.

And without asking for permission he caught her form as if with an iron hoop. She leaned on him more and more; before they reached the door, she was hanging powerless on his arm.

Then he raised her as lightly as he would a child, and bore her out of the hall.

## Chapter XXIV

That evening after the banquet, Pan Andrei wished absolutely to see the prince, but he was told that the prince was occupied in a secret interview with Pan Suhanyets.

He went therefore early next morning, and was admitted at once.

“Your highness,” said he, “I have come with a prayer.”

“What do you wish me to do for you?”

“I am not able to live here longer. Each day increases my torment. There is nothing for me here in Kyedani. Let your highness find some office for me, send me whithersoever it please you. I have heard that regiments are to move against Zolotarenko; I will go with them.”

“Zolotarenko would be glad to have an uproar with us, but he cannot get at us in any way, for Swedish protection is here already, and we cannot go against him without the Swedes. Count Magnus advances with terrible dilatoriness because he does not trust me. But is it so ill for you here in Kyedani at our side?”

“Your highness is gracious to me, and still my suffering is so keen that I cannot describe it. To tell the truth, I thought everything would take another course—I thought that we should fight, that we should live in fire and smoke, day and night in the saddle. God created me for that. But to sit here, listen to quarrels and disputes, rot in inactivity, or hunt down my own people instead of the enemy—I cannot endure it, simply I am unable. I prefer death a hundred times. As God is dear to me, this is pure torture!”

“I know whence that despair comes. From love—nothing more. When older, you will learn to laugh at these torments. I saw yesterday that you and that maiden were more and more angry with each other.”

“I am nothing to her, nor she to me. What has been is ended.”

“But what, did she fall ill yesterday?”

“She did.”

The prince was silent for a while, then said: “I have advised you already, and I advise once more, if you care for her take her. I will give command to have the marriage performed. There will be a little screaming and crying—that’s nothing! After the marriage take her to your quarters; and if next day she still cries, that will be the most.”

“I beg, your highness, for some office in the army, not for marriage,” said Kmita, roughly.

“Then you do not want her?”

“I do not. Neither I her, nor she me. Though it were to tear the soul within me, I will not ask her for anything. I only wish to be as far away as possible, to forget everything before my mind is lost. Here there is nothing to do; and inactivity is the worst of all, for trouble gnaws a man like sickness. Remember, your highness, how grievous it was for you yesterday till good news came. So it is with me today, and so it will be. What have I to do? Seize my head, lest bitter thoughts split it, and sit down? What can I wait for? God knows what kind of times these are, God knows what kind of war this is, which I cannot understand nor grasp with my mind—which causes me still more grief. Now, as God is dear to me, if your highness will not use me in some way, I will flee, collect a party, and fight.”

“Whom?” asked the prince.

“Whom? I will go to Vilna, and attack as I did Hovanski. Let your highness permit my squadron to go with me, and war will begin.”

“I need your squadron here against internal enemies.”

“That is the pain, that is the torment, to watch in Kyedani with folded arms, or chase after some Volodyovski whom I would rather have as a comrade by my side.”

“I have an office for you,” said the prince. “I will not let you go to Vilna, nor will I give you a squadron; and if you go against my will, collect a squadron and fight, know that by this you cease to serve me.”

“But I shall serve the country.”

“He serves the country who serves me—I have convinced you of that already. Remember also that you have taken an oath to me. Finally, if you go as a volunteer you will go also from under my jurisdiction, and the courts are waiting for you with sentences. In your own interest you should not do this.”

“What power have courts now?”

“Beyond Kovno none; but here, where the country is still quiet, they have not ceased to act. It is true you may not appear, but decisions will be given and will weigh upon you until times of peace. Whom they have once declared they will remember even in ten years, and the nobles of Lauda will see that you are not forgotten.”

“To tell the truth to your highness, when it comes to atonement I will yield. Formerly I was ready to war with the whole Commonwealth, and to win for myself as many sentences as the late Pan Lashch, who had a cloak lined with them. But now a kind of galled spot has come out on my conscience. A man fears to wade farther than he wished, and mental disquiet touching everything gnaws him.”

“Are you so squeamish? But a truce to this! I will tell you, if ’tis your wish to go hence, I have an office for you and a very honorable one. Ganhoff is creeping into my eyes for this office, and talks of it every day. I have been thinking to give it to him. Still ’tis impossible to do so, for I must have a man of note, not with a trifling name, not a foreigner, but a Pole, who by his very person will bear witness that not all men have left me, that there are still weighty citizens on my side. You are just the man; you have so much good daring, are more willing to make others bend than to bow down yourself.”

“What is the task?”

“To go on a long journey.”

“I am ready today!”

“And at your own cost, since I am straitened for money. Some of my revenues the enemy have taken; others, our own people are ravaging, and no part comes in season; besides, all the army which I have here, has fallen to my expense. Of a certainty the treasurer, whom I have now behind a locked door, does not give me a copper—first, because he has not the wish to do so; second; because he has not the coin. Whatever public money there is, I take without asking; but is there much? From the Swedes you will get anything sooner than money, for their hands tremble at sight of a farthing.”

“Your highness need not explain. If I go, it will be at my own expense.”

“But it will be necessary to appear with distinction, without sparing.”

“I will spare nothing.”

The hetman’s face brightened; for in truth he had no ready money, though he had plundered Vilna not long before, and, besides, he was greedy by nature. It was also true that the revenues from his immense estates, extending from Livonia to Kiev and from Smolensk to Mazovia, had really ceased to flow in, and the cost of the army increased every day.

“That suits me,” said he; “Ganhoff would begin at once to knock on my coffers, but you are another kind of man. Hear, then, your instructions.”

“I am listening with care.”

“First, you will go to Podlyasye. The road is perilous; for the confederates, who left the camp, are there and acting against me. How you will escape them is your own affair. Yakub Kmita might spare you; but beware of Horotkyevich, Jyromski, and especially of Volodyovski with his Lauda men.”

“I have been in their hands already, and no evil has happened to me.”

“That is well. You will go to Zabludovo, where Pan Harasimovich lives; you will order him to collect what money he can from my revenues, the public taxes and whencesoever it is possible, and send it to me—not to this place, however, but to Tyłtsa, where there are effects of mine already. What goods or property he can pawn, let him pawn; what he can get from the Jews, let him take. Secondly, let him think how to ruin the confederates. But that is not your mission; I will send him instructions under my own hand. You will give him the letter and move straight to Tykotsin, to Prince Boguslav—”

Here the hetman stopped and began to breathe heavily, for continuous speaking tortured him greatly. Kmita looked eagerly at Radzivill, for his own soul was chafing to go, and he felt that the journey, full of expected adventures, would be balsam to his grief.

After a while the hetman continued: “I am astonished that Boguslav is loitering still in Podlyasye. As God is true, he may ruin both me and himself. Pay diligent attention to what he says; for though you will give him my letters, you should supplement them with living speech, and explain that which may not be written. Now understand that yesterday’s intelligence was good, but not so good as I told the nobles—not so good, in fact, as I myself thought at first. The Swedes have the upper hand, it is true; they have occupied Great Poland, Mazovia, Warsaw; the province of Syeradz has yielded to them, they are pursuing Yan Kazimir to Krakow, and as God is in heaven, they will besiege the place. Charnyetski is to defend it. He is a newly baked senator, but, I must confess, a good soldier. Who can foresee what will happen? The Swedes, of course, know how to take fortresses, and there was no time to fortify Krakow. Still, that spotted little castellan<sup>22</sup> (Charnyetski) may hold out there a month, two, three. Such wonders take place at times, as we all remember in the case of Zbaraj. If he will stand obstinately, the devil may turn everything around. Learn now political secrets. Know first that in Vienna they will not look with willing eye on the growing power of Sweden, and may give aid. The Tartars, too, I know this well, are inclined to assist Yan Kazimir, and to move against the Cossacks and Moscow with all force; and then the armies in the Crimea under Pototski would assist. Yan Kazimir is in despair, but tomorrow his fortune may be preponderant.”

Here the prince was forced to give rest again to his wearied breast, and Pan Andrei experienced a wonderful feeling which he could not himself account for at once. Behold, he,

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<sup>22</sup> Charnyetski was pockmarked.

an adherent of Radzivill and Sweden, felt as it were a great joy at the thought that fortune might turn from the Swedes!

“Suhanyets told me,” said the prince, “how it was at Vidava and Jarnov. There in the first onset our advance guard—I mean the Polish—ground the Swedes into the dust. They were not general militia, and the Swedes lost courage greatly.”

“Still victory was with the Swedes, was it not?”

“It was, for the squadrons mutinied against Yan Kazimir, and the nobles declared that they would stand in line, but would not fight. Still it was shown that the Swedes are no better in the field than the quarter soldiers. Only let there be one or two victories and their courage may change. Let money come to Yan Kazimir to pay wages, and the troops will not mutiny. Pototski has not many men, but they are sternly disciplined and as resolute as hornets. The Tartars will come with Pototski, but the elector will not move with his reinforcement.”

“How is that?”

“Boguslav and I concluded that he would enter at once into a league with the Swedes and with us, for we know how to measure his love for the Commonwealth. He is too cautious, however, and thinks only of his own interest. He is waiting to see what will happen; meanwhile he is entering into a league, but with the Prussian towns, which remain faithful to Yan Kazimir. I think that in this there will be treason of some kind, unless the elector is not himself, or doubts Swedish success altogether. But until all this is explained, the league stands against Sweden; and let the Swedes stumble in Little Poland, Great Poland and Mazovia will rise, the Prussians will go with them, and it may come to pass—” Here the prince shuddered as if terrified at his supposition.

“What may come to pass?” asked Kmita.

“That not a Swedish foot will go out of the Commonwealth,” answered the prince, gloomily.

Kmita frowned and was silent.

“Then,” continued the hetman, in a low voice, “our fortune will have fallen as low as before it was high.”

Pan Andrei, springing from his seat, cried with sparkling eyes and flushed face: “What is this? Why did your highness say not long ago that the Commonwealth was lost—that only in league with the Swedes, through the person and future reign of your highness, could it possibly be saved? What have I to believe—what I heard then, or what I hear now? If what your highness says today is true, why do we hold with the Swedes, instead of beating them?—and the soul laughs at the thought of this.”

Radzivill looked sternly at Kmita. “You are over bold!” said he.

But Kmita was careering on his own enthusiasm as on a horse. “Speak later of what kind of man I am; but now answer my question, your highness.”

“I will give this answer,” said Radzivill, with emphasis: “if things take the turn that I mention, we will fall to beating the Swedes.”

Pan Andrei ceased distending his nostrils, slapped his forehead with his palm, and cried, “I am a fool! I am a fool!”

“I do not deny that,” answered the prince. “I will say more: you exceed the measure of insolence. Know then that I send you to note the turns of fortune. I desire the good of the country, nothing else. I have mentioned to you suppositions which may not, which certainly will not, come true. But there is need to be cautious. Whoso wishes that water should not bear

him away must know how to swim, and whoso goes through a pathless forest must stop often to note the direction in which he should travel. Do you understand?"

"As clearly as sunshine."

"We are free to draw back, and we are bound to do so if it will be better for the country; but we shall not be able if Prince Boguslav stays longer in Podlyasye. Has he lost his head, or what? If he stays there, he must declare for one side or the other—either for the Swedes or Yan Kazimir—and that is just what would be worst of all."

"I am dull, your highness, for again I do not understand."

"Podlyasye is near Mazovia; and either the Swedes will occupy it or reinforcements will come from the Prussian towns against the Swedes. Then it will be necessary to choose."

"But why does not Prince Boguslav choose?"

"Until he chooses, the Swedes will seek us greatly and must win our favor; the same is true of the elector. If it comes to retreating and turning against the Swedes, he is to be the link between me and Yan Kazimir. He is to ease my return, which he could not do if previously he had taken the side of the Swedes. But since he will be forced to make a final choice if he remains in Podlyasye, let him go to Prussia, to Tyłtsa, and wait there for events. The elector stays in Brandenburg. Boguslav will be of greater importance in Prussia; he may take the Prussians in hand altogether, increase his army, and stand at the head of a considerable force. And then both the Swedes and Yan Kazimir will give what we ask in order to win us both; and our house will not only not fall, but will rise higher, and that is the main thing."

"Your highness said that the good of the country was the main thing."

"But do not break in at every word, since I told you at first that the two are one; and listen farther. I know well that Prince Boguslav, though he signed the act of union with Sweden here in Kyedani, does not pass as an adherent of theirs. Though the report will be baseless, do you declare along the road that I forced him to sign it against his heart. People will believe this readily, for it happens frequently that even full brothers belong to different parties. In this way he will be able to gain the confidence of the confederates, invite the leaders to his camp as if for negotiations, and then seize and take them to Prussia. That will be a good method, and salutary for the country, which those men will ruin completely unless they are stopped."

"Is this all that I have to do?" asked Kmita, with a certain disillusion.

"This is merely a part, and not the most important. From Prince Boguslav you will go with my letters to Karl Gustav himself. I cannot come to harmony with Count Magnus from the time of that battle at Klavany. He looks at me askance, and does not cease from supposing that if the Swedes were to stumble, if the Tartars were to rush at the other enemy, I would turn against the Swedes."

"By what your highness has said just now, his supposition is correct."

"Correct or not, I do not wish it held, or wish him to see what trumps I have in my hand. Besides, he is ill-disposed toward me personally. Surely he has written more than once against me to the king, and beyond a doubt one of two things—either that I am weak, or that I am not reliable. This must be remedied. You will give my letter to the king. If he asks about the Klavany affair, tell the truth, neither adding nor taking away. You may confess that I condemned those officers to death, and you obtained their pardon. That will cost you nothing, but the sincerity may please him. You will not complain against Count Magnus directly in presence of the king, for he is his brother-in-law. But if the king should ask, so, in passing, what people here think, say that they are sorry because Count Magnus does not repay the



hetman sufficiently, in view of his sincere friendship for the Swedes; that the prince himself (that is I) grieves greatly over this. If he asks if it is true that all the quota troops have left me, say that 'tis not true; and as proof offer yourself. Tell him that you are colonel; for you are. Say that the partisans of Pan Gosyevski brought the troops to mutiny, but add that there is a mortal enmity between us. Say that if Count Magnus had sent me cannon and cavalry I should have crushed the confederates long ago—that this is the general opinion. Finally, take note of everything, give ear to what they are saying near the person of the king, and report, not to me, but, if occasion offers, to Prince Boguslav in Prussia. You may do so even through the elector's men, should you meet them. Perhaps you know German?"

"I had an officer, a noble of Courland, a certain Zend, whom the Lauda men slew; from him I learned German not badly. I have also been often in Livonia."

"That is well."

"But, your highness, where shall I find the King of Sweden?"

"You will find him where he will be. In time of war he may be here today and there tomorrow. Should you find him at Krakow, it would be better, for you will take letters to other persons who live in those parts."

"Then I am to go to others?"

"Yes. You must make your way to the marshal of the kingdom, Pan Lyubomirski. It is of great moment to me that he come to our views. He is a powerful man, and in Little Poland much depends on him. Should he declare sincerely for the Swedes, Yan Kazimir would have no place in the Commonwealth. Conceal not from the King of Sweden that you are going from me to Lyubomirski to win him for the Swedes. Do not boast of this directly, but speak as it were inadvertently. That will influence him greatly in my favor. God grant that Lyubomirski declare for us. He will hesitate, that I know; still I hope that my letters will turn the scale, for there is a reason why he must care greatly for my good will. I will tell you the whole affair, that you may know how to act. You see Pan Lyubomirski has been coming around me for a long time, as men go around a bear in a thicket, and trying from afar to see if I would give my only daughter to his son Heraclius. They are children yet, but the contract might be made—which is very important for the marshal, more than for me, since there is not another such heiress in the Commonwealth, and if the two fortunes were united, there would not be another such in the world. That is a well-buttered toast! But if the marshal were to conceive the hope that his son might receive the crown of the Grand Principality as the dower of my daughter! Rouse that hope in him and he will be tempted, as God is in heaven, for he thinks more of his house than he does of the Commonwealth."

"What have I to tell him?"

"That which I cannot write. But it must be placed before him with skill. God preserve you from disclosing that you have heard from me how I desire the crown—it is too early for that yet—but say, 'All the nobles in Lauda and Lithuania talk of crowning Radzivill, and rejoice over it; the Swedes themselves mention it, I have heard it near the person of the king.' You will observe who of his courtiers is the marshal's confidant, and suggest to that courtier the following thought: 'Let Lyubomirski join the Swedes and ask in return the marriage of Heraclius and Radzivill's daughter, then let him support Radzivill as Grand Prince. Heraclius will be Radzivill's heir.' That is not enough; suggest also that once Heraclius has the Lithuanian crown he will be elected in time to the throne of Poland, and so the two crowns may be united again in these two families. If they do not grasp at this idea with both hands, they will show themselves petty people. Whoso does not aim high and fears great plans, should be content with a little baton, with a small castellanship; let him serve, bend his neck,

gain favor through chamber attendants, for he deserves nothing better! God has created me for something else, and therefore I dare to stretch my hands to everything which it is in the power of man to reach, and to go to those limits which God alone has placed to human effort."

Here the prince stretched his hands, as if wishing to seize some unseen crown, and gleamed up altogether, like a torch; from emotion the breath failed in his throat again.

After a while he calmed himself and said with a broken voice—

"Behold—where my soul flies—as if to the sun—Disease utters its warning—let it work its will—I would rather death found me on the throne—than in the antechamber of a king."

"Shall the physician be called?" asked Kmita.

Radzivill waved his hand.

"No need of him—I feel better now—That is all I had to say—In addition keep your eyes open, your ears open—See also what the Pototskis will do. They hold together, are true to the Vazas (that is, to Yan Kazimir)—and they are powerful—It is not known either how the Konyetspolskis and Sobyeskis will turn—Observe and learn—Now the suffocation is gone. Have you understood everything clearly?"

"Yes. If I err, it will be my own fault."

"I have letters written already; only a few remain. When do you wish to start?"

"Today! As soon as possible."

"Have you no request to make?"

"Your highness," began Kmita, and stopped suddenly. The words came from his mouth with difficulty, and on his face constraint and confusion were depicted.

"Speak boldly," said the hetman.

"I pray," said Kmita, "that Billevich and she—suffer no harm while here."

"Be certain of that. But I see that you love the girl yet."

"Impossible," answered Kmita. "Do I know! An hour I love her, an hour I hate her. The devil alone knows! All is over, as I have said—suffering only is left. I do not want her, but I do not want another to take her. Your highness, pardon me, I know not myself what I say. I must go—go with all haste! Pay no heed to my words, God will give back my mind the moment I have gone through the gate."

"I understand that, because till love has grown cold with time, though not wanting her yourself, the thought that another might take her burns you. But be at rest on that point, for I will let no man come here, and as to going away they will not go. Soon it will be full of foreign soldiers all around, and unsafe. Better, I will send her to Tanrogi, near Tytlsa, where my daughter is. Be at rest, Yendrek. Go, prepare for the road, and come to me to dine."

Kmita bowed and withdrew, and Radzivill began to draw deep breaths. He was glad of the departure of Kmita. He left him his squadron and his name as an adherent; for his person the prince cared less.

But Kmita in going might render him notable services; in Kyedani he had long since grown irksome to the hetman, who was surer of him at a distance than near at hand. The wild courage and temper of Kmita might at any instant bring an outburst in Kyedani and a rupture very dangerous for both. The departure put danger aside.

“Go, incarnate devil, and serve!” muttered the prince, looking at the door through which the banneret of Orsha had passed. Then he called a page and summoned Ganhoff.

“You will take Kmita’s squadron,” said the prince to him, “and command over all the cavalry. Kmita is going on a journey.”

Over the cold face of Ganhoff there passed as it were a ray of joy. The mission had missed him, but a higher military office had come. He bowed in silence, and said—

“I will pay for the favor of your highness with faithful service.” Then he stood erect and waited.

“And what will you say further?” asked the prince.

“Your highness, a noble from Vilkomir came this morning with news that Pan Sapyeha is marching with troops against your highness.”

Radzivill quivered, but in the twinkle of an eye he mastered his expression.

“You may go,” said he to Ganhoff.

Then he fell into deep thought.

## Chapter XXV

Kmita was very busily occupied in preparations for the road, and in choosing the men of his escort; for he determined not to go without a certain-sized party, first for his own safety, and second for the dignity of his person as an envoy. He was in a hurry, since he wished to start during the evening of that day, or if the rain did not cease, early next morning. He found men at last—six trusty fellows who had long served under him in those better days when before his journey to Lyubich he had stormed around Hovanski—old fighters of Orsha, ready to follow him even to the end of the earth. They were themselves nobles and attendant boyars, the last remnant of that once powerful band cut down by the Butryms. At the head of them was the sergeant Soroka, a trusty servant of the Kmitas—an old soldier and very reliable, though numerous sentences were hanging over him for still more numerous deeds of violence.

After dinner the prince gave Pan Andrei the letters and a pass to the Swedish commanders whom the young envoy might meet in the more considerable places; he took farewell of him and sent him away with much feeling, really like a father, recommending wariness and deliberation.

Meanwhile the sky began to grow clear; toward evening the weak sun of autumn shone over Kyedani and went down behind red clouds, stretched out in long lines on the west.

There was nothing to hinder the journey. Kmita was just drinking a stirrup cup with Ganhoff, Kharlamp, and some other officers when about dusk Soroka came in and asked—

“Are you going, Commander?”

“In an hour,” answered Kmita.

“The horses and men are ready now in the yard.”

The sergeant went out, and the officers began to strike glasses still more; but Kmita rather pretended to drink than to drink in reality. The wine had no taste for him, did not go to his head, did not cheer his spirit, while the others were already merry.

“Worthy Colonel,” said Ganhoff, “commend me to the favor of Prince Boguslav. That is a great cavalier; such another there is not in the Commonwealth. With him you will be as in France. A different speech, other customs, every politeness may be learned there more easily than even in the palace of the king.”

“I remember Prince Boguslav at Berestechko,” said Kharlamp; “he had one regiment of dragoons drilled in French fashion completely—they rendered both infantry and cavalry service. The officers were French, except a few Hollanders; of the soldiers the greater part were French, all dandies. There was an odor of various perfumes from them as from a drug-shop. In battle they thrust fiercely with rapiers, and it was said that when one of them thrust a man through he said, ‘*Pardonnez-moi!*’ (pardon me); so they mingled politeness with uproarious life. But Prince Boguslav rode among them with a handkerchief on his sword, always smiling, even in the greatest din of battle, for it is the French fashion to smile amid bloodshed. He had his face touched with paint, and his eyebrows blackened with coal, at which the old soldiers were angry and called him a bawd. Immediately after battle he had new ruffs brought him, so as to be always dressed as if for a banquet, and they curled his hair with irons, making marvellous ringlets out of it. But he is a manful fellow, and goes first into

the thickest fire. He challenged Pan Kalinovski because he said something to him, and the king had to make peace.”

“There is no use in denying,” said Ganhoff. “You will see curious things, and you will see the King of Sweden himself, who next to our prince is the best warrior in the world.”

“And Pan Charnyetski,” said Kharlamp; “they are speaking more and more of him.”

“Pan Charnyetski is on the side of Yan Kazimir, and therefore is our enemy,” remarked Ganhoff, severely.

“Wonderful things are passing in this world,” said Kharlamp, musingly. “If any man had said a year or two ago that the Swedes would come hither, we should all have thought, ‘We shall be fighting with the Swedes;’ but see now.”

“We are not alone; the whole Commonwealth has received them with open arms,” said Ganhoff.

“True as life,” put in Kmita, also musingly.

“Except Sapyeha, Gosyevski, Charnyetski, and the hetmans of the crown,” answered Kharlamp.

“Better not speak of that,” said Ganhoff. “But, worthy Colonel, come back to us in good health; promotion awaits you.”

“And Panna Billevich?” added Kharlamp.

“Panna Billevich is nothing to you,” answered Kmita, brusquely.

“Of course nothing, I am too old. The last time—Wait, gentlemen, when was that? Ah, the last time during the election of the present mercifully reigning Yan Kazimir.”

“Cease the use of that name from your tongue,” interrupted Ganhoff. “Today rules over us graciously Karl Gustav.”

“True! *Consuetudo altera natura* (custom is a second nature). Well, the last time, during the election of Yan Kazimir, our ex-king and Grand Duke of Lithuania, I fell terribly in love with one lady, an attendant of the Princess Vishnyevetski. Oh, she was an attractive little beast! But when I wanted to look more nearly into her eyes, Pan Volodyovski thrust up his sabre. I was to fight with him; then Bogun came between us—Bogun, whom Volodyovski cut up like a hare. If it had not been for that, you would not see me alive. But at that time I was ready to fight, even with the devil. Volodyovski stood up for her only through friendship, for she was betrothed to another, a still greater swordsman. Oh, I tell you, gentlemen, that I thought I should wither away—I could not think of eating or drinking. When our prince sent me from Warsaw to Smolensk, only then did I shake off my love on the road. There is nothing like a journey for such griefs. At the first mile I was easier, before I had reached Vilna my head was clear, and to this day I remain single. That is the whole story. There is nothing for unhappy love like a journey.”

“Is that your opinion?” asked Kmita.

“As I live, it is! Let the black ones take all the pretty girls in Lithuania and the kingdom, I do not need them.”

“But did you go away without farewell?”

“Without farewell; but I threw a red ribbon behind me, which one old woman, very deeply versed in love matters, advised me to do.”

“Good health!” interrupted Ganhoff, turning again to Pan Andrei.

“Good health!” answered Kmita, “I give thanks from my heart.”

“To the bottom, to the bottom! It is time for you to mount, and service calls us. May God lead you forth and bring you home.”

“Farewell!”

“Throw the red ribbon behind,” said Kharlamp, “or at the first resting-place put out the fire yourself with a bucket of water; that is, if you wish to forget.”

“Be with God!”

“We shall not soon see one another.”

“Perhaps somewhere on the battlefield,” added Ganhoff. “God grant side by side, not opposed.”

“Of course not opposed,” said Kmita.

And the officers went out.

The clock on the tower struck seven. In the yard the horses were pawing the stone pavement with their hoofs, and through the window were to be seen the men waiting. A wonderful disquiet seized Pan Andrei. He was repeating to himself, “I go, I go!” Imagination placed before his eyes unknown regions, and a throng of strange faces which he was to see, and at the same time wonder seized him at the thought of the journey, as if hitherto it had never been in his mind.

He must mount and move on. “What happens, will happen. What will be, will be!” thought he to himself.

When, however, the horses were snorting right there at the window, and the hour of starting had struck, he felt that the new life would be strange, and all with which he had lived, to which he had grown accustomed, to which he had become attached heart and soul, would stay in that region, in that neighborhood, in that place. The former Kmita would stay there as well. Another man as it were would go hence—a stranger to all outside, as all outside were strangers to him. He would have to begin there an entirely new life. God alone knew whether there would be a desire for it.

Pan Andrei was mortally wearied in soul, and therefore at that moment he felt powerless in view of those new scenes and new people. He thought that it was bad for him here, that it would be bad for him there, at least it would be burdensome.

But it is time, time. He must put his cap on his head and ride off.

But will he go without a last word? Is it possible to be so near and later to be so far, to say not one word and go forth? See to what it has come! But what can he say to her? Shall he go and say, “Everything is ruined; my lady, go thy way, I will go mine”? Why, why say even that, when without saying it is so? He is not her betrothed, as she is not and will not be his wife. What has been is lost, is rent, and will not return, will not be bound up afresh. Loss of time, loss of words, and new torture.

“I will not go!” thought Pan Kmita.

But, on the other hand, the will of a dead man binds them yet. It is needful to speak clearly and without anger of final separation, and to say to her, “My lady, you wish me not; I return you your word. Therefore we shall both act as though there had been no will, and let each seek happiness where each can find it?”

But she may answer: "I have said that long since; why tell it to me now?"

"I will not go, happen what may!" repeated Kmita to himself.

And pressing the cap on his head, he went out of the room into the corridor. He wished to mount straightway and be outside the gate quickly.

All at once, in the corridor, something caught him as it were by the hair. Such a desire to see her, to speak to her, possessed him, that he ceased to think whether to go or not to go, he ceased to reason, and rather pushed on with closed eyes, as if wishing to spring into water.

Before the very door whence the guard had just been removed, he came upon a youth, a servant of the sword-bearer.

"Is Pan Billevich in the room?" asked he.

"The sword-bearer is among the officers in the barracks."

"And the lady?"

"The lady is at home."

"Tell her that Pan Kmita is going on a long journey and wishes to see the lady."

The youth obeyed the command; but before he returned with an answer Kmita raised the latch and went in without question.

"I have come to take farewell," said he, "for I do not know whether we shall meet again in life."

Suddenly he turned to the youth: "Why stand here yet?"

"My gracious lady," continued Kmita, when the door had closed after the servant, "I intended to go without parting, but had not the power. God knows when I shall return, or whether I shall return, for misfortunes come lightly. Better that we part without anger and offence in our hearts, so that the punishment of God fall not on either of us. There is much to say, much to say, and now the tongue cannot say it all. Well, there was no happiness, clearly by the will of God there was not; and now, O man, even if thou batter thy head against the wall, there is no cure! Blame me not, and I will not blame you. We need not regard that testament now, for as I have said, the will of man is nothing against the will of God. God grant you happiness and peace. The main thing is that we forgive each other. I know not what will meet me outside, whither I am going. But I cannot sit longer in torture, in trouble, in sorrow. A man breaks himself on the four walls of a room without result, gracious lady, without result! One has no labor here—only to take grief on the shoulders, only think for whole days of unhappy events till the head aches, and in the end think out nothing. This journey is as needful to me, as water to a fish, as air to a bird, for without it I should go wild."

"God grant you happiness," said Panna Aleksandra.

She stood before him as if stunned by the departure, the appearance, and the words of Pan Kmita. On her face were confusion and astonishment, and it was clear that she was struggling to recover herself; meanwhile she gazed on the young man with eyes widely open.

"I do not cherish ill will against you," said she after a time.

"Would that all this had not been!" said Kmita. "Some evil spirit came between us and separated us as if with a sea, and that water is neither to be swum across nor waded through. The man did not do what he wanted, he went not where he wished, but something as it were pushed him till we both entered pathless regions. But since we are to vanish the one from the eyes of the other, it is better to cry out even from remoteness, 'God guide!' It is needful also

for you to know that offence and anger are one thing, and sorrow another. From anger I have freed myself, but sorrow sits in me—maybe not for you. Do I know myself for whom and for what? Thinking, I have thought out nothing; but still it seems to me that it will be easier both to you and to me if we talk. You hold me a traitor, and that pricks me most bitterly of all, for as I wish my soul's salvation, I have not been and shall not be a traitor."

"I hold you that no longer," said Olenka.

"Oi, how could you have held me that even one hour? You know of me, that once I was ready for violence, ready to slay, burn, shoot; that is one thing, but to betray for gain, for advancement, never! God guard me, God judge me! You are a woman, and cannot see in what lies the country's salvation; hence it besseems you not to condemn, to give sentence. And why did you utter the sentence? God be with you! Know this, that salvation is in Prince Radzivill and the Swedes; and who thinks otherwise, and especially acts, is just ruining the country. But it is no time to discuss, it is time to go. Know that I am not a traitor, not one who sells. May I perish if I ever be that! Know that unjustly you scorned me, unjustly consigned me to death—I tell you this under oath and at parting, and I say it that I may say with it, I forgive you from my heart; but do you forgive me as well."

Panna Aleksandra had recovered completely. "You say that I have judged you unjustly; that is true. It is my fault; I confess it and beg your forgiveness."

Here her voice trembled, her blue eyes filled with tears, and he cried with transport—

"I forgive! I forgive! I would forgive you even my death!"

"May God guide you and bring you to the right road. May you leave that on which you are erring."

"But give peace, give peace!" cried Kmita, excitedly; "let no misunderstanding rise between us again. Whether I err or err not, be silent on that point. Let each man follow the way of his conscience; God will judge every intention. Better that I have come hither, than to go without farewell. Give me your hand for the road. Only that much is mine; for tomorrow I shall not see you, nor after tomorrow, nor in a month, perhaps never—Oi, Olenka! and in my head it is dim—Olenka! And shall we never meet again?"

Abundant tears like pearls were falling from Panna Aleksandra's lashes to her cheeks.

"Pan Andrei, leave traitors, and all may be."

"Quiet, oh, quiet!" said Kmita, with a broken voice. "It may not be—I cannot—better say nothing—Would I were slain! less should I suffer—For God's sake, why does this meet us? Farewell for the last time. And then let death close my eyes somewhere outside—Why are you weeping? Weep not, or I shall go wild!"

And in supreme excitement he seized her half by constraint, and though she resisted, he kissed her eyes and her mouth, then fell at her feet. At last he sprang up, and grasping his hair like a madman, rushed forth from the chamber.

"The devil could do nothing here, much less a red ribbon."

Olenka saw him through the window as he was mounting in haste; the seven horsemen then moved forward. The Scots on guard at the gate made a clatter with their weapons, presenting arms; then the gate closed after the horsemen, and they were not to be seen on the dark road among the trees.

Night too had fallen completely.



## Chapter XXVI

Kovno, and the whole region on the left bank of the Vilia, with all the roads, were occupied by the enemy (the Russians); therefore Kmita, not being able to go to Podlyasye by the highroad leading from Kovno to Grodno and thence to Byalystok, went by side-roads from Kyedani straight down the course of the Nyevyaja to the Nyemen, which he crossed near Vilkovo, and found himself in the province of Trotsk.

All that part of the road, which was not over great, he passed in quiet, for that region lay as it were under the hand of Radzivill.

Towns, and here and there even villages, were occupied by castle squadrons of the hetman, or by small detachments of Swedish cavalry which the hetman pushed forward thus far of purpose against the legions of Zolotarenko, which stood there beyond the Vilia, so that occasions for collisions and war might be more easily found.

Zolotarenko would have been glad too to have an “uproar” with the Swedes, according to the words of the hetman; but those whose ally he was did not wish war with them, or in every case wished to put it off as long as possible. Zolotarenko therefore received the strictest orders not to cross the river, and in case that Radzivill himself, together with the Swedes, moved on him, to retreat with all haste.

For these reasons the country on the right side of the Vilia was quiet; but since from one side Cossack pickets, from the other those of the Swedes and Radzivill were looking at one another, one musket-shot might at any moment let loose a terrible war.

In prevision of this, people took timely refuge in safe places. Therefore the whole country was quiet, but empty. Pan Andrei saw deserted towns, everywhere the windows of houses held up by sticks, and whole villages depopulated. The fields were also empty, for there was no crop that year. Common people secreted themselves in fathomless forests, to which they drove all their cattle; but the nobles fled to neighboring Electoral Prussia, at that time altogether safe from war. For this reason there was an uncommon movement over the roads and trails of the wilderness, and the number of fugitives was still more increased by those who from the left bank of the Vilia were able to escape the oppression of Zolotarenko.

The number of these was enormous, and especially of peasants; for the nobles who had not been able hitherto to flee from the left bank went into captivity or yielded their lives on their thresholds.

Pan Andrei, therefore, met every moment whole crowds of peasants with their wives and children, and driving before them flocks of sheep with horses and cattle. That part of the province of Trotsk touching upon Electoral Prussia was wealthy and productive; therefore the well-to-do people had something to save and guard. The approaching winter did not alarm fugitives, who preferred to await better days amid mosses of the forest, in snow covered huts, than to await death in their native villages at the hands of the enemy.

Kmita often approached the fleeing crowds, or fires gleaming at night in dense forest places. Wherever he met people from the left bank of the Vilia, from near Kovno, or from still remoter neighborhoods, he heard terrible tales of the cruelties of Zolotarenko and his allies, who exterminated people without regard to age or sex; they burned villages, cut down even trees in the gardens, leaving only land and water. Never had Tartar raids left such desolation behind.

Not death alone was inflicted on the inhabitants, but before death they were put to the most ingenious tortures. Many of those people fled with bewildered minds. These filled the forest depths at night with awful shrieks; others were ever in a species of continual fear and expectation of attack, though they had crossed the Nyemen and Vilia, though forests and morasses separated them from Zolotarenko's bands. Many of these stretched their hands to Kmita and his horsemen of Orsha, imploring rescue and pity, as if the enemy were standing there over them.

Carriages belonging to nobles were moving toward Prussia; in them old men, women, and children; behind them, dragged on wagons with servants, effects, supplies of provisions, and other things. All these fleeing people were panic-stricken, terrified and grieved because they were going into exile.

Pan Andrei comforted these unfortunates at times by telling them that the Swedes would soon pass over and drive that enemy far away. Then the fugitives stretched their hands to heaven and said—

“God give health, God give fortune to the prince *voevoda*! When the Swedes come we will return to our homes, to our burned dwellings.”

And they blessed the prince everywhere. From mouth to mouth news was given that at any moment he might cross the Vilia at the head of his own and Swedish troops. Besides, they praised the “modesty” of the Swedes, their discipline, and good treatment of the inhabitants. Radzivill was called the Gideon of Lithuania, a Samson, a savior. These people from districts steaming with fresh blood and fire were looking for him as for deliverance.

And Kmita, hearing those blessings, those wishes, those almost prayers, was strengthened in his faith concerning Radzivill, and repeated in his soul—

“I serve such a lord! I will shut my eyes and follow blindly his fortune. At times he is terrible and beyond knowing; but he has a greater mind than others, he knows better what is needed, and in him alone is salvation.”

It became lighter and calmer in his breast at this thought; he advanced therefore with greater solace in his heart, dividing his soul between sorrow for Kyedani and thoughts on the unhappy condition of the country.

His sorrow increased continually. He did not throw the red ribbon behind him, he did not put out the fire with water; for he felt, first, that it was useless, and then he did not wish to do so.

“Oh that she were present, that she could hear the wailing and groans of people, she would not beg God to turn me away, she would not tell me that I err, like those heretics who have left the true faith. But never mind! Earlier or later she will be convinced, she will see that her own judgment was at fault. And then what God will give will be. Maybe we shall meet again in life.”

And yearning increased in the young cavalier; but the conviction that he was marching by the right, not by the wrong road, gave him a peace long since unknown. The conflict of thought, the gnawing, the doubts left him by degrees, and he rode forward; he sank in the shoreless forest almost with gladness. From the time that he had come to Lyubich, after his famous raids on Hovanski, he had not felt so vivacious.

Kharlamp was right in this, that there is no cure like the road for cares and troubles. Pan Andrei had iron health; his daring and love of adventures were coming back every hour. He saw these adventures before him, smiled at them, and urged on his convoy unceasingly, barely stopping for short night-rests.

Olenka stood ever before the eyes of his spirit, tearful, trembling in his arms like a bird, and he said to himself, "I shall return."

At times the form of the hetman passed before him, gloomy, immense, terrible. But it may be just because he was moving away more and more, that that form became almost dear to him. Hitherto he had bent before Radzivill; now he began to love him. Hitherto Radzivill had borne him along as a mighty whirlpool of water seizes and attracts everything that comes within its circle; now Kmita felt that he wished with his whole soul to go with him.

And in the distance that gigantic *voevoda* increased continually in the eyes of the young knight, and assumed almost superhuman proportions. More than once, at his night halt, when Pan Andrei had closed his eyes in sleep, he saw the hetman sitting on a throne loftier than the tops of the pine-trees. There was a crown on his head; his face was the same, gloomy, enormous; in his hand a sword and a sceptre, at his feet the whole Commonwealth. And in his soul Kmita did homage to greatness.

On the third day of the journey they left the Nyemen far behind, and entered a country of still greater forests. They met whole crowds of fugitives on the roads; but nobles unable to bear arms were going almost without exception to Prussia before the bands of the enemy, who, not held in curb there, as on the banks of the Vilia, by the regiments of Sweden and Radzivill, pushed at times far into the heart of the country, even to the boundary of Electoral Prussia. Their main object was plunder.

Frequently these were detachments as if from the army of Zolotarenko, but really recognizing no authority—simply robber companies, so called "parties" commanded at times even by local bandits. Avoiding engagements in the field with troops and even with townspeople, they attacked small villages, single houses, and travellers.

The nobles on their own account attacked these parties with their household servants, and ornamented with them the pine-trees along the roads; still it was easy in the forest to stumble upon their frequent bands, and therefore Pan Andrei was forced to exercise uncommon care.

But somewhat beyond Pilvishki on the Sheshupa, Kmita found the population living quietly in their homes. The townspeople told him, however, that not longer than a couple of days before, a strong band of Zolotarenko's men, numbering as many as five hundred, had made an attack, and would, according to their custom, have cut down all the people, and let the place rise in smoke, were it not for unexpected aid which fell as it were from heaven.

"We had already committed ourselves to God," said the master of the inn in which Pan Andrei had taken lodgings, "when the saints of the Lord sent some squadrons. We thought at first that a new enemy had come, but they were ours. They sprang at once on Zolotarenko's ruffians, and in an hour they laid them out like a pavement, all the more easily as we helped them."

"What kind of a squadron was it?" asked Kmita.

"God give them health! They did not say who they were, and we did not dare to ask. They fed their horses, took what hay and bread there was, and rode away."

"But whence did they come, and whither did they go?"

"They came from Kozlova Ruda, and they went to the south. We, who before that wished to flee to the woods, thought the matter over and stayed here, for the under-starosta said that after such a lesson the enemy would not look in on us again soon."

The news of the battle interested Kmita greatly, therefore he asked further: "And do you not know who commanded that squadron?"

“We do not know; but we saw the colonel, for he talked with us on the square, he is young, and sharp as a needle. He does not look like the warrior that he is.”

“Volodyovski!” cried Kmita.

“Whether he is Volodyovski, or not, may his hands be holy, may God make him hetman!”

Pan Andrei fell into deep thought. Evidently he was going by the same road over which a few days before Volodyovski had marched with the Lauda men. In fact, that was natural, for both were going to Podlyasye. But it occurred to Pan Andrei that if he hastened he might easily meet the little knight and be captured; in that case, all the letters of Radzivill would fall with him into possession of the confederates. Such an event might destroy his mission, and bring God knows what harm to the cause of Radzivill. For this reason Pan Andrei determined to stay a couple of days in Pilvishki, so that the squadron of Lauda might have time to advance as far as possible.

The men, as well as the horses, travelling almost with one sweep from Kyedani (for only short halts had been given on the road hitherto), needed rest; therefore Kmita ordered the soldiers to remove the packs from the horses and settle themselves comfortably in the inn.

Next day he was convinced that he had acted not only cleverly but wisely, for scarcely had he dressed in the morning, when his host stood before him.

“I bring news to your grace,” said he.

“It is good?”

“Neither good nor bad, but that we have guests. An enormous court arrived here today, and stopped at the starosta’s house. There is a regiment of infantry, and what crowds of cavalry and carriages with servants!—The people thought that the king himself had come.”

“What king?”

The innkeeper began to turn his cap in his hand. “It is true that we have two kings now, but neither one came—only the prince marshal.”

Kmita sprang to his feet. “What prince marshal? Prince Boguslav?”

“Yes, your grace; the cousin of the prince *voevoda* of Vilna.”

Pan Andrei clapped his hands from astonishment. “And so we have met.”

The innkeeper, understanding that his guest was an acquaintance of Prince Boguslav, made a lower bow than the day before, and went out of the room; but Kmita began to dress in haste, and an hour later was before the house of the starosta.

The whole place was swarming with soldiers. The infantry were stacking their muskets on the square; the cavalry had dismounted and occupied the houses at the side. The soldiers and attendants in the most varied costumes had halted before the houses, or were walking along the streets. From the mouths of the officers were to be heard French and German. Nowhere a Polish soldier, nowhere a Polish uniform; the musketeers and dragoons were dressed in strange fashion, different, indeed, from the foreign squadrons which Pan Andrei had seen in Kyedani, for they were not in German but in French style. The soldiers, handsome men and so showy that each one in the ranks might be taken for an officer, delighted the eyes of Pan Andrei. The officers looked on him also with curiosity, for he had arrayed himself richly in velvet and brocade, and six men, dressed in new uniforms, followed him as a suite.

Attendants, all dressed in French fashion, were hurrying about in front of the starosta's house; there were pages in caps and feathers, armor-bearers in velvet kaftans, and equerries in Swedish, high, wide-legged boots.

Evidently the prince did not intend to tarry long in Pilvishki, and had stopped only for refreshment, for the carriages were not taken to the shed; and the equerries, in waiting, were feeding horses out of tin sieves which they held in their hands.

Kmita announced to an officer on guard before the house who he was and what was his mission; the officer went to inform the prince. After a while he returned hastily, to say that the prince was anxious to see a man sent from the hetman; and showing Kmita the way, he entered the house with him.

After they had passed the antechamber, they found in the dining-hall a number of attendants, with legs stretched out, slumbering sweetly in armchairs; it was evident that they must have started early in the morning from the last halting-place: The officer stopped before the door of the next room, and bowing to Pan Andrei, said—

“The prince is there.”

Pan Andrei entered and stopped at the threshold. The prince was sitting before a mirror fixed in the corner of the room, and was looking so intently at his own face, apparently just touched with rouge and white, that he did not turn attention to the incomer. Two chamber servants, kneeling before him, were fastening buckles at the ankles on his high travelling-boots, while he was arranging slowly with his fingers the luxuriant, evenly cut forelock of his bright gold-colored wig, or it might be of his own abundant hair.

He was still a young man, of thirty-five years, but seemed not more than five and twenty. Kmita knew the prince, but looked on him always with curiosity: first, because of the great knightly fame which surrounded him, and which was won mainly through duels fought with various foreign magnates; second, by reason of his peculiar figure—whoso saw his form once was forced to remember it ever after. The prince was tall and powerfully built, but on his broad shoulders stood a head as diminutive as if taken from another body. His face, also, was uncommonly small, almost childlike; but in it, too, there was no proportion, for he had a great Roman nose and enormous eyes of unspeakable beauty and brightness, with a real eagle boldness of glance. In presence of those eyes and the nose, the rest of his face, surrounded, moreover, with plentiful tresses of hair, disappeared almost completely; his mouth was almost that of a child; above it was a slight mustache barely covering his upper lip. The delicacy of his complexion, heightened by rouge and white paint, made him almost like a young lady; and at the same time the insolence, pride, and self-confidence depicted in that face permitted no one to forget that he was that *chercheur de noises* (seeker of quarrels), as he was nicknamed at the French court—a man out of whose mouth a sharp word came with ease, but whose sword came from its scabbard with still greater ease.

In Germany, in Holland, in France, they related marvels of his military deeds, of his disputes, quarrels, adventures, and duels. He was the man who in Holland rushed into the thickest whirl of battle, among the incomparable regiments of Spanish infantry, and with his own princely hand captured a flag and a cannon; he, at the head of the regiments of the Prince of Orange, captured batteries declared by old leaders to be beyond capture; he, on the Rhine, at the head of French musketeers, shattered the heavy squadrons of Germany, trained in the Thirty Years' War; he wounded, in a duel in France, the most celebrated fencer among French knights, Prince de Fremouille; another famous fighter, Baron Von Goetz, begged of him life, on his knees; he wounded Baron Grot, for which he had to hear bitter reproaches from his cousin Yanush, because he was lowering his dignity as prince by fighting with men

beneath him in rank; finally, in presence of the whole French court, at a ball in the Louvre, he slapped Marquis de Rieux on the face, because he had spoken to him “unbecomingly.” The duels that he had fought incognito in smaller towns, in taverns and inns, did not enter into reckoning.

He was a mixture of effeminacy and unbounded daring. During rare and short visits to his native land he amused himself by quarrels with the Sapyehas, and with hunting; but on those occasions the hunters had to find for him she-bears with their young, as being dangerous and enraged; against these he went armed only with a spear.

But it was tedious for him in his own country, to which he came, as was said, unwillingly, most frequently in time of war; he distinguished himself by great victories at Berestechko, Mogilyoff, and Smolensk. War was his element, though he had a mind quick and subtle, equally fitted for intrigues and diplomatic exploits. In these he knew how to be patient and enduring, far more enduring than in the “loves,” of which a whole series completed the history of his life. The prince, at the courts where he had resided, was the terror of husbands who had beautiful wives. For that reason, doubtless, he was not yet married, though his high birth and almost inexhaustible fortune made him one of the most desirable matches in Europe. The King and Queen of France, Marya Ludvika of Poland, the Prince of Orange, and his uncle, the Elector of Brandenburg, tried to make matches for him; but so far he preferred his freedom.

“I do not want a dower,” said he, cynically; “and of the other pleasures I have no lack as I am.”

In this fashion he reached the thirty-fifth year of his age.

Kmita, standing on the threshold, examined with curiosity Boguslav’s face, which the mirror reflected, while he was arranging with seriousness the hair of his forelock; at last, when Pan Andrei coughed once and a second time, he said, without turning his head—

“But who is present? Is it a messenger from the prince *voevoda*?”

“Not a messenger, but from the prince *voevoda*,” replied Pan Andrei.

Then the prince turned his head, and seeing a brilliant young man, recognized that he had not to do with an ordinary servant.

“Pardon, Cavalier,” said he, affably, “for I see that I was mistaken in the office of the person. But your face is known to me, though I am not able to recall your name. You are an attendant of the prince hetman?”

“My name is Kmita,” answered Pan Andrei, “and I am not an attendant; I am a colonel from the time that I brought my own squadron to the prince hetman.”

“Kmita!” cried the prince, “that same Kmita, famous in the last war, who harried Hovanski, and later on managed not worse on his own account? I have heard much about you.”

Having said this, the prince began to look more carefully and with a certain pleasure at Pan Andrei, for from what he had heard he thought him a man of his own cut.

“Sit down,” said he, “I am glad to know you more intimately. And what is to be heard in Kyedani?”

“Here is a letter from the prince hetman,” answered Kmita.

The servants, having finished buckling the prince’s boots, went out. The prince broke the seal and began to read. After a while there was an expression of weariness and dissatisfaction on his face. He threw the letter under the mirror and said—

“Nothing new! The prince *voevoda* advises me to go to Prussia, to Tyłtsa or to Taurogi, which, as you see, I am just doing. *Ma foi*, I do not understand my cousin. He reports to me that the elector is in Brandenburg, and that he cannot make his way to Prussia through the Swedes, and he writes at the same time that the hairs are standing on his head because I do not communicate with him, either for health or prescription; and how can I? If the elector cannot make his way through the Swedes, how can my messenger do so? I am in Podlyasye, for I have nothing else to do. I tell you, my cavalier, that I am as much bored as the devil doing penance. I have speared all the bears near Tykotsin; the fair heads of that region have the odor of sheepskin, which my nostrils cannot endure. But—Do you understand French or German?”

“I understand German,” answered Kmita.

“Praise be to God for that! I will speak German, for my lips fly off from your language.”

When he had said this the prince put out his lower lip and touched it with his fingers, as if wishing to be sure that it had not gone off: then he looked at the mirror and continued—

“Report has come to me that in the neighborhood of Lukovo one Skshetuski, a noble, has a wife of wonderful beauty. It is far from here; but I sent men to carry her off and bring her. Now, if you will believe it, Pan Kmita, they did not find her at home.”

“That was good luck,” said Pan Andrei, “for she is the wife of an honorable cavalier, a celebrated man, who made his way out of Zbaraj through the whole power of Hmelnitski.”

“The husband was besieged in Zbaraj, and I would have besieged the wife in Tykotsin. Do you think she would have held out as stubbornly as her husband?”

“Your highness, for such a siege a counsel of war is not needed, let it pass without my opinion,” answered Pan Andrei, brusquely.

“True, loss of time!” said the prince. “Let us return to business. Have you any letters yet?”

“What I had to your highness I have delivered; besides those I have one to the King of Sweden. Is it known to your highness where I must seek him?”

“I know nothing. What can I know? He is not in Tykotsin; I can assure you of that, for if he had once seen that place he would have resigned his dominion over the whole Commonwealth. Warsaw is now in Swedish hands, but you will not find the king there. He must be before Krakow, or in Krakow itself, if he has not gone to Royal Prussia by this time. To my thinking Karl Gustav must keep the Prussian towns in mind, for he cannot leave them in his rear. Who would have expected, when the whole Commonwealth abandons its king, when all the nobles join the Swedes, when the provinces yield one after the other, that just then towns, German and Protestant, would not hear of the Swedes but prepare for resistance? They wish to save the Commonwealth and adhere to Yan Kazimir. In beginning our work we thought that it would be otherwise: that before all they would help us and the Swedes to cut that loaf which you call your Commonwealth; but now they won’t move! The luck is that the elector has his eye on them. He has offered them forces already against the Swedes; but the Dantzig people do not trust him, and say that they have forces enough of their own.”

“We knew that already in Kyedani,” said Kmita.

“If they have not forces enough, in every case they have a good sniff,” continued the prince, laughing; “for the elector cares as much, I think, about the Commonwealth as I do, or as the prince *voevoda* of Vilna does.”

“Your highness, permit me to deny that,” said Kmita, abruptly. “The prince cares that much about the Commonwealth that he is ready at every moment to give his last breath and spill his last blood for it.”

Prince Boguslav began to laugh.

“You are young, Cavalier, young! But enough! My uncle the elector wants to grab Royal Prussia, and for that reason only, he offers his aid. If he has the towns once in hand, if he has his garrisons in them, he will be ready to agree with the Swedes next day, nay, even with the Turks or with devils. Let the Swedes add a bit of Great Poland, he will be ready to help them with all his power to take the rest. The only trouble is in this, that the Swedes are sharpening their teeth against Prussia, and hence the distrust between them and the elector.”

“I hear with astonishment the words of your highness,” said Kmita.

“The devils were taking me in Podlyasye,” answered the prince—“I had to stay there so long in idleness. But what was I to do? An agreement was made between me and the prince *voevoda*, that until affairs were cleared up in Prussia, I was not to take the Swedish side publicly. And that was right, for thus a gate remains open. I sent even secret couriers to Yan Kazimir, announcing that I was ready to summon the general militia in Podlyasye if a manifesto were sent me. The king, as king, might have let himself be tricked; but the queen it is clear does not trust me, and must have advised against it. If it were not for that woman, I should be today at the head of all the nobles of Podlyasye; and what is more, those confederates who are now ravaging the property of Prince Yanush would have no choice but to come under my orders. I should have declared myself a partisan of Yan Kazimir, but, in fact, having power in my hand, would treat with the Swedes. But that woman knows how grass grows, and guesses the most secret thought. She is the real king, not queen! She has more wit in one finger than Yan Kazimir in his whole body.”

“The prince *voevoda*—” began Kmita.

“The prince *voevoda*,” interrupted Boguslav, with impatience, “is eternally late with his counsel; he writes to me in every letter, ‘Do this and do that,’ while I have in fact done it long before. Besides, the prince *voevoda* loses his head. For listen what he asks of me.”

Here the prince took up the letter and began to read aloud—

*“Be cautious yourself on the road; and those rascals, the confederates, who have mutinied against me and are ravaging Podlyasye, for God’s sake think how to disperse them, lest they go to the king. They are preparing to visit Zabłudovo, and beer in that place is strong; when they get drunk, let them be cut off—each host may finish his guest. Nothing better is needed; for when the heads are removed, the rest will scatter—”*

Boguslav threw the letter with vexation on the table.

“Listen, Pan Kmita,” said he, “you see I have to go to Prussia and at the same time arrange a slaughter in Zabłudovo. I must feign myself a partisan of Yan Kazimir and a patriot, and at the same time cut off those people who are unwilling to betray the king and the country. Is that sense? Does one hang to the other? *Ma foi*, the prince is losing his head. I have met now, while coming to Pilvishki, a whole insurgent squadron travelling along through Podlyasye. I should have galloped over their stomachs with gladness, even to gain some amusement; but before I am an open partisan of the Swedes, while my uncle the elector holds formally with the Prussian towns, and with Yan Kazimir too, I cannot permit myself such pleasure, God knows I cannot. What could I do more than to be polite to those insurgents, as they are polite to me, suspecting me of an understanding with the hetman, but not having black on white?”



Here the prince lay back comfortably in the armchair, stretched out his legs, and putting his hands behind his head carelessly, began to repeat—

“Ah, there is nonsense in this Commonwealth, nonsense! In the world there is nothing like it!”

Then he was silent for a moment; evidently some idea came to his head, for he struck his wig and inquired—

“But will you not be in Podlyasye?”

“Yes,” said Kmita, “I must be there, for I have a letter with instructions to Harasimovich, the under-starosta in Zabłudovo.”

“In God’s name!” exclaimed the prince, “Harasimovich is here with me. He is going with the hetman’s effects to Prussia, for we were afraid that they might fall into the hands of the confederates. Wait, I will have him summoned.”

Here the prince summoned a servant and ordered him to call the under-starosta.

“This has happened well,” said the prince, “You will save yourself a journey—though it may be too bad that you will not visit Podlyasye, for among the heads of the confederacy there is a namesake of yours whom you might secure.”

“I have no time for that,” said Kmita, “since I am in a hurry to go to the king and Pan Lyubomirski.”

“Ah, you have a letter to the marshal of the kingdom? Well, I can divine the reason of it. Once the marshal thought of marrying his son to Yanush’s daughter. Did not the hetman wish this time to renew negotiations delicately?”

“That is just the mission.”

“Both are quite children. H’m! that’s a delicate mission, for it does not become the hetman to speak first. Besides—”

Here the prince frowned.

“Nothing will come of it. The daughter of the hetman is not for Heraclius, I tell you that! The prince hetman must understand that his fortune is to remain in possession of the Radzivils.”

Kmita looked with astonishment on the prince, who was walking with quicker and quicker pace through the room.

All at once he stopped before Pan Andrei, and said, “Give me the word of a cavalier that you will answer truly my question.”

“Gracious prince,” said Kmita, “only those lie who are afraid, and I fear no man.”

“Did the prince *voevoda* give orders to keep secret from me the negotiations with Lyubomirski?”

“Had I such a command, I should not have mentioned Lyubomirski.”

“It might have slipped you. Give me your word.”

“I give it,” said Kmita, frowning.

“You have taken a weight from my heart, for I thought that the *voevoda* was playing a double game with me.”

“I do not understand, your highness.”

“I would not marry, in France, Rohan, not counting half threescore other princesses whom they were giving me. Do you know why?”

“I do not.”

“There is an agreement between me and the prince *voevoda* that his daughter and his fortune are growing up for me. As a faithful servant of the Radzivills, you may know everything.”

“Thank you for the confidence. But your highness is mistaken. I am not a servant of the Radzivills.”

Boguslav opened his eyes widely. “What are you?”

“I am a colonel of the hetman, not of the castle; and besides I am the hetman’s relative.”

“A relative?”

“I am related to the Kishkis, and the hetman is born of a Kishki.”

Prince Boguslav looked for a while at Kmita, on whose face a light flush appeared. All at once he stretched forth his hands and said—

“I beg your pardon, cousin, and I am glad of the relationship.”

The last words were uttered with a certain inattentive though showy politeness, in which there was something directly painful to Pan Andrei. His face flushed still more, and he was opening his mouth to say something hasty, when the door opened and Harasimovich appeared on the threshold.

“There is a letter for you,” said Boguslav.

Harasimovich bowed to the prince, and then to Pan Andrei, who gave him the letter.

“Read it!” said Prince Boguslav.

Harasimovich began to read—

*“Pan Harasimovich! Now is the time to show the good will of a faithful servant to his lord. As whatever money you are able to collect, you in Zabudovo and Pan Pjinski in Orel—”*

“The confederates have slain Pan Pjinski in Orel, for which reason Pan Harasimovich has taken to his heels,” interrupted the prince.

The under-starosta bowed and read further—

*“—and Pan Pjinski in Orel, even the public revenue, even the excise, rent—”*

“The confederates have already taken them,” interrupted Boguslav again.

*“—send me at once,” continued Harasimovich. “If you can mortgage some villages to neighbors or townspeople, obtaining as much money on them as possible, do so, and whatever means there may be of obtaining money, do your best in the matter, and send the money to me. Send horses and whatever effects there are in Orel. There is a great candlestick too, and other things—pictures, ornaments, and especially the cannons on the porch at my cousins; for robbers may be feared—”*

“Again counsel too late, for these cannons are going with me,” said the prince.

*“If they are heavy with the stocks, then take them without the stocks and cover them, so it may not be known that you are bringing them. And take these things to Prussia with all speed, avoiding with utmost care those traitors who have caused mutiny in my army and are ravaging my estates—”*

“As to ravaging, they are ravaging! They are pounding them into dough,” interrupted the prince anew.

*“—ravaging my estates, and are preparing to move against Zabludovo on their way perhaps to the king. With them it is difficult to fight, for they are many; but if they are admitted, and given plenty to drink, and killed in the night while asleep (every host can do that), or poisoned in strong beer, or (which is not difficult in that place) a wild crowd let in to plunder them—”*

“Well, that is nothing new!” said Prince Boguslav. “You may journey with me, Pan Harasimovich.”

“There is still a supplement,” said the under-starosta. And he read on,

*“The wines, if you cannot bring them away (for with us such can be had nowhere), sell them quickly—”*

Here Harasimovich stopped and seized himself by the head—

“For God’s sake! those wines are coming half a day’s road behind us, and surely have fallen into the hands of that insurgent squadron which was hovering around us. There will be a loss of some thousands of gold pieces. Let your highness give witness with me that you commanded me to wait till the barrels were packed in the wagons.”

Harasimovich’s terror would have been still greater had he known Pan Zagloba, and had he known that he was in that very squadron. Meanwhile Prince Boguslav smiled and said—

“Oh, let the wines be to their health! Read on!”

*“—if a merchant cannot be found—”*

Prince Boguslav now held his sides from laughter. “He has been found,” said he, “but you must sell to him on credit.”

*“—but if a merchant cannot be found,” read Harasimovich, in a complaining voice, “bury it in the ground secretly, so that more than two should not know where it is; but leave a keg in Orel and one in Zabludovo, and those of the best and sweetest, so that the officers may take a liking to it; and put in plenty of poison, so that the officers at least may be killed, then the squadron will break up. For God’s sake, serve me faithfully in this, and secretly, for the mercy of God. Burn what I write, and whoso finds out anything send him to me. Either the confederates will find and drink the wine, or it may be given as a present to make them friendly.”*

The under-starosta finished reading, and looked at Prince Boguslav, as if waiting for instructions; and the prince said—

“I see that my cousin pays much attention to the confederates; it is only a pity that, as usual, he is too late. If he had come upon this plan two weeks ago, or even one week, it might have been tried. But now go with God, Pan Harasimovich; I do not need you.”

Harasimovich bowed and went out.

Prince Boguslav stood before the mirror, and began to examine his own figure carefully; he moved his head slightly from right to left, then stepped back from the mirror, then approached it, then shook his curls, then looked askance, not paying any attention to Kmita, who sat in the shade with his back turned to the window.

But if he had cast even one look at Pan Andrei’s face he would have seen that in the young envoy something wonderful was taking place; for Kmita’s face was pale, on his forehead

stood thick drops of sweat, and his hands shook convulsively. After a while he rose from the chair, but sat down again immediately, like a man struggling with himself and suppressing an outburst of anger or despair. Finally his features settled and became fixed; evidently he had with his whole strong force of will and energy enjoined calm on himself and gained complete self-control.

“Your highness,” said he, “from the confidence which the prince hetman bestows on me you see that he does not wish to make a secret of anything. I belong soul and substance to his work; with him and your highness my fortune may increase; therefore, whither you both go, thither go I also. I am ready for everything. But though I serve in those affairs and am occupied in them, still I do not of course understand everything perfectly, nor can I penetrate all the secrets of them with my weak wit.”

“What do you wish then, Sir Cavalier, or rather, fair cousin?”

“I ask instruction, your highness; it would be a shame indeed were I unable to learn at the side of such statesmen. I know not whether your highness will be pleased to answer me without reserve—”

“That will depend on your question and on my humor,” answered Boguslav, not ceasing to look at the mirror.

Kmita’s eyes glittered for a moment, but he continued calmly—

“This is my question: The prince *voevoda* of Vilna shields all his acts with the good and salvation of the Commonwealth, so that in fact the Commonwealth is never absent from his lips; be pleased to tell me sincerely, are these mere pretexts, or has the hetman in truth nothing but the good of the Commonwealth in view?”

Boguslav cast a quick glance on Pan Andrei. “If I should say that they are pretexts, would you give further service?”

Kmita shrugged his shoulders carelessly. “Of course! As I have said, my fortune will increase with the fortune of your highness and that of the hetman. If that increase comes, the rest is all one to me.”

“You will be a man! Remember that I foretell this. But why has my cousin not spoken openly with you?”

“Maybe because he is squeamish, or just because it did not happen to be the topic.”

“You have quick wit, Cousin Cavalier, for it is the real truth that he is squeamish and shows his true skin unwillingly. As God is dear to me, true! Such is his nature. So, even in talking with me, the moment he forgets himself he begins to adorn his speech with love for the country. When I laugh at him to his eyes, he comes to his senses. True! true!”

“Then it is merely a pretext?” asked Kmita.

The prince turned the chair around and sat astride of it, as on a horse, and resting his arms on the back of it was silent awhile, as if in thought; then he said—

“Hear me, Pan Kmita. If we Radzivils lived in Spain, France, or Sweden, where the son inherits after the father, and where the right of the king comes from God himself, then, leaving aside civil war, extinction of the royal stock, or some uncommon event, we should serve the king and the country firmly, being content with the highest offices which belong to us by family and fortune. But here, in the land where the king has not divine right at his back, but the nobles create him, where everything is in free suffrage, we ask ourselves with reason—Why should a Vaza rule, and not a Radzivil? There is no objection so far as the

Vazas are concerned, for they take their origin from hereditary kings; but who will assure us, who will guarantee that after the Vazas the nobles will not have the whim of seating on the throne of the kingdom and on the throne of the Grand Principality even Pan Harasimovich, or some Pan Myeleshko, or some Pan Pyeglasyeovich from Psivolki? *Tfu!* can I guess whom they may fancy? And must we, Radzivills, and princes of the German Empire, come to kiss the hand of King Pyeglasyeovich? *Tfu!* to all the horned devils, Cavalier, it is time to finish with this! Look meanwhile at Germany—how many provincial princes there, who in importance and fortune are fitted to be under-starostas for us. Still they have their principalities, they rule, wear crowns on their heads, and take precedence of us, though it would be fitter for them to bear the trains of our mantles. It is time to put an end to this, and accomplish that which was already planned by my father.”

Here the prince grew vivacious, rose from the chair, and began to walk through the room.

“This will not take place without difficulty and obstacles,” continued he, “for the Radzivills of Olyta and Nyesvyej are not willing to aid us. I know that Prince Michael wrote to my cousin that he would better think of a hair-shirt than of a royal mantle. Let him think of a hair-shirt himself, let him do penance, let him sit on ashes, let the Jesuits lash his skin with disciplines; if he is content with being a royal carver, let him carve capons virtuously all his virtuous life, till his virtuous death! We shall get on without him and not drop our hands, for just now is the time. The devils are taking the Commonwealth; for now it is so weak, has gone to such dogs, that it cannot drive them away. Everyone is crawling in over its boundaries, as into an unfenced garden. What has happened here with the Swedes has happened nowhere on earth to this day. We, Sir Cavalier, may sing in truth ‘*Te Deum laudamus.*’ In its way the event is unheard of, unparalleled. Just think: an invader attacks a country, an invader famous for rapacity; and not only does he not find resistance, but every living man deserts his old king and hurries to a new one—magnates, nobles, the army, castles, towns, all—without honor, without fame, without feeling, without shame! History gives not another such example. *Tfu! tfu!* trash inhabit this country—men without conscience or ambition. And is such a country not to perish? They are looking for our favor! Ye will have favor! In Great Poland already the Swedes are thumb-screwing nobles; and so will it be everywhere—it cannot be otherwise.”

Kmita grew paler and paler, but with the remnant of his strength he held in curb an outburst of fury; the prince, absorbed in his own speech, delighted with his own words, with his own wisdom, paid no attention to his listener, and continued—

“There is a custom in this land that when a man is dying his relatives at the last moment pull the pillow from under his head, so that he may not suffer longer. I and the prince *voevoda* of Vilna have determined to render this special service to the Commonwealth. But because many plunderers are watching for the inheritance and we cannot get it all, we wish that a part, and that no small one, should come to us. As relatives, we have that right. If with this comparison I have not spoken on a level with your understanding, and have not been able to hit the point, I will tell you in other words: Suppose the Commonwealth a red cloth at which are pulling the Swedes, Hmelnitski, the Hyperboreans,<sup>23</sup> the Tartars, the elector, and whosoever lives around. But I and the prince *voevoda* of Vilna have agreed that enough of that cloth must remain in our hands to make a robe for us; therefore we do not prevent the dragging, but we drag ourselves. Let Hmelnitski stay in the Ukraine; let the Swedes and the elector settle about Prussia and Great Poland; let Rakotsy, or whoever is nearer, take Little Poland—Lithuania must be for Prince Yanush, and, together with his daughter, for me.”

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<sup>23</sup> The Russians.

Kmita rose quickly. "I give thanks, your highness; that is all I wanted to know."

"You are going out, Sir Cavalier?"

"I am."

The prince looked carefully at Kmita, and at that moment first noted his pallor and excitement.

"What is the matter, Pan Kmita?" asked he. "You look like a ghost."

"Weariness has knocked me off my feet, and my head is dizzy. Farewell, your highness; I will come before starting, to bow to you again."

"Make haste, then, for I start after midday myself."

"I shall return in an hour at furthest."

When he had said this, Kmita bent his head and went out. In the other room the servants rose at sight of him, but he passed like a drunken man, seeing no one. At the threshold of the room he caught his head with both hands, and began to repeat, almost with a groan—

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews! Jesus, Mary, Joseph!"

With tottering steps he passed through the guard, composed of six men with halberds. Outside the gate were his own men, the sergeant Soroka at the head of them.

"After me!" called Kmita. And he moved through the town toward the inn.

Soroka, an old soldier of Kmita's, knowing him perfectly, noticed at once that something uncommon had happened to the colonel.

"Let your soul be on guard," said he quietly to the men; "woe to him on whom his anger falls now!"

The soldiers hastened their steps in silence, but Kmita did not go at a walk; he almost ran, waving his hand and repeating words well-nigh incoherent.

To the ears of Soroka came only broken phrases—

"Poisoners, faith-breakers, traitors! Crime and treason—the two are the same—"

Then he began to mention his old comrades. The names Kokosinski, Kulvyets, Ranitski, Rekuts, and others fell from his lips one after another; a number of times he mentioned Volodyovski. Soroka heard this with wonder, and grew more and more alarmed; but in his mind he thought—

"Someone's blood will flow; it cannot be otherwise."

Meanwhile they had come to the inn. Kmita shut himself in his room at once, and for about an hour he gave no sign of life. The soldiers meanwhile had tied on the packs and saddled the horses without order.

"That is no harm," said Soroka; "it is necessary to be ready for everything."

"We too are ready!" answered the old fighters, moving their mustaches.

In fact, it came out soon that Soroka knew his colonel well; for Kmita appeared suddenly in the front room, without a cap, in his trousers and shirt only.

"Saddle the horses!" cried he.

"They are saddled."

“Fasten on the packs!”

“They are fastened.”

“A ducat a man!” cried the young colonel, who in spite of all his fever and excitement saw that those soldiers had guessed his thought quickly.

“We give thanks, Commander!” cried all in chorus.

“Two men will take the packhorses and go out of the place immediately toward Dembova. Go slowly through the town; outside the town put the horses on a gallop, and stop not till the forest is reached.”

“According to command!”

“Four others load their pistols. For me saddle two horses, and let another be ready.”

“I knew there would be something!” muttered Soroka.

“Now, Sergeant, after me!” cried Kmita.

And undressed as he was, in trousers only, and open shirt, he went out of the front room. Soroka followed him, opening his eyes widely with wonder; they went in this fashion to the well in the yard of the inn. Here Kmita stopped, and pointing to the bucket hanging from the sweep, said—

“Pour water on my head!”

Soroka knew from experience how dangerous it was to ask twice about an order; he seized the rope, let the bucket down into the water, drew up quickly, and taking the bucket in his hands, threw the water on Pan Andrei, who, puffing and blowing like a whale, rubbed his wet hair with his hands, and cried—

“More!”

Soroka repeated the act, and threw water with all his force, just as if he were putting out a fire.

“Enough!” said Kmita, at length. “Follow me, help me to dress.”

Both went to the inn. At the gate they met the two men going out with two packhorses.

“Slowly through the town; outside the town on a gallop!” commanded Kmita; and he went in.

Half an hour later he appeared dressed completely, as if for the road, with high boots and an elkskin coat, girded with a leather belt into which was thrust a pistol.

The soldiers noticed, too, that from under his kaftan gleamed the edge of chain mail, as if he were going to battle. He had his sabre also girt high, so as to seize the hilt more easily. His face was calm enough, but stern and threatening. Casting a glance at the soldiers to see if they were ready and armed properly, he mounted his horse, and throwing a ducat at the innkeeper, rode out of the place.

Soroka rode at his side; three others behind, leading a horse. Soon they found themselves on the square filled by Boguslav’s troops. There was movement among them already; evidently the command had come to prepare for the road. The horsemen were tightening the girths of the saddle and bridling the horses; the infantry were taking their muskets, stacked before the houses; others were attaching horses to wagons.

Kmita started as it were from meditation.

“Hear me, old man,” said he to Soroka; “from the starosta’s house does the road go on—it will not be necessary to come back through the square?”

“But where are we going, Colonel?”

“To Dembova.”

“Then we must go from the square past the house. The square will be behind us.”

“It is well,” said Kmita.

“Oh, if only those men were alive now! Few are fitted for work like this—few!”

Meanwhile they passed the square, and began to turn toward the starosta’s house, which lay about one furlong and a half farther on, near the roadside.

“Stop!” cried Kmita, suddenly.

The soldiers halted, and he turned to them. “Are you ready for death?” asked he, abruptly.

“Ready!” answered in chorus these daredevils of Orsha.

“We crawled up to Hovanski’s throat, and he did not devour us—do you remember?”

“We remember!”

“There is need to dare great things today. If success comes, our gracious king will make lords of you—I guarantee that! If failure, you will go to the stake!”

“Why not success?” asked Soroka, whose eyes began to gleam like those of an old wolf.

“There will be success!” said three others—Biloüs, Zavratynski, and Lubyenyets.

“We must carry off the prince marshal!” said Kmita. Then he was silent, wishing to see the impression which the mad thought would make on the soldiers. But they were silent too, and looked on him as on a rainbow; only, their mustaches quivered, and their faces became terrible and murderous.

“The stake is near, the reward far away,” added Kmita.

“There are few of us,” muttered Zavratynski.

“It is worse than against Hovanski,” said Lubyenyets.

“The troops are all in the market-square, and at the house are only the sentries and about twenty attendants,” said Kmita, “who are off their guard, and have not even swords at their sides.”

“You risk your head; why should we not risk ours?” said Soroka.

“Hear me,” continued Kmita. “If we do not take him by cunning, we shall not take him at all. Listen! I will go into the room, and after a time come out with the prince. If the prince will sit on my horse, I will sit on the other, and we will ride on. When we have ridden about a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards, then seize him from both sides by the shoulders, and gallop the horses with all breath.”

“According to order!” answered Soroka.

“If I do not come out,” continued Kmita, “and you hear a shot in the room, then open on the guards with pistols, and give me the horse as I rush from the door.”

“That will be done,” answered Soroka.

“Forward!” commanded Kmita.



They moved on, and a quarter of an hour later halted at the gate of the starosta's house. At the gate were six guards with halberds; at the door of the anteroom four men were standing. Around a carriage in the front yard were occupied equerries and outriders, whom an attendant of consequence was overseeing—a foreigner, as might be known from his dress and wig.

Farther on, near the carriage-house, horses were being attached to two other carriages, to which gigantic Turkish grooms were carrying packs. Over these watched a man dressed in black, with a face like that of a doctor or an astrologer.

Kmita announced himself as he had previously, through the officer of the day, who returned soon and asked him to the prince.

"How are you, Cavalier?" asked the prince, joyfully. "You left me so suddenly that I thought scruples had risen in you from my words, and I did not expect to see you again."

"Of course I could not go without making my obeisance."

"Well, I thought: the prince *voevoda* has known whom to send on a confidential mission. I make use of you also, for I give you letters to a number of important persons, and to the King of Sweden himself. But why armed as if for battle?"

"I am going among confederates; I have heard right here in this place, and your highness has confirmed the report, that a confederate squadron passed. Even here in Pilvishki they brought a terrible panic on Zolotarenko's men, for a famed soldier is leading that squadron."

"Who is he?"

"Pan Volodyovski; and with him are Mirski, Oskyerko, and the two Skshetuskis—one that man of Zbaraj, whose wife your highness wanted to besiege in Tykotsin. All rebelled against the prince *voevoda*; and it is a pity, for they were good soldiers. What is to be done? There are still fools in the Commonwealth who are unwilling to pull the red cloth with Cossacks and Swedes."

"There is never a lack of fools in the world, and especially in this country," said the prince. "Here are the letters; and besides, when you see his Swedish grace, say as if in confidence that in heart I am as much his adherent as my cousin, but for the time I must dissemble."

"Who is not forced to that?" answered Kmita. "Every man dissembles, especially if he thinks to do something great."

"That is surely the case. Acquit yourself well, Sir Cavalier, I will be thankful to you, and will not let the hetman surpass me in rewarding."

"If the favor of your highness is such, I ask reward in advance."

"You have it! Surely my cousin has not furnished you over abundantly for the road. There is a serpent in his money-box."

"May God guard me from asking money! I did not ask it of the hetman, and I will not take it from your highness. I am at my own expense, and I will remain so."

Prince Boguslav looked at the young knight with wonder. "I see that in truth the Kmitas are not of those who look at men's hands. What is your wish then, Sir Cavalier?"

"The matter is as follows: without thinking carefully in Kyedani, I took a horse of high blood, so as to show myself before the Swedes. I do not exaggerate when I say there is not a better in the stables of Kyedani. Now I am sorry for him, and I am afraid to injure him on the road, in the stables of inns, or for want of rest. And as accidents are not hard to meet, he may fall into enemies' hands, even those of that Volodyovski, who personally is terribly hostile to me.

I have thought, therefore, to beg your highness to take him to keep and use until I ask for him at a more convenient time.”

“Better sell him to me.”

“Impossible—it would be like selling a friend. At a small estimate that horse has taken me a hundred times out of the greatest danger; for he has this virtue too, that in battle he bites the enemy savagely.”

“Is he such a good horse?” asked Prince Boguslav, with lively interest.

“Is he good? If I were sure your highness would not be offended, I would bet a hundred gold florins without looking, that your highness has not such a one in your stables.”

“Maybe I would bet, if it were not that today is not the time for a trial. I will keep him willingly, though; if possible, I would buy. But where is this wonder kept?”

“My men are holding him just here in front of the gate. As to his being a wonder, he is a wonder; for it is no exaggeration to say that the Sultan might covet such a horse. He is not of this country, but from Anatolia; and in Anatolia, as I think, only one such was found.”

“Then let us look at him.”

“I serve your highness.”

Before the gate Kmita’s men were holding two horses completely equipped: one was indeed of high breed, black as a raven, with a star on his forehead, and a white fetlock to a leg like a lance; he neighed slightly at sight of his master.

“I guess that to be the one,” said Boguslav. “I do not know whether he is such a wonder as you say, but in truth he is a fine horse.”

“Try him!” cried Kmita; “or no, I will mount him myself!”

The soldiers gave Kmita the horse; he mounted, and began to ride around near the gate. Under the skilled rider the horse seemed doubly beautiful. His prominent eyes gained brightness as he moved at a trot; he seemed to blow forth inner fire through his nostrils, while the wind unfolded his mane. Pan Kmita described a circle, changed his gait; at last he rode straight on the prince, so that the nostrils of the horse were not a yard from his face, and cried—

“Halt!”

The horse stopped with his four feet resisting, and stood as if fixed to the ground.

“What do you say?” asked Kmita.

“The eyes and legs of a deer, the gait of a wolf, the nostrils of an elk, and the breast of a woman!” said Boguslav. “Here is all that is needed. Does he understand German command?”

“Yes; for my horse-trainer Zend, who was a Courlander, taught him.”

“And the beast is swift?”

“The wind cannot come up with him; a Tartar cannot escape him.”

“Your trainer must have been a good one, for I see that the horse is highly taught.”

“Is he taught? Your highness will not believe. He goes so in the rank that when the line is moving at a trot, you may let the reins drop and he will not push one half of his nose beyond the line. If your highness will be pleased to try, and if in two furlongs he will push beyond the others half a head, then I will give him as a gift.”

“That would be the greatest wonder, not to advance with dropped reins.”

“It is wonderful and convenient, for both hands of the rider are free. More than once have I had a sabre in one hand and a pistol in the other, and the horse went alone.”

“But if the rank turns?”

“Then he will turn too without breaking the line.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the prince; “no horse will do that. I have seen in France horses of the king’s musketeers, greatly trained, of purpose not to spoil the court ceremonies, but still it was necessary to guide them with reins.”

“The wit of man is in this horse. Let your highness try him yourself.”

“Give him here!” said the prince, after a moment’s thought.

Kmita held the horse till Boguslav mounted. He sprang lightly into the saddle, and began to pat the steed on his shining neck.

“A wonderful thing,” said he; “the best horses shed their hair in the autumn, but this one is as if he had come out of water. In what direction shall we go?”

“Let us move in a line, and if your highness permits, toward the forest. The road is even and broad, but in the direction of the town some wagon might come in the way.”

“Let us ride toward the forest.”

“Just two furlongs. Let your highness drop the reins and start on a gallop. Two men on each side, and I will ride a little behind.”

“Take your places!” said the prince.

The line was formed; they turned the horses’ heads from the town. The prince was in the middle.

“Forward!” said he. “On a gallop from the start—march!”

The line shot on, and after a certain time was moving like a whirlwind. A cloud of dust hid them from the eyes of the attendants and equeries, who, collecting in a crowd at the gate, looked with curiosity at the racing. The trained horses going at the highest speed, snorting from effort, had run already a furlong or more; and the prince’s steed, though not held by the reins, did not push forward an inch. They ran another furlong. Kmita turned, and seeing behind only a cloud of dust, through which the starosta’s house could barely be seen, and the people standing before it not at all, cried with a terrible voice—

“Take him!”

At this moment Biloüs and the gigantic Zavrattynski seized both arms of the prince, and squeezed them till the bones cracked in their joints, and holding him in their iron fists, put spurs to their own horses.

The prince’s horse in the middle held the line, neither pushing ahead nor holding back an inch. Astonishment, fright, the whirlwind beating in his face, deprived Prince Boguslav of speech for the first moment. He struggled once and a second time—without result, however, for pain from his twisted arms pierced him through.

“What is this, ruffians? Know ye not who I am?” cried he at last.

Thereupon Kmita pushed him with the barrel of the pistol between the shoulders. “Resistance is useless; it will only bring a bullet in your body!” cried he.

“Traitor!” said the prince.

“But who are you?” asked Kmita.

And they galloped on farther.

## Chapter XXVII

They ran long through the pine-forest with such speed that the trees by the roadside seemed to flee backward in panic; inns, huts of forest guards, pitch-clearings, flashed by, and at times wagons singly or a few together, going to Pilvishki. From time to time Boguslav bent forward in the saddle as if to struggle; but his arms were only wrenched the more painfully in the iron hands of the soldiers, while Pan Andrei held the pistol-barrel between the princess shoulders again, and they rushed on till the white foam was falling in flakes from the horses.

At last they were forced to slacken the speed, for breath failed both men and beasts, and Pilvishki was so far behind that all possibility of pursuit had ceased. They rode on then a certain time at a walk and in silence, surrounded by a cloud of steam, which was issuing from the horses.

For a long time the prince said nothing; he was evidently trying to calm himself and cool his blood. When he had done this he asked—

“Whither are you taking me?”

“Your highness will know that at the end of the road,” answered Kmita.

Boguslav was silent, but after a while said, “Cavalier, command these trash to let me go, for they are pulling out my arms. If you command them to do so, they will only hang; if not, they will go to the stake.”

“They are nobles, not trash,” answered Kmita; “and as to the punishment which your highness threatens, it is not known whom death will strike first.”

“Know ye on whom ye have raised hands?” asked the prince, turning to the soldiers.

“We know,” answered they.

“By a million horned devils!” cried Boguslav, with an outburst. “Will you command these people to let me go, or not?”

“Your highness, I will order them to bind your arms behind your back; then you will be quieter.”

“Impossible! You will put my arms quite out of joint.”

“I would give orders to let another off on his word that he would not try to escape, but you know how to break your word,” said Kmita.

“I will give another word,” answered the prince—“that not only will I escape at the first opportunity, but I will have you torn apart with horses, when you fall into my hands.”

“What God wants to give, he gives!” said Kmita. “But I prefer a sincere threat to a lying promise. Let go his hands, only hold his horse by the bridle; but, your highness, look here! I have but to touch the trigger to put a bullet into your body, and I shall not miss, for I never miss. Sit quietly; do not try to escape.”

“I do not care, Cavalier, for you or your pistol.”

When he had said this, the prince stretched his aching arms, to straighten them and shake off the numbness. The soldiers caught the horse’s bridle on both sides, and led him on.

After a while Boguslav said, “You dare not look me in the eyes, Pan Kmita; you hide in the rear.”

“Indeed!” answered Kmita; and urging forward his horse, he pushed Zavrattynski away, and seizing the reins of the prince’s horse, he looked Boguslav straight in the face. “And how is my horse? Have I added even one virtue?”

“A good horse!” answered the prince. “If you wish, I will buy him.”

“This horse deserves a better fate than to carry a traitor till his death.”

“You are a fool, Pan Kmita.”

“Yes, for I believed the Radzivils.”

Again came a moment of silence, which was broken by the prince.

“Tell me, Pan Kmita, are you sure that you are in your right mind, that your reason has not left you? Have you asked yourself what you have done, madman? Has it not come to your head that as things are now it would have been better for you if your mother had not given you birth, and that no one, not only in Poland, but in all Europe, would have ventured on such a daredevil deed?”

“Then it is clear that there is no great courage in that Europe, for I have carried off your highness, hold you, and will not let you go.”

“It can only be an affair with a madman,” said the prince, as if to himself.

“My gracious prince,” answered Pan Andrei, “you are in my hands; be reconciled to that, and waste not words in vain. Pursuit will not come up, for your men think to this moment that you have come off with me voluntarily. When my men took you by the arms no one saw it, for the dust covered us; and even if there were no dust, neither the equerries nor the guards could have seen, it was so far. They will wait for you two hours; the third hour they will be impatient, the fourth and fifth uneasy, and the sixth will send out men in search; but we meanwhile shall be beyond Maryapole.”

“What of that?”

“This, that they will not pursue; and even if they should start immediately in pursuit, your horses are just from the road, while ours are fresh. Even if by some miracle they should come up, that would not save you, for, as truly as you see me here, I should open your head—which I shall do if nothing else is possible. This is the position! Radzivil has a court, an army, cannon, dragoons; Kmita has six men, and Kmita holds Radzivil by the neck.”

“What further?” asked the prince.

“Nothing further! We will go where it pleases me. Thank God, your highness, that you are alive; for were it not that I gave orders to throw many gallons of water on my head today, you would be in the other world already, that is, in hell, for two reasons—as a traitor and as a Calvinist.”

“And would you have dared to do that?”

“Without praising myself I say that your highness would not easily find an undertaking on which I would not venture; you have the best proof of that in yourself.”

The prince looked carefully at the young man and said, “Cavalier, the devil has written on your face that you are ready for anything, and that is the reason why I have a proof in myself. I tell you, indeed, that you have been able to astonish me with your boldness, and that is no easy thing.”

“That’s all one to me. Give thanks to God, your highness, that you are alive yet, and quits.”

“No, Cavalier. First of all, do you thank God; for if one hair had fallen from my head, then know that the Radzivils would find you even under the earth. If you think that because there is disunion between us and those of Nyesvyej and Olyta, and that they will not pursue you, you are mistaken. Radzivill blood must be avenged, an awful example must be given, otherwise there would be no life for us in this Commonwealth. You cannot hide abroad, either: the Emperor of Germany will give you up, for I am a prince of the German Empire; the Elector of Brandenburg is my uncle; the Prince of Orange is his brother-in-law; the King and Queen of France and their ministers are my friends. Where will you hide? The Turks and Tartars will sell you, though we had to give them half our fortune. You will not find on earth a corner, nor such deserts, nor such people—”

“It is a wonder to me,” replied Kmita, “that your highness takes such thought in advance for my safety. A great person a Radzivill! Still I have only to touch a trigger.”

“I do not deny that. More than once it has happened in the world that a great man died at the hands of a common one. A camp-follower killed Pompey; French kings perished at the hands of low people. Without going farther, the same thing happened to my great father. But I ask you what will come next?”

“What is that to me? I have never taken much thought of what will be tomorrow. If it comes to close quarters with all the Radzivils, God knows who will be warmed up best. The sword has been long hanging over my head, but the moment I close my eyes I sleep as sweetly as a suslik. And if one Radzivill is not enough for me, I will carry off a second, and a third.”

“As God is dear to me, Cavalier, you please me much; for I repeat that you alone in Europe could dare a deed like this. The beast does not care, nor mind what will come tomorrow. I love daring people, and there are fewer and fewer of them in the world. Just think! he has carried off a Radzivill and holds him as his own. Where were you reared in this fashion, Cavalier? Whence do you come?”

“I am banneret of Orsha.”

“Pan Banneret of Orsha, I grieve that the Radzivils are losing a man like you, for with such men much might be done. If it were not a question of myself—h’m! I would spare nothing to win you.”

“Too late!” said Kmita.

“That is to be understood,” answered the prince. “Much too late! But I tell you beforehand that I will order you only to be shot, for you are worthy to die a soldier’s death. What an incarnate devil to carry me off from the midst of my men!”

Kmita made no answer; the prince meditated awhile, then cried—

“If you free me at once, I will not take vengeance. Only give me your word that you will tell no one of this, and command your men to be silent.”

“Impossible!” replied Kmita.

“Do you want a ransom?”

“I do not.”

“What the devil, then, did you carry me off for? I cannot understand it.”

“It would take a long time to tell. I will tell your highness later.”

“But what have we to do on the road unless to talk? Acknowledge, Cavalier, one thing: you carried me off in a moment of anger and desperation, and now you don’t know well what to do with me.”

“That is my affair!” answered Kmita; “and if I do not know what to do, it will soon be seen.”

Impatience was depicted on Prince Boguslav’s face.

“You are not over-communicative, Pan Banneret of Orsha; but answer me one question at least sincerely: Did you come to me, to Podlyasye, with a plan already formed of attacking my person, or did it enter your head in the last moment?”

“To that I can answer your highness sincerely, for my lips are burning to tell you why I left your cause; and while I am alive, while there is breath in my body, I shall not return to it. The prince *voevoda* of Vilna deceived me, and in advance brought me to swear on the crucifix that I would not leave him till death.”

“And you are keeping the oath well. There is nothing to be said on that point.”

“True!” cried Kmita, violently. “If I have lost my soul, if I must be damned, it is through the Radzivills. But I give myself to the mercy of God, and I would rather lose my soul, I would rather burn eternally, than to sin longer with knowledge and willingly—than to serve longer, knowing that I serve sin and treason. May God have mercy on me! I prefer to burn, I prefer a hundred times to burn; I should burn surely, if I remained with you. I have nothing to lose; but at least I shall say at the judgment of God: ‘I knew not what I was swearing, and had I discovered that I had sworn treason to the country, destruction to the Polish name, I should have broken the oath right there.’ Now let the Lord God be my judge.”

“To the question, to the question!” said Boguslav, calmly.

But Pan Andrei breathed heavily, and rode on some time in silence, with frowning brow and eyes fixed on the earth, like a man bowed down by misfortune.

“To the question!” repeated the prince.

Kmita roused himself as if from a dream, shook his head, and said—

“I believed the prince hetman as I would not have believed my own father. I remember that banquet at which he announced his union with the Swedes. What I suffered then, what I passed through, God will account to me. Others, honorable men, threw their batons at his feet and remained with their country; but I stood like a stump with the baton, with shame, with submission, with infamy, in torture, for I was called traitor to my eyes. And who called me traitor? Oi, better not say, lest I forget myself, go mad, and put a bullet right here in the head of your highness. You are the men, you the traitors, the Judases, who brought me to that.”

Here Kmita gazed with a terrible expression on the prince, and hatred came out on his face from the bottom of his soul, like a dragon which had crawled out of a cave to the light of day; but Boguslav looked at the young man with a calm, fearless eye. At last he said—

“But that interests me, Pan Kmita; speak on.”

Kmita dropped the bridle of the prince’s horse, and removed his cap as if wishing to cool his burning head.

“That same night,” continued he, “I went to the hetman, for he gave command to call me. I thought to myself, ‘I will renounce his service, break my oath, suffocate him, choke him with these hands, blow up Kyedani with powder, and then let happen what may.’ He knew too that was ready for anything, knew what I was; I saw well that he was fingering a box in which there were pistols. ‘That is nothing,’ thought I to myself; ‘either he will miss me or he will



kill me.' But he began to reason, to speak, to show such a prospect to me, simpleton, and put himself forward as such a savior, that your highness knows what happened."

"He convinced the young man," said Boguslav.

"So that I fell at his feet," cried Kmita, "and saw in him the father, the one savior, of the country; so that I gave myself to him soul and body as to a devil. For him, for his honesty I was ready to hurl myself headlong from the tower of Kyedani."

"I thought such would be the end," said Boguslav.

"What I lost in his cause I will not say, but I rendered him important services. I held in obedience my squadron, which is in Kyedani now—God grant to his ruin! Others, who mutinied, I cut up badly. I stained my hands in brothers' blood, believing that a stern necessity for the country. Often my soul was pained at giving command to shoot honest soldiers; often the nature of a noble rebelled against him, when one time and another he promised something and did not keep his word. But I thought: 'I am simple, he is wise!—it must be done so.' But today, when I learned for the first time from those letters of the poisons, the marrow stiffened in my bones. How? Is this the kind of war? You wish to poison soldiers? And that is to be in hetman fashion? That is to be the Radzivill method, and am I to carry such letters?"

"You know nothing of politics, Cavalier," interrupted Boguslav.

"May the thunders crush it! Let the criminal Italians practise it, not a noble whom God has adorned with more honorable blood than others, but at the same time obliged him to war with a sabre and not with a drug-shop."

"These letters, then, so astonished you that you determined to leave the Radzivills?"

"It was not the letters—I might have thrown them to the hangman, or tossed them into the fire, for they refer not to my duties; it was not the letters. I might have refused the mission without leaving the cause. Do I know what I might have done? I might have joined the dragoons, or collected a party again, and harried Hovanski as before. But straightway a suspicion came to me: 'But do they not wish to poison the country as well as those soldiers?' God granted me not to break out, though my head was burning like a grenade, to remember myself, to have the power to think: 'Draw him by the tongue, and discover the whole truth; betray not what you have at heart, give yourself out as worse than the Radzivills themselves, and draw him by the tongue.'"

"Whom—me?"

"Yes! God aided me, so that I, simple man, deceived a politician—so that your highness, holding me the last of ruffians, hid nothing of your own ruffianism, confessed everything, told everything, as if it had been written on the hand. The hair stood on my head, but I listened and listened to the end. O traitors! arch hell-dwellers! O parricides! How is it, that a thunderbolt has not stricken you down before now? How is it that the earth has not swallowed you? So you are treating with Hmelnitski, with the Swedes, with the elector, with Rakotsy, and with the devil himself to the destruction of this Commonwealth? Now you want to cut a mantle out of it for yourself, to sell it to divide it, to tear your own mother like wolves? Such is your gratitude for all the benefits heaped on you—for the offices, the honors, the dignities, the wealth, the authority, the estates which foreign kings envy you? And you were ready without regard to those tears, torments, oppression. Where is your conscience, where your faith, where your honesty? What monster brought you into the world?"

“Cavalier,” interrupted Boguslav, coldly, “you have me in your hand, you can kill me; but I beg one thing, do not bore me.”

Both were silent.

However, it appeared plainly, from the words of Kmita, that the soldier had been able to draw out the naked truth from the diplomat, and that the prince was guilty of great incautiousness, of a great error in betraying his most secret plans and those of the hetman. This pricked his vanity; therefore, not caring to hide his ill-humor, he said—

“Do not ascribe it to your own wit merely, Pan Kmita, that you got the truth from me. I spoke openly, for I thought the prince *voevoda* knew people better, and had sent a man worthy of confidence.”

“The prince *voevoda* sent a man worthy of confidence,” answered Kmita, “but you have lost him. Henceforth only scoundrels will serve you.”

“If the way in which you seized me was not scoundrelly, then may the sword grow to my hand in the first battle.”

“It was a stratagem! I learned it in a hard school. You wish, your highness, to know Kmita. Here he is! I shall not go with empty hands to our gracious lord.”

“And you think that a hair of my head will fall from the hand of Yan Kazimir?”

“That is a question for the judges, not for me.”

Suddenly Kmita reined in his horse: “But the letter of the prince *voevoda*—have you that letter on your person?”

“If I had, I would not give it. The letter remained in Pilvishki.”

“Search him!” cried Kmita.

The soldiers seized the prince again by the arms. Soroka began to search his pockets. After a while he found the letter.

“Here is one document against you and your works,” said Pan Andrei, taking the letter. “The King of Poland will know from it what you have in view; the Swedish King will know too, that although now you are serving him, the prince *voevoda* reserves to himself freedom to withdraw if the Swedish foot stumbles. All your treasons will come out, all your machinations. But I have, besides, other letters—to the King of Sweden, to Wittemberg, to Radzeyovski. You are great and powerful; still I am not sure that it will not be too narrow for you in this Commonwealth, when both kings will prepare a recompense worthy of your treasons.”

Prince Boguslav’s eyes gleamed with ill-omened light, but after a while he mastered his anger and said—

“Well, Cavalier! For life or death between us! We have met! You may cause us trouble and much evil, but I say this: No man has dared hitherto to do in this country what you have done. Woe be to you and to yours!”

“I have a sabre to defend myself, and I have something to redeem my own with,” answered Kmita.

“You have me as a hostage,” said the prince.

And in spite of all his anger he breathed calmly; he understood one thing at this moment, that in no case was his life threatened—that his person was too much needed by Kmita.

Then they went again at a trot, and after an hour's ride they saw two horsemen, each of whom led a pair of packhorses. They were Kmita's men sent in advance from Pilvishki.

"What is the matter?" asked Kmita.

"The horses are terribly tired, for we have not rested yet."

"We shall rest right away!"

"There is a cabin at the turn, maybe 'tis a public house."

"Let the sergeant push on to prepare oats. Public house or not, we must halt."

"According to order, Commander."

Soroka gave reins to the horses, and they followed him slowly. Kmita rode at one side of the prince, Lubyenyets at the other. Boguslav had become completely calm and quiet; he did not draw Pan Andrei into further conversation. He seemed to be exhausted by the journey, or by the position in which he found himself, and dropping his head somewhat on his breast, closed his eyes. Still from time to time he cast a side look now at Kmita, now at Lubyenyets, who held the reins of the horse, as if studying to discover who would be the easier to overturn so as to wrest himself free.

They approached the building situated on the roadside at a bulge of the forest. It was not a public house, but a forge and a wheelwright-shop, in which those going by the road stopped to shoe their horses and mend their wagons. Between the forge and the road there was a small open area, sparsely covered with trampled grass; fragments of wagons and broken wheels lay thrown here and there on that place, but there were no travellers. Soroka's horses stood tied to a post. Soroka himself was talking before the forge to the blacksmith, a Tartar, and two of his assistants.

"We shall not have an overabundant repast," said the prince; "there is nothing to be had here."

"We have food and spirits with us," answered Kmita.

"That is well! We shall need strength."

They halted. Kmita thrust his pistol behind his belt, sprang from the saddle, and giving his horse to Soroka, seized again the reins of the prince's horse, which however Lubyenyets had not let go from his hand on the other side.

"Your highness will dismount!" said Kmita.

"Why is that? I will eat and drink in the saddle," said the prince, bending down.

"I beg you to come to the ground!" said Kmita, threateningly.

"But into the ground with you!" cried the prince, with a terrible voice; and drawing with the quickness of lightning the pistol from Kmita's belt, he thundered into his very face.

"Jesus, Mary!" cried Kmita.

At this moment the horse under the prince struck with spurs reared so that he stood almost erect; the prince turned like a snake in the saddle toward Lubyenyets, and with all the strength of his powerful arm struck him with the pistol between the eyes.

Lubyenyets roared terribly and fell from the horse.

Before the others could understand what had happened, before they had drawn breath, before the cry of fright had died on their lips, Boguslav scattered them as a storm would have done, rushed from the square to the road, and shot on like a whirlwind toward Pilvishki.

“Seize him! Hold him! Kill him!” cried wild voices.

Three soldiers who were sitting yet on the horses rushed after him; but Soroka seized a musket standing at the wall, and aimed at the fleeing man, or rather at his horse.

The horse stretched out like a deer, and moved forward like an arrow urged from the string. The shot thundered. Soroka rushed through the smoke for a better view of what he had done; he shaded his eyes with his hand, gazed awhile, and cried at last—

“Missed!”

At this moment Boguslav disappeared beyond the bend, and after him vanished the pursuers.

Then Soroka turned to the blacksmith and his assistants, who were looking up to that moment with dumb astonishment at what had happened, and cried—

“Water!”

The blacksmith ran to draw water, and Soroka knelt near Pan Andrei, who was lying motionless. Kmita’s face was covered with powder from the discharge, and with drops of blood; his eyes were closed, his left brow and left temple were blackened. The sergeant began first to feel lightly with his fingers the head of his colonel.

“His head is sound.”

But Kmita gave no signs of life, and blood came abundantly from his face. The blacksmith’s assistants brought a bucket of water and a cloth. Soroka, with equal deliberation and care, began to wipe Kmita’s face.

Finally the wound appeared from under the blood and blackness. The ball had opened Kmita’s left cheek deeply, and had carried away the end of his ear. Soroka examined to see if his cheekbone were broken.

After a while he convinced himself that it was not, and drew a long breath. Kmita, under the influence of cold water and pain, began to give signs of life. His face quivered, his breast heaved with breath.

“He is alive!—nothing! he will be unharmed,” cried Soroka, joyfully; and a tear rolled down the murderous face of the sergeant.

Meanwhile at the turn of the road appeared Biloüs, one of the three soldiers who had followed the prince.

“Well, what?” called Soroka.

The soldier shook his head. “Nothing!”

“Will the others return soon?”

“The others will not return.”

With trembling hands the sergeant laid Kmita’s head on the threshold of the forge, and sprang to his feet. “How is that?”

“Sergeant, that prince is a wizard! Zavratynski caught up first, for he had the best horse, and because the prince let him catch up. Before our eyes Boguslav snatched the sabre from his hand and thrust him through. We had barely to cry out. Vitkovski was next, and sprang to

help; and him this Radzivill cut down before my eyes, as if a thunderbolt had struck him. He did not give a sound. I did not wait my turn. Sergeant, the prince is ready to come back here.”

“There is nothing in this place for us,” said Soroka. “To horse!”

That moment they began to make a stretcher between the horses for Kmita. Two of the soldiers, at the command of Soroka, stood with muskets on the road, fearing the return of the terrible man.

But Prince Boguslav, convinced that Kmita was not alive, rode quietly to Pilvishki. About dark he was met by a whole detachment of horsemen sent out by Patterson, whom the absence of the prince had disturbed for some time. The officer, on seeing the prince, galloped to him—

“Your highness, we did not know—”

“That is nothing!” interrupted Prince Boguslav. “I was riding this horse in the company of that cavalier, of whom I bought him.”

And after a while he added: “I paid him well.”

## Chapter XXVIII

The trusty Soroka carried his colonel through the deep forest, not knowing himself what to begin, whither to go or to turn.

Kmita was not only wounded, but stunned by the shot. Soroka from time to time moistened the piece of cloth in a bucket hanging by the horse, and washed his face; at times he halted to take fresh water from the streams and forest ponds; but neither halts nor the movement of the horse could restore at once consciousness to Pan Andrei, and he lay as if dead, till the soldiers going with him, and less experienced in the matter of wounds than Soroka, began to be alarmed for the life of their colonel.

“He is alive,” answered Soroka; “in three days he will be on horseback like any of us.”

In fact, an hour later, Kmita opened his eyes; but from his mouth came forth one word only—“Drink!”

Soroka held a cup of pure water to his lips; but it seemed that to open his mouth caused Pan Andrei unendurable pain, and he was unable to drink. But he did not lose consciousness: he asked for nothing, apparently remembered nothing; his eyes were wide open, and he gazed, without attention, toward the depth of the forest, on the streaks of blue sky visible through the dense branches above their heads, and at his comrades, like a man roused from sleep, or like one recovered from drunkenness, and permitted Soroka to take care of him without saying a word—nay, the cold water with which the sergeant washed the wound seemed to give him pleasure, for at times his eyes smiled. But Soroka comforted him—

“Tomorrow the dizziness will pass, Colonel; God grant recovery.”

In fact, dizziness began to disappear toward evening; for just before the setting of the sun Kmita seemed more self-possessed and asked on a sudden, “What noise is that?”

“What noise? There is none,” answered Soroka.

Apparently the noise was only in the head of Pan Andrei, for the evening was calm. The setting sun, piercing the gloom with its slanting rays, filled with golden glitter the forest darkness, and lighted the red trunks of the pine-trees. There was no wind, and only here and there, from hazel, birch, and hornbeam trees leaves dropped to the ground, or timid beasts made slight rustle in fleeing to the depths of the forest in front of the horsemen.

The evening was cool; but evidently fever had begun to attack Pan Andrei, for he repeated—“Your highness, it is life or death between us!”

At last it became dark altogether, and Soroka was thinking of a night camp; but because they had entered a damp forest and the ground began to yield under the hoofs of their horses, they continued to ride in order to reach high and dry places.

They rode one hour and a second without being able to pass the swamp. Meanwhile it was growing lighter, for the moon had risen. Suddenly Soroka, who was in advance, sprang from the saddle and began to look carefully at the ground.

“Horses have passed this way,” said he, at sight of tracks in the soft earth.

“Who could have passed, when there is no road?” asked one of the soldiers supporting Pan Kmita.

“But there are tracks, and a whole crowd of them! Look here between the pines—as evident as on the palm of the hand!”

“Perhaps cattle have passed.”

“Impossible. It is not the time of forest pastures; horse-hoofs are clearly to be seen, somebody must have passed. It would be well to find even a forester’s cabin.”

“Let us follow the trail.”

“Let us ride forward!”

Soroka mounted again and rode on. Horses’ tracks in the turfy ground were more distinct; and some of them, as far as could be seen in the light of the moon, seemed quite fresh. Still the horses sank to their knees, and beyond. The soldiers were afraid that they could not wade through, or would come to some deeper quagmire; when, at the end of half an hour, the odor of smoke and rosin came to their nostrils.

“There must be a pitch-clearing here,” said Soroka.

“Yes, sparks are to be seen,” said a soldier.

And really in the distance appeared a line of reddish smoke, filled with flame, around which were dancing the sparks of a fire burning under the ground.

When they had approached, the soldiers saw a cabin, a well, and a strong shed built of pine logs. The horses, wearied from the road, began to neigh; frequent neighing answered them from under the shed, and at the same time there stood before the riders some kind of a figure, dressed in sheepskin, wool outward.

“Are there many horses?” asked the man in the sheepskin.

“Is this a pitch-factory?” inquired Soroka.

“What kind of people are ye? Where do ye come from?” asked the pitch-maker, in a voice in which astonishment and alarm were evident.

“Never fear!” answered Soroka; “we are not robbers.”

“Go your own way; there is nothing for you here.”

“Shut thy mouth, and guide us to the house since we ask. Seest not, scoundrel, that we are taking a wounded man?”

“What kind of people are ye?”

“Be quick, or we answer from guns. It will be better for thee to hurry. Take us to the house; if not, we will cook thee in thy own pitch.”

“I cannot defend myself alone, but there will be more of us. Ye will lay down your lives here.”

“There will be more of us too; lead on!”

“Go on yourselves; it is not my affair.”

“What thou hast to eat, give us, and *gorailka*. We are carrying a man who will pay.”

“If he leaves here alive.”

Thus conversing, they entered the cabin; a fire was burning in the chimney, and from pots, hanging by the handles, came the odor of boiling meat. The cabin was quite large. Soroka saw at the walls six wooden beds, covered thickly with sheepskins.

"This is the resort of some company," muttered he to his comrades. "Prime your guns and watch well. Take care of this scoundrel, let him not slip away. The owners sleep outside tonight, for we shall not leave the house."

"The men will not come today," said the pitch-maker.

"That is better, for we shall not quarrel about room, and tomorrow we will go on," replied Soroka; "but now dish the meat, for we are hungry, and spare no oats on the horses."

"Where can oats be found here, great mighty soldiers?"

"We heard horses under the shed, so there must be oats; thou dost not feed them with pitch."

"They are not my horses."

"Whether they are yours or not, they must eat as well as ours. Hurry, man, hurry! if thy skin is dear to thee!"

The pitch-maker said nothing. The soldiers entered the house, placed the sleeping Kmita on a bed, and sat down to supper. They ate eagerly the boiled meat and cabbage, a large kettle of which was in the chimney. There was millet also, and in a room at the side of the cabin Soroka found a large decanter of spirits.

He merely strengthened himself with it slightly, and gave none to the soldiers, for he had determined to hold it in reserve for the night. This empty house with six beds for men, and a shed in which a band of horses were neighing, seemed to him strange and suspicious. He judged simply that this was a robbers' retreat, especially since in the room from which he brought the decanter he found many weapons hanging on the wall, and a keg of powder, with various furniture, evidently plundered from noble houses. In case the absent occupants of the cabin returned, it was impossible to expect from them not merely hospitality, but even mercy. Soroka therefore resolved to hold the house with armed hand, and maintain himself in it by superior force or negotiations.

This was imperative also in view of the health of Pan Kmita, for whom a journey might be fatal, and in view of the safety of all.

Soroka was a trained and seasoned soldier, to whom one feeling was foreign—the feeling of fear. Still in that moment, at thought of Prince Boguslav, fear seized him. Having been for long years in the service of Kmita, he had blind faith, not only in the valor, but the fortune of the man; he had seen more than once deeds of his which in daring surpassed every measure, and touched almost on madness, but which still succeeded and passed without harm. With Kmita he had gone through the "raids" on Hovanski; had taken part in all the surprises, attacks, fights, and onsets, and had come to the conviction that Pan Andrei could do all things, succeed in all things, come out of every chaos, and destroy whomsoever he wished. Kmita therefore was for him the highest impersonation of power and fortune—but this time he had met his match seemingly, nay, he had met his superior. How was this? One man carried away, without weapons, and in Kmita's hands, had freed himself from those hands; not only that, he had overthrown Kmita, conquered his soldiers, and terrified them so that they ran away in fear of his return. That was a wonder of wonders, and Soroka lost his head pondering over it. To his thinking, anything might come to pass in the world rather than this, that a man might be found who could ride over Kmita.

"Has our fortune then ended?" muttered he to himself, gazing around in wonder.

It was not long since with eyes shut he followed Pan Kmita to Hovanski's quarters surrounded by eighty thousand men; now at the thought of that long-haired prince with lady's eyes and a painted face, superstitious terror seized him, and he knew not what to do. The



thought alarmed him, that tomorrow or the next day he would have to travel on highways where the terrible prince himself or his pursuers might meet him. This was the reason why he had gone from the road to the dense forest, and at present wished to stay in that cabin until pursuers were deluded and wearied.

But since even that hiding-place did not seem to him safe for other reasons, he wished to discover what course to take; therefore he ordered the soldiers to stand guard at the door and the windows, and said to the pitch-maker—

“Here, man, take a lantern and come with me.”

“I can light the great mighty lord only with a pitch-torch, for we have no lantern.”

“Then light the torch; if thou burn the shed and the horses, it is all one to me.”

After such words a lantern was found right away. Soroka commanded the fellow to go ahead, and followed himself with a pistol in his hand.

“Who live in this cabin?” asked he on the road.

“Men live here.”

“What are their names?”

“That is not free for me to say.”

“It seems to me, fellow, that thou’lt get a bullet in thy head.”

“My master,” answered the pitch-maker, “if I had told in a lie any kind of name, you would have to be satisfied.”

“True! But are there many of those men?”

“There is an old one, two sons, and two servants.”

“Are they nobles?”

“Surely nobles.”

“Do they live here?”

“Sometimes here, and sometimes God knows where.”

“But the horses, whence are they?”

“God knows whence they bring them.”

“Tell the truth; do thy masters not rob on the highway?”

“Do I know? It seems to me they take horses, but whose—that’s not on my head.”

“What do they do with the horses?”

“Sometimes they take ten or twelve of them, as many as there are, and drive them away, but whither I know not.”

Thus conversing, they reached the shed, from which was heard the snorting of horses.

“Hold the light,” said Soroka.

The fellow raised the lantern, and threw light on the horses standing in a row at the wall. Soroka examined them one after another with the eye of a specialist, shook his head, smacked his lips, and said—

“The late Pan Zend would have rejoiced. There are Polish and Muscovite horses here—there is a Wallachian, a German—a mare. Fine horses! What dost thou give them to eat?”

“Not to lie, my master, I sowed two fields with oats in springtime.”

“Then thy masters have been handling horses since spring?”

“No, but they sent a servant to me with a command.”

“Then art thou theirs?”

“I was till they went to the war.”

“What war?”

“Do I know? They went far away last year, and came back in the summer.”

“Whose art thou now?”

“These are the king’s forests.”

“Who put thee here to make pitch?”

“The royal forester, a relative of these men, who also brought horses with them; but since he went away once with them, he has not come back.”

“And do guests come to these men?”

“Nobody comes here, for there are swamps around, and only one road. It is a wonder to me that ye could come, my master; for whoso does not strike the road, will be drawn in by the swamp.”

Soroka wanted to answer that he knew these woods and the road very well; but after a moment’s thought he determined that silence was better, and inquired—

“Are these woods very great?”

The fellow did not understand the question. “How is that?”

“Do they go far?”

“Oh! who has gone through them? Where one ends another begins, and God knows where they are not; I have never been in that place.”

“Very well!” said Soroka.

Then he ordered the man to go back to the cabin, and followed himself.

On the way he was pondering over what he should do, and hesitated. On one hand the wish came to him to take the horses while the cabin-dwellers were gone, and flee with this plunder. The booty was precious, and the horses pleased the old soldier’s heart greatly; but after a while he overcame the temptation. To take them was easy, but what to do further. Swamps all around, one egress—how hit upon that? Chance had served him once, but perhaps it would not a second time. To follow the trail of hoofs was useless, for the cabin-dwellers had surely wit enough to make by design false and treacherous trails leading straight into quagmires. Soroka knew clearly the methods of men who steal horses, and of those who take booty.

He thought awhile, therefore, and meditated; all at once he struck his head with his fist—

“I am a fool!” muttered he. “I’ll take the fellow on a rope, and make him lead me to the highway.”

Barely had he uttered the last word when he shuddered, “To the highway? But that prince will be there, and pursuit. To lose fifteen horses!” said the old fox to himself, with as much

sorrow as if he had cared for the beasts from their colthood. "It must be that our fortune is ended. We must stay in the cabin till Pan Kmita recovers—stay with consent of the owners or without their consent; and what will come later, that is work for the colonel's head."

Thus meditating, he returned to the cabin. The watchful soldiers were standing at the door, and though they saw a lantern shining in the dark from a distance—the same lantern with which Soroka and the pitch-maker had gone out—still they forced them to tell who they were before they let them enter the cabin. Soroka ordered his soldiers to change the watch about midnight, and threw himself down on the plank bed beside Kmita.

It had become quiet in the cabin; only the crickets raised their usual music in the adjoining closet, and the mice gnawed from moment to moment among the rubbish piled up there. The sick man woke at intervals and seemed to have dreams in his fever, for to Soroka's ears came the disconnected words—

"Gracious king, pardon—Those men are traitors—I will tell all their secrets—The Commonwealth is a red cloth—Well, I have you, worthy prince—Hold him!—Gracious king, this way, for there is treason!"

Soroka rose on the bed and listened; but the sick man, when he had screamed once and a second time, fell asleep, and then woke and cried—

"Olenka, Olenka, be not angry!"

About midnight he grew perfectly calm and slept soundly. Soroka also began to slumber; but soon a gentle knocking at the door of the cabin roused him.

The watchful soldier opened his eyes at once, and springing to his feet went out.

"But what is the matter?" asked he.

"Sergeant, the pitch-maker has escaped."

"A hundred devils! he'll bring robbers to us right away."

"Who was watching him?"

"Biloüs."

"I went with him to water our horses," said Biloüs, explaining. "I ordered him to draw the water, and held the horses myself."

"And what? Did he jump into the well?"

"No, Sergeant, but between the logs, of which there are many near the well, and into the stump-holes. I let the horses go; for though they scattered there are others here, and sprang after him, but I fell into the first hole. It was night—dark; the scoundrel knows the place, and ran away. May the pest strike him!"

"He will bring those devils here to us—he'll bring them. May the thunderbolts split him!"

The sergeant stopped, but after a while said—

"We will not lie down; we must watch till morning. Any moment a crowd may come."

And giving an example to the others, he took his place on the threshold of the cabin with a musket in his hand. The soldiers sat near him talking in an undertone, listening sometimes to learn if in the night sounds of the pinewoods the tramp and snort of coming horses could reach them.

It was a moonlight night, and calm, but noisy. In the forest depths life was seething. It was the season of mating; therefore the wilderness thundered with terrible bellowing of stags. These sounds, short, hoarse, full of anger and rage, were heard round about in all parts of the forest, distant and near—sometimes right there, as if a hundred yards from the cabin.

“If men come, they will bellow too, to mislead us,” said Biloüs.

“Eh! they will not come tonight. Before the pitch-maker finds them ’twill be day,” said the other soldiers.

“In the daytime, Sergeant, it would be well to examine the cabin and dig under the walls; for if robbers dwell here there must be treasures.”

“The best treasures are in that stable,” said Soroka, pointing with his finger to the shed.

“But we’ll take them?”

“Ye are fools! there is no way out—nothing but swamps all around.”

“But we came in.”

“God guided us. A living soul cannot come here or leave here without knowing the road.”

“We will find it in the daytime.”

“We shall not find it, for tracks are made everywhere purposely, and the trails are misleading. It was not right to let the man go.”

“It is known that the highroad is a day’s journey distant, and in that direction,” said Biloüs.

Here he pointed with his finger to the eastern part of the forest.

“We will ride on till we pass through—that’s what we’ll do! You think that you will be a lord when you touch the highway? Better the bullet of a robber here than a rope there.”

“How is that, father?” asked Biloüs.

“They are surely looking for us there.”

“Who, father?”

“The prince.”

Soroka was suddenly silent; and after him were silent the others, as if seized with fear.

“Oi!” said Biloüs, at last. “It is bad here and bad there; though you twist, you can’t turn.”

“They have driven us poor devils into a net; here robbers, and there the prince,” said another soldier.

“May the thunderbolts burn them there! I would rather have to do with a robber than with a wizard,” added Biloüs; “for that prince is possessed, yes, possessed. Zavratynski could wrestle with a bear, and the prince took the sword from his hands as from a child. It can only be that he enchanted him, for I saw, too, that when he rushed at Vitkovski Boguslav grew up before the eyes to the size of a pine-tree. If he had not, I shouldn’t have let him go alive.”

“But you were a fool not to jump at him.”

“What had I to do, Sergeant? I thought this way: he is sitting on the best horse; if he wishes, he will run away, but if he attacks me I shall not be able to defend myself, for with a wizard is a power not human! He becomes invisible to the eye or surrounds himself with dust—”

“That is truth,” answered Soroka; “for when I fired at him he was surrounded as it were by a fog, and I missed. Any man mounted may miss when the horse is moving, but on the ground that has not happened to me for ten years.”

“What’s the use in talking?” said Biloüs, “better count: Lyubyenyets, Vitkovski, Zavratynski, our colonel; and one man brought them all down, and he without arms—such men that each of them has many a time stood against four. Without the help of the devil he could not have done this.”

“Let us commend our souls to God; for if he is possessed, the devil will show him the road to this place.”

“But without that he has long arms for such a lord.”

“Quiet!” exclaimed Soroka, quickly; “something is making the leaves rustle.”

The soldiers were quiet and bent their ears. Near by, indeed, were heard some kind of heavy steps, under which the fallen leaves rustled very clearly.

“I hear horses,” whispered Soroka.

But the steps began to retreat from the cabin, and soon after was heard the threatening and hoarse bellowing of a stag.

“That is a stag! He is making himself known to a doe, or fighting off another horned fellow.”

“Throughout the whole forest are entertainments as if at the wedding of Satan.”

They were silent again and began to doze. The sergeant raised his head at times and listened for a while, then dropped it toward his breast. Thus passed an hour, and a second; at last the nearest pine-trees from being black became gray, and the tops grew whiter each moment, as if someone had burnished them with molten silver. The bellowing of stags ceased, and complete stillness reigned in the forest depths. Dawn passed gradually into day; the white and pale light began to absorb rosy and golden gleams; at last perfect morning had come, and lighted the tired faces of the soldiers sleeping a firm sleep at the cabin.

Then the door opened, Kmita appeared on the threshold, and called—

“Soroka! come here!”

The soldiers sprang up.

“For God’s sake, is your grace on foot?” asked Soroka.

“But you have slept like oxen; it would have been possible to cut off your heads and throw them out before anyone would have been roused.”

“We watched till morning, Colonel; we fell asleep only in the broad day.”

Kmita looked around. “Where are we?”

“In the forest, Colonel.”

“I see that myself. But what sort of a cabin is this?”

“We know not ourselves.”

“Follow me,” said Kmita. And he turned to the inside of the cabin. Soroka followed.

“Listen,” said Kmita, sitting on the bed. “Did the prince fire at me?”

“He did.”

“And what happened to him?”

“He escaped.”

A moment of silence followed.

“That is bad,” said Kmita, “very bad! Better to lay him down than to let him go alive.”

“We wanted to do that, but—”

“But what?”

Soroka told briefly all that had happened. Kmita listened with wonderful calmness; but his eyes began to glitter, and at last he said—

“Then he is victor; but we’ll meet again. Why did you leave the highroad?”

“I was afraid of pursuit.”

“That was right, for surely there was pursuit. There are too few of us now to fight against Boguslav’s power—too few. Besides, he has gone to Prussia; we cannot reach him there, we must wait—”

Soroka was relieved. Pan Kmita evidently did not fear Boguslav greatly, since he talked of overtaking him. This confidence was communicated at once to the old soldier accustomed to think with the head of his colonel and to feel with his heart.

Meanwhile Pan Andrei, who had fallen into deep thought, came to himself on a sudden, and began to seek something about his person with both his hands.

“Where are my letters?” asked he.

“What letters?”

“Letters that I had on my body. They were fastened to my belt; where is the belt?” asked Pan Andrei, in haste.

“I unbuckled the belt myself, that your grace might breathe more easily; there it is.”

“Bring it.”

Soroka gave him a belt lined with white leather, to which a bag was attached by cords. Kmita untied it and took out papers hastily.

“These are passes to the Swedish commandants; but where are the letters?” asked he, in a voice full of disquiet.

“What letters?” asked Soroka.

“Hundreds of thunders! the letters of the hetman to the Swedish King, to Pan Lyubomirski, and all those that I had.”

“If they are not on the belt, they are nowhere. They must have been lost in the time of the riding.”

“To horse and look for them!” cried Kmita, in a terrible voice.

But before the astonished Soroka could leave the room Pan Andrei sank to the bed as if strength had failed him, and seizing his head with his hands, began to repeat in a groaning voice—

“*Ai!* my letters, my letters!”

Meanwhile the soldiers rode off, except one, whom Soroka commanded to guard the cabin. Kmita remained alone in the room, and began to meditate over his position, which was not deserving of envy. Boguslav had escaped. Over Pan Andrei was hanging the terrible and

inevitable vengeance of the powerful Radzivills. And not only over him, but over all whom he loved, and speaking briefly, over Olenka. Kmita knew that Prince Yanush would not hesitate to strike where he could wound him most painfully—that is, to pour out his vengeance on the person of Panna Billevich. And Olenka was still in Kyedani at the mercy of the terrible magnate, whose heart knew no pity. The more Kmita meditated over his position, the more clearly was he convinced that it was simply dreadful. After the seizure of Boguslav, the Radzivills will hold him a traitor; the adherents of Yan Kazimir, the partisans of Sapyeha, and the confederates who had risen up in Podlyasye look on him as a traitor now, and a damned soul of the Radzivills. Among the many camps, parties, and foreign troops occupying at that moment the fields of the Commonwealth, there is not a camp, a party, a body of troops which would not count him as the greatest and most malignant enemy. Indeed, the reward offered for his head by Hovanski is still in force, and now Radzivill and the Swedes will offer rewards—and who knows if the adherents of the unfortunate Yan Kazimir have not already proclaimed one?

“I have brewed beer and must drink it,” thought Kmita. When he bore away Prince Boguslav, he did so to throw him at the feet of the confederate’s, to convince them beyond question that he had broken with the Radzivills, to purchase a place with them, to win the right of fighting for the king and the country. Besides, Boguslav in his hands was a hostage for the safety of Olenka. But since Boguslav has crushed Kmita and escaped, not only is Olenka’s safety gone, but also the proof that Kmita has really left the service of the Radzivills. But the road to the confederates is open to him; and if he meets Volodyovski’s division and his friends the colonels, they may grant him his life, but will they take him as a comrade, will they believe him, will they not think that he has appeared as a spy, or has come to tamper with their courage and bring over people to Radzivill? Here he remembered that the blood of confederates was weighing on him; that to begin with, he had struck down the Hungarians and dragoons in Kyedani, that he had scattered the mutinous squadrons or forced them to yield, that he had shot stubborn officers and exterminated soldiers, that he had surrounded Kyedani with trenches and fortified it, and thus assured the triumph of Radzivill in Jmud. “How could I go?” thought he; “the plague would in fact be a more welcome guest there than I! With Boguslav on a lariat at the saddle it would be possible; but with only my mouth and empty hands!”

If he had those letters he might join the confederates, he would have had Prince Yanush in hand, for those letters might undermine the credit of the hetman, even with the Swedes—even with the price of them he might save Olenka; but some evil spirit had so arranged that the letters were lost.

When Kmita comprehended all this, he seized his own head a second time.

“For the Radzivills a traitor, for Olenka a traitor, for the confederate’s a traitor, for the king a traitor! I have ruined my fame, my honor, myself, and Olenka!”

The wound in his face was burning, but in his soul hot pain, a hundredfold greater, was burning him. In addition to all, his self-love as a knight was suffering. For he was shamefully beaten by Boguslav. Those slashes which Volodyovski had given him in Lyubich were nothing. There he was finished by an armed man whom he had called out in a duel, here by a defenceless prisoner whom he had in his hand.

With every moment increased in Kmita the consciousness of how terrible and shameful was the plight into which he had fallen. The longer he examined it the more clearly he saw its horror; and every moment he saw new black corners from which were peering forth infamy

and shame, destruction to himself, to Olenka, wrong against the country—till at last terror and amazement seized him.

“Have I done all this?” asked he of himself; and the hair stood on his head.

“Impossible! It must be that fever is shaking me yet,” cried he. “Mother of God, this is not possible!”

“Blind, foolish quarreller,” said his conscience, “this would not have come to thee in fighting for the king and the country, nor if thou hadst listened to Olenka.”

And sorrow tore him like a whirlwind. Hei! if only he could say to himself: “The Swedes against the country, I against them! Radzivill against the king, I against him!” Then it would be clear and transparent in his soul. Then he might collect a body of cutthroats from under a dark star and, frolic with them as a gypsy at a fair, fall upon the Swedes, and ride over their breasts with pure heart and conscience; then he might stand in glory as in sunlight before Olenka, and say—

“I am no longer infamous, but *defensor patriæ* (a defender of the country); love me, as I love thee.”

But what was he now? That insolent spirit, accustomed to self-indulgence, would not confess to a fault altogether at first. It was the Radzivills who (according to him) had pushed him down in this fashion; it was the Radzivills who had brought him to ruin, covered him with evil repute, bound his hands, despoiled him of honor and love.

Here Pan Kmita gnashed his teeth, stretched out his hands toward Jmud, on which Yanush, the hetman, was sitting like a wolf on a corpse, and began to call out in a voice choking with rage—

“Vengeance! Vengeance!”

Suddenly he threw himself in despair on his knees in the middle of the room, and began to cry—

“I vow to thee, O Lord Christ, to bend those traitors and gallop over them with justice, with fire, and with sword, to cut them, while there is breath in my throat, steam in my mouth, and life for me in this world! So help me, O Nazarene King! Amen!”

Some kind of internal voice told him in that moment, “Serve the country, vengeance afterward.”

Pan Andrei’s eyes were flaming, his lips were baked, and he trembled as in a fever; he waved his hands, and talking with himself aloud, walked, or rather ran, through the room, kicked the bed with his feet; at last he threw himself once more on his knees.

“Inspire me, O Christ, what to do, lest I fall into frenzy.”

At that moment came the report of a gun, which the forest echo threw from pine-tree to pine-tree till it brought it like thunder to the cabin.

Kmita sprang up, and seizing his sabre ran out.

“What is that?” asked he of the soldier standing at the threshold.

“A shot, Colonel.”

“Where is Soroka?”

“He went to look for the letters.”



“In what direction was the shot?”

The soldier pointed to the eastern part of the forest, which was overgrown with dense underwood.

“There!”

At that moment was heard the tramp of horses not yet visible.

“Be on your guard!” cried Kmita.

But from out the thicket appeared Soroka, hurrying as fast as his horse could gallop, and after him the other soldier. They rushed up to the cabin, sprang from the horses, and from behind them, as from behind breastworks, took aim at the thicket.

“What is there?” asked Kmita.

“A party is coming,” answered Soroka.

## Chapter XXIX

Silence succeeded; but soon something began to rustle in the near thicket, as if wild beasts were passing. The movement, however, grew slower the nearer it came. Then there was silence a second time.

“How many of them are there?” asked Kmita.

“About six, and perhaps eight; for to tell the truth I could not count them surely,” said Soroka.

“That is our luck! They cannot stand against us.”

“They cannot. Colonel; but we must take one of them alive, and scorch him so that he will show the road.”

“There will be time for that. Be watchful!”

Kmita had barely said, “Be watchful,” when a streak of white smoke bloomed forth from the thicket, and you would have said that birds had fluttered in the near grass, about thirty yards from the cabin.

“They shot from old guns, with hobnails!” said Kmita; “if they have not muskets, they will do nothing to us, for old guns will not carry from the thicket.”

Soroka, holding with one hand the musket resting on the saddle of the horse standing in front of him, placed the other hand in the form of a trumpet before his mouth, and shouted—

“Let any man come out of the bushes, he will cover himself with his legs right away.”

A moment of silence followed; then a threatening voice was heard in the thicket—

“What kind of men are you?”

“Better than those who rob on the highroad.”

“By what right have you found out our dwelling?”

“A robber asks about right! The hangman will show you right! Come to the cabin.”

“We will smoke you out just as if you were badgers.”

“But come on; only see that the smoke does not stifle you too.”

The voice in the thicket was silent; the invaders, it seemed, had begun to take counsel. Meanwhile Soroka whispered to Kmita—

“We must decoy someone hither, and bind him; we shall then have a guide and a hostage.”

“Pshaw!” answered Kmita, “if anyone comes it will be on parole.”

“With robbers parole may be broken.”

“It is better not to give it!” said Kmita.

With that questions sounded again from the thicket.

“What do you want?”

Now Kmita began to speak. “We should have gone as we came if you had known politeness and not fired from a gun.”

“You will not stay there—there will be a hundred horse of us in the evening.”

“Before evening two hundred dragoons will come, and your swamps will not save you, for they will pass as we passed.”

“Are you soldiers?”

“We are not robbers, you may be sure.”

“From what squadron?”

“But are you hetman? We will not report to you.”

“The wolves will devour you, in old fashion.”

“And the crows will pick you!”

“Tell what you want, a hundred devils! Why did you come to our cabin?”

“Come yourselves, and you will not split your throat crying from the thicket. Nearer, nearer!”

“On your word.”

“A word is for knights, not for robbers. If it please you, believe; if not, believe not.”

“May two come?”

“They may.”

After a while from out the thicket a hundred yards distant appeared two men, tall and broad-shouldered. One somewhat bent seemed to be a man of years; the other went upright, but stretched his neck with curiosity toward the cabin. Both wore short sheepskin coats covered with gray cloth of the kind used by petty nobles, high cowhide boots, and fur caps drawn down to their ears.

“What the devil!” said Kmita, examining the two men with care.

“Colonel!” cried Soroka, “a miracle indeed, but those are our people.”

Meanwhile they approached within a few steps, but could not see the men standing near the cabin, for the horses concealed them.

All at once Kmita stepped forward. Those approaching did not recognize him, however, for his face was bound up; they halted, and began to measure him with curious and unquiet eyes.

“And where is the other son, Pan Kyemlich?” asked Kmita; “he has not fallen, I hope.”

“Who is that—how is that—what—who is talking?” asked the old man, in a voice of amazement and as it were terrified.

And he stood motionless, with mouth and eyes widely open; then the son, who since he was younger had quicker vision, took the cap from his head.

“For God’s sake, father! that’s the colonel!” cried he.

“O Jesus! sweet Jesus!” cried the old man, “that is Pan Kmita!”

And both took the fixed posture of subordinates saluting their commanders, and on their faces were depicted both shame and wonder.

“Ah! such sons,” said Pan Andrei, laughing, “and greeted me from a gun?”

Here the old man began to shout—

“Come this way, all of you! Come!”

From the thicket appeared a number of men, among whom were the second son of the old man and the pitch-maker; all ran up at breakneck speed with weapons ready, for they knew not what had happened. But the old man shouted again—

“To your knees, rogues, to your knees! This is Pan Kmita! What fool was it who fired? Give him this way!”

“It was you, father,” said young Kyemlich.

“You lie—you lie like a dog! Pan Colonel, who could know that it was your grace who had come to our cabin? As God is true, I do not believe my own eyes yet.”

“I am here in person,” answered Kmita, stretching his hand toward him.

“O Jesus!” said the old man, “such a guest in the pinewoods. I cannot believe my own eyes. With what can we receive your grace here? If we expected, if we knew!”

Here he turned to his sons: “Run, some blockhead, to the cellar, bring mead!”

“Give the key to the padlock, father.”

The old man began to feel in his belt, and at the same time looked suspiciously at his son.

“The key of the padlock? But I know thee, gypsy; thou wilt drink more thyself than thou’lt bring. What’s to be done? I’ll go myself; he wants the key of the padlock! But go roll off the logs, and I’ll open and bring it myself.”

“I see that you have spoons hidden under the logs, Pan Kyemlich,” said Kmita.

“But can anything be kept from such robbers!” asked the old man, pointing to the sons. “They would eat up their father. Ye are still here? Go roll away the logs. Is this the way ye obey him who begat you?”

The young men went quickly behind the cabin to the pile of logs.

“You are in disagreement with your sons in old fashion, it seems?” said Kmita.

“Who could be in agreement with them? They know how to fight, they know how to take booty; but when it comes to divide with their father, I must tear my part from them at risk of my life. Such is the pleasure I have; but they are like wild bulls. I beg your grace to the cabin, for the cold bites out here. For God’s sake! such a guest, such a guest! And under the command of your grace we took more booty than during this whole year. We are in poverty now, wretchedness! Evil times, and always worse; and old age, too, is no joy. I beg you to the cabin, over our lowly threshold. For God’s sake! who could have looked for your grace here!”

Old Kyemlich spoke with a marvellously rapid and complaining utterance, and while speaking cast quick, restless glances on every side. He was a bony old man, enormous in stature, with a face ever twisted and sullen! He, as well as his two sons, had crooked eyes. His brows were bushy, and also his mustaches, from beneath which protruded beyond measure an underlip, which when he spoke came to his nose, as happens with men who are toothless. The agedness of his face was in wonderful contrast to the quickness of his movements, which displayed unusual strength and alertness. His movements were as rapid as if a spring stirred him; he turned his head continually, trying to take in with his eyes everything around—men as well as things. Toward Kmita he became every minute more humble, in proportion as subservience to his former leader, fear, and perhaps admiration or attachment were roused in him.

Kmita knew the Kyemliches well, for the father and two sons had served under him when single-handed he had carried on war in White Russia with Hovanski. They were valiant soldiers, and as cruel as valiant. One son, Kosma, was standard-bearer for a time in Kmita's legion; but he soon resigned that honorable office, since it prevented him from taking booty. Among the gamblers and unbridled souls who formed Kmita's legion, and who drank away and lost in the day what they won with blood in the night from the enemy, the Kyemliches were distinguished for mighty greed. They accumulated booty carefully, and hid it in the woods. They took with special eagerness horses, which they sold afterward at country houses and in towns. The father fought no worse than the twin sons, but after each battle he dragged away from them the most considerable part of the booty, scattering at the same time complaints and regrets that they were wronging him, threatening a father's curse, groaning and lamenting. The sons grumbled at him, but being sufficiently stupid by nature they let themselves be tyrannized over. In spite of their endless squabbles and scoldings, they stood up, one for the other, in battle venomously without sparing blood. They were not liked by their comrades, but were feared universally, for in quarrels they were terrible; even officers avoided provoking them. Kmita was the one man who had roused indescribable fear in them, and after Kmita, Pan Ranitski, before whom they trembled when from anger his face was covered with spots. They revered also in both lofty birth; for the Kmitas, from old times, had high rank in Orsha, and in Ranitski flowed senatorial blood.

It was said in the legion that they had collected great treasures, but no one knew surely that there was truth in this statement. On a certain day Kmita sent them away with attendants and a herd of captured horses; from that time they vanished. Kmita thought that they had fallen; his soldiers said that they had escaped with the horses, the temptation in this case being too great for their hearts. Now, as Pan Andrei saw them in health, and as in a shed near the cabin horses were neighing, and the rejoicing and subservience of the old man were mingled with disquiet, he thought that his soldiers were right in their judgment. Therefore, when they had entered the cabin he sat on a plank bed, and putting his hands on his sides, looked straight into the old man's eyes and asked—

“Kyemlich, where are my horses?”

“Jesus! sweet Jesus!” groaned the old man. “Zolotarenko's men took the horses; they beat us and wounded us, drove us ninety miles; we hardly escaped with our lives. Oh, Most Holy Mother! we could not find either your grace or your men. They drove us thus far into these pinewoods, into misery and hunger, to this cabin and these swamps. God is kind that your grace is living and in health, though, I see, wounded. Maybe we can nurse you, and put on herbs; and those sons of mine went to roll off the logs, and they have disappeared. What are the rogues doing? They are ready to take out the door and get at the mead. Hunger here and misery; nothing more! We live on mushrooms; but for your grace there will be something to drink and a bite to eat. Those men took the horses from us, robbed us—there is no denying that! And they deprived us of service with your grace. We shall not have a bit of bread for old age, unless your grace takes us back into service.”

“That may happen too,” answered Kmita.

Now the two sons of the old man came in—Kosma and Damian, twins, big fellows, awkward, with enormous heads completely overgrown with an immensely thick bush of hair, stiff as a brush, sticking out unevenly around the ears, forming hair-screws and fantastic tufts on their skulls. When they came in they stood near the door, for in presence of Kmita they dared not sit down; and Damian said—

“The cellar is cleared.”

“’Tis well,” answered old Kyemlich, “I will go to bring mead.”

Here he looked significantly at his sons.

“And Zolotarenko’s men took the horses,” said he, with emphasis; and went out of the cabin.

Kmita glanced at the two who stood by the door, and who looked as if they had been hewn out of logs roughly with an axe.

“What are you doing now?”

“We take horses!” answered the twins at the same time.

“From whom?”

“From whomsoever comes along.”

“But mostly?”

“From Zolotarenko’s men.”

“That is well, you are free to take from the enemy; but if you take from your own you are robbers, not nobles. What do you do with those horses?”

“Father sells them in Prussia.”

“Has it happened to you to take from the Swedes? Swedish companies are not far from here. Have you attacked the Swedes?”

“We have.”

“Then you fall on single men or small companies; but when they defend themselves, what then?”

“We pound them.”

“Ah, ha, you pound them! Then you have a reckoning with Zolotarenko’s men and with the Swedes, and surely you could not have got away dry had you fallen into their hands.”

Kosma and Damian were silent.

“You are carrying on a dangerous business, more becoming to robbers than nobles. It must be, also, that some sentences are hanging over you from old times?”

“Of course there are!” answered Kosma and Damian.

“So I thought. From what parts are you?”

“We are from these parts.”

“Where did your father live before?”

“In Borovichko.”

“Was that his village?”

“Yes, together with Pan Kopystynski.”

“And what became of him?”

“We killed him.”

“And you had to flee before the law. It will be short work with you Kyemliches, and you’ll finish on trees. The hangman will light you, it cannot be otherwise!”

Just then the door of the room creaked, and the old man came in bringing a decanter of mead and two glasses. He looked unquietly at his sons and at Kmita, and then said—

“Go and cover the cellar.”

The twins went out at once. The old man poured mead into one glass; the other he left empty, waiting to see if Kmita would let him drink with him.

But Kmita was not able to drink himself, for he even spoke with difficulty, such pain did the wound cause him. Seeing this, the old man said—

“Mead is not good for the wound, unless poured in, to clear it out more quickly. Your grace, let me look at the wound and dress it, for I understand this matter as well as a barber.”

Kmita consented. Kyemlich removed the bandage, and began to examine the wound carefully.

“The skin is taken off, that’s nothing! The ball passed along the outside; but still it is swollen.”

“That is why it pains me.”

“But it is not two days old. Most Holy Mother! someone who must have been very near shot at your grace.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because all the powder was not burned, and grains like cockle are under the skin. They will stay with your grace. Now we need only bread and spiderweb. Terribly near was the man who fired. It is well that he did not kill your grace.”

“It was not fated me. Mix the bread and the spiderweb and put them on as quickly as possible, for I must talk with you, and my jaws pain me.”

The old man looked suspiciously at the colonel, for in his heart there was fear that the talk might touch again on the horses said to have been taken by the Cossacks; but he busied himself at once, kneaded the moistened bread first, and since it was not hard to find spiderwebs in the cabin he attended promptly to Kmita.

“I am easy now,” said Pan Andrei; “sit down, worthy Kyemlich.”

“According to command of the colonel,” answered the old man, sitting on the edge of a bench and stretching out his iron-gray bristly head uneasily toward Kmita.

But Kmita, instead of conversing, took his own head in his hands and fell into deep thought. Then he rose and began to walk in the room; at moments he halted before Kyemlich and gazed at him with distraught look; apparently he was weighing something, wrestling with thoughts. Meanwhile about half an hour passed; the old man squirmed more and more uneasily. All at once Kmita stopped before him.

“Worthy Kyemlich,” said he, “where are the nearest of those squadrons which rose up against the prince *voevoda* of Vilna?”

The old man began to wink his eyes suspiciously. “Does your grace wish to go to them?”

“I do not request you to ask, but to answer.”

“They say that one squadron is quartered in Shchuchyn—that one which came here last from Jmud.”

“Who said so?”

“The men of the squadron themselves.”

“Who led it?”

“Pan Volodyovski.”

“That’s well. Call Soroka!”

The old man went out, and returned soon with the sergeant.

“Have the letters been found?” asked Kmita.

“They have not, Colonel,” answered Soroka.

Kmita shook his hands. “Oh, misery, misery! You may go, Soroka. For those letters which you have lost you deserve to hang. You may go. Worthy Kyemlich, have you anything on which to write?”

“I hope to find something,” answered the old man.

“Even two leaves of paper and a pen.”

The old man vanished through the door of a closet which was evidently a storeroom for all kinds of things, but he searched long. Kmita was walking the while through the room, and talking to himself—

“Whether I have the letters or not,” said he, “the hetman does not know that they are lost, and he will fear lest I publish them. I have him in hand. Cunning against cunning! I will threaten to send them to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk. That is what I will do. In God is my hope, that the hetman will fear this.”

Further thought was interrupted by old Kyemlich, who, coming out of the closet, said—

“Here are three leaves of paper, but no pens or ink.”

“No pens? But are there no birds in the woods here? They may be shot with a gun.”

“There is a falcon nailed over the shed.”

“Bring his wing hither quickly!”

Kyemlich shot off with all speed, for in the voice of Kmita was impatience, and as it were a fever. He returned in a moment with the falcon’s wing. Kmita seized it, plucked out a quill, and began to make a pen of it with his dagger.

“It will do!” said he, looking at it before the light; “but it is easier to cut men’s heads than quills. Now we need ink.”

So saying, he rolled up his sleeve, cut himself deeply in the arm, and moistened the quill in blood.

“Worthy Kyemlich,” said he, “leave me.”

The old man left the room, and Pan Andrei began to write at once:—

*I renounce the service of your highness, for I will not serve traitors and deceivers. And if I swore on the crucifix not to leave your highness, God will forgive me; and even if he were to damn me, I would rather burn for my error than for open and purposed treason to my country and king. Your highness deceived me, so that I was like a blind sword in your hand, ready to spill the blood of my brethren. Therefore I summon your highness to the judgment of God, so that it may be known on whose side was treason, and on whose honest intention. Should we ever meet, though you are powerful and able to strike unto death, not only a private man, but the whole Commonwealth, and I have only a sabre in my hand, still I will*



*vindicate my own, and will strike your highness, for which my regret and compunction will give me power. And your highness knows that I am of those who without attendant squadrons, without castles and cannon, can injure. While in me there is breath, over you there is vengeance, so that you can be sure neither of the day nor the hour. And this is as certain to be as that this is my own blood with which I write. I have your letters, letters to ruin you, not only with the King of Poland, but the King of Sweden, for in them treason to the Commonwealth is made manifest, as well as this too, that you are ready to desert the Swedes if only a leg totters under them. Even had you twice your present power, your ruin is in my hands, for all men must believe signatures and seals. Therefore I say this to your highness: If a hair falls from the heads which I love and which are left in Kyedani, I will send those letters and documents to Pan Sapyeha, and I will have copies printed and scattered through the land. Your highness can go by land or water (you have your choice); but after the war, when peace comes to the Commonwealth, you will give me the Billeviches, and I will give you the letters, or if I hear evil tidings Pan Sapyeha will show them straightway to Pontus de la Gardie. Your highness wants a crown, but where will you put it when your head falls either from the Polish or the Swedish axe? It is better, I think, to have this understanding now; though I shall not forget revenge hereafter, I shall take it only in private, excepting this case. I would commend you to God were it not that you put the help of the devil above that of God.*

*Kmita.*

*P.S. Your highness will not poison the confederates, for there will be those who, going from the service of the devil to that of God, will forewarn them to drink beer neither in Orel nor Zabłudovo.*

Here Kmita sprang up and began to walk across the room. His face was burning, for his own letter had heated him like fire. This letter was a declaration of war against the Radzivils; but still Kmita felt in himself some extraordinary power, and was ready, even at that moment, to stand eye to eye before that powerful family who shook the whole country. He, a simple noble, a simple knight, an outlaw pursued by justice, who expected assistance from no place, who had offended all so that everywhere he was accounted an enemy—he, recently overthrown, felt in himself now such power that he saw, as if with the eyes of a prophet, the humiliation of Prince Yanush and Boguslav, and his own victory. How he would wage war, where he would find allies, in what way he would conquer, he knew not—what is more, he had not thought of this. But he had profound faith that he would do what he ought to do—that is, what is right and just, in return for which God would be with him. He was filled with confidence beyond measure and bounds. It had become sensibly easier in his soul. Certain new regions were opened as it were entirely before him. Let him but sit on his horse and ride thither to honor, to glory, to Olenka.

“But a hair will not fall from her head,” repeated he to himself, with a certain feverish joy; “the letters will defend her. The hetman will guard her as the eye in his head—as I myself would. Oh, I have settled this! I am a poor worm, but they will be afraid of my sting.”

Then this thought came to him: “And shall I write to her too? The messenger who will take the letter to the hetman can give a slip of paper to her secretly. Why not inform her that I have broken with the Radzivils, and that I am going to seek other service?”

This thought struck his heart greatly. Cutting his arm again, he moistened the pen and began to write—

*Olenka—I am no longer on the Radzivil side, for I have seen through them at last—*

But suddenly he stopped, thought awhile, and said to himself, "Let deeds, not words, bear witness for me henceforth; I will not write." And he tore the paper. But he wrote on a third sheet a short letter to Volodyovski in the following words—

*Gracious Colonel—The undersigned friend warns you and the other colonels to be on your guard. There were letters from the hetman to Prince Boguslav and Pan Harasimovich to poison you, or to have men under you in your own quarters. Harasimovich is absent, for he has gone with Prince Boguslav to Tyltsa in Prussia; but there may be similar commands to other managers. Be careful of those managers, receive nothing from them, and at night do not sleep without guards. I know also to a certainty that the hetman will march against you soon with an army; he is waiting only for cavalry which General de la Gardie is to send, fifteen hundred in number. See to it, therefore, that he does not fall upon you and destroy you singly. But better send reliable men to the voevoda of Vityebsk to come, with all haste and take chief command. A well-wisher counsels this—believe him. Meanwhile keep together, choosing quarters for the squadrons one not far from the other, so that you may be able to give mutual assistance. The hetman has few cavalry, only a small number of dragoons, and Kmita's men, but they are not reliable. Kmita himself is absent. The hetman found some other office for him; it being likely that he does not trust him. Kmita too is not such a traitor as men say; he is merely led astray. I commit you to God.*

*Babinich.*

Pan Andrei did not wish to put his own name to the letter, for he judged that it would rouse in each one aversion and especially distrust. "In case they understand," thought he, "that it would be better for them to retreat before the hetman than to meet him in a body, they will suspect at once, if they see my name, that I wish to collect them, so that the hetman may finish them at a blow; they will think this a new trick, but from some Babinich they will receive warning more readily."

Pan Andrei called himself Babinich from the village Babiniche, near Orsha, which from remote times belonged to the Kmitas.

When he had written the letter, at the end of which he placed a few timid words in his own defence, he felt new solace in his heart at the thought that with that letter he had rendered the first service, not only to Volodyovski and his friends, but to all the colonels who would not desert their country for Radzivill. He felt also that that thread would go farther. The plight into which he had fallen was difficult, indeed, almost desperate; but still there was some help, some issue, some narrow path which would lead to the highroad.

But now when Olenka in all probability was safe from the vengeance of Radzivill, and the confederates from an unexpected attack. Pan Andrei put the question, What was he to do himself?

He had broken with traitors, he had burned the bridges in the rear, he wished now to serve his country, to devote to it his strength, his health, his life; but how was he to do this, how begin, to what could he put his hand?

Again it came to his head to join the confederates; but if they will not receive him, if they will proclaim him a traitor and cut him down, or what is worse, expel him in disgrace?

"I would rather they killed me!" cried Pan Andrei; and he flushed from shame and the feeling of his own disgrace. Perhaps it is easier to save Olenka or the confederates than his own fame.

Now the position was really desperate, and again the young hero's soul began to seethe.

“But can I not act as I did against Hovanski?” asked he of himself. “I will gather a party, will attack the Swedes, burn, pursue. That is nothing new for me! No one has resisted them; I will resist until the time comes when the whole Commonwealth will ask, as did Lithuania, who is that hero who all alone dares to creep into the mouth of the lion? Then I will remove my cap and say, ‘See, it is I, it is Kmita!’”

And such a burning desire drew him on to that bloody work that he wished to rush out of the room and order the Kyemliches, their attendants, and his own men to mount and move on. But before he reached the door he felt as if someone had suddenly punched him in the breast and pushed him back from the threshold. He stood in the middle of the room, and looked forward in amazement.

“How is this? Shall I not efface my offences in this way?”

And at once he began to reckon with his own conscience.

“Where is atonement for guilt?” asked his conscience. “Here something else is required!”

“What?” asked Kmita.

“With what can thy guilt be effaced, if not with service of some kind, difficult and immense, honorable and pure as a tear? Is it service to collect a band of ruffians and rage like a whirlwind with them through the fields and the wilderness? Dost thou not desire this because fighting has for thee a sweet odor, as has roast meat for a dog? That is amusement, not service; a carnival, not war; robbery, not defence of the country! And didst thou not do the same against Hovanski, but what didst thou gain? Ruffians infesting the forests are ready also to attack the Swedish commands, and whence canst thou get other men? Thou wilt attack the Swedes, but also the inhabitants; thou wilt bring vengeance on these inhabitants, and what wilt thou effect? Thou art trying to escape, thou fool, from toil and atonement.”

So conscience spoke in Kmita; and Kmita saw that it was right, and vexation seized him, and a species of grief over his own conscience because it spoke such bitter truth.

“What shall I begin?” asked he, at last; “who will help me, who will save me?”

Here somehow his knees began to bend till at last he knelt down at the plank bed and began to pray aloud, and implore from his whole soul and heart—

“O Jesus Christ, dear Lord,” said he, “as on the cross thou hadst pity for the thief, so now have pity for me. Behold I desire to cleanse myself from sins, to begin a new life, and to serve my country honestly; but I know not how, for I am foolish. I served those traitors, O Lord, also not so much from malice, but especially as it were through folly; enlighten me, inspire me, comfort me in my despair, and rescue me in thy mercy, or I perish.”

Here Pan Andrei’s voice quivered; he beat his broad breast till it thundered in the room, and repeated, “Be merciful to me, a sinner! be merciful to me, a sinner! Be merciful to me, a sinner!” Then placing his hands together and stretching them upward, he said, “And thou, Most Holy Lady, insulted by heretics in this land, take my part with thy Son, intercede for my rescue, desert me not in my suffering and misery, so that I may be able to serve thee, to avenge the insults against thee, and at the hour of my death have thee as a patroness for my unhappy soul.”

When Pan Andrei was imploring thus, tears began to fall from his eyes; at last he dropped his head on the plank bed and sank into silence, as if waiting for the effect of his ardent prayer. Silence followed in the room, and only the deep sound of the neighboring pine-trees entered from outside. Then chips crackled under heavy steps beyond the window, and two men began to speak—

“What do you think, Sergeant? Where shall we go from here?”

“Do I know?” answered Soroka. “We shall go somewhere, maybe far off, to the king who is groaning under the Swedish hand.”

“Is it true that all have left him?”

“But the Lord God has not left him.”

Kmita rose suddenly from the bed, but his face was clear and calm; he went straight to the door, and opening it said to the soldier—

“Have the horses ready! it is time for the road!”

## Chapter XXX

A movement rose quickly among the soldiers, who were glad to go out of the forest to the distant world, all the more since they feared pursuit on the part of Boguslav Radzivill; and old Kyemlich went to the cabin, understanding that Kmita would need him.

“Does your grace wish to go?” asked he.

“I do. Will you guide me out of the forest? Do you know all the roads?”

“I know all the roads in these parts. But whither does your grace wish to go?”

“To our gracious king.”

The old man started back in astonishment. “O Wise Lady!” cried he. “To what king.”

“Not to the Swedish, you may be sure.”

Kyemlich not only failed to recover, but began to make the sign of the cross.

“Then surely your grace does not know that people say our lord the king has taken refuge in Silesia, for all have deserted him. Krakow is besieged.”

“We will go to Silesia.”

“Well, but how are we to pass through the Swedes?”

“Whether we pass through as nobles or peasants, on horseback or on foot, is all one to me, if only we pass.”

“Then too a tremendous lot of time is needed.”

“We have time enough, but I should be glad to go as quickly as possible.”

Kyemlich ceased to wonder. The old man was too cunning not to surmise that there was some particular and secret cause for this undertaking of Pan Kmita's, and that moment a thousand suppositions began to crowd into his head. But as the soldiers, on whom Pan Andrei had enjoined silence, said nothing to the old man or his sons about the seizure of Prince Boguslav, the supposition seemed to him most likely that the prince *voevoda* of Vilna had sent the young colonel on some mission to the king. He was confirmed in this opinion specially because he counted Kmita a zealous adherent of Prince Yanush, and knew of his services to the hetman; for the confederate squadrons had spread tidings of him throughout the whole province of Podlyasye, creating the opinion that Kmita was a tyrant and a traitor.

“The hetman is sending a confidant to the king,” thought the old man; “that means that surely he wishes to agree with him and leave the Swedes. Their rule must be bitter to him already, else why send?”

Old Kyemlich did not struggle long over this question, for his interest in the matter was altogether different; and namely, what profit could he draw from such circumstances? If he served Kmita he would serve at the same time the hetman and the king, which would not be without a notable reward. The favor of such lords would be of service, too, should he be summoned to account for old sins. Besides, there will surely be war, the country will flame up, and then plunder will crawl of itself into his hands. All this smiled at the old man, who besides was accustomed to obey Kmita, and had not ceased to fear him like fire, cherishing toward him also a certain kind of love, which Kmita knew how to rouse in all his subordinates.

“Your grace,” said he, “must go through the whole Commonwealth to reach the king. Swedish troops are nothing, for we may avoid the towns and go through the woods; but the worst is that the woods, as is usual in unquiet times, are full of parties of freebooters, who fall upon travellers; and your grace has few men.”

“You will go with me, Pan Kyemlich, and your sons and the men whom you have; there will be more of us.”

“If your grace commands I will go, but I am a poor man. Only misery with us; nothing more. How can I leave even this poverty and the roof over my head?”

“Whatever you do will be paid for; and for you it is better to take your head out of this place while it is yet on your shoulders.”

“All the Saints of the Lord! What does your grace say? How is that? What threatens me, innocent man, in this place? Whom do we hinder?”

“I know you robbers!” answered Pan Andrei. “You had partnership with Kopystynski, and killed him; then you ran away from the courts, you served with me, you took away my captured horses.”

“As true as life! O Mighty Lady!” cried the old man.

“Wait and be silent! Then you returned to your old lair, and began to ravage in the neighborhood like robbers, taking horses and booty everywhere. Do not deny it, for I am not your judge, and you know best whether I tell the truth. If you take the horses of Zolotarenko, that is well; if the horses of the Swedes, that is well. If they catch you they will flay you; but that is their affair.”

“True, true; but we take only from the enemy,” said the old man.

“Untrue; for you attack your own people, as your sons have confessed to me, and that is simple robbery, and a stain on the name of a noble. Shame on you, robbers! you should be peasants, not nobles.”

“Your grace wrongs us,” said old fox, growing red, “for we, remembering our station, do no peasant deed. We do not take horses at night from any man’s stable. It is something different to drive a herd from the fields, or to capture horses. This is permitted, and there is no prejudice to a noble therefrom in time of war. But a horse in a stable is sacred; and only a gypsy, a Jew, or a peasant would steal from a stable—not a noble. We, your grace, do not do that. But war is war!”

“Though there were ten wars, only in battle can plunder be taken; if you seek it on the road, you are robbers.”

“God is witness to our innocence.”

“But you have brewed beer here. In few words, it is better for you to leave this place, for sooner or later the halter will take you. Come with me; you will wash away your sins with faithful service and win honor. I will receive you to my service, in which there will be more profit than in those horses.”

“We will go with your grace everywhere; we will guide you through the Swedes and through the robbers—for true is the speech of your grace, that evil people persecute us here terribly, and for what? For our poverty—for nothing but our poverty. Perhaps God will take pity on us, and save us from suffering.”

Here old Kyemlich rubbed his hands mechanically, and his eyes glittered. "From these works," thought he, "it will boil in the country as in a kettle, and foolish the man who takes no advantage."

Kmita looked at him quickly. "Only don't try to betray me!" said he, threateningly, "for you will not be able, and the hand of God only could save you."

"We have never betrayed," answered Kyemlich, gloomily, "and may God condemn me if such a thought entered my head."

"I believe you," said Kmita, after a short silence, "for treason is something different from robbery; no robber will betray."

"What does your grace command now?" asked Kyemlich.

"First, here are two letters, requiring quick delivery. Have you sharp men?"

"Where must they go?"

"Let one go to the prince *voevoda*, but without seeing Radzivill himself. Let him deliver the letter in the first squadron of the prince, and come back without awaiting an answer."

"The pitch-maker will go; he is a sharp man and experienced."

"He will do. The second letter must be taken to Podlyasye; inquire for Pan Volodyovski's Lauda squadron, and give it into the hands of the colonel himself."

The old man began to mutter cunningly, and thought, "I see work on every side; since he is sniffing with the confederates there will be boiling water—there will be, there will be!"

"Your grace," said he, aloud, "if there is not such a hurry with this letter, when we leave the forest it perhaps might be given to some man on the road. There are many nobles here friendly to the confederates; anyone would take it willingly, and one man more would remain to us."

"You have calculated shrewdly," answered Kmita, "for it is better that he who delivers the letter should not know from whom he takes it. Shall we go out of the forest soon?"

"As your grace wishes. We can go out in two weeks, or tomorrow."

"Of that later; but now listen to me carefully, Kyemlich."

"I am attending with all my mind, your grace."

"They have denounced me in the whole Commonwealth as a tyrant, as devoted to the hetman, or altogether to Sweden. If the king knew who I am, he might not trust me, and might despise my intention, which, if it is not sincere, God sees! Are you attending, Kyemlich?"

"I am, your grace."

"Therefore I do not call myself Kmita, but Babinich, do you understand? No one must know my real name. Open not your lips; let not a breath out. If men ask whence I come, say that you joined me on the road and do not know, but say, 'Whoso is curious, let him ask the man himself.'"

"I understand, your grace."

"Warn your sons, and also your men. Even if straps were cut out of them, they must say my name is Babinich. You will answer for this with your life."

“It will be so, your grace. I will go and tell my sons, for it is necessary to put everything into the heads of those rogues with a shovel. Such is the joy I have with them. God has punished me for the sins of my youth; that is the trouble. Let me say another word, your grace.”

“Speak boldly.”

“It seems to me better not to tell soldiers or men where we are going.”

“That is true.”

“It is enough for them to know that Babinich, not Pan Kmita, is travelling. And on such a journey it is better to conceal your grace’s rank.”

“Why?”

“Because the Swedes give passes to the more considerable people; and whoso has not a pass, him they take to the commandant.”

“I have passes to the Swedish troops.”

Astonishment gleamed in the cunning eyes of Kyemlich; but after a while he asked, “Will your grace let me say once more what I think?”

“If you give good counsel and delay not, speak; for I see that you are a clever man.”

“If you have passes, it is better, for in need they may be shown; but if your grace is travelling on an errand that should remain secret, it is safer not to show the passes. I know not whether they are given in the name of Babinich or Kmita; but if you show them, the trace will remain and pursuit will be easier.”

“You have struck the point!” cried Kmita. “I prefer to reserve the passes for another time, if it is possible to go through without them.”

“It is possible, your grace; and that disguised either as a peasant or a petty noble—which will be easier, for I have some clean clothes, a cap and gray coat, for example, just such as petty nobles wear. We may travel with a band of horses, as if we were going to the fairs, and drive farther till we come to Lovich and Warsaw, as I have done more than once during peace, and I know the roads. About this time there is a fair in Sobota, to which people come from afar. In Sobota we shall learn of other places where there are fairs, and so on. The Swedes too take less note of small nobles, for crowds of them stroll about at all the fairs. If some commandant inquires we will explain ourselves, but if a small party asks we will gallop over their bellies, God and the Most Holy Lady permitting.”

“But if they take our horses? Requisitions in time of war are of daily occurrence.”

“Either they will buy or they will take them. If they buy we will go to Sobota, not to sell, but to buy horses; and if they take them, we will raise a lament and go with our complaint to Warsaw and to Krakow.”

“You have a cunning mind,” said Kmita, “and I see that you will serve me. Even if the Swedes take these horses, some man will be found to pay for them.”

“I was going to Elko in Prussia with them; this turns out well, for just in that direction does our road lie. From Elko we will go along the boundary, then turn to Ostrolenko, thence through the wilderness to Pultusk and to Warsaw.”

“Where is that Sobota?”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Saturday.



“Not far from Pyantek.”<sup>25</sup>

“Are you jesting, Kyemlich?”

“How should I dare,” answered the old man, crossing his arms on his breast and bending his head; “but they have such wonderful names for towns in this region. It is a good bit of road beyond Lovich, your grace.”

“Are there large fairs in that Sobota?”

“Not such as in Lovich; but there is one at this time of year, to which horses are driven from Prussia, and crowds of people assemble. Surely it will not be worse this year, for it is quiet about there. The Swedes are in power everywhere, and have garrisons in the towns. Even if a man wanted to rise against them, he could not.”

“Then I will take your plan. We will go with horses, and that you suffer no loss I will pay for them in advance.”

“I thank your grace for the rescue.”

“Only get sheepskin coats ready and common saddles and sabres, for we will start at once. Tell your sons and men who I am, what my name is, that I am travelling with horses, that you and they are hired assistants. Hurry!”

When the old man turned to the door, Pan Andrei said further, “No one will call me grace nor commandant nor colonel, only *you* and *Babinich*.”

Kyemlich went out, and an hour later all were sitting on their horses ready to start on the long journey. Kmita dressed in the gray coat of a poor noble, a cap of worn sheepskin, and with a bandaged face, as if after a duel in some inn, was difficult of recognition, and looked really like some poor devil of a noble, strolling from one fair to another. He was surrounded by people dressed in like fashion, armed with common poor sabres, with long whips to drive the horses, and lariats to catch those that might try to escape.

The soldiers looked with astonishment at their colonel, making various remarks, in low tones, concerning him. It was a wonder to them that he was Babinich instead of Pan Kmita, that they were to say *you* to him; and most of all shrugged his shoulders old Soroka, who, looking at the terrible colonel as at a rainbow, muttered to Biloüs—

“That *you* will not pass my throat. Let him kill me, but I will give him, as of old, what belongs to him.”

The soldiers knew not that the soul in Pan Andrei had changed as well as his external form.

“Move on!” cried Babinich, on a sudden.

The whips cracked; the riders surrounded the horses, which were huddled together, and they moved on.

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<sup>25</sup> Friday.

## Chapter XXXI

Passing along the very boundary between the province of Trotsk and Prussia, they travelled through broad and pathless forests known only to Kyemlich, until they entered Prussia and reached Leng, or, as old Kyemlich, called it, Elko, where they got news of public affairs from nobles stopping there, who, taking their wives, children, and effects, had fled from the Swedes and sought refuge under the power of the elector.

Leng had the look of a camp, or rather it might be thought that some petty diet was in session there. The nobles drank Prussian beer in the public houses, and talked, while every now and then someone brought news. Without making inquiries and merely by listening with care, Babinich learned that Royal Prussia and the chief towns in it had taken decisively the side of Yan Kazimir, and had made a treaty of mutual defence with the elector against every enemy. It was said, however, that in spite of the treaty the most considerable towns were unwilling to admit the elector's garrisons, fearing lest that adroit prince, when he had once entered with armed hand, might hold them for good, or might in the decisive moment join himself treacherously to the Swedes—a deed which his inborn cunning made him capable of doing.

The nobles murmured against this distrust entertained by townspeople; but Pan Andrei, knowing the Radzivill intrigues with the elector, had to gnaw his tongue to refrain from telling what was known to him. He was held back by the thought that it was dangerous in Electoral Prussia to speak openly against the elector; and secondly, because it did not beseem a small gray-coated noble who was going to a fair with horses, to enter into the intricate subject of politics, over which the ablest statesmen were racking their brains to no purpose.

He sold a pair of horses, bought new ones, and journeyed farther, along the Prussian boundary, but by the road leading from Leng to Shchuchyn, situated in the very corner of the province of Mazovia, between Prussia on the one side and the province of Podlyasye on the other. To Shchuchyn Pan Andrei had no wish to go, for he learned that in that town were the quarters of the confederate squadron commanded by Volodyovski.

Volodyovski must have passed over almost the same road on which Kmita was travelling, and stopped before the very boundary of Podlyasye, either for a short rest or for temporary quarters, in Shchuchyn, where it must have been easier to find food for men and horses than in greatly plundered Podlyasye.

Kmita did not wish to meet the famous colonel, for he judged that having no proofs, except words, he would not be able to persuade Volodyovski of his conversion and sincerity. He gave command, therefore, to turn to the west toward Vansosh, ten miles from Shchuchyn. As to the letter he determined to send it to Pan Michael at the first opportunity.

But before arriving at Vansosh, they stopped at a wayside inn called "The Mandrake," and disposed themselves for a night's rest, which promised to be comfortable, for there was no one at the inn save the host, a Prussian.

But barely had Kmita with the three Kyemliches and Soroka sat down to supper when the rattling of wheels and the tramp of horses were heard. As the sun had not gone down yet, Kmita went out in front of the inn to see who was coming, for he was curious to know if it was some Swedish party; but instead of Swedes he saw a carriage, and following it two pack-wagons, surrounded by armed men.

At the first glance it was easy to see that some personage was coming. The carriage was drawn by four good Prussian horses, with large bones and rather short backs; a jockey sat on one of the front horses, holding two beautiful dogs in a leash; on the seat was a driver, and at his side a haiduk dressed in Hungarian fashion; in the carriage was the lord himself, in a cloak lined with wolfskin and fastened with numerous gilded buttons.

In the rear followed two wagons, well filled, and at each of them four servants armed with sabres and guns.

The lord, though a personage, was still quite young, a little beyond twenty. He had a plump, red face, and in his whole person there was evidence that he did not stint himself in eating.

When the carriage stopped, the haiduk sprang to give his hand to help down the lord; but the lord, seeing Kmita standing on the threshold, beckoned with his glove, and called—

“Come this way, my good friend!”

Kmita instead of going to him withdrew to the interior, for anger seized him at once. He had not become accustomed yet to the gray coat, or to being beckoned at with a glove. He went back therefore, sat at the table, and began to eat. The unknown lord came in after him. When he had entered he half closed his eyes, for it was dark in the room, since there was merely a small fire burning in the chimney.

“But why did no one come out as I was driving up?” asked the unknown lord.

“The host has gone to another room,” answered Kmita, “and we are travellers, like your grace.”

“Thank you for the confidence. And what manner of travellers?”

“Oh, a noble travelling with horses.”

“And your company are nobles too?”

“Poor men, but nobles.”

“With the forehead, then, with the forehead. Whither is God guiding you?”

“From fair to fair, to sell horses.”

“If you stay here all night, I’ll see, perhaps I’ll pick out something. Meanwhile will you permit me to join you at the table?”

The unknown lord asked, it is true, if they would let him sit with them, but in such a tone as if he were perfectly sure that they would; and he was not mistaken. The young horse-dealer said—

“We beg your grace very kindly, though we have nothing to offer but sausage and peas.”

“There are better dainties in my bags,” answered the lordling, not without a certain pride; “but I have a soldier’s palate, and sausage with peas, if well cooked, I prefer to everything.” When he had said this—and he spoke very slowly, though he looked quickly and sharply—he took his seat on the bench on which Kmita pushed aside to give convenient room.

“Oh, I beg, I beg, do not incommode yourself. On the road rank is not regarded; and though you were to punch me with your elbow, the crown would not fall from my head.”

Kmita, who was pushing a plate of peas to the unknown, and who, as has been said, was not used to such treatment, would certainly have broken the plate on the head of the puffed up young man if there had not been something in that pride of his which amused Pan Andrei; therefore not only did he restrain his internal impulse at once, but laughed and said—

“Such times are the present, your grace, that crowns fall from the loftiest heads; for example, our king Yan Kazimir, who by right should wear two crowns, has none, unless it be one of thorns.”

The unknown looked quickly at Kmita, then sighed and said, “Times are such now that it is better not to speak of this unless with confidants.” Then after a moment he added: “But you have brought that out well. You must have served with polished people, for your speech shows more training than your rank.”

“Rubbing against people, I have heard this and that, but I have never been a servant.”

“Whence are you by birth, I beg to ask?”

“From a village in the province of Trotsk.”

“Birth in a village is no drawback, if you are only noble; that’s the main thing. What is to be heard in Lithuania?”

“The old story—no lack of traitors.”

“Traitors, do you say? What kind of traitors?”

“Those who have deserted the king and the Commonwealth.”

“How is the prince *voevoda* of Vilna?”

“Sick, it is said; his breath fails him.”

“God give him health, he is a worthy lord!”

“For the Swedes he is, since he opened the gates to them.”

“I see that you are not a partisan of his.”

Kmita noticed that the stranger, while asking him questions as it were good-naturedly, was observing him.

“What do I care!” said he; “let others think of him. My fear is that the Swedes may take my horses in requisition.”

“You should have sold them on the spot, then. In Podlyasye are stationed, very likely, the squadrons which rebelled against the hetman, and surely they have not too many horses.”

“I do not know that, for I have not been among them, though some man in passing gave me a letter to one of their colonels, to be delivered when possible.”

“How could that passing man give you a letter when you are not going to Podlyasye?”

“Because in Shchuchyn one confederate squadron is stationed, therefore the man said to me, ‘Either give it yourself or find an opportunity in passing Shchuchyn.’”

“That comes out well, for I am going to Shchuchyn.”

“Your grace is fleeing also before the Swedes?”

The unknown, instead of an answer, looked at Kmita and asked phlegmatically, “Why do you say *also*, since you not only are not fleeing from the Swedes, but are going among them and will sell them horses, if they do not take your beasts by force?”

At this Kmita shrugged his shoulders. “I said *also*, because in Leng I saw many nobles who escaped before the Swedes; and as to me, if all were to serve them as much as I wish to serve them, I think they would not warm the places here long.”

“Are you not afraid to say this?”

"I am not afraid, for I am not a coward, and in the second place your grace is going to Shchuchyn, and there everyone says aloud what he thinks. God grant a quick passage from talking to action."

"I see that you are a man of wit beyond your station," repeated the unknown. "But if you love not the Swedes, why leave these squadrons, which have mutinied against the hetman? Have they mutinied because their wages were kept back, or from caprice? No! but because they would not serve the hetman and the Swedes. It would have been better for those soldiers, poor fellows, to remain under the hetman, but they preferred to give themselves the name of rebels, to expose themselves to hunger, hardships, and many destructive things, rather than act against the king. That it will come to war between them and the Swedes is certain, and it would have come already were it not that the Swedes have not advanced to that corner as yet. Wait, they will come, they will meet here, and then you will see!"

"I think, too, that war will begin here very soon," said Kmita.

"Well, if you have such an opinion, and a sincere hatred for the Swedes—which looks out of your eyes, for you speak truth, I am a judge of that—then why not join these worthy soldiers? Is it not time, do they not need hands and sabres? Not a few honorable men are serving among them, who prefer their own king to a foreign one, and soon there will be more of these. You come from places in which men know not the Swedes as yet, but those who have made their acquaintance are shedding hot tears. In Great Poland, though it surrendered to them of its own will, they thumbscrew nobles, plunder, make requisitions, seize everything they can. At present in this province their manner is no better. General Stenbok gave forth a manifesto that each man remain quietly at home, and his property would be respected. But what good was in that! The General has his will, and the smallest commandants have theirs, so that no man is sure of tomorrow, nor of what property he holds. Every man wishes to get good of what he has, to use it in peace, wants it to bring him pleasure. But now the first best adventurer will come and say, 'Give.' If you do not give, he will find reason to strip you of your property, or without reason will have your head cut off. Many shed bitter tears, when they think of their former king. All are oppressed and look to those confederates unceasingly, to see if some rescue for the country and the people will not come from them."

"Your grace, as I see, has no better wish for the Swedes than I have," said Kmita.

The unknown looked around as it were with a certain alarm, but soon calmed himself and spoke on—

"I would that pestilence crushed them, and I hide that not from you, for it seems to me that you are honest; and though you were not honest, you would not bind me and take me to the Swedes, for I should not yield, having armed men, and a sabre at my side."

"Your grace may be sure that I will not harm you; your courage is to my heart. And it pleases me that your grace did not hesitate to leave property behind, in which the enemy will not fail to punish you. Such goodwill to the country is highly deserving of praise."

Kmita began unwittingly to speak in a patronizing tone, as a superior to a subordinate, without thinking that such words might seem strange in the mouth of a small horse-dealing noble; but apparently the young lord did not pay attention to that, for he merely winked cunningly and said—

"But am I a fool? With me the first rule is that my own shall not leave me, for what the Lord God has given must be respected. I stayed at home quietly with my produce and grain, and when I had sold in Prussia all my crops, cattle, and utensils, I thought to myself: 'It is time for the road. Let them take vengeance on me now, let them take whatever pleases their taste.'"

“Your grace has left the hind and the buildings for good?”

“Yes, for I hired the starostaship of Vansosh from the *voevoda* of Mazovia, and just now the term has expired. I have not paid the last rent, and I will not, for I hear the *voevoda* of Mazovia is an adherent of the Swedes. Let the rent be lost to him for that, and it will add to my ready money.”

“Pon my word,” said Kmita, smiling, “I see that your grace is not only a brave cavalier, but an adroit one.”

“Of course,” replied the unknown. “Adroitness is the main thing! But I was not speaking of that. Why is it that, feeling the wrongs of our country and of our gracious king, you do not go to those honorable soldiers in Podlyasye and join their banner? You would serve both God and yourself; luck might come, for to more than one has it happened to come out of war a great man, from being a small noble. It is evident that you are bold and resolute, and since your birth is no hindrance, you might advance quickly to some fortune, if God favors you with booty. If you do not squander that which here and there will fall into your hands, the purse will grow heavy. I do not know whether you have land or not, but you may have it; with a purse it is not hard to rent an estate, and from renting an estate to owning one, with the help of the Lord, is not far. And so, beginning as an attendant, you may die an officer, or in some dignity in the country, in case you are not lazy in labor; for whoso rises early, to him God gives treasure.”

Kmita gnawed his mustache, for laughter seized him; then his face quivered, and he squirmed, for from time to time pain came from the healing wound. The unknown continued—

“As to receiving you there, they will receive you, for they need men; besides, you have pleased me, and I take you under my protection, with which you may be certain of promotion.”

Here the young man raised his plump face with pride, and began to smooth his mustaches; at last he said—

“Will you be my attendant, carry my sabre, and manage my men?”

Kmita did not restrain himself, but burst out in sincere, joyous laughter, so that all his teeth gleamed.

“Why laugh?” asked the unknown, frowning.

“From delight at the service.”

But the youthful personage was offended in earnest, and said—

“He was a fool who taught you such manners, and be careful with whom you are speaking, lest you exceed measure in familiarity.”

“Forgive me, your grace,” answered Kmita, joyously, “for really I do not know before whom I am standing.”

The young lord put his hands on his hips: “I am Pan Jendzian of Vansosh,” said he, with importance.

Kmita had opened his mouth to tell his assumed name, when Biloüs came hurriedly into the room.

“Pan Com—”

Here the soldier, stopped by the threatening look of Kmita, was confused, stammered, and finally coughed out with effort—

“I beg to tell you some people are coming.”

“Where from?”

“From Shchuchyn.”

Kmita was embarrassed, but hiding his confusion quickly, he answered, “Be on your guard. Are there many?”

“About ten men on horseback.”

“Have the pistols ready. Go!”

When the soldier had gone out, Kmita turned to Pan Jendzian of Vansosh and asked—

“Are they not Swedes?”

“Since you are going to them,” answered Pan Jendzian, who for some time had looked with astonishment on the young noble, “you must meet them sooner or later.”

“I should prefer the Swedes to robbers, of whom there are many everywhere. Whoso goes with horses must go armed and keep on the watch, for horses are very tempting.”

“If it is true that Pan Volodyovski is in Shchuchyn,” said Pan Jendzian, “this is surely a party of his. Before they take up their quarters there they wish to know if the country is safe, for with Swedes at the border it would be difficult to remain in quiet.”

When he heard this, Pan Andrei walked around in the room and sat down in its darkest corner, where the sides of the chimney cast a deep shadow on the corner of the table; but meanwhile the sound of the tramp and snorting of horses came in from outside, and after a time a number of men entered the room.

Walking in advance, a gigantic fellow struck with wooden foot the loose planks in the floor of the room. Kmita looked at him, and the heart died within his bosom. It was Yuzva Butrym, called Footless.

“But where is the host?” inquired he, halting in the middle of the room.

“I am here!” answered the innkeeper, “at your service.”

“Oats for the horses!”

“I have no oats, except what these men are using.” Saying this, he pointed at Jendzian and the horse-dealer’s men.

“Whose men are you?” asked Jendzian.

“And who are you yourself?”

“The starosta of Vansosh.”

His own people usually called Jendzian starosta, as he was the tenant of a starostaship, and he thus named himself on the most important occasions.

Yuzva Butrym was confused, seeing with what a high personage he had to do; therefore he removed his cap, and said—

“With the forehead, great mighty lord. It was not possible to recognize dignity in the dark.”

“Whose men are these?” repeated Jendzian, placing his hands on his hips.

“The Lauda men from the former Billevich squadron, and now of Pan Volodyovski’s.”

“For God’s sake! Then Pan Volodyovski is in the town of Shchuchyn?”

“In his own person, and with other colonels who have come from Jmud.”

“Praise be to God, praise be to God!” repeated the delighted starosta. “And what colonels are with Pan Volodyovski?”

“Pan Mirski was,” answered Butrym, “till apoplexy struck him on the road; but Pan Oskyerko is there, and Pan Kovalski, and the two Skshetuskis.”

“What Skshetuskis?” cried Jendzian. “Is not one of them Skshetuski from Bujets?”

“I do not know where he lives,” said Butrym, “but I know that he was at Zbaraj.”

“Save us! that is my lord!”

Here Jendzian saw how strangely such a word would sound in the mouth of a starosta, and added—

“My lord godson’s father, I wanted to say.”

The starosta said this without forethought, for in fact he had been the second godfather to Skshetuski’s first son, Yaremka.

Meanwhile thoughts one after another were crowding to the head of Pan Kmita, sitting in the dark corner of the room. First the soul within him was roused at sight of the terrible graycoat, and his hand grasped the sabre involuntarily. For he knew that Yuzva, mainly, had caused the death of his comrades, and was his most inveterate enemy. The old-time Pan Kmita would have commanded to take him and tear him with horses, but the Pan Babinich of that day controlled himself. Alarm, however, seized him at the thought that if the man were to recognize him various dangers might come to his farther journey and the whole undertaking. He determined, therefore, not to let himself be known, and he pushed ever deeper into the shade; at last he put his elbow on the table, and placing his head in his palms began to feign sleep; but at the same time he whispered to Soroka, who was sitting at the table—

“Go to the stable, let the horses be ready. We will go in the night.”

Soroka rose and went out; Kmita still feigned sleep. Various memories came to his head. These people reminded him of Lauda, Vodokty, and that brief past which had vanished as a dream. When a short time before Yuzva Butrym said that he belonged to the former Billevich squadron, the heart trembled in Pan Andrei at the mere name. And it came to his mind that it was also evening, that the fire was burning in the chimney in the same way, when he dropped unexpectedly into Vodokty, as if with the snow, and for the first time saw in the servants’ hall Olenka among the spinners.

He saw now with closed lids, as if with eyesight, that bright, calm lady; he remembered everything that had taken place—how she wished to be his guardian angel, to strengthen him in good, to guard him from evil, to show him the straight road of worthiness. If he had listened to her, if he had listened to her! She knew also what ought to be done, on what side to stand; knew where was virtue, honesty, duty, and simply would have taken him by the hand and led him, if he had listened to her.

Here love, roused by remembrance, rose so much in Pan Andrei’s heart that he was ready to pour out all his blood, if he could fall at the feet of that lady; and at that moment he was ready to fall on the neck of that bear of Lauda, that slayer of his comrades, simply because he was from that region, had named the Billeviches, had seen Olenka.



His own name repeated a number of times by Yuzva Butrym roused him first from his musing. The tenant of Vansosh inquired about acquaintances, and Yuzva told him what had happened in Kyedani from the time of the memorable treaty of the hetman with the Swedes; he spoke of the oppression of the army, the imprisonment of the colonels, of sending them to Birji, and their fortunate escape. The name of Kmita, covered with all the horror of treason and cruelty, was repeated prominently in those narratives. Yuzva did not know that Pan Volodyovski, the Skshetuskis, and Zagloba owed their lives to Kmita; but he told of what had happened in Billeviche—

“Our colonel seized that traitor in Billeviche, as a fox in his den, and straightway commanded to lead him to death; I took him with great delight, for the hand of God had reached him, and from moment to moment I held the lantern to his eyes, to see if he showed any sorrow. But no! He went boldly, not considering that he would stand before the judgment of God—such is his reprobate nature. And when I advised him to make even the sign of the cross, he answered, ‘Shut thy mouth, fellow; ’tis no affair of thine!’ We posted him under a pear-tree outside the village, and I was already giving the word, when Pan Zagloba, who went with us, gave the order to search him, to see if he had papers on his person. A letter was found. Pan Zagloba said, ‘Hold the light!’ and he read. He had barely begun reading when he caught his head: ‘Jesus, Mary! bring him back to the house!’ Pan Zagloba mounted his horse and rode off, and we brought Kmita back, thinking they would burn him before death, to get information from him. But nothing of the kind! They let the traitor go free. It was not for my head to judge what they found in the letter, but I would not have let him go.”

“What was in that letter?” asked the tenant of Vansosh.

“I know not; I only think that there must have been still other officers in the hands of the prince *voevoda*, who would have had them shot right away if we had shot Kmita. Besides, our colonel may have taken pity on the tears of Panna Billevich, for she fell in a faint so that hardly were they able to bring her to her senses. I do not make bold to complain; still evil has happened, for the harm which that man has done, Lucifer himself would not be ashamed of. All Lithuania weeps through him; and how many widows and orphans and how many poor people complain against him is known to God only. Whoso destroys him will have merit in heaven and before men.”

Here conversation turned again to Pan Volodyovski, the Skshetuskis, and the squadrons in Podlyasye.

“It is hard to find provisions,” said Butrym, “for the lands of the hetman are plundered completely—nothing can be found in them for the tooth of a man or a horse; and the nobles are poor in the villages, as with us in Jmud. The colonels have determined therefore to divide the horses into hundreds, and post them five or ten miles apart. But when winter comes, I cannot tell what will happen.”

Kmita, who had listened patiently while the conversation touched him, moved now, and had opened his mouth to say from his dark corner, “The hetman will take you, when thus divided, one by one, like lobsters from a net.” But at that moment the door opened, and in it stood Soroka, whom Kmita had sent to get the horses ready for the road. The light from the chimney fell straight on the stern face of the sergeant. Yuzva Butrym glanced at him, looked a long time, then turned to Jendzian and asked—

“Is that a servant of your great mightiness? I know him from some place or another.”

“No,” replied Jendzian; “those are nobles going with horses to fairs.”

“But whither?” asked Yuzva.

"To Sobota," said old Kyemlich.

"Where is that?"

"Not far from Pyantek."

Yuzva accounted this answer an untimely jest, as Kmita had previously, and said with a frown, "Answer when people ask!"

"By what right do you ask?"

"I can make that clear to you, for I am sent out to see if there are not suspicious men in the neighborhood. Indeed it seems to me there are some, who do not wish to tell where they are going."

Kmita, fearing that a fight might rise out of this conversation, said, without moving from the dark corner—

"Be not angry, worthy soldier, for Pyantek and Sobota are towns, like others, in which horse-fairs are held in the fall. If you do not believe, ask the lord starosta, who must know of them."

"They are regular places," said Jendzian.

"In that case it is all right. But why go to those places? You can sell horses in Shchuchyn, where there is a great lack of them, and those which we took in Pilvishki are good for nothing; they are galled."

"Every man goes where it is better for him, and we know our own road," answered Kmita.

"I know not whether it is better for you; but it is not better for us that horses are driven to the Swedes and informants go to them."

"It is a wonder to me," said the tenant of Vansosh. "These people talk against the Swedes, and somehow they are in a hurry to go to them." Here he turned to Kmita: "And you do not seem to me greatly like a horse-dealer, for I saw a fine ring on your finger, of which no lord would be ashamed."

"If it has pleased your grace, buy it of me; I gave two quarters for it in Leng."

"Two quarters? Then it is not genuine, but a splendid counterfeit. Show it."

"Take it, your grace."

"Can you not move yourself? Must I go?"

"I am terribly tired."

"Ah, brother, a man would say that you are trying to hide your face."

Hearing this, Yuzva said not a word, but approached the chimney, took out a burning brand, and holding it high above his head, went straight toward Kmita and held the light before his eyes.

Kmita rose in an instant to his whole height, and during one wink of an eyelid they looked at each other eye to eye. Suddenly the brand fell from the hand of Yuzva, scattering a thousand sparks on the way.

"Jesus, Mary!" screamed Butrym, "this is Kmita!"

"I am he!" said Pan Andrei, seeing that there were no further means of concealment.

"This way, this way! Seize him!" shouted Yuzva to the soldiers who had remained outside. Then turning to Pan Andrei, he said—

“Thou art he, O hell-dweller, traitor! Thou art that Satan in person! Once thou didst slip from my hands, and now thou art hurrying in disguise to the Swedes. Thou art that Judas, that torturer of women and men! I have thee!”

So saying, he seized Pan Andrei by the shoulder; but Pan Andrei seized him. First, however, the two young Kyemliches, Kosma and Damian, had risen from the bench, almost touching the ceiling with their bushy heads, and Kosma asked—

“Shall we pound, father?”

“Pound!” answered old Kyemlich, unsheathing his sabre.

The doors burst open, and Yuzva’s soldiers rushed in; but behind them, almost on their necks, came Kyemlich’s men.

Yuzva caught Pan Andrei by the shoulder, and in his right hand held a naked rapier, making a whirlwind and lightning with it around himself. But Pan Andrei, though he had not the gigantic strength of his enemy, seized Butrym’s throat as if in a vice. Yuzva’s eyes were coming out; he tried to stun Kmita with the hilt of his rapier, but did not succeed, for Kmita thundered first on his forehead with the hilt of his sabre. Yuzva’s fingers, holding the shoulder of his opponent, opened at once; he tottered and bent backward under the blow. To make room for a second blow, Kmita pushed him again, and slashed him with full sweep on the face with his sabre. Yuzva fell on his back like an oak-tree, striking the floor with his skull.

“Strike!” cried Kmita, in whom was roused, in one moment, the old fighting spirit.

But he had no need to urge, for it was boiling in the room, as in a pot. The two young Kyemliches slashed with their sabres, and at times butted with their heads, like a pair of bullocks, putting down a man with each blow; after them advanced their old father, bending every moment to the floor, half closing his eyes, and thrusting quickly the point of his weapon under the arms of his sons.

But Soroka, accustomed to fighting in inns and close quarters, spread the greatest destruction. He pressed his opponents so sorely that they could not reach him with a blade; and when he had discharged his pistols in the crowd, he smashed heads with the butts of the pistols, crushing noses, knocking out teeth and eyes. Kyemlich’s servants and Kmita’s two soldiers aided their masters.

The fight moved from the table to the upper end of the room. The Lauda men defended themselves with rage; but from the moment that Kmita, having finished Yuzva, sprang into the fight and stretched out another Butrym, the victory began to incline to his side.

Jendzian’s servants also sprang into the room with sabres and guns; but though their master cried, “Strike!” they were at a loss what to do, for they could not distinguish one side from the other, since the Lauda men wore no uniforms, and in the disturbance the starosta’s young men were punished by both sides.

Jendzian held himself carefully outside the battle, wishing to recognize Kmita, and point him out for a shot; but by the faint light of the fire Kmita vanished time after time from his eye—at one instant springing to view as red as a devil, then again lost in darkness.

Resistance on the part of the Lauda men grew weaker and weaker, for the fall of Yuzva and the terrible name of Kmita had lessened their courage; still they fought on with rage. Meanwhile the innkeeper went past the strugglers quietly with a bucket of water in his hand and dashed it on the fire. In the room followed black darkness; the strugglers gathered into such a dense crowd that they could strike with fists only; after a while cries ceased; only

panting breaths could be heard, and the orderless stamp of boots. Through the door, then flung open, sprang first Jendzian's people, after them the Lauda men, then Kmita's attendants.

Pursuit began in the first room, in the bins before the house, and in the shed. Some shots were heard; then uproar and the noise of horses. A battle began at Jendzian's wagons, under which his people hid themselves; the Lauda men too sought refuge there, and Jendzian's people, taking them for the other party, fired at them a number of times.

"Surrender!" cried old Kyemlich, thrusting the point of his sabre between the spokes of the wagon and stabbing at random the men crouched beneath.

"Stop! we surrender!" answered a number of voices.

Then the people from Vansosh threw from under the wagon their sabres and guns; after that the young Kyemliches began to drag them out by the hair, till the old man cried—

"To the wagons! take what comes under your hands! Quick! quick! to the wagons!"

The young men did not let the command be given thrice, but rushed to untie the coverings, from beneath which the swollen sides of Jendzian's sacks appeared. They had begun to throw out the sacks, when suddenly Kmita's voice thundered—

"Stop!"

And Kmita, supporting his command by his hand, fell to slashing them with the flat of his bloody sabre.

Kosma and Damian sprang quickly aside.

"Cannot we take them, your grace?" asked the old man, submissively.

"Stand back!" cried Kmita. "Find the starosta for me."

Kosma and Damian rushed to the search in a moment, and behind them their father; in a quarter of an hour they came bringing Jendzian, who, when he saw Kmita, bowed low and said—

"With the permission of your grace, I will say that wrong is done me here, for I did not attack any man, and to visit acquaintances, as I am going to do, is free to all."

Kmita, resting on his sabre, breathed heavily and was silent; Jendzian continued—

"I did no harm here either to the Swedes or the prince hetman. I was only going to Pan Volodyovski, my old acquaintance; we campaigned together in Russia. Why should I seek a quarrel? I have not been in Kyedani, and what took place there is nothing to me. I am trying to carry off a sound skin; and what God has given me should not be lost, for I did not steal it, but earned it in the sweat of my brow. I have nothing to do with this whole question! Let me go free, your great mightiness—"

Kmita breathed heavily, looking absently at Jendzian all the time.

"I beg humbly, your great mightiness," began the starosta again. "Your great mightiness saw that I did not know those people, and was not a friend of theirs. They fell upon your grace, and now they have their pay; but why should I be made to suffer? Why should my property be lost? How am I to blame? If it cannot be otherwise, I will pay a ransom to the soldiers of your great mightiness, though there is not much remaining to me, poor man. I will give them a thaler apiece, so that their labor be not lost—I will give them two; and your great mightiness will receive from me also—"

“Cover the wagons!” cried Kmita, suddenly. “But do you take the wounded men and go to the devil!”

“I thank your grace humbly,” said the lord tenant of Vansosh.

Then old Kyemlich approached, pushing out his underlip with the remnants of his teeth, and groaning—

“Your grace, that is ours. Mirror of justice, that is ours.”

But Kmita gave him such a look that the old man cowered, and dared not utter another word.

Jendzian’s people rushed, with what breath they had, to put the horses to the wagons. Kmita turned again to the lord starosta—

“Take all the wounded and killed, carry them to Pan Volodyovski, and tell him from me that I am not his enemy, but may be a better friend than he thinks. I wish to avoid him, for it is not yet time for us to meet. Perhaps that time will come later; but today he would neither believe me, nor have I that wherewith to convince him—perhaps later—Do you understand? Tell him that those people fell upon me and I had to defend myself.”

“In truth it was so,” responded Jendzian.

“Wait; tell Pan Volodyovski, besides, to keep the troops together, for Radzivill, the moment he receives cavalry from Pontus de la Gardie, will move on them. Perhaps now he is on the road. Yanush and Boguslav Radzivill are intriguing with the Elector of Brandenburg, and it is dangerous to be near the boundary. But above all, let them keep together, or they will perish for nothing. The *voevoda* of Vityebsk wishes to come to Podlyasye; let them go to meet him, so as to give aid in case of obstruction.”

“I will tell everything, as if I were paid for it.”

“Though Kmita says this, though Kmita gives warning, let them believe him, take counsel with other colonels, and consider that they will be stronger together. I repeat that the hetman is already on the road, and I am not an enemy of Pan Volodyovski.”

“If I had some sign from your grace, that would be still better,” said Jendzian.

“What good is a sign?”

“Pan Volodyovski would straightway have greater belief in your grace’s sincerity; would think, ‘There must be something in what he says if he has sent a sign.’”

“Then here is the ring; though there is no lack of signs of me on the heads of those men whom you are taking to Pan Volodyovski.”

Kmita drew the ring from his finger. Jendzian on his part took it hastily, and said—

“I thank your grace humbly.”

An hour later, Jendzian with his wagons and his people, a little shaken up however, rode forward quietly toward Shchuchyn, taking three killed and the rest wounded, among whom were Yuzva Butrym, with a cut face and a broken head. As he rode along Jendzian looked at the ring, in which the stone glittered wonderfully in the moonlight, and he thought of that strange and terrible man, who having caused so much harm to the confederates and so much good to the Swedes and Radzivill, still wished apparently to save the confederates from final ruin.

“For he gives sincere advice,” said Jendzian to himself. “It is always better to hold together. But why does he forewarn? Is it from love of Volodyovski, because the latter gave him his

life in Billeviche? It must be from love! Yes, but that love may come out with evil result for the hetman. Kmita is a strange man; he serves Radzivill, wishes well to our people, and is going to the Swedes; I do not understand this.” After a while he added: “He is a bountiful lord; but it is evil to come in his way.”

As earnestly and vainly as Jendzian, did old Kyemlich rack his brain in effort to find an answer to the query, “Whom does Pan Kmita serve?”

“He is going to the king, and kills the confederates, who are fighting specially on the king’s side. What is this? And he does not trust the Swedes, for he hides from them. What will happen to us?”

Not being able to arrive at any conclusion, he turned in rage to his sons: “Rascals! You will perish without blessing! And you could not even pull away a little from the slain?”

“We were afraid!” answered Kosma and Damian.

Soroka alone was satisfied, and he clattered joyously after his colonel.

“Evil fate has missed us,” thought he, “for we killed those fellows. I’m curious to know whom we shall kill next time.”

And it was all one to him, as was also this—whither he was faring.

No one dared approach Kmita or ask him anything, for the young colonel was as gloomy as night. He grieved terribly that he had to kill those men, at the side of whom he would have been glad to stand as quickly as possible in the ranks. But if he had yielded and let himself be taken to Volodyovski, what would Volodyovski have thought on learning that he was seized making his way in disguise to the Swedes, and with passes to the Swedish commandants?

“My old sins are pursuing and following me,” said Kmita to himself. “I will flee to the farthest place; and guide me, O God!”

He began to pray earnestly and to appease his conscience, which repeated, “Again corpses against thee, and not corpses of Swedes.”

“O God, be merciful!” answered Kmita. “I am going to my king; there my service will begin.”

## Chapter XXXII

Jendzian had no intention of passing a night at “The Mandrake,” for from Vansosh to Shchuchyn was not far—he wanted merely to give rest to his horses, especially to those drawing the loaded wagons. Therefore, when Kmita let him travel farther, Jendzian lost no time, and entered Shchuchyn late in the evening. Having announced himself to the sentries, he took his place on the square; for the houses were occupied by soldiers, who even then were not all able to find lodgings. Shchuchyn passed for a town, but was not one in reality; for it had not yet even walls, a town hall, courts of justice, or the college of monks, founded in the time of King Yan III. It had a few houses, but a greater number of cabins than houses, and was called a town, because it was built in a quadrangular form with a marketplace in the centre, slightly less swampy than the pond at which the paltry little place was situated.

Jendzian slept under his warm wolfskin till morning, and then went straight to Pan Volodyovski, who, as he had not seen him for an age, received him with gladness and took him at once to Pan Yan and Zagloba. Jendzian shed tears at sight of his former master, whom he had served faithfully so many years; and with whom he had passed through so many adventures and worked himself finally to fortune. Without shame of his former service, Jendzian began to kiss the hands of Pan Yan and repeat with emotion—

“My master, my master, in what times do we meet again!”

Then all began in a chorus to complain of the times; at last Zagloba said—

“But you, Jendzian, are always in the bosom of fortune, and as I see have come out a lord. Did I not prophesy that if you were not hanged you would have fortune? What is going on with you now?”

“My master, why hang me, when I have done nothing against God, nothing against the law? I have served faithfully; and if I have betrayed any man, he was an enemy—which I consider a special service. And if I destroyed a scoundrel here and there by stratagem, as some one of the rebels, or that witch—do you remember, my master?—that is not a sin; but even if it were a sin, it is my master’s, not mine, for it was from you that I learned stratagems.”

“Oh, that cannot be! See what he wants!” said Zagloba. “If you wish me to howl for your sins after death, give me their fruit during life. You are using alone all that wealth which you gained with the Cossacks, and alone you will be turned to roast bacon in hell.”

“God is merciful, my master, though it is untrue that I use wealth for myself alone; for first I beggared our wicked neighbors with lawsuits, and took care of my parents, who are living now quietly in Jendziane, without any disputes—for the Yavorskis have gone off with packs to beg, and I, at a distance, am earning my living as I can.”

“Then you are not living in Jendziane?” asked Pan Yan.

“In Jendziane my parents live as of old, but I am living in Vansosh, and I cannot complain, for God has blessed me. But when I heard that all you gentlemen were in Shchuchyn, I could not sit still, for I thought to myself, ‘Surely it is time to move again!’ There is going to be war, let it come!”

“Own up,” said Zagloba, “the Swedes frightened you out of Vansosh?”

“There are no Swedes yet in Vidzka, though small parties appear, and cautiously, for the peasants are terribly hostile.”

“That is good news for me,” said Volodyovski, “for yesterday I sent a party purposely to get an informant concerning the Swedes, for I did not know whether it was possible to stay in Shchuchyn with safety; surely that party conducted you hither?”

“That party? Me? I have conducted it, or rather I have brought it, for there is not even one man of that party who can sit on a horse alone.”

“What do you say? What has happened?” inquired Volodyovski.

“They are terribly beaten!” explained Jendzian.

“Who beat them?”

“Pan Kmita.”

The Skshetuskis and Zagloba sprang up from the benches, one interrupting the other in questioning—

“Pan Kmita? But what was he doing here? Has the prince himself come already? Well! Tell right away what has happened.”

Pan Volodyovski rushed out of the room to see with his eyes, to verify the extent of the misfortune, and to look at the men; therefore Jendzian said—

“Why should I tell? Better wait till Pan Volodyovski comes back; for it is more his affair, and it is a pity to move the mouth twice to repeat the same story.”

“Did you see Kmita with your own eyes?” asked Zagloba.

“As I see you, my master!”

“And spoke with him?”

“Why should I not speak with him, when we met at ‘The Mandrake’ not far from here? I was resting my horses, and he had stopped for the night. An hour would have been short for our talk. I complained of the Swedes, and he complained also of the Swedes—”

“Of the Swedes? He complained also?” asked Pan Yan.

“As of devils, though he was going among them.”

“Had he many troops?”

“He had no troops, only a few attendants; true, they were armed, and had such snouts that even those men who slaughtered the Holy Innocents at Herod’s command had not rougher or viler. He gave himself out as a small noble in pigskin boots, and said that he went with horses to the fairs. But though he had a number of horses, his story did not seem clear to me, for neither his person nor his bearing belonged to a horse-dealer, and I saw a fine ring on his finger—this one.” Here Jendzian held a glittering stone before the listeners.

Zagloba struck himself on the side and cried: “Ah, you gypsied that out of him! By that alone might I know you, Jendzian, at the end of the world!”

“With permission of my master, I did not gypsy it; for I am a noble, not a gypsy, and feel myself the equal of any man, though I live on rented lands till I settle on my own. This ring Pan Kmita gave as a token that what he said was true; and very soon I will repeat his words faithfully to your graces, for it seems to me that in this case our skins are in question.”

“How is that?” asked Zagloba.

At this moment Volodyovski came in, roused to the utmost, and pale from anger; he threw his cap on the table and cried—



“It passes imagination! Three men killed; Yuzva Butrym cut up, barely breathing!”

“Yuzva Butrym? He is a man with the strength of a bear!” said the astonished Zagloba.

“Before my eyes Pan Kmita stretched him out,” put in Jendzian.

“I’ve had enough of that Kmita!” cried Volodyovski, beside himself; “wherever that man shows himself he leaves corpses behind, like the plague. Enough of this! Balance for balance, life for life; but now a new reckoning! He has killed my men, fallen upon good soldiers; that will be set to his account before our next meeting.”

“He did not attack them, but they him; for he hid himself in the darkest corner, so they should not recognize him,” explained Jendzian.

“And you, instead of giving aid to my men, testify in his favor!” said Volodyovski, in anger.

“I speak according to justice. As to aid, my men tried to give aid; but it was hard for them, for in the tumult they did not know whom to beat and whom to spare, and therefore they suffered. That I came away with my life and my sacks is due to the sense of Pan Kmita alone, for hear how it happened.”

Jendzian began a detailed account of the battle in “The Mandrake,” omitting nothing; and when at length he told what Kmita had commanded him to tell, they were all wonder fully astonished.

“Did he say that himself?” asked Zagloba.

“He himself,” replied Jendzian. “‘I,’ said he, ‘am not an enemy to Pan Volodyovski or the confederates, though they think differently. Later this will appear; but meanwhile let them come together, in God’s name, or the *voevoda* of Vilna will take them one by one like lobsters from a net.’”

“And did he say that the *voevoda* was already on the march?” asked Tan Yan.

“He said that the *voevoda* was only waiting for Swedish reinforcements, and that he would move at once on Podlyasie.”

“What do you think of all this, gentlemen?” asked Volodyovski, looking at his comrades.

“Either that man is betraying Radzivill, or he is preparing some ambush for us. But of what kind? He advises us to keep in a body. What harm to us may rise out of that?”

“To perish of hunger,” answered Volodyovski. “I have just received news that Jyromski, Kotovski, and Lipnitski must dispose their cavalry in parties of some tens each over the whole province, for they cannot get forage together.”

“But if Radzivill really does come,” asked Pan Stanislav, “who can oppose him?”

No one could answer that question, for really it was as clear as the sun that if the grand hetman of Lithuania should come and find the confederates scattered, he could destroy them with the greatest ease.

“An astonishing thing!” repeated Zagloba; and after a moment’s silence he continued: “Still I should think that he had abandoned Radzivill. But in such a case he would not be slipping past in disguise, and to whom—to the Swedes.” Here he turned to Jendzian: “Did he tell you that he was going to Warsaw?”

“He did.”

“But the Swedish forces are there already.”

“About this hour he must have met the Swedes, if he travelled all night,” answered Jendzian.

“Have you ever seen such a man?” asked Zagloba, looking at his comrades.

“That there is in him evil with good, as tares with wheat, is certain,” said Pan Yan; “but that there is any treason in this counsel that he gives us at present, I simply deny. I do not know whither he is going, why he is slipping past in disguise; and it would be idle to break my head over this, for it is some mystery. But he gives good advice, warns us sincerely: I will swear to that, as well as to this—that the only salvation for us is to listen to his advice. Who knows if we are not indebted to him again, for safety and life?”

“For God’s sake,” cried Volodyovski, “how is Radzivill to come here when Zolotarenko’s men and Hovanski’s infantry are in his way? It is different in our case! One squadron may slip through, and even with one we had to open a way through Pilvishki with sabres. It is another thing with Kmita, who is slipping by with a few men; but when the prince hetman passes with a whole army? Either he will destroy those first—”

Volodyovski had not finished speaking when the door opened and an attendant came in.

“A messenger with a letter to the Colonel,” said he.

“Bring it.”

The attendant went out and returned in a moment with the letter. Pan Michael broke the seal quickly and read—

*That which I did not finish telling the tenant of Vansosh yesterday, I add today in writing. The hetman of himself has troops enough against you, but he is waiting for Swedish reinforcements, so as to go with the authority of the King of Sweden; for then if the Northerners<sup>26</sup> attack him they will have to strike the Swedes too, and that would mean war with the King of Sweden. They will not venture to make war without orders, for they fear the Swedes, and will not take on themselves the responsibility of beginning a war. They have discovered that it is Radzivill’s purpose to put the Swedes forward against them everywhere; let them shoot or cut down even one man, there would be war at once. The Northerners themselves know not what to do now, for Lithuania is given up to the Swedes; they stay therefore in one place, only waiting for what will be, and warring no further. For these reasons they do not restrain Radzivill, nor oppose him. He will go directly against you, and will destroy you one after the other, unless you collect in one body. For God’s sake, do this, and beg the vovoda of Vityebsk to come quickly, since it is easier for him to reach you now through the Northerners while they stand as if stupefied. I wanted to warn you under another name, so that you might more easily believe, but because tidings are given you already from another, I write my own name. It is destruction if you do not believe. I am not now what I was, and God grant that you will hear something altogether different about me.*

*Kmita.*

“You wished to know how Radzivill would come to us; here is your answer!” said Pan Yan.

“That is true, he gives good reasons,” answered Volodyovski.

“What good reasons! holy reasons!” cried Zagloba. “There can be no doubt here. I was the first to know that man; and though there are no curses that have not been showered on his head, I tell you we shall bless him yet. With me it is enough to look at a man to know his value. You remember how he dropped into my heart at Kyedani? He loves us, too, as

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<sup>26</sup> Russians.

knightly people. When he heard my name the first time, he came near suffocating me with admiration, and for my sake saved you all.”

“You have not changed,” remarked Jendzian; “why should Pan Kmita admire you more than my master or Pan Volodyovski?”

“You are a fool!” answered Zagloba. “He knew you at once; and if he called you the tenant, and not the fool of Vansosh, it was through politeness.”

“Then maybe he admired you through politeness!” retorted Jendzian.

“See how the bread swells; get married, lord tenant, and surely you will swell better—I guarantee that.”

“That is all well,” said Volodyovski; “but if he is so friendly, why did he not come to us himself instead of slipping around us like a wolf and biting our men?”

“Not your head, Pan Michael. What we counsel do you carry out, and no evil will come of it. If your wit were as good as your sabre, you would be grand hetman already, in place of Revera Pototski. And why should Kmita come here? Is it not because you would not believe him, just as you do not now believe his letter, from which it might come to great trouble, for he is a stubborn cavalier. But suppose that you did believe him, what would the other colonels do, such as Kotovski, Jyromski, or Lipnitski? What would your Lauda men say? Would not they cut him down the moment you turned your head away?”

“Father is right!” said Pan Yan; “he could not come here.”

“Then why was he going to the Swedes?” insisted the stubborn Pan Michael.

“The devil knows, whether he is going to the Swedes; the devil knows what may flash into Kmita’s wild noddle. That is nothing to us, but let us take advantage of the warning, if we wish to carry away our heads.”

“There is nothing to meditate on here,” said Pan Stanislav.

“It is needful to inform with all speed Kotovski, Jyromski, Lipnitski, and that other Kmita,” said Pan Yan. “Send to them, Michael, news at once; but do not write who gave the warning, for surely they would not believe.”

“We alone shall know whose the service, and in due time we shall not fail to publish it!” cried Zagloba, “Onward, lively, Michael!”

“And we will move to Bialystok ourselves, appointing a muster there for all. God give us the *voevoda* of Vityebsk at the earliest,” said Yan.

“From Bialystok we must send a deputation from the army to him. God grant that we shall stand before the eyes of the hetman of Lithuania,” said Zagloba, “with equal force or greater than his own. It is not for us to rush at him, but it is different with the *voevoda*. He is a worthy man, and honest; there is not another such in the Commonwealth.”

“Do you know Pan Sapyeha?” asked Stanislav.

“Do I know him! I knew him as a little boy, not higher than my sabre. But he was then like an angel.”

“And now he has turned into money, not only his property, not only his silver and jewels, but most likely he has melted into coin the metal of his horse-trappings, so as to collect as many troops as possible against the enemy,” said Volodyovski.

“Thank God that there is even one such man,” answered Pan Stanislaw, “for remember how we trusted in Radzivill.”

“Oh that is blasphemous!” cried Zagloba. “*Voevoda* of Vityebsk, *ba! ba!* Long life to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk! And you, Michael, to the road with all speed, to the road! Let the mudfish remain in these swamps of Shchuchyn, but we will go to Bialystok, where perhaps we shall find other fish. The Jews there, on Sabbath, bake very excellent bread. Well, at least war will begin; I am yearning for it. And if we break through Radzivill we will begin at the Swedes. We have shown them already what we can do. To the road, Michael, for *periculum in mora* (there is danger in delay)!”

“I will go to put the squadrons in line!” said Pan Yan.

An hour later, messengers, between ten and twenty in number, were flying as a horse gallops toward Podlyasye, and soon after them moved the whole squadron of Lauda. The officers went in advance, arranging and discussing; and Roh Kovalski, the lieutenant, led the soldiers. They went through Osovyets and Gonyandz, shortening for themselves the road to Bialystok, where they hoped to find other confederate squadrons.

## Chapter XXXIII

Pan Volodyovski's letters, announcing the expedition of Radzivill, found hearing with all the colonels, scattered throughout the whole province of Podlyasye. Some had divided their squadrons already into smaller detachments, so as to winter them more easily; others permitted officers to lodge in private houses, so that there remained at each flag merely a few officers and some tens of soldiers. The colonels permitted this partly in view of hunger, and partly through the difficulty of retaining in just discipline squadrons which after they had refused obedience to their own proper authority were inclined to oppose officers on the slightest pretext. If a chief of sufficient weight had been found, and had led them at once to battle against either of the two enemies, or even against Radzivill, discipline would have remained surely intact; but it had become weakened by idleness in Podlyasye, where the time passed in shooting at Radzivill's castles, in plundering the goods of the *voevoda*, and in parleying with Prince Boguslav. In these circumstances the soldier grew accustomed only to violence and oppression of peaceful people in the province. Some of the soldiers, especially attendants and camp-followers, deserted, and forming unruly bands, worked at robbery on the highway. And so that army, which had not joined any enemy and was the one hope of the king and the patriots, was dwindling day by day. The division of squadrons into small detachments had dissolved them completely. It is true that it was difficult to subsist in a body, but still it may be that the fear of want was exaggerated purposely. It was autumn, and the harvest had been good; no enemy had up to that time ravaged the province with fire and sword. Just then the robberies of the confederate soldiers were destroying this province precisely as inactivity was destroying the soldiers themselves; for things had combined so wonderfully that the enemy left those squadrons in peace.

The Swedes, flooding the country from the west and extending to the south, had not yet come to that corner which between the province of Mazovia and Lithuania formed Podlyasye; from the other side the legions of Hovanski, Trubetskoi, and Serebryani, stood in inactivity in the district occupied by them, hesitating, or rather not knowing what to lay hold on. In the Russian provinces Buturlin and Hmelnitski sent parties out in old fashion, and just then they had defeated at Grodek a handful of troops led by Pototski, grand hetman of the kingdom. But Lithuania was under Swedish protection. To ravage and to occupy it further meant, as was stated justly by Kmita in his letter, to declare war against the Swedes, who were terrible and roused universal alarm in the world. "There was therefore a moment of relief from the Northerners;" and some experienced men declared that they would soon be allies of Yan Kazimir and the Commonwealth against the King of Sweden, whose power, were he to become lord of the whole Commonwealth, would not have an equal in Europe.

Hovanski therefore attacked neither Podlyasye nor the confederate squadrons, while these squadrons, scattered and without a leader, attacked no one, and were unable to attack or to undertake anything more important than plundering the property of Radzivill; and withal they were dwindling away. But Volodyovski's letters, touching the impending attack by the hetman, roused the colonels from their inactivity and slumber. They assembled the squadrons, called in scattered soldiers, threatening with penalties those who would not come. Jyromski, the most important of the colonels, and whose squadron was in the best condition, moved first, and without delay, to Bialystok; after him came in one week Yakub Kmita—true, with only one hundred and twenty men; then the soldiers of Kotovski and Lipnitski began to assemble, now singly, now in crowds; petty nobles from the surrounding villages also came in as volunteers, such as the Zyentsinkis, the Sviderskis, the Yavorskis, the

Jendzians, the Mazovyetskis; volunteers came even from the province of Lyubelsk, such as the Karvovskis and the Turs; and from time to time appeared a more wealthy noble with a few servants, well armed. Deputies were sent from the squadrons to levy contributions, to collect money and provisions for receipts; in a word, activity reigned everywhere, and military preparations sprang up. When Volodyovski with his Lauda squadron arrived, there were already some thousands of people under arms, to whom only a leader was wanting.

These men were unorganized and unruly, though not so unorganized nor so unruly as those nobles of Great Poland, who a few months before had the task of defending the passage of Uistsie against the Swedes; for these men from Podlyasye, Lublin, and Lithuania were accustomed to war, and there were none among them, unless youths, who had not smelled powder, and who “had not used the snuffbox of Gradivus.” Each in his time had fought—now against the Cossacks, now against the Turks, now against Tartars; there were some who still held in remembrance the Swedish wars. But above all towered in military experience and eloquence Pan Zagloba; and he was glad to be in that assemblage of soldiers, in which there were no deliberations with a dry throat.

Zagloba extinguished the importance of colonels the most important. The Lauda men declared that had it not been for him, Volodyovski, the Skshetuskis, Mirski, and Oskyerko would have died at the hands of Radzivill, for they were being taken to Birji to execution. Zagloba did not hide his own services, but rendered complete justice to himself, so that all might know whom they had before them.

“I do not like to praise myself,” said he, “nor to speak of what has not been; for with me truth is the basis, as my sister’s son also can testify.”

Here he turned to Roh Kovalski, who straightway stepped forth from behind Pan Zagloba, and said, with a ringing, stentorian voice—

“Uncle never lies!”

And, puffing, Pan Roh rolled his eyes over the audience, as if seeking the insolent man who would dare to gainsay him.

But no one ever gainsaid him. Then Zagloba began to tell of his old-time victories—how during the life of Konyetspolski he had caused victory twice over Gustavus Adolphus, how in later times he staggered Hmelnitski, how he acted at Zbaraj, how Prince Yeremi relied on his counsels in everything, how he confided to him the leadership in sorties.

“And after each sortie,” said he, “when we had spoiled five or ten thousand of the ruffians, Hmelnitski in despair used to butt his head against the wall, and repeat, ‘No one has done this but that devil of a Zagloba!’ and when it came to the treaty of Zborovo, the Khan himself looked at me as a wonder, and begged for my portrait, since he wished to send it as a gift to the Sultan.”

“Such men do we need now more than ever,” said the hearers.

And since many had heard besides of the marvellous deeds of Zagloba, accounts of which were travelling over the whole Commonwealth, and since recent events in Kyedani, such as the liberation of the colonels, and the battle with the Swedes at Klavany, confirmed the old opinion concerning the man—his glory increased still more; and Zagloba walked in it, as in the sunlight, before the eyes of all men, bright and radiant beyond others.

“If there were a thousand such men in the Commonwealth, it would not have come to what it has!” said the soldiers.

“Let us thank God that we have even one among us.”

“He was the first to proclaim Radzivil a traitor.”

“And he snatched honorable men from his grasp, and on the road he so pommelled the Swedes at Klavany that a witness of their defeat could not escape.”

“He won the first victory!”

“God grant, not the last!”

Colonels like Jyromski, Kotovski, Yakub Kmita, and Lipnitski looked also on Zagloba with great respect. They urged him to their quarters, seizing him from one another by force; and his counsel was sought in everything, while they wondered at his prudence, which was quite equal to his bravery.

And just then they were considering an important affair. They had sent, it is true, deputies to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, asking him to come and take command; but since no one knew clearly where the *voevoda* was at that moment, the deputies went away, and as it were fell into water. There were reports that they had been taken by Zolotarenko’s parties, which came as far as Volkovysk, plundering on their own account.

The colonels at Bialystok therefore decided to choose a temporary leader who should have management of all till the arrival of Sapyeha. It is not needful to say that, with the exception of Volodyovski, each colonel was thinking of himself.

Then began persuading and soliciting. The army gave notice that it wished to take part in the election, not through deputies, but in the general circle which was formed for that purpose.

Volodyovski, after advising with his comrades, gave strong support to Jyromski, who was a virtuous man and important; besides, he impressed the troops by his looks, and a senatorial beard to his girdle. He was also a ready and experienced soldier. He, through gratitude, recommended Volodyovski; but Kotovski, Lipnitski, and Yakub Kmita opposed this, insisting that it was not possible to select the youngest, for the chief must represent before the country the greatest dignity.

“But who is the oldest here?” asked many voices.

“Uncle is the oldest,” cried suddenly Roh Kovalski, with such a thundering voice that all turned toward him.

“It is a pity that he has no squadron!” said Yahovich, Jyromski’s lieutenant.

But others began to cry: “Well, what of that? Are we bound to choose only a colonel? Is not the election in our power? Is this not free suffrage? Any noble may be elected king, not merely commander.”

Then Pan Lipnitski, as he did not favor Jyromski, and wished by all means to prevent his election, raised his voice—

“As true as life! You are free, gracious gentlemen, to vote as may please you. If you do not choose a colonel, it will be better; for there will be no offence to any man, nor will there be jealousy.”

Then came a terrible uproar. Many voices cried, “To the vote! to the vote!” but others, “Who here is more famous than Pan Zagloba? Who is a greater knight? Who is a more experienced soldier? We want Pan Zagloba! Long life to him! Long life to our commander!”

“Long life to Pan Zagloba! long life to him!” roared more and more throats.

“To the sabres with the stubborn!” cried the more quarrelsome.

“There is no opposition! By acclamation!” answered crowds.

“Long life to him! He conquered Gustavus Adolphus! He staggered Hmelnitski!”

“He saved the colonels themselves!”

“He conquered the Swedes at Klavany!”

“Vivat! vivat! Zagloba dux! Vivat! vivat!”

And throngs began to hurl their caps in the air, while running through the camp in search of Zagloba.

He was astonished, and at the first moment confused, for he had not sought the office. He wanted it for Pan Yan, and did not expect such a turn of affairs. So when a throng of some thousands began to shout his name, his breath failed him, and he became as red as a beet. Then his comrades rushed around him; but in their enthusiasm they interpreted everything in a good sense, for seeing his confusion they fell to shouting—

“Look at him! he blushes like a maiden! His modesty is equal to his manhood! Long life to him, and may he lead us to victory!”

Meanwhile the colonels also came up—glad, not glad; they congratulated him on his office, and perhaps some were even glad that it had missed their rivals. Pan Volodyovski merely moved his mustaches somewhat, he was not less astonished than Zagloba; and Jendzian, with open eyes and mouth, stared with unbelief, but already with respect, at Zagloba, who came to himself by degrees, and after a while put his hands on his hips, and rearing his head, received with fitting dignity the congratulations.

Jyromski congratulated first on behalf of the colonels, and then of the army. Pan Jymirski, an officer of Kotovski’s squadron, spoke very eloquently, quoting the maxims of various sages.

Zagloba listened, nodded; finally, when the speaker had finished, the commander gave utterance to the following words—

“Gracious gentlemen! Even if a man should endeavor to drown honest merit in the unfordable ocean, or cover it with the heaven-touching Carpathians, still, having like oil the property of floating to the surface, it would work itself out, so as to say to the eyes of men, ‘I am that which trembles not before light, which has no fear of judgment, which waits for reward.’ But as a precious stone is set in gold, so should that virtue be set in modesty; therefore, gracious gentlemen, standing here in your presence, I ask: Have I not hidden myself and my services? Have I praised myself in your presence? Have I asked for this office, with which you have adorned me? You yourselves have discovered my merits, for I am this moment ready to deny them, and to say to you: There are better than I, such as Pan Jyromski, Pan Kotovski, Pan Lipnitski, Pan Kmita, Pan Oskyerko, Pan Skshetuski, Pan Volodyovski—such great cavaliers that antiquity itself might be proud of them. Why choose me leader, and not some one of them? It is still time. Take from my shoulders this office, and clothe in this mantle a worthier man!”

“Impossible! impossible!” bellowed hundreds and thousands of voices.

“Impossible!” repeated the colonels, delighted with the public praise, and wishing at the same time to show their modesty before the army.

“I see myself that it is impossible now,” said Zagloba; “then, gracious gentlemen, let your will be done. I thank you from my heart, lords brothers, and I have faith that God will grant that you be not deceived in the trust which you have placed in me. As you are to stand with me to death, so I promise to stand with you; and if an inscrutable fate brings us either victory



or destruction, death itself will not part us, for even after death we shall share a common renown.”

Tremendous enthusiasm reigned in the assembly. Some grasped their sabres, others shed tears; sweat stood in drops on the bald head of Zagloba, but the ardor within him grew greater.

“We will stand by our lawful king, by our elected, and by our country,” shouted he; “live for them, die for them! Gracious gentlemen, since this fatherland is a fatherland never have such misfortunes fallen on it. Traitors have opened the gates, and there is not a foot of land, save this province, where an enemy is not raging. In you is the hope of the country, and in me your hope; on you and on me the whole Commonwealth has its eyes fixed! Let us show that it holds not its hands forth in vain. As you ask from me manhood and faith, so I ask of you discipline and obedience; and if we be worthy, if we open, by our example, the eyes of those whom the enemy has deceived, then half the Commonwealth will fly to us! Whoso has God and faith in his heart will join us, the forces of heaven will support us, and who in that hour can oppose us?”

“It will be so! As God lives, it will be so! Solomon is speaking! Strike! strike!” shouted thundering voices.

But Zagloba stretched forth his hands to the north, and shouted—

“Come now, Radzivill! Come now, lord hetman, lord heretic, *voevoda* of Lucifer! We are waiting for you—not scattered, but standing together; not in discord, but in harmony; not with papers and compacts, but with swords in our hands! An army of virtue is waiting for you, and I am its leader. Take the field! Meet Zagloba! Call the devils to your side; let us make the trial! Take the field!”

Here he turned again to the army, and roared till his voice was heard throughout the whole camp—

“As God is true, gracious gentlemen, prophecies support me! Only harmony, and we shall conquer those scoundrels, those wide-breeches and stocking fellows, fish-eaters and lousy rogues, sheepskin tanners who sleigh-ride in summer! We’ll give them pepper, till they wear off their heels racing home. Let every living man slay them, the dog brothers! Slay, whoso believes in God, to whom virtue and the country are dear!”

Several thousand sabres were gleaming at once. Throngs surrounded Zagloba, crowding, trampling, pushing, and roaring—

“Lead us on! lead us on!”

“I will lead you tomorrow! Make ready!” shouted Zagloba, with ardor.

This election took place in the morning, and in the afternoon there was a review of the army. The squadrons were disposed on the plain of Horoshchan, one by the other in great order, with the colonels and banners in front; and before the regiments rode the commander, under a horsetail standard, with a gilded baton in his hand, and a heron feather in his cap—you would have said, a born hetman! And so he reviewed in turn the squadrons, as a shepherd examines his flock, and courage was added to the soldiers at sight of that lordly figure. Each colonel came out to him in turn, and he spoke with each—praised something, blamed something; and in truth those of the newcomers who in the beginning were not pleased with the choice were forced to admit in their souls that the new commander was a soldier very well conversant with military affairs, and for whom leadership was nothing new.

Volodyovski alone moved his mustaches somewhat strangely when the new commander clapped him on the shoulder at the review, in presence of the other colonels, and said—

“Pan Michael, I am satisfied with you, for your squadron is in such order as no other. Hold on in this fashion, and you may be sure that I’ll not forget you.”

“’Pon my word!” whispered Volodyovski to Pan Yan on the way home from the review, “what else could a real hetman have told me?”

That same day Zagloba sent detachments in directions in which it was needful to go, and in direction in which there was no need of going. When they returned in the morning, he listened with care to every report; then he betook himself to the quarters of Volodyovski, who lived with Pan Yan and Pan Stanislaw.

“Before the army I must uphold dignity,” said he, kindly; “when we are alone we can have our old intimacy—here I am a friend, not a chief. Besides, I do not despise your counsel, though I have my own reason; for I know you as men of experience such as few in the Commonwealth have.”

They greeted him therefore in old fashion, and “intimacy” soon reigned completely. Jendzian alone dared not be with him as formerly, and sat on the very edge of his bench.

“What does father think to do?” asked Pan Yan.

“First of all to uphold order and discipline, and keep the soldiers at work, that they may not grow mangy from laziness. I said well, Pan Michael, that you mumbled like a suckling when I sent those parties toward the four points of the world; but I had to do so to inure men to service, for they have been idle a long time. That first, second, what do we need? Not men, for enough of them come, and more will come yet. Those nobles who fled from Mazovia to Prussia before the Swedes, will come too. Men and sabres will not be wanting; but there are not provisions enough, and without supplies no army on earth can remain in the field. I had the idea to order parties to bring in whatever falls into their hands—cattle, sheep, pigs, grain, hay; and in this province and the district of Vidzko in Mazovia, which also has not seen an enemy yet, there is abundance of everything.”

“But those nobles will raise heaven-climbing shouts,” said Pan Yan, “if their crops and cattle are taken.”

“The army means more for me than the nobles. Let them cry! Supplies will not be taken for nothing. I shall command to give receipts, of which I have prepared so many during the night, that half the Commonwealth might be taken under requisition with them. I have no money; but when the war is over and the Swedes driven out, the Commonwealth will pay. What is the use in talking! It would be worse for the nobles if the army were to grow hungry, go around and rob. I have a plan too of scouring the forests, for I hear that very many peasants have taken refuge there with their cattle. Let the army people return thanks to the Holy Ghost, who inspired them to choose me, for no other man would have managed in such fashion.”

“On your great mightiness is a senator’s head, that is certain!” exclaimed Jendzian.

“Hei!” retorted Zagloba, rejoiced at the flattery, “and you are not to be imposed on, you rogue! Soon it will be seen how I’ll make you lieutenant, only let there be a vacancy.”

“I thank your great mightiness humbly,” replied Jendzian.

“This is my plan,” continued Zagloba: “first to collect such supplies that we could stand a siege, then to make a fortified camp, and let Radzivill come with Swedes or with devils. I’m a rascal if I do not make a second Zbaraj here!”

“As God is dear to me, a noble idea!” cried Volodyovski; “but where can we get cannon?”

“Pan Kotovski has two howitzers, and Yakub Kmita has one gun for firing salutes; in Bialystok are four eight-pounders which were to be sent to the castle of Tykotsin; for you do not know, gentlemen, that Bialystok was left by Pan Vyesyolovski for the support of Tykotsin Castle, and those cannon were bought the past year with the rent, as Pan Stempalski, the manager here, told me. He said also that there were a hundred charges of powder for each cannon. We’ll help ourselves, gracious gentlemen; only support me from your souls, and do not forget the body either, which would be glad to drink something, for it is time now for that.”

Volodyovski gave orders to bring drink, and they talked on at the cups.

“You thought that you would have the picture of a commander,” continued Zagloba, sipping lightly the old mead. “Never, never! I did not ask for the favor; but since they adorn me with it, there must be obedience and order. I know what each office means, and see if I am not equal to everyone. I’ll make a second Zbaraj in this place, nothing but a second Zbaraj! Radzivill will choke himself well; and the Swedes will choke themselves before they swallow me. I hope that Hovanski will try us too; I would bury him in such style that he would not be found at the last judgment. They are not far away, let them try!—Mead, Pan Michael!”

Volodyovski poured out mead. Zagloba drank it at a draught, wrinkled his forehead, and as if thinking of something said—

“Of what was I talking? What did I want?—Ah! mead, Pan Michael!”

Volodyovski poured out mead again.

“They say,” continued Zagloba, “that Pan Sapyeha likes a drink in good company. No wonder! every honorable man does. Only traitors, who have false thoughts for their country, abstain, lest they tell their intrigues. Radzivill drinks birch sap, and after death will drink pitch. I think that Sapyeha and I shall be fond of each other; but I shall have everything here so arranged that when he comes all will be ready. There is many a thing on my head; but what is to be done? If there is no one in the country to think, then think thou, old Zagloba, while breath is in thy nostrils. The worst is that I have no chancellery.”

“And what does father want of a chancellery?” asked Pan Yan.

“Why has the king a chancellery? And why must there be a military secretary with an army? It will be necessary to send to some town to have a seal made for me.”

“A seal?” repeated Jendzian, with delight, looking with growing respect at Zagloba.

“And on what will your lordship put the seal?” asked Volodyovski.

“In such a confidential company you may address me as in old times. The seal will not be used by me, but by my chancellor—keep that in mind, to begin with!”

Here Zagloba looked with pride and importance at those present, till Jendzian sprang up from the bench, and Pan Stanislav muttered—

“*Honores mutant mores* (honors change manners)!”

“What do I want of a chancellery? But listen to me!” said Zagloba. “Know this, to begin with, that those misfortunes which have fallen upon our country, according to my understanding, have come from no other causes than from license, unruliness, and excesses—Mead, Pan Michael!—and excesses, I say, which like a plague are destroying us; but first of all, from heretics blaspheming with ever-growing boldness the true faith, to the damage of our Most Holy Patroness, who may fall into just anger because of these insults.”

“He speaks truly,” said the knights, in chorus; “the dissidents were the first to join the enemy, and who knows if they did not bring the enemy hither?”

“For example, the grand hetman of Lithuania!”

“But in this province, where I am commander, there is also no lack of heretics, as in Tykotsin and other towns; therefore to obtain the blessing of God on our undertaking at its inception, a manifesto will be issued, that whoso is living in error must turn from it in three days, and those who will not do that will have their property confiscated to the army.”

The knights looked at one another with astonishment. They knew that there was no lack of adroit reason and stratagem in Zagloba, but they did not suppose him to be such a statesman and judge of public questions.

“And you ask,” continued Zagloba, with triumph, “where we shall get money for the army? But the confiscations, and all the wealth of the Radzivills, which by confiscation will become army property?”

“Will there be right on our side?” asked Volodyovski.

“There are such times at present that whoever has a sword is right. And what right have the Swedes and all those enemies who are raging within the boundaries of the Commonwealth?”

“It is true!” answered Pan Michael, with conviction.

“That is not enough!” cried Zagloba, growing warmer, “another manifesto will be issued to the nobles of Podlyasye, and those lands in the neighboring provinces which are not yet in the hands of the enemy, to assemble a general militia. These nobles must arm their servants, so that we may not lack infantry. I know that many would be glad to appear, if only they could see some government. They will have a government and manifestoes.”

“You have, in truth, as much sense as the grand chancellor of the kingdom,” cried Volodyovski.

“Mead, Pan Michael!—A third letter will be sent to Hovanski, telling him to go to destruction; if not, we will smoke him out of every town and castle. They (the Northerners) are quiet now in Lithuania, it is true, and do not capture castles; but Zolotarenko’s men rob, going along in parties of one or two thousand. Let him restrain them, or we will destroy them.”

“We might do that, indeed,” said Pan Yan, “and the troops would not be lying idle.”

“I am thinking of this, and I will send new parties today, precisely to Volkovysk; but some things are to be done, and others are not to be omitted. I wish to send a fourth letter to our elected, our good king, to console him in his sorrow; saying that there are still men who have not deserted him, that there are sabres and hearts ready at his nod. Let our father have at least this comfort in a strange land; our beloved lord, our Yagellon blood, which must wander in exile—think of it, think of it!”

Here Zagloba fell to sobbing, for he had much mead in his head, and at last he roared from pity over the fate of the king, and Pan Michael at once seconded him in a thinner voice. Jendzian sobbed too, or pretended to sob; but Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav rested their heads on their hands, and sat in silence.

The silence continued for a while; suddenly Zagloba fell into a rage.

“What is the elector doing?” cried he. “If he has made a pact with the Prussian towns, let him take the field against the Swedes, let him not intrigue on both sides, let him do what a loyal vassal is bound to do, and take the field in defence of his lord and benefactor.”

“Who can tell that he will not declare for the Swedes?” asked Pan Stanislaw.

“Declare for the Swedes? Then I will declare to him! The Prussian boundary is not far, and I have some thousands of sabres within call! You will not deceive Zagloba! As true as you see me here, the commander of this noble army, I will visit him with fire and sword. We have not provisions; well, we shall find all we need in Prussian storehouses.”

“Mother of God!” cried Jendzian, in ecstasy. “Your great mightiness will conquer crowned heads!”

“I will write to him at once: ‘Worthy Pan Elector, there is enough of turning the cat away by the tail, enough of evasion and delay! Come out against the Swedes, or I will come on a visit to Prussia. It cannot be otherwise.’—Ink, pen, and paper!—Jendzian, will you go with the letter?”

“I will go!” answered the tenant of Vansosh, delighted with his new dignity.

But before pen, ink, and paper were brought to Zagloba, shouts were raised in front of the house, and throngs of soldiers darkened the windows. Some shouted “Vivat!” others cried, “Allah,” in Tartar. Zagloba and his comrades went out to see what was taking place.

It appeared that they were bringing those eight pounders which Zagloba had remembered, and the sight of which was now delighting the hearts of the soldiers.

Pan Stempalski, the manager of Bialystok, approached Zagloba, and said—

“Serene, great mighty Commander! From the time that he of immortal memory, the lord marshal of the Grand Principality of Lithuania, left by will his property at Bialystok to support the castle of Tykotsin, I, being manager of that property, have applied faithfully and honestly all its income to the benefit of that castle, as I can show to the whole Commonwealth by registers. So that working more than twenty years I have provided that castle with powder and guns and brass; holding it as a sacred duty that every copper should go to that object to which the serene great mighty marshal of the Grand Principality of Lithuania commanded that it should go. But when by the changing wheel of fate the castle of Tykotsin became the greatest support in this province of the enemies of the country, I asked God and my own conscience whether I ought to strengthen it more, or whether I was not bound to give into the hands of your great mightiness this wealth and these military supplies obtained from the income of the present year.”

“You should give them to me!” interrupted Zagloba, with importance.

“I ask but one thing—that your great mightiness be pleased, in presence of the whole army and in writing, to give me a receipt, that I applied nothing from that property to my own use, and that I delivered everything into the hands of the Commonwealth, worthily represented here by you, the great mighty commander.”

Zagloba motioned with his head as a sign of assent, and began at once to look over the register.

It appeared that besides the eight-pounders there were put away in the storehouses three hundred German muskets, very good ones; besides two hundred Moscow halberts, for infantry in the defence of walls and breastworks; and six thousand ducats in ready money.

“The money will be divided among the army,” said Zagloba; “and as to the muskets and halberts,”—here he looked around—“Pan Oskyerko, you will take them and form a body of infantry; there are a few foot-soldiers here from the Radzivill fugitives, and as many as are lacking may be taken from the millers.”

Then he turned to all present: "Gracious gentlemen, there is money, there are cannons, there will be infantry and provisions—these are my orders, to begin with."

"Vivat!" shouted the army.

"And now, gracious gentlemen, let all the young men go on a jump to the villages for spades, shovels, and pickaxes. We will make a fortified camp, a second Zbaraj! But whether a man belongs to cavalry or infantry, let none be ashamed of the shovel, and to work!"

Then the commander withdrew to his quarters, attended by the shouts of the army.

"As God is true, that man has a head on his shoulders," said Volodyovski to Pan Yan, "and things begin to go in better order."

"If only Radzivill does not come soon," put in Pan Stanislav, "for he is such a leader that there is not another like him in the Commonwealth. Our Pan Zagloba is good for provisioning the camp; but it is not for him to measure strength with such a warrior as Radzivill."

"That is true!" answered Pan Yan. "When it comes to action we will help him with counsel, for he does not understand war. Besides, his rule will come to an end the moment Sapyeha arrives."

"He can do much good before that time," said Volodyovski.

In truth, the army needed some leader, even Zagloba; for from the day of his election better order reigned in the camp. On the following day they began to make breastworks near the Byalystok ponds. Pan Oskyerko, who had served in foreign armies and understood fortification, directed the whole labor. In three days there had arisen a very strong entrenchment, really something like Zbaraj, for the sides and the rear of it were defended by swampy ponds. The sight of this work raised the hearts of the soldiers; the whole army felt that it had some ground under its feet. But courage was strengthened still more at sight of the supplies of food brought by strong parties. Every day they drove in oxen, sheep, pigs; every day came wagons bringing all kinds of grain and hay. Some things came from Lukovo, others from Vidzko. There came also, in continually greater numbers, nobles, small and great, for when the tidings went around that there was a government, an army, and a commander, there was more confidence among people. It was burdensome for the inhabitants to support a "whole division;" but to begin with, Zagloba did not inquire about that; in the second place, it was better to give half to the army and enjoy the rest in peace, than to be exposed every moment to losing all through the unruly bands, which had increased considerably and raged like Tartars, and which, at command of Zagloba, were pursued and destroyed.

"If the commander turns out to be such a leader as he is a manager," said the soldiers in camp, "the Commonwealth does not know yet how great a man it has."

Zagloba himself was thinking, with definite alarm, of the coming of Yanush Radzivill. He called to mind all the victories of Radzivill; then the form of the hetman took on monstrous shapes in the imagination of the new commander, and in his soul he said—

"Oh, who can oppose that dragon? I said that he would choke himself with me, but he will swallow me as a sheatfish a duck."

And he promised himself, under oath, not to give a general battle to Radzivill.

"There will be a siege," thought he, "and that always lasts long. Negotiations can be tried too, and by that time Sapyeha will come up."

In case he should not come up, Zagloba determined to listen to Pan Yan in everything, for he remembered how highly Prince Yeremi prized this officer and his military endowments.

“You, Pan Michael,” said Zagloba to Volodyovski, “are just created for attack, and you may be sent scouting, even with a large party, for you know how to manage, and fall on the enemy, like a wolf on sheep; but if you were commanded to be hetman of a whole army—I pass, I pass! You will not fill a vault with your mind, since you have no wit for sale; but Yan, he has the head of a commander, and if I were to die he is the only man who could fill my place.”

Meanwhile contradictory tidings came. First it was reported that Radzivill was marching through Electoral Prussia; second, that having defeated Hovanski’s troops, he had taken Grodno and was marching thence with great force; further, there were men who insisted that not Prince Yanush, but Sapyeha, with the aid of Prince Michael Radzivill, had defeated Hovanski. Scouting-parties brought no reliable news, saving this, that a body of Zolotarenko’s men, about two thousand in number, were at Volkovysk, and threatened the town. The neighborhood was in flames.

One day later fugitives began to come in who confirmed the news, reporting besides that the townspeople had sent envoys to Hovanski and Zolotarenko with a prayer to spare the place, to which they received answer from Hovanski that that band was a separate one, having nothing to do with his army. Zolotarenko advised the people to ransom themselves; but they, as poor men after the recent fire and a number of plunderings, had no ransom to give. They implored the commander in God’s name to hasten to their rescue, while they were conducting negotiations to ransom the town, for afterward there would not be time. Zagloba selected fifteen hundred good troops, among them the Lauda men, and calling Volodyovski, said—

“Now, Pan Michael, it is time to show what you can do. Go to Volkovysk and destroy those ruffians who are threatening an undefended town. Such an expedition is not a novelty for you; I think you will take it as a favor that I give such functions.” Here he turned to the other colonels: “I must remain in camp myself, for all the responsibility is on me, that is, first; and second, it does not beseem my office to go on an expedition against ruffians. But let Radzivill come, then in a great battle it will be shown who is superior—the hetman or the commander.”

Volodyovski set out with alacrity, for he was weary of camp life and yearned for battle. The squadrons selected marched out willingly and with singing; the commander appeared on the rampart on horseback, and blessed the departing, making over them the sign of the cross for the road. There were some who wondered that Zagloba sent off that party with such solemnity, but he remembered that Jolkyevski and other hetmans had the habit of making the sign of the cross over squadrons when going to battle; besides, he loved to do everything with ceremony, for that raised his dignity in the eyes of the soldiers.

Barely had the squadrons vanished in the haze of the distance, when he began to be alarmed about them.

“Yan!” said he, “another handful of men might be sent to Volodyovski.”

“Be at rest, father,” answered Pan Yan. “For Volodyovski to go on such an expedition is the same as to eat a plate of fried eggs. Dear God, he has done nothing else all his life!”

“That is true; but if an overwhelming force should attack him? *Nec Hercules contra plures* (Neither Hercules against [too] many).”

“What is the use in talking about such a soldier? He will test everything carefully before he strikes; and if the forces against him are too great, he will pluck off what he can and return, or will send for reinforcements. You may sleep quietly, father.”

“Ah, I also knew whom I was sending, but I tell you that Pan Michael must have given me some herb; I have such a weakness for him. I have never loved anyone so, except Podbipienta and you. It cannot be but that little fellow has given me something.”

Three days passed. Provisions were brought continually, volunteers also marched in, but of Pan Michael not a sound. Zagloba's fears increased, and in spite of Pan Yan's remonstrance that in no way could Volodyovski return yet from Volkovysk, Zagloba sent one hundred of Yakub Kmita's light horse for intelligence.

The scouts marched out, and two days more passed without news.

On the seventh day, during a gray misty nightfall, the camp-attendants sent for food to Bobrovniki returned in great haste, with the report that they had seen some army coming out of the forest beyond Bobrovniki.

“Pan Michael!” exclaimed Zagloba, joyfully.

But the men contradicted that. They had not gone to meet it for the special reason that they saw strange flags, not belonging to Volodyovski's troops. And besides, this force was greater. The attendants, being attendants, could not fix the number exactly; some said there were three thousand; others five thousand, or still more.

“I will take twenty horsemen and go to meet them,” said Captain Lipnitski.

He went.

An hour passed, and a second; at last it was stated that not a party was approaching, but a whole army.

It is unknown why, but on a sudden it was thundered through the camp—

“Radzivill is coming!”

This report, like an electric shock, moved and shook the whole camp; the soldiers rushed to the bulwarks. On some faces terror was evident; the men did not stand in proper order; Oskyerko's infantry only occupied the places indicated. Among the volunteers there was a panic at the first moment. From mouth to mouth flew various reports: “Radzivill has cut to pieces Volodyovski and the second party formed of Yakub Kmita's men,” repeated some. “Not a witness of the defeat has escaped!” said others. “And now Lipnitski has gone, as it were, under the earth.” “Where is the commander? Where is the commander?”

The colonels rushed to establish order; and since all in the camp, save a few volunteers, were old soldiers, they soon stood in order, waiting for what would appear.

When the cry came, “Radzivill is coming!” Zagloba was greatly confused; but in the first moment he would not believe it.

“What has happened to Volodyovski? Has he let himself be surrounded, so that not a man has come back with a warning? And the second party? And Pan Lipnitski? Impossible!” repeated Zagloba to himself, wiping his forehead, which was sweating profusely. “Has this dragon, this man-killer, this Lucifer, been able to come from Kyedani already? Is the last hour approaching?”

Meanwhile from every side voices more and more numerous cried, “Radzivill! Radzivill!”

Zagloba ceased to doubt. He sprang up and rushed to Pan Yan's quarters. “Oh, Yan, save! It is time now!”

“What has happened?” asked Pan Yan.



“Radzivill is coming! To your head I give everything, for Prince Yeremi said that you are a born leader. I will superintend myself, but do you give counsel and lead.”

“That cannot be Radzivill!” said Pan Yan. “From what direction are the troops marching?”

“From Volkovysk. It is said that they have taken Volodyovski and the second party which I sent not long ago.”

“Volodyovski let himself be taken! Oh, father, you do not know him. He is coming back himself—no one else!”

“But it is said that there is an enormous army!”

“Praise be to God! it is clear then that Sapyeha is coming.”

“For God’s sake! what do you tell me? Why then was it said that Lipnitski went against them?”

“That is just the proof that it is not Radzivill who is coming. Lipnitski discovered who it was, joined, and all are coming together. Let us go out, let us go out!”

“I said that the first moment!” cried Zagloba. “All were frightened, but I thought, ‘That cannot be!’ I saw the position at once. Come! hurry, Yan, hurry! Those men out there are confused. Aha!”

Zagloba and Pan Yan hastened to the ramparts, occupied already by the troops, and began to pass along. Zagloba’s face was radiant; he stopped every little while, and cried so that all heard him—

“Gracious gentlemen, we have guests! I have no reason to lose heart! If that is Radzivill, I’ll show him the road back to Kyedani!”

“We’ll show him!” cried the army.

“Kindle fires on the ramparts! We will not hide ourselves; let them see us, we are ready! Kindle fires!”

Straightway they brought wood, and a quarter of an hour later the whole camp was flaming, till the heavens grew red as if from daybreak. The soldiers, turning away from the light, looked into the darkness in the direction of Bobrovniki. Some of them cried that they heard a clatter and the stamp of horses.

Just then in the darkness musket-shots were heard from afar. Zagloba pulled Pan Yan by the skirts.

“They are beginning to fire!” said he, disquieted.

“Salutes!” answered Pan Yan.

After the shots shouts of joy were heard. There was no reason for further doubt; a moment later a number of riders rushed in on foaming horses, crying—

“Pan Sapyeha! the *voevoda* of Vityebsk!”

Barely had the soldiers heard this, when they rushed forth from the walls, like an overflowed river, and ran forward, roaring so that anyone hearing their voices from afar might think them cries from a town in which victors were putting all to the sword.

Zagloba, wearing all the insignia of his office, with a baton in his hand and a heron’s feather in his cap, rode out under his horsetail standard, at the head of the colonels, to the front of the fortifications.

After a while the *voevoda* of Vityebsk at the head of his officers, and with Volodyovski at his side, rode into the lighted circle. He was a man already in respectable years, of medium weight, with a face not beautiful, but wise and kindly. His mustaches, cut evenly over his upper lip, were iron-gray, as was also a small beard, which made him resemble a foreigner, though he dressed in Polish fashion. Though famous for many military exploits he looked more like a civilian than a soldier; those who knew him more intimately said that in the countenance of the *voevoda* Minerva was greater than Mars. But, besides Minerva and Mars, there was in that face a gem rarer in those times; that is honesty, which flowing forth from his soul was reflected in his eyes as the light of the sun is in water. At the first glance people recognized that he was a just and honorable man.

“We waited as for a father!” cried the soldiers.

“And so our leader has come!” repeated others, with emotion.

“Vivat, vivat!”

Pan Zagloba, at the head of his colonels, hurried toward Sapyeha, who reined in his horse and began to bow with his lynx-skin cap.

“Serene great mighty *voevoda*!” began Zagloba, “though I possessed the eloquence of the ancient Romans, nay, of Cicero himself, or, going to remoter times, of that famous Athenian, Demosthenes, I should not be able to express the delight which has seized our hearts at sight of the worthy person of the serene great mighty lord. The whole Commonwealth is rejoicing in our hearts, greeting the wisest senator and the best son, with a delight all the greater because unexpected. Behold, we were drawn out here on these bulwarks under arms, not ready for greeting, but for battle—not to hear shouts of delight, but the thunder of cannon—not to shed tears, but our blood! When however hundred-tongued Fame bore around the news that the defender of the fatherland was coming, not the heretic—the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, not the grand hetman of Lithuania—Sapyeha, not Radzivill—”

But Pan Sapyeha was in an evident hurry to enter; for he waved his hand quickly, with a kindly though lordly inattention, and said—

“Radzivill also is coming. In two days he will be here!”

Zagloba was confused; first, because the thread of his speech was broken, and second, because the news of Radzivill made a great impression on him. He stood therefore a moment before Sapyeha, not knowing what further to say; but he came quickly to his mind, and drawing hurriedly the baton from his belt, said with solemnity, calling to mind what had taken place at Zbaraj—

“The army has chosen me for its leader, but I yield this into worthier hands, so as to give an example to the younger how we must resign the highest honors for the public good.”

The soldiers began to shout; but Pan Sapyeha only smiled and said—

“Lord brother, I would gladly receive it, but Radzivill might think that you gave it through fear of him.”

“Oh, he knows me already,” answered Zagloba, “and will not ascribe fear to me. I was the first to stagger him in Kyedani; and I drew others after me by my example.”

“If that is the case, then lead on to the camp,” said Sapyeha. “Volodyovski told me on the road that you are an excellent manager and have something on which to subsist; and we are wearied and hungry.”

So saying, he spurred on his horse, and after him moved the others; and all entered the camp amid measureless rejoicing. Zagloba, remembering what was said of Sapyeha—that he liked feasts and the goblet—determined to give fitting honor to the day of his coming; hence he appeared with a feast of such splendor as had not been yet in the camp. All ate and drank. At the cups Volodyovski told what had happened at Volkovysk—how forces, considerably greater than his own, had been sent out by Zolotarenko, how the traitor had surrounded him, how straitened he was when the sudden arrival of Sapyeha turned a desperate defence into a brilliant victory.

“We gave them something to think of,” said he, “so that they will not stick an ear out of their camp.”

Then the conversation turned to Radzivill. The *voevoda* of Vityebsk had very recent tidings, and knew through reliable people of everything that took place in Kyedani. He said therefore that the hetman had sent a certain Kmita with a letter to the King of Sweden, and with a request to strike Podlyasye from two sides at once.

“This is a wonder of wonders to me!” exclaimed Zagloba; “for had it not been for that Kmita, we should not have concentrated our forces to this moment, and if Radzivill had come he might have eaten us up, one after the other, like puddings of Syedlets.”

“Volodyovski told me all that,” said Sapyeha, “from which I infer that Kmita has a personal affection for you. It is too bad that he hasn’t it for the country. But people who see nothing above themselves, serve no cause well and are ready to betray anyone, as in this case Kmita Radzivill.”

“But among us there are no traitors, and we are ready to stand up with the serene great mighty *voevoda* to the death!” said Jyromski.

“I believe that here are most honorable soldiers,” answered Sapyeha, “and I had no expectation of finding such order and abundance, for which I must give thanks to his grace Pan Zagloba.”

Zagloba blushed with pleasure, for somehow it had seemed to him hitherto that though the *voevoda* of Vityebsk had treated him graciously, still he had not given him the recognition and respect which he, the ex-commander, desired. He began therefore to relate how he had made regulations, what he had done, what supplies he had collected, how he had brought cannon, and formed infantry, finally what an extensive correspondence he had carried on; and not without boasting did he make mention of the letters sent to the banished king, to Hovanski, and to the elector.

“After my letter, his grace the elector must declare for us openly or against us,” said he, with pride.

The *voevoda* of Vityebsk was a humorous man, and perhaps also he was a little joyous from drink; therefore he smoothed his mustache, laughed maliciously, and said—

“Lord brother, but have you not written to the Emperor of Germany?”

“No!” answered Zagloba, astonished.

“That is a pity,” said the *voevoda*; “for there an equal would have talked with an equal.”

The colonels burst into a thundering laugh; but Zagloba showed at once that if the *voevoda* wished to be a scythe, he had struck a stone.

“Serene great mighty lord,” said he, “I can write to the elector, for as a noble I am an elector myself, and I exercised my rights not so long ago when I gave my voice for Yan Kazimir.”

“You have brought that out well,” answered Sapyeha.

“But with such a potentate as the Emperor I do not correspond,” continued Zagloba, “lest he might apply to me a certain proverb which I heard in Lithuania.”

“What was the proverb?”

“Such a fool’s head as that must have come out of Vityebsk!” answered Zagloba, without confusion.

Hearing this, the colonels were frightened; but the *voevoda* leaned back and held his sides from laughter.

“Ah, but you have settled me this time! Let me embrace you! Whenever I want to shave my beard I’ll borrow your tongue!”

The feast continued till late in the night; it was broken up by the arrival of nobles from Tykotsin, who brought news that Radzivill’s scouts had already reached that place.

## Chapter XXXIV

Radzivill would have fallen on Podlyasye long before, had not various reasons held him back in Kyedani. First, he was waiting for the Swedish reinforcements, which Pontus de la Gardie delayed by design. Although bonds of relationship connected the Swedish general with the king himself, he could not compare in greatness of family, in importance, in extensive connections by blood, with that Lithuanian magnate; and as to fortune, though at that time there was no ready money in Radzivill's treasury, all the Swedish generals might have been portioned with one half of the prince's estates and consider themselves wealthy. Now, when by the turn of fortune Radzivill was dependent on Pontus, the general could not deny himself the pleasure of making that lord feel his dependence and the superiority of De la Gardie.

Radzivill did not need reinforcements to defeat the confederates, since for that he had forces enough of his own; but the Swedes were necessary to him for the reasons mentioned by Kmita in his letter to Volodyovski. He was shut off from Podlyasye by the legions of Hovanski, who might block the road to him; but if Radzivill marched together with Swedish troops, and under the ægis of the King of Sweden, every hostile step on the part of Hovanski would be considered a challenge to Karl Gustav. Radzivill wished this in his soul, and therefore he waited impatiently for the arrival of even one Swedish squadron, and while urging Pontus he said more than once to his attendants—

“A couple of years ago he would have thought it a favor to receive a letter from me, and would have left the letter by will to his descendants; but today he takes on the airs of a superior.”

To which a certain noble, loud-mouthed and truth-telling, known in the whole neighborhood, allowed himself to answer at once—

“According to the proverb, mighty prince, ‘As a man makes his bed, so must he sleep on it.’”

Radzivill burst out in anger, and gave orders to cast the noble into the tower; but on the following day he let him out and presented him with a gold button; for of this noble it was said that he had ready money, and the prince wanted to borrow money of him on his note. The noble accepted the button, but gave not the money.

Swedish reinforcements came at last, to the number of eight hundred horse, of the heavy cavalry. Pontus sent directly to the castle of Tykotsin three hundred infantry and one hundred light cavalry, wishing to have his own garrison there in every event.

Hovanski's troops withdrew before them, making no opposition; they arrived therefore safely at Tykotsin, for this took place when the confederate squadrons were still scattered over all Podlyasye, and were occupied only in plundering the estates of Radzivill.

It was hoped that the prince, after he had received the desired reinforcements, would take the field at once; but he loitered yet. The cause of this was news from Podlyasye of disagreement in that province; of lack of union among the confederates, and misunderstandings between Kotovski, Lipnitski, and Yakub Kmita.

“It is necessary to give them time,” said the prince, “to seize one another by the heads. They will gnaw one another to pieces; their power will disappear without war; and then we will strike on Hovanski.”

But on a sudden contradictory news began to come; the colonels not only did not fight with one another, but had assembled in one body at Byalystok. The prince searched his brain for

the cause of this change. At last the name of Zagloba, as commander, came to his ears. He was informed also of the making of a fortified camp, the provisioning of the army, and the cannon dug out at Bialystok by Zagloba, of the increase of confederate strength, of volunteers coming from the interior. Prince Yanush fell into such wrath that Ganhoff, a fearless soldier, dared not approach him for some time.

At last the command was issued to the squadrons to prepare for the road. In one day a whole division was ready—one regiment of German infantry, two of Scottish, one of Lithuanian. Pan Korf led the artillery; Ganhoff took command of the cavalry. Besides, Kharlamp's dragoons, the Swedish cavalry, and the light regiment of Nyevyarovski, there was the princess own heavy squadron, in which Slizyen was lieutenant. It was a considerable force, and composed of veterans. With a force no greater the prince, during the first wars with Hmelnitski, had won those victories which had adorned his name with immortal glory; with a power no greater he had beaten Nebaba at Loyovo, crushed a number of tens of thousands led by the famous Krechovski, destroyed Mozyr and Turoff, had taken Kiev by storm, and so pushed Hmelnitski in the steppes that he was forced to seek safety in negotiations.

But the star of that powerful warrior was evidently setting, and he had no good forebodings himself. He cast his eyes into the future, and saw nothing clearly. He would go to Podlyasye, tear apart with horses the insurgents, give orders to pull out of his skin the hated Zagloba—and what would come of that? What further? What change of fate would come? Would he then strike Hovanski, would he avenge the defeat at Tsibyhova, and adorn his own head with new laurels? The prince said that he would, but he doubted, for just then reports began to circulate widely that the Northerners, fearing the growth of Swedish power, would cease to wage war, and might even form an alliance with Yan Kazimir. Sapyeha continued to pluck them still, and defeated them where he could; but at the same time he negotiated with them. Pan Gosyevski had the same plans.

Then in case of Hovanski's retreat that field of action would be closed, and the last chance of showing his power would vanish from Radzivill; or if Yan Kazimir could make a treaty with those who till then had been his enemies, and urge them against the Swedes, fortune might incline to his side against Sweden, and thereby against Radzivill.

From Poland there came, it is true, the most favorable news. The success of the Swedes surpassed all expectation. Provinces yielded one after another; in Great Poland Swedes ruled as in Sweden; in Warsaw, Radzeyovski governed; Little Poland offered no resistance; Krakow might fall at any moment; the king, deserted by the army and the nobles, with confidence in his people broken to the core, went to Silesia; and Karl Gustav himself was astonished at the ease with which he had crushed that power, always victorious hitherto in war with the Swedes.

But just in that ease had Radzivill a foreboding of danger to himself; for the Swedes, blinded by triumph, would not count with him, would not consider him, especially because he had not shown himself so powerful and so commanding as all, not excepting himself, had thought him.

Will the Swedish King give him then Lithuania, or even White Russia? Will he not prefer to pacify an eternally hungry neighbor with some eastern slice of the Commonwealth, so as to have his own hands free in the remnants of Poland?

These were the questions which tormented continually the soul of Prince Yanush. Days and nights did he pass in disquiet. He conceived that Pontus de la Gardie would not have dared to treat him so haughtily, almost insultingly, had he not thought that the king would confirm such a manner of action, or what is worse, had not his instructions been previously prepared.

“As long as I am at the head of some thousands of men,” thought Radzivil, “they will consider me; but when money fails, when my hired regiments scatter, what then?”

And the revenues from his enormous estates did not come in. An immense part of them, scattered throughout Lithuania and far away to Polesie or Kiev, lay in ruins; those in Podlyasie the confederates had plundered completely. At times it seemed to the prince that he would topple over the precipice; that from all his labor and plotting only the name traitor would remain to him—nothing more.

Another phantom terrified him—the phantom of death, which appeared almost every night before the curtain of his bed, and beckoned with its hand, as if wishing to say to him, “Come into darkness, cross the unknown river.”

Had he been able to stand on the summit of glory, had he been able to place on his head, even for one day, for one hour, that crown desired with such passion, he might meet that awful and silent phantom with unterrified eye. But to die and leave behind evil fame and the scorn of men, seemed to that lord, who was as proud as Satan himself, a hell during life.

More than once then, when he was alone or with his astrologer, in whom he placed the greatest trust, did he seize his temples and repeat with stifled voice—

“I am burning, burning, burning!”

Under these conditions he was preparing for the campaign against Podlyasie, when the day before the march it was announced that Prince Boguslav had left Taurogi.

At the mere news of this, Prince Yanush, even before he saw his cousin, revived as it were; for that Boguslav brought with him his youth and a blind faith in the future. In him the line of Birji was to be renewed, for him alone was Prince Yanush toiling.

When he heard that Boguslav was coming, the hetman wished to go out to meet him, but etiquette did not permit him to go forth to meet a younger cousin; he sent therefore a gilded carriage, and a whole squadron as escort, and from the breastworks raised by Kmita and from the castle itself mortars were fired at his command, just as at the coming of a king.

When the cousins, after a ceremonial greeting, were left alone at last, Yanush seized Boguslav in his embrace and began to repeat, with a voice of emotion—

“My youth has returned! My health has returned in a moment!”

But Boguslav looked at him carefully and asked—

“What troubles your highness?”

“Let us not give ourselves titles if no one obeys us. What troubles me? Sickness irritates me so that I am falling like a rotten tree. But a truce to this! How is my wife and Maryska?”

“They have gone from Taurogi to Tyłtsa. They are both well, and Marie is like a rosebud; that will be a wonderful rose when it blooms. *Ma foi!* more beautiful feet there are not in the world, and her tresses flow to the very ground.”

“Did she seem so beautiful to you? That is well. God inspired you to come; I feel better in spirit when I see you. But what do you bring touching public affairs? What is the elector doing?”

“You know that he has made a league with the Prussian towns?”

“I know.”

“But they do not trust him greatly. Dantzig will not receive his garrisons. The Germans have a good sniff.”

“I know that too. But have you not written to him? What are his plans touching us?”

“Touching us?” repeated Boguslav, inattentively.

He cast his eyes around the room, then rose. Prince Yanush thought that he was looking for something; but he hurried to a mirror in the corner, and withdrawing a proper distance, rubbed his whole face with a finger of his right hand; at last he said—

“My skin is chapped a little from the journey, but before morning it will be healed. What are the elector’s plans touching us? Nothing; he wrote to me that he will not forget us.”

“What does that mean?”

“I have the letter with me; I will show it to you. He writes that whatever may happen he will not forget us; and I believe him, for his interests enjoin that. The elector cares as much for the Commonwealth as I do for an old wig, and would be glad to give it to Sweden if he could seize Prussia; but the power of Sweden begins to alarm him, therefore he would be glad to have an ally ready for the future; and he will have one if you mount the throne of Lithuania.”

“Would that had happened! Not for myself do I wish that throne!”

“All Lithuania cannot be had, perhaps, at first, but even if we get a good piece with White Russia and Jmud—”

“But what of the Swedes?”

“The Swedes will be glad also to use us as a guard against the East.”

“You pour balsam on me.”

“Balsam! Aha! A certain necromancer in Taurogi wanted to sell me balsam, saying that whoever would anoint himself with it would be safe from spears, swords, and sabres. I ordered a soldier to rub him with it at once and thrust a spear into him. Can you imagine, the spear went right through his body.”

Here Prince Boguslav laughed, showing teeth as white as ivory. But this conversation was not to the taste of Yanush; he began again therefore on public affairs.

“I sent letters to the King of Sweden, and to many others of our dignitaries. You must have received a letter through Kmita.”

“But wait! I was coming to that matter. What is your idea of Kmita?”

“He is hotheaded, wild, dangerous, and cannot endure restraint; but he is one of those rare men who serve us in good faith.”

“Surely,” answered Boguslav; “and he came near earning the kingdom of heaven for me.”

“How is that?” asked Yanush, with alarm.

“They say, lord brother, that if your bile is stirred suffocation results. Promise me to listen with patience and quietly, and I will tell something of your Kmita, from which you will know him better than you have up to this moment.”

“Well, I will be patient, only begin.”

“A miracle of God saved me from the hands of that incarnate devil,” said Boguslav; and he began to relate all that had happened in Pilvishki.



It was no smaller miracle that Prince Yanush did not have an attack of asthma, but it might be thought that apoplexy would strike him. He trembled all over, he gnashed his teeth, he covered his eyes with his hand; at last he cried with a hoarse voice—

“Is that true? Very well! He has forgotten that his little wench is in my hands—”

“Restrain yourself, for God’s sake! Hear on. I acquitted myself with him as beseems a cavalier, and if I have not noted this adventure in my diary, and do not boast of it, I refrain because ’tis a shame that I let myself be tricked by that clown, as if I were a child—I, of whom Mazarin said that in intrigue and adroitness there was not my equal in the whole court of France. But no more of this! I thought at first that I had killed your Kmita; now I have proof in my hands that he has slipped away.”

“That is nothing! We will find him! We will dig him out! We will get him, even from under the earth! Meanwhile I will give him a sorer blow than if I were to flay him alive.”

“You will give him no blow, but only injure your own health. Listen! in coming hither I noticed some low fellow on a pied horse, who held himself at no great distance from my carriage. I noticed him specially because his horse was pied, and I gave the order at last to summon him. ‘Where art thou going?’ ‘To Kyedani.’ ‘What art thou taking?’ ‘A letter to the prince *voevoda*.’ I ordered him to give the letter, and as there are no secrets between us I read it. Here it is!”

Then he gave Prince Yanush Kmita’s letter, written from the forest at the time when he was setting out with the Kyemliches.

The prince glanced over the letter, and crushing it with rage, cried—

“True! in God’s name, true! He has my letters, and in them are things which may make the King of Sweden himself suspicious, nay more, give him mortal offence.”

Here choking seized him, and the expected attack came on. His mouth opened widely, and he gasped quickly after air; his hands tore the clothing near his throat. Prince Boguslav, seeing this, clapped his hands, and when the servants ran in, he said—

“Save the prince your lord, and when he recovers breath beg him to come to my chamber; meanwhile I will rest a little.” And he went out.

Two hours later, Yanush, with bloodshot eyes, hanging lids, and a blue face, knocked at Prince Boguslav’s chamber. Boguslav received him lying in bed, his face rubbed with milk of almonds, which was to enhance the softness and freshness of his skin. Without a wig on his head, without the colors on his face, and with unblackened brows, he seemed much older than in full dress; but Prince Yanush paid no heed to that.

“I have come to the conclusion,” said he, “that Kmita will not publish those letters, for if he should he would by that act write the sentence of death for the maiden. He understands well that only by keeping them does he hold me; but I cannot pour out my vengeance, and that gnaws me, as if I were carrying about a mad dog in my breast.”

“Still, it will be necessary to get those letters,” said Boguslav.

“But *quo modo* (in what way)?”

“Some adroit man must be sent after him, to enter into friendship and at a given opportunity seize the letters and punch Kmita with a knife. It is necessary to offer a great reward.”

“Who here would undertake that deed?”

“If it were only in Paris, or even in Germany, I could find a hundred volunteers in one day, but in this country such wares are not found.”

“And one of our own people is needed, for he would be on his guard against a stranger.”

“It seems to me that I can find someone in Prussia.”

“Oh, if he could be taken alive and brought to my hands, I would pay him once for all. I say that the insolence of that man passes every measure. I sent him away because he enraged me, for he would spring at my throat for any reason, just like a cat; he hurled at me his own wishes in everything. A hundred times lacking little had I the order just—just in my mouth to shoot him; but I could not, I could not.”

“Tell me, is he really a relative of ours?”

“He is a relative of the Kishkis, and through the Kishkis of us.”

“In his fashion he is a devil, and an opponent dangerous in the highest degree.”

“He? You might command him to go to Tsargrad<sup>27</sup> and pull the Sultan from his throne, or tear out the beard of the King of Sweden and bring it to Kyedani. But what did he not do here in time of war?”

“He has that look, but he has promised us vengeance to the last breath. Luckily he has a lesson from me that ’tis not easy to encounter us. Acknowledge that I treated him in Radzivill fashion; if a French cavalier had done a deed like mine, he would boast of it whole days, excepting the hours of sleeping, eating, and kissing; for they, when they meet, emulate one another in lying, so that the sun is ashamed to shine.”

“It is true that you squeezed him, but I would that it had not happened.”

“And I would that you had chosen better confidants, with more respect for the Radzivill bones.”

“Those letters! those letters!”

The cousins were silent for a while. Boguslav spoke first.

“But what sort of a maiden is she?”

“Panna Billevich?”

“Billevich or Myeleshko, one is the equal of the other. I do not ask for her name, but if she is beautiful.”

“I do not look on those things; but this is certain—the Queen of Poland need not be ashamed of such beauty.”

“The Queen of Poland? Marya Ludvika? In the time of Cinq-Mars maybe the Queen of Poland was beautiful, but now the dogs howl when they see her. If your Panna Billevich is such as she, then I’ll hide myself; but if she is really a wonder, let me take her to Tanrogi, and there she and I will think out a vengeance for Kmita.”

Yanush meditated a moment.

“I will not give her to you,” said he at last, “for you will constrain her with violence, and then Kmita will publish the letters.”

“I use force against one of your tufted larks! Without boasting I may say that I have had affairs with not such as she, and I have constrained no one. Once only, but that was in

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<sup>27</sup> *Tsargrad* = Tsar’s city, Constantinople.

Flanders—she was a fool—the daughter of a jeweller. After me came the infantry of Spain, and the affair was accounted to them.”

“You do not know this girl; she is from an honorable house, walking virtue, you would say a nun.”

“Oh, we know the nuns too!”

“And besides she hates us, for she is a patriot. She has tried to influence Kmita. There are not many such among our women. Her mind is purely that of a man; and she is the most ardent adherent of Yan Kazimir.”

“Then we will increase his adherents.”

“Impossible, for Kmita will publish the letters. I must guard her like the eyes in my head—for a time. Afterward I will give her to you or to your dragoons, all one to me!”

“I give my word of a cavalier that I will not constrain her; and a word given in private I always keep. In politics it is another thing. It would be a shame for me indeed if I could gain nothing by her.”

“You will not.”

“In the worst case I’ll get a slap in the face, and from a woman that is no shame. You are going to Podlyasye, what will you do with her? You will not take her with you, you cannot leave her here; for the Swedes will come to this place, and the girl should remain always in our hands as a hostage. Is it not better that I take her to Tanrogi and send Kmita, not an assassin, but a messenger with a letter in which I shall write, ‘Give the letters and I’ll give you the maiden.’”

“True,” answered Prince Yanush; “that’s a good method.”

“But if,” continued Boguslav, “not altogether as I took her, that will be the first step in vengeance.”

“But you have given your word not to use violence.”

“I have, and I say again that it would be a shame for me—”

“Then you must take also her uncle, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, who is staying here with her.”

“I do not wish to take him. The noble in the fashion of this region wears, of course, straw in his boots, and I cannot bear that.”

“She will not go alone.”

“That’s to be seen. Ask them to supper this evening, so that I may see and know whether she is worth putting between the teeth, and immediately I’ll think out methods against her. Only, for God’s sake, mention not Kmita’s act, for that would confirm her in devotion to him. But during supper, no matter what I say, contradict not. You will see my methods, and they will remind you of your own years of youth.”

Prince Yanush waved his hands and went out; and Boguslav put his hands under his head, and began to meditate over means.

## Chapter XXXV

To the supper, besides the sword-bearer of Rossyeni and Olenka, were invited the most distinguished officers of Kyedani and some attendants of Prince Boguslav. He came himself in such array and so lordly that he attracted all eyes. His wig was dressed in beautiful waving curls; his face in delicacy of color called to mind milk and roses; his small mustache seemed to be of silken hair, and his eyes stars. He was dressed in black, in a kaftan made of stripes of silk and velvet, the sleeves of which were slashed and fastened together the length of the arm. Around his neck he had a broad collar, of the most marvellous Brabant lace, of inestimable value, and at the wrists ruffles of the same material. A gold chain fell on his breast, and over the right shoulder along the whole kaftan went to his left hip a sword-strap of Dutch leather, so set with diamonds that it looked like a strip of changing light. The hilt of his sword glittered in like manner, and in his shoe-buckles gleamed the two largest diamonds, as large as hazelnuts. The whole figure seemed imposing, and as noble as it was beautiful.

In one hand he held a lace handkerchief; in the other he carried, according to the fashion of the time, on his sword-hilt, a hat adorned with curling black ostrich feathers of uncommon length.

All, not excepting Prince Yanush, looked at him with wonder and admiration. His youthful years came to the memory of the prince *voevoda*, when he in the same way surpassed all at the French court with his beauty and his wealth. Those years were now far away, but it seemed at that moment to the hetman that he was living again in that brilliant cavalier who bore the same name.

Prince Yanush grew vivacious, and in passing he touched with his index finger the breast of his cousin.

“Light strikes from you as from the moon,” said he. “Is it not for Panna Billevich that you are so arrayed?”

“The moon enters easily everywhere,” answered Boguslav, boastingly.

And then he began to talk with Ganhoff, near whom he halted, perhaps of purpose to exhibit himself the better, for Ganhoff was a man marvellously ugly; he had a face dark and pitted with smallpox, a nose like the beak of a hawk, and mustaches curled upward. He looked like the spirit of darkness, but Boguslav near him like the spirit of light.

The ladies entered—Pani Korf and Olenka. Boguslav cast a swift glance at Olenka, and bowed promptly to Pani Korf; he was just putting his fingers to his mouth, to send in cavalier fashion a kiss to Panna Billevich, when he saw her exquisite beauty, both proud and dignified. He changed his tactics in an instant, caught his hat in his right hand, and advancing toward the lady bowed so low that he almost bent in two; the curls of his wig fell on both sides of his shoulders, his sword took a position parallel with the floor, and he remained thus, moving purposely his cap and sweeping the floor in front of Olenka with the ostrich feather, in sign of respect. A more courtly homage he could not have given to the Queen of France. Panna Billevich, who had learned of his coming, divined at once who stood before her; therefore seizing her robe with the tips of her fingers, she gave him in return a courtesy equally profound.

All wondered at the beauty and grace of manners of the two, which was evident from the greeting itself—grace not over usual in Kyedani, for, as a Wallachian, Yanush’s princess was

more in love with eastern splendor than with courtliness, and Yanush's daughter was still a little girl.

Boguslav now raised his head, shook the curls of his wig over his shoulders, and striking his heels together with force, moved quickly toward Olenka; at the same time he threw his hat to a page and gave her his hand.

"I do not believe my eyes, and see as it were in a dream what I see," said he, conducting her to the table; "but tell me, beautiful goddess, by what miracle you have descended from Olympus to Kyedani?"

"Though simply a noble woman, not a goddess," answered Olenka, "I am not so simple-minded as to take the words of your highness as anything beyond courtesy."

"Though I tried to be politest of all, your glass would tell more than I."

"It would not tell more, but more truly," answered Olenka, pursing her mouth according to the fashion of the time.

"Were there a mirror in the room, I would conduct you to it straightway; meanwhile look into my eyes, and you will see if their admiration is not sincere."

Here Boguslav bent his head before Olenka; his eyes gleamed large, black as velvet, sweet, piercing, and at the same time burning. Under the influence of their fire the maiden's face was covered with a purple blush. She dropped her glance and pushed away somewhat, for she felt that with his arm Boguslav pressed lightly her arm to his side.

So he came to the table. He sat near her, and it was evident that in truth her beauty had made an uncommon impression on him. He expected to find a woman of the nobles, shapely as a deer, laughing and playful as a nutcracker, ruddy as a poppy-flower; but he found a proud lady, in whose black brows unbending will was revealed, in whose eyes were reason and dignity, in whose whole face was the transparent repose of a child; and at the same time she was so noble in bearing, so charming and wonderful, that at any king's castle she might be the object of homage and courtship from the first cavaliers of the realm.

Her beauty aroused admiration and desire; but at the same time there was in it a majesty which curbed these, so that despite himself Boguslav thought, "I pressed her arm too early; with such a one subtlety is needed, not haste!"

Nevertheless he determined to possess her heart, and he felt a wild delight at the thought that the moment would come when the majesty of the maiden and that purest beauty would yield to his love or his hatred. The threatening face of Kmita stood athwart these imaginings; but to that insolent man this was but an incentive the more. Under the influence of these feelings he grew radiant; blood began to play in him, as in an Oriental steed; all his faculties flashed up uncommonly, and light gleamed from his whole form as from his diamonds.

Conversation at the table became general, or rather it was turned into a universal chorus of praise and flattery of Boguslav, which the brilliant cavalier heard with a smile, but without overweening delight, since it was common and of daily occurrence. They spoke first of his military deeds and duels. The names of the conquered princes, margraves, barons, streamed as if out of a sleeve. He threw in carelessly from time to time one more. The listeners were astonished; Prince Yanush stroked his long mustaches with delight, and at last Ganhoff said—

"Even if fortune and birth did not stand in my way, I should not like to stand in the way of your highness, and the only wonder to me is that men of such daring have been found."

“What is to be done, Ganhoff? There are men of iron visage and wildcat glance, whose appearance alone causes terror; but God has denied me that power—even a young lady would not be frightened at my face.”

“Just as darkness is not afraid of a torch,” said Pani Korf, simpering and posing, “until the torch burns in it.”

Boguslav laughed, and Pani Korf talked on without ceasing to pose—

“Duels concern soldiers more, but we ladies would be glad to hear of your love affairs, tidings of which have come to us.”

“Untrue ones, my lady benefactress, untrue—they have all merely grown on the road. Proposals were made for me, of course. Her Grace, the Queen of France was so kind—”

“With the Princess de Rohan,” added Yanush.

“With another too—De la Forse,” added Boguslav; “but even a king cannot command his own heart to love, and we do not need, praise be to God, to seek wealth in France, hence there could be no bread out of that flour. Graceful ladies they were, ’tis true, and beautiful beyond imagination; but we have still more beautiful, and I need not go out of this hall to find such.”

Here he looked long at Olenka, who, feigning not to hear, began to say something to the sword-bearer; and Pani Korf raised her voice again—

“There is no lack here of beauties; still there are none who in fortune and birth could be the equal of your highness.”

“Permit me, my benefactress, to differ,” responded Boguslav, with animation; “for first I do not think that a Polish noble lady is inferior in any way to a Rohan or De la Forse; second, it is not a novelty for the Radzivills to marry a noble woman, since history gives many examples of that. I assure you, my benefactress, that that noble lady who should become Radzivill would have the step and precedence of princesses in France.”

“An affable lord!” whispered the sword-bearer to Olenka.

“That is how I have always understood,” continued Boguslav, “though more than once have I been ashamed of Polish nobles, when I compare them with those abroad; for never would that have happened there which has happened in this Commonwealth—that all should desert their king, nay, even men are ready to lay in wait for his life. A French noble may permit the worst action, but he will not betray his king—”

Those present began to look at one another and at the prince with astonishment. Prince Yanush frowned and grew stern; but Olenka fixed her blue eyes on Boguslav’s face with an expression of admiration and thankfulness.

“Pardon, your highness,” said Boguslav, turning to Yanush, who was not able yet to recover himself, “I know that you could not act otherwise, for all Lithuania would have perished if you had followed my advice; but respecting you as older, and loving you as a brother, I shall not cease to dispute with you touching Yan Kazimir. We are among ourselves, I speak therefore what I think. Our insufficiently lamented king, good, kind, pious, and doubly dear to me—I was the first of Poles to attend him when he was freed from durance in France. I was almost a child at the time, but all the more I shall never forget him; and gladly would I give my blood to protect him, at least from those who plot against his sacred person.”

Though Yanush understood Boguslav’s game now, still it seemed to him too bold and too hazardous for such a trifling object; therefore without hiding his displeasure he said—

“In God’s name, of what designs against the safety of our ex-king are you speaking? Who cherishes them, where could such a monster be found among the Polish people? True as life, such a thing has not happened in the Commonwealth since the beginning of the world.”

Boguslav hung his head.

“Not longer than a month ago,” said he, with sadness in his voice, “on the road between Podlyasye and Electoral Prussia, when I was going to Tanrogi, there came to me a noble of respectable family. That noble, not being aware of my real love for our gracious king, and thinking that I, like others, was an enemy of his, promised for a considerable reward to go to Silesia, carry off Yan Kazimir and deliver him to the Swedes, either living or dead.”

All were dumb with amazement.

“And when with anger and disgust I rejected such an offer,” said Boguslav, in conclusion, “that man with brazen forehead said, ‘I will go to Radzeyovski; he will buy and pay me gold by the pound.’”

“I am not a friend of the ex-king,” said Yanush; “but if the noble had made me a proposal like that, I should have placed him by a wall, and in front of him six musketeers.”

“At the first moment I wanted to do so, but did not,” answered Boguslav, “as the conversation was with four eyes, and people might cry out against the violence and tyranny of the Radzivills. I frightened him, however, by saying that Radzeyovski and the King of Sweden, even Hmelnitski, would put him to death for such a proposal; in one word, I brought that criminal so far that he abandoned his plan.”

“That was not right; it was not proper to let him go living, he deserved at least the impaling-stake,” cried Korf.

Boguslav turned suddenly to Yanush.

“I cherish also the hope that punishment will not miss him, and first I propose that he perish not by an ordinary death; but your highness alone is able to punish him, for he is your attendant and your colonel.”

“In God’s name! my colonel? Who is he—who? Speak!”

“His name is Kmita,” said Boguslav.

“Kmita!” repeated all, with astonishment.

“That is not true!” cried Panna Billevich at once, rising from her chair, with flashing eyes and heaving breast.

Deep silence followed. Some had not recovered yet from the fearful news given by Boguslav; others were astonished at the boldness of that lady who had dared to throw a lie in the eyes of Prince Boguslav; the sword-bearer began to stutter, “Olenka! Olenka!” But Boguslav veiled his face in sorrow, and said without anger—

“If he is your relative or betrothed, I am grieved that I mentioned this fact; but cast him out of your heart, for he is not worthy of you, O lady.”

She remained yet a moment in pain, flushed, and astonished; but by degrees her face became cool, until it was cold and pale. She sank down in the chair, and said—

“Forgive me, your highness, I made an unseemly contradiction. All is possible for that man.”

“May God punish me if I feel aught save pity!” answered Boguslav, mildly.

“He was the betrothed of this lady,” said Prince Yanush, “and I myself made the match. He was a young man, hotheaded; he caused a world of turmoil. I saved him from justice, for he was a good soldier. I saw that he was lawless, and would be; but that he, a noble, could think of such infamy, I did not expect.”

“He is an evil man; that I knew long since,” said Ganhoff.

“And why did you not forewarn me?” inquired Yanush, in a tone of reproach.

“I was afraid that your highness might suspect me of envy, for he had everywhere the first step before me.”

“*Horribile dictu et auditu* (horrible in the speaking and the hearing),” said Korf.

“Gracious gentlemen,” exclaimed Boguslav, “let us give peace to him. If it is grievous for you to hear of this, what must it be for Panna Billevich?”

“Your highness, be pleased not to consider me,” said Olenka; “I can listen to everything now.”

The evening was drawing toward its close. Water was given for the washing of fingers; then Prince Yanush rose first and gave his arm to Pani Korf, and Prince Boguslav to Olenka.

“God has punished the traitor already,” said he to her; “for whoso has lost you has lost heaven. It is less than two hours since I first saw you, charming lady, and I should be glad to see you forever, not in pain and in tears, but in joy and in happiness.”

“I thank your highness,” answered Olenka.

After the departure of the ladies the men returned to the table to seek consolation in cups, which went around frequently. Prince Boguslav drank deeply, for he was satisfied with himself. Prince Yanush conversed with the sword-bearer of Rossyeni.

“I march tomorrow with the army for Podlyasye,” said he. “A Swedish garrison will come to Kyedani. God knows when I shall return. You cannot stay here with the maiden; it would not be a fit place for her among soldiers. You will both go with Prince Boguslav to Taurogi, where she may stay with my wife among her ladies in waiting.”

“Your highness,” answered the sword-bearer, “God has given us a corner of our own; why should we go to strange places? It is a great kindness of your highness to think of us: but not wishing to abuse favor, we prefer to return to our own roof.”

The prince was unable to explain to the sword-bearer all the reasons for which he would not let Olenka out of his hands at any price; but some of them he told with all the rough outspokenness of a magnate.

“If you wish to accept it as a favor, all the better, but I will tell you that it is precaution as well. You will be a hostage there; you will be responsible to me for all the Billeviches, who I know well do not rank themselves among my friends, and are ready to raise Jmud in rebellion when I am gone. Advise them to sit in peace, and do nothing against the Swedes, for your head and that of your niece will answer for their acts.”

At this juncture patience was evidently lacking to the sword-bearer, for he answered quickly—

“It would be idle for me to appeal to my rights as a noble. Power is on the side of your highness, and it is all one to me where I must sit in prison; I prefer even that place to this.”

“Enough!” said the prince, threateningly.



“What is enough, is enough!” answered the sword-bearer. “God grant to this violence an end, and to justice new power. Speaking briefly, do not threaten, your highness, for I fear not.”

Evidently Boguslav saw lightnings of anger gleaming on the face of Yanush, for he approached quickly.

“What is the question?” asked he, standing between them.

“I was telling the hetman,” said the sword-bearer, with irritation, “that I choose imprisonment in Taurogi rather than in Kyedani.”

“In Taurogi there is for you not a prison, but my house, in which you will be as if at home. I know that the hetman chooses to see in you a hostage; I see only a dear guest.”

“I thank your highness,” answered the sword-bearer.

“And I thank you. Let us strike glasses and drink together, for they say that a libation must be made to friendship, or it will wither at its birth.”

So saying, Boguslav conducted the sword-bearer to the table, and they fell to touching glasses and drinking to each other often and frequently. An hour later the sword-bearer turned with somewhat uncertain step toward his room, repeating in an undertone—

“An amiable lord! A worthy lord! A more honest one could not be found with a lantern—gold, pure gold! I would gladly shed my blood for him!”

Meanwhile the cousins found themselves alone. They had something yet to talk over, and besides, certain letters came; a page was sent to bring these from Ganhoff.

“Evidently,” said Yanush, “there is not a word of truth in what you reported of Kmita?”

“Evidently. You know best yourself. But, well? Acknowledge, was not Mazarin right? With one move to take terrible vengeance on an enemy, and to make a breach in that beautiful fortress—well, who could do that? This is called intrigue worthy of the first court in the world! But that Panna Billevich is a pearl, and charming too, lordly and distinguished as if of princely blood. I thought I should spring from my skin.”

“Remember that you have given your word—remember that he will ruin us if he publishes those letters.”

“What brows! What a queenly look, so that respect seizes one! Whence is there such a girl, such well-nigh royal majesty? I saw once in Antwerp, splendidly embroidered on Gobelin tapestry Diana hunting the curious Actæon with dogs. She was like this one as cup is like cup.”

“Look out that Kmita does not publish the letters, for then the dogs would gnaw us to death.”

“Not true! I will turn Kmita into an Actæon, and hunt him to death. I have struck him down on two fields, and it will come to battle between us yet.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a page with a letter. The *voevoda* of Vilna took the letter in his hand and made the sign of the cross. He did that always to guard against evil tidings; then, instead of opening, he began to examine it carefully. All at once his countenance changed.

“Sapyeha’s arms are on the seal!” exclaimed he; “it is from the *voevoda* of Vityebsk.”

“Open quickly!” said Boguslav.

The hetman opened and began to read, interrupting himself from time to time with exclamations.

“He is marching on Podlyasye! He asks if I have no messages for Tykotsin! An insult to me! Still worse; for listen to what he writes further—

*“Do you wish civil war, your highness? do you wish to sink one more sword in the bosom of the mother? If you do, come to Podlyasye. I am waiting for you, and I trust that God will punish your pride with my hands. But if you have pity on the country, if conscience stirs within you, if you value your deeds of past times and you wish to make reparation, the field is open before you. Instead of beginning a civil war, summon the general militia, raise the peasants, and strike the Swedes while Pontus, feeling secure, suspects nothing and is exercising no vigilance. From Hovanski you will have no hindrance, for reports come to me from Moscow that they are thinking there of an expedition against Livonia, though they keep that a secret. Besides, if Hovanski wished to undertake anything I hold him in check, and if I could have sincere trust I would certainly help you with all my forces to save the country. All depends on you, for there is time yet to turn from the road and efface your faults. Then it will appear clearly that you did not accept Swedish protection for personal purposes, but to avert final defeat from Lithuania. May God thus inspire you; for this I implore him daily, though your highness is pleased to accuse me of envy.*

*“P.S. I have heard that the siege of Nyesvyej is raised, and that Prince Michael will join us as soon as he repairs his losses. See, your highness, how nobly your family act, and consider their example; in every case remember that you have now a boat and a carriage.”<sup>28</sup>*

“Have you heard?” asked Prince Yanush, when he had finished reading.

“I have heard—and what?” answered Boguslav, looking quickly at his cousin.

“It would be necessary to abjure all, leave all, tear down our work with our own hands.”

“Break with the powerful Karl Gustav, and seize the exiled Yan Kazimir by the feet, that he might deign to forgive and receive us back to his service, and also implore Sapyeha’s intercession.”

Yanush’s face was filled with blood.

“Have you considered how he writes to me: ‘Correct yourself, and I will forgive you,’ as a lord to an underling.”

“He would write differently if six thousand sabres were hanging over his neck.”

“Still—” Here Prince Yanush fell to thinking gloomily.

“Still, what?”

“Perhaps for the country it would be salvation to do as Sapyeha advises.”

“But for you—for me, for the Radzivills?”

Yanush made no answer; he dropped his head on his fists and thought.

“Let it be so!” said he, at last; “let it be accomplished!”

“What have you decided?”

“Tomorrow I march on Podlyasye, and in a week I shall strike on Sapyeha.”

“You are a Radzivill!” cried Boguslav. And they grasped each other’s hands.

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<sup>28</sup> “A boat and a carriage” means you can go by either—that is, by land or water: you have your choice.

After a while Boguslav went to rest. Yanush remained alone. Once, and a second time he passed through the room with heavy steps. At last he clapped his hands. A page entered the room.

“Let the astrologer come in an hour to me with a ready figure,” said he.

The page went out, and the prince began again to walk and repeat his Calvinistic prayers. After that he sang a psalm in an undertone, stopping frequently, for his breath failed him, and looking from time to time through the window at the stars twinkling in the sky.

By degrees the lights were quenched in the castle; but besides the astrologer and the prince one other person was watching in a room, and that was Olenka Billevich.

Kneeling before her bed, she clasped both hands over her head, and whispered with closed eyes—

“Have mercy on us! Have mercy on us!”

The first time since Kmita’s departure she would not, she could not pray for him.

## Chapter XXXVI

Kmita had, it is true, Radzivill's passes to all the Swedish captains, commandants, and governors, to give him a free road everywhere, and make no opposition, but he did not dare to use those passes; for he expected that Prince Boguslav, immediately after Pilvishki, had hurried off messengers in every direction with information to the Swedes of what had happened, and with an order to seize him. For this reason Pan Andrei had assumed a strange name, and also changed his rank. Avoiding therefore Lomja and Ostrolenko, to which the first warning might have come, he directed his horses and his company to Pjasnysh, whence he wished to go through Pultusk to Warsaw.

But before he reached Pjasnysh he made a bend on the Prussian boundary through Vansosh, Kolno, and Myshynyets, because the Kyemliches, knowing those wildernesses well, were acquainted with the forest trails, and besides had their "cronies" among the Bark-shoes,<sup>29</sup> from whom they might expect aid in case of emergency.

The country at the boundary was occupied for the most part by the Swedes, who limited themselves, however, to occupying the most considerable towns, going not too boldly into the slumbering and fathomless forests inhabited by armed men—hunters who never left the wilderness, and were still so wild that just a year before, the Queen, Marya Ludvika, had given a command to build a chapel in Myshynyets and settle there Jesuits, who were to teach religion and soften the manners of those men of the wilderness.

"The longer we do not meet the Swedes," said old Kyemlich, "the better for us."

"We must meet them at last," answered Pan Andrei.

"If a man meets them in a large town they are often afraid to do him injustice; for in a town there is always some government and some higher commandant to whom it is possible to make complaint. I have always asked people about this, and I know that there are commands from the King of Sweden forbidding violence and extortion. But the smaller parties sent far away from the eyes of commandants have no regard for orders, and plunder peaceful people."

They passed on then through the forests, meeting Swedes nowhere, spending the nights with pitch-makers in forest settlements. The greatest variety of tales concerning the invasion were current among the Bark-shoes, though almost none of them had known the Swedes hitherto. It was said that a people had come from over the sea who did not understand human speech, who did not believe in Christ the Lord, the Most Holy Lady, or the Saints, and that they were wonderfully greedy. Some told of the uncommon desire of those enemies for cattle, skins, nuts, mead, and dried mushrooms, which if refused, they burned the woods straightway. Others insisted that, on the contrary, they were a people of werewolves, living on human flesh, and feeding specially on the flesh of young girls.

Under the influence of those terrible tidings, which flew into the remotest depths of the wilderness, the Bark-shoes began to watch and to search through the forests. Those who were making potash and pitch; those who worked at gathering hops; woodcutters and fishermen, who had their wicker nets fixed in the reedy banks, of the Rosoga; trappers and snarers, beekeepers and beaver-hunters, assembled at the most considerable settlements, listening to tales, communicating news, and counselling how to drive out the enemy in case they appeared in the wilderness.

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<sup>29</sup> So called because they wore shoes made from the inner bark of basswood or linden trees.

Kmita, going with his party, met more than once greater or smaller bands of these men, dressed in hemp shirts, and skins of wolves, foxes, or bears. More than once he was stopped at narrow places, and by inquiries—

“Who art thou? A Swede?”

“No!” answered Pan Andrei.

“God guard thee!”

Kmita looked with curiosity at those men who lived always in the gloom of forests, and whose faces the open sun had never burned; he wondered at their stature, their boldness of look, the sincerity of their speech, and their daring, not at all peasant-like.

The Kyemliches, who knew them, assured Pan Andrei that there were no better shots than these men in the whole Commonwealth. When he discovered that they all had good German muskets bought in Prussia for skins, he asked them to show their skill in shooting, was astonished at sight of it, and thought, “Should I need to collect a party, I will come here.”

At Myshynyets itself he found a great assembly. More than a hundred marksmen held constant watch at the mission, for it was feared that the Swedes would show themselves there first, especially because the starosta of Ostrolenko had commanded them to cut out a road in the forest so that the priests settled at the mission might have “access to the world.”

The hop-raisers, who took their produce to Pjasnysh to the celebrated breweries there, and hence passed for men of experience, related that Lomja, Ostrolenko, and Pjasnysh were swarming with Swedes, who were managing and collecting taxes there as if at home.

Kmita tried to persuade the Bark-shoes not to wait for the Swedes in the wilderness, but to strike on them at Ostrolenko, and begin war; he offered to command them himself. He found a great willingness among them; but two priests led them away from this mad enterprise, telling them to wait till the whole country moved, and not draw on themselves the terrible vengeance of the enemy by premature attack.

Pan Andrei departed, but regretted his lost opportunity. The only consolation remaining was this—he had convinced himself that if powder were to explode anywhere, neither the Commonwealth nor the king would lack defenders in those parts.

“This being the case,” thought he, “it is possible to begin in another place.”

His fiery nature was restive for quick action, but judgment said: “The Bark-shoes alone cannot conquer the Swedes. You will go through a part of the country; you will look around, examine, and then obey the king’s order.”

He travelled on therefore. He went out of the deep wilderness to the forest borders, to a neighborhood more thickly settled; he saw an uncommon movement in all the villages. The roads were crowded with nobles going in wagons, carriages, and carts, of various kinds, or on horseback. All were hastening to the nearest towns and villages to give Swedish commanders an oath of loyalty to the new king. In return they received certificates which were to preserve their persons and property. In the capitals of provinces and districts “capitulations” were published securing freedom of confession and privileges pertaining to the order of nobles.

The nobles went with the requisite oath, not only willingly, but in haste; for various punishments threatened the stubborn, and especially confiscation and robbery. It was said that here and there the Swedes had already begun, as in Great Poland, to thumbscrew suspected men. It was repeated also, with alarm, that they were casting suspicion on the wealthiest on purpose to rob them.

In view of all this, it was unsafe to remain in the country; the wealthier therefore hurried to the towns to live under the immediate eye of Swedish commandants, so as to avoid suspicion of intrigue against the King of Sweden.

Pan Andrei bent his ear carefully to what nobles were saying, and though they did not wish greatly to speak with him, since he was a poor fellow, he discovered this much, that near neighbors, acquaintances, even friends, did not speak among themselves with sincerity touching the Swedes or the new government. It is true they complained loudly of the "requisitions;" and in fact there was reason, for to each village, each hamlet, came letters from commandants with orders to furnish great quantities of grain, bread, salt, cattle, money; and frequently these orders exceeded the possible, especially because when supplies of one kind were exhausted, others were demanded; whoso did not pay, to him was sent an execution in thrice the amount.

But the old days had gone! Each man extricated himself as best he was able, took out of his own mouth, gave, paid; complaining, groaning, and thinking in his soul that long ago it was different. But they comforted themselves for the time, saying that when the war was over the requisitions would cease. The Swedes promised the same, saying, "Only let the king gain the whole country, he will begin to govern at once like a father."

For the nobles who had given up their own king and country; who before, and not long before, had called the kindly Yan Kazimir a tyrant, suspecting him of striving for absolute power; who opposed him in everything, protesting in provincial and national diets, and in their hunger for novelty and change went so far that they recognized, almost without opposition, an invader as lord, so as to have some change—it would be a shame then even to complain. Karl Gustav had freed them from the tyrant, they had abandoned of their own will their lawful king; but they had the change so greatly desired.

Therefore the most intimate did not speak sincerely among themselves touching what they thought of that change, inclining their ears willingly to those who asserted that the attacks, requisitions, robberies, and confiscations were, of course burdens, but only temporary ones, which would cease as soon as Karl Gustav was firm on the throne.

"This is grievous, brother, grievous," said one noble to another at times, "but still we must be thankful for the new ruler. He is a great potentate and warrior; he will conquer the Tartars, restrain the Turks, drive the Northerners away from the boundaries; and we together with Sweden will flourish."

"Even if we were not glad," answered another, "what is to be done against such power? We cannot fly to the sun on a spade."

At times, too, they referred to the fresh oath. Kmita was enraged listening to such talks and discussions; and once when a certain noble said in his presence in an inn that a man must be faithful to him to whom he had taken oath. Pan Andrei shouted out to him—

"You must have two mouths—one for true and the other for false oaths, for you have sworn to Yan Kazimir!"

There were many other nobles present, for this happened not far from Pjasnysh. Hearing these words, all started. On some faces wonder was visible at the boldness of Kmita; others flushed. At last the most important man said—

"No one here has broken his oath to the former king. He broke it himself; for he left the country, not watching over its defence."

“Would you were killed!” cried Kmita. “But King Lokyetek—how many times was he forced to leave the country, and still he returned, for the fear of God was yet in men’s hearts. It was not Yan Kazimir who deserted, but those who sold him and who now calumniate him, so as to palliate their own sins before God and the world!”

“You speak too boldly, young man! Whence come you who wish to teach us people of this place the fear of God? See to it that the Swedes do not overhear you.”

“If you are curious, I will tell you whence I am. I am from Electoral Prussia, and belong to the elector. But being of Sarmatian blood, I feel a good will toward the country, and am ashamed of the indifference of this people.”

Here the nobles, forgetting their anger, surrounded him and began to inquire hurriedly and with curiosity—

“You are from Electoral Prussia? But tell what you know! What is the elector doing there? Does he think of rescuing us from oppression?”

“From what oppression? You are glad of the new ruler, so do not talk of oppression. As you have made your bed, so you must sleep on it.”

“We are glad, for we cannot help it. They stand with swords over our necks. But speak out, as if we were not glad.”

“Give him something to drink, let his tongue be loosened! Speak boldly, there are no traitors here among us.”

“You are all traitors!” roared Pan Andrei, “and I don’t wish to drink with you; you are servants of the Swedes.”

Then he went out of the room, slamming the door, and they remained in shame and amazement; no man seized his sabre, no man moved after Kmita to avenge the insult.

But he went directly to Pryasnysh. A few furlongs before the place Swedish patrols took him and led him before the commandant. There were only six men in the patrol, and an under-officer was the seventh; therefore Soroka and the two Kyemliches began to look at them hungrily, like wolves at sheep, and asked Kmita with their eyes, if he would not give order to surround them.

Pan Andrei also felt no small temptation, especially since the Vengyerka flowed near, between banks overgrown with reeds; but he restrained himself, and let the party be taken quietly to the commandant.

There he told the commandant who he was—that he had come from the elector’s country, and that he went every year with horses to Sobota. The Kyemliches too had certificates with which they provided themselves in Leng, for the place was well known to them; therefore the commandant, who was himself a Prussian German, made no difficulty, only inquired carefully what kind of horses they were driving and wished to see them.

When Kmita’s attendants drove the beasts up, in accordance with the commandant’s wish, he looked at them carefully and said—

“I will buy these. From another I would have taken them without pay; but since you are from Prussia, I will not harm you.”

Kmita seemed somewhat confused when it came to selling, for by this the reason for going farther was lost, and he would have to go back to Prussia. He asked therefore a price so high that it was almost twice the real value of the horses. Beyond expectation the officer was neither angry, nor did he haggle about the price.

“Agreed!” said he. “Drive the horses into the shed, and I will bring you the pay at once.”

The Kyemliches were glad in their hearts, but Pan Andrei fell into anger and began to curse. Still there was no way but to drive in the horses. If they refused, they would be suspected at once of trading only in appearance.

Meanwhile the officer came back, and gave Kmita a piece of paper with writing.

“What is this?” asked Pan Andrei.

“Money or the same as money—an order.”

“And where will they pay me?”

“At headquarters!”

“Where are headquarters?”

“In Warsaw,” said the officer, laughing maliciously.

“We sell only for ready money.”

“How’s that, what’s that, oh, gates of heaven?” began old Kyemlich, groaning.

Kmita turned, and looking at him threateningly, said—

“For me the word of the commandant is the same as ready money. I will go willingly to Warsaw, for there I can buy honest goods from the Armenians, for which I shall be well paid in Prussia.”

Then, when the officer walked away, Pan Andrei said, to comfort Kyemlich—

“Quiet, you rogue! These orders are the best passes; we can go to Krakow with our complaints, for they will not pay us. It is easier to press cheese out of a stone than money out of the Swedes. But this is just playing into my hand. This breeches fellow thinks that he has tricked me, but he knows not what service he has rendered. I’ll pay you out of my own pocket for the horses; you will be at no loss.”

The old man recovered himself, and it was only from habit that he did not cease yet for a while to complain—

“They have plundered us, brought us to poverty!”

But Pan Andrei was glad to find the road open before him, for he foresaw that the Swedes would not pay for the horses in Warsaw, and in all likelihood they would pay nowhere—hence he would be able to go on continually as it were seeking for justice, even to the Swedish king, who was at Krakow occupied with the siege of the ancient capital.

Meanwhile Kmita resolved to pass the night in Pjasnysh to give his horses rest, and without changing his assumed name to throw aside his exterior of a poor noble. He saw that all despised a poor horse-dealer, that anyone might attack him more readily and have less fear to answer for injustice to an insignificant man. It was more difficult in that dress to have approach to important nobles, and therefore more difficult to discover what each one was thinking.

He procured therefore clothing answering to his station and his birth, and went to an inn so as to talk with his brother nobles. But he was not rejoiced at what he heard. In the taverns and public houses the nobles drank to the health of the King of Sweden, and to the success of the protector, struck glasses with the Swedish officers, laughed at the jokes which these officers permitted themselves to make at the expense of Yan Kazimir and Charnyetski.



Fear for their own lives and property had debased people to such a degree that they were affable to the invaders, and hurried to keep up their good humor. Still even that debasement had its limits. The nobles allowed themselves, their king, the hetmans, and Pan Charnyetski to be ridiculed, but not their religion; and when a certain Swedish captain declared that the Lutheran faith was as good as the Catholic, Pan Grabkovski, sitting near him, not being able to endure that blasphemy, struck him on the temple with a hatchet, and taking advantage of the uproar, slipped out of the public house and vanished in the crowd.

They fell to pursuing him, but news came which turned attention in another direction. Couriers arrived with news that Krakow had surrendered, that Pan Charnyetski was in captivity, and that the last barrier to Swedish dominion was swept away.

The nobles were dumb at the first moment, but the Swedes began to rejoice and cry “Vivat.” In the church of the Holy Ghost, in the church of the Bernardines, and in the cloister of Bernardine nuns, recently erected by Pani Muskovski, it was ordered to ring the bells. The infantry and cavalry came out on the square, from the breweries and cloth-shearing mills, in battle-array, and began to fire from cannons and muskets. Then they rolled out barrels of *gorailka*, mead, and beer for the army and the citizens; they burned pitch-barrels and feasted till late at night. The Swedes dragged out the inhabitants from the houses to dance with them, to rejoice and frolic; and together with throngs of soldiers straggled along nobles who drank with the cavalry, and were forced to feign joy at the fall of Krakow and the defeat of Charnyetski.

Disgust carried away Kmita, and he took refuge early in his quarters outside the town, but he could not sleep. A fever tormented him, and doubts besieged his soul. Had he not turned from the road too late, when the whole country was in the hands of the Swedes? It came into his head that all was lost now, and the Commonwealth would never rise from its fall.

“This is not a mere unlucky war,” thought he, “which may end with the loss of some province; this is accomplished ruin! This means that the whole Commonwealth becomes a Swedish province. We have caused this ourselves, and I more than others.”

This thought burned him, and conscience gnawed. Sleep fled from him. He knew not what to do—to travel farther, remain in the place, or return. Even if he collected a party and harried the Swedes, they would hunt him as a bandit, and not treat him as a soldier. Besides, he is in a strange region, where no one knows who he is. Who will join him? Fearless men rallied to him in Lithuania, where he, the most famous, called them together; but here, even if some had heard of Kmita, they held him a traitor and a friend of the Swedes, but surely no one had ever heard of Babinich.

All is useless! It is useless to go to the king, for it is too late; it is useless to go to Podlyasie, for the Confederates think him a traitor; it is useless to go to Lithuania, for there the Radzivils own all; it is useless to stay where he is, for there he has nothing to do. The best would be to drive out the soul, and not look on this world, but flee from remorse.

But will it be better in that world for those who having sinned their fill in this life, have not effaced their sins in any way, and will stand before judgment beneath the whole weight of these sins? Kmita struggled in his bed, as if lying on a bed of torture. Such unendurable torments he had not passed through, even in the forest cabin of the Kyemliches.

He felt strong, healthy, enterprising—the soul in him was rushing out to begin something, to do something—and here every road was blocked; even knock the head against a wall—there is no issue, no salvation, no hope.

After he had tossed during the night on his bed, he sprang up before daybreak, roused his men, and rode on. They went toward Warsaw, but he knew not himself wherefore or why. He would have escaped to the Saitch in despair, if times had not changed, and if Hmelnitski, together with Buturlin, had not just overborne the grand hetman of the kingdom, at Grodek, carrying at the same time fire and sword through the southwestern regions of the Commonwealth, and sending predatory bands as far as Lublin.

Along the roads to Pultusk, Pan Andrei met at all points Swedish parties, escorting wagons with provisions, grain, bread, beer, and herds of every kind of cattle. With the herds and wagons went crowds of peasants, small nobles, weeping and groaning, for they were dragged away numbers of miles with the wagons. Happy the man who was allowed to return home with his wagon; and this did not happen in every case, for after they had brought the supplies peasants and petty nobles were forced to labor at repairing castles, building sheds and magazines.

Kmita saw also that in the neighborhood of Pultusk the Swedes acted more harshly with the people than in Pjasnysh; and not being able to understand the cause, he inquired about it of the nobles whom he met on the road.

“The nearer you go to Warsaw,” answered one of the travellers, “the harsher you will find the oppressors. Where they have just come and are not secure, they are more kindly, publish the commands of the king against oppression, and promulgate the capitulations; but where they feel safe, and have occupied castles in the neighborhood, they break all promises, have no consideration, commit injustice, plunder, rob, raise their hands against churches, the clergy, and sacred nuns. It is nothing here yet, but to describe what is going on in Great Poland words fail in the mouths of men.”

Here the noble began to describe what was taking place in Great Poland—what extortions, violence, and murders the savage enemy committed; how men were thumbscrewed and tortured to discover money; how the Provincial, Father Branetski, was killed in Poznan itself; and peasants were tortured so fearfully that the hair stood on one’s head at the mere thought of it.

“It will come to this everywhere,” said the noble; “it is the punishment of God. The last judgment is near. Worse and worse every day—and salvation from no point.”

“It is a marvel to me,” said Kmita, “for I am not of these parts and know not how people feel here, that you, gracious gentlemen, being nobles and knightly persons, endure these oppressions in patience.”

“With what can we rise up?” answered the noble. “In their hands are the castles, fortresses, cannon, powder, muskets; they have taken from us even fowling-pieces. There was still some hope in Charnyetski; but since he is in prison, and the king in Silesia, who will think of resistance? There are hands, but nothing in them, and there is no head.”

“And there is no hope,” added Kmita, in a hollow voice.

Here they dropped the conversation, for a Swedish division came up convoying wagons, small nobles, and a “requisition.” It was a wonderful spectacle. Sitting on horses as fat as bullocks, mustached and bearded troopers rode on in a cloud of dust, with their right hands on their hips, with their hats on the sides of their heads, with tens of geese and hens hanging at their saddles. Looking at their warlike and insolent faces, it was easy to see that they felt like lords, gladsome and safe. But the brotherhood of petty nobles walked at the side of the wagons, not only barefooted, but with heads drooping on their bosoms, abused, troubled, frequently urged forward with whips.

On seeing this, Kmita's lips quivered as in a fever, and he fell to repeating to the noble near whom he was riding—

“Oh, my hands are itching, my hands are itching, my hands are itching!”

“Quiet, in the name of the Merciful God! you will ruin yourself, me, and my little children.”

More than once, however, Pan Andrei had before him sights still more marvellous. Behold at times, among parties of horsemen, he saw marching groups, larger or smaller, of Polish nobles, with armed attendants; these nobles were joyous, singing songs, drunk, and with Swedes and Germans on the footing of “lord brother.”

“How is this?” asked Kmita. “They are persecuting some nobles and crushing them, while with others they enter into friendship. It must be that those citizens whom I see among the soldiers are fanatical traitors?”

“Not merely fanatical traitors, but worse, for they are heretics,” answered the noble. “They are more grievous to us Catholics than the Swedes; they are the men who plunder most, burn houses, carry off maidens, commit private offences. The whole country is in alarm from them, for everything drops from these men altogether without punishment, and it is easier to get justice from Swedish commanders against a Swede, than against one of our own heretics. Every commandant, if you utter a word, will answer at once, ‘I have no right to touch him, for he is not my man; go to your own tribunals.’ And what tribunals are there here now, and what execution of law when everything is in Swedish hands? Where the Swede cannot go the heretics will take him, and they are the men chiefly who incite the Swedes against churches and clergy. This is the way in which they punish the country, our mother, for having given them refuge here and freedom for their blasphemous faith when they were persecuted in other Christian lands justly, for their intrigues and abominations.”

The noble stopped and looked with alarm at Kmita—

“But you say that you are from Electoral Prussia, so you may be a Lutheran?”

“God save me from that,” answered Pan Andrei. “I am from Prussia, but of a family Catholic for ages, for we went from Lithuania to Prussia.”

“Then praise to the Most High, for I was frightened. My dear sir, as to Lithuania there is no lack of dissidents there; and they have a powerful chief in Radzivill, who has turned out so great a traitor that he can come into comparison with Radzeyovski alone.”

“May God grant the devils to pull the soul out through his throat before the New Year!” exclaimed Kmita, with venom.

“Amen!” answered the noble, “and also the souls of his servants, his assistants, his executioners, of whom tidings have come even to us, and without whom he would not have dared to bring destruction on this country.”

Kmita grew pale and said not a word. He did not ask even—he did not dare to ask—of what assistants, servants, and executioners that noble was speaking.

Travelling slowly, they came to Pultusk late in the evening; there they called Kmita to the bishop's palace or castle to give answer to the commandant.

“I am furnishing horses to the army of his Swedish Grace,” said Pan Andrei, “and I have orders with which I am going to Warsaw for money.”

Colonel Israel (such was the name of the commandant) smiled under his mustaches and said—

“Oh, make haste, make haste, and take a wagon for the return, so as to have something to carry that money in!”

“I thank you for the counsel,” answered Pan Andrei. “I understand that you are jeering at me; but I will go for my own, even if I have to go to his grace the king!”

“Go! don’t give away your own; a very nice sum belongs to you.”

“The hour will come when you’ll pay me,” retorted Kmita, going out.

In the town itself he came on celebrations again, for rejoicing over the capture of Krakow was to last three days. He learned, however, that in Pjasnysh the Swedish triumph was exaggerated, perhaps by design. Charnyetski, the castellan of Kiev, had not fallen into captivity, but had obtained the right of marching from the city with his troops, with arms and lighted matches at the cannon. It was said that he was to retire to Silesia. This was not a great consolation, but still a consolation.

In Pultusk there were considerable forces which were to go thence to the Prussian boundary, under command of Colonel Israel, to alarm the elector; therefore neither the town nor the castle, though very spacious, could furnish lodging for the soldiers. Here too, for the first time, Kmita saw soldiers encamped in a church—in a splendid Gothic structure, founded almost two hundred years before by Bishop Gijytski, were quartered hireling German infantry. Inside the sanctuary it was flaming with light as on Easter, for on the stone floor were burning fires kindled in various places. Kettles were steaming over the fires. Around kegs of beer were groups of common soldiers—hardened robbers, who had plundered all Catholic Germany, and of a certainty were not spending their first night in a church. In the church were heard talking and shouting. Hoarse voices were singing camp songs; there sounded also the outcry and merriment of women, who in those days straggled usually in the wake of an army.

Kmita stood in the open door; through the smoke in the midst of ruddy flames he saw the red, mustached faces of soldiers who, inflamed with drink, were sitting on kegs and quaffing beer; some throwing dice or playing cards, some selling church vestments, others embracing low women dressed in bright garments. Uproar, laughter, the clatter of tankards, the sound of muskets, the echoes thundering in the vaults deafened him. His head whirled; he could not believe what his eyes saw; the breath died in his breast; hell would not have more greatly amazed him. At last he clutched his hair and ran out repeating as if in bewilderment—

“O God, aid us! O God, correct us! O God, deliver us!”

## Chapter XXXVII

In Warsaw the Swedes had been managing for a long time. Wittemberg, the real governor of the city and the commander of the garrison, was at that moment in Krakow; Radzeyovski carried on the government in his place. Not less than two thousand soldiers were in the city proper surrounded by walls, and in the jurisdictions beyond the walls built up with splendid edifices belonging to the church and the world. The castle and the city were not destroyed; for Pan Vessel, starosta of Makovo, had yielded them up without battle, and he with the garrison disappeared hurriedly, fearing the personal vengeance of Radzeyovski, his enemy.

But when Pan Kmita examined more closely and carefully, he saw on many houses the traces of plundering hands. These were the houses of those citizens who had fled from the city, not wishing to endure foreign rule, or who had offered resistance when the Swedes were breaking over the walls.

Of the lordly structures in the jurisdictions those only retained their former splendor the owners of which stood soul and body with the Swedes. Therefore the Kazanovski Palace remained in all its magnificence, for Radzeyovski had saved that, his own, and the palace of Konyetspolski, the standard-bearer, as well as the edifice reared by Vladislav IV, and which was afterward known as the Kazimirovski Palace. But edifices of the clergy were injured considerably; the Denhof Palace was half wrecked; the chancellor's or the so-called Ossolinski Palace, on Reformatski Street, was plundered to its foundations. German hirelings looked out through its windows; and that costly furniture which the late chancellor had brought from Italy at such outlay—those Florentine leathers, Dutch tapestry, beautiful cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, pictures, bronze and marble statues, clocks from Venice and Dantzic, and magnificent glasses were either lying in disordered heaps in the yard, or, already packed, were waiting to be taken, when the time came, by the Vistula to Sweden. Guards watched over these precious things, but meanwhile they were being ruined under the wind and rain.

In other cities the same thing might be seen; and though the capital had yielded without battle, still thirty gigantic flatboats were ready on the Vistula to bear away the plunder.

The city looked like a foreign place. On the streets foreign languages were heard more than Polish; everywhere were met Swedish soldiers, German, French, English, and Scottish mercenaries, in the greatest variety of uniforms—in hats, in lofty helmets, in kaftans, in breastplates, half breastplates, in stockings, or Swedish boots, with legs as wide as water-buckets. Everywhere a foreign medley, foreign garments, foreign faces, foreign songs. Even the horses had forms different from those to which the eye was accustomed. There had also rushed in a multitude of Armenians with dark faces, and black hair covered with bright skullcaps; they had come to buy plundered articles.

But most astonishing of all was the incalculable number of gypsies, who, it is unknown for what purpose, had gathered after the Swedes from all parts of the country. Their tents stood at the side of the Uyazdovski Palace, and along the monastery jurisdiction, forming as it were a special town of linen houses within a town of walled structures.

In the midst of these various-tongued throngs the inhabitants of the city almost vanished; for their own safety they sat gladly enclosed in their houses, showing themselves rarely, and then passing swiftly along the streets. Only occasionally the carriage of some magnate, hurrying

from the Krakow suburbs to the castle, and surrounded by haiduks, Turkish grooms, or troops in Polish dress, gave reminder that the city was Polish.

Only on Sundays and holidays, when the bells announced services, did crowds come forth from the houses, and the capital put on its former appearance—though even then lines of foreign soldiers stood hedgelike in front of the churches, to look at the women or pull at their dresses when, with downcast eyes, they walked past them. These soldiers laughed, and sometimes sang vile songs just when the priests were singing Mass in the churches.

All this flashed past the astonished eyes of Pan Kmita like jugglery; but he did not warm his place long in Warsaw, for not knowing any man he had no one before whom to open his soul. Even with those Polish nobles who were stopping in the city and living in public houses built during the reign of King Sigismund III on Długa Street, Pan Andrei did not associate closely. He conversed, it is true, with this one and that, to learn the news; but all were fanatical adherents of the Swedes, and waiting for the return of Karl Gustav, clung to Radzeyovski and the Swedish officers with the hope of receiving starostaships, confiscated private estates, and profits from church and other recoupments. Each man of them would have been served rightly had someone spat in his eyes, and from this Kmita did not make great effort to restrain himself.

From the townspeople Kmita only heard that they regretted past times, and the good king of the fallen country. The Swedes persecuted them savagely, seized their houses, exacted contributions, imprisoned them. They said also that the guilds had arms secreted, especially the linen-weavers, the butchers, the furriers, and the powerful guild of tailors; that they were looking continually for the return of Yan Kazimir, did not lose hope, and with assistance from outside were ready to attack the Swedes.

Hearing this, Kmita did not believe his own ears. It could not find place in his head that men of mean station and rank should exhibit more love for the country and loyalty to their lawful king than nobles, who ought to bring those sentiments into the world with their birth.

But it was just the nobles and magnates who stood by the Swedes, and the common people who for the greater part wished to resist; and more than once it happened that when the Swedes were driving common people to work at fortifying Warsaw, these common people chose to endure flogging, imprisonment, even death itself, rather than aid in confirming Swedish power.

Beyond Warsaw the country was as noisy as in a beehive. All the roads, the towns, and the hamlets were occupied by soldiers, by attendants of great lords and nobles, and by lords and nobles serving the Swedes. All was captured, gathered in, subdued; everything was as Swedish as if the country had been always in their hands.

Pan Andrei met no people save Swedes, adherents of the Swedes, or people in despair, indifferent, who were convinced to the depth of their souls that all was lost. No one thought of resistance; commands were carried out quietly and promptly one half or a tenth part of which would have been met in times not long past with opposition and protest. Fear had reached that degree that even those who were injured praised loudly the kind protector of the Commonwealth.

Formerly it happened often enough that a noble received his own civil and military deputies of exaction with gun in hand, and at the head of armed servants; now such tributes were imposed as it pleased the Swedes to impose, and the nobles gave them as obediently as sheep give their wool to the shearer. It happened more than once that the same tribute was taken twice. It was vain to use a receipt as defence; it was well if the executing officer did not moisten it in wine and make the man who showed it swallow the paper. That was nothing!

“Vivat protector!” cried the noble; and when the officer had departed he ordered his servant to crawl out on the roof and see if another were not coming. And well if only all were ended with Swedish contributions; but worse than the enemy were, in that as in every other land, the traitors. Old private grievances, old offences were brought up; ditches were filled, meadows and forests were seized, and for the friend of the Swedes everything went unpunished. Worst, however, were the dissidents; and they were not all. Armed bands were formed of unfortunates, desperadoes, ruffians, and gamblers. Assisted by Swedish marauders, Germans, and disturbers of all kinds, these bands fell upon peasants and nobles. The country was filled with fires; the armed hand of the soldier was heavy on the towns; in the forest the robber attacked. No one thought of curing the Commonwealth; no one dreamed of rescue, of casting off the yoke; no one had hope.

It happened that Swedish and German plunderers near Sohachev besieged Pan Lushchevski, the starosta of that place, falling upon him at Strugi, his private estate. He, being of a military turn, defended himself vigorously, though an old man. Kmita came just then; and since his patience had on it a sore ready to break at any cause, it broke at Strugi. He permitted the Kyemliches, therefore, “to pound,” and fell upon the invaders himself with such vigor that he scattered them, struck them down; no one escaped, even prisoners were drowned at his command. The starosta, to whom the aid was as if it had fallen from heaven, received his deliverer with thanks and honored him at once. Pan Andrei, seeing before him a personage, a statesman, and besides a man of old date, confessed his hatred of the Swedes, and inquired of the starosta what he thought of the future of the Commonwealth, in the hope that he would pour balsam on his soul.

But the starosta viewed the past differently, and said: “My gracious sir, I know not what I should have answered had this question been put when I had ruddy mustaches and a mind clouded by physical humor; but today I have gray mustaches, and the experience of seventy years on my shoulders, and I see future things, for I am near the grave; therefore I say that not only we, even if we should correct our errors, but all Europe, cannot break the Swedish power.”

“How can that be? Where did it come from?” cried Kmita. “When was Sweden such a power? Are there not more of the Polish people on earth, can we not have a larger army? Has that army yielded at any time to Sweden in bravery?”

“There are ten times as many of our people. God has increased our produce so that in my starostaship of Sohachev more wheat is grown than in all Sweden; and as to bravery, I was at Kirchholm when three thousand hussars of us scattered in the dust eighteen thousand of the best troops of Sweden.”

“If that is true,” said Kmita, whose eyes flashed at remembrance of Kirchholm, “what earthly causes are there why we should not put an end to them now?”

“First, this,” answered the old man, with a deliberate voice, “that we have become small and they have grown great; that they have conquered us with our own hands, as before now they conquered the Germans with Germans. Such is the will of God; and there is no power, I repeat, that can oppose them today.”

“But if the nobles should come to their senses and rally around their ruler—if all should seize arms, what would you advise to do then, and what would you do yourself?”

“I should go with others and fall, and I should advise every man to fall; but after that would come times on which it is better not to look.”

“Worse times cannot come! As true as life, they cannot! It is impossible!” cried Kmita.

“You see,” continued the starosta, “before the end of the world and before the last judgment Antichrist will come, and it is said that evil men will get the upper hand of the good. Satans will go through the world, will preach a faith opposed to the true one, and will turn men to it. With the permission of God, evil will conquer everywhere until the moment in which trumpeting angels shall sound for the end of the world.”

Here the starosta leaned against the back of the chair on which he was sitting, closed his eyes, and spoke on in a low, mysterious voice—

“It was said, ‘There will be signs.’ There have been signs on the sun in the form of a hand and a sword. God be merciful to us, sinners! The evil gain victory over the just, for the Swedes and their adherents are conquering. The true faith is failing, for behold the Lutheran is rising. Men! do ye not see that *dies iræ, dies illa* (the day of wrath, that day) is approaching? I am seventy years old; I stand on the brink of the Styx—I am waiting for the ferryman and the boat—I see—”

Here the starosta became silent, and Kmita looked at him with terror; for the reasons seemed to him just, the conclusions fitting, therefore he was frightened at his decisions and reflected deeply. But the starosta did not look at him; he only looked in front of himself, and said at last—

“And of course the Swedes conquer here when that is the permission of God, the express will mentioned and spoken of in the Prophecies—Oi, people, to Chenstohova, to Chenstohova!” And again the starosta was silent.

The sun was just setting, and looking only aslant into the room, its light broke into colors on the glass fitted in lead, and made seven colored stripes on the floor; the rest of the room was in darkness. It became more and more awe-inspiring for Kmita; at moments it seemed to him that if the light were to vanish, that instant the trumpeting angel would summon to judgment.

“Of what prophecies is your grace speaking?” asked Kmita, at last; for the silence seemed to him still more solemn.

The starosta instead of an answer turned to the door of an adjoining room, and called—

“Olenka! Olenka!”

“In God’s name!” cried Kmita, “whom are you calling?”

At that moment he believed everything—believed that his Olenka by a miracle was brought from Kyedani and would appear before his eyes. He forgot everything, fastened his gaze on the door, and waited without breath in his breast.

“Olenka! Olenka!”

The door opened, and there entered not Panna Billevich, but a young woman, shapely, slender, tall, a little like Olenka, with dignity and calm spread over her face. She was pale, perhaps ill, and maybe frightened at the recent attack; she walked with downcast eyes as lightly and quietly as if some breath were moving her forward.

“This is my daughter,” said the starosta. “I have no sons at home; they are with Pan Pototski, and with him near our unfortunate king.”

Then he turned to his daughter: “Thank first this manful cavalier for rescuing us, and then read to him the prophecy of Saint Bridget.”

The maiden bowed down before Pan Andrei, then went out, and after a while returned with a printed roll in her hand, and standing in that many-colored light, began to read in a resonant and sweet voice—



*“The prophecy of Saint Bridget, I will declare to you first of the five kings and their rule: Gustav the son of Erick, the lazy ass, because neglecting the right worship he went over to the false. Rejecting the faith of the Apostles, he brought to the kingdom the Augsburg Confession, putting a stain on his reputation. Look at Ecclesiastes, where it is stated of Solomon that he defiled his glory with idolatry—”*

“Are you listening?” asked the starosta, pointing toward Kmita with the index finger of his left hand and holding the others, ready for counting.

“Yes,” answered Kmita.

*“Erick, the son of Gustavus, a wolf of unsatiable greed,” read the lady, “with which he drew on himself the hatred of all men and of his brother Yan. First, suspecting Yan of intrigues with Denmark and Poland, he tormented him with war, and taking him with his wife he held them four years in a dungeon. Yan, at last brought out of imprisonment and aided by change of fortune, conquered Erick, expelled him from the kingdom, and put him into prison forevermore. There is an unforeseen event!”*

“Consider,” said the old man. “Here is another.”

The lady read further:—

*“Yan, the brother of Erick, a lofty eagle, thrice conqueror over Erick, the Danes, and the Northerners. His son Sigismund, in whom dwells nobility of blood, chosen to the Polish throne. Praise to his offshoots!”*

“Do you understand?” asked the starosta.

“May God prosper the years of Yan Kazimir!” answered Kmita.

*“Karl, the prince of Sudermanii, the ram, who as rams lead the flock, so he led the Swedes to injustice; and he attacked justice.”*

“That is the fourth!” interrupted the starosta.

*“The fifth, Gustavus Adolphus,” read the lady, “is the lamb slain, but not spotless, whose blood was the cause of suffering and misfortune—”*

“Yes; that is Gustavus Adolphus!” said the starosta. “Of Christiana there is no mention, for only men are counted. Read now the end, which refers accurately to the present time.”

She read as follows:—

*“I will show to thee the sixth, who distracts land and sea and brings trouble on the simple; whose hour of punishment I will place in my own hand. Though he attained his end quickly, my judgment draws near him; he will leave the kingdom in suffering and it will be written: They sowed rebellion and reap suffering and pain. Not only will I visit that kingdom, but rich cities and powerful; for the hungry are called, who will devour their sufficiency. Internal evils will not be lacking, and misfortune will abound. The foolish will rule, and the wise and the old men will not raise their heads. Honor and truth will fall, till that man shall come who will implore away my anger and who will not spare his own soul in love of truth.”*

“There you have it!” said the starosta.

“All is verified, so that only a blind man could doubt!” answered Kmita.

“Therefore the Swedes cannot be conquered,” said the starosta.

“Till that man shall come who will not spare his soul for the love of truth!” exclaimed Kmita.

“The prophecy leaves hope! Not judgment, but salvation awaits us.”

“Sodom was to be spared if ten just men could be found in it,” said the starosta; “but that many were not found. In the same manner will not be found the man who will not spare his soul for love of truth; and the hour of judgment will strike.”

“It cannot be but that he will be found,” called out Kmita.

Before the starosta answered the door opened, and into the room walked a man no longer young, in armor and with a musket in his hand.

“Pan Shchebjytski?” said the starosta.

“Yes,” answered the newly arrived. “I heard that ruffians had besieged you, and I hastened with my servants to the rescue.”

“Without the will of God a hair will not fall from the head of a man,” answered the starosta. “This cavalier has already freed me from oppression. But whence do you come?”

“From Sohachev.”

“Have you heard anything new?”

“Every news is worse. New misfortune—”

“What has happened?”

“The provinces of Krakow, Sandomir, Rus, Lubelsk, Belzk, Volynia, and Kiev have surrendered to Karl Gustav. The act is already signed by envoys and by Karl.”

The starosta shook his head, and turned to Kmita—

“See,” said he, “do you still think that the man will be found who will not spare his soul for the love of truth?”

Kmita began to tear the hair from his forelock; “Despair! despair!” repeated he, in distraction.

And Pan Shchebjytski continued: “They say also that the remnants of the army, which are with Pototski, the hetman, have already refused obedience and wish to go to the Swedes. The hetman probably is not sure of safety or life among them, and must do what they want.”

“They sow rebellion and reap suffering and pain,” said the starosta. “Whoso wishes to do penance for his sins, now is his time!”

Kmita could not hear further either prophecies or news; he wanted to sit with all speed on his horse and cool his head in the wind. He sprang up therefore, and began to take farewell of the starosta.

“But whither so hastily?” asked the latter.

“To Chenstohova, for I too am a sinner!”

“Though glad to entertain, I will not delay you, since your work is more urgent, for the day of judgment is at hand.”

Kmita went out; and after him went the young lady, wishing instead of her father to do honor to the guest, for the old man was weak on his feet.

“Be in good health, young lady,” said Kmita; “you do not know how thankful I am to you.”

“If you are thankful to me,” answered the young lady, “do me one service. You are going to Chenstohova; here is a ruddy ducat—take it, I beg, and give it for a Mass in the chapel.”

“For whose intention?” asked Kmita.

The prophetess dropped her eyes, trouble spread over her face; at the same time a slight flush came to her cheeks, and she said with a low voice, like the rustle of leaves—

“For the intention of Andrei, that God may turn him from sinful ways.”

Kmita pushed back two steps, stared, and from astonishment could not speak for a time.

“By the wounds of Christ!” cried he, at last, “what manner of house is this? Where am I? The prophecy itself, the soothsaying, and the indications—Your name is Olenka, and you give me for a Mass for the intentions of a sinful Andrei. This cannot be chance; it is the finger of God—it is, it is. I shall go wild!—As God lives, I shall!”

“What is the matter?”

He caught her hands violently and began to shake them. “Prophecy further, speak to the end! If that Andrei will return and efface his faults, will Olenka keep faith with him? Speak, answer, for I shall not go away without that!”

“What is your trouble?”

“Will Olenka keep faith with him?” repeated Kmita.

Tears came suddenly into the eyes of the maiden: “To the last breath, to the hour of death!” said she, with sobbing.

She had not finished speaking when Kmita fell his whole length at her feet. She wanted to flee; he would not let her, and kissing her feet, he said—

“I too am a sinful Andrei, who wants to return. I too have my loved one, Olenka. May yours return, and may mine keep faith. May your words be prophetic. You have poured balsam and hope into my suffering soul—God reward you, God reward you!”

Then he sprang up, sat on his horse, and rode away.

## Chapter XXXVIII

The words of the young daughter of the starosta of Sohachev filled Kmita with great consolation, and for three days they did not leave his head. In the daytime on horseback, in the night on the bed, he was thinking of what had happened to him, and he came always to the conclusion that this could not be simple chance, but an indication from God, and a presage that if he would hold out, if he would not leave the good road, that same road which Olenka had shown him, she would keep faith and give him her former affection.

“If the starosta’s daughter,” thought Kmita, “keeps faith with her Andrei, who has not begun to grow better, there is still hope for me, with my honest intention of serving virtue, the country, and the king.”

But, on the other hand, suffering was not absent from Pan Andrei. He had an honest intention, but had it not come too late? Was there yet any road, were there yet any means? The Commonwealth seemed to sink deeper each day, and it was difficult to close one’s eyes to the terrible truth that for it there was no salvation. Kmita wished nothing more intently than to begin some kind of work, but he saw no willing people. Every moment new figures, every moment new faces, passed before him in the time of his journey; but the sight of them, their talk and discussions, merely took from him the remnant of his hopes.

Some had gone body and soul to the Swedish camp, seeking in it their own profit; these people drank and caroused as at a wake, drowning, in cups and in riot, shame and the honor of nobles; others told, with blindness beyond understanding, of that power which the Commonwealth would form in union with Sweden, under the sceptre of the first warrior on earth; and these were the most dangerous, for they were sincerely convinced that the whole earth must bow before such an alliance. A third party, like the starosta of Sohachev, honorable people and wishing well to the country, sought signs on the earth and in the heavens, repeated prophecies, and seeing the will of God and unbending predestination in all things that happened, came to the conclusion that there was no hope, no salvation; that the end of the world was drawing nigh; therefore it would be madness to think of earthly instead of heavenly salvation. Others hid in the forest, or escaped with their lives beyond the boundaries of the Commonwealth. Kmita met only unrestrained, corrupted, mad, timid, or desperate people. He met no man who had hope.

Meanwhile the fortune of the Swedes was increasing. News that the rest of the army had revolted, were conspiring, threatening the hetmans, and wishing to go over to the Swedes, gained certainty every day. The report that Konyetspolski with his division had joined Karl Gustav reverberated like thunder through every corner of the Commonwealth, and drove out the remnant of faith from men’s hearts, for Konyetspolski was a knight of Zbaraj. He was followed by the starosta of Yavor and Prince Dymitr Vishnyevetski, who was not restrained by a name covered with immortal glory.

Men had begun now to doubt Lyubomirski, the marshal. Those who knew him well asserted that ambition surpassed in him both reason and love of country; that for the time being he was on the king’s side because he was flattered, because all eyes were turned to him, because one side and the other tried to win him, to persuade him, because he was told that he had the fate of the country in his hands. But in view of Swedish success he began to hesitate, to delay; and each moment he gave the unfortunate Yan Kazimir to understand more clearly that he could save him, or sink him completely.

The refugee king was living in Glogov with a handful of trusted persons, who shared his fate. Each day someone deserted him, and went over to the Swedes. Thus do the weak bend in days of misfortune, even men to whom the first impulse of the heart points out the thorny path of honor. Karl Gustav received the deserters with open arms, rewarded them, covered them with promises, tempted and attracted the remnant of the faithful, extended more widely his rule; fortune itself pushed from before his feet every obstacle; he conquered Poland with Polish forces; he was a victor without a battle.

Crowds of *voevodas*, castellans, officials of Poland and Lithuania, throngs of armed nobles, complete squadrons of incomparable Polish cavalry, stood in his camp, watching the eyes of their newly made lord and ready at his beck.

The last of the armies of the kingdom was calling more and more emphatically to its hetman: "Go, incline thy gray head before the majesty of Karl—go, for we wish to belong to the Swedes."

"To the Swedes! to the Swedes!"

And in support of these words thousands of sabres flashed forth.

At the same time war was flaming continually on the east. The terrible Hmelnitski was besieging Lvoff again; and legions of his allies, rolling on past the unconquered walls of Zamost, spread over the whole province of Lubelsk, reaching even to Lublin.

Lithuania was in the hands of the Swedes and Hovanski. Radzivill had begun war in Podlyasye, the elector was loitering, and any moment he might give the last blow to the expiring Commonwealth; meanwhile he was growing strong in Royal Prussia.

Embassies from every side were hastening to the King of Sweden, wishing him a happy conquest.

Winter was coming; leaves were falling from the trees; flocks of ravens, crows, and jackdaws had deserted the forests, and were flying over the villages and towns of the Commonwealth.

Beyond Pyotrkoff Kmita came again upon Swedish parties, who occupied all the roads and highways. Some of them, after the capture of Krakow, were marching to Warsaw, for it was said that Karl Gustav, having received homage from the northern and eastern provinces and signed the "capitulations," was only waiting for the submission of those remnants of the army under Pototski and Lantskoronski; that given, he would go straightway to Prussia, and therefore he was sending the army ahead. The road was closed in no place to Pan Andrei, for in general nobles roused no suspicion. A multitude of armed attendants were going with the Swedes; others were going to Krakow—one to bow down before the new king, another to obtain something from him. No one was asked for a pass or a letter, especially since in the neighborhood of Karl, who was counterfeiting kindness, no man dared trouble another.

The last night before Chenstohova met Pan Andrei in Krushyn; but barely had he settled down when guests arrived. First a Swedish detachment of about one hundred horse, under the lead of a number of officers and some important captain. This captain was a man of middle age, of a form rather imposing, large, powerful, broad-shouldered, quick-eyed; and though he wore a foreign dress and looked altogether like a foreigner, still when he entered the room he spoke to Pan Andrei in purest Polish, asking who he was and whither he was going.

Pan Andrei answered at once that he was a noble from Sohachev, for it might have seemed strange to the officer that a subject of the elector had come to that remote place. Learning that Pan Andrei was going to the King of Sweden with complaint that payment of money due him by the Swedes was refused, the officer said—

“Prayer at the high altar is best, and wisely you go to the king; for though he has a thousand affairs on his head, he refuses hearing to no one, and he is so kind to Polish nobles that you are envied by the Swedes.”

“If only there is money in the treasury?”

“Karl Gustav is not the same as your recent Yan Kazimir, who was forced to borrow even of Jews, for whatever he had he gave straightway to him who first asked for it. But if a certain enterprise succeeds, there will be no lack of coin in the treasury.”

“Of what enterprise is your grace speaking?”

“I know you too little to speak confidentially, but be assured that in a week or two the treasury of the King of Sweden will be as weighty as that of the Sultan.”

“Then some alchemist must make money for him, since there is no place from which to get it in this country.”

“In this country? It is enough to stretch forth daring hands. And of daring there is no lack among us, as is shown by the fact that we are now rulers here.”

“True, true,” answered Kmita; “we are very glad of that rule, especially if you teach us how to get money like chips.”

“The means are in your power, but you would rather die of hunger than take one copper.”

Kmita looked quickly at the officer, and said—

“For there are places against which it is terrible, even for Tartars, to raise hands.”

“You are too mysterious. Sir Cavalier,” answered the officer, “and remember that you are going, not to Tartars, but to Swedes for money.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a new party of men, whom the officer was evidently expecting, for he hurried out of the inn. Kmita followed and stood in the door to see who were coming.

In front was a closed carriage drawn by four horses, and surrounded by a party of Swedish horsemen; it stopped before the inn. The officer who had just been talking to Kmita went up to the carriage quickly, and opening the door made a low bow to the person sitting inside.

“He must be some distinguished man,” thought Kmita.

That moment they brought from the inn a flaming torch. Out of the carriage stepped an important personage dressed in black, in foreign fashion, with a cloak to his knees, lined with fox-skin, and a hat with feathers. The officer seized the torch from the hands of a horseman, and bowing once more, said—

“This way, your excellency!”

Kmita pushed back as quickly as possible, and they entered after him. In the room the officer bowed a third time and said—

“Your excellency, I am Count Veyhard Vjeshchovich, *ordinarius proviantmagister*, of his Royal Grace Karl Gustav, and am sent with an escort to meet your excellency.”

“It is pleasant for me to meet such an honorable cavalier,” said the personage in black, giving bow for bow.

“Does your excellency wish to stop here some time or to go on at once? His Royal Grace wishes to see your excellency soon.”

"I had intended to halt at Chenstohova for prayers," answered the newly arrived, "but in Vyelunie I received news that his Royal Grace commands me to hurry; therefore, after I have rested, we will go on. Meanwhile dismiss the escort, and thank the captain who led it."

The officer went to give the requisite order. Pan Andrei stopped him on the way.

"Who is that?" asked he.

"Baron Lisola, the Imperial Envoy, now on his way from the court of Brandenburg to our lord," answered the officer. Then he went out, and after a while returned.

"Your excellency's orders are carried out," said he to the baron.

"I thank you," said Lisola; and with great though very lofty affability he indicated to Count Veyhard a place opposite himself. "Some kind of storm is beginning to whistle outside," said he, "and rain is falling. It may continue long; meanwhile let us talk before supper. What is to be heard here? I have been told that the *voevodas* of Little Poland have submitted to his Grace of Sweden."

"True, your excellency; his Grace is only waiting for the submission of the rest of the troops, then he will go at once to Warsaw and to Prussia."

"Is it certain that they will surrender?"

"Deputies from the army are already in Krakow. They have no choice, for if they do not come to us Hmelnitski will destroy them utterly."

Lisola inclined his reasoning head upon his breast. "Terrible, unheard of things!" said he.

The conversation was carried on in the German language. Kmita did not lose a single word of it.

"Your excellency," said Count Veyhard, "that has happened which had to happen."

"Perhaps so; but it is difficult not to feel compassion for a power which has fallen before our eyes, and for which a man who is not a Swede must feel sorrow."

"I am not a Swede; but if Poles themselves do not feel sorrow, neither do I," answered the count.

Lisola looked at him seriously. "It is true that your name is not Swedish. From what people are you, I pray?"

"I am a Cheh" (Bohemian).

"Indeed? Then you are a subject of the German emperor? We are under the same rule."

"I am in the service of the Most Serene King of Sweden," said Veyhard, with a bow.

"I wish not to derogate from that service in the least," answered Lisola, "but such employments are temporary; being then a subject of our gracious sovereign, whoever you may be, whomsoever you may serve, you cannot consider anyone else as your natural sovereign."

"I do not deny that."

"Then I will tell you sincerely, that our lord mourns over this illustrious Commonwealth, over the fate of its noble monarch, and he cannot look with a kindly or willing eye on those of his subjects who are aiding in the final ruin of a friendly power. What have the Poles done to you, that you show them such ill will?"

"Your excellency, I might answer many things, but I fear to abuse your patience."

“You seem to me not only a famous soldier, but a wise man. My office obliges me to observe, to listen, to seek causes; speak then, even in the most minute way, and fear not to annoy my patience. If you incline at any time to the service of the emperor, which I wish most strongly, you will find in me a friend who will explain and repeat your reasons, should any man wish to consider your present service as wrong.”

“Then I will tell you all that I have on my mind. Like many nobles, younger sons, I had to seek my fortune outside my native land. I came to this country where the people are related to my own, and take foreigners into service readily.”

“Were you badly received?”

“Salt mines were given to my management. I found means of livelihood, of approach to the people and the king himself; I serve the Swedes at present, but should anyone wish to consider me unthankful, I could contradict him directly.”

“How?”

“Can more be asked of me than of the Poles themselves? Where are the Poles today? Where are the senators of this kingdom, the princes, the magnates, the nobles, if not in the Swedish camp? And still they should be the first to know what they ought to do, where the salvation of their country is, and where its destruction. I follow their example; who of them then has the right to call me unthankful? Why should I, a foreigner, be more faithful to the King of Poland and the Commonwealth than they themselves are? Why should I despise that service for which they themselves are begging?”

Lisola made no answer. He rested his head on his hand and fell into thought. It would seem that he was listening to the whistle of the wind and the sound of the autumn rain, which had begun to strike the windows of the inn.

“Speak on,” said he, at last; “in truth you tell me strange things.”

“I seek fortune where I can find it,” continued Count Veyhard; “and because this people are perishing, I do not need to care for them more than they do for themselves, besides, even if I were to care, it would avail nothing, for they must perish.”

“But why is that?”

“First, because they wish it themselves; second, because they deserve it. Your excellency, is there another country in the world where so many disorders and such violence may be seen? What manner of government is there here? The king does not rule, because they will not let him; the diets do not rule, because the members break them; there is no army, because the Poles will not pay taxes; there is no obedience, for obedience is opposed to freedom; there is no justice, for there is no one to execute decisions, and each strong man tramples on decisions; there is no loyalty in this people, for all have deserted their king; there is no love for the country, for they have given it to the Swede, for the promise that he will not prevent them from living in old fashion according to their ancient violence. Where could anything similar be found? What people in the world would aid an enemy in conquering their own country? Who would desert a king, not for his tyranny, not for his evil deeds, but because a stronger one came? Where is there a people who love private profits more, or trample more on public affairs? What have they, your excellency? Let anyone mention to me even one virtue—prudence, reason, cleverness, endurance, abstinence. What have they? Good cavalry? that and nothing more. But the Numidians were famous for cavalry, and the Gauls, as may be read in Roman history, had celebrated soldiers; but where are they? They have perished as they were bound to perish. Whoso wishes to save the Poles is merely losing time, for they



will not save themselves. Only the mad, the violent, the malicious, and the venal inhabit this land.”

Count Veyhard pronounced the last words with a genuine outburst of hatred marvellous in a foreigner who had found bread among that people; but Lisola was not astonished. A veteran diplomat, he knew the world and men. He knew that whoso does not know how to pay his benefactor with his heart, seeks in him faults, so as to shield with them his own unthankfulness. Besides, it may be that he recognized that Count Veyhard was right. He did not protest, but asked quickly, “Are you a Catholic?”

The count was confused. “Yes, your excellency,” answered he.

“I have heard in Vyelunie that there are persons who persuade the king, Karl Gustav, to occupy the monastery of Yasna Gora.<sup>30</sup> Is it true?”

“Your excellency, the monastery lies near the Silesian boundary, and Yan Kazimir can easily receive messages therefrom. We must occupy it to prevent that. I was the first to direct attention to this matter, and therefore his Royal Grace has confided these functions to me.”

Here Count Veyhard stopped suddenly, remembered Kmita, sitting in the other corner of the room, and coming up to him, asked—

“Do you understand German?”

“Not a word, even if a man were to pull my teeth,” answered Pan Andrei.

“That is too bad, for we wished to ask you to join our conversation.” Then he turned to Lisola.

“There is a strange noble here, but he does not understand German; we can speak freely.”

“I have no secret to tell,” said Lisola; “but as I am a Catholic too, I should not like to see such injustice done to a sacred place. And because I am certain that the most serene emperor has the same feeling, I shall beg his Grace the King of Sweden to spare the monks. And do not hurry with the occupation until there is a new decision.”

“I have express, though secret, instructions; but I shall not withhold them from your excellency, for I wish to serve faithfully my lord the emperor. I can assure your excellency that no profanation will come to the sacred place. I am a Catholic.”

Lisola laughed, and wishing to extort the truth from a man less experienced than himself, asked jokingly—

“But you will shake up their treasury for the monks? It will not pass without that, will it?”

“That may happen,” answered Count Veyhard. “The Most Holy Lady will not ask for thalers from the priors’ caskets. When all others pay, let the monks pay too.”

“But if the monks defend themselves?”

The count laughed. “In this country no man will defend himself, and today no man is able. There was a time for defence—now it is too late.”

“Too late,” repeated Lisola.

The conversation ended there. After supper they went away. Kmita remained alone. This was for him the bitterest night that he had spent since leaving Kyedani. While listening to the words of Count Veyhard, Kmita had to restrain himself with all his power to keep from

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<sup>30</sup> Bright Mountain.

shouting at him, "Thou liest, thou cur!" and from falling on him with his sabre. But if he did not do so, it was unhappily because he felt and recognized truth in the words of the foreigner—awful truth burning like fire, but genuine.

"What could I say to him?" thought he; "with what could I offer denial except with my fist? What reasons could I bring? He snarled out the truth. Would to God he were slain! And that statesman of the emperor acknowledged to him that in all things and for all defence it was too late."

Kmita suffered in great part perhaps because that "too late" was the sentence not only of the country, but of his own personal happiness. And he had had his fill of suffering; there was no strength left in him, for during all those weeks he had heard nothing save, "All is lost, there is no time left, it is too late." No ray of hope anywhere fell into his soul.

Ever riding farther, he had hastened greatly, night and day, to escape from those prophecies, to find at last some place of rest, some man who would pour into his spirit even one drop of consolation. But he found every moment greater fall, every moment greater despair. At last the words of Count Veyhard filled that cup of bitterness and gall; they showed to him clearly this, which hitherto was an undefined feeling, that not so much the Swedes, the Northerners, and the Cossacks had killed the country, as the whole people.

"The mad, the violent, the malicious, the venal, inhabit this land," repeated Kmita after Count Veyhard, "and there are no others! They obey not the king, they break the diets, they pay not the taxes, they help the enemy to the conquest of this land. They must perish.

"In God's name, if I could only give him the lie! Is there nothing good in us save cavalry; no virtue, nothing but evil itself?"

Kmita sought an answer in his soul. He was so wearied from the road, from sorrows, and from everything that had passed before him, that it grew cloudy in his head. He felt that he was ill and a deathly sickness seized possession of him. In his brain an ever-growing chaos was working. Faces known and unknown pushed past him—those whom he had known long before and those whom he had met on this journey. Those figures spoke, as if at a diet, they quoted sentences, prophecies; and all was concerning Olenka. She was awaiting deliverance from Kmita; but Count Veyhard held him by the arms, and looking into his eyes repeated: "Too late! what is Swedish is Swedish!" and Boguslav Radzivill sneered and supported Count Veyhard. Then all of them began to scream: "Too late, too late, too late!" and seizing Olenka they vanished with her somewhere in darkness.

It seemed to Pan Andrei that Olenka and the country were the same, that he had ruined both and had given them to the Swedes of his own will. Then such measureless sorrow grasped hold of him that he woke, looked around in amazement and listening to the wind which in the chimney, in the walls, in the roof, whistled in various voices and played through each cranny, as if on an organ.

But the visions returned, Olenka and the country were blended again in his thoughts in one person whom Count Veyhard was conducting away saying: "Too late, too late!"

So Pan Andrei spent the night in a fever. In moments of consciousness he thought that it would come to him to be seriously ill, and at last he wanted to call Soroka to bleed him. But just then dawn began; Kmita sprang up and went out in front of the inn.

The first dawn had barely begun to dissipate the darkness; the day promised to be mild; the clouds were breaking into long stripes and streaks on the west, but the east was pure; on the heavens, which were growing pale gradually, stars, unobscured by mist, were twinkling.

Kmita roused his men, arrayed himself in holiday dress, for Sunday had come and they moved to the road.

After a bad sleepless night, Kmita was wearied in body and spirit. Neither could that autumn morning, pale but refreshing, frosty and clear, scatter the sorrow crushing the heart of the knight. Hope in him had burned to the last spark, and was dying like a lamp in which the oil is exhausted. What would that day bring? Nothing!—the same grief, the same suffering, rather it will add to the weight on his soul; of a surety it will not decrease it.

He rode forward in silence, fixing his eyes on some point which was then greatly gleaming upon the horizon. The horses were snorting; the men fell to singing with drowsy voices their matins.

Meanwhile it became clearer each moment, the heavens from pale became green and golden and that point on the horizon began so to shine that Kmita's eyes were dazzled by its glitter. The men ceased their singing and all gazed in that direction, at last Soroka said—

“A miracle or what?—That is the west, and it is as if the sun were rising.”

In fact, that light, increased in the eyes: from a point it became a ball, from a ball a globe; from afar you would have said that someone had hung above the earth a giant star, which was scattering rays immeasurable.

Kmita and his men looked with amazement on that bright, trembling, radiant vision, not knowing what was before their sight. Then a peasant came along from Krushyn in a wagon with a rack. Kmita turning to him saw that the peasant, holding his cap in his hand and looking at the light, was praying.

“Man,” asked Pan Andrei, “what is that which shines so?”

“The church on Yasna Gora.”

“Glory to the Most Holy Lady!” cried Kmita. He took his cap from his head, and his men removed theirs.

After so many days of suffering, of doubts, and of struggles, Pan Andrei felt suddenly that something wonderful was happening in him, Barely had the words, “the church on Yasna Gora,” sounded in his ears when the confusion fell from him as if some hand had removed it.

A certain inexplicable awe seized hold of Pan Andrei, full of reverence, but at the same time a joy unknown to experience, great and blissful. From that church shining on the height in the first rays of the sun, hope, such as for a long time Pan Andrei had not known, was beating—a strength invincible on which he wished to lean. A new life, as it were, entered him and began to course through his veins with the blood. He breathed as deeply as a sick man coming to himself out of fever and unconsciousness.

But the church glittered more and more brightly, as if it were taking to itself all the light of the sun. The whole region lay at its feet, and the church gazed at it from the height; you would have said, “’Tis the sentry and guardian of the land.”

For a long time Kmita could not take his eyes from that light; he satisfied and comforted himself with the sight of it. The faces of his men had grown serious, and were penetrated with awe. Then the sound of a bell was heard in the silent morning air.

“From your horses!” cried Pan Andrei.

All sprang from their saddles, and kneeling on the road began the litany. Kmita repeated it, and the soldiers responded together.

Other wagons came up. Peasants seeing the praying men on the road joined them, and the crowd grew greater continually. When at length the prayers were finished Pan Andrei rose, and after him his men; but they advanced on foot, leading their horses and singing: "Hail, ye bright gates!"

Kmita went on with alertness as if he had wings on his shoulders. At the turns of the road the church vanished, then came out again. When a height or a mist concealed it, it seemed to Kmita that light had been captured by darkness; but when it gleamed forth again all faces were radiant.

So they went on for a long time. The cloister and the walls surrounding it came out more distinctly, became more imposing, more immense. At last they saw the town in the distance, and under the mountain whole lines of houses and cottages, which, compared with the size of the church, seemed as small as birds' nests.

It was Sunday; therefore when the sun had risen well the road was swarming with wagons, and people on foot going to church. From the lofty towers the bells great and small began to peal, filling the air with noble sounds. There was in that sight and in those metal voices a strength, a majesty immeasurable, and at the same time a calm. That bit of land at the foot of Yasna Gora resembled in no wise the rest of the country.

Throngs of people stood black around the walls of the church. Under the hill were hundreds of wagons, carriages, and equipages; the talk of men was blended with the neighing of horses tied to posts. Farther on, at the right, along the chief road leading to the mountain, were to be seen whole rows of stands, at which were sold metal offerings, wax candles, pictures, and scapulars. A river of people flowed everywhere freely.

The gates were wide open; whoso wished entered, whoso wished went forth; on the walls, at the guns, were no soldiers. Evidently the very sacredness of the place guarded the church and the cloister, and perhaps men trusted in the letters of Karl Gustav in which he guaranteed safety.

## Chapter XXXIX

From the gates of the fortress peasants and nobles, villagers from various neighborhoods, people of every age, of both sexes, of all ranks, pressed forward to the church on their knees, singing prayerful hymns. That river flowed slowly, and its course was stopped whenever the bodies of people crowded against one another too densely. At times the songs ceased and the crowds began to repeat a litany, and then the thunder of words was heard from one end of the place to the other. Between hymn and litany, between litany and hymn, the people were silent, struck the ground with their foreheads, or cast themselves down in the form of a cross. At these moments were heard only the imploring and shrill voices of beggars, who sitting at both banks of the human river exposed their deformed limbs to public gaze. Their howling was mingled with the clinking of coppers thrown into tin and wooden dishes. Then again the river of heads flowed onward, and again the hymns thundered.

As the river flowed nearer to the church door, excitement grew greater, and was turned into ecstasy. You could see hands stretched toward heaven, eyes turned upward, faces pale from emotion or glowing with prayer. Differences of rank disappeared: the coat of the peasant touched the robe of the noble, the jacket of the soldier the yellow coat of the artisan.

In the church door the crush was still greater. The bodies of men had become not a river, but a bridge, so firm that you might travel on their heads and their shoulders without touching the ground with a foot. Breath failed their breasts, space failed their bodies; but the spirit which inspired gave them iron endurance. Each man was praying; no one thought of aught else. Each one bore on himself the pressure and weight of the whole of that mass, but no man fell; and pressed by those thousands he felt in himself power against thousands, and with that power he pushed forward, lost in prayer, in ecstasy, in exaltation.

Kmita, creeping forward in the first ranks with his men, reached the church with the earliest; then the current carried him too to the chapel of miracles, where the multitude fell on their faces, weeping, embracing the floor with their hands, and kissing it with emotion. So also did Pan Andrei; and when at last he had the boldness to raise his head, delight, happiness, and at the same time mortal awe, almost took from him consciousness.

In the chapel there was a ruddy gloom not entirely dispersed by the rays of candles burning on the altar. Colored rays fell also through the windowpanes; and all those gleams, red, violet, golden, fiery, quivered on the walls, slipped along the carvings and windings, made their way into dark depths bringing forth to sight indistinct forms buried as it were in a dream. Mysterious glimmers ran along and united with darkness, so undistinguishable that all difference between light and darkness was lost. The candles on the altar had golden halos; the smoke from the censers formed purple mist; the white robes of the monks serving Mass played with the darkened colors of the rainbow. All things there were half visible, half veiled, unearthly; the gleams were unearthly, the darkness unearthly, mysterious, majestic, blessed, filled with prayer, adoration, and holiness.

From the main nave of the church came the deep sound of human voices, like the mighty sound of the sea; but in the chapel deep silence reigned, broken only by the voice of the priest chanting Mass.

The image was still covered; expectation therefore held the breath in all breasts. There were only to be seen, looking in one direction, faces as motionless as if they had parted with

earthly life, hands palm to palm and placed before mouths, like the hands of angels in pictures.

The organ accompanied the singing of the priest, and gave out tones mild and sweet, flowing as it were from flutes beyond the earth. At moments they seemed to distil like water from its source; then again they fell softly but quickly like dense rain showers in May.

All at once the thunder of trumpets and drums roared, and a quiver passed through all hearts. The covering before the picture was pushed apart from the centre to the sides, and a flood of diamond light flashed from above on the faithful.

Groans, weeping, and cries were heard throughout the chapel.

“*Salve, Regina!*” (Hail, O Queen!) cried the nobles, “*Monstra te esse matrem!*” (Show thyself a mother); but the peasants cried, “O Most Holy Lady! Golden Lady! Queen of the Angels! save us, assist us, console us, pity us!”

Long did those cries sound, together with sobs of women and complaints of the hapless, with prayers for a miracle on the sick or the maimed.

The soul lacked little of leaving Kmita; he felt only that he had before him infinity, which he could not grasp, could not comprehend, and before which all things were effaced. What were doubts in presence of that faith which all existence could not exhaust? what was misfortune in presence of that solace? what was the power of the Swedes in presence of that defence? what was the malice of men before the eyes of such protection?

Here his thoughts became settled, and turned into faculties; he forgot himself, ceased to distinguish who he was, where he was. It seemed to him that he had died, that his soul was now flying with the voices of organs, mingled in the smoke of the censers; his hands, used to the sword and to bloodshed, were stretched upward, and he was kneeling in ecstasy, in rapture.

The Mass ended. Pan Andrei knew not himself how he reached again the main nave of the church. The priest gave instruction from the pulpit; but Kmita for a long time heard not, understood not, like a man roused from sleep, who does not at once note where his sleeping ended and his waking moments began.

The first words which he heard were: “In this place hearts change and souls are corrected, for neither can the Swedes overcome this power, nor those wandering in darkness overcome the true light!”

“Amen!” said Kmita in his soul, and he began to strike his breast; for it seemed to him then that he had sinned deeply through thinking that all was lost, and that from no source was there hope.

After the sermon Kmita stopped the first monk he met, and told him that he wished to see the prior on business of the church and the cloister.

He got hearing at once from the prior, who was a man in ripe age, inclining then toward its evening. He had a face of unequalled calm. A thick black beard added to the dignity of his face; he had mild azure eyes with a penetrating look. In his white habit he seemed simply a saint Kmita kissed his sleeve; he pressed Kmita’s head, and inquired who he was and whence he had come.

“I have come from Jmud,” answered Kmita, “to serve the Most Holy Lady, the suffering country, and my deserted king, against all of whom I have hitherto sinned, and in sacred confession I beg to make a minute explanation. I ask that today or tomorrow my confession

be heard, since sorrow for my sins draws me to this. I will tell you also, revered father, my real name—under the seal of confession, not otherwise, for men ill inclined to me prevent and bar me from reform. Before men I wish to be called Babinich, from one of my estates, taken now by the enemy. Meanwhile I bring important information to which do you, revered father, give ear with patience, for it is a question of this sacred retreat and this cloister.”

“I praise your intentions and the change of life which you have undertaken,” said the prior, Father Kordetski; “as to confession, I will yield to your urgent wish and hear it now.”

“I have travelled long,” added Kmita, “I have seen much and I have suffered not a little. Everywhere the enemy has grown strong, everywhere heretics are raising their heads, nay, even Catholics themselves are going over to the camp of the enemy; who, emboldened by this, as well as by the capture of two capitals, intend to raise now sacrilegious hands against Yasna Gora.”

“From whom have you this news?” asked the prior.

“I spent last night at Krushyn, where I saw Count Veyhard Vjeshchovich and Baron Lisola, envoy of the Emperor of Germany, who was returning from the Brandenburg court, and is going to the King of Sweden.”

“The King of Sweden is no longer in Krakow,” said the prior, looking searchingly into the eyes of Pan Andrei.

But Pan Andrei did not drop his lids and talked on—

“I do not know whether he is there or not. I know that Lisola is going to him, and Count Veyhard was sent to relieve the escort and conduct him farther. Both talked before me in German, taking no thought of my presence; for they did not suppose that I understood their speech. I knowing German, was able to learn that Count Veyhard has proposed the occupation of this cloister and the taking of its treasure, for which he has received permission from the king.”

“And you have heard this with your own ears?”

“Just as I am standing here.”

“The will of God be done!” said the priest, calmly.

Kmita was alarmed. He thought that the priest called the command of the King of Sweden the will of God and was not thinking of resistance; therefore he said—

“I saw in Pultusk a church in Swedish hands, the soldiers were playing cards in the sanctuary of God, kegs of beer were on the altars, and shameless women were there with the soldiers.”

The prior looked steadily, directly in the eyes of the soldier. “A wonderful thing!” said he; “sincerity and truth are looking out of your eyes.”

Kmita flushed. “May I fall a corpse here if what I say is not true.”

“In every case these tidings over which we must deliberate are important.”

“You will permit me to ask the older fathers and some of the more important nobles who are now dwelling with us. You will permit—”

“I will repeat gladly the same thing before them.”

Father Kordetski went out, and in quarter of an hour returned with four older fathers. Soon after Pan Rujyts-Zamoyiski, the sword-bearer of Syerad, entered—a dignified man; Pan Okyelnitski, banneret of Vyelunie; Pan Pyotr Charnyetski, a young cavalier with a fierce

warlike face, like an oak in stature and strength; and other nobles of various ages. The prior presented to them Pan Babinich from Jmud, and repeated in the presence of all the tidings which he had brought. They wondered greatly and began to measure Pan Andrei with their eyes inquiringly and incredulously, and when no one raised his voice the prior said—

“May God preserve me from attributing to this cavalier evil intention or calumny; but the tidings which he brings seem to me so unlikely that I thought it proper for us to ask about them in company. With the sincerest intention this cavalier may be mistaken; he may have heard incorrectly, understood incorrectly, or have been led into error through heretics. To fill our hearts with fear, to cause panic in a holy place, to harm piety, is for them an immense delight, which surely no one of them in his wickedness would like to deny himself.”

“That seems to me very much like truth,” said Father Nyeshkovski, the oldest in the assembly.

“It would be needful to know in advance if this cavalier is not a heretic himself?” said Pyotr Charnyetski.

“I am a Catholic, as you are!” answered Kmita.

“It behooves us to consider first the circumstances,” put in Zamoyski.

“The circumstances are such,” said the prior, Kordetski, “that surely God and His Most Holy Mother have sent blindness of purpose on these enemies, so that they might exceed the measure in their iniquities; otherwise they never would have dared to raise the sword against this sacred retreat. Not with their own power have they conquered this Commonwealth, whose own sons have helped them. But though our people have fallen low, though they are wading in sin, still in sin itself there is a certain limit which they would not dare to pass. They have deserted their king, they have fallen away from the Commonwealth; but they have not ceased to revere their Mother, their Patroness and Queen. The enemy jeer at us and ask with contempt what has remained to us of our ancient virtues. I answer they have all perished; still something remains, for faith in the Most Holy Lady and reverence for Her have remained to them, and on this foundation the rest may be built. I see clearly that, let one Swedish ball make a dint in these sacred walls, the most callous men will turn from the conqueror—from being friends will become enemies of the Swedes and draw swords against them. But the Swedes have their eyes open to their own danger, and understand this well. Therefore, if God, as I have said, has not sent upon them blindness intentionally, they will never dare to strike Yasna Gora; for that day would be the day of their change of fortune and of our revival.”

Kmita heard the words of the prior with astonishment, words which were at the same time an answer to what had come from the mouth of Count Veyhard against the Polish people. But recovering from astonishment, he said—

“Why should we not believe, revered father, that God has in fact visited the enemy with blindness? Let us look at their pride, their greed of earthly goods, let us consider their unendurable oppression and the tribute which they levy even on the clergy, and we may understand with ease that they will not hesitate at sacrilege of any kind.”

The prior did not answer Kmita directly, but turning to the whole assembly, continued—

“This cavalier says that he saw Lisola, the envoy, going to the King of Sweden. How can that be since I have undoubted news from the Paulists in Krakow that the king is not in Krakow, nor in Little Poland, since he went to Warsaw immediately after the surrender of Krakow.”

“He cannot have gone to Warsaw,” answered Kmita, “and the best proof is that he is waiting for the surrender and homage of the quarter soldiers, who are with Pototski.”



“General Douglas is to receive homage in the name of the king, so they write me from Krakow.”

Kmita was silent; he knew not what to answer.

“But I will suppose,” continued the prior, “that the King of Sweden does not wish to see the envoy of the emperor and has chosen purposely to avoid him. Carolus likes to act thus—to come on a sudden, to go on a sudden; besides the mediation of the emperor displeases him. I believe then readily that he went away pretending not to know of the coming of the envoy. I am less astonished that Count Veyhard, a person of such note, was sent out to meet Lisola with an escort, for it may be they wished to show politeness and sugar over the disappointment for the envoy; but how are we to believe that Count Veyhard would inform Baron Lisola at once of his plans.”

“Unlikely!” said Father Nyeshkovski, “since the baron is a Catholic and friendly both to us and the Commonwealth.”

“In my head too that does not find place,” added Zamoyski.

“Count Veyhard is a Catholic himself and a well-wisher of ours,” said another father.

“Does this cavalier say that he has heard this with his own ears?” asked Charnyetski, abruptly.

“Think, gentlemen, over this too,” added the prior, “I have a safeguard from Carolus Gustavus that the cloister and the church are to be free forever from occupation and quartering.”

“It must be confessed,” said Zamoyski, with seriousness, “that in these tidings no one thing holds to another. It would be a loss for the Swedes, not a gain, to strike Yasna Gora; the king is not present, therefore Lisola could not go to him; Count Veyhard would not make a confidant of him; farther, Count Veyhard is not a heretic, but a Catholic—not an enemy of the cloister, but its benefactor; finally, though Satan tempted him to make the attack, he would not dare to make it against the order and safeguard of the king.” Here he turned to Kmita—

“What then will you say, Cavalier, and why, with what purpose, do you wish to alarm the reverend fathers and us in this place?”

Kmita was as a criminal before a court. On one hand, despair seized him, because if they would not believe, the cloister would become the prey of the enemy; on the other, shame burned him, for he saw that all appearances argued against his information, and that he might easily be accounted a calumniator. At thought of this, anger tore him, his innate impulsiveness was roused, his offended ambition was active; the old-time half-wild Kmita was awakened. But he struggled until he conquered himself, summoned all his endurance, and repeated in his soul: “For my sins, for my sins!” and said, with a changing face—

“What I have heard, I repeat once more: Count Veyhard is going to attack this cloister. The time I know not, but I think it will be soon—I give warning and on you will fall the responsibility if you do not listen.”

“Calmly, Cavalier, calmly,” answered Pyotr Charnyetski, with emphasis. “Do not raise your voice.” Then he spoke to the assembly—“Permit me, worthy fathers, to put a few questions to the newly arrived.”

“You have no right to offend me,” cried Kmita.

“I have not even the wish to do so,” answered Pan Pyotr, coldly; “but it is a question here of the cloister and the Holy Lady and Her capital. Therefore you must set aside offence; or if you do not set it aside, do so at least for the time, for be assured that I will meet you anywhere. You bring news which we want to verify—that is proper and should not cause wonder; but if you do not wish to answer, we shall think that you are afraid of self-contradiction.”

“Well, put your questions!” said Babinich, through his teeth.

“You say that you are from Jmud?”

“True.”

“And you have come here so as not to serve the Swedes and Radzivill the traitor?”

“True.”

“But there are persons there who do not serve him, and oppose him on the side of the country; there are squadrons which have refused him obedience; Sapyeha is there. Why did you not join them?”

“That is my affair.”

“Ah, ha! your affair,” said Charnyetski. “You may give me that answer to other questions.”

Pan Andrei’s hands quivered, he fixed his eyes on the heavy brass bell standing before him on the table, and from that bell they were turned to the head of the questioner. A wild desire seized him to grasp that bell and bring it down on the skull of Charnyetski. The old Kmita was gaining the upper hand over the pious and penitent Babinich; but he broke himself once more and said—

“Inquire.”

“If you are from Jmud, then you must know what is happening at the court of the traitor. Name to me those who have aided in the ruin of the country, name to me those colonels who remain with him.”

Kmita grew pale as a handkerchief, but still mentioned some names. Charnyetski listened and said, “I have a friend, an attendant of the king, Pan Tyzenhauz, who told me of one, the most noted. Do you know nothing of this arch criminal?”

“I do not know.”

“How is this? Have you not heard of him who spilled his brother’s blood, like Cain? Have you not heard, being from Jmud, of Kmita?”

“Revered fathers!” screamed Pan Andrei, on a sudden, shaking as in a fever, “let a clerical person question me, I will tell all. But by the living God do not let this noble torment me longer!”

“Give him peace,” said the prior, turning to Pan Pyotr. “It is not a question here of this cavalier.”

“Only one more question,” said Zamoyski; and turning to Babinich, he asked—“You did not expect that we would doubt your truth?”

“As God is in heaven I did not!”

“What reward did you expect?”

Pan Andrei, instead of giving an answer, plunged both hands into a small leather sack which hung at his waist from a belt, and taking out two handfuls of pearls, emeralds, turquoises, and other precious stones, scattered them on the table. "There!" said he, with a broken voice, "I have not come here for money! Not for your rewards! These are pearls and other small stones; all taken from the caps of boyars. You see what I am. Do I want a reward? I wish to offer these to the Most Holy Lady; but only after confession, with a clean heart. Here they are—That's the reward which I ask. I have more, God grant you—"

All were silent in astonishment, and the sight of jewels thrown out as easily as grits from a sack made no small impression; for involuntarily everyone asked himself what reason could that man have, if he had no thought of rewards?

Pan Pyotr was confused; for such is the nature of man that the sight of another's power and wealth dazzles him. Finally his suspicions fell away, for how could it be supposed that that great lord, scattering jewels, wanted to frighten monks for profit.

Those present looked at one another and Kmita stood over his jewels with head upraised like the head of a roused eagle, with fire in his eyes and a flush on his face. The fresh wound passing through his cheek and his temple was blue; and terrible was Pan Babinich threatening with his predatory glance Charnyetski, on whom his anger was specially turned.

"Through your anger truth itself bursts forth," said Kordetski; "but put away those jewels, for the Most Holy Lady cannot receive that which is offered in anger, even though the anger be just; besides, as I have said, it is not a question here of you, but of the news which has filled us with terror and fear. God knows whether there is not some misunderstanding or mistake in it, for, as you see yourself, what you say does not fit with reality. How are we to drive out the faithful, diminish the honor of the Most Holy Lady, and keep the gates shut night and day?"

"Keep the gates shut, for God's mercy, keep the gates shut!" cried Pan Andrei, wringing his hands till his fingers cracked in their joints.

There was so much truth and unfeigned despair in his voice that those present trembled in spite of themselves, as if danger was really there at hand, and Zamoyski said—

"As it is, we give careful attention to the environs, and repairs are going on in the walls. In the daytime we can admit people for worship; but it is well to observe caution even for this reason, that the king has gone, and Wittemberg rules in Krakow with iron hand, and oppresses the clergy no less than the laity."

"Though I do not believe in an attack, I have nothing to say against caution," answered Charnyetski.

"And I," said the prior, "will send monks to Count Veyhard to enquire if the safeguard of the king has validity."

Kmita breathed freely and cried—

"Praise be to God, praise be to God!"

"Cavalier," said the prior, "God reward you for the good intention. If you have warned us with reason, you will have a memorable merit before the Holy Lady and the country; but wonder not if we have received your information with incredulity; more than once have we been alarmed. Some frightened us out of hatred to our faith, to destroy the honor shown the Most Holy Lady; others, out of greed, so as to gain something; still others, so as to bring news and gain consideration in the eyes of people; and maybe there were even those who were deceived. Satan hates this place most stubbornly, and uses every endeavor to hinder piety here and to permit the faithful to take as little part in it as possible, for nothing brings

the court of hell to such despair as reverence for Her who crushed the head of the serpent. But now it is time for vespers. Let us implore Her love, let us confide ourselves to her guardianship, and let each man go to sleep quietly; for where should there be peace and safety, if not under Her wings?"

All separated. When vespers were finished Father Kordetski himself heard the confession of Pan Andrei, and listened to him long in the empty church; after that, Pan Andrei lay in the form of a cross before the closed doors of the chapel till midnight. At midnight he returned to his room, roused Soroka, and commanded the old man to flog him before he went to sleep, so that his shoulders and back were covered with blood.

## Chapter XL

Next morning, a wonderful and unusual movement reigned in the cloister. The gate was open, and entrance was not refused to the pious. Services were celebrated in the usual course; but after services all strangers were directed to leave the circuit of the cloister. Kordetski himself, in company with Zamoyski and Pan Pyotr, examined carefully the embrasures, and the escarpments supporting the walls from the inside and outside. Directions were given for repairing places here and there; blacksmiths in the town received orders to make hooks and spears, scythes fixed on long handles, clubs and heavy sticks of wood filled with strong spikes. And since it was known that they had already a considerable supply of such implements in the cloister, people in the town began at once to say that the cloister expected a sudden attack. New orders in quick succession seemed to confirm these reports. Toward night two hundred men were working at the side of the walls. Twelve heavy guns sent at the time of the siege of Krakow by Pan Varshytski, castellan of Krakow, were placed on new carriages and properly planted.

From the cloister storehouses monks and attendants brought out balls, which were placed in piles near the guns; carts with powder were rolled out; bundles of muskets were untied, and distributed to the garrison. On the towers and bastions watchmen were posted to look carefully, night and day, on the region about; men were sent also to make investigation through the neighborhood—to Pjystaini, Klobuchek, Kjepitsi, Krushyn, and Mstov.

To the cloister storehouses, which were already well filled, came supplies from the town, from Chenstohovka and other villages belonging to the cloister.

The report went like thunder through the whole neighborhood. Townspeople and peasants began to assemble and take counsel. Many were unwilling to believe that any enemy would dare to attack Yasna Gora.

It was said that only Chenstohova itself was to be occupied; but even that excited the minds of men, especially when some of them remembered that the Swedes were heretics, whom nothing restrained, and who were ready to offer a purposed affront to the Most Holy Lady.

Therefore men hesitated, doubted, and believed in turn. Some wrung their hands, waiting for terrible signs on earth and in heaven—visible signs of God's anger; others were sunk in helpless and dumb despair; an anger more than human seized a third party, whose heads were filled as it were with flame. And when once the fancy of men had spread its wings for flight, straightway there was a whirl of news, ever changing, ever more feverish, ever more monstrous.

And as when a man thrusts a stick or throws fire into an anthill, unquiet swarms rush forth at once, assemble, separate, reassemble; so was the town, so were the neighboring hamlets, in an uproar.

In the afternoon crowds of townspeople and peasants, with women and children, surrounded the walls of the cloister, and held them as it were in siege, weeping and groaning. At sunset Kordetski went out to them, and pushing himself into the throng, asked—

“People, what do you want?”

“We want to go as a garrison to the cloister to defend the Mother of God,” cried men, shaking their flails, forks, and other rustic weapons.

“We wish to look for the last time on the Most Holy Lady,” groaned women.

The prior went on a high rock and said—

“The gates of hell will not prevail against the might of heaven. Calm yourselves, and receive consolation into your hearts. The foot of a heretic will not enter these holy walls. Neither Lutherans nor Calvinists will celebrate their superstitious incantations in this retreat of worship and faith. I know not in truth whether the insolent enemy will come hither; but I know this, that if he does come, he will be forced to retreat in shame and disgrace, for a superior power will crush him, his malice will be broken, his power rubbed out, and his fortune will fail. Take consolation to your hearts. You are not looking for the last time on our Patroness: you will see her in still greater glory, and you will see new miracles. Take consolation, dry your tears, and strengthen yourselves in faith; for I tell you—and it is not I who speak, but the Spirit of God speaks through me—that the Swede will not enter these walls; grace will flow hence, and darkness will not put out the light, just as the night which is now coming will not hinder God’s sun from rising tomorrow.”

It was just sunset. Dark shade had covered already the region about; but the church was gleaming red in the last rays of the sun. Seeing this, the people knelt around the walls, and consolation flowed into their hearts at once. Meanwhile the Angelus was sounded on the towers, and Kordetski began to sing, “The Angel of the Lord;” and after him whole crowds sang. The nobles and the soldiers standing on the walls joined their voices, the bells greater and smaller pealed in accompaniment, and it seemed that the whole mountain was singing and sounding like a gigantic organ to the four points of the earth.

They sang till late; the prior blessed the departing on their way, and said—

“Those men who have served in war, who know how to wield weapons and who feel courage in their hearts, may come in the morning to the cloister.”

“I have served, I was in the infantry, I will come!” cried numerous voices.

And the throngs separated slowly. The night fell calmly. All woke next morning with a joyous cry: “The Swede is not here!” Still, all day workmen were bringing supplies which had been called for. An order went out also to those who had shops at the eastern walls of the cloister to bring their goods to the cloister; and in the cloister itself work did not cease on the walls. Secured especially were the so-called “passages,” that is, small openings in the walls, which were not gates, but which might serve in making sallies. Pan Zamoyski gave orders to bring beams, bricks, and dung, so at a given moment they could be easily closed from within.

All day, too, wagons were coming in with supplies and provisions; there came also some noble families who were alarmed by the news of the impending attack of the enemy. About midday the men who had been sent out the preceding day to gather tidings came back; but no one had seen the Swedes nor even heard of them, except those who were stationed near Kjepitsi.

Still, preparations were not abandoned in the cloister. By order of the prior, those of the townspeople and peasantry came who had formerly served in the infantry and who were accustomed to service. They were assigned to the command of Pan Mosinski, who was defending the northeastern bastion. Pan Zamoyski was occupied during the day either in disposing the men in their places, instructing each one what to do, or holding counsel with the fathers in the refectory.

Kmita with joy in his heart looked at the military preparations, at the soldiers as they were mustered, at the cannon, at the stacks of muskets, spears, and hooks. That was his special element. In the midst of those terrible implements, in the midst of the urgent preparations and military feverishness, it was light, pleasant, and joyous for him. It was the easier and more

joyous because he had made a general confession of his whole life, and beyond his own expectations had received absolution, for the prior took into account his intention, his sincere desire to reform, and this too, that he had already entered on the road.

So Pan Andrei had freed himself from the burdens under which he was almost falling. Heavy penances had been imposed on him, and every day his back was bleeding under Soroka's braided lash; he was enjoined to practice obedience, and that was a penance still more difficult, for he had not obedience in his heart; on the contrary, he had pride and boastfulness. Finally, he was commanded to strengthen his reformation by virtuous deeds; but that was the easiest, he desired and asked for nothing more; his whole soul was tearing forth toward exploits, for by exploits he understood war and killing the Swedes from morning till evening without rest and without mercy. And just then, what a noble road was opening to him! To kill Swedes, not only in defence of the country, not only in defence of the king to whom he had sworn loyalty, but in defence of the Queen of the Angels—that was a happiness beyond his merit.

Whither had those times gone when he was standing as it were on the parting of the roads, asking himself whither he should go? where are those times in which he knew not what to begin, in which he was always meeting doubt, and in which he had begun to lose hope? And those men, those white monks, and that handful of peasants and nobles were preparing for serious defence, for a life-and-death struggle. That was the one spot of such character in the Commonwealth, and Pan Andrei had come just to that spot, as if led by some fortunate star. And he believed sacredly in victory, though the whole power of Sweden were to encircle those walls; hence in his heart he had prayer, joy, and gratitude.

In this frame of mind he walked along the walls, and with a bright face examined, inspected, and saw that good was taking place. With the eye of experience, he saw at once from the preparations that they were made by men of experience, who would be able to show themselves when it came to the test. He wondered at the calmness of the prior, for whom he had conceived a deep reverence; he was astonished at the prudence of Zamoyski, and even of Pan Charnyetski; though he was displeased at him, he did not show a wry face. But that knight looked on Pan Andrei harshly, and meeting him on the wall the day after the return of the messengers, he said—

“No Swedes are to be seen; and if they do not come, the dogs will eat your reputation.”

“If any harm should result from their coming to this holy place, then let the dogs eat my reputation.”

“You would rather not smell their powder. We know knights who have boots lined with hare's skin.”

Kmita dropped his eyes like a young girl. “You might rather let disputes rest,” said he. “In what have I offended you? I have forgotten your offences against me, do you forget mine against you.”

“You called me a whippersnapper,” said Charnyetski, sharply. “I should like to know who you are. In what are the Babiniches better than the Charnyetskis? Are they a senatorial family too?”

“My worthy sir,” said Kmita, with a pleasant face, “if it were not for the obedience which was imposed on me in confession, if it were not for those blows which are given me every day on my back for my follies of past time, I would speak to you differently; but I am afraid of relapsing into previous offences. As to whether the Babiniches or the Charnyetskis are better, that will appear when the Swedes come.”

“And what kind of office do you think of getting? Do you suppose that they will make you one of the commanders?”

Kmita grew serious. “You accused me of seeking profit; now you speak of office. Know that I have not come here for honor. I might have received higher honor elsewhere. I will remain a simple soldier, even under your command.”

“Why, for what reason?”

“Because you do me injustice, and are ready to torment me.”

“H’m! There is no reason for that. It is very beautiful of you to be willing to remain a simple soldier when it is clear that you have wonderful daring, and obedience does not come easy. Would you like to fight?”

“That will appear with the Swedes, as I have said.”

“But if the Swedes do not come?”

“Then do you know what? we will go to look for them,” said Kmita.

“That pleases me!” cried Charnyetski. “We could assemble a nice party. Silesia is not far from this place, and at once soldiers could be collected. Officers, like my uncle, have promised, but nothing has been said about soldiers; a great number of them might be had at the first call.”

“And this would give a saving example to others!” cried Kmita, with warmth. “I have a handful of men too—you ought to see them at work.”

“Good, good!” said Charnyetski, “as God is dear to me! let me have your face!”

“And give yours,” said Kmita.

And without long thinking they rushed into each other’s arms. Just then the prior was passing, and seeing what had happened he began to bless both. They told at once of what they had been talking. The prior merely smiled quietly, and went on saying to himself—

“Health is returning to the sick.”

Toward evening preparations were finished, and the fortress was entirely ready for defence. Nothing was wanting—neither supplies, nor powder, nor guns; only walls sufficiently strong and a more numerous garrison.

Chenstohova, or rather Yasna Gora, though strengthened by nature and art, was counted among the smallest and weakest fortresses of the Commonwealth. But as to the garrison, as many people might have been had for the summoning as anyone wished; but the prior purposely did not overburden the walls with men, so that supplies might hold out for a long time. Still there were those, especially among the German gunners, who were convinced that Chenstohova could not defend itself.

Fools! they thought that it had no defence but its walls and its weapons; they knew not what hearts filled with faith are. The prior then fearing lest they might spread doubt among the people, dismissed them, save one who was esteemed a master in his art.

That same day old Kyemlich and his sons came to Kmita with a request to be freed from service. Anger carried away Pan Andrei. “Dogs!” cried he, “you are ready to resign such a service and will not defend the Most Holy Lady.—Well, let it be so! You have had pay for your horses, you will receive the rest for your services soon.”



Here he took a purse from a casket, and threw it on the floor to them. "Here are your wages! You choose to seek plunder on that side of the walls—to be robbers instead of defenders of Mary! Out of my sight! you are not worthy to be here! you are not worthy of Christian society! you are not worthy to die such a death as awaits you in this place! Out, out!"

"We are not worthy," answered the old man, spreading his hands and bending his head, "we are not worthy to have our dull eyes look on the splendors of Yasna Gora, Fortress of heaven! Morning Star! Refuge of sinners! We are not worthy, not worthy." Here he bent so low that he bent double, and at the same time with his thin greedy hands, grown lean, seized the purse lying on the floor. "But outside the walls," said he, "we shall not cease to serve your grace. In sudden need, we will let you know everything; we will go where 'tis needful; we will do what is needful. Your grace will have ready servants outside the walls."

"Be off!" repeated Pan Andrei.

They went out bowing; for fear was choking them, and they were happy that the affair had ended thus. Toward evening they were no longer in the fortress.

A dark and rainy night followed. It was November 8; an early winter was approaching, and together with waves of rain the first flakes of wet snow were flying to the ground. Silence was broken only by the prolonged voices of guards calling from bastion to bastion, "Hold watch!" and in the darkness slipped past here and there the white habit of the prior, Kordetski. Kmita slept not; he was on the walls with Charnyetski, with whom he spoke of his past campaigns. Kmita narrated the course of the war with Hovanski, evidently not mentioning the part which he had taken in it himself; and Charnyetski talked of the skirmishes with the Swedes at Pjedbor, at Jarnovtsi, and in the environs of Krakow, of which he boasted somewhat and said—

"What was possible was done. You see, for every Swede whom I stretched out I made a knot on my sword-sash. I have six knots, and God grant me more! For this reason I wear the sword higher toward my shoulder. Soon the sash will be useless; but I'll not take out the knots, in every knot I will have a turquoise set; after the war I will hang up the sash as a votive offering. And have you one Swede on your conscience?"

"No!" answered Kmita, with shame. "Not far from Sohachev I scattered a band, but they were robbers."

"But you might make a great score of Northerners?"

"I might do that."

"With the Swedes it is harder, for rarely is there one of them who is not a wizard. They learned from the Finns how to use the black ones, and each Swede has two or three devils in his service, and there are some who have seven. These guard them terribly in time of battle; but if they come hither, the devils will help them in no way, for the power of devils can do nothing in a circle where the tower on Yasna Gora is visible. Have you heard of this?"

Kmita made no answer; he turned his head to listen attentively.

"They are coming!" said he, suddenly.

"Who, in God's name? What do you say?"

"I hear cavalry."

"That is only wind and the beating of rain."

“By the wounds of Christ! that is not the wind, but horses! I have a wonderfully sharp ear. A multitude of cavalry are marching, and are near already; but the wind drowns the noise. The time has come! The time has come!”

The voice of Kmita roused the stiffened guards, dozing near at hand; but it had not yet ceased when below in the darkness was heard the piercing blare of trumpets, and they began to sound, prolonged, complaining, terrible. All sprang up from slumber in amazement, in fright, and asked one another—

“Are not those the trumpets sounding to judgment in this gloomy night?”

Then the monks, the soldiers, the nobles, began to come out on the square.

The bell-ringers rushed to the bells; and soon they were all heard, the great, the smaller, and the small bells, as if for a fire, mingling their groans with the sounds of the trumpets, which had not ceased to play.

Lighted matches were thrown into pitch-barrels, prepared of purpose and tied with chains; then they were drawn upward with cranks. Red light streamed over the base of the cliff, and then the people on Yasma Gora saw before them a party of mounted trumpeters—those standing nearest with trumpets at their mouths, behind them long and deep ranks of mounted men with unfurled flags.

The trumpeters played some time yet, as if they wished with those brazen sounds to express the whole power of the Swedes, and to terrify the monks altogether. At last they were silent; one of them separated from the rank, and waving a white kerchief, approached the gate.

“In the name of his Royal Grace,” cried the trumpeter, “the Most Serene King of the Swedes, Goths, and Vandals, Grand Prince of Finland, Esthonia, Karelia, Stettin, Pomerania, and the Kashubes, Prince of Rugen, Lord of Ingria, Wismark, and Bavaria, Count of the Rhenish Palatinate, open the gates.”

“Admit him,” said Kordetski.

They opened, but only a door in the gate.

The horseman hesitated for a time; at last he came down from his horse, entered within the circle of the walls, and seeing a crowd of white habits, he asked—

“Who among you is the superior?”

“I am,” answered Kordetski.

The horseman gave him a letter with seals, and said: “Count Veyhard will wait for an answer at Saint Barbara’s.”

The prior summoned at once the monks and nobles to the council-chamber to deliberate.

On the way, Pan Charnyetski said to Kmita: “Come you also.”

“I will go, but only through curiosity,” answered Pan Andrei; “for I have no work there. Henceforward I will not serve the Most Holy Lady with my mouth.”

When they had entered the council-chamber, the prior broke the seal and read as follows:—

*“It is not a secret to you, worthy fathers, with what favorable mind and with what heart I have always looked on this holy place and your Congregation; also, how constantly I have surrounded you with my care and heaped benefits on you. Therefore I desire that you remain in the conviction that neither my inclination nor good wishes toward you have ceased in the present juncture. Not as an enemy, but as a friend, do I come this day. Put your cloister under*

*my protection without fear, as the time and present circumstances demand. In this way you will find the calm which you desire, as well as safety. I promise you solemnly that the sacredness of the place will be inviolate; your property will not be destroyed. I will bear all expenses myself, and in fact add to your means. Consider also carefully how much you will profit if, satisfying me, you confide to me your cloister. Remember my advice, lest a greater misfortune reach you from the terrible General Miller, whose orders will be the more severe because he is a heretic and an enemy of the true faith. When he comes, you must yield to necessity and carry out his commands; and you will raise useless complaints with pain in your souls and your bodies, because you disregarded my mild counsel."*

The memory of recent benefactions of Count Veybard touched the monks greatly. There were some who had confidence in his goodwill, and wished to see in his counsel the avoidance of future defeats and misfortunes. But no one raised a voice, waiting for what Kordetski would say. He was silent for a while, but his lips were moving in prayer; then he said—

"Would a true friend draw near in the nighttime and terrify with such a dreadful voice of trumpets and crooked horns the sleeping servants of God? Would he come at the head of those armed thousands who are now standing under these walls? Why did he not come with four or nine others, if he hoped for the reception given a welcome benefactor? What do those stern legions mean, if not a threat in case we refuse to yield up this cloister? Listen; remember, too, dearest brothers, that this enemy has never kept word nor oath nor safeguard. We too have that of the King of Sweden sent us spontaneously, in which is an express promise that the cloister shall remain free of occupation. And why are they standing now under its walls, trumpeting their own lie with fearful brazen sound? My dear brothers, let each man raise his heart to heaven, so that the Holy Ghost may enlighten it, and then let us consider what conscience dictates to each one touching the good of this holy retreat."

Silence followed. Then Kmita's voice rose: "I heard in Krushyn Lisola ask him, 'Will you shake up their treasury for the monks?' to which the count, who now stands under these walls, answered, 'The Mother of God will not ask for the thalers in the priors' chests.' Today this same Count Veyhard writes to you, reverend fathers, that he will bear all expenses himself, and besides add to your means. Consider his sincerity!"

To this Father Myelko, one of the oldest in the assembly, and besides a former soldier, answered: "We live in poverty, and burn these torches before the altar of the Most Holy Lady in Her praise. But though we were to take them from the altar so as to purchase immunity for this holy place, where is our guarantee that the Swedes will respect the immunity, that they with sacrilegious hands will not remove offerings, sacred vestments, church furniture? Is it possible to trust liars?"

"Without the Provincial to whom we owe obedience, we can do nothing," said Father Dobrosh.

"War is not our affair," added Father Tomitski; "let us listen to what these knights will say who have taken refuge under the wings of the Mother of God in this cloister."

All eyes were now turned to Pan Zamoyski, the oldest in years, the highest in dignity and office. He rose and spoke in the following words:—

"It is a question here of your fate, reverend fathers. Compare then the strength of the enemy with the resistance which you can place against him according to your force and will. What counsel can we, guests here, impart to you? But, reverend fathers, since you ask us what is to be done, I will answer: Until the inevitable forces us, let the thought of surrender be far away; for it is a shameful and an unworthy act to purchase with vile submission an uncertain peace from a faithless enemy. We have taken refuge here of our own will, with our wives and

children; surrendering ourselves to the guardianship of the Most Holy Lady, we have determined with unswerving faith to live with you, and, if God shall so desire, to die with you. It is indeed better for us thus than to accept a shameful captivity or behold an affront to a holy place; of a certainty, that Mother of the Most High God who has inspired our breasts with a desire of defending Her against godless and sacrilegious heretics will second the pious endeavors of Her servants and support the cause of Her own defence.”

At this point Pan Zamoyski ceased speaking; all paid attention to his words, strengthening themselves with the meaning of them; and Kmita, without forethought, as was his wont, sprang forward and pressed the hand of the old man to his lips. The spectators were edified by this sight, and each one saw a good presage in that youthful ardor, and a desire to defend the cloister increased and seized all hearts.

Meanwhile a new presage was given: outside the window of the refectory was heard unexpectedly the trembling and aged voice of Constantsia, the old beggar woman of the church, singing a pious hymn:—

“In vain dost thou threaten me, O savage Hussite,  
In vain dost thou summon devils’ horns to thy aid,  
In vain dost thou burn, sparing no blood,  
For thou’lt not subdue me;  
Though thousands of pagans were now rushing hither,  
Though armies were flying against me on dragons,  
Neither sword, flame, nor men will avail thee,  
For I shall be victor!”

“Here,” said Kordetski, “is the presage which God sends through the lips of that old beggar woman. Let us defend ourselves, brothers; for in truth besieged people have never yet had such aids as will come to us.”

“We will give our lives willingly,” said Charnyetski.

“We will not trust faith-breakers! We will not trust heretics, nor those among Catholics who have accepted the service of the evil spirit!” shouted others, who did not wish to let those speak who opposed.

It was decided to send two priests to Count Veyhard with information that the gates would remain closed and the besieged would defend themselves, to which action the safeguard of the king gave them a right.

But in their own way the envoys were to beg the Count humbly to desist from his design, or at least to defer it for a time until the monks could ask permission of Father Teofil Bronyevski, Provincial of the order, who was then in Silesia.

The envoys, Fathers Benedykt Yarachevski and Martseli Tomitski, passed out through the gate; the others awaited, in the refectory, their return with throbbing hearts, for terror had seized those monks, unused to war, when the hour had struck and the moment had come in which they were forced to choose between duty and the anger and vengeance of the enemy.

But half an hour had barely elapsed when the two fathers appeared before the council. Their heads were hanging over their breasts, on their faces were pallor and grief. In silence they gave Kordetski a letter from Count Veyhard, which he took from their hands and read aloud. There were eight points of capitulation under which the count summoned the monks to surrender the cloister.

When he had finished reading, the prior looked long in the faces of those assembled; at last he said with a solemn voice—

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! in the name of the Most Pure and Most Holy Mother of God! to the walls, beloved brethren!”

“To the walls, to the walls!” was the answer of all.

A little later a bright flame lighted the base of the cloister. Count Veyhard had given orders to burn the buildings connected with the church of Saint Barbara. The fire seizing the old houses grew with each moment. Soon pillars of red smoke reared themselves toward the sky; in the midst of these, fiery sparkling tongues were gleaming. Finally one conflagration was spreading in clouds.

By the gleam of the fire, divisions of mounted soldiers could be seen passing quickly from place to place. The usual license of soldiers had begun. The horsemen drove out from the stables cattle, which running with fright, filled the air with plaintive bellowing; sheep, gathered in groups, pushed at random toward the fire. Many of the defenders saw for the first time the bloody face of war, and their hearts grew benumbed with terror at sight of people driven by soldiers and slashed with sabres, at sight of women dragged by the hair through the marketplace. And by the bloody gleams of the fire all this was as visible as on the palm of the hand. Shouts, and even words, reached the ears of the besieged perfectly.

Since the cannon of the cloister had not answered yet, horsemen sprang from their horses and approached the foot of the mountain itself, shaking their swords and muskets. Every moment some sturdy fellow, dressed in a yellow cavalry jacket, putting his hands around his mouth, jeered and threatened the besieged, who listened patiently, standing at their guns with lighted matches.

Kmita was at the side of Charnyetski, just in front of the church, and saw everything clearly. On his cheeks a deep flush came out, his eyes were like two torches, and in his hand he held an excellent bow, which he had received as an inheritance from his father, who had captured it from a celebrated Agá at Hotsin. He heard the threats and invectives, and finally when a gigantic horseman had come under the cliff and was making an uproar he turned to Charnyetski—

“As God is true, he is blaspheming against the Most Holy Lady. I understand German; he blasphemes dreadfully! I cannot endure it!” And he lowered the bow; but Charnyetski touched him with his hand—

“God will punish him for his blasphemy,” said he; “but Kordetski has not permitted us to shoot first, let them begin.”

He had barely spoken when the horseman raised his musket to his face; a shot thundered, and the ball, without reaching the walls, was lost somewhere among the crannies of the place.

“We are free now!” cried Kmita.

“Yes,” answered Charnyetski.

Kmita, as a true man of war, became calm in a moment. The horseman, shading his eyes with his hands, looked after the ball; Kmita drew the bow, ran his finger along the string till it twittered like a swallow, then he bent carefully and cried—

“A corpse, a corpse!”

At the same moment was heard the whirring whistle of the terrible arrow; the horseman dropped his musket, raised both hands on high, threw up his head, and fell on his back. He

struggled for a while like a fish snatched from water, and dug the earth with his feet; but soon he stretched himself and remained without motion.

“That is one!” said Kmita.

“Tie it in your sword-sash,” answered Charnyetski.

“A bell-rope would not be long enough, if God will permit!” cried Pan Andrei.

A second horseman rushed to the dead man, wishing to see what had happened to him, or perhaps to take his purse, but the arrow whistled again, and the second fell on the breast of the first. Meanwhile the fieldpieces which Count Veyhard had brought with him opened fire. He could not storm the fortress with them, neither could he think of capturing it, having only cavalry, but he gave command to open fire to terrify the priests. Still a beginning was made.

Kordetski appeared at the side of Charnyetski, and with him came Father Dobrosh, who managed the cloister artillery in time of peace, and on holidays fired salutes; therefore he passed as an excellent gunner among the monks.

The prior blessed the cannon and pointed them out to the priest, who rolled up his sleeves and began to aim at a point in a half circle between two buildings where a number of horsemen were raging, and among them an officer with a rapier in his hand. The priest aimed long, for his reputation was at stake. At last he took the match and touched the priming.

Thunder shook the air and smoke covered the view; but after a while the wind bore it aside. In the space between the buildings there was not a single horseman left. A number were lying with their horses on the ground; the others had fled.

The monks on the walls began to sing. The crash of buildings falling around Saint Barbara’s church accompanied the songs. It grew darker, but vast swarms of sparks sent upward by the fall of timbers pierced the air.

Trumpets were sounded again in the ranks of Count Veyhard’s horsemen; but the sound from them receded. The fire was burning to the end. Darkness enveloped the foot of Yasna Gora. Here and there was heard the neighing of horses; but ever farther, ever weaker, the Count was withdrawing to Kjepitsi.

Kordetski knelt on the walls.

“Mary! Mother of the one God,” said he, with a powerful voice, “bring it to pass that he whose attack comes after this man will retreat in like manner—with shame and vain anger in his soul.”

While he prayed thus the clouds broke suddenly above his head, and the bright light of the moon whitened the towers, the walls, the kneeling prior and the burned ruins of buildings at Saint Barbara.

## Chapter XLI

The following day peace reigned at the foot of Yasna Gora; taking advantage of which, the monks were occupied the more earnestly in preparations for defence. The last repairs were made in the walls and the curtains, and still more appliances were prepared to serve in resisting assault.

From Zdebov, Krovodja, Lgota, and Grabuvka a number of tens of peasants volunteered, who had served before in the land-infantry. These were accepted and placed among the defenders. Kordetski doubled and trebled himself. He performed divine service, sat in council, neglected the sick neither day nor night, and in the interval visited the walls, talked with nobles and villagers. Meanwhile he had in his face and whole person a calm of such character that one might almost say it belonged to stone statues only. Looking at his face, grown pale from watching, it might be thought that that man slept an easy and sweet sleep; but the calm resignation and almost joy burning in his eyes, his lips moving in prayer, announced that he watched, thought, prayed, and made offerings for all. From his spirit, with all its powers intent upon God, faith flowed in a calm and deep stream; all drank of this faith with full lips, and whoso had a sick soul was made well. Wherever his white habit was seen, there calm appeared on the faces of men, their eyes smiled, and their lips repeated: "Our kind father, our comforter, our defender, our good hope." They kissed his hands and his habit; he smiled like the dawn, and went farther, while around him, above and before him, went confidence and serenity.

Still he did not neglect earthly means of salvation; the fathers who entered his cell found him, if not on his knees, over letters which he sent in every direction. He wrote to Wittemberg, the commander-in-chief at Krakow, imploring him to spare a sacred place; and to Yan Kazimir, who in Opola had made the last effort to save a thankless people; to Stefan Charnyetski, held by his own word as on a chain at Syevyej; to Count Veyhard; and to Colonel Sadovski, a Lutheran Cheh, who served under Miller, but who, having a noble soul, had endeavored to dissuade the fierce general from this attack on the cloister.

Two conflicting councils were held before Miller. Count Veyhard, irritated by the stubbornness which he had met on November 8, used all efforts to incline the general to a campaign; he promised him untold treasures and profit, he asserted that in the whole world there were scarcely churches which could be compared with Chenstohova or Yasna Gora. Sadovski opposed in the following manner:—

"General," said he to Miller, "you who have taken so many famed fortresses that you have been justly named Poliorcetes by cities in Germany, know how much blood and time it may cost to take even the weakest fortress, if the assaulted are willing to resist unto death.

"But the monks will not resist?" asked Miller.

"I think just the contrary. The richer they are, the more stubborn a defence will they make; they are confident not only in the might of arms, but in the sacredness of the place, which the Catholic superstition of this whole country considers inviolable. It is enough to recall the German war; how often have monks given an example of daring and stubbornness, even in cases where soldiers themselves despaired of defence! It will take place this time too, all the more since the fortress is not so insignificant as Count Veyhard would like to consider it. It is situated on a rocky eminence difficult for the miner, the walls which, if they were not indeed in good condition, have been repaired before this time; and as to supplies of arms, powder,

and provisions, a cloister so rich has inexhaustible supplies; fanaticism will animate their hearts and—”

“And do you think, gracious colonel, that they will force me to retreat?”

“I do not think that, but I believe that we shall be forced to remain long under the walls, we shall have to send for larger guns than those we have here, and you must go to Prussia. It is necessary to calculate how much time we can devote to Chenstohova; for if his Grace the King of Sweden summons you from the siege for the more important affairs of Prussia, the monks will report without fail that you were forced to retreat. And then think, your grace, what a loss your fame as Poliorcetes will sustain, not to speak of the encouragement which the resisting will find in the whole country. Only [here Sadovski lowered his voice] let the mere intention of attacking this cloister be noised about, and it will make the worst impression. You do not know—for no foreigner, not a papist, can know—what Chenstohova is to this people. Very important for us are those nobles, who yielded so readily; those magnates; the quarter troops, who together with the hetmans, have come over to our side. Without them we could not have done what we have done. With their hands we have occupied half the country—nay, more than half; but let one shot fall at Chenstohova—who knows? perhaps not a Pole will remain with us. So great is the strength of superstition! A new most terrible war may flame up!”

Miller recognized in his soul the justice of Sadovski’s reasoning, all the more since he considered monks in general, and the Chenstohova monks in particular, wizards—that Swedish general feared enchantments more than guns; still wishing to irritate, and maybe prolong the dispute, he said—

“You speak as though you were prior of Chenstohova, or as if they had begun to pay you a ransom.”

Sadovski was a daring soldier and impulsive, and because he knew his value he was easily offended.

“I will not say another word,” answered he, haughtily.

Miller in his turn was angry at the tone in which the above words were spoken.

“I will make no further request of you,” said he; “Count Veyhard is enough for me, he knows this country better.”

“We shall see!” responded Sadovski, and went out of the room.

Count Veyhard in fact took his place. He brought a letter, which he had received from Varshytski with a request to leave the cloister in peace; but from this letter the obstinate man drew counsel directly opposed.

“They beg,” said he to Miller; “therefore they know that there will be no defence.”

A day later the expedition against Chenstohova was decided upon at Vyelunie.

It was not kept a secret; therefore Father Yatsek Rudnitski, provost of the monastery at Vyelunie, was able to go in time to Chenstohova with the news. The poor monk did not admit for one moment that the people of Yasna Gora would defend themselves. He only wanted to forewarn them so that they might know what course to take and seek favorable conditions. In fact, the news bowed down the minds of the monks. In some souls courage weakened at once. But Kordetski strengthened it; he warmed the cold with the heat of his own heart, he promised days of miracle, he made the very presence of death agreeable, and changed them so much through the inspiration of his own soul that unwittingly they began to prepare for the



attack as they were accustomed to prepare for great church festivals—hence with joy and solemnity.

The chiefs of the lay garrison, Zamoyski and Charnyetski, also made their final preparations. They burned all the shops which were nestled around the walls of the fortress and which might lighten an assault for the enemy; the buildings near the mountain were not spared either, so that for a whole day a ring of flame surrounded the fortress; but when there remained of the shops merely the ashes of timbers and planks, the guns of the cloister had before them empty space, unhedged by any obstacles. Their black jaws gaped freely into the distance, as if searching for the enemy impatiently and wishing to greet them at the earliest moment with ominous thunder.

Meanwhile winter was drawing near with swift step. A sharp north wind was blowing, swamps were turned into lumps of earth; and in the mornings, water in shallow places was congealed into frail icy shells. The prior, Kordetski, making the rounds of the walls, rubbed his hands blue from cold, and said—

“God will send frost to assist us. It will be hard to intrench batteries and dig mines; meanwhile you will take rest in warm rooms, and the north wind will soon disgust them with the siege.”

But for this very reason Miller was anxious to finish quickly. He had nine thousand troops, mostly infantry, and nineteen guns. He had also two squadrons of Polish cavalry, but he could not count on them; first, because he could not employ the cavalry in taking the lofty fortress; and second, because the men went unwillingly, and gave notice beforehand that they would take no part in the struggles. They went rather to protect the fortress, in case of capture, against the greed of the conquerors—so at least the colonels declared to the soldiers; they went finally because the Swedes commanded, for the whole army of the country was in their camp and had to obey.

From Vyelunie to Chenstohova the road is short. On November 18 the siege was to begin. But the Swedish general calculated that it would not last above a couple of days, and that he would take the precious fortress by negotiation.

Meanwhile Kordetski, the prior, prepared the souls of men. They went to divine services as on a great and joyous festival; and had it not been for the unquiet and pallor of some faces, it might have been supposed that that was a joyous and solemn thanksgiving. The prior himself celebrated Mass; all the bells were ringing. The services did not end with Mass, for a grand procession went out on the walls.

The prior, bearing the Most Holy Sacrament, was supported under the arms by Zamoyski and Pan Pyotr Charnyetski. In front walked young boys in robes, they carried censers with myrrh and incense; before and after the baldachin marched ranks of white-habited monks, with eyes and heads raised toward heaven—men of various years, from decrepit old men to tender youths who had just begun their novitiate. The yellow flames of the candles quivered in the air; but the monks moved onward and sang, buried altogether in God, as if mindful of naught else in the world. Behind them appeared the shaven temples of nobles, the tearful faces of women, but calm beneath their tears, inspired with faith and trust; peasants marched also, long-haired, wearing coarse coats, resembling the primitive Christians; little children, maidens, and boys mingled with the throng, joining their thin voices with the general chorus. And God heard that pouring forth of hearts, that fleeing from earthly oppression to the single defence of His wings. The wind went down, the air grew calm, the heavens became azure, and the autumnal sun poured a mild pale golden, but still warm, light on the earth. The procession passed once around the walls, but did not return, did not disperse—went farther.

Rays from the monstrance fell on the face of the prior, and that face seemed golden and radiant from their light. Kordetski kept his eyes closed, and on his lips was a smile not of earth—a smile of happiness, of sweetness, of exaltation; his soul was in heaven, in brightness, in endless delight, in unbroken calm. But as if taking orders from above, and forgetting not this earthly church, the men, the fortress, and that hour then impending, he halted at moments, opened his eyes, elevated the monstrance, and gave blessing.

He blessed the people, the army, the squadrons, blooming like flowers and gleaming like a rainbow; he blessed the walls, and that eminence which looked down and around upon the land; he blessed the cannon, the guns, smaller and greater, the balls, iron and lead, the vessels with powder, the planking at the cannon, the piles of harsh implements used to repel the assaults of the enemy; he blessed the armies lying at a distance; he blessed the north, the south, the east, and the west, as if to cover that whole region, that whole land, with the power of God.

It had struck two in the afternoon, the procession was still on the walls; but meanwhile on those edges, where the sky and the earth seemed to touch, a bluish haze was spread out, and just in that haze something began to shimmer, to move—forms of some kind were creeping. At first dim, unfolding gradually, these forms became every moment more distinct. A cry was heard suddenly at the end of the procession—

“The Swedes are coming; the Swedes are coming!”

Then silence fell, as if hearts and tongues had grown numb; bells only continued to sound. But in the stillness the voice of the prior thundered, far reaching though calm—

“Brothers, let us rejoice! the hour of victories and miracles is drawing near!”

And a moment later he exclaimed: “Under Thy protection we take refuge, Our Mother, Our Lady, Our Queen!”

Meanwhile the Swedish cloud had changed into an immeasurable serpent, which was crawling forward ever nearer. Its terrible curves were visible. It twisted, uncoiled; at one time it glittered under the light with its gleaming steel scales, fit another it grew dark, crawled, crawled on, emerged from the distance.

Soon eyes looking from the walls could distinguish everything in detail. In advance came the cavalry, after it infantry in quadrangles; each regiment formed a long rectangular body, over which rose a smaller one formed of erect spears; farther on, behind, after the infantry, came cannon with jaws turned rearward and inclined to the earth.

Their slowly moving barrels, black or yellowish, shone with evil omen in the sun; behind them clattered over the uneven road the powder-boxes and the endless row of wagons with tents and every manner of military appliance.

Dreadful but beautiful was that advance of a regular army, which moved before the eyes of the people on Yasna Gora, as if to terrify them. A little later the cavalry separated from the rest of the army and approached at a trot, trembling like waves moved by wind. They broke soon into a number of greater and smaller parties. Some pushed toward the fortress; some in the twinkle of an eye scattered through the neighboring villages in pursuit of plunder; others began to ride around the fortress, to examine the walls, study the locality, occupy the buildings which were nearest. Single horsemen flew back continually as fast as a horse could gallop from the larger parties to the deep divisions of infantry to inform the officers where they might dispose themselves.

The tramp and neighing of horses, the shouts, the exclamations, the murmur of thousands of voices, and the dull thump of cannon, came distinctly to the ears of the besieged, who till that moment were standing quietly on the wall, as if for a spectacle, looking with astonished eyes at that great movement and deploying of the enemy's troops.

At last the infantry regiments arrived and began to wander around the fortress, seeking places best fitted for fortification. Now they struck, on Chenstohovka, an estate near the cloister, in which there were no troops, only peasants living in huts.

A regiment of Finns, who had come first, fell savagely on the defenceless peasants. They pulled them out of the huts by the hair, and simply cut down those who resisted; the rest of the people driven from the manor-house were pursued by cavalry and scattered to the four winds.

A messenger was sent with Miller's summons to surrender; he had already sounded his trumpet before the gates of the church; but the defenders, at sight of the slaughter and cruelty of the soldiers in Chenstohova, answered with cannon fire.

Now, when the people of the town had been driven out of all the nearer buildings, and the Swedes had disposed themselves therein, it behooved to destroy them with all haste, so that the enemy might not injure the cloister under cover of those buildings. Therefore the walls of the cloister began to smoke all around like the sides of a ship surrounded by a storm and by robbers. The roar of cannon shook the air till the walls of the cloister were trembling, and glass in the windows of the church and other buildings was rattling. Fiery balls in the form of whitish cloudlets describing ill-omened arcs fell on the Swedish places of refuge, they broke rafters, roofs, walls; and columns of smoke were soon rising from the places into which balls had descended.

Conflagration had enwrapped the buildings. Barely had the Swedish regiments taken possession when they fled from the new quarters with all breath, and, uncertain of their positions, hurried about in various directions. Disorder began to creep among them; they removed the cannon not yet mounted, so as to save them from being struck. Miller was amazed; he had not expected such a reception, nor such gunners on Yasna Gora.

Meanwhile night came, and since he needed to bring the army into order, he sent a trumpeter with a request for a cessation. The fathers agreed to that readily.

In the morning, however, they burned another enormous storehouse with great supplies of provisions, in which building the Westland regiment had taken its quarters. The fire caught the building so quickly, the shots fell, one after another, with such precision that the Westlanders were unable to carry off their muskets or ammunition, which exploded, hurling far around burning brands.

The Swedes did not sleep that night; they made preparations, entrenchments for the guns, filled baskets with earth, formed a camp. The soldiers, though trained during so many years in so many battles, and by nature valiant and enduring, did not wait for the following day with joy. The first day had brought defeat.

The cannon of the cloister caused such loss among the Swedes that the oldest warriors were confounded, attributing this to careless approach to the fortress, and to going too near the walls.

But the next day, even should it bring victory, did not promise glory; for what was the capture of an inconsiderable fortress and a cloister to the conquerors of so many famed cities, a hundred times better fortified? The greed of rich plunder alone upheld their willingness, but that oppressive alarm with which the allied Polish squadrons had approached this greatly

renowned Yasna Gora was imparted in a mysterious way to the Swedes. Some of them trembled at the thought of sacrilege, while others feared something indefinite, which they could not explain, and which was known under the general name of enchantment. Miller himself believed in it; why should not the soldiers believe?

It was noticed that when Miller was approaching the church of Saint Barbara, the horse under him slipped suddenly, started back, distended his nostrils, pricked up his ears, snorted with fright, and refused to advance. The old general showed no personal alarm; still the next day he assigned that place to the Prince of Hesse, and marched himself with the heavier guns to the northern side of the cloister, toward the village of Chenstohova; there he made intrenchments during the night, so as to attack in the morning.

Barely had light begun to gleam in the sky when heavy artillery firing began; but this time the Swedish guns opened first. The enemy did not think of making a breach in the walls at once, so as to rush through it to storm; he wanted only to terrify, to cover the church and the cloister with balls, to set fire, to dismount cannon, to kill people, to spread alarm.

A procession went out again on the walls of the fortress, for nothing strengthened the combatants like a view of the Holy Sacrament, and the monks marching forward with it calmly. The guns of the cloister answered—thunder for thunder, lightning for lightning, so far as the defenders were able, so far as breath held out in the breast. The very earth seemed to tremble in its foundations. A sea of smoke stretched over the cloister and the church.

What moments, what sights for men who had never in their lives beheld the bloody face of war! and there were many such in the fortress. That unbroken roar, lightnings, smoke, the howling of balls tearing the air, the terrible hiss of bombs, the clatter of shot on the pavement, the dull blows against the wall, the sound of breaking windows, the explosions of bursting bombs, the whistling of fragments of them, the breaking and cracking of timbers; chaos, annihilation, hell!

In those hours there was not a moment of rest nor cessation; breasts half-suffocated with smoke, every moment new flocks of cannonballs; and amid the confusion shrill voices in various parts of the fortress, the church, and the cloister, were crying—

“It is on fire! water, water!”

“To the roof with barefooted men! more cloth!”

“Aim the cannon higher!—higher!—aim at the centre of the buildings—fire!”

About noon the work of death increased still more. It might seem that, if the smoke were to roll away, the Swedes would see only a pile of balls and bombs in place of the cloister. A cloud of lime, struck from the walls by the cannon, rose up, and mingling with the smoke, hid the light. Priests went out with relics to exorcise these clouds, lest they might hinder defence. The thunders of cannon were interrupted, but were as frequent as the breath gulps of a panting dragon.

Suddenly on a tower, newly built after a fire of the previous year, trumpets began to sound forth the glorious music of a church hymn. That music flowed down through the air and was heard round about, was heard everywhere, as far as the batteries of the Swedes. The sound of the trumpets was accompanied by the voices of people, and amidst the bellowing and whistling, amidst the shouts, the rattle and thunder of muskets, were heard the words—

“Mother of God, Virgin,  
Glorified by God Mary!”

Here a number of bombs burst; the cracking of rafters and beams, and then the shout: "Water!" struck the ear, and again the song flowed on in calmness.

"From Thy Son the Lord  
Send down to us, win for us,  
A time of bread, a time of plenty."

Kmita, who was standing on the wall at the cannon, opposite the village of Chenstohova, in which Miller's quarters were, and whence the greatest fire came, pushed away a less accurate cannoneer to begin work himself; and worked so well that soon, though it was in November and the day cold, he threw off his fox-skin coat, threw off his vest, and toiled in his trousers and shirt.

The hearts grew in people unacquainted with war, at sight of this soldier blood and bone, to whom all that was passing—that bellowing of cannon, those flocks of balls, that destruction and death—seemed as ordinary an element as fire to a salamander.

His brow was wrinkled, there was fire in his eyes, a flush on his cheeks, and a species of wild joy in his face. Every moment he bent to the cannon, altogether occupied with the aiming, altogether given to the battle, thinking of naught else; he aimed, lowered, raised, at last cried, "Fire!" and when Soroka touched the match, he ran to the opening and called out from time to time—

"One by the side of the other!"

His eagle eyes penetrated through smoke and dust, and when among the buildings he saw somewhere a dense mass of caps or helmets, straightway he crushed it with an accurate shot, as if with a thunderbolt. At times he burst out into laughter when he had caused greater or less destruction. The balls flew over him and at his side—he did not look at anything; suddenly, after a shot he sprang to the opening, fixed his eyes in the distance, and cried—

"The gun is dismounted! Only three pieces are playing there now!"

He did not rest until midday. Sweat was pouring from him, his shirt was steaming; his face was blackened with soot, and his eyes glittering. Pyotr Charnyetski himself wondered at his aim, and said to him repeatedly—

"War is nothing new to you; that is clear at a glance. Where have you learned it so well?"

At three o'clock in the afternoon a second Swedish gun was silent, dismounted by Kmita's accurate aim. They drew out the remaining guns from the intrenchments about an hour later. Evidently the Swedes saw that the position was untenable.

Kmita drew a deep breath.

"Rest!" said Charnyetski to him.

"Well! I wish to eat something. Soroka, give me what you have at hand."

The old sergeant bestirred himself quickly. He brought some *gorailka* in a tin cup and some dried fish. Kmita began to eat eagerly, raising his eyes from time to time and looking at the bombs flying over at no great distance, just as if he were looking at crows. But still they flew in considerable number, not from Chenstohova, but from the opposite side; namely, all those which passed over the cloister and the church.

"They have poor gunners, they point too high," said Pan Andrei, without ceasing to eat; "see, they all go over us, and they are aimed at us."

A young monk heard these words—a boy of seventeen years, who had just entered his novitiate. He was the first always to bring balls for loading, and he did not leave his place though every vein in him was trembling from fear, for he saw war for the first time. Kmita made an indescribable impression on him by his calmness, and hearing his words he took refuge near him with an involuntary movement as if wishing to seek protection and safety under the wings of that strength.

“Can they reach us from that side?” asked he.

“Why not?” answered Kmita. “And why, my dear brother, are you afraid?”

“I thought,” answered the trembling youth, “that war was terrible; but I did not think it was so terrible.”

“Not every bullet kills, or there would not be men in the world, there would not be mothers enough to give birth to them.”

“I have the greatest fear of those fiery balls, those bombs. Why do they burst with such noise? Mother of God, save us! and they wound people so terribly.”

“I will explain to you, and you will discover by experience, young father. That ball is iron, and inside it is loaded with powder. In one place there is an opening rather small, in which is a fuse of paper or sometimes of wood.”

“Jesus of Nazareth! is there a fuse in it?”

“There is; and in the fuse some tow steeped in sulphur, which catches fire when the gun is discharged. Then the ball should fall with the fuse toward the ground, so as to drive it into the middle; then the fire reaches the powder and the ball bursts. But many balls do not fall on the fuse; that does not matter, however, for when the fire burns to the end, the explosion comes.”

On a sudden Kmita stretched out his hand and cried, “See, see! you have an experiment.”

“Jesus! Mary! Joseph!” cried the young brother, at sight of the coming bomb.

The bomb fell on the square that moment, and snarling and rushing along began to bound on the pavement, dragging behind a small blue smoke, turned once more, and rolling to the foot of the wall on which they were sitting, fell into a pile of wet sand, which it scattered high to the battlement, and losing its power altogether, remained without motion.

Luckily it had fallen with the fuse up; but the sulphur was not quenched, for the smoke rose at once.

“To the ground! on your faces!” frightened voices began to shout. “To the ground, to the ground!”

But Kmita at the same moment sprang to the pile of sand, with a lightning movement of his hand caught the fuse, plucked it, pulled it out, and raising his hand with the burning sulphur cried—

“Rise up! It is just as if you had pulled the teeth out of a dog! It could not kill a fly now.”

When he had said this, he kicked the bomb, those present grew numb at sight of this deed, which surpassed human daring, and for a certain time no one made bold to speak; at last Charnyetski exclaimed—

“You are a madman! If that had burst, it would have turned you into powder!”

Pan Andrei laughed so heartily that his teeth glittered.

“But do we not need powder? You could have loaded a gun with me, and after my death I could have done harm to the Swedes.”

“May the bullets strike you! Where is your fear?”

The young monk placed his hands together and looked with mute homage on Kmita. But the deed was also seen by Kordotski, who was approaching on that side. He came up, took Pan Andrei with his hands by the head, and then made the sign of the cross on him.

“Such men as you will not surrender Yasna Gora; but I forbid exposing a needful life to danger. When the firing is over and the enemy leave the field, take that bomb, pour the powder out of it, and bear it to the Most Holy Lady. That gift will be dearer to Her than those pearls and bright stones which you offered Her.”

“Father,” answered Kmita, deeply moved, “what is there great in that? For the Most Holy Lady I would—Oh! words do not rise in my mouth—I would go to torments, to death. I know not what I would not do to serve Her.”

Tears glistened in the eyes of Pan Andrei, and the prior said—

“Go to Her with those tears before they dry. Her favor will flow to thee, calm thee, comfort thee, adorn thee with glory and honor.”

When he had said this he took him by the arm and led him to the church. Pan Charnyetski looked after them for a time. At last he said—

“I have seen many daring men in my life, who counted no danger to themselves; but this Lithuanian is either the D—”

Here Charnyetski closed his mouth with his hand, so not to speak a foul name in the holy place.

## Chapter XLII

The war with cannon was no bar to negotiations, which the fathers determined to use at every opportunity. They wished to delude the enemy and procrastinate till aid came, or at least severe winter. But Miller did not cease to believe that the monks wished merely to extort the best terms.

In the evening, therefore, after that cannonading, he sent Colonel Kuklinovski again with a summons to surrender. The prior showed Kuklinovski the safeguard of the king, which closed his mouth at once. But Miller had a later command of the king to occupy Boleslav, Vyelunie, Kjepits, and Chenstohova.

“Take this order to them,” said he to Kuklinovski; “for I think that they will lack means of evasion when it is shown them.” But he was deceived.

The prior answered: “If the command includes Chenstohova, let the general occupy the place with good fortune. He may be sure that the cloister will make no opposition; but Chenstohova is not Yasna Gora, of which no mention is made in the order.”

When Miller heard this answer he saw that he had to deal with diplomats more adroit than himself; reasons were just what he lacked—and there remained only cannon.

A truce lasted through the night. The Swedes worked with vigor at making better trenches; and on Yasna Gora they looked for the damages of the previous day, and saw with astonishment that there were none. Here and there roofs and rafters were broken, here and there plaster had dropped from the walls—that was all. Of the men, none had fallen, no one was even maimed. The prior, going around on the walls, said with a smile to the soldiers—

“But see, this enemy with his bombarding is not so terrible as reported. After a festival there is often more harm done. God’s care is guarding you; God’s hand protects you; only let us endure, and we shall see greater wonders.”

Sunday came, the festival of the offering of the Holy Lady. There was no hindrance to services, since Miller was waiting for the final answer, which the monks had promised to send after midday.

Mindful meanwhile of the words of Scripture, how Israel bore the ark of God around the camp to terrify the Philistines, they went again in procession with the monstrance.

The letter was sent about one o’clock, not to surrender; but to repeat the answer given Kuklinovski, that the church and the cloister are called Yasna Gora, and that the town Chenstohova does not belong to the cloister at all. “Therefore we implore earnestly his worthiness,” wrote the prior Kordetski, “to be pleased to leave in peace our Congregation and the church consecrated to God and His Most Holy Mother, so that God may be honored therein during future times. In this church also we shall implore the Majesty of God for the health and success of the Most Serene King of Sweden. Meanwhile we, unworthy men, while preferring our request, commend ourselves most earnestly to the kindly consideration of your worthiness, confiding in your goodness, from which we promise much to ourselves in the future.”

There were present at the reading of the letter, Sadovski; Count Veyhard; Horn, governor of Kjepitsi; De Fossis, a famous engineer; and the Prince of Hesse, a man young and very haughty, who though subordinate to Miller, was willing to show his own importance. He laughed therefore maliciously, and repeated the conclusion of the letter with emphasis—



“They promise much to themselves from your kindness; General, that is a hint for a contribution. I put one question, gentlemen: Are the monks better beggars or better gunners?”

“True,” said Horn, “during these first days we have lost so many men that a good battle would not have taken more.”

“As for me,” continued the Prince of Hesse, “I do not want money; I am not seeking for glory, and I shall freeze off my feet in these huts. What a pity that we did not go to Prussia, a rich country, pleasant, one town excelling another.”

Miller, who acted quickly but thought slowly, now first understood the sense of the letter; he grew purple and said—

“The monks are jeering at us, gracious gentlemen.”

“They had not the intention of doing so, but it comes out all the same,” answered Horn.

“To the trenches, then! Yesterday the fire was weak, the balls few.”

The orders given flew swiftly from end to end of the Swedish line. The trenches were covered with blue clouds; the cloister answered quickly with all its energy. But this time the Swedish guns were better planted, and began to cause greater damage. Bombs, loaded with powder, were scattered, each drawing behind it a curl of flame. Lighted torches were hurled too, and rolls of hemp steeped in rosin.

As sometimes flocks of passing cranes, tired from long flying, besiege a high cliff, so swarms of these fiery messengers fell on the summit of the church and on the wooden roofs of the buildings. Whoso was not taking part in the struggle, was near a cannon, was sitting on a roof. Some dipped water from wells, others drew up the buckets with ropes, while third parties put out fire with wet cloths. Balls crashing rafters and beams fell into garrets, and soon smoke and the odor of burning filled all the interior of buildings. But in garrets, too, defenders were watching with buckets of water. The heaviest bombs burst even through ceilings. In spite of efforts more than human, in spite of wakefulness, it seemed that, early or late, flames would embrace the whole cloister. Torches and bundles of hemp pushed with hooks from the roofs formed burning piles at the foot of the walls. Windows were bursting from heat, and women and children confined in rooms were stifling from smoke and exhalations. Hardly were some missiles extinguished, hardly was the water flowing in broken places, when there came new flocks of burning balls, flaming cloths, sparks, living fire. The whole cloister was seized with it. You would have said that heaven had opened on the place, and that a shower of thunders was falling; still it burned, but was not consumed; it was flaming, but did not fall into fragments; what was more, the besieged began to sing like those youths in the fiery furnace; for, as the day previous, a song was now heard from the tower, accompanied by trumpets. To the men standing on the walls and working at the guns, who at each moment might think that all was blazing and falling to ruins behind their shoulders, that song was like healing balsam, announcing continually that the church was standing, that the cloister was standing, that so far flames had not vanquished the efforts of men. Hence it became a custom to sweeten with such harmony the suffering of the siege, and to keep removed from the ears of women the terrible shouts of raging soldiery.

But in the Swedish camp that singing and music made no small impression. The soldiers in the trenches heard it at first with wonder, then with superstitious dread.

“How is it,” said they to one another, “we have cast so much fire and iron at that henhouse that more than one powerful fortress would have flown away in smoke and ashes, but they are playing joyously? What does this mean?”

“Enchantment!” said others.

“Balls do not harm those walls. Bombs roll down from the roofs as if they were empty kegs! Enchantment, enchantment!” repeated they. “Nothing good will meet us in this place.”

The officers in fact were ready to ascribe some mysterious meaning to those sounds. But others interpreted differently, and Sadowski said aloud, so that Miller might hear: “They must feel well there, since they rejoice; or are they glad because we have spent so much powder for nothing?”

“Of which we have not too much,” added the Prince of Hesse.

“But we have as leader Poliorcetes,” said Sadowski, in such a tone that it could not be understood whether he was ridiculing or flattering Miller. But the latter evidently took it as ridicule, for he bit his mustache.

“We shall see whether they will be playing an hour later,” said he, turning to his staff.

Miller gave orders to double the fire, but these orders were carried out over-zealously. In their hurry, the gunners pointed the cannons too high, and the result was they carried too far. Some of the balls, soaring above the church and the cloister, went to the Swedish trenches on the opposite side, smashing timber works, scattering baskets, killing men.

An hour passed; then a second. From the church tower came solemn music unbroken.

Miller stood with his glass turned on Chenstohova. He looked a long time. Those present noticed that the hand with which he held the glass to his eyes trembled more and more; at last he turned and cried—

“The shots do not injure the church one whit!” And anger, unrestrained, mad, seized the old warrior. He hurled the glass to the earth, and it broke into pieces. “I shall go wild from this music!” roared he.

At that moment De Fossis, the engineer, galloped up. “General,” said he, “it is impossible to make a mine. Under a layer of earth lies rock. There miners are needed.”

Miller used an oath. But he had not finished the imprecation when another officer came with a rush from the Chenstohova entrenchment, and saluting, said—

“Our largest gun has burst. Shall we bring others from Lgota?”

Fire had slackened somewhat; the music was heard with more and more solemnity. Miller rode off to his quarters without saying a word. But he gave no orders to slacken the struggle; he determined to worry the besieged. They had in the fortress barely two hundred men as garrison; he had continual relays of fresh soldiers.

Night came, the guns thundered unceasingly; but the cloister guns answered actively—more actively indeed than during the day, for the Swedish campfires showed them ready work. More than once it happened that soldiers had barely sat around the fire and the kettle hanging over it, when a ball from the cloister flew to them out of the darkness, like an angel of death. The fire was scattered to splinters and sparks, the soldiers ran apart with unearthly cries, and either sought refuge with other comrades, or wandered through the night, chilled, hungry, and frightened.

About midnight the fire from the cloister increased to such force that within reach of a cannon not a stick could be kindled. The besieged seemed to speak in the language of cannons the following words: “You wish to wear us out—try it! We challenge you!”

One o'clock struck, and two. A fine rain began to fall in the form of cold mist, but piercing, and in places thickened as if into pillars, columns and bridges seeming red from the light of the fire. Through these fantastic arcades and pillars were seen at times the threatening outlines of the cloister, which changed before the eye; at one time it seemed higher than usual, then again it fell away as if in an abyss. From the trenches to its walls stretched as it were ill-omened arches and corridors formed of darkness and mist, and through those corridors flew balls bearing death; at times all the air above the cloister seemed clear as if illumined by a lightning flash; the walls, the lofty works, and the towers were all outlined in brightness, then again they were quenched. The soldiers looked before them with superstitious and gloomy dread. Time after time one pushed another and whispered—

“Hast seen it? This cloister appears and vanishes in turn. That is a power not human.”

“I saw something better than that,” answered the other. “We were aiming with that gun that burst, when in a moment the whole fortress began to jump and quiver, as if someone were raising and lowering it. Fire at such a fortress; hit it!”

The soldier then threw aside the cannon brush, and after a while added—

“We can win nothing here! We shall never smell their treasures. Brr, it is cold! Have you the tar-bucket there? Set fire to it; we can even warm our hands.”

One of the soldiers started to light the tar by means of a sulphured thread. He ignited the sulphur first, then began to let it down slowly.

“Put out that light!” sounded the voice of an officer. But almost the same instant was heard the noise of a ball; then a short cry, and the light was put out.

The night brought the Swedes heavy losses. A multitude of men perished at the campfires; in places regiments fell into such disorder that they could not form line before morning. The besieged, as if wishing to show that they needed no sleep, fired with increasing rapidity.

The dawn lighted tired faces on the walls, pale, sleepless, but enlivened by feverishness. Kordetski had lain in the form of a cross in the church all night; with daylight he appeared on the walls, and his pleasant voice was heard at the cannon, in the curtains, and near the gates.

“God is forming the day, my children,” said he. “Blessed be His light. There is no damage in the church, none in the buildings. The fire is put out, no one has lost his life. Pan Mosinski, a fiery ball fell under the cradle of your little child, and was quenched, causing no harm. Give thanks to the Most Holy Lady; repay her.”

“May Her name be blessed,” said Mosinski; “I serve as I can.”

The prior went farther.

It had become bright day when he stood near Charnyetski and Kmita. He did not see Kmita; for he had crawled to the other side to examine the woodwork, which a Swedish ball had harmed somewhat. The prior asked straightway—

“But where is Babinich? Is he not sleeping?”

“I, sleep in such a night as this!” answered Pan Andrei, climbing up on the wall. “I should have no conscience. Better watch as an orderly of the Most Holy Lady.”

“Better, better, faithful servant!” answered Kordetski.

Pan Andrei saw at that moment a faint Swedish light gleaming, and immediately he cried—

“Fire, there, fire! Aim! higher! at the dog-brothers!”

Kordetski smiled, seeing such zeal, and returned to the cloister to send to the wearied men a drink made of beer with pieces of cheese broken in it.

Half an hour later appeared women, priests, and old men of the church, bringing steaming pots and jugs. The soldiers seized these with alacrity, and soon was heard along all the walls eager drinking. They praised the drink, saying—

“We are not forgotten in the service of the Most Holy Lady. We have good food.”

“It is worse for the Swedes,” added others. “It was hard for them to cook food the past night; it will be worse the night coming.”

“They have enough, the dog-faiths. They will surely give themselves and us rest during the day. Their poor guns must be hoarse by this time from roaring continually.”

But the soldiers were mistaken, for the day was not to bring rest. When, in the morning, officers coming with the reports informed Miller that the result of the night’s cannonading was nothing, that in fact the night had brought the Swedes a considerable loss in men, the general was stubborn and gave command to continue cannonading. “They will grow tired at last,” said he to the Prince of Hesse.

“This is an immense outlay of powder,” answered that officer.

“But they burn powder too?”

“They must have endless supplies of saltpetre and sulphur, and we shall give them charcoal ourselves, if we are able to burn even one booth. In the night I went near the walls, and in spite of the thunder, I heard a mill clearly, that must be a powder-mill.”

“I will give orders to cannonade as fiercely as yesterday, till sunset. We will rest for the night. We shall see if an embassy does not come out.”

“Your worthiness knows that they have sent one to Wittemberg?”

“I know; I will send too for the largest cannons. If it is impossible to frighten the monks or to raise a fire inside the fortress, we must make a breach.”

“I hope, your worthiness, that the field-marshal will approve the siege.”

“The field-marshal knows of my intention, and he has said nothing,” replied Miller, dryly. “If failure pursues me still farther, the field-marshal will give censure instead of approval, and will not fail to lay all the blame at my door. The king will say he is right—I know that. I have suffered not a little from the field-marshal’s sullen humor, just as if ’tis my fault that he, as the Italians state, is consumed by *mal francese*.”

“That they will throw the blame on you I doubt not, especially when it appears that Sadovich is right.”

“How right? Sadovich speaks for those monks as if he were hired by them. What does he say?”

“He says that these shots will be heard through the whole country, from the Carpathians to the Baltic.”

“Let the king command in such case to tear the skin from Count Veyhard and send it as an offering to the cloister; for he it is who instigated to this siege.”

Here Miller seized his head.

“But it is necessary to finish at a blow. It seems to me, something tells me, that in the night they will send someone to negotiate; meanwhile fire after fire!”

The day passed then as the day previous, full of thunder, smoke, and flames. Many such were to pass yet over Yasna Gora. But the defenders quenched the conflagrations and cannonaded no less bravely. One half the soldiers went to rest, the other half were on the walls at the guns.

The people began to grow accustomed to the unbroken roar, especially when convinced that no great damage was done. Faith strengthened the less experienced; but among them were old soldiers, acquainted with war, who performed their service as a trade. These gave comfort to the villagers.

Soroka acquired much consideration among them; for, having spent a great part of his life in war, he was as indifferent to its uproar as an old innkeeper to the shouts of carousers. In the evening when the guns had grown silent he told his comrades of the siege of Zbaraj. He had not been there in person, but he knew of it minutely from soldiers who had gone through that siege and had told him.

“There rolled on Cossacks, Tartars, and Turks, so many that there were more under-cooks there than all the Swedes that are here. And still our people did not yield to them. Besides, evil spirits have no power here; but there it was only Friday, Saturday, and Sunday that the devils did not help the ruffians; the rest of the time they terrified our people whole nights. They sent Death to the breastworks to appear to the soldiers and take from them courage for battle. I know this from a man who saw Death himself.”

“Did he see her?” asked with curiosity peasants gathering around the sergeant.

“With his own eyes. He was going from digging a well; for water was lacking, and what was in the ponds smelt badly. He was going, going, till he saw walking in front of him some kind of figure in a black mantle.”

“In a black, not in a white one?”

“In black; in war Death dresses in black. It was growing dark, the soldier came up. ‘Who is here?’ inquired he—no answer. Then he pulled the mantle, looked, and saw a skeleton. ‘But what art thou here for?’ asked the soldier. ‘I am Death,’ was the answer; ‘and I am coming for thee in a week.’ The soldier thought that was bad. ‘Why,’ asked he, ‘in a week, and not sooner? Art thou not free to come sooner?’ The other said: ‘I can do nothing before a week, for such is the order.’

“The soldier thought to himself: ‘That is hard; but if she can do nothing to me now, I’ll pay her what I owe.’ Winding Death up in the mantle, he began to beat her bones on the pebbles; but she cried and begged: ‘I’ll come in two weeks!’ ‘Impossible.’ ‘In three, four, ten, when the siege is over; a year, two, fifteen—’ ‘Impossible.’ ‘I’ll come in fifty years.’ The soldier was pleased, for he was then fifty, and thought: ‘A hundred years is enough; I’ll let her go.’ The man is living this minute, and well; he goes to a battle as to a dance, for what does he care?”

“But if he had been frightened, it would have been all over with him?”

“The worst is to fear Death,” said Soroka, with importance. “This soldier did good to others too; for after he had beaten Death, he hurt her so that she was fainting for three days, and during that time no one fell in camp, though sorties were made.”

“But we never go out at night against the Swedes.”

“We haven’t the head for it,” answered Soroka.

The last question and answer were heard by Kmita, who was standing not far away, and he struck his head. Then he looked at the Swedish trenches. It was already night. At the trenches for an hour past deep silence had reigned. The wearied soldiers were seemingly sleeping at the guns.

At two cannon-shots' distance gleamed a number of fires; but at the trenches themselves was thick darkness.

"That will not enter their heads, nor the suspicion of it, and they cannot suppose it," whispered Kmita to himself.

He went straight to Charnyetski, who, sitting at the gun-carriage, was reading his rosary, and striking one foot against the other, for both feet were cold.

"Cold," said he, seeing Kmita; "and my head is heavy from the thunder of two days and one night. In my ears there is continual ringing."

"In whose head would it not ring from such uproars? But today we shall rest. They have gone to sleep for good. It would be possible to surprise them like a bear in a den; I know not whether guns would rouse them."

"Oh," said Charnyetski, raising his head, "of what are you thinking?"

"I am thinking of Zbaraj, how the besieged inflicted with sorties more than one great defeat on the ruffians."

"You are thinking of blood, like a wolf in the night."

"By the living God and his wounds, let us make a sortie! We will cut down men, spike guns! They expect no attack."

Charnyetski sprang to his feet.

"And in the morning they will go wild. They imagine, perhaps, that they have frightened us enough and we are thinking of surrender; they will get their answer. As I love God, 'tis a splendid idea, a real knightly deed! That should have come to my head too. But it is needful to tell all to Kordetski, for he is commander."

They went.

Kordetski was taking counsel in the chamber with Zamoyski. When he heard steps, he raised his voice and pushing a candle to one side, inquired—

"Who is coming? Is there anything new?"

"It is I, Charnyetski," replied Pan Pyotr, "with me is Babinich; neither of us can sleep. We have a terrible odor of the Swedes. This Babinich, father, has a restless head and cannot stay in one place. He is boring me, boring; for he wants terribly to go to the Swedes beyond the walls to ask them if they will fire tomorrow also, or give us and themselves time to breathe."

"How is that?" inquired the prior, not concealing his astonishment "Babinich wants to make a sortie from the fortress?"

"In company, in company," answered Charnyetski, hurriedly, "with me and some others. They, it seems, are sleeping like dead men at the trenches; there is no fire visible, no sentries to be seen. They trust over much in our weakness."

"We will spike the guns," said Kmita.

"Give that Babinich this way!" exclaimed Zamoyski; "let me embrace him! The sting is itching, O hornet! thou wouldst gladly sting even at night. This is a great undertaking, which

may have the finest results. God gave us only one Lithuanian, but that one an enraged and biting beast. I applaud the design; no one here will find fault with it. I am ready to go myself."

Kordetski at first was alarmed, for he feared bloodshed, especially when his own life was not exposed; after he had examined the idea more closely, he recognized it as worthy of the defenders.

"Let me pray," said he. And kneeling before the image of the Mother of God, he prayed a while, with outspread arms, and then rose with serene face.

"Pray you as well," said he; "and then go."

A quarter of an hour later the four went out and repaired to the walls. The trenches in the distance were sleeping. The night was very dark.

"How many men will you take?" asked Kordetski of Kmita.

"I?" answered Pan Andrei, in surprise. "I am not leader, and I do not know the place so well as Pan Charnyetski. I will go with my sabre, but let Charnyetski lead the men, and me with the others; I only wish to have my Soroka go, for he can hew terribly."

This answer pleased both Charnyetski and the prior, for they saw in it clear proof of submission. They set about the affair briskly. Men were selected, the greatest silence was enjoined, and they began to remove the beams, stones, and brick from the passage in the wall.

This labor lasted about an hour. At length the opening was ready, and the men began to dive into the narrow jaws. They had sabres, pistols, guns, and some, namely peasants, had scythes with points downward—a weapon with which they were best acquainted.

When outside the wall they organized; Charnyetski stood at the head of the party, Kmita at the flank; and they moved along the ditch silently, restraining the breath in their breasts, like wolves stealing up to a sheepfold.

Still, at times a scythe struck a scythe, at times a stone gritted under a foot, and by those noises it was possible to know that they were pushing forward unceasingly. When they had come down to the plain, Charnyetski halted, and, not far from the enemy's trenches, left some of his men, under command of Yanich, a Hungarian, an old, experienced soldier; these men he commanded to lie on the ground. Charnyetski himself advanced somewhat to the right, and having now under foot soft earth which gave out no echo, began to lead forward his party more swiftly. His plan was to pass around the intrenchment, strike on the sleeping Swedes from the rear, and push them toward the cloister against Yanich's men. This idea was suggested by Kmita, who now marching near him with sabre in hand, whispered—

"The intrenchment is extended in such fashion that between it and the main camp there is open ground. Sentries, if there are any, are before the trenches and not on this side of it, so that we can go behind freely, and attack them on the side from which they least expect attack."

"That is well," said Charnyetski; "not a foot of those men should escape."

"If anyone speaks when we enter," continued Pan Andrei, "let me answer; I can speak German as well as Polish; they will think that someone is coming from Miller, from the camp."

"If only there are no sentries behind the intrenchments."

"Even if there are, we shall spring on in a moment; before they can understand who and what, we shall have them down."

“It is time to turn, the end of the trench can be seen,” said Charnyetski; and turning he called softly, “To the right, to the right!”

The silent line began to bend. That moment the moon lighted a bank of clouds somewhat, and it grew clearer. The advancing men saw an empty space in the rear of the trench.

As Kmita had foreseen, there were no sentries whatever on that space; for why should the Swedes station sentries between their trenches and their own army, stationed in the rear of the trenches. The most sharp-sighted leader could not suspect danger from that side.

At that moment Charnyetski said in the lowest whisper; “Tents are now visible. And in two of them are lights. People are still awake there—surely officers. Entrance from the rear must be easy.”

“Evidently,” answered Kmita. “Over that road they draw cannon, and by it troops enter. The bank is already at hand. Have a care now that arms do not clatter.”

They had reached the elevation raised carefully with earth dug from so many trenches. A whole line of wagons was standing there, in which powder and balls had been brought.

But at the wagons, no man was watching; passing them, therefore, they began to climb the embankment without trouble, as they had justly foreseen, for it was gradual and well raised.

In this manner they went right to the tents, and with drawn weapons stood straight in front of them. In two of the tents lights were actually burning; therefore Kmita said to Charnyetski—

“I will go in advance to those who are not sleeping. Wait for my pistol, and then on the enemy!” When he had said this, he went forward.

The success of the sortie was already assured; therefore he did not try to go in very great silence. He passed a few tents buried in darkness; no one woke, no one inquired, “Who is there?”

The soldiers of Yasna Gora heard the squeak of his daring steps and the beating of their own hearts. He reached the lighted tent, raised the curtain and entered, halted at the entrance with pistol in hand and sabre down on its strap.

He halted because the light dazzled him somewhat, for on the camp table stood a candlestick with six arms, in which bright lights were burning.

At the table were sitting three officers, bent over plans. One of them, sitting in the middle, was poring over these plans so intently that his long hair lay on the white paper. Seeing someone enter, he raised his head, and asked in a calm voice—

“Who is there?”

“A soldier,” answered Kmita.

That moment the two other officers turned their eyes toward the entrance.

“What soldier, where from?” asked the first, who was De Fossis, the officer who chiefly directed the siege.

“From the cloister,” answered Kmita. But there was something terrible in his voice.

De Fossis rose quickly and shaded his eyes with his hand. Kmita was standing erect and motionless as an apparition; only the threatening face, like the head of a predatory bird, announced sudden danger.

Still the thought, quick as lightning, rushed through the head of De Fossis, that he might be a deserter from Yasna Gora; therefore he asked again, but excitedly—



“What do you want?”

“I want this!” cried Kmita; and he fired from a pistol into the very breast of De Fossis.

With that a terrible shout and a salvo of shots was heard on the trench. De Fossis fell as falls a pine-tree struck by lightning; another officer rushed at Kmita with his sword, but the latter slashed him between the eyes with his sabre, which grinded on the bone; the third officer threw himself on the ground, wishing to slip out under the side of the tent, but Kmita sprang at him, put his foot on his shoulder, and nailed him to the earth with a thrust.

By this time the silence of night had turned into the day of judgment. Wild shouts: “Slay, kill!” were mingled with howls and shrill calls of Swedish soldiers for aid. Men bewildered from terror rushed out of the tents, not knowing whither to turn, in what direction to flee. Some, without noting at once whence the attack came, ran straight to the enemy, and perished under sabres, scythes, and axes, before they had time to cry “Quarter!” Some in the darkness stabbed their own comrades; others unarmed, half-dressed, without caps, with hands raised upward, stood motionless on one spot; some at last dropped on the earth among the overturned tents. A small handful wished to defend themselves; but a blinded throng bore them away, threw them down, and trampled them.

Groans of the dying and heartrending prayers for quarter increased the confusion.

When at last it grew clear from the cries that the attack had come, not from the side of the cloister, but from the rear, just from the direction of the Swedish army, then real desperation seized the attacked. They judged evidently that some squadrons, allies of the cloister, had struck on them suddenly.

Crowds of infantry began to spring out of the intrenchment and run toward the cloister, as if they wished to find refuge within its walls. But soon new shouts showed that they had come upon the party of the Hungarian, Yanich, who finished them under the very fortress.

Meanwhile the cloister-men, slashing, thrusting, trampling, advanced toward the cannons. Men with spikes ready, rushed at them immediately; but others continued the work of death. Peasants, who would not have stood before trained soldiers in the open field, rushed now a handful at a crowd.

Valiant Colonel Horn, governor of Kjepitsi, endeavored to rally the fleeing soldiers; springing into a corner of the trench, he shouted in the darkness and waved his sword. The Swedes recognized him and began at once to assemble; but in their tracks and with them rushed the attackers, whom it was difficult to distinguish in the darkness.

At once was heard a terrible whistle of scythes, and the voice of Horn ceased in a moment. The crowd of soldiers scattered as if driven apart by a bomb. Kmita and Charnyetski rushed after them with a few people, and cut them to pieces.

The trench was taken.

In the main camp of the Swedes trumpets sounded the alarm. Straightway the guns of Yasna Gora gave answer, and fiery balls began to fly from the cloister to light up the way for the homecoming men. They came panting, bloody, like wolves who had made a slaughter in a sheepfold; they were retreating before the approaching sound of musketeers. Charnyetski led the van, Kmita brought up the rear.

In half an hour they reached the party left with Yanich; but he did not answer their call; he alone had paid for the sortie with his life, for when he rushed after some officer, his own soldiers shot him.

The party entered the cloister amid the thunder of cannon and the gleam of flames. At the entrance the prior was waiting, and he counted them in order as the heads were pushed in through the opening. No one was missing save Yanich.

Two men went out for him at once, and half an hour later they brought his body; for Kordetski wished to honor him with a fitting burial.

But the quiet of night, once broken, did not return till white day. From the walls cannon were playing; in the Swedish positions the greatest confusion continued. The enemy not knowing well their own losses, not knowing whence the aggressor might come, fled from the trenches nearest the cloister. Whole regiments wandered in despairing disorder till morning, mistaking frequently their own for the enemy, and firing at one another. Even in the main camp were soldiers and officers who abandoned their tents and remained under the open sky, awaiting the end of that ghastly night. Alarming news flew from mouth to mouth. Some said that succor had come to the fortress, others asserted that all the nearer intrenchments were captured.

Miller, Sadovski, the Prince of Hesse, Count Veyhard, and other superior officers, made superhuman exertions to bring the terrified regiments to order. At the same time the cannonade of the cloister was answered by balls of fire, to scatter the darkness and enable fugitives to assemble. One of the balls struck the roof of the chapel, but striking only the edge of it, returned with rattling and crackling toward the camp, casting a flood of flame through the air.

At last the night of tumult was ended. The cloister and the Swedish camp became still. Morning had begun to whiten the summits of the church, the roofs took on gradually a ruddy light, and day came.

In that hour Miller, at the head of his staff, rode to the captured trench. They could, it is true, see him from the cloister and open fire; but the old general cared not for that. He wished to see with his own eyes all the injury, and count the slain. The staff followed him; all were disturbed—they had sorrow and seriousness in their faces. When they reached the intrenchment, they dismounted and began to ascend. Traces of the struggle were visible everywhere; lower down than the guns were the overthrown tents; some were still open, empty, silent. There were piles of bodies, especially among the tents; half-naked corpses, mangled, with staring eyes, and with terror stiffened in their dead eyeballs, presented a dreadful sight. Evidently all these men had been surprised in deep sleep; some of them were barefoot; it was a rare one who grasped his rapier in his dead hand; almost no one wore a helmet or a cap. Some were lying in tents, especially at the side of the entrance; these, it was apparent, had barely succeeded in waking; others, at the sides of tents, were caught by death at the moment when they were seeking safety in flight. Everywhere there were many bodies, and in places such piles that it might be thought some cataclysm of nature had killed those soldiers; but the deep wounds in their faces and breasts, some faces blackened by shots, so near that all the powder had not been burned, testified but too plainly that the hand of man had caused the destruction.

Miller went higher, to the guns; they were standing dumb, spiked, no more terrible now than logs of wood; across one of them lay hanging on both sides the body of a gunner, almost cut in two by the terrible sweep of a scythe. Blood had flowed over the carriage and formed a broad pool beneath it. Miller observed everything minutely, in silence and with frowning brow. No officer dared break that silence. For how could they bring consolation to that aged general, who had been beaten like a novice through his own want of care? That was not only defeat, but shame; for the general himself had called that fortress a henhouse, and promised

to crush it between his fingers, for he had nine thousand soldiers, and there were two hundred men in the garrison; finally, that general was a soldier, blood and bone, and against him were monks.

That day had a grievous beginning for Miller.

Now the infantry came up and began to carry out bodies. Four of them, bearing on a stretcher a corpse, stopped before the general without being ordered.

Miller looked at the stretcher and closed his eyes.

“De Fossis,” said he, in a hollow voice.

Scarcely had they gone aside when others came, this time Sadovski moved toward them and called from a distance, turning to the staff—

“They are carrying Horn!”

But Horn was alive yet, and had before him long days of atrocious suffering. A peasant had cut him with the very point of a scythe; but the blow was so fearful that it opened the whole framework of his breast. Still the wounded man retained his presence of mind. Seeing Miller and the staff, he smiled, wished to say something, but instead of a sound there came through his lips merely rose-colored froth; then he began to blink, and fainted.

“Carry him to my tent,” said Miller, “and let my doctor attend to him immediately.”

Then the officers heard him say to himself—

“Horn, Horn—I saw him last night in a dream—just in the evening. A terrible thing, beyond comprehension!”

And fixing his eyes on the ground, he dropped into deep thought; all at once he was roused from his reverie by the voice of Sadovski, who cried: “General! look there, there—the cloister!”

Miller looked and was astonished. It was broad day and clear, only fogs were hanging over the earth; but the sky was clear and blushing from the light of the morning. A white fog hid the summit itself of Yasna Gora, and according to the usual order of things ought to hide the church, but by a peculiar phenomenon the church, with the tower, was raised, not only above the cliff, but above the fog, high, high—precisely as if it had separated from its foundations and was hanging in the blue under the dome of the sky. The cries of the soldiers announced that they too saw the phenomenon.

“That fog deceives the eye!” said Miller.

“The fog is lying under the church,” answered Sadovski.

“It is a wonderful thing; but that church is ten times higher than it was yesterday, and hangs in the air,” said the Prince of Hesse.

“It is going yet! higher, higher!” cried the soldiers. “It will vanish from the eye!”

In fact the fog hanging on the cliff began to rise toward the sky in the form of an immense pillar of smoke; the church planted, as it were, on the summit of that pillar, seemed to rise higher each instant; at the same time when it was far up, as high as the clouds themselves, it was veiled more and more with vapor; you would have said that it was melting, liquefying; it became more indistinct, and at last vanished altogether.

Miller turned to the officers, and in his eyes were depicted astonishment and a superstitious dread.

"I acknowledge, gentlemen," said he, "that I have never seen such a thing in my life, altogether opposed to nature: it must be the enchantment of papists."

"I have heard," said Sadowski, "soldiers crying out, 'How can you fire at such a fortress?' In truth I know not how."

"But what is there now?" cried the Prince of Hesse. "Is that church in the fog, or is it gone?"

"Though this were an ordinary phenomenon of nature, in any event it forebodes us no good. See, gentlemen, from the time that we came here we have not advanced one step."

"If," answered Sadowski, "we had only not advanced; but to tell the truth, we have suffered defeat after defeat, and last night was the worst. The soldiers losing willingness lose courage, and will begin to be negligent. You have no idea of what they say in the regiments. Besides, wonderful things take place; for instance, for a certain time no man can go alone, or even two men, out of the camp; whoever does so is as if he had fallen through the earth, as if wolves were prowling around Chenstohova. I sent myself, not long since, a banneret and three men to Vyelunie for warm clothing, and from that day, no tidings of them."

"It will be worse when winter comes; even now the nights are unendurable," added the Prince of Hesse.

"The mist is growing thinner!" said Miller, on a sudden.

In fact a breeze rose and began to blow away the vapors. In the bundles of fog something began to quiver; finally the sun rose and the air grew transparent. The walls of the cloister were outlined faintly, then out came the church and the cloister. Everything was in its old place. The fortress was quiet and still, as if people were not living in it.

"General," said the Prince of Hesse, with energy, "try negotiations again, it is needful to finish at once."

"But if negotiations lead to nothing, do you, gentlemen, advise to give up the siege?" asked Miller, gloomily.

The officers were silent. After a while Sadowski said—

"Your worthiness knows best that it will come to that."

"I know," answered Miller, haughtily, "and I say this only to you, that I curse the day and the hour in which I came hither, as well as the counsellor who persuaded me to this siege [here he pierced Count Veyhard with his glance]. You know, however, after what has happened, that I shall not withdraw until I turn this cursed fortress into a heap of ruins, or fall myself."

Displeasure was reflected in the face of the Prince of Hesse. He had never respected Miller overmuch; hence he considered this mere military braggadocio ill-timed, in view of the captured trenches, the corpses, and the spiked cannon. He turned to him then and answered with evident sarcasm—

"General, you are not able to promise that; for you would withdraw in view of the first command of the king, or of Marshal Wittemberg. Sometimes also circumstances are able to command not worse than kings and marshals."

Miller wrinkled his heavy brows, seeing which Count Veyhard said hurriedly—

"Meanwhile we will try negotiations. They will yield; it cannot be otherwise."

The rest of his words were drowned by the rejoicing sound of bells, summoning to early Mass in the church of Yasna Gora. The general with his staff rode away slowly toward

Chenstohova; but had not reached headquarters when an officer rushed up on a foaming horse.

“He is from Marshal Wittemberg!” said Miller.

The officer handed him a letter. The general broke the seal hurriedly, and running over the letter quickly with his eyes, said with confusion in his countenance—

“No! This is from Poznan. Evil tidings. In Great Poland the nobles are rising, the people are joining them. At the head of the movement is Krishtof Jegotski, who wants to march to the aid of Chenstohova.”

“I foretold that these shots would be heard from the Carpathians to the Baltic,” muttered Sadovski. “With this people change is sudden. You do not know the Poles yet; you will discover them later.”

“Well! we shall know them,” answered Miller. “I prefer an open enemy to a false ally. They yielded of their own accord, and now they are taking arms. Well! they will know our weapons.”

“And we theirs,” blurted out Sadovski. “General, let us finish negotiations with Chenstohova; let us agree to any capitulation. It is not a question of the fortress, but of the rule of his Royal Grace in this country.”

“The monks will capitulate,” said Count Veyhard. “Today or tomorrow they will yield.”

So they conversed with one another; but in the cloister after early Mass the joy was unbounded. Those who had not gone out in the sortie asked those who had how everything had happened. Those who had taken part boasted greatly, glorifying their own bravery and the defeat they had given the enemy.

Among the priests and women curiosity became paramount. White habits and women’s robes covered the wall. It was a beautiful and gladsome day. The women gathered around Charnyetski, crying “Our deliverer! our guardian!” He defended himself particularly when they wanted to kiss his hands, and pointing to Kmita, said—

“Thank him too. He is Babinich,<sup>31</sup> but no old woman. He will not let his hands be kissed, for there is blood on them yet; but if any of the younger would like to kiss him on the lips, I think that he would not flinch.”

The younger women did in fact cast modest and at the same time enticing glances at Pan Andrei, admiring his splendid beauty; but he did not answer with his eyes to those dumb questions, for the sight of these maidens reminded him of Olenka.

“Oh, my poor girl!” thought he, “if you only knew that in the service of the Most Holy Lady I am opposing those enemies whom formerly I served to my sorrow!”

And he promised himself that the moment the siege was over he would write to her in Kyedani, and hurry off Soroka with the letter. “And I shall send her not empty words and promises; for now deeds are behind me, which without empty boasting, but accurately, I shall describe in the letter. Let her know that she has done this, let her be comforted.”

And he consoled himself with this thought so much that he did not even notice how the maidens said to one another, in departing—

“He is a good warrior; but it is clear that he looks only to battle, and is an unsocial grumbler.”

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<sup>31</sup> This name is derived from *baba* an old woman.

## Chapter XLIII

According to the wish of his officers, Miller began negotiations again. There came to the cloister from the Swedish camp a well-known Polish noble, respected for his age and his eloquence. They received him graciously on Yasna Gora, judging that only in seeming and through constraint would he argue for surrender, but in reality would add to their courage and confirm the news, which had broken through the besieged wall, of the rising in Great Poland; of the dislike of the quarter troops to Sweden; of the negotiations of Yan Kazimir with the Cossacks, who, as it were, seemed willing to return to obedience; finally, of the tremendous declaration of the Khan of the Tartars, that he was marching with aid to the vanquished king, all of whose enemies he would pursue with fire and sword.

But how the monks were mistaken! The personage brought indeed a large bundle of news—but news that was appalling, news to cool the most fervent zeal, to crush the most invincible resolution, stagger the most ardent faith.

The priests and the nobles gathered around him in the council chamber, in the midst of silence and attention; from his lips sincerity itself seemed to flow, and pain for the fate of the country. He placed his hand frequently on his white head as if wishing to restrain an outburst of despair; he gazed on the crucifix; he had tears in his eyes, and in slow, broken accents, he uttered the following words:—

“Ah, what times the suffering country has lived to! All help is past: it is incumbent to yield to the King of the Swedes. For whom in reality have you, revered fathers, and you lords brothers, the nobles, seized your swords? For whom are you sparing neither watching nor toil, nor suffering nor blood? For whom, through resistance—unfortunately vain—are you exposing yourselves and holy places to the terrible vengeance of the invincible legions of Sweden? Is it for Yan Kazimir? But he has already disregarded our kingdom. Do you not know that he has already made his choice, and preferring wealth, joyous feasts; and peaceful delights to a troublesome throne, has abdicated in favor of Karl Gustav? You are not willing to leave him, but he has left you, you are unwilling to break your oath, he has broken it; you are ready to die for him, but he cares not for you nor for any of us. Our lawful king now is Karl Gustav! Be careful, then, lest you draw on your heads, not merely anger, vengeance, and ruin, but sin before heaven, the cross, and the Most Holy Lady; for you are raising insolent hands, not against invaders, but against your own king.”

These words were received in silence, as though death were flying through that chamber. What could be more terrible than news of the abdication of Yan Kazimir? It was in truth news monstrously improbable; but that old noble gave it there in presence of the cross, in presence of the image of Mary, and with tears in his eyes.

But if it were true, further resistance was in fact madness. The nobles covered their eyes with their hands, the monks pulled their cowls over their heads, and silence, as of the grave, continued unbroken; but Kordetski, the prior, began to whisper earnest prayer with his pallid lips, and his eyes, calm, deep, clear, and piercing, were fixed on the speaker immovably.

The noble felt that inquiring glance, was ill at ease and oppressed by it; he wished to preserve the marks of importance, benignity, compassionate virtue, good wishes, but could not; he began to cast restless glances on the other fathers, and after a while he spoke further:—

“It is the worst thing to inflame stubbornness by a long abuse of patience. The result of your resistance will be the destruction of this holy church, and the infliction on you—God avert

it!—of a terrible and cruel rule, which you will be forced to obey. Aversion to the world and avoidance of its questions are the weapons of monks. What have you to do with the uproar of war—you, whom the precepts of your order call to retirement and silence? My brothers, revered and most beloved fathers! do not take on your hearts, do not take on your consciences, such a terrible responsibility. It was not you who built this sacred retreat, not for you alone must it serve! Permit that it flourish, and that it bless this land for long ages, so that our sons and grandsons may rejoice in it.”

Here the traitor opened his arms and fell into tears. The nobles were silent, the fathers were silent; doubt had seized all. Their hearts were tortured, and despair was at hand; the memory of baffled and useless endeavors weighed on their minds like lead.

“I am waiting for your answer, fathers,” said the venerable traitor, dropping his head on his breast.

Kordetski now rose, and with a voice in which there was not the least hesitation or doubt, spoke as if with the vision of a prophet—

“Your statement that Yan Kazimir has abandoned us, has abdicated and transferred his rights to Karl Gustav, is a calumny. Hope has entered the heart of our banished king, and never has he toiled more zealously than he is toiling at this moment to secure the salvation of the country, to secure his throne, and bring us aid in oppression.”

The mask fell in an instant from the face of the traitor; malignity and deceit were reflected in it as clearly as if dragons had crept out at once from the dens of his soul, in which till that moment they had held themselves hidden.

“Whence this intelligence, whence this certainty?” inquired he.

“Whence?” answered the prior, pointing to a great crucifix hanging on the wall. “Go! place your finger on the pierced feet of Christ, and repeat what you have told us.”

The traitor began to bend as if under the crushing of an iron hand, and a new dragon, terror, crawled forth to his face.

Kordetski, the prior, stood lordly, terrible as Moses; rays seemed to shoot from his temples.

“Go, repeat!” said he, without lowering his hand, in a voice so powerful that the shaken arches of the council chamber trembled and echoed as if in fear—“Go, repeat!”

A moment of silence followed; at last the stifled voice of the visitor was heard—

“I wash my hands—”

“Like Pilate!” finished Kordetski.

The traitor rose and walked out of the room. He hurried through the yard of the cloister, and when he found himself outside the gate, he began to run, almost as if something were hunting him from the cloister to the Swedes.

Zamoyski went to Charnyetski and Kmita, who had not been in the hall, to tell them what had happened.

“Did that envoy bring any good?” asked Charnyetski; “he had an honest face.”

“God guard us from such honest men!” answered Zamoyski; “he brought doubt and temptation.”

“What did he say?” asked Kmita, raising a little the lighted match which he was holding in his hand.

“He spoke like a hired traitor.”

“That is why he hastens so now, I suppose,” said Charnyetski. “See! he is running with almost full speed to the Swedish camp. Oh, I would send a ball after him!”

“A good thing!” said Kmita, and he put the match to the cannon.

The thunder of the gun was heard before Zamoyski and Charnyetski could see what had happened. Zamoyski caught his head.

“In God’s name!” cried he, “what have you done?—he was an envoy.”

“I have done ill!” answered Kmita; “for I missed. He is on his feet again and hastens farther. Oh! why did it go over him?” Here he turned to Zamoyski. “Though I had hit him in the loins, they could not have proved that we fired at him purposely, and God knows I could not hold the match in my fingers; it came down of itself. Never should I have fired at an envoy who was a Swede, but at sight of Polish traitors my entrails revolt.”

“Oh, curb yourself; for there would be trouble, and they would be ready to injure our envoys.”

But Charnyetski was content in his soul; for Kmita heard him mutter, “At least that traitor will be sure not to come on an embassy again.”

This did not escape the ear of Zamoyski, for he answered: “If not this one, others will be found; and do you, gentlemen, make no opposition to their negotiations, do not interrupt them of your own will; for the more they drag on, the more it results to our profit. Succor, if God sends it, will have time to assemble, and a hard winter is coming, making the siege more and more difficult. Delay is loss for the enemy, but brings profit to us.”

Zamoyski then went to the chamber, where, after the envoy’s departure, consultation was still going on. The words of the traitor had startled men; minds and souls were excited. They did not believe, it is true, in the abdication of Yan Kazimir; but the envoy had held up to their vision the power of the Swedes, which previous days of success had permitted them to forget. Now it confronted their minds with all that terror before which towns and fortresses not such as theirs had been frightened—Poznan, Warsaw, Krakow, not counting the multitude of castles which had opened their gates to the conqueror; how could Yasna Gora defend itself in a general deluge of defeats?

“We shall defend ourselves a week longer, two, three,” thought to themselves some of the nobles and some of the monks; “but what farther, what end will there be to these efforts?”

The whole country was like a ship already deep in the abyss, and that cloister was peering up like the top of a mast through the waves. Could those wrecked ones, clinging to the mast, think not merely of saving themselves, but of raising that vessel from under the ocean?

According to man’s calculations they could not, and still, at the moment when Zamoyski re-entered the hall, Kordetski was saying—

“My brothers! if you sleep not, neither do I sleep. When you are imploring our Patroness for rescue, I too am praying. Weariness, toil, weakness, cling to my bones as well as to yours; responsibility in like manner weighs upon me—nay, more perhaps, than upon you. Why have I faith while you seem in doubt? Enter into yourselves; or is it that your eyes, blinded by earthly power, see not a power greater than the Swedes? Or think you that no defence will suffice, that no hand can overcome that preponderance? If that is the case your thoughts are sinful, and you blaspheme against the mercy of God, against the all-might of our Lord, against the power of that Patroness whose servants you call yourselves. Who of you will dare



to say that that Most Holy Queen cannot shield us and send victory? Therefore let us beseech her, let us implore night and day, till by our endurance, our humility, our tears, our sacrifice of body and health, we soften her heart, and pray away our previous sins."

"Father," said one of the nobles, "it is not a question for us of our lives or of our wives and children; but we tremble at the thought of the insults which may be put on the image, should the enemy capture the fortress by storm."

"And we do not wish to take on ourselves the responsibility," added another.

"For no one has a right to take it, not even the prior," added a third.

And the opposition increased, and gained boldness, all the more since many monks maintained silence. The prior, instead of answering directly, began to pray.

"O Mother of Thy only Son!" said he, raising his hands and his eyes toward heaven, "if Thou hast visited us so that in Thy capital we should give an example to others of endurance, of bravery, of faithfulness to Thee, to the country, to the king—if Thou hast chosen this place in order to rouse by it the consciences of men and save the whole country, have mercy on those who desire to restrain, to stop the fountain of Thy grace, to hinder Thy miracles, and resist Thy holy will." Here he remained a moment in ecstasy, and then turned to the monks and nobles: "What man will take on his shoulders this responsibility—the responsibility of stopping the miracles of Mary Her grace. Her salvation for this kingdom and the Catholic faith?"

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" answered a number of voices, "God preserve us from that!"

"Such a man will not be found!" cried Zamoyski.

And those of the monks in whose hearts doubt had been plunging began to beat their breasts, for no small fear had now seized them; and none of the councillors thought of surrender that evening.

But though the hearts of the older men were strengthened, the destructive planting of that hireling had given forth fruits of poison.

News of the abdication of Yan Kazimir and the improbability of succor went from the nobles to the women, from the women to the servants; the servants spread it among the soldiers, on whom it made the very worst impression. The peasants were astonished least of all; but experienced soldiers, accustomed to calculate the turns of war in soldier fashion only, began to assemble and explain to one another the impossibility of further defence, complaining of the stubbornness of monks, who did not understand the position; and, finally, to conspire and talk in secret.

A certain gunner, a German of suspected fidelity, proposed that the soldiers themselves take the matter in hand, and come to an understanding with the Swedes touching the surrender of the fortress. Others caught at this idea; but there were those who not only opposed the treason resolutely, but informed Kordetski of it without delay.

Kordetski, who knew how to join with the firmest trust in the powers of heaven the greatest earthly adroitness and caution, destroyed the secretly spreading treason in its inception.

First of all he expelled from the fortress the leaders of the treason, and at the head of them that gunner, having no fear whatever of what they could inform the Swedes regarding the state of the fortress and its weak sides; then, doubling the monthly wages of the garrison, he took from them an oath to defend the cloister to the last drop of their blood.

But he redoubled also his watchfulness, resolving to look with more care to the paid soldiers, as well as the nobles, and even his own monks. The older fathers were detailed to the night choirs; the younger, besides the service of God, were obliged to render service on the walls.

Next day a review of the infantry was held. To each bastion one noble with his servants, ten monks and two reliable gunners were detailed. All these were bound to watch, night and day, the places confided to them.

Pan Mosinski took his place at the northeastern bastion; he was a good soldier, the man whose little child had survived in a miraculous manner, though a bomb fell near its cradle. With him Father Hilary Slavoshevski kept guard. On the western bastion was Father Myeletski, of the nobles Pan Mikolai Kryshstoporski, a man surly and abrupt in speech, but of unterrified valor. The southeastern bastion was occupied by Charnyetski and Kmita, and with them was Father Adam Stypulski, who had formerly been a hussar. He, when the need came, tucked up his habit, aimed cannon, and took no more heed of the balls flying over his head than did the old sergeant Soroka. Finally, to the southwestern bastion were appointed Pan Skorjevski and Father Daniel Ryhtalski, who were distinguished by this, that both could abstain from sleep two and three nights in succession without harm to their health or their strength.

Fathers Dobrosh and Malahovski were appointed over the sentries. Persons unfitted for fighting were appointed to the roofs. The armory and all military implements Father Lyassota took under his care; after Father Dobrosh, he took also the office of master of the fires. In the night he had to illuminate the walls so that infantry of the enemy might not approach them. He arranged sockets and iron-holders on the towers, on which flamed at night torches and lights.

In fact, the whole tower looked every night like one gigantic torch. It is true that this lightened cannonading for the Swedes; but it might serve as a sign that the fortress was holding out yet, if, perchance, some army should march to relieve the besieged.

So then not only had designs of surrender crept apart into nothing, but the besieged turned with still greater zeal to defence. Next morning the prior walked along the walls, like a shepherd through a sheepfold, saw that everything was right, smiled kindly, praised the chiefs and the soldiers, and coming to Charnyetski, said with radiant face—

“Our beloved leader, Pan Zamoyski, rejoices equally with me, for he says that we are now twice as strong as at first. A new spirit has entered men’s hearts, the grace of the Most Holy Lady will do the rest; but meanwhile I will take to negotiations again. We will delay and put off, for by such means the blood of people will be spared.”

“Oh, revered father!” said Kmita, “what good are negotiations? Loss of time! Better another sortie tonight, and we will cut up those dogs.”

Kordetski (for he was in good humor) smiled as a mother smiles at a wayward child; then he raised a band of straw lying near the gun, and pretended to strike Pan Andrei with it on the shoulders: “And you will interfere here, you Lithuanian plague; you will lap blood as a wolf, and give an example of disobedience; here it is for you, here it is for you!”

Kmita, delighted as a schoolboy, dodged to the right and to the left, and as if teasing purposely, repeated: “Kill the Swedes! kill, kill, kill!”

And so they gave comfort to one another, having ardent souls devoted to the country. But Kordetski did not omit negotiations, seeing that Miller desired them earnestly and caught after every pretext. This desire pleased Kordetski, for he divined, without trouble, that it could not be going well with the enemy if he was so anxious to finish.

Days passed then, one after another, in which guns and muskets were not indeed silent, but pens were working mainly. In this way the siege was prolonged, and winter was coming harsher and harsher. On the Carpathian summits clouds hatched in their precipitous nests storms, frost, and snows, and then came forth on the country, leading their icy descendants. At night the Swedes cowered around fires, choosing to die from the balls of the cloister rather than freeze.

A hard winter had rendered difficult the digging of trenches and the making of mines. There was no progress in the siege. In the mouths not merely of officers, but of the whole army, there was only one word—"negotiations."

The priests feigned at first a desire to surrender. Father Dobrosh and the learned priest Sebastyan Stavitski came to Miller as envoys. They gave him some hope of agreement. He had barely heard this when he opened his arms and was ready to seize them with joy to his embraces. It was no longer a question of Chenstohova, but of the whole country. The surrender of Yasna Gora would have removed the last hope of the patriots, and pushed the Commonwealth finally into the arms of the King of Sweden; while, on the contrary, resistance, and that a victorious resistance, might change hearts and call out a terrible new war. Signs were not wanting. Miller knew this, felt what he had undertaken, what a terrible responsibility was weighing on him; he knew that either the favor of the king, with the baton of a marshal, honors, a title, were waiting for him, or final fall. Since he had begun to convince himself that he could not crack this "nut," he received the priests with unheard-of honor, as if they were ambassadors from the Emperor of Germany or the Sultan. He invited them to a feast, he drank to their honor, and also to the health of the prior and Pan Zamoyski; he gave them fish for the cloister; finally, he offered conditions of surrender so gracious that he did not doubt for a moment that they would be accepted in haste.

The fathers thanked him humbly, as beseemed monks; they took the paper and went their way. Miller promised the opening of the gates at eight of the following morning. Joy indescribable reigned in the camp of the Swedes. The soldiers left the trenches, approached the walls, and began to address the besieged.

But it was announced from the cloister that in an affair of such weight the prior must consult the whole Congregation; the monks therefore begged for one day's delay. Miller consented without hesitation. Meanwhile they were counselling in the chamber till late at night.

Though Miller was an old and trained warrior, though there was not, perhaps, in the whole Swedish army a general who had conducted more negotiations with various places than that Poliorcetes, still his heart beat unquietly when next morning he saw two white habits approaching his quarters.

They were not the same fathers. First walked Father Bleshynski, a reader of philosophy, bearing a sealed letter; after him came Father Malahovski, with hands crossed on his breast, with drooping head and a face slightly pale.

The general received them surrounded by his staff and all his noted colonels; and when he had answered politely the submissive bow of Father Bleshynski, he took the letter from his hand hastily and began to read.

But all at once his face changed terribly: a wave of blood flew to his head; his eyes were bursting forth, his neck grew thick, and terrible anger raised the hair under his wig. For a while speech was taken from him; he only indicated with his hand the letter to the Prince of Hesse, who ran over it with his eyes, and turning to the colonels, said calmly—

“The monks declare only this much, that they cannot renounce Yan Kazimir before the primate proclaims a new king; or speaking in other words, they will not recognize Karl Gustav.”

Here the Prince of Hesse laughed. Sadovski fixed a jeering glance on Miller, and Count Veyhard began to pluck his own beard from rage. A terrible murmur of excitement rose among those present.

Then Miller struck his palms on his knees and cried—

“Guards, guards!”

The mustached faces of four musketeers showed themselves quickly in the door.

“Take those shaven sticks,” cried the general, “and confine them! And Pan Sadovski, do you trumpet for me under the cloister, that if they open fire from one cannon on the walls, I will hang these two monks the next moment.”

The two priests were led out amid ridicule and the scoffing of soldiers. The musketeers put their own caps on the priests’ heads, or rather on their faces to cover their eyes, and led them of purpose to various obstacles. When either of the priests stumbled or fell, an outburst of laughter was heard in the crowds; but the fallen man they raised with the butts of muskets, and pretending to support, they pushed him by the loins and the shoulders. Some threw horse-dung at the priests; others took snow and rubbed it on their shaven crowns, or let it roll down on their habits. The soldiers tore strings from trumpets, and tying one end to the neck of each priest, held the other, and imitating men taking cattle to a fair, called out the prices.

Both fathers walked on in silence, with hands crossed on their breasts and prayers on their lips. Finally, trembling from cold and insulted, they were enclosed in a barn; around the place guards armed with muskets were stationed.

Miller’s command, or rather his threat, was trumpeted under the cloister walls.

The fathers were frightened, and the troops were benumbed from the threat. The cannon were silent; a council was assembled, they knew not what to do. To leave the fathers in cruel hands was impossible; and if they sent others, Miller would detain them as well. A few hours later he himself sent a messenger, asking what the monks thought of doing.

They answered that until the fathers were freed no negotiations could take place; for how could the monks believe that the general would observe conditions with them if, despite the chief law of nations, he imprisoned envoys whose sacredness even barbarians respect?

To this declaration there was no ready answer; hence terrible uncertainty weighed on the cloister and froze the zeal of its defenders.

The Swedish army dug new trenches in haste, filled baskets with earth, planted cannon; insolent soldiers pushed forward to within half a musket-shot of the walls. They threatened the church, the defenders; half-drunken soldiers shouted, raising their hands toward the walls, “Surrender the cloister, or you will see your monks hanging!”

Others blasphemed terribly against the Mother of God and the Catholic faith. The besieged, out of respect to the life of the fathers, had to listen with patience. Rage stopped the breath in Kmita’s breast. He tore the hair on his head, the clothing on his breast, and wringing his hands, said to Charnyetski—

“I asked, ‘Of what use is negotiation with criminals?’ Now stand and suffer, while they are crawling into our eyes and blaspheming! Mother of God, have mercy on me, and give me

patience! By the living God, they will begin soon to climb the walls! Hold me, chain me like a murderer, for I shall not contain myself.”

But the Swedes came ever nearer, blaspheming more boldly.

Meanwhile a fresh event brought the besieged to despair. Stefan Charnyetski in surrendering Krakow had obtained the condition of going out with all his troops, and remaining with them in Silesia till the end of the war. Seven hundred infantry of those troops of the royal guard, under command of Colonel Wolf, were near the boundary, and trusting in stipulations, were not on their guard. Count Veyhard persuaded Miller to capture those men.

Miller sent Count Veyhard himself, with two thousand cavalry, who crossing the boundary at night attacked those troops during sleep, and captured them to the last man. When they were brought to the Swedish camp, Miller commanded to lead them around the wall, so as to show the priests that that army from which they had hoped succor would serve specially for the capture of Chenstohova.

The sight of that brilliant guard of the king dragged along the walls was crushing to the besieged, for no one doubted that Miller would force them first to the storm.

Panic spread again among the troops of the cloister; some of the soldiers began to break their weapons and exclaim that there was help no longer, that it was necessary to surrender at the earliest. Even the hearts of the nobles had fallen; some of them appeared before Kordetski again with entreaties to take pity on their children, on the sacred place, on the image, and on the Congregation of monks. The courage of the prior and Pan Zamoyski was barely enough to put down this movement.

But Kordetski had the liberation of the imprisoned fathers on his mind first of all, and he took the best method; for he wrote to Miller that he would sacrifice those brothers willingly for the good of the church. Let the general condemn them to death; all would know in future what to expect from him, and what faith to give his promises.

Miller was joyful, for he thought the affair was approaching its end. But he did not trust the words of Kordetski at once, nor his readiness to sacrifice the monks. He sent therefore one of them, Father Bleszynski, to the cloister, binding him first with an oath to explain the power of the Swedes and the impossibility of resistance. The monk repeated everything faithfully, but his eyes spoke something else, and concluding he said—

“But prizing life less than the good of the Congregation, I am waiting for the will of the council; and whatsoever you decide I will lay before the enemy most faithfully.”

They directed him to say: “The monks are anxious to treat, but cannot believe a general who imprisons envoys.” Next day the other envoy of the fathers came to the cloister, and returned with a similar answer.

After this both heard the sentence of death. The sentence was read at Miller’s quarters in presence of the staff and distinguished officers. All observed carefully the faces of the monks, curious to learn what impression the sentence would make; and with the greatest amazement they saw in both a joy as great, as unearthly, as if the highest fortune had been announced to them. The pale faces of the monks flushed suddenly, their eyes were filled with light, and Father Malahovski said with a voice trembling from emotion—

“Ah! why should we not die today, since we are predestined to fall a sacrifice for our Lord and the king?”

Miller commanded to lead them forth straightway. The officers looked at one another. At last one remarked; “A struggle with such fanaticism is difficult.”

The Prince of Hesse added: "Only the first Christians had such faith. Is that what you wish to say?" Then he turned to Count Veyhard. "Pan Veyhard," said he, "I should be glad to know what you think of these monks?"

"I have no need to trouble my head over them," answered he, insolently; "the general has already taken care of them."

Then Sadowski stepped forward to the middle of the room, stood before Miller, and said with decision: "Your worthiness, do not command to execute these monks."

"But why not?"

"Because there will be no talk of negotiations after that; for the garrison of the fortress will be flaming with vengeance, and those men will rather fall one upon the other than surrender."

"Wittemberg will send me heavy guns."

"Your worthiness, do not do this deed," continued Sadowski, with force; "they are envoys who have come here with confidence."

"I shall not have them hanged on confidence, but on gibbets."

"The echo of this deed will spread through the whole country, will enrage all hearts, and turn them away from us."

"Give me peace with your echoes; I have heard of them already a hundred times."

"Your worthiness will not do this without the knowledge of his Royal Grace?"

"You have no right to remind me of my duties to the king."

"But I have the right to ask for permission to resign from service, and to present my reasons to his Royal Grace. I wish to be a soldier, not an executioner."

The Prince of Hesse issued from the circle in the middle of the room, and said ostentatiously—

"Give me your hand. Pan Sadowski; you are a gentleman, a noble, and an honest man."

"What does this mean?" roared Miller, springing from his seat.

"General," answered the Prince of Hesse, "I permit myself to remark that Pan Sadowski is an honorable man, and I judge that there is nothing in this against discipline."

Miller did not like the Prince of Hesse; but that cool, polite, and also contemptuous manner of speaking, special to men of high rank, imposed on him, as it does on many persons of low birth. Miller made great efforts to acquire this manner, but had no success. He restrained his outburst, however, and said calmly—

"The monks will be hanged tomorrow."

"That is not my affair," answered the Prince of Hesse; "but in that event let your worthiness order an attack on those two thousand Poles who are in our camp, for if you do not they will attack us. Even now it is less dangerous for a Swedish soldier to go among a pack of wolves than among their tents. This is all I have to say, and now I permit myself to wish you success." When he had said this he left the quarters.

Miller saw that he had gone too far. But he did not withdraw his orders, and that same day gibbets were erected in view of the whole cloister. At the same time the soldiers, taking advantage of the truce, pushed still nearer the walls, not ceasing to jeer, insult, blaspheme,

and challenge. Whole throngs of them climbed the mountain, stood as closely together as if they intended to make an assault.

That time Kmita, whom they had not chained as he had requested, did not in fact restrain himself, and thundered from a cannon into the thickest group, with such effect that he laid down in a row all those who stood in front of the shot. That was like a watchword; for at once, without orders, and even in spite of orders, all the cannons began to play, muskets and guns thundered.

The Swedes, exposed to fire from every side, fled from the fortress with howling and screaming, many falling dead on the road.

Charnyetski sprang to Kmita: "Do you know that for that the reward is a bullet in the head?"

"I know, all one to me. Let me be—"

"In that case aim surely."

Kmita aimed surely; soon, however, he missed. A great movement rose meanwhile in the Swedish camp, but it was so evident that the Swedes were the first to violate the truce, that Miller himself recognized in his soul that the besieged were in the right.

What is more, Kmita did not even suspect that with his shots he had perhaps saved the lives of the fathers; but Miller, because of these shots, became convinced that the monks in the last extremity were really ready to sacrifice their two brethren for the good of the church and the cloister.

The shots beat into his head this idea also, that if a hair were to fall from the heads of the envoys, he would not hear from the cloister anything save similar thunders; so next day he invited the two imprisoned monks to dinner, and the day after he sent them to the cloister.

Kordetski wept when he saw them, all took them in their arms and were astonished at hearing from their mouths that it was specially owing to those shots that they were saved. The prior, who had been angry at Kmita, called him at once and said—

"I was angry because I thought that you had destroyed the two fathers; but the Most Holy Lady evidently inspired you. This is a sign of Her favor, be rejoiced."

"Dearest, beloved father, there will be no more negotiations, will there?" asked Kmita, kissing Kordetski's hands.

But barely had he finished speaking, when a trumpet was heard at the gates, and an envoy from Miller entered the cloister.

This was Pan Kuklinovski, colonel of the volunteer squadron attached to the Swedes. The greatest ruffians without honor or faith served in that squadron, in part dissidents such as Lutherans, Arians, Calvinists—whereby was explained their friendship for Sweden; but a thirst for robbery and plunder attracted them mainly to Miller's army. That band, made up of nobles, outlaws, fugitives from prison and from the hands of a master, of attendants, and of gallows-birds snatched from the rope, was somewhat like Kmita's old party, save in this, that Kmita's men fought as do lions, and those preferred to plunder, offer violence to noble women, break open stables and treasure chests. But Kuklinovski himself had less resemblance to Kmita. Age had mixed gray with his hair. He had a face dried, insolent, and shameless. His eyes, which were unusually prominent and greedy, indicated violence of character. He was one of those soldiers in whom, because of a turbulent life and continuous wars, conscience had been burned out to the bottom. A multitude of such men strolled about in that time, after the Thirty Years' War, through all Germany and Poland. They were ready

to serve any man, and more than once a mere simple incident determined the side on which they were to stand.

Country and faith, in a word all things sacred, were thoroughly indifferent to them. They recognized nothing but war, and sought in it pleasure, dissipation, profit, and oblivion of life. But still when they had chosen some side they served it loyally enough, and that through a certain soldier-robber honor, so as not to close the career to themselves and to others. Such a man was Kuklinovski. Stern daring and immeasurable stubbornness had won for him consideration among the disorderly. It was easy for him to find men. He had served in various arms and services. He had been ataman in the Saitch; he had led regiments in Wallachia; in Germany he had enlisted volunteers in the Thirty Years' War, and had won a certain fame as a leader of cavalry. His crooked legs, bent in bow fashion, showed that he had spent the greater part of his life on horseback. He was as thin as a splinter, and somewhat bent from profligacy. Much blood, shed not in war only, weighed upon him. And still he was not a man wholly wicked by nature; he felt at times nobler influences. But he was spoiled to the marrow of his bones, and insolent to the last degree. Frequently had he said in intimate company, in drink; "More than one deed was done for which the thunderbolt should have fallen, but it fell not."

The effect of this impunity was that he did not believe in the justice of God, and punishment, not only during life, but after death. In other words, he did not believe in God; still, he believed in the devil, in witches, in astrologers, and in alchemy. He wore the Polish dress, for he thought it most fitting for cavalry; but his mustache, still black, he trimmed in Swedish fashion, and spread at the ends turned upward. In speaking he made every word diminutive, like a child; this produced a strange impression when heard from the mouth of such a devil incarnate and such a cruel ruffian, who was ever gulping human blood. He talked much and boastingly; clearly he thought himself a celebrated personage, and one of the first cavalry colonels on earth.

Miller, who, though on a broader pattern, belonged himself to a similar class, valued him greatly, and loved specially to seat him at his own table. At that juncture Kuklinovski forced himself on the general as an assistant, guaranteeing that he would with his eloquence bring the priests to their senses at once.

Earlier, when, after the arrest of the priests, Pan Zamoyski was preparing to visit Miller's camp and asked for a hostage, Miller sent Kuklinovski; but Zamoyski and the prior would not accept him, as not being of requisite rank.

From that moment, touched in his self-love, Kuklinovski conceived a mortal hatred for the defenders of Yasna Gora, and determined to injure them with all his power. Therefore he chose himself as an embassy—first for the embassy itself, and second so as to survey everything and cast evil seed here and there. Since he was long known to Charnyetski he approached the gate guarded by him; but Charnyetski was sleeping at the time—Kmita, taking his place, conducted the guest to the council hall.

Kuklinovski looked at Pan Andrei with the eye of a specialist, and at once he was pleased not only with the form but the bearing of the young hero, which might serve as a model.

"A soldier," said he, raising his hand to his cap, "knows at once a real soldier. I did not think that the priests had such men in their service. What is your rank, I pray?"

In Kmita, who had the zeal of a new convert, the soul revolted at sight of Poles who served Swedes; still, he remembered the recent anger of Kordetski at his disregard of negotiations; therefore he answered coldly, but calmly—



“I am Babinich, former colonel in the Lithuanian army, but now a volunteer in the service of the Most Holy Lady.”

“And I am Kuklinovski, also colonel, of whom you must have heard; for during more than one little war men mentioned frequently that name and this sabre [here he struck at his side], not only here in the Commonwealth, but in foreign countries.”

“With the forehead,” said Kmita, “I have heard.”

“Well, so you are from Lithuania, and in that land are famous soldiers. We know of each other, for the trumpet of fame is to be heard from one end of the world to the other. Do you know there, worthy sir, a certain Kmita?”

The question fell so suddenly that Pan Andrei was as if fixed to the spot. “But why do you ask of him?”

“Because I love him, though I know him not, for we are alike as two boots of one pair; and I always repeat this, with your permission, ‘There are two genuine soldiers in the Commonwealth—I in the kingdom, and Kmita in Lithuania,’—a pair of dear doves, is not that true? Did you know him personally?”

“Would to God that you were killed!” thought Kmita; but, remembering Kuklinovski’s character of envoy, he answered aloud: “I did not know him personally. But now come in, for the council is waiting.”

When he had said this, he indicated the door through which a priest came out to receive the guest. Kuklinovski entered the chamber with him at once, but first he turned to Kmita: “It would please me,” said he, “if at my return you and none other were to conduct me out.”

“I will wait here,” answered Kmita. And he was left alone. After a while he began to walk back and forth with quick steps; his whole soul was roused within him, and his heart was filled with blood, black from anger.

“Pitch does not stick to a garment like evil fame to a man,” muttered he. “This scoundrel, this wretch, this traitor calls me boldly his brother, and thinks he has me as a comrade. See to what I have come! All gallows-birds proclaim me their own, and no decent man calls me to mind without horror. I have done little yet, little! If I could only give a lesson to this rascal! It cannot be but that I shall put my score on him.”

The council lasted long in the chamber. It had grown dark. Kmita was waiting yet.

At last Kuklinovski appeared. Pan Andrei could not see the colonel’s face, but he inferred from his quick panting, that the mission had failed, and had been also displeasing, for the envoy had lost desire for talk. They walked on then for some time in silence. Kmita determined meanwhile to get at the truth, and said with feigned sympathy—

“Surely, you are coming with nothing.—Our priests are stubborn; and, between you and me, they act ill, for we cannot defend ourselves forever.”

Kuklinovski halted and pulled him by the sleeve. “And do you think that they act ill? You have your senses; these priests will be ground into bran—I guarantee that! They are unwilling to obey Kuklinovski; they will obey his sword.”

“You see, it is not a question of the priests with me,” said Kmita, “but of this place, which is holy, that is not to be denied, but which the later it is surrendered the more severe must the conditions be. Is what men say true, that through the country tumults are rising, that here and there they are slashing the Swedes, and that the Khan is marching with aid? If that is true, Miller must retreat.”

“I tell you in confidence, a wish for Swedish broth is rising in the country, and likely in the army as well; that is true. They are talking of the Khan also. But Miller will not retreat; in a couple of days heavy artillery will come. We’ll dig these foxes out of their hole, and then what will be will be!—But you have sense.”

“Here is the gate!” said Kmita; “here I must leave you, unless you wish me to attend you down the slope?”

“Attend me, attend me! A couple of days ago you fired after an envoy.”

“Indeed! What do you mean?”

“Maybe unwillingly. But better attend me; I have a few words to say to you.”

“And I to you.”

“That is well.”

They went outside the gate and sank in the darkness. Here Kuklinovski stopped, and taking Kmita again by the sleeve, began to speak—

“You, Sir Cavalier, seem to me adroit and foreseeing, and besides I feel in you a soldier, blood and bone. What the devil do you stick to priests for, and not to soldiers? Why be a serving lad for priests? There is a better and a pleasanter company with us—with cups, dice, and women. Do you understand?”

Here he pressed Kmita’s arm with his fingers. “This house,” continued he, pointing with his finger to the fortress, “is on fire, and a fool is he who flees not from a house when ’tis burning. Maybe you fear the name of traitor? Spit on those who would call you that! Come to our company; I, Kuklinovski, propose this. Obey, if you like; if you don’t like, obey not—there will be no offence. General Miller will receive you well, I guarantee that; you have touched my heart, and I speak thus from good wishes. Ours is a joyous company, joyous! A soldier’s freedom is in this—to serve whom he likes. Monks are nothing to you! If a bit of virtue hinders you, then cough it out. Remember this also, that honest men serve with us. How many nobles, magnates, hetmans! What can be better? Who takes the part of our little Kazimir? No man save Sapyeha alone, who is bending Radzivill.”

Kmita grew curious; “Did you say that Sapyeha is bending Radzivill?”

“I did. He is troubling him terribly there in Podlyasye, and is besieging him now in Tykotsin. But we do not disturb him.”

“Why is that?”

“Because the King of Sweden wants them to devour one another. Radzivill was never reliable; he was thinking of himself. Besides, he is barely breathing. Whoever lets himself be besieged in a fix, he is finished.”

“Will not the Swedes go to succor him?”

“Who is to go? The king himself is in Prussia, for there lies the great question. The elector has wriggled out hitherto; he will not wriggle out this time. In Great Poland is war, Wittemberg is needed in Krakow, Douglas has work with the hill-men; so they have left Radzivill to himself. Let Sapyeha devour him. Sapyeha has grown, that is true, but his turn will come also. Our Karl, when he finishes with Prussia, will twist the horns of Sapyeha. Now there is no power against him, for all Lithuania stands at his side.”

“But Jmud?”

“Pontus de la Gardie holds that in his paws, and heavy are the paws, I know him.”

“How is it that Radzivill has fallen, he whose power was equal to that of kings?”

“It is quenching already, quenching—”

“Wonderful are the ordinances of God!”

“The wheel of war changes. But no more of this. Well, what? Do you make up your mind to my proposition? You’ll not be sorry! Come to us. If it is too hurried today, think till tomorrow, till the day after, before the heavy artillery comes. These people here trust you evidently, since you pass through the gate as you do now. Or come with letters and go back no more.”

“You attract others to the Swedish side, for you are an envoy of Sweden,” said Kmita; “it does not beseem you to act otherwise, though in your soul who knows what you think? There are those who serve the Swedes, but wish them ill in their hearts.”

“Word of a cavalier!” answered Kuklinovski, “that I speak sincerely, and not because I am filling the function of an envoy. Outside the gate I am no longer an envoy; and if you wish I will remove the office of envoy of my own will, and speak to you as a private man. Throw that vile fortress to the devil!”

“Do you say this as a private man?”

“Yes.”

“And may I give answer to you as to a private man?”

“As true as life I propose it myself.”

“Then listen, Pan Kuklinovski,” Here Kmita inclined and looked into the very eyes of the ruffian. “You are a rascal, a traitor, a scoundrel, a crab-monger, an arch-cur! Have you enough, or shall I spit in your eyes yet?”

Kuklinovski was astounded to such a degree that for a time there was silence.

“What is this? How is this? Do I hear correctly?”

“Have you enough, you cur? or do you wish me to spit in your eyes?”

Kuklinovski drew his sabre; but Kmita caught him with his iron hand by the wrist, twisted his arm, wrested the sabre from him, then slapped him on the cheek so that the sound went out in the darkness; seized him by the other side, turned him in his hand like a top, and kicking him with all his strength, cried—

“To a private man, not to an envoy!”

Kuklinovski rolled down like a stone thrown from a ballista. Pan Andrei went quietly to the gate.

The two men parted on the slope of the eminence; hence it was difficult to see them from the walls. But Kmita found waiting for him at the gate Kordetski, who took him aside at once, and asked—

“What were you doing so long with Kuklinovski.”

“I was entering into confidence with him,” answered Pan Andrei.

“What did he say?”

“He said that it was true concerning the Khan.”

“Praise be to God, who can change the hearts of pagans and make friends out of enemies.”

“He told me that Great Poland is moving.”

“Praise be to God!”

“That the quarter soldiers are more and more unwilling to remain with the Swedes; that in Podlyasye, the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, Sapyeha, has beaten the traitor Radzivill, and that he has all honest people with him. As all Lithuania stands by him, except Jmud, which De la Gardie has taken.”

“Praise be to God! Have you had no other talk with each other?”

“Yes; Kuklinovski tried afterward to persuade me to go over to the Swedes.”

“I expected that,” said the prior; “he is a bad man. And what did you answer?”

“You see he told me, revered father, as follows: ‘I put aside my office of envoy, which without that is finished beyond the gates, and I persuade you as a private man.’ And I to make sure asked, ‘May I answer as to a private man?’ He said, ‘Yes’—then—”

“What then?”

“Then I gave it to him in the snout, and he rolled down hill.”

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

“Be not angry, father; I acted very carefully, and that he will not say a word about the matter to any man is certain.”

The priest was silent for a time, then said; “That you acted honestly, I know. I am only troubled at this, that you have gained a new enemy. He is a terrible man.”

“One more, one less!” said Kmita. Then he bent to the ear of the priest. “But Prince Boguslav, he at least is an enemy! What is such a Kuklinovski? I don’t even look back at him.”

## Chapter XLIV

Now the terrible Arwid Wittemberg made himself heard. A famous officer brought his stern letter to the cloister, commanding the fathers to surrender the fortress to Miller. "In the opposite event," wrote Wittemberg, "if you do not abandon resistance, and do not yield to the said general, you may be sure that a punishment awaits you which will serve others as an example. The blame for your suffering lay to yourselves."

The fathers after receiving this letter determined in old fashion to procrastinate, and present new difficulties daily. Again days passed during which the thunder of artillery interrupted negotiations, and the contrary.

Miller declared that he wished to introduce his garrison only to insure the cloister against bands of freebooters. The fathers answered that since their garrison appeared sufficient against such a powerful leader as the general himself, all the more would it suffice against bands of freebooters. They implored Miller, therefore, by all that was sacred, by the respect which the people had for the place, by God and by Mary, to go to Vyelunie, or wherever it might please him. But the patience of the Swedes was exhausted. That humility of the besieged, who implored for mercy while they were firing more and more quickly from cannons, brought the chief and the army to desperation.

At first Miller could not get it into his head why, when the whole country had surrendered, that one place was defending itself; what power was upholding them; in the name of what hopes did these monks refuse to yield, for what were they striving, for what were they hoping?

But flowing time brought more clearly the answer to that question. The resistance which had begun there was spreading like a conflagration. In spite of a rather dull brain, the general saw at last what the question with Kordetski was; and besides, Sadovski had explained incontrovertibly that it was not a question of that rocky nest, nor of Yasna Gora, nor of the treasures gathered in the cloister, nor of the safety of the Congregation, but of the fate of the whole Commonwealth. Miller discovered that that silent priest knew what he was doing, that he had knowledge of his mission, that he had risen as a prophet to enlighten the land by example—to call with a mighty voice to the east and the west, to the north and the south, *Sursum corda!* (Raise your hearts) in order to rouse, either by his victory or his death and sacrifice, the sleeping from their slumber, to purify the sinful, to bring light into darkness.

When he had discovered this, that old warrior was simply terrified at that defender and at his own task. All at once that "henhouse" of Chenstohova seemed to him a giant mountain defended by a Titan, and the general seemed small to himself; and on his own army he looked, for the first time in his life, as on a handful of wretched worms. Was it for them to raise hands against that mysterious and heaven-touching power? Therefore Miller was terrified, and doubt began to steal into his heart. Seeing that the fault would be placed upon him, he began himself to seek the guilty, and his anger fell first on Count Veyhard. Disputes rose in the camp, and dissensions began to inflame hearts against one another; the works of the siege had to suffer therefrom.

Miller had been too long accustomed to estimate men and events by the common measure of a soldier, not to console himself still at times with the thought that at last the fortress would surrender. And taking things in human fashion, it could not be otherwise. Besides,

Wittenberg was sending him six siege guns of the heaviest calibre, which had shown their force at Krakow.

“Devil take it!” thought Miller; “such walls will not stand against guns like these, and if that nest of terrors, of superstitions, of enchantment, winds up in smoke, then things will take another turn, and the whole country will be pacified.”

While waiting for the heavier guns, he commanded to fire from the smaller. The days of conflict returned. But in vain did balls of fire fall on the roofs, in vain did the best gunners exert superhuman power. As often as the wind blew away the sea of smoke, the cloister appeared untouched, imposing as ever, lofty, with towers piercing calmly the blue of the sky. At the same time things happened which spread superstitious terror among the besiegers. Now balls flew over the whole mountain and struck soldiers on the other side; now a gunner, occupied in aiming a gun, fell on a sudden; now smoke disposed itself in terrible and strange forms; now powder in the boxes exploded all at once, as if fired by some invisible hand.

Besides, soldiers were perishing continually who alone, in twos or in threes, went out of the camp. Suspicion fell on the Polish auxiliary squadrons, which, with the exception of Kuklinovski’s regiment, refused out and out every cooperation in the siege, and showed daily more menacing looks. Miller threatened Colonel Zbrojek with a court-martial, but he answered in presence of all the officers: “Try it, General.”

Officers from the Polish squadrons strolled purposely through the Swedish camp, exhibiting contempt and disregard for the soldiers, and raising quarrels with the officers. Thence it came to duels, in which the Swedes, as less trained in fencing, fell victims more frequently. Miller issued a severe order against duels, and finally forbade the Poles entrance to the camp. From this it came that at last both armies were side by side like enemies, merely awaiting an opportunity for battle.

But the cloister defended itself ever better. It turned out that the guns sent by Pan Myaskovski were in no wise inferior to those which Miller had, and the gunners through constant practice arrived at such accuracy that each shot threw down an enemy. The Swedes attributed this to enchantment. The gunners answered the officers that with that power which defended the cloister it was no business of theirs to do battle.

A certain morning a panic began in the southwestern trench, for the soldiers had seen distinctly a woman in a blue robe shielding the church and the cloister. At sight of this they threw themselves down on their faces. In vain did Miller ride up, in vain did he explain that mist and smoke had disposed themselves in that form, in vain besides was his threat of court-martial and punishment. At the first moment no one would hear him, especially as the general himself was unable to hide his amazement.

Soon after this the opinion was spread through the whole army that no one taking part in the siege would die his own death. Many officers shared this belief, and Miller was not free from fears; for he brought in Lutheran ministers and enjoined on them to undo the enchantment. They walked through the camp whispering, and singing psalms; fear, however, had so spread that more than once they heard from the mouths of the soldiers: “Beyond your power, beyond your strength!”

In the midst of discharges of cannon a new envoy from Miller entered the cloister, and stood before the face of Kordetski and the council.

This was Pan Sladkovski, chamberlain of Rava, whom Swedish parties had seized as he was returning from Prussia. They received him coldly and harshly, though he had an honest face and his look was as mild as the sky; but the monks had grown accustomed to see honest faces

on traitors. He was not confused a whit by such a reception; combing briskly his yellow forelock with his fingers, he began:—

“Praised be Jesus Christ!”

“For the ages of ages!” answered the Congregation, in a chorus.

And Kordetski added at once; “Blessed be those who serve him.”

“I serve him,” answered Sladkovski, “and that I serve him more sincerely than I do Miller will be shown soon. H’m! permit me, worthy and beloved fathers, to cough, for I must first spit out foulness. Miller then—*tfu!* sent me, my good lords, to you to persuade you—*tfu!*—to surrender. But I accepted the office so as to say to you: Defend yourselves, think not of surrender, for the Swedes are spinning thin, and the Devil is taking them by the eye.”

The monks and the laity were astonished at sight of such an envoy. Pan Zamoyski exclaimed at once: “As God is dear to me, this is an honest man!” and springing to him began to shake his hand; but Sladkovski, gathering his forelock into one bunch, said—

“That I am no knave will be shown straightway. I have become Miller’s envoy so as to tell you news so favorable that I could wish, my good lords, to tell it all in one breath. Give thanks to God and His Most Holy Mother who chose you as instruments for changing men’s hearts. The country, taught by your example and by your defence, is beginning to throw off the yoke of the Swedes. What’s the use in talking? In Great Poland and Mazovia the people are beating the Swedes, destroying smaller parties, blocking roads and passages. In some places they have given the enemy terrible punishment already. The nobles are mounting their horses, the peasants are gathering in crowds, and when they seize a Swede they tear straps out of him. Chips are flying, tow is flying! This is what it has come to. And whose work is this?—yours.”

“An angel, an angel is speaking!” cried monks and nobles, raising their hands toward heaven.

“Not an angel, but Sladkovski, at your service. This is nothing!—Listen on. The Khan, remembering the kindness of the brother of our rightful king, Yan Kazimir, to whom may God give many years! is marching with aid, and has already passed the boundary of the Commonwealth. The Cossacks who were opposed he has cut to pieces, and is moving on with a horde of a hundred thousand toward Lvoff, and Hmelnitski nolens volens is coming with him.”

“For God’s sake, for God’s sake!” repeated people, overcome as it were by happiness.

But Pan Sladkovski, sweating and waving his hand, with still more vigor cried—

“That is nothing yet! Pan Stefan Charnyetski, with whom the Swedes violated faith, for they carried captive his infantry under Wolf, feels free of his word and is mounting. Yan Kazimir is collecting troops, and may return any day to the country and the hetmans. Listen further, the hetmans, Pototski and Lantskoronski, and with them all the troops, are waiting only for the coming of the king to desert the Swedes and raise sabres against them. Meanwhile they are coming to an understanding with Sapyeha and the Khan. The Swedes are in terror; there is fire in the whole country, war in the whole country—whosoever is living is going to the field!”

What took place in the hearts of the monks and the nobles is difficult of description. Some wept, some fell on their knees, other repeated, “It cannot be, it cannot be!” Hearing this, Sladkovski approached the great crucifix hanging on the wall and said—

“I place my hands on these feet of Christ pierced with a nail, and swear that I declare the pure and clean truth. I repeat only: Defend yourselves, fail not; trust not the Swedes; think not that by submission and surrender you could insure any safety for yourselves. They keep no promises, no treaties. You who are closed in here know not what is passing in the whole country, what oppression has come, what deeds of violence are done—murdering of priests, profanation of sanctuaries, contempt of all law. They promise you everything, they observe nothing. The whole kingdom is given up as plunder to a dissolute soldiery. Even those who still adhere to the Swedes are unable to escape injustice. Such is the punishment of God on traitors, on those who break faith with the king. Delay!—I, as you see me here, if only I survive, if I succeed in slipping away from Miller, will move straightway to Silesia, to our king. I will fall at his feet and say: Gracious King, save Chenstohova and your most faithful servants! But, most beloved fathers, stand firm, for the salvation of the whole Commonwealth is depending upon you.”

Here Sladkovski’s voice trembled, tears appeared on his eyelids, but he spoke further. “You will have grievous times yet: siege guns are coming from Krakow, which two hundred infantry are bringing. One is a particularly dreadful cannon. Terrible assaults will follow. But these will be the last efforts. Endure yet these, for salvation is coming already. By these red wounds of God, the king, the hetmans, the army, the whole Commonwealth will come to rescue its Patroness. This is what I tell you: rescue, salvation, glory is right here—not distant.”

The worthy noble now burst into tears, and sobbing became universal.

Ah! still better news was due to that wearied handful of defenders, to that handful of faithful servants, and a sure consolation from the country.

The prior rose, approached Sladkovski, and opened wide his arms. Sladkovski rushed into them, and they embraced each other long; others following their example began to fall into one another’s arms, embrace, kiss, and congratulate one another as if the Swedes had already retreated. At last the prior said—

“To the chapel, my brethren, to the chapel!”

He went in advance, and after him the others. All the candles were lighted, for it was growing dark outside; and the curtains were drawn aside from the wonder-working image, from which sweet abundant rays were scattered at once round about. Kordetski knelt on the steps, farther away the monks, the nobles, and common people; women with children were present also. Pale and wearied faces and eyes which had wept were raised toward the image; but from behind the tears was shining on each face a smile of happiness. Silence continued for a time; at last Kordetski began—

“Under thy protection we take refuge, Holy Mother of God—”

Further words stopped on his lips, weariness, long suffering, hidden alarms, together with the gladsome hope of rescue, rose in him like a mighty wave; therefore sobbing shook his breast, and that man, who bore on his shoulders the fate of the whole country, bent like a weak child, fell on his face, and with weeping immeasurable had strength only to cry: “O Mary, Mary, Mary!”

All wept with him, but the image from above cast brightest rays.

It was late at night when the monks and the nobles went each his own way to the walls; but Kordetski remained all night lying in the chapel in the form of a cross. There were fears in the cloister that weariness might overpower him; but next morning he appeared on the



bastions, went among the soldiers and the garrison, glad and refreshed, and here and there he repeated—

“Children, the Most Holy Lady will show again that she is mightier than siege guns, and then will come the end of your sorrows and torments.”

That morning Yatsek Bjuhanski, an inhabitant of Chenstohova, disguised as a Swede, approached the walls to confirm the news that great guns were coming from Krakow, but also that the Khan with the horde was approaching. He delivered a letter from Father Anton Pashkovski, of the monastery at Krakow, who, describing the terrible cruelty and robbery of the Swedes, incited and implored the fathers of Yasna Gora to put no trust in the promises of the enemy, but to defend the sacred place patiently against the insolence of the godless.

“There is no faith in the Swedes,” wrote Father Pashkovski, “no religion. Nothing divine or human is sacred and inviolate for them. It is not their custom to respect anything, though guarded by treaties or public declarations.”

That was the day of the Immaculate Conception. Some tens of officers and soldiers of the allied Polish squadrons besought with most urgent requests Miller’s permission to go to the fortress for divine service. Perhaps Miller thought that they would become friendly with the garrison, carry news of the siege guns and spread alarm; perhaps he did not wish by refusing to cast sparks on inflammable elements, which without that made relations between the Poles and the Swedes more and more dangerous: ’tis enough that he gave the permission.

With these quarter soldiers went a certain Tartar of the Polish Mohammedan Tartars. He, amid universal astonishment, encouraged the monks not to yield their holy place to vile enemies, considering with certainty that the Swedes would soon go away with shame and defeat. The quarter soldiers repeated the same, confirming completely the news brought by Sladkovski. All this taken together raised the courage of the besieged to such a degree that they had no fear of those gigantic cannons, and the soldiers made sport of them among themselves.

After services firing began on both sides. There was a certain Swedish soldier who had come many times to the wall, and with a trumpet-like voice had blasphemed against the Mother of God. Many a time had the besieged fired at him, but always without result. Kmita aimed at him once, but his bowstring broke; the soldier became more and more insolent, and roused others by his daring. It was said that he had seven devils in his service who guarded and shielded him.

He came this day again to blaspheme; but the besieged, trusting that on the day of the Immaculate Conception enchantments would have less effect, determined to punish him without fail. They fired a good while in vain; at last a cannon ball, rebounding from an ice wall, and tripping along the snow like a bird, struck him straight in the breast and tore him in two. The defenders comforted themselves with this and cried out: “Who will blaspheme against Her another time?” Meanwhile the revilers had rushed down to the trenches, in panic.

The Swedes fired at the walls and the roofs; but the balls brought no terror to the besieged.

The old beggarwoman, Konstantsia, who dwelt in a cranny of the cliff, used to go, as if in ridicule of the Swedes, along the whole slope, gathering bullets in her apron, and threatening from time to time the soldiers with her staff. They, thinking her a witch, were afraid she would injure them, especially when they saw that bullets did not touch her.

Two whole days passed in vain firing. They hurled on the roof ship ropes very thickly steeped in pitch; these flew like fiery serpents; but the guards, trained in a masterly manner,

met the danger in time. A night came with such darkness that, in spite of the fires, tar barrels, and the fireworks of Father Lyassota, the besieged could see nothing.

Meanwhile some uncommon movement reigned among the Swedes. The squeak of wheels was heard, men's voices, at times the neighing of horses, and various other kinds of uproar. The soldiers on the walls guessed the cause easily.

"The guns have come surely," said some.

The officers were deliberating on a sortie which Charnyetski advised; but Zamoyski opposed, insisting, with reason, that at such important works the enemy must have secured themselves sufficiently, and must surely hold infantry in readiness. They resolved merely to fire toward the north and south, whence the greatest noise came. It was impossible to see the result in the darkness.

Day broke at last, and its first rays exposed the works of the Swedes. North and south of the fortress were intrenchments, on which some thousands of men were employed. These intrenchments stood so high that to the besieged the summits of them seemed on a line with the walls of the fortress. In the openings at the top were seen great jaws of guns, and the soldiers standing behind them looked at a distance like swarms of yellow wasps.

The morning Mass was not over in the church when unusual thunder shook the air; the windowpanes rattled; some of them dropped out of the frames from shaking alone, and were broken with a sharp shiver on the stone floor; and the whole church was filled with dust which rose from fallen plaster.

The great siege guns had spoken.

A terrible fire began, such as the besieged had not experienced. At the end of Mass all rushed out on the walls and roofs. The preceding storms seemed innocent play in comparison with this terrible letting loose of fire and iron.

The smaller pieces thundered in support of the siege guns. Great bombs, pieces of cloth steeped in pitch, torches, and fiery ropes were flying. Balls twenty-six pounds in weight tore out battlements, struck the walls of buildings; some settled in them, others made great holes, tearing off plaster and bricks. The walls surrounding the cloister began to shake here and there and lose pieces, and struck incessantly by new balls threatened to fall. The buildings of the cloister were covered with fire.

The trumpeters on the tower felt it totter under them. The church quaked from continuous pounding, and candles fell out of the sockets at some of the altars.

Water was poured in immense quantities on the fires that had begun, on the blazing torches, on the walls, on the fire balls; and formed, together with the smoke and the dust, rolls of steam so thick that light could not be seen through them. Damage was done to the walls and buildings. The cry, "It is burning, it is burning!" was heard oftener amid the thunder of cannon and the whistle of bullets. At the northern bastion the two wheels of a cannon were broken, and one injured cannon was silent. A ball had fallen into a stable, killed three horses, and set fire to the building. Not only balls, but bits of grenades, were falling as thickly as rain on the roofs, the bastions, and the walls.

In a short time the groans of the wounded were heard. By a strange chance three young men fell, all named Yan. This amazed other defenders bearing the same name; but in general the defence was worthy of the storm. Even women, children, and old men came out on the walls. Soldiers stood there with unterrified heart, in smoke and fire, amid a rain of missiles, and answered with determination to the fire of the enemy. Some seized the wheels and rolled the

cannon to the most exposed places; others thrust into breaches in the walls stones, beams, dung, and earth.

Women with dishevelled hair and inflamed faces gave an example of daring, and some were seen running with buckets of water after bombs which were still springing and ready to burst right there, that moment. Ardor rose every instant, as if that smell of powder, smoke, and steam, that thunder, those streams of fire and iron, had the property of rousing it. All acted without command, for words died amid the awful noise. Only the supplications which were sung in the chapel rose above the voices of cannon.

About noon firing ceased. All drew breath; but before the gate a drum was sounded, and the drummer sent by Miller, approaching the gate, inquired if the fathers had had enough, and if they wished to surrender at once. Kordetski answered that they would deliberate over the question till morning. The answer had barely reached Miller when the attack began anew, and the artillery fire was redoubled.

From time to time deep ranks of infantry pushed forward under fire toward the mountain, as if wishing to try an assault; but decimated by cannon and muskets, they returned each time quickly and in disorder under their own batteries. As a wave of the sea covers the shore and when it retreats leaves on the sand weeds, mussels, and various fragments broken in the deep, so each one of those Swedish waves when it sank back left behind bodies thrown here and there on the slope.

Miller did not give orders to fire at the bastions, but at the wall between them, where resistance was least. Indeed, here and there considerable rents were made, but not large enough for the infantry to rush through.

Suddenly a certain event checked the storm.

It was well toward evening when a Swedish gunner about to apply a lighted match to one of the largest guns was struck in the very breast by a ball from the cloister. The ball came not with the first force, but after a third bound from the ice piled up at the intrenchment; it merely hurled the gunner a number of yards. He fell on an open box partly filled with powder. A terrible explosion was heard that instant, and masses of smoke covered the trench. When the smoke fell away it appeared that five gunners had lost their lives; the wheels of the cannon were injured, and terror seized the soldiers. It was necessary to cease fire for the time from that intrenchment, since a heavy fog had filled the darkness; they also stopped firing in other places.

The next day was Sunday. Lutheran ministers held services in the trenches, and the guns were silent. Miller again inquired if the fathers had had enough. They answered that they could endure more.

Meanwhile the damage in the cloister was examined and found to be considerable. People were killed and the wall was shaken here and there. The most formidable gun was a gigantic culverin standing on the north. It had broken the wall to such a degree, torn out so many stones and bricks, that the besieged could foresee that should the fire continue two days longer a considerable part of the wall would give away.

A breach such as the culverin would make could not be filled with beams or earth. The prior foresaw with an eye full of sorrow the ruin which he could not prevent.

Monday the attack was begun anew, and the gigantic gun widened the breach. Various mishaps met the Swedes, however. About dusk that day a Swedish gunner killed on the spot Miller's sister's son, whom the general loved as though he had been his own, and intended to

leave him all that he had—beginning with his name and military reputation and ending with his fortune. But the heart of the old warrior blazed up with hatred all the more from this loss.

The wall at the northern bastion was so broken that preparations were made in the night for a hand-to-hand assault. That the infantry might approach the fortress with less danger, Miller commanded to throw up in the darkness a whole series of small redoubts, reaching the very slope. But the night was clear, and white light from the snow betrayed the movements of the enemy. The cannons of Yasna Gora scattered the men occupied in making those parapets formed of fascines, fences, baskets, and timbers.

At daybreak Charnyetski saw a siege machine which they had already rolled toward the walls. But the besieged broke it with cannon fire without difficulty; so many men were killed on that occasion that the day might have been called a day of victory for the besieged, had it not been for that great gun which shook the wall incessantly with irrestrainable power.

A thaw came on the following days, and such dense mists settled down that the fathers attributed them to the action of evil spirits. It was impossible to see either the machines of war, the erection of parapets, or the work of the siege. The Swedes came near the very walls of the cloister. In the evening Charnyetski, when the prior was making his usual round of the walls, took him by the side and said in a low voice—

“Bad, revered father! Our wall will not hold out beyond a day.”

“Perhaps these fogs will prevent them from firing,” answered Kordetski; “and we meanwhile will repair the rents somehow.”

“The fogs will not prevent the Swedes, for that gun once aimed may continue even in darkness the work of destruction; but here the ruins are falling and falling.”

“In God and in the Most Holy Lady is our hope.”

“True! But if we make a sortie? Even were we to lose men, if they could only spike that dragon of hell.”

Just then some form looked dark in the fog, and Babinich appeared near the speakers.

“I saw that someone was speaking; but faces cannot be distinguished three yards away,” said he. “Good evening, revered father! But of what is the conversation?”

“We are talking of that gun. Pan Charnyetski advises a sortie. These fogs are spread by Satan; I have commanded an exorcism.”

“Dear father,” said Pan Andrei, “since that gun has begun to shake the wall, I am thinking of it, and something keeps coming to my head. A sortie is of no use. But let us go to some room; there I will tell you my plans.”

“Well,” said the prior, “come to my cell.”

Soon after they were sitting at a pine table in Kordetski’s modest cell. Charnyetski and the priest were looking carefully into the youthful face of Babinich, who said—

“A sortie is of no use in this case. They will see it and repulse it. Here one man must do the work.”

“How is that?” asked Charnyetski.

“One man must go and burst that cannon with powder; and he can do it during such fogs. It is best that he go in disguise. There are jackets here like those worn by the enemy. As it will not be possible to do otherwise, he will slip in among the Swedes; but if at this side of the trench from which the gun is projecting there are no soldiers, that will be better still.”

“For God’s sake! what will the man do?”

“It is only necessary to put a box of powder into the mouth of the gun, with a hanging fuse and a thread to be ignited. When the powder explodes, the gun—devil I wanted to say—will burst.”

“Oh, my son! what do you say? Is it little powder that they thrust into it every day, and it does not burst?”

Kmita laughed, and kissed the priest on the sleeve of his habit. “Beloved father, there is a great heart in you, heroic and holy—”

“Give peace now!” answered the prior.

“And holy,” repeated Kmita; “but you do not understand cannon. It is one thing when powder bursts in the butt of the cannon, for then it casts forth the ball and the force flies out forward, but another if you stop the mouth of a gun with powder and ignite it—no cannon can stand such a trial. Ask Pan Charnyetski. The same thing will take place if you fill the mouth of a cannon with snow and fire it; the piece will burst. Such is the villanous power of powder. What will it be when a whole box of it explodes at the mouth? Ask Pan Charnyetski.”

“That is true. These are no secrets for soldiers,” answered Charnyetski.

“You see if this gun is burst,” continued Kmita, “all the rest are a joke.”

“This seems impossible to me,” said Kordetski; “for, first, who will undertake to do it?”

“A certain poor fellow,” said Kmita; “but he is resolute, his name is Babinich.”

“You!” cried the priest and Charnyetski together.

“*Ai*, father, benefactor! I was with you at confession, and acknowledged all my deeds in sincerity; among them were deeds not worse than the one I am now planning; how can you doubt that I will undertake it? Do you not know me?”

“He is a hero, a knight above knights,” cried Charnyetski. And seizing Kmita by the neck, he continued: “Let me kiss you for the wish alone; give me your mouth.”

“Show me another remedy, and I will not go,” said Kmita; “but it seems to me that I shall manage this matter somehow. Remember that I speak German as if I had been dealing in staves, wainscots, and wall plank in Dantzic. That means much, for if I am disguised they will not easily discover that I am not of their camp. But I think that no one is standing before the mouth of the cannon; for it is not safe there, and I think that I shall do the work before they can see me.”

“Pan Charnyetski, what do you think of this?” asked the prior, quickly.

“Out of one hundred men one might return from such an undertaking; but *audaces fortuna juvat* (fortune favors the bold).”

“I have been in hotter places than this,” said Kmita: “nothing will happen to me, for such is my fortune. *Ai*, beloved father, and what a difference! Ere now to exhibit myself, and for vainglory, I crawled into danger; but this undertaking is for the Most Holy Lady. Even should I have to lay down my head, which I do not foresee, say yourself could a more praiseworthy death be wished to any man than down there in this cause?”

The priest was long silent, and then said at last—

“I should try to restrain you with persuasion, with prayers and imploring, if you wished to go for mere glory; but you are right: this is a question affecting the honor of the Most Holy

Lady, this sacred place, the whole country! And you, my son, whether you return safely or win the palm of glory, you will gain the supreme happiness—salvation. Against my heart then I say, Go; I do not detain you. Our prayers, the protection of God, will go with you.”

“In such company I shall go boldly and perish with joy.”

“But return, soldier of God, return safely; for you are loved with sincerity here. May Saint Raphael attend you and bring you back, cherished son, my dear child!”

“Then I will begin preparations at once,” said Pan Andrei, joyfully pressing the priest. “I will dress in Swedish fashion with a jacket and wide-legged boots. I will fill in the powder, and do you, father, stop the exorcisms for this night; fog is needful to the Swedes, but also to me.”

“And do you not wish to confess before starting?”

“Of course, without that I should not go; for the devil would have approach to me.”

“Then begin with confession.”

Charnyetski went out of the cell, and Kmita knelt down near the priest and purged himself of his sins. Then, gladsome as a bird, he began to make preparations.

An hour or two later, in the deep night, he knocked again at the prior’s cell, where Pan Charnyetski also was waiting.

The two scarcely knew Pan Andrei, so good a Swede had he made himself. He had twirled his mustaches to his eyes and brushed them out at the ends; he had put his hat on one side of his head, and looked precisely like some cavalry officer of noted family.

“As God lives, one would draw a sabre at sight of him,” said Charnyetski.

“Put the light at a distance,” said Kmita; “I will show you something.”

When Father Kordetski had put the light aside quickly, Pan Andrei placed on a table a roll, a foot and a half long and as thick as the arm of a sturdy man, sewn up in pitched linen and filled firmly with powder. From one end of it was hanging a long string made of tow steeped in sulphur.

“Well,” said he, “when I put this fleabane in the mouth of the cannon and ignite the string, then its belly will burst.”

“Lucifer would burst!” cried Pan Charnyetski. But he remembered that it was better not to mention the name of the foul one, and he slapped his own mouth.

“But how will you set fire to the string?” asked Kordetski.

“In that lies the whole danger, for I must strike fire. I have good flint, dry tinder, and steel of the best; but there will be a noise, and they may notice something. The string I hope will not quench, for it will hang at the beard of the gun, and it will be hard to see it, especially as it will hide itself quickly in burning; but they may pursue me, and I cannot flee straight toward the cloister.”

“Why not?” asked the priest.

“For the explosion would kill me. The moment I see the spark on the string I must jump aside with all the strength in my legs, and when I have run about fifty yards, must fall to the ground under the intrenchment. After the explosion I shall rush toward the cloister.”

“My God, my God, how many dangers!” said the prior, raising his eyes to heaven.

“Beloved father, so sure am I of returning that even emotion does not touch me, which on an occasion like this ought to seize me. This is nothing! Farewell, and pray the Lord God to give me luck. Only conduct me to the gate.”

“How is that? Do you want to go now?” asked Charnyetski.

“Am I to wait till daylight, or till the fog rises? Is not my head dear to me?”

But Pan Andrei did not go that night, for just as they came to the gate, darkness, as if out of spite, began to grow light. Some movement too was heard around the great siege gun.

Next morning the besieged were convinced that the gun was transferred to another place.

The Swedes had received apparently some report of a great weakness in the wall a little beyond the bend near the southern bastion, and they determined to direct missiles to that spot. Maybe too the prior was not a stranger to the affair, for the day before they had seen old Kostuha (Konstantsia) going out of the cloister. She was employed chiefly when there was need of giving false reports to the Swedes. Be that as it may, it was a mistake on their part; for the besieged could now repair in the old place the wall so greatly shaken, and to make a new breach a number of days would be needed.

The nights were clear in succession, the days full of uproar. The Swedes fired with terrible energy. The spirit of doubt began again to fly over the fortress. Among the besieged were nobles who wished to surrender; some of the monks too had lost heart. The opposition gained strength and importance. The prior made head against it with unrestrained energy, but his health began to give way. Meanwhile came reinforcements to the Swedes and supplies from Krakow, especially terrible explosive missiles in the form of iron cylinders filled with powder and lead. These caused more terror than damage to the besieged.

Kmita, from the time that he had conceived the plan of bursting the siege gun, secreted himself in the fortress. He looked every day at the roll, with heartsickness. On reflection he made it still larger, so that it was almost an ell long and as thick as a bootleg. In the evening he cast greedy looks toward the gun, then examined the sky like an astrologer. But the bright moon, shining on the snow continually, baffled his plan.

All at once a thaw came; clouds covered the horizon, and the night was dark—so dark that even strain your eyes you could see nothing. Pan Andrei fell into such humor as if someone had given him the steed of the Sultan; and midnight had barely sounded when he stood before Charnyetski in his cavalry dress, the roll under his arm.

“I am going!” said he.

“Wait, I will speak to the prior.”

“That is well. Kiss me, Pan Pyotr, and go for the prior.”

Charnyetski kissed him with feeling, and turned away. He had hardly gone thirty steps when Kordetski stood before him in white. He had guessed that Kmita was going, and had come there to bless him.

“Babinich is ready; he is only waiting for your reverence.”

“I hurry, I hurry!” answered the priest. “O Mother of God, save him and aid him!”

After a while both were standing at the opening where Charnyetski left Kmita, but there was no trace of him.

“He has gone!” said the prior, in amazement.

“He has gone!” repeated Charnyetski.

“But, the traitor!” said the prior, with emotion, “I intended to put this little scapular on his neck.”

Both ceased to speak; there was silence around, and as the darkness was dense there was firing from neither side. On a sudden Charnyetski whispered eagerly—

“As God is dear to me, he is not even trying to go in silence! Do you hear steps crushing the snow?”

“Most Holy Lady, guard thy servant!” said the prior.

Both listened carefully for a time, till the brisk steps and the noise on the snow had ceased.

“Do you know, your reverence, at moments I think that he will succeed, and I fear nothing for him. The strange man went as if he were going to an inn to drink a glass of liquor. What courage he has in him! Either he will lay down his head untimely, or he will be hetman. H’m! if I did not know him as a servant of Mary, I should think that he has—God give him success, God grant it to him! for such another cavalier there is not in the Commonwealth.”

“It is so dark, so dark!” said Kordetski; “but they are on their guard since the night of your sortie. He might come upon a whole rank before he could see it.”

“I do not think so. The infantry are watching, that I know, and watch carefully; but they are in the intrenchment, not before the muzzles of their own cannon. If they do not hear the steps, he can easily push under the intrenchment, and then the height of it alone will cover him—*Uf!*”

Here Charnyetski puffed and ceased speaking; for his heart began to beat like a hammer from expectation and alarm, and breath failed him.

Kordetski made the sign of the cross in the darkness.

A third person stood near the two. This was Zamoyski.

“What is the matter?” asked he.

“Babinich has gone to blow up the siege gun.”

“How is that? What is that?”

“He took a roll of powder, cord, and flint, and went.”

Zamoyski pressed his head between his hands.

“Jesus, Mary! Jesus, Mary! All alone?”

“All alone.”

“Who let him go? That’s an impossible deed!”

“I. For the might of God all things are possible, even his safe return,” said Kordetski.

Zamoyski was silent. Charnyetski began to pant from emotion.

“Let us pray,” said the prior.

The three knelt down and began to pray. But anxiety raised the hair on the heads of both knights. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, an hour as long as a lifetime.

“There will be nothing now!” said Charnyetski, sighing deeply.

All at once in the distance a gigantic column of flame burst forth, and a roar as if all the thunders of heaven had been hurled to the earth; it shook the walls, the church, and the cloister.



“He has burst it, he has burst it!” shouted Charnyetski.

New explosions interrupted further speech of his.

Kordetski threw himself on his knees, and raising his hands, cried to heaven, “Most Holy Mother, Guardian, Patroness, bring him back safely!”

A noise was made on the walls. The garrison, not knowing what had happened, seized their arms. The monks rushed from their cells. No one was sleeping. Even women sprang forth. Questions and answers crossed one another like lightnings.

“What has happened?”

“An assault!”

“The Swedish gun has burst!” cried one of the cannoneers.

“A miracle, a miracle!”

“The largest gun is burst!”

“That great one!”

“Where is the prior?”

“On the wall. He is praying; he did this.”

“Babinich burst the gun!” cried Charnyetski.

“Babinich, Babinich! Praise to the Most Holy Lady! They will harm us no longer.”

At the same time sounds of confusion rose from the Swedish camp. In all the trenches fires began to shine. An increasing uproar was heard. By the light of the fires masses of soldiers were seen moving in various directions without order, trumpets sounded, drums rolled continually; to the walls came shouts in which alarm and amazement were heard.

Kordetski continued kneeling on the wall.

At last the night began to grow pale, but Babinich came not to the fortress.

## Chapter XLV

What had happened to Pan Andrei, and in what way had he been able to carry out his plan?

After leaving the fortress he advanced some time with a sure and wary step. At the very end of the slope he halted and listened. It was silent around—so silent in fact that his steps were heard clearly on the snow. In proportion as he receded from the walls, he stepped more carefully. He halted again, and again listened. He was somewhat afraid of slipping and falling, and thus dampening his precious roll; he drew out his rapier therefore and leaned on it. That helped him greatly. Thus feeling his way, after the course of half an hour he heard a slight sound directly in front.

“Ah! they are watching. The sortie has taught them wariness,” thought he.

And he went farther now very slowly. He was glad that he had not gone astray, for the darkness was such that he could not see the end of the rapier.

“Those trenches are considerably farther: I am advancing well then!” whispered he to himself.

He hoped also not to find men before the intrenchment; for, properly speaking, they had nothing to do there, especially at night. It might be that at something like a hundred or fewer yards apart single sentries were stationed; but he hoped to pass them in such darkness. It was joyous in his soul.

Kmita was not only daring but audacious. The thought of bursting the gigantic gun delighted him to the bottom of his soul—not only as heroism, not only as an immortal service to the besieged, but as a terrible damage to the Swedes. He imagined how Miller would be astounded, how he would gnash his teeth, how he would gaze in helplessness on those walls; and at moments pure laughter seized him.

And as he had himself said, he felt no emotion, no fear, no inquiet. It did not even enter his head to what an awful danger he was exposing himself. He went on as a schoolboy goes to an orchard to make havoc among apples. He recalled other times when he harried Hovanski, stole up at night to a camp of thirty thousand with two hundred such fighters as himself.

His comrades stood before his mind: Kokosinski, the gigantic Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus, the spotted Ranitski, of senatorial stock, and others; then for a moment he sighed after them. “If they were here now,” thought he, “we might blow up six guns.” Then the feeling of loneliness oppressed him somewhat, but only for a short while; soon memory brought before his eyes Olenka. Love spoke in him with immeasurable power. He was moved to tenderness. If she could see him, the heart would rejoice in her this time. Perhaps she thinks yet that he is serving the Swedes. He is serving them nicely! And soon he will oblige them! What will happen when she learns of all these perils? What will she think? She will think surely, “He is a whirlwind, but when it comes to a deed which no other can do, he will do it; where another dares not go, he will go. Such a man is that Kmita!”

“Another such deed I shall never accomplish,” said Pan Andrei; and boastfulness seized him completely. Still, in spite of these thoughts he did not forget where he was, whither he was going, what he intended to do; and he began to advance like a wolf on a night pasture. He looked behind once and a second time. No church, no cloister! All was covered with thick, impenetrable gloom. He noted, however, by the time, that he must have advanced far already, and that the trench might be right there.

“I am curious to know if there are sentries,” thought he.

But he had not advanced two steps after giving himself this question, when, in front of him, was heard the tramp of measured steps and a number of voices inquired at various distances—

“Who goes?”

Pan Andrei stood as if fixed to the earth. He felt hot.

“Ours,” answered a number of voices.

“The watchword!”

“Upsala.”

“The countersign!”

“The crown.”

Kmita saw at this moment that there was a change of sentries. “I’ll give you Upsala and a crown!” And he rejoiced. This was really for him a very favorable circumstance, for he might pass the line of guards at the moment of changing sentries, when the tramp of the soldiers drowned his own steps.

In fact, he did so without the least difficulty, and went after the returning soldiers rather boldly up to the trench itself. There they made a turn to go around it; but he pushed quickly into the ditch and hid in it.

Meanwhile objects had become somewhat more visible; Pan Andrei thanked Heaven, for in the previous darkness he could not by feeling have found the gun sought for. Now, by throwing back his head and straining his vision, he saw above him a black line, indicating the edge of the trench, and also the black outlines of the baskets between which stood the guns.

He could indeed see their jaws thrust out a little above the trench. Advancing slowly in the ditch, he discovered the great gun at last. He halted and began to listen. From the intrenchment a noise came—a murmur; evidently the infantry were near the guns, in readiness. But the height of the intrenchment concealed Kmita; they might hear him, they could not see him. Now he had only to rise from below to the mouth of the gun, which was high above his head.

Fortunately the sides of the ditch were not too steep; and besides the embankment freshly made, or moist with water, had not frozen, since for some time there had been a thaw.

Taking note of all this, Kmita began to sink holes quietly in the slope of the intrenchment and to climb slowly to the gun. After fifteen minutes’ work he was able to seize the opening of the culverin. Soon he was hanging in the air, but his uncommon strength permitted him to hold himself thus till he pushed the roll into the jaws of the cannon.

“Here’s dog sausage for thee!” muttered he, “only don’t choke with it!”

Then he slipped down and began to look for the string, which, fastened to the inner side of the roll, was hanging to the ditch. After a while he felt it with his hand. But then came the greatest difficulty, for he had to strike fire and ignite the string.

Kmita waited for a moment, thinking that the noise would increase somewhat among the soldiers in the breastworks. At last he began to strike the flint lightly with the steel. But that moment above his head was heard in German the question—

“Who is there in the ditch?”

“It is I, Hans!” answered Kmita, without hesitation; “the devils have taken my ramrod into the ditch, and I am striking fire to find it.”

“All right, all right,” said the gunner. “It is your luck there is no firing, for the wind would have taken your head off.”

“Ah!” thought Kmita, “the gun besides my charge has still its own—so much the better.”

At that moment the sulphur-string caught, and delicate little sparks began to run upward along its dry exterior.

It was time to disappear. Kmita hurried along the ditch with all the strength in his legs, not losing an instant, not thinking overmuch of the noise he was making. But when he had run twenty yards, curiosity overcame in him the feeling of his terrible danger.

“The string has gone out, there is moisture in the air!” thought he; and he stopped. Casting a look behind, he saw a little spark yet, but much higher than he had left it.

“Eh, am I not too near?” thought he; and fear hurried him forward.

He pushed on at full speed; all at once he struck a stone and fell. At that moment a terrible roar rent the air; the earth trembled, pieces of wood, iron, stones, lumps of ice and earth, whistled about his ears, and here his sensations ended.

After that were heard new explosions in turn. These were powder-boxes standing near the cannon which exploded from the shock.

But Kmita did not hear these; he lay as if dead in the ditch. He did not hear also how, after a time of deep silence, the groans of men were heard, cries and shouts for help; how nearly half the army, Swedish and allied, assembled.

The confusion and uproar lasted long, till from the chaos of testimony the Swedish general reached the fact that the siege-gun had been blown up of purpose by someone. Search was ordered immediately. In the morning the searching soldiers found Kmita lying in the ditch.

It appeared that he was merely stunned from the explosion. He had lost, to begin with, control of his hands and feet. His powerlessness lasted the whole ensuing day. They nursed him with the utmost care. In the evening he had recovered his power almost completely.

He was brought then by command before Miller, who occupied the middle place at the table in his quarters; around him sat the Prince of Hesse, Count Veyhard, Sadovski, all the noted officers of the Swedes, of the Poles, Zbrojek, Kalinski, and Kuklinovski. The last at sight of Kmita became blue, his eyes burned like two coals, and his mustaches began to quiver. Without awaiting the question of the general, he said—

“I know this bird. He is from the Chenstohova garrison. His name is Babinich.”

Kmita was silent; pallor and weariness were evident on his face, but his glance was bold and his countenance calm.

“Did you blow up the siege-gun?” asked Miller.

“I did.”

“How did you do it?”

Kmita stated all briefly, concealed nothing. The officers looked at one another in amazement.

“A hero!” whispered the Prince of Hesse to Sadovski.

But Sadowski inclined to Count Veyhard. "Count Veyhard," asked he, "how are we to take a fortress with such defenders? What do you think, will they surrender?"

"There are more of us in the fortress ready for such deeds," said Kmita. "You know not the day nor the hour."

"I too have more than one halter in the camp," said Miller.

"We know that. But you will not take Yasna Gora while there is one man alive there."

A moment of silence followed. Then Miller inquired—

"Is your name Babinich?"

Pan Andrei thought that after what he had done, and in presence of death, the time had come in which he had no need to conceal his name. Let people forget the faults and transgressions bound up with it; let glory and devotion shine over them.

"My name is not Babinich," said he, with a certain pride, "my name is Andrei Kmita; I was colonel of my own personal squadron in the Lithuanian contingent."

Hardly had Kuklinovski heard this when he sprang up as if possessed, stuck out his eyes, opened his mouth, and began to strike his sides with his hands. At last he cried—

"General, I beg for a word without delay, without delay."

A murmur rose at the same time among the Polish officers, which the Swedes heard with wonder, since for them the name Kmita meant nothing. They noted at once that this must be no common soldier, for Zbrojek rose, and approaching the prisoner said—

"Worthy colonel, in the straits in which you are I cannot help you; but give me your hand, I pray."

Kmita raised his head and began to snort.

"I will not give a hand to traitors who serve against their country!"

Zbrojek's face flushed. Kalinski, who stood right behind him, withdrew. The Swedish officers surrounded them at once, asking what man this Kmita was whose name had made such an impression. During this time Kuklinovski had squeezed Miller up to the window, and said—

"For your worthiness the name Kmita is nothing; but he is the first soldier, the first colonel, in the whole Commonwealth. All know of him, all know that name; once he served Radzivill and the Swedes; now it is clear that he has gone over to Yan Kazimir. There is not his equal among soldiers, save me. He was the only man who could go alone and blow up that gun. From this one deed you may know him. He fought Hovanski, so that a reward was put on his head. He with two or three hundred men kept up the whole war after the defeat at Shklov, until others were found who, imitating him, began to tear at the enemy. He is the most dangerous man in all the country—"

"Why do you sing his praises to me?" inquired Miller. "That he is dangerous I know to my own irreparable loss."

"What does your worthiness think of doing with him?"

"I should give orders to hang him; but being a soldier myself, I know how to value daring and bravery. Besides, he is a noble of high birth—I will order him shot, and that today."

"Your worthiness, it is not for me to instruct the most celebrated soldier and statesman of modern times; but I permit myself to say that that man is too famous. If you shoot him,

Zbrojek's squadron and Kalinski's will withdraw at the latest this very day, and go over to Yan Kazimir."

"If that is true, I'll have them cut to pieces before they go!" cried Miller.

"Your worthiness, a terrible responsibility! for if that becomes known—and the cutting down of two squadrons is hard to hide—the whole Polish army will leave Karl Gustav; at present their loyalty is tottering, as you know. The hetmans are not reliable. Pan Konyetspolski with six thousand of the best cavalry is at the side of our king. That force is no trifle. God defend us if these too should turn against us, against the person of his Royal Grace! Besides, this fortress defends itself; and to cut down the squadrons of Zbrojek and Kalinski is no easy matter, for Wolf is here too with his infantry. They might come to an agreement with the garrison of the fortress."

"A hundred horned devils!" cried Miller; "what do you want, Kuklinovski? do you want me to give Kmita his life? That cannot be."

"I want," answered Kuklinovski, "you to give him to me."

"What will you do with him?"

"Ah, I—will tear him alive from his skin."

"You did not know even his real name, you do not know him. What have you against him?"

"I made his acquaintance first in the fortress, where I have been twice as an envoy to the monks."

"Have you reasons for vengeance?"

"Your worthiness, I wished privately to bring him to our camp. He, taking advantage of the fact that I laid aside my office of envoy, insulted me, Kuklinovski, as no man in life has insulted me."

"What did he do to you?"

Kuklinovski trembled and gnashed his teeth. "Better not speak of it. Only give him to me. He is doomed to death anyhow, and I would like before his end to have a little amusement with him—all the more because he is the Kmita whom formerly I venerated, and who repaid me in such fashion. Give him to me; it will be better for you. If I rub him out, Zbrojek and Kalinski and with them all the Polish knighthood will fall not upon you, but upon me, and I'll help myself. There will not be anger, wry faces, and mutiny. It will be my private matter about Kmita's skin, of which I shall have a drum made."

Miller fell to thinking; a sudden suspicion flashed over his face.

"Kuklinovski," said he, "maybe you wish to save him?"

Kuklinovski smiled quietly, but that smile was so terrible and sincere that Miller ceased to doubt.

"Perhaps you give sound advice," said he.

"For all my services I beg this reward only."

"Take him, then."

Now both returned to the room where the rest of the officers were assembled. Miller turned to them and said—

"In view of the services of Pan Kuklinovski I place at his absolute disposal this prisoner."

A moment of silence followed; then Pan Zbrojek put his hands on his sides, and asked with a certain accent of contempt—

“And what does Pan Kuklinovski think to do with the prisoner?”

Kuklinovski bent, straightened himself quickly, his lips opened with an ill-omened smile, and his eyes began to quiver.

“Whoso is not pleased with what I do to the prisoner, knows where to find me.” And he shook his sabre.

“Your promise, Pan Kuklinovski,” said Zbrojek.

“Promise, promise!”

When he had said this he approached Kmita. “Follow me, little worm; come after me, famous soldier. Thou’rt a trifle weak; thou needst swathing—I’ll swathe thee.”

“Ruffian!” said Kmita.

“Very good, very good, daring soul! Meanwhile step along.”

The officers remained in the room; Kuklinovski mounted his horse before the quarters. Having with him three soldiers, he commanded one of them to lead Kmita by a lariat; and all went together toward Lgota, where Kuklinovski’s regiment was quartered.

On the way Kmita prayed ardently. He saw that death was approaching, and he committed himself with his whole soul to God. He was so sunk in prayer and in his own doom that he did not hear what Kuklinovski said to him; he did not know even how long the road was.

They stopped at last before an empty, half-ruined barn, standing in the open field, at some distance from the quarters of Kuklinovski’s regiment. The colonel ordered them to lead Kmita in, and turning himself to one of the soldiers, said—

“Hurry for me to the camp, bring ropes and a tar bucket!”

The soldier galloped with all the breath in his horse, and in quarter of an hour returned at the same pace, with a comrade. They had brought the requisite articles.

“Strip this spark naked!” ordered Kuklinovski; “tie his hands and feet behind him with a rope, and then fasten him to a beam.”

“Ruffian!” said Kmita.

“Good, good! we can talk yet, we have time!”

Meanwhile one of the soldiers climbed up on the beam, and the others fell to dragging the clothes from Kmita. When he was naked the three executioners placed Pan Andrei with his face to the ground, bound his hands and feet with a long rope, then passing it still around his waist they threw the other end to the soldier sitting on the beam.

“Now raise him, and let the man on the beam pull the rope and tie it!” said Kuklinovski.

In a moment the order was obeyed.

“Let him go!”

The rope squeaked. Pan Andrei was hanging parallel with the earth, a few ells above the threshing-floor. Then Kuklinovski dipped tow in the burning tar-bucket, walked up to him, and said—

“Well, Pan Kmita, did not I say that there are two colonels in the Commonwealth?—only two, I and thou! And thou didst not wish to join company with Kuklinovski, and kicked him!

Well, little worm, thou art right! Not for thee is the company of Kuklinovski, for Kuklinovski is better. Hei! a famous colonel is Pan Kmita, and Kuklinovski has him in his hand, and Kuklinovski is roasting his sides!”

“Ruffian!” repeated Kmita, for the third time.

“This is how he will roast his sides!” finished Kuklinovski, and he touched Kmita’s side with the burning tow; then he said—

“Not too much at first; we have time.”

Just then the tramp of horses was heard near the barn-door.

“Whom are the devils bringing?” asked Kuklinovski.

The door squeaked and a soldier entered. “General Miller wishes to see your grace at once!”

“Ah! that is thou, old man?” asked Kuklinovski. “What business? What devil?”

“The general asks your grace to come to him straightway.”

“Who came from the general?”

“There was a Swedish officer; he has ridden off already. He had almost driven the breath out of his horse.”

“I’ll go,” said Kuklinovski. Then he turned to Kmita: “It was hot for thee; cool off now, little worm. I’ll come again soon, we’ll have another talk.”

“What shall be done with the prisoner?” asked one of the soldiers.

“Leave him as he is. I shall return directly. Let one go with me.”

The colonel went out, and with him that soldier who had sat on the beam at first. There remained only three, but soon three new ones entered the barn.

“You may go to sleep,” said he who had reported Miller’s order to Kuklinovski, “the colonel has left the guard to us.”

“We prefer to remain,” replied one of the first three soldiers, “to see the wonder; for such a—”

Suddenly he stopped. A certain unearthly sound was wrested from his throat like the call of a strangled cock. He threw out his arms and fell as if struck by lightning.

At the same moment the cry of “Pound” was heard through the barn, and two of the newly arrived rushed like leopards on the two remaining soldiers. A terrible, short struggle surged up, lighted by the gleams of the burning tar-bucket. After a moment two bodies fell in the straw, for a moment longer were heard the gasps of the dying, then that voice rose which at first seemed familiar to Kmita.

“Your grace, it is I, Kyemlich, and my sons. We have been waiting since morning for a chance, we have been watching since morning.” Then he turned to his sons: “Now out, rogues, free the colonel in a breath—quickly!”

And before Kmita was able to understand what was taking place there appeared near him the two bushy forelocks of Kosma and Damian, like two gigantic distaffs. The ropes were soon cut, and Kmita stood on his feet. He tottered at first; his stiffened lips were barely able to say—

“That is you?—I am thankful.”



"It is I!" answered the terrible old man. "Mother of God! Oh—let his grace dress quickly. You rogues—" And he began to give Kmita his clothes.

"The horses are standing at the door," said he. "From here the way is open. There are guards; maybe they would let no one in, but as to letting out, they will let out. We know the password. How does your grace feel?"

"He burned my side, but only a little. My feet are weak—"

"Drink some *gorailka*."

Kmita seized with eagerness the flask the old man gave him, and emptying half of it said—

"I was stiff from the cold. I shall be better at once."

"Your grace will grow warm on the saddle. The horses are waiting."

"In a moment I shall be better," repeated Kmita. "My side is smarting a little—that's nothing!—I am quite well." And he sat on the edge of a grain-bin.

After a while he recovered his strength really, and looked with perfect presence of mind on the ill-omened faces of the three Kyemliches, lighted by the yellowish flame of the burning pitch. The old man stood before him.

"Your grace, there is need of haste. The horses are waiting."

But in Pan Andrei the Kmita of old times was roused altogether.

"Oh, impossible!" cried he, suddenly; "now I am waiting for that traitor."

The Kyemliches looked amazed, but uttered not a word—so accustomed were they from former times to listen blindly to this leader.

The veins came out on his forehead; his eyes were burning in the dark, like two stars, such was the hate and the desire of vengeance that gleamed in them. That which he did then was madness, he might pay for it with his life; but his life was made up of a series of such madresses. His side pained him fiercely, so that every moment he seized it unwittingly with his hand; but he was thinking only of Kuklinovski, and he was ready to wait for him even till morning.

"Listen!" said he; "did Miller really call him?"

"No," answered the old man. "I invented that to manage the others here more easily. It would have been hard for us three against five, for someone might have raised a cry."

"That was well. He will return alone or in company. If there are any people with him, then strike at once on them. Leave him to me. Then to horse! Has anyone pistols?"

"I have," said Kosma.

"Give them here! Are they loaded, is there powder in the pan?"

"Yes."

"Very well. If he comes back alone, when he enters spring on him and shut his mouth. You can stuff his own cap into it."

"According to command," said the old man. "Your grace permits us now to search these? We are poor men."

He pointed to the corpses lying on the straw.

"No! Be on the watch. What you find on Kuklinovski will be yours."

“If he returns alone,” said the old man, “I fear nothing. I shall stand behind the door; and even if someone from the quarters should come, I shall say that the colonel gave orders not to admit.”

“That will do. Watch!”

The tramp of a horse was heard behind the barn. Kmita sprang up and stood in the shadow at the wall. Kosma and Damian took their places near the door, like two cats waiting for a mouse.

“He is alone,” said the old man.

“Alone,” repeated Kosma and Damian.

The tramp approached, was right there and halted suddenly.

“Come out here, someone—hold the horse!”

The old man jumped out quickly. A moment of silence followed, then to those waiting in the barn came the following conversation—

“Is that you, Kyemlich? What the thunder! art mad, or an idiot? It is night, Miller is asleep. The guard will not give admission; they say that no officer went away. How is that?”

“The officer is waiting here in the barn for your grace. He came right away after you rode off; he says that he missed your grace.”

“What does all this mean? But the prisoner?”

“Is hanging.”

The door squeaked, and Kuklinovski pushed into the barn; but before he had gone a step two iron hands caught him by the throat, and smothered his cry of terror. Kosma and Damian, with the adroitness of genuine murderers, hurled him to the ground, put their knees on his breast, pressed him so that his ribs began to crack, and gagged him in the twinkling of an eye.

Kmita came forward, and holding the pitch light to his eyes, said—

“Ah! this is Pan Kuklinovski! Now I have something to say to you!”

Kuklinovski’s face was blue, the veins were so swollen that it seemed they might burst any moment; but in his eyes, which were coming out of his head and bloodshot, there was quite as much wonder as terror.

“Strip him and put him on the beam!” cried Kmita.

Kosma and Damian fell to stripping him as zealously as if they wished to take the skin from him together with his clothing.

In a quarter of an hour Kuklinovski was hanging by his hands and feet, like a half goose, on the beam. Then Kmita put his hands on his hips and began to brag terribly.

“Well, Pan Kuklinovski,” said he, “who is better, Kmita or Kuklinovski?” Then he seized the burning tow and took a step nearer. “Thy camp is distant one shot from a bow, thy thousand ruffians are within call, there is thy Swedish general a little beyond, and thou art hanging here from this same beam from which ’twas thy thought to roast me.—Learn to know Kmita! Thou hadst the thought to be equal to Kmita, to belong to his company, to be compared with him? Thou cutpurse, thou low ruffian, terror of old women, thou offscouring of man. Lord Scoundrel of Scoundrelton! Wry-mouth, trash, slave! I might have thee cut up like a kid, like a capon; but I choose to roast thee alive as thou didst think to roast me.”

Saying this, he raised the tow and applied it to the side of the hanging, hapless man; but he held it longer, until the odor of the burned flesh began to spread through the barn.

Kuklinovski writhed till the rope was swinging with him. His eyes, fastened on Kmita, expressed terrible pain and a dumb imploring for pity; from his gagged lips came woeful groans; but war had hardened the heart of Pan Andrei, and there was no pity in him, above all, none for traitors.

Removing at last the tow from Kuklinovski's side, he put it for a while under his nose, rubbed with it his mustaches, his eyelashes, and his brows; then he said—

“I give thee thy life to meditate on Kmita. Thou wilt hang here till morning, and now pray to God that people find thee before thou art frozen.”

Then he turned to Kosma and Damian. “To horse!” cried he, and went out of the barn.

Half an hour later around the four riders were quiet hills, silent and empty fields. The fresh breeze, not filled with smoke of powder, entered their lungs. Kmita rode ahead, the Kyemliches after him. They spoke in low voices. Pan Andrei was silent, or rather he was repeating in silence the morning “Our Father,” for it was not long before dawn.

From time to time a hiss or even a low groan was rent from his lips, when his burned side pained him greatly. But at the same time he felt on horseback and free; and the thought that he had blown up the greatest siege gun, and besides that had torn himself from the hands of Kuklinovski and had wrought vengeance on him, filled Pan Andrei with such consolation that in view of it the pain was nothing.

Meanwhile a quiet dialogue between the father and the sons turned into a loud dispute.

“The money belt is good,” said the greedy old man; “but where are the rings? He had rings on his fingers; in one was a stone worth twenty ducats.”

“I forgot to take it,” answered Kosma.

“I wish you were killed! Let the old man think of everything, and these rascals haven't wit for a copper! You forgot the rings, you thieves? You lie like dogs!”

“Then turn back, father, and look,” muttered Damian.

“You lie, you thieves! You hide things. You wrong your old father—such sons! I wish that I had not begotten you. You will die without a blessing.”

Kmita reined in his horse somewhat. “Come this way!” called he.

The dispute ceased, the Kyemliches hurried up, and they rode farther four abreast.

“And do you know the road to the Silesian boundary?” asked Pan Andrei.

“O Mother of God! we know, we know,” answered the old man.

“There are no Swedish parties on the road?”

“No, for all are at Chenstohova, unless we might meet a single man; but God give us one!”

A moment of silence followed.

“Then you served with Kuklinovski?” asked Kmita.

“We did, for we thought that being near we might serve the holy monks and your grace, and so it has happened. We did not serve against the fortress—God save us from that! we took no pay unless we found something on Swedes.”

“How on Swedes?”

“For we wanted to serve the Most Holy Lady even outside the walls; therefore we rode around the camp at night or in the daytime, as the Lord God gave us; and when any of the Swedes happened alone, then we—that is—O Refuge of sinners!—we—”

“Pounded him!” finished Kosma and Damian.

Kmita laughed. “Kuklinovski had good servants in you. But did he know about this?”

“He received a share, an income. He knew, and the scoundrel commanded us to give a thaler a head. Otherwise he threatened to betray us. Such a robber—he wronged poor men! And we have kept faith with your grace, for not such is service with you. Your grace adds besides of your own; but he, a thaler a head, for our toil, for our labor. On him may God—”

“I will reward you abundantly for what you have done,” said Kmita. “I did not expect this of you.”

The distant sound of guns interrupted further words. Evidently the Swedes had begun to fire with the first dawn. After a while the roar increased. Kmita stopped his horse; it seemed to him that he distinguished the sound of the fortress cannon from the cannon of the Swedes, therefore he clinched his fist, and threatening with it in the direction of the enemies’ camp said—

“Fire away, fire away! Where is your greatest gun now?”

## Chapter XLVI

The bursting of the gigantic culverin had really a crushing effect upon Miller, for all his hopes had rested hitherto on that gun. Infantry were ready for the assault, ladders and piles of fascines were collected; but now it was necessary to abandon all thought of a storm.

The plan of blowing up the cloister by means of mines came also to nothing. Miners brought in previously from Olkush split, it is true, the rock, and approached on a diagonal to the cloister; but work progressed slowly. The workmen, in spite of every precaution, fell frequently from the guns of the church, and labored unwillingly. Many of them preferred to die rather than aid in the destruction of a sacred place.

Miller felt a daily increasing opposition. The frost took away the remnant of courage from his unwilling troops, among whom terror was spreading from day to day with a belief that the capture of the cloister did not lie within human power.

Finally Miller himself began to lose hope, and after the bursting of the gun he was simply in despair; a feeling of helplessness and impotence took possession of him. Next morning he called a council, but he called it with the secret wish to hear from officers encouragement to abandon the fortress.

They began to assemble, all wearied and gloomy. In silence they took their places around a table in an enormous and cold room, in which the steam from their breaths stood before their faces, and they looked from behind it as from behind a cloud. Each one felt in his soul exhaustion and weariness; each one said to himself: "There is no counsel to give save one, which it is better for no man to be the first to give." All waited for what Miller would say. He ordered first of all to bring plenty of heated wine, hoping that under the influence of warm drink it would be easier to obtain a real thought from those silent figures, and encouragement to retreat from the fortress.

At last, when he supposed that the wine had produced its effect, he spoke in the following words—

"Have you noticed, gentlemen, that none of the Polish colonels have come to this council, though I summoned them all?"

"It is known of course to your worthiness that servants of the Polish squadron have, while fishing, found silver belonging to the cloister, and that they fought for it with our soldiers. More than ten men have been cut down."

"I know; I succeeded in snatching a part of that silver from their hands, indeed the greater part. It is here now, and I am thinking what to do with it."

"This is surely the cause of the anger of the Polish colonels. They say that if the Poles found the silver, it belongs to the Poles."

"That's a reason!" cried Count Veyhard.

"For my mind, it is a strong reason," said Sadovski; "and I think that if you had found the silver you would not feel bound to divide it, not only with the Poles, but even with me, a Cheh."

"First of all, my dear sir, I do not share your good will for the enemies of our king," answered the count, with a frown.

“But we, thanks to you, must share with you shame and disgrace, not being able to succeed against a fortress to which you have brought us.”

“Then have you lost all hope?”

“But have you any yourself to give away?”

“Just as if you knew; and I think that these gentlemen share more willingly with me in my hope, than with you in your fear.”

“Do you make me a coward, Count Veyhard?”

“I do not ascribe to you more courage than you show.”

“And I ascribe to you less.”

“But I,” said Miller, who for some time had looked on the count with dislike as the instigator of the ill-starred undertaking, “shall have the silver sent to the cloister. Perhaps kindness and graciousness will do more with these surly monks than balls and cannon. Let them understand that we wish to possess the fortress, not their treasures.”

The officers looked on Miller with wonder, so little accustomed were they to magnanimity from him. At last Sadowski said—

“Nothing better could be done, for it will close at once the mouths of the Polish colonels who lay claim to the silver. In the fortress it will surely make a good impression.”

“The death of that Kmita will make the best impression,” answered Count Veyhard. “I hope that Kuklinovski has already torn him out of his skin.”

“I think that he is no longer alive,” said Miller. “But that name reminds me of our loss, which nothing can make good. That was the greatest gun in the whole artillery of his grace. I do not hide from you, gentlemen, that all my hopes were placed on it. The breach was already made, terror was spreading in the fortress. A couple of days longer and we should have moved to a storm. Now all our labor is useless, all our exertions vain. They will repair the wall in one day. And the guns which we have now are no better than those of the fortress, and can be easily dismounted. No larger ones can be had anywhere, for even Marshal Wittemberg hasn’t them. The more I ponder over it, the more the disaster seems dreadful. And to think that one man did this—one dog! one Satan! I shall go mad! To all the horned devils!”

Here Miller struck the table with his fist, for unrestrained anger had seized him, the more desperately because he was powerless. After a while he cried—

“But what will the king say when he hears of this loss?” After a while he added: “And what shall we do? We cannot gnaw away that cliff with our teeth. Would that the plague might strike those who persuaded me to come to this fortress!”

Having said this, he took a crystal goblet, and in his excitement hurled it to the floor so that the crystal was broken into small bits.

This unbecoming frenzy, more befitting a peasant than a warrior holding such a high office, turned all hearts from him, and soured good-humor completely.

“Give counsel, gentlemen!” cried Miller.

“It is possible to counsel, but only in calmness,” answered the Prince of Hesse.

Miller began to puff and blow out his anger through his nostrils. After a time he grew calm, and passing his eyes over those present as if encouraging them with a glance, he said—

"I ask your pardon, gentlemen, but my anger is not strange. I will not mention those places which, when I had taken command after Torstenson, I captured, for I do not wish, in view of the present disaster, to boast of past fortune. All that is done at this fortress simply passes reason. But still it is necessary to take counsel. For that purpose I have summoned you. Deliberate, then, and what the majority of us determine at this council will be done."

"Let your worthiness give us the subject for deliberation," said the Prince of Hesse. "Have we to deliberate only concerning the capture of the fortress, or also concerning this, whether it is better to withdraw?"

Miller did not wish to put the question so clearly, or at least he did not wish the "either—or," to come first from his mouth; therefore he said—

"Let each speak clearly what he thinks. It should be a question for us of the profit and praise of the king."

But none of the officers wished more than Miller to appear first with the proposition to retreat, therefore there was silence again.

"Pan Sadovski," said Miller after a while, in a voice which he tried to make agreeable and kind, "you say what you think more sincerely than others, for your reputation insures you against all suspicion."

"I think, General," answered the colonel, "that Kmita was one of the greatest soldiers of this age, and that our position is desperate."

"But you were in favor of withdrawing from the fortress?"

"With permission of your worthiness, I was only in favor of not beginning the siege. That is a thing quite different."

"Then what do you advise now?"

"Now I give the floor to Count Veyhard."

Miller swore like a pagan.

"Count Veyhard will answer for this unfortunate affair," said he.

"My counsels have not all been carried out," answered the count, insolently. "I can boldly cast responsibility from myself. There were men who with a wonderful, in truth an inexplicable, goodwill for the priests, dissuaded his worthiness from all severe measures. My advice was to hang those envoy priests, and I am convinced that if this had been done terror would have opened to us before this time the gates of that henhouse."

Here the count looked at Sadovski; but before the latter had answered, the Prince of Hesse interfered: "Count, do not call that fortress a henhouse, for the more you decrease its importance the more you increase our shame."

"Nevertheless I advised to hang the envoys. Terror and always terror, that is what I repeated from morning till night; but Pan Sadovski threatened resignation, and the priests went unharmed."

"Go, Count, today to the fortress," answered Sadovski, "blow up with powder their greatest gun as Kmita did ours, and I guarantee that, that will spread more terror than a murderous execution of envoys."

The count turned directly to Miller: "Your worthiness I thought we had come here for counsel and not for amusement."

“Have you an answer to baseless reproaches?” asked Miller.

“I have, in spite of the joyousness of these gentlemen, who might save their humor for better times.”

“Oh, son of Laertes, famous for stratagems!” exclaimed the Prince of Hesse.

“Gentlemen,” answered the count, “it is universally known that not Minerva but Mars is your guardian deity; but since Mars has not favored you, and you have renounced your right of speech, let me speak.”

“The mountain is beginning to groan, and soon we shall see the small tail of a mouse,” said Sadowski.

“I ask for silence!” said Miller, severely. “Speak, Count, but keep in mind that up to this moment your counsels have given bitter fruit.”

“Which, though it is winter, we must eat like mouldy biscuits,” put in the Prince of Hesse.

“This explains why your princely highness drinks so much wine,” said Count Veyhard; “and though it does not take the place of native wit, it helps you to a happy digestion of even disgrace. But no matter! I know well that there is a party in the fortress which is long desirous of surrender, and that only our weakness on one side and the superhuman stubbornness of the prior on the other keep it in check. New terror will give this party new power; for this purpose we should show that we make no account of the loss of the gun, and storm the more vigorously.”

“Is that all?”

“Even if it were all, I think that such counsel is more in accordance with the honor of Swedish soldiers than barren jests at cups, or than sleeping after drinking-bouts. But that is not all. We should spread the report among our soldiers, and especially among the Poles, that the men at work now making a mine have discovered the old underground passage leading to the cloister and the church.”

“That is good counsel,” said Miller.

“When this report is spread among the soldiers and the Poles, the Poles themselves will persuade the monks to surrender, for it is a question with them as with the monks, that that nest of superstitions should remain intact.”

“For a Catholic that is not bad!” muttered Sadowski.

“If he served the Turks he would call Rome a nest of superstitions,” said the Prince of Hesse.

“Then, beyond doubt, the Poles will send envoys to the priests,” continued Count Veyhard—“that party in the cloister, which is long anxious for surrender will renew its efforts under the influence of fear; and who knows but its members will force the prior and the stubborn to open the gates?”

“The city of Priam will perish through the cunning of the divine son of Laertes,” declaimed the Prince of Hesse.

“As God lives, a real Trojan history, and he thinks he has invented something new!” said Sadowski.

But the advice pleased Miller, for in very truth it was not bad. The party which the count spoke of existed really in the cloister. Even some priests of weaker soul belonged to it. Besides, fear might extend among the garrison, including even those who so far were ready to defend it to the last drop of blood.



“Let us try, let us try!” said Miller, who like a drowning man seized every plank, and from despair passed easily to hope. “But will Kuklinovski or Zbrojek agree to go again as envoys to the cloister, or will they believe in that passage, and will they inform the priests of it?”

“In every case Kuklinovski will agree,” answered the count; “but it is better that he should believe really in the existence of the passage.”

At that moment they heard the tramp of a horse in front of the quarters.

“There, Pan Zbrojek has come!” said the Prince of Hesse, looking through the window.

A moment later spurs rattled, and Zbrojek entered, or rather rushed into the room. His face was pale, excited, and before the officers could ask the cause of his excitement the colonel cried—

“Kuklinovski is no longer living!”

“How? What do you say? What has happened?” exclaimed Miller.

“Let me catch breath,” said Zbrojek, “for what I have seen passes imagination.”

“Talk more quickly. Has he been murdered?” cried all.

“By Kmita,” answered Zbrojek.

The officers all sprang from their seats, and began to look at Zbrojek as at a madman; and he, while blowing in quick succession bunches of steam from his nostrils, said—

“If I had not seen I should not have believed, for that is not a human power. Kuklinovski is not living, three soldiers are killed, and of Kmita not a trace. I know that he was a terrible man. His reputation is known in the whole country. But for him, a prisoner and bound, not only to free himself, but to kill the soldiers and torture Kuklinovski to death—that a man could not do, only a devil!”

“Nothing like that has ever happened; that’s impossible of belief!” whispered Sadovski.

“That Kmita has shown what he can do,” said the Prince of Hesse. “We did not believe the Poles yesterday when they told us what kind of bird he was; we thought they were telling big stories, as is usual with them.”

“Enough to drive a man mad,” said the count.

Miller seized his head with his hands, and said nothing. When at last he raised his eyes, flashes of wrath were crossing in them with flashes of suspicion.

“Pan Zbrojek,” said he, “though he were Satan and not a man, he could not do this without some treason, without assistance. Kmita had his admirers here; Kuklinovski his enemies, and you belong to the number.”

Zbrojek was in the full sense of the word an insolent soldier; therefore when he heard an accusation directed against himself, he grew still paler, sprang from his place, approached Miller, and halting in front of him looked him straight in the eyes.

“Does your worthiness suspect me?” inquired he.

A very oppressive moment followed. The officers present had not the slightest doubt were Miller to give an affirmative answer something would follow terrible and unparalleled in the history of camps. All hands rested on their rapier hilts. Sadovski even drew his weapon altogether.

But at that moment the officers saw before the window a yard filled with Polish horsemen. Probably they also had come with news of Kuklinovski, but in case of collision they would stand beyond doubt on Zbrojek's side. Miller too saw them, and though the paleness of rage had come on his face, still he restrained himself, and feigning to see no challenge in Zbrojek's action, he answered in a voice which he strove to make natural—

“Tell in detail how it happened.”

Zbrojek stood for a time yet with nostrils distended, but he too remembered himself; and then his thoughts turned in another direction, for his comrades, who had just ridden up, entered the room.

“Kuklinovski is murdered!” repeated they, one after another. “Kuklinovski is killed! His regiment will scatter! His soldiers are going wild!”

“Gentlemen, permit Pan Zbrojek to speak; he brought the news first,” cried Miller.

After a while there was silence, and Zbrojek spoke as follows—

“It is known to you, gentlemen, that at the last council I challenged Kuklinovski on the word of a cavalier. I was an admirer of Kmita, it is true; but even you, though his enemies, must acknowledge that no common man could have done such a deed as bursting that cannon. It behooves us to esteem daring even in an enemy; therefore I offered him my hand, but he refused his, and called me a traitor. Then I thought to myself, ‘Let Kuklinovski do what he likes with him.’ My only other thought was this: ‘If Kuklinovski acts against knightly honor in dealing with Kmita, the disgrace of his deed must not fall on all Poles, and among others on me.’ For that very reason I wished surely to fight with Kuklinovski, and this morning taking two comrades, I set out for his camp. We come to his quarters; they say there, ‘He is not at home.’ I send to this place—he is not here. At his quarters they tell us, ‘He has not returned the whole night.’ But they are not alarmed, for they think that he has remained with your worthiness. At last one soldier says, ‘Last evening he went to that little barn in the field with Kmita, whom he was going to burn there.’ I ride to the barn; the doors are wide open. I enter; I see inside a naked body hanging from a beam. ‘That is Kmita,’ thought I; but when my eyes have grown used to the darkness, I see that the body is some thin and bony one, and Kmita looked like a Hercules. It is a wonder to me that he could shrink so much in one night. I draw near—Kuklinovski!”

“Hanging from the beam?” asked Miller.

“Exactly! I make the sign of the cross—I think, ‘Is it witchcraft, an omen, deception, or what?’ But when I saw three corpses of soldiers, the truth stood as if living before me. That terrible man had killed these, hung Kuklinovski, burned him like an executioner, and then escaped.”

“It is not far to the Silesian boundary,” said Sadovski.

A moment of silence followed. Every suspicion of Zbrojek's participation in the affair was extinguished in Miller's soul. But the event itself astonished and filled him with a certain undefined fear. He saw dangers rising around, or rather their terrible shadows, against which he knew not how to struggle; he felt that some kind of chain of failures surrounded him. The first links were before his eyes, but farther the gloom of the future was lying. Just such a feeling mastered him as if he were in a cracked house which might fall on his head any moment. Uncertainty crushed him with an insupportable weight, and he asked himself what he had to lay hands on.

Meanwhile Count Veyhard struck himself on the forehead. "As God lives," said he, "when I saw this Kmita yesterday it seemed as if I had known him somewhere. Now again I see before me that face. I remember the sound of his voice. I must have met him for a short time and in the dark, in the evening; but he is going through my head—going—" Here he began to rub his forehead with his hand.

"What is that to us?" asked Miller; "you will not mend the gun, even should you remember; you will not bring Kuklinovski to life."

Here he turned to the officers. "Gentlemen, come with me, whoso wishes, to the scene of this deed."

All wished to go, for curiosity was exciting them. Horses were brought, and they moved on at a trot, the general at the head. When they came to the little barn they saw a number of tens of Polish horsemen scattered around that building, on the road, and along the field.

"What men are they?" asked Miller of Zbrojek.

"They must be Kuklinovski's; I tell your worthiness that those ragamuffins have simply gone wild."

Zbrojek then beckoned to one of the horsemen—

"Come this way, come this way. Quickly!"

The soldier rode up.

"Are you Kuklinovski's men?"

"Yes."

"Where is the rest of the regiment?"

"They have run away. They refused to serve longer against Yasna Gora."

"What does he say?" asked Miller.

Zbrojek interpreted the words.

"Ask him where they went to."

Zbrojek repeated the question.

"It is unknown," said the soldier. "Some have gone to Silesia. Others said that they would serve with Kmita, for there is not another such colonel either among the Poles or the Swedes."

When Zbrojek interpreted these words to Miller, he grew serious. In truth, such men as Kuklinovski had were ready to pass over to the command of Kmita without hesitation. But then they might become terrible, if not for Miller's army, at least for his supplies and communication. A river of perils was rising higher and higher around the enchanted fortress.

Zbrojek, into whose head this idea must have come, said, as if in answer to these thoughts of Miller: "It is certain that everything is in a storm now in our Commonwealth. Let only such a Kmita shout, hundreds and thousands will surround him, especially after what he has done."

"But what can he effect?" asked Miller.

"Remember, your worthiness, that that man brought Hovanski to desperation, and Hovanski had, counting the Cossacks, six times as many men as we. Not a transport will come to us without his permission, the country houses are destroyed, and we are beginning to feel

hunger. Besides, this Kmita may join with Jegotski and Kulesha; then he will have several thousand sabres at his call. He is a grievous man, and may become most harmful.”

“Are you sure of your soldiers?”

“Surer than of myself,” answered Zbrojek, with brutal frankness.

“How surer?”

“For, to tell the truth, we have all of us enough of this siege.”

“I trust that it will soon come to an end.”

“Only the question is: How? But for that matter to capture this fortress is at present as great a calamity as to retire from it.”

Meanwhile they had reached the little barn. Miller dismounted, after him the officers, and all entered. The soldiers had removed Kuklinovski from the beam, and covering him with a rug laid him on his back on remnants of straw. The bodies of three soldiers lay at one side, placed evenly one by the other.

“These were killed with knives.”

“But Kuklinovski?”

“There are no wounds on Kuklinovski, but his side is roasted and his mustaches daubed with pitch. He must have perished of cold or suffocation, for he holds his own cap in his teeth to this moment.”

“Uncover him.”

The soldier raised a corner of the rug, and a terrible face was uncovered, swollen, with eyes bursting out. On the remnants of his pitched mustaches were icicles formed from his frozen breath and mixed with soot, making as it were tusks sticking out of his mouth. That face was so revolting that Miller, though accustomed to all kinds of ghastliness, shuddered and said—

“Cover it quickly. Terrible, terrible!”

Silence reigned in the barn.

“Why have we come here?” asked the Prince of Hesse, spitting. “I shall not touch food for a whole day.”

All at once some kind of uncommon exasperation closely bordering on frenzy took possession of Miller. His face became blue, his eyes expanded, he began to gnash his teeth, a wild thirst for the blood of someone had seized him; then turning to Zbrojek, he screamed—

“Where is that soldier who saw that Kuklinovski was in the barn? He must be a confederate!”

“I know not whether that soldier is here yet,” answered Zbrojek. “All Kuklinovski’s men have scattered like oxen let out from the yoke.”

“Then catch him!” bellowed Miller, in fury.

“Catch him yourself!” cried Zbrojek, in similar fury.

And again a terrible outburst hung as it were on a spiderweb over the heads of the Swedes and the Poles. The latter began to gather around Zbrojek, moving their mustaches threateningly and rattling their sabres.

During this noise the echoes of shots and the tramp of horses were heard, and into the barn rushed a Swedish officer of cavalry.

“General!” cried he. “A sortie from the cloister! The men working at the mine have been cut to pieces! A party of infantry is scattered!”

“I shall go wild!” roared Miller, seizing the hair of his wig. “To horse!”

In a moment they were all rushing like a whirlwind toward the cloister, so that lumps of snow fell like hail from the hoofs of their horses. A hundred of Sadowski’s cavalry, under command of his brother, joined Miller and ran to assist. On the way they saw parties of terrified infantry fleeing in disorder and panic, so fallen were the hearts of the Swedish infantry, elsewhere unrivalled. They had left even trenches which were not threatened by any danger. The oncoming officers and cavalry trampled a few, and rode finally to within a furlong of the fortress, but only to see on the height as clearly as on the palm of the hand, the attacking party returning safely to the cloister; songs, shouts of joy, and laughter came from them to Miller’s ears.

Single persons stood forth and threatened with bloody sabres in the direction of the staff. The Poles present at the side of the Swedish general recognized Zamoyski himself, who had led the sortie in person, and who, when he saw the staff, stopped and saluted it solemnly with his cap. No wonder he felt safe under cover of the fortress cannon.

And, in fact, it began to smoke on the walls, and iron flocks of cannon balls were flying with terrible whistling among the officers. Troopers tottered in their saddles, and groans answered whistles.

“We are under fire. Retreat!” commanded Sadowski.

Zbrojek seized the reins of Miller’s horse. “General, withdraw! It is death here!”

Miller, as if he had become torpid, said not a word, and let himself be led out of range of the missiles. Returning to his quarters, he locked himself in, and for a whole day would see no man. He was meditating surely over his fame of Poliorcetes.

Count Veyhard now took all power in hand, and began with immense energy to make preparations for a storm. New breastworks were thrown up; the soldiers succeeding the miners broke the cliff unweariedly to prepare a mine. A feverish movement continued in the whole Swedish camp. It seemed that a new spirit had entered the besiegers, or that reinforcements had come. A few days later the news thundered through the Swedish and allied Polish camps that the miners had found a passage going under the church and the cloister, and that it depended now only on the goodwill of the general to blow up the whole fortress.

Delight seized the soldiers worn out with cold, hunger, and fruitless toil. Shouts of: “We have Chenstohova! We’ll blow up that henhouse!” ran from mouth to mouth. Feasting and drinking began.

The count was present everywhere; he encouraged the soldiers, kept them in that belief, repeated a hundred times daily the news of finding the passage, incited to feasting and frolics.

The echo of this gladness reached the cloister at last. News of the mines dug and ready to explode ran with the speed of lightning from rampart to rampart. Even the most daring were frightened. Weeping women began to besiege the prior’s dwelling, to hold out to him their children when he appeared for a while, and cry—

“Destroy not the innocent! Their blood will fall on thy head!”

The greater coward a man had been, the greater his daring now in urging Kordetski not to expose to destruction the sacred place, the capital of the Most Holy Lady.

Such grievous, painful times followed, for the unbending soul of our hero in a habit, as had not been till that hour. It was fortunate that the Swedes ceased their assaults, so as to prove more convincingly that they needed no longer either balls or cannon, that it was enough for them to ignite one little powder fuse. But for this very reason terror increased in the cloister. In the hour of deep night it seemed to some, the most timid, that they heard under the earth certain sounds, certain movements; that the Swedes were already under the cloister. Finally, a considerable number of the monks fell in spirit. Those, with Father Stradomski at the head of them, went to the prior and urged him to begin negotiations at once for surrender. The greater part of the soldiers went with them, and some of the nobles.

Kordetski appeared in the courtyard, and when the throng gathered around him in a close circle, he said—

“Have we not sworn to one another to defend this holy place to the last drop of our blood? In truth, I tell you that if powder hurls us forth, only our wretched bodies, only the temporary covering, will fall away and return to the earth, but the souls will not return—heaven will open above them, and they will enter into rejoicing and happiness, as into a sea without bounds. There Jesus Christ will receive them, and that Most Holy Mother will meet them, and they like golden bees will sit on her robe, and will sink in light and gaze on the face of the Lord.”

Here the reflection of that brightness was gleaming on his face. He raised his inspired eyes upward, and spoke on with a dignity and a calm not of earth:—

“O Lord, the Ruler of worlds, Thou art looking into my heart, and Thou knowest that I am not deceiving this people when I say that if I desired only my own happiness I would stretch out my hands to Thee and cry from the depth of my soul: O Lord! let powder be there, let it explode, for in such a death is redemption of sins and faults, for it is eternal rest, and Thy servant is weary and toil worn overmuch. And who would not wish a reward of such kind, for a death without pain and as short as the twinkle of an eye, as a flash in the heavens, after which is eternity unbroken, happiness inexhaustible, joy without end. But Thou hast commanded me to guard Thy retreat, therefore it is not permitted me to go. Thou hast placed me on guard, therefore Thou hast poured into me Thy strength, and I know, O Lord, I see and feel that although the malice of the enemy were to force itself under this church, though all the powder and destructive saltpetre were placed there, it would be enough for me to make the sign of the cross above them and they would never explode.”

Here he turned to the assembly and continued: “God has given me this power, but do you take fear out of your hearts. My spirit pierces the earth and tells you; Your enemies lie, there are no powder dragons under the church. You, people of timid hearts, you in whom fear has stifled faith, deserve not to enter the kingdom of grace and repose today. There is no powder under your feet then! God wishes to preserve this retreat, so that, like Noah’s ark, it may be borne above the deluge of disasters and mishap; therefore, in the name of God, for the third time I tell you, there is no powder under the church. And when I speak in His name, who will make bold to oppose me, who will dare still to doubt?”

When he had said this he was silent and looked at the throng of monks, nobles, and soldiers. But such was the unshaken faith, the conviction and power in his voice that they were silent also, and no man came forward. On the contrary, solace began to enter their hearts, till at last one of the soldiers, a simple peasant, said—

“Praise to the name of the Lord! For three days they say they are able to blow up the fortress; why do they not blow it up?”

“Praise to the Most Holy Lady! Why do they not blow it up?” repeated a number of voices.

Then a wonderful sign was made manifest. Behold all about them on a sudden was heard the sound of wings, and whole flocks of small winter birds appeared in the court of the fortress, and every moment new ones flew in from the starved country-places around. Birds such as gray larks, ortolans, buntings with yellow breasts, poor sparrows, green titmice, red bulfinches, sat on the slopes of the roofs, on the corners over the doors, on the church; others flew around in a many-colored crown above the head of the prior, flapping their wings, chirping sadly as if begging for alms, and having no fear whatever of man. People present were amazed at the sight; and Kordetski, after he had prayed for a while, said at last—

“See these little birds of the forest. They come to the protection of the Mother of God, but you doubt Her power.”

Consolation and hope had entered their hearts; the monks, beating their breasts, went to the church, and the soldiers mounted the walls.

Women scattered grain to the birds, which began to pick it up eagerly.

All interpreted the visit of these tiny forest-dwellers as a sign of success to themselves, and of evil to the enemy.

“Fierce snows must be lying, when these little birds, caring neither for shots nor the thunder of cannon, flock to our buildings,” said the soldiers.

“But why do they fly from the Swedes to us?”

“Because the meanest creature has the wit to distinguish an enemy from a friend.”

“That cannot be,” said another soldier, “for in the Swedish camp are Poles too; but it means that there must be hunger there, and a lack of oats for the horses.”

“It means still better,” said a third, “that what they say of the powder is downright falsehood.”

“How is that?” asked all, in one voice.

“Old people say,” replied the soldier, “that if a house is to fall, the sparrows and swallows having nests in spring under the roof, go away two or three days in advance; every creature has sense to feel danger beforehand. Now if powder were under the cloister, these little birds would not fly to us.”

“Is that true?”

“As true as Amen to ‘Our Father!’”

“Praise to the Most Holy Lady! it will be bad for the Swedes.”

At this moment the sound of a trumpet was heard at the northwestern gate; all ran to see who was coming.

It was a Swedish trumpeter with a letter from the camp. The monks assembled at once in the council hall. The letter was from Count Veyhard, and announced that if the fortress were not surrendered before the following day it would be hurled into the air. But those who before had fallen under the weight of fear had no faith now in this threat.

“Those are vain threats!” said the priests and the nobles together.

“Let us write to them not to spare us; let them blow us up!”

And in fact they answered in that sense.

Meanwhile the soldiers who had gathered around the trumpeter answered his warnings with ridicule.

“Good!” said they to him. “Why do you spare us? We will go the sooner to heaven.”

But the man who delivered the answering letter to the messenger said—

“Do not lose words and time for nothing. Want is gnawing you, but we lack nothing, praise be to God! Even the birds fly away from you.”

And in this way Count Veyhard’s last trick came to nothing. And when another day had passed it was shown with perfect proof how vain were the fears of the besieged, and peace returned to the cloister.

The following day a worthy man from Chenstohova, Yatsek Bjuhanski, left a letter again giving warning of a storm; also news of the return of Yan Kazimir from Silesia, and the uprising of the whole Commonwealth against the Swedes. But according to reports circulating outside the walls, this was to be the last storm.

Bjuhanski brought the letter with a bag of fish to the priests for Christmas Eve, and approached the walls disguised as a Swedish soldier. Poor man!—the Swedes saw him and seized him. Miller gave command to stretch him on the rack; but the old man had heavenly visions in the time of his torture, and smiled as sweetly as a child, and instead of pain unspeakable joy was depicted on his face. The general was present at the torture, but he gained no confession from the martyr; he merely acquired the despairing conviction that nothing could bend those people, nothing could break them.

Now came the old beggarwoman Kostuha, with a letter from Kordetski begging most humbly that the storm be delayed during service on the day of Christ’s birth. The guards and the officers received the beggarwoman with insults and jeers at such an envoy, but she answered them straight in the face—

“No other would come, for to envoys you are as murderers, and I took the office for bread—a crust. I shall not be long in this world; I have no fear of you: if you do not believe, you have me in your hands.”

But no harm was done her. What is more, Miller, eager to try conciliation again, agreed to the prior’s request, even accepted a ransom for Bjuhanski, not yet tortured quite out of his life; he sent also that part of the silver found with the Swedish soldiers. He did this last out of malice to Count Veyhard, who after the failure of the mine had fallen into disfavor again.

At last Christmas Eve came. With the first star, lights great and small began to shine all around in the fortress. The night was still, frosty, but clear. The Swedish soldiers, stiffened with cold in the intrenchments, gazed from below on the dark walls of the unapproachable fortress, and to their minds came the warm Scandinavian cottages stuffed with moss, their wives and children, the fir-tree gleaming with lights; and more than one iron breast swelled with a sigh, with regret, with homesickness, with despair. But in the fortress, at tables covered with hay, the besieged were breaking wafers. A quiet joy was shining in all faces, for each one had the foreboding, almost the certainty, that the hours of suffering would be soon at an end.

“Another storm tomorrow, but that will be the last,” repeated the priests and the soldiers. “Let him to whom God will send death give thanks that the Lord lets him be present at Mass, and thus opens more surely heaven’s gates, for whoso dies for the faith on the day of Christ’s birth must be received into glory.”



They wished one another success, long years, or a heavenly crown; and so relief dropped into every heart, as if suffering were over already.

But there stood one empty chair near the prior; before it a plate on which was a package of white wafers bound with a blue ribbon. When all had sat down, no one occupied that place. Zamoyski said—

“I see, revered father, that according to ancient custom there are places for men outside the cloister.”

“Not for men outside,” said Father Augustine, “but as a remembrance of that young man whom we loved as a son, and whose soul is looking with pleasure upon us because we keep him in eternal memory.”

“As God lives,” replied Zamoyski, “he is happier now than we. We owe him due thanks.”

Kordetski had tears in his eyes, and Charnyetski said—

“They write of smaller men in the chronicles. If God gives me life, and anyone asks me hereafter, who was there among us the equal of ancient heroes, I shall say Babinich.”

“Babinich was not his name,” said Kordetski.

“How not Babinich?”

“I long knew his real name under the seal of confession; but when going out against that cannon, he said to me: ‘If I perish, let men know who I am, so that honorable repute may rest with my name, and destroy my former misdeeds.’ He went, he perished; now I can tell you that he was Kmita!”

“That renowned Lithuanian Kmita?” cried Charnyetski, seizing his forelock.

“The same. How the grace of God changes hearts!”

“For God’s sake. Now I understand why he undertook that work; now I understand where he got that daring, that boldness, in which he surpassed all men. Kmita, Kmita, that terrible Kmita whom Lithuania celebrates.”

“Henceforth not only Lithuania, but the whole Commonwealth will glorify him in a different manner.”

“He was the first to warn us against Count Veyhard.”

“Through his advice we closed the gates in good season, and made preparations.”

“He killed the first Swede with a shot from a bow.”

“And how many of their cannon did he spoil! Who brought down De Fossis?”

“And that siege gun! If we are not terrified at the storm of tomorrow, who is the cause?”

“Let each remember him with honor, and celebrate his name wherever possible, so that justice be done,” said Kordetski; “and now may God give him eternal rest.”

“And may everlasting light shine on him,” answered one chorus of voices.

But Pan Charnyetski was unable for a long time to calm himself, and his thoughts were continually turning to Kmita.

“I tell you, gentlemen, that there was something of such kind in that man that though he served as a simple soldier, the command of itself crawled at once to his hand, so that it was a wonder to me how people obeyed such a young man unwittingly. In fact, he was commander on the bastion, and I obeyed him myself. Oh, had I known him then to be Kmita!”

“Still it is a wonder to me,” said Zamoyski, “that the Swedes have not boasted of his death.”

Kordetski sighed. “The powder must have killed him on the spot.”

“I would let a hand be cut from me could he be alive again,” cried Charnyetski. “But that such a Kmita let himself be blown up by powder!”

“He gave his life for ours,” said Kordetski.

“It is true,” added Zamoyski, “that if that cannon were lying in the intrenchment, I should not think so pleasantly of tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow God will give us a new victory,” said the prior, “for the ark of Noah cannot be lost in the deluge.”

Thus they conversed with one another on Christmas Eve, and then separated; the monks going to the church, the soldiers, some to quiet rest, and others to keep watch on the walls and at the gates. But great care was superfluous, for in the Swedish camp there reigned unbroken calm. They had given themselves to rest and meditation, for to them too was approaching a most serious day.

The night was solemn. Legions of stars twinkled in the sky, changing into blue and rosy colors. The light of the moon changed to green the shrouds of snow stretching between the fortress and the hostile camp. The wind did not howl, and it was calm, as from the beginning of the siege it had not been near the cloister.

At midnight the Swedish soldiers heard the flow of the mild and grand tones of the organ; then the voices of men were joined with them; then the sounds of bells, large and small. Joy, consolation, and great calm were in those sounds; and the greater was the doubt, the greater the feeling of helplessness which weighed down the hearts of the Swedes.

The Polish soldiers from the commands of Zbrojek and Kalinski, without seeking permission, went up to the very walls. They were not permitted to enter through fear of some snare; but they were permitted to stand near the walls. They also collected together. Some knelt on the snow, others shook their heads pitifully, sighing over their own lot, or beat their breasts, promising repentance; and all heard with delight and with tears in their eyes the music and the hymns sung according to ancient usage.

At the same time the sentries on the walls who could not be in the church, wishing to make up for their loss, began also to sing, and soon was heard throughout the whole circuit of the walls the Christmas hymn:—

“He is lying in the manger;  
Who will run  
To greet the little stranger?”

In the afternoon of the following day the thunder of guns drowned again every other sound. All the intrenchments began to smoke simultaneously, the earth trembled in its foundations; as of old there flew on the roof of the church heavy balls, bombs, grenades, and torches fixed in cylinders, pouring a rain of melted lead, and naked torches, knots and ropes. Never had the thunder been so unceasing, never till then had such a river of fire and iron fallen on the cloister; but among the Swedish guns was not that great gun, which alone could crush the wall and make a breach necessary for assault.

But the besieged were so accustomed to fire that each man knew what he had to do, and the defence went in its ordinary course without command. Fire was answered with fire, missile with missile, but better aimed, for with more calmness.

Toward evening Miller went out to see by the last rays of the setting sun the results; and his glance fell on the tower outlined calmly on the background of the sky.

"That cloister will stand for the ages of ages!" cried he, beside himself.

"Amen!" answered Zbrojek, quietly.

In the evening a council was assembled again at headquarters, still more gloomy than usual. Miller opened it himself.

"The storm of today," said he, "has brought no result. Our powder is nearly consumed; half of our men are lost, the rest discouraged: they look for disasters, not victory. We have no supplies; we cannot expect reinforcements."

"But the cloister stands unmoved as on the first day of the siege," added Sadowski.

"What remains for us?"

"Disgrace."

"I have received orders," said the general, "to finish quickly or retreat to Prussia."

"What remains to us?" repeated the Prince of Hesse.

All eyes were turned to Count Veyhard, who said: "To save our honor!"

A short broken laugh, more like the gnashing of teeth, came from Miller, who was called Poliorcetes. "The Count wishes to teach us how to raise the dead," said he.

Count Veyhard acted as though he had not heard this.

"Only the slain have saved their honor," said Sadowski.

Miller began to lose his cool blood. "And that cloister stands there yet, that Yasna Gora, that henhouse! I have not taken it! And we withdraw. Is this a dream, or am I speaking in my senses?"

"That cloister stands there yet, that Yasna Gora!" repeated word for word the Prince of Hesse, "and we shall withdraw—defeated!"

A moment of silence followed; it seemed as though the leader and his subordinates found a certain wild pleasure in bringing to mind their shame and defeat.

Now Count Veyhard said slowly and emphatically: "It has happened more than once in every war that a besieged fortress has ransomed itself from the besiegers, who then went away as victors; for whoso pays a ransom, by this same recognizes himself as defeated."

The officers, who at first listened to the words of the speaker with scorn and contempt, now began to listen more attentively.

"Let that cloister pay us any kind of ransom," continued the count; "then no one will say that we could not take it, but that we did not wish to take it."

"Will they agree?" asked the Prince of Hesse.

"I will lay down my head," answered Count Veyhard, "and more than that, my honor as a soldier."

"Can that be!" asked Sadowski. "We have enough of this siege, but have they enough? What does your worthiness think of this?"

Miller turned to Veyhard. "Many grievous moments, the most grievous of my life, have I passed because of your counsels, Sir Count; but for this last advice I thank you, and will be grateful."

All breasts breathed more freely. There could be no real question but that of retreating with honor.

On the morrow, the day of Saint Stephen, the officers assembled to the last man to hear Kordetski's answer to Miller's letter, which proposed a ransom, and was sent in the morning.

They had to wait long. Miller feigned joyousness, but constraint was evident on his face. No one of the officers could keep his place. All hearts beat unquietly. The Prince of Hesse and Sadowski stood under the window conversing in a low voice.

"What do you think?" asked the first; "will they agree?"

"Everything indicates that they will agree. Who would not wish to be rid of such terrible danger come what may, at the price of a few tens of thousands of thalers, especially since monks have not worldly ambition and military honor, or at least should not have? I only fear that the general has asked too much."

"How much has he asked?"

"Forty thousand from the monks, and twenty thousand from the nobles, but in the worst event they will try to reduce the sum."

"Let us yield, in God's name, let us yield. If they have not the money, I would prefer to lend them my own, if they will let us go away with even the semblance of honor. But I tell your princely highness that though I recognize the count's advice this time as good, and I believe that they will ransom themselves, such a fever is gnawing me that I would prefer ten storms to this waiting."

"*Uf!* you are right. But still this Count Veyhard may go high."

"Even as high as the gibbet," said the other.

But the speakers did not foresee that a worse fate than even the gibbet was awaiting Count Veyhard.

That moment the thunder of cannon interrupted further conversation.

"What is that? firing from the fortress!" cried Miller. And springing up like a man possessed, he ran out of the room.

All ran after him and listened. The sound of regular salvos came indeed from the fortress.

"Are they fighting inside, or what?" cried Miller; "I don't understand."

"I will explain to your worthiness," said Zbrojek, "this is Saint Stephen's Day, and the name's day of the Zamoyskis, father and son; the firing is in their honor."

With that shouts of applause were heard from the fortress, and after them new salvos.

"They have powder enough," said Miller, gloomily. "That is for us a new indication."

But fate did not spare him another very painful lesson.

The Swedish soldiers were so discouraged and fallen in spirit that at the sound of firing from the fortress the detachments guarding the nearest intrenchments deserted them in panic.

Miller saw one whole regiment, the musketeers of Smaland, taking refuge in disorder at his own quarters; he heard too how the officers repeated among themselves at this sight—

“It is time, it is time, it is time to retreat!”

But by degrees everything grew calm; one crushing impression remained. The leader, and after him the subordinates, entered the room and waited, waited impatiently; even the face of Count Veyhard, till then motionless, betrayed disquiet.

At last the clatter of spurs was heard in the antechamber, and the trumpeter entered, all red from cold, his mustaches covered with his frozen breath.

“An answer from the cloister!” said he, giving a large packet wound up in a colored handkerchief bound with a string.

Miller’s hands trembled somewhat, and he chose to cut the string with a dagger rather than to open it slowly. A number of pairs of eyes were fixed on the packet; the officers were breathless. The general unwound one roll of the cloth, a second, and a third, unwound with increasing haste till at last a package of wafers fell out on the table. Then he grew pale, and though no one asked what was in the package, he said, “Wafers!”

“Nothing more?” asked someone in the crowd.

“Nothing more!” answered the general, like an echo.

A moment of silence followed, broken only by panting; at times too was heard the gritting of teeth, at times the rattling of rapiers.

“Count Veyhard!” said Miller, at last, with a terrible and ill-omened voice.

“He is no longer here!” answered one of the officers.

Again silence followed.

That night movement reigned in the whole camp. Scarcely was the light of day quenched when voices of command were heard, the hurrying of considerable divisions of cavalry, the sound of measured steps of infantry, the neighing of horses, the squeaking of wagons, the dull thump of cannon, with the biting of iron, the rattle of chains, noise, bustle, and turmoil.

“Will there be a new storm in the morning?” asked the guards at the gates.

But they were unable to see, for since twilight the sky was covered with clouds, and abundant snow had begun to fall. Its frequent flakes excluded the light. About five o’clock in the morning all sounds had ceased, but the snow was falling still more densely. On the walls and battlements it had created new walls and battlements. It covered the whole cloister and church, as if wishing to hide them from the glance of the enemy, to shelter and cover them from iron missiles.

At last the air began to grow gray, and the bell commenced tolling for morning service, when the soldiers standing guard at the southern gate heard the snorting of a horse.

Before the gate stood a peasant, all covered with snow; behind him was a low, small wooden sleigh, drawn by a thin, shaggy horse. The peasant fell to striking his body with his arms, to jumping from one foot to the other, and to crying—

“People, but open here!”

“Who is alive?” they asked from the walls.

“Your own, from Dzbov. I have brought game for the benefactors.”

“And how did the Swedes let you come?”

“What Swedes?”

“Those who are besieging the church.”

“Oho, there are no Swedes now!”

“Praise God, every soul! Have they gone?”

“The tracks behind them are covered.”

With that, crowds of villagers and peasants blackened the road, some riding, others on foot, there were women too, and all began to cry from afar—

“There are no Swedes! there are none! They have gone to Vyelunie. Open the gates! There is not a man in the camp!”

“The Swedes have gone, the Swedes have gone!” cried men on the walls; and the news ran around like lightning.

Soldiers rushed to the bells, and rang them all as if for an alarm. Every living soul rushed out of the cells, the dwellings, and the church.

The news thundered all the time. The court was swarming with monks, nobles, soldiers, women, and children. Joyful shouts were heard around. Some ran out on the walls to examine the empty camp; others burst into laughter or into sobs. Some would not believe yet, but new crowds came continually, peasants and villagers.

They came from Chenstohova, from the surrounding villages, and from the forests near by, noisily, joyously, and with singing. New tidings crossed one another each moment. All had seen the retreating Swedes, and told in what direction they were going.

A few hours later the slope and the plain below the mountain were filled with people. The gates of the cloister were open wide, as they had been before the siege; and all the bells were ringing, ringing, ringing—and those voices of triumph flew to the distance, and then the whole Commonwealth heard them.

The snow was covering and covering the tracks of the Swedes.

About noon of that day the church was so filled with people that head was as near head as on a paved street in a city one stone is near another. Father Kordetski himself celebrated a thanksgiving Mass, and to the throng of people it seemed that a white angel was celebrating it. And it seemed to them also that he was singing out his soul in that Mass, or that it was borne heavenward in the smoke of the incense, and was expanding in praise to the Lord.

The thunder of cannon shook not the walls, nor the glass in the windows, nor covered the people with dust, nor interrupted prayer, nor that thanksgiving hymn which amid universal ecstasy and weeping, the holy prior was intoning—

“Te Deum laudamus.”

## Chapter XLVII

The horses bore Kmita and the Kyemliches swiftly toward the Silesian boundary. They advanced with caution to avoid meeting Swedish scouts, for though the cunning Kyemliches had "passes," given by Kuklinovski and signed by Miller, still soldiers, though furnished with such documents, were usually subjected to examination, and examination might have an evil issue for Pan Andrei and his comrades. They rode, therefore, swiftly, so as to pass the boundary in all haste and push into the depth of the Emperor's territory. The boundaries themselves were not free from Swedish ravagers, and frequently whole parties of horsemen rode into Silesia to seize those who were going to Yan Kazimir. But the Kyemliches, during their stay at Chenstohova, occupied continually with hunting individual Swedes, had learned through and through the whole region, all the boundary roads, passages, and paths where the chase was most abundant, and were as if in their own land.

Along the road old Kyemlich told Pan Andrei what was to be heard in the Commonwealth; and Pan Andrei, having been confined so long in the fortress, forgetting his own pain, listened to the news eagerly, for it was very unfavorable to the Swedes, and heralded a near end to their domination in Poland.

"The army is sick of Swedish fortune and Swedish company," said old Kyemlich; "and as some time ago the soldiers threatened the hetmans with their lives if they would not join the Swedes, so now the same men entreat Pototski and send deputations asking him to save the Commonwealth from oppression, swearing to stand by him to the death. Some colonels also have begun to attack the Swedes on their own responsibility."

"Who began first?"

"Jegotski, the starosta of Babimost, and Pan Kulesha. These began in Great Poland, and annoy the Swedes notably. There are many small divisions in the whole country, but it is difficult to learn the names of the leaders, for they conceal them to save their own families and property from Swedish vengeance. Of the army that regiment rose first which is commanded by Pan Voynilovich."

"Gabryel? He is my relative, though I do not know him."

"A genuine soldier. He is the man who rubbed out Pratski's party, which was serving the Swedes, and shot Pratski himself; but now he has gone to the rough mountains beyond Krakow; there he cut up a Swedish division, and secured the mountaineers from oppression."

"Are the mountaineers fighting with the Swedes already?"

"They were the first to rise; but as they are stupid peasants, they wanted to rescue Krakow straightway with axes. General Douglas scattered them, for they knew nothing of the level country; but of the parties sent to pursue them in the mountains, not a man has returned. Pan Voynilovich has helped those peasants, and now has gone himself to the marshal at Lyubovlya, and joined his forces."

"Is Pan Lyubomirski, the marshal, opposed to the Swedes?"

"Reports disagreed. They said that he favored this side and that; but when men began to mount their horses throughout the whole country he went against the Swedes. He is a powerful man, and can do them a great deal of harm. He alone might war with the King of Sweden. People say too that before spring there will not be one Swede in the Commonwealth."

“God grant that!”

“How can it be otherwise, your grace, since for the siege of Chenstohova all are enraged against them? The army is rising, the nobles are fighting already wherever they can, the peasants are collecting in crowds, and besides, the Tartars are marching; the Khan, who defeated Hmelnitski and the Cossacks, and promised to destroy them completely unless they would march against the Swedes, is coming in person.”

“But the Swedes have still much support among magnates and nobles?”

“Only those take their part who must, and even they are merely waiting for a chance. The prince *voevoda* of Vilna is the only man who has joined them sincerely, and that act has turned out ill for him.”

Kmita stopped his horse, and at the same time caught his side, for terrible pain had shot through him.

“In God’s name!” cried he, suppressing a groan, “tell me what is taking place with Radzivill. Is he all the time in Kyedani?”

“O Ivory Gate!” said the old man; “I know as much as people say, and God knows what they do not say. Some report that the prince *voevoda* is living no longer; others that he is still defending himself against Pan Sapyeha, but is barely breathing. It is likely that they are struggling with each other in Podlyasye, and that Pan Sapyeha has the upper hand, for the Swedes could not save the prince *voevoda*. Now they say that, besieged in Tykotsin by Sapyeha, it is all over with him.”

“Praise be to God! The honest are conquering traitors! Praise be to God! Praise be to God!”

Kyemlich looked from under his brows at Kmita, and knew not himself what to think, for it was known in the whole Commonwealth that if Radzivill had triumphed in the beginning over his own troops and the nobles who did not wish Swedish rule, it happened, mainly, thanks to Kmita and his men. But old Kyemlich did not let that thought be known to his colonel, and rode farther in silence.

“But what has happened to Prince Boguslav?” asked Pan Andrei, at last.

“I have heard nothing of him, your grace,” answered Kyemlich. “Maybe he is in Tykotsin, and maybe with the elector. War is there at present, and the King of Sweden has gone to Prussia; but we meanwhile are waiting for our own king. God give him! for let him only show himself, all to a man will rise, and the troops will leave the Swedes straightway.”

“Is that certain?”

“Your grace, I know only what those soldiers said who had to be with the Swedes at Chenstohova. They are very fine cavalry, some thousands strong, under Zbrojek, Kalinski, and other colonels. I may tell your grace that no man serves there of his own will, except Kuklinovski’s ravagers; they wanted to get the treasures of Yasna Gora. But all honorable soldiers did nothing but lament, and one quicker than another complained: ‘We have enough of this Jew’s service! Only let our king put a foot over the boundary, we will turn our sabres at once on the Swedes; but while he is not here, how can we begin, whither can we go?’ So they complain; and in the other regiments which are under the hetmans it is still worse. This I know certainly, for deputations came from them to Pan Zbrojek with arguments, and they had secret talks there at night; this Miller did not know, though he felt that there was evil about him.”

“But is the prince *voevoda* of Vilna besieged in Tykotsin?” asked Pan Andrei.



Kyemlich looked again unquietly on Kmita, for he thought that surely a fever was seizing him if he asked to have the same information repeated; still he answered—

“Besieged by Pan Sapyeha.”

“Just are Thy judgments, God!” said Kmita. “He who might compare in power with kings! Has no one remained with him?”

“In Tykotsin there is a Swedish garrison. But with the prince only some of his trustiest attendants have remained.”

Kmita’s breast was filled with delight. He had feared the vengeance of the terrible magnate on Olenka, and though it seemed to him that he had prevented that vengeance with his threats, still he was tormented by the thought that it would be better and safer for Olenka and all the Billeviches to live in a lion’s den than in Kyedani, under the hand of the prince, who never forgave any man. But now when he had fallen his opponents must triumph by the event; now when he was deprived of power and significance, when he was lord of only one poor castle, in which he defended his own life and freedom, he could not think of vengeance; his hand had ceased to weigh on his enemies.

“Praise be to God! praise be to God!” repeated Kmita.

He had his head so filled with the change in Radzivil’s fortunes, so occupied with that which had happened during his stay in Chenstohova, and with the question where was she whom his heart loved, and what had become of her, that a third time he asked Kyemlich: “You say that the prince is broken?”

“Broken completely,” answered the old man. “But are you not sick?”

“My side is burned. That is nothing!” answered Kmita.

Again they rode on in silence. The tired horses lessened their speed by degrees, till at last they were going at a walk. That monotonous movement lulled to sleep Pan Andrei, who was mortally wearied, and he slept long, nodding in the saddle. He was roused only by the white light of day. He looked around with amazement, for in the first moment it seemed to him that everything through which he had passed in that night was merely a dream; at last he inquired—

“Is that you, Kyemlich? Are we riding from Chenstohova?”

“Of course, your grace.”

“But where are we?”

“Oho, in Silesia already. Here the Swedes will not get us.”

“That is well!” said Kmita, coming to his senses completely. “But where is our gracious king living?”

“At Glogov.”

“We will go there then to bow down to our lord, and offer him service. But listen, old man, to me.”

“I am listening, your grace.”

Kmita fell to thinking, however, and did not speak at once. He was evidently combining something in his head; he hesitated, considered, and at last said: “It cannot be otherwise!”

“I am listening, your grace,” repeated Kyemlich.

“Neither to the king nor to any man at the court must you mutter who I am. I call myself Babinich, I am faring from Chenstohova. Of the great gun and of Kuklinovski you may talk, so that my intentions be not misconstrued, and I be considered a traitor, for in my blindness I aided and served Prince Radzivill; of this they may have heard at the court.”

“I may speak of what your grace did at Chenstohova—”

“But who will show that ’tis true till the siege is over?”

“I will act at your command.”

“The day will come for truth to appear at the top,” added Kmita, as it were to himself, “but first our gracious lord must convince himself. Later he also will give me his witness.”

Here the conversation was broken. By this time it had become perfect day. Old Kyemlich began to sing matins, and Kosma and Damian accompanied him with bass voices. The road was difficult, for the frost was cutting, and besides, the travellers were stopped continually and asked for news, especially if Chenstohova was resisting yet. Kmita answered that it was resisting, and would take care of itself; but there was no end to questions. The roads were swarming with travellers, the inns everywhere filled. Some people were seeking refuge in the depth of the country from the neighboring parts of the Commonwealth before Swedish oppression; others were pushing toward the boundary for news. From time to time appeared nobles, who, having had enough of the Swedes, were going, like Kmita, to offer their services to the fugitive king. There were seen, also, attendants of private persons; at times smaller or larger parties of soldiers, from armies, which either voluntarily or in virtue of treaties with the Swedes had passed the boundaries—such, for instance, as the troops of Stefan Charnyetski. News from the Commonwealth had roused the hope of those “exiles,” and many of them were making ready to come home in arms. In all Silesia, and particularly in the provinces of Ratibor and Opol, it was boiling as in a pot; messengers were flying with letters to the king and from the king; they were flying with letters to Charnyetski, to the primate, to Pan Korytsinski, the chancellor; to Pan Varshytski, the castellan of Krakow, the first senator of the Commonwealth, who had not deserted the cause of Yan Kazimir for an instant.

These lords, in agreement with the great queen, who was unshaken in misfortune, were coming to an understanding with one another, with the country, and with the foremost men in it, of whom it was known that they would gladly resume allegiance to their legal lord. Messengers were sent independently by the marshal of the kingdom, the hetmans, the army, and the nobles, who were making ready to take up arms.

It was the eve of a general war, which in some places had broken out already. The Swedes put down these local outbursts either with arms or with the executioner’s axe, but the fire quenched in one place flamed up at once in another. An awful storm was hanging over the heads of the Scandinavian invaders; the ground itself, though covered with snow, began to burn their feet; threats and vengeance surrounded them on all sides; their own shadows alarmed them.

They went around like men astray. The recent songs of triumph died on their lips, and they asked one another in the greatest amazement, “Are these the same people who yesterday left their own king, and gave up without fighting a battle?” Yes, lords, nobles, army—an example unheard of in history—passed over to the conqueror; towns and castles threw open their gates; the country was occupied. Never had a conquest cost fewer exertions, less blood. The Swedes themselves, wondering at the ease with which they had occupied a mighty Commonwealth, could not conceal their contempt for the conquered, who at the first gleam of a Swedish sword rejected their own king, their country, provided that they could enjoy life and goods in peace, or acquire new goods in the confusion. What in his time Count Veyhard

had told the emperor's envoy, Lisola, the king himself, and all the Swedish generals repeated: "There is no manhood in this nation, there is no stability, there is no order, no faith, no patriotism! It must perish."

They forgot that that nation had still one feeling, specially that one whose earthly expression was *Yasna Gora*. And in that feeling was rebirth.

Therefore the thunder of cannon which was heard under the sacred retreat found an echo at once in the hearts of all magnates, nobles, town-dwellers, and peasants. An outcry of awe was heard from the Carpathians to the Baltic, and the giant was roused from his torpor.

"That is another people!" said the amazed Swedish generals.

And all, from Arwid Wittemberg to the commandants of single castles, sent to Karl Gustav in Prussia tidings filled with terror.

The earth was pushing from under their feet; instead of recent friends, they met enemies on all sides; instead of submission, hostility; instead of fear, a wild daring ready for everything; instead of mildness, ferocity; instead of long-suffering, vengeance.

Meanwhile from hand to hand were flying in thousands throughout the whole Commonwealth the manifestoes of Yan Kazimir, which, issued at first in Silesia, had found no immediate echo. Now, on the contrary, they were seen in castles still free of the enemy. Wherever the Swedish hand was not weighing, the nobles assembled in crowds large and small, and beat their breasts, listening to the lofty words of the fugitive king, who, recounting faults and sins, urged them not to lose hope, but hasten to the rescue of the fallen Commonwealth.

"Though the enemy have already advanced far, it is not too late," wrote Yan Kazimir, "for us to recover the lost provinces and towns, give due praise to God, satisfy the profaned churches with the blood of the enemy, and restore the former liberties, laws, and ancient enactments of Poland to their usual circuit; if only there is a return of that ancient Polish virtue, and that devotion and love of God peculiar to your ancestors, virtues for which our great-grandfather, Sigismund I, honored them before many nations. A return to virtue has already diminished these recent transgressions. Let those of you to whom God and His holy faith are dearer than aught else rise against the Swedish enemy. Do not wait for leaders or *voevodas*, or for such an order of things as is described in public law. At present the enemy have brought all these things to confusion among you; but do you join, the first man to a second, a third to these two, a fourth to the three, a fifth to the four, and thus farther, so that each one with his own subjects may come, and when it is possible try resistance. Afterward you will select a leader. Join yourselves one party to another, and you will form an army. When the army is formed and you have chosen a known chief over it, wait for our person, not neglecting an occasion wherever it comes to defeat the enemy. If we hear of the occasion, and your readiness and inclination, we will come at once and lay down our life wherever the defence of the country requires it."

This manifesto was read even in the camp of Karl Gustav, in castles having Swedish garrisons, in all places wherever Polish squadrons were found. The nobles shed tears at every word of the king their kind lord, and took an oath on crosses, on pictures of the Most Holy Lady, and on scapulars to please him. To give a proof of their readiness, while ardor was in their hearts and their tears were not dry, they mounted here and there without hesitation, and moved on while hot against the Swedes.

In this way the smaller Swedish parties began to melt and to vanish. This was done in Lithuania, Mazovia, Great and Little Poland. More than once nobles who had assembled at a

neighbor's house for a christening, a name's day, a wedding or a dance, without any thought of war, finished the entertainment with this, that after they had taken a good share of drink they struck like a thunderbolt and cut to pieces the nearest Swedish command. Then, amid songs and shouts, they assembled for the road. Those who wished to "hunt" rode farther, changed into a crowd greedy for blood, from a crowd into a "party" which began steady war. Subject peasants and house-servants joined the amusement in throngs; others gave information about single Swedes or small squads disposed incautiously through the villages. And the number of "balls" and "masquerades" increased with each day. Joyousness and daring personal to the people were bound up with these bloody amusements.

They disguised themselves gladly as Tartars, the very name of which filled the Swedes with alarm; for among them were current marvellous accounts and fables touching the ferocity, the terrible and savage bravery of those sons of the Crimean steppes, with whom the Scandinavians had never met hitherto. Besides, it was known universally that the Khan with about a hundred thousand of the horde was marching to succor Yan Kazimir; and the nobles made a great uproar while attacking Swedish commands, from which wonderful disorder resulted.

The Swedish colonels and commandants in many places were really convinced that Tartars were present, and retreated in haste to larger fortresses and camps, spreading everywhere erroneous reports and alarm. Meanwhile the neighborhoods which were freed in this manner from the enemy were able to defend themselves, and change an unruly rabble into the most disciplined of armies.

But more terrible for the Swedes than "masquerades" of nobles, or than the Tartars themselves, were the movements of the peasants. Excitement among the people began with the first day of the siege of Chenstohova; and ploughmen hitherto silent and patient began here and there to offer resistance, here and there to take scythes and flails and help nobles. The most brilliant Swedish generals looked with the greatest alarm at these crowds, which might at any moment turn into a genuine deluge and overwhelm beyond rescue the invaders.

Terror seemed to them the most appropriate means by which to crush in the beginning this dreadful danger. Karl Gustav cajoled still, and retained with words of kindness those Polish squadrons which had followed him to Prussia. He had not spared flattery on Konyetspolski, the celebrated commander from Zbaraj. This commander stood at his side with six thousand cavalry, which at the first hostile meeting with the elector spread such terror and destruction among the Prussians that the elector abandoning the fight agreed as quickly as possible to the conditions.

The King of Sweden sent letters also to the hetmans, the magnates, and the nobles, full of graciousness, promises, and encouragement to preserve loyalty to him. But at the same time he issued commands to his generals and commandants to destroy with fire and sword every opposition within the country, and especially to cut to pieces peasant parties. Then began a period of iron military rule. The Swedes cast aside the semblance of friendship. The sword, fire, pillage, oppression, took the place of the former pretended good will. From the castles they sent strong detachments of cavalry and infantry in pursuit of the "masqueraders." Whole villages, with churches and priests' dwellings, were levelled to the earth. Nobles taken prisoners, were delivered to the executioner; the right hands were cut from captured peasants, then they were sent home.

These Swedish detachments were specially savage in Great Poland, which, as it was the first to surrender, was also the first to rise against foreign dominion. Commandant Stein gave orders on a certain occasion to cut the hands from more than three hundred peasants. In towns

they built permanent gibbets, which every day were adorned with new victims. Pontus de la Gardie did the same in Lithuania and Jmud, where the noble villages took up arms first, and after them the peasants. Because in general it was difficult for the Swedes in the disturbance to distinguish their friends from their enemies, no one was spared.

But the fire put down in blood, instead of dying, grew without ceasing, and a war began which was not on either side a question merely of victory, castles, towns, or provinces, but of life or death. Cruelty increased hatred, and they began not to struggle, but to exterminate each the other without mercy.

## Chapter XLVIII

This war of extermination was just beginning when Kmita, with the three Kyemliches, reached Glogov, after a journey which was difficult in view of Pan Andrei's shaken health. They arrived in the night. The town was crowded with troops, lords, nobles, servants of the king and of magnates. The inns were so occupied that old Kyemlich with the greatest trouble found lodgings for his colonel outside the town at the house of a rope-maker.

Pan Andrei spent the whole first day in bed in pain and fever from the burn. At times he thought that he should be seriously and grievously ill; but his iron constitution gained the victory. The following night brought him ease, and at daybreak he dressed and went to the parish church to thank God for his miraculous escape.

The gray and snowy winter morning had barely dissipated the darkness. The town was still sleeping, but through the church door lights could be seen on the altar, and the sounds of the organ came forth.

Kmita went to the centre of the church. The priest was celebrating Mass before the altar; there were few worshippers so far. At benches some persons were kneeling with their faces hidden in their hands; but besides those Pan Andrei saw, when his eyes had grown used to the darkness, a certain figure lying in the form of a cross in front of the pews on a carpet. Behind him were kneeling two youths with ruddy and almost angelic childish faces.

This man was motionless, and only from his breast moving continually with deep sighs could it be known that he was not sleeping, but praying earnestly and with his whole soul. Kmita himself became absorbed in a thanksgiving prayer; but when he had finished his eyes turned involuntarily to the man lying as a cross, and could not leave him; something fastened them to him. Sighs deep as groans, audible in the silence of the church, shook that figure continually. The yellow rays of the candles burning before the altar, together with the light of day, whitening in the windows, brought it out of the gloom, and made it more and more visible.

Pan Andrei conjectured at once from the dress that he must be some noted person, besides all present, not excepting the priest celebrating Mass, looked on him with honor and respect. The unknown was dressed entirely in black velvet bound with sable, but on his shoulders he had, turned down, a white lace collar, from under which peeped the golden links of a chain; a black hat with feathers of like color lay at his side; one of the pages kneeling beyond the carpet held gloves and a sword enamelled in blue. Kmita could not see the face of the unknown, for it was hidden by the folds of the carpet, and besides, the locks of an unusually thick wig scattered around his head concealed it completely.

Pan Andrei pressed up to the front pew to see the face of the unknown when he rose. Mass was then drawing to an end. The priest was singing *Pater noster*. The people who wished to be at the following Mass were coming in through the main entrance. The church was filled gradually with figures with heads shaven at the sides, dressed in cloaks with long sleeves, in military burkas, in fur cloaks, and in brocade coats. It became somewhat crowded. Kmita then pushed with his elbow a noble standing at his side, and whispered—

“Pardon, your grace, that I trouble you during service, but my curiosity is most powerful. Who is that?” He indicated with his eyes the man lying in the form of a cross.

“Have you come from a distance, that you know not?” asked the noble.

“Certainly I come from a distance, and therefore I ask in hope that if I find some polite man he will not begrudge an answer.”

“That is the king.”

“As God lives!” cried Kmita.

But at that moment the king rose, for the priest had begun to read the Gospel.

Pan Andrei saw an emaciated face, yellow and transparent, like church wax. The eyes of the king were moist, and his lids red. You would have said that all the fate of the country was reflected in that noble face, so much was there in it of pain, suffering, care. Sleepless nights divided between prayer and grief, terrible deceptions, wandering, desertion, the humiliated majesty of that son, grandson, and great-grandson of powerful kings, the gall which his own subjects had given him to drink so bountifully, the ingratitude of that country for which he was ready to devote his blood and life—all this could be read in that face as in a book, and still it expressed not only resignation, obtained through faith and prayer, not only the majesty of a king and an anointed of God, but such great, inexhaustible kindness that evidently it would be enough for the greatest renegade, the most guilty man, only to stretch out his hands to that father, and that father would receive him, forgive him, and forget his offences.

It seemed to Kmita at sight of him that someone had squeezed his heart with an iron hand. Compassion rose in the ardent soul of the young hero. Compunction, sorrow, and homage straitened the breath in his throat, a feeling of immeasurable guilt cut his knees under him so that he began to tremble through his whole body, and at once a new feeling rose in his breast. In one moment he had conceived such a love for that suffering king that to him there was nothing dearer on earth than that father and lord, for whom he was ready to sacrifice blood and life, bear torture and everything else in the world. He wished to throw himself at those feet, to embrace those knees, and implore forgiveness for his crimes. The noble, the insolent disturber, had died in him in one moment, and the royalist was born, devoted with his whole soul to his king.

“That is our lord, our unhappy king,” repeated he to himself, as if he wished with his lips to give witness to what his eyes saw and what his heart felt.

After the Gospel, Yan Kazimir knelt again, stretched out his arms, raised his eyes to heaven, and was sunk in prayer. The priest went out at last, there was a movement in the church, the king remained kneeling.

Then that noble whom Kmita had addressed pushed Pan Andrei in the side.

“But who are you?” asked he.

Kmita did not understand the question at once, and did not answer it directly, so greatly were his heart and mind occupied by the person of the king.

“And who are you?” repeated that personage.

“A noble like yourself,” answered Pan Andrei, waking as if from a dream.

“What is your name?”

“What is my name? Babinich; I am from Lithuania, from near Vityebsk.”

“And I am Pan Lugovski, of the king’s household. Have you just come from Lithuania, from Vityebsk?”

“No; I come from Chenstohova.”

Pan Lugovski was dumb for a moment from wonder.

“But if that is true, then come and tell us the news. The king is almost dead from anxiety because he has had no certain tidings these three days. How is it? You are perhaps from the squadron of Zbrojek, Kalinski, or Kuklinovski, from near Chenstohova.”

“Not from near Chenstohova, but directly from the cloister itself.”

“Are you not jesting? What is going on there, what is to be heard? Does Yasna Gora defend itself yet?”

“It does, and will defend itself. The Swedes are about to retreat.”

“For God’s sake! The king will cover you with gold. From the very cloister do you say that you have come? How did the Swedes let you pass?”

“I did not ask their permission; but pardon me, I cannot give a more extended account in the church.”

“Right, right!” said Pan Lugovski. “God is merciful! You have fallen from heaven to us! It is not proper in the church—right! Wait a moment. The king will rise directly; he will go to breakfast before high Mass. Today is Sunday. Come stand with me at the door, and when the king is going out I will present you. Come, come, there is no time to spare.”

He pushed ahead, and Kmita followed. They had barely taken their places at the door when the two pages appeared, and after them came Yan Kazimir slowly.

“Gracious King!” cried Pan Lugovski, “there are tidings from Chenstohova.”

The wax-like face of Yan Kazimir became animated in an instant.

“What tidings? Where is the man?” inquired he.

“This noble; he says that he has come from the very cloister.”

“Is the cloister captured?” cried the king.

That moment Pan Andrei fell his whole length at the feet of the king. Yan Kazimir inclined and began to raise him by the arms.

“Oh, ceremony another time, another time!” cried he. “Rise, in God’s name, rise! Speak quickly! Is the cloister taken?”

Kmita sprang up with tears in his eyes, and cried with animation—

“It is not, and will not be taken, Gracious Lord. The Swedes are beaten. The great gun is blown up. There is fear among them, hunger, misery. They are thinking of retreat.”

“Praise, praise to Thee, Queen of the Angels and of us!” said the king. Then he turned to the church door, removed his hat, and without entering knelt on the snow at the door. He supported his head on a stone pillar, and sank into silence. After a while sobbing began to shake him. Emotion seized all, and Pan Andrei wept loudly. The king, after he had prayed and shed tears, rose quieted, with a face much clearer. He inquired his name of Kmita, and when the latter had told his assumed one, said—

“Let Pan Lugovski conduct you at once to our quarters. We shall not take our morning food without hearing of the defence.”

A quarter of an hour later Kmita was standing in the king’s chamber before a distinguished assembly. The king was only waiting for the queen, to sit down to breakfast. Marya Ludvika appeared soon. Yan Kazimir barely saw her when he exclaimed—



“Chenstohova has held out! The Swedes will retreat! Here is Pan Babinich, who has just come, and he brings the news.”

The black eyes of the queen rested inquiringly on the youthful face of the hero, and seeing its sincerity, they grew bright with joy; and he, when he had made a profound obeisance, looked also at her boldly, as truth and honesty know how to look.

“The power of God!” said the queen. “You have taken a terrible weight from our hearts, and God grant this is the beginning of a change of fortune. Do you come straight from near Chenstohova?”

“Not from near Chenstohova, he says, but from the cloister itself—one of the defenders!” exclaimed the king. “A golden guest! God grant such to come daily; but let him begin. Tell, brother, tell how you defended yourselves, and how the hand of God guarded you.”

“It is sure, Gracious King and Queen, that nothing saved us but the guardianship of God and the miracles of the Most Holy Lady, which I saw every day with my eyes.”

Here Kmita was preparing for his narrative, when new dignitaries appeared. First came the nuncio of the Pope; then the primate, Leshchynski; after him Vydjga, a golden-mouthed preacher, who was the queen’s chancellor, later bishop of Varmia, and finally primate. With him came the chancellor of the kingdom, Pan Korytsinski, and the Frenchman De Noyers, a relative of the queen, and other dignitaries who had not deserted the king in misfortune, but chose to share with him the bitter bread of exile rather than break plighted faith.

The king was eager to hear; therefore he ceased eating, every moment, and repeated, “Listen, gentlemen, listen; a guest from Chenstohova! Good news; hear it! From Yasna Gora itself!”

Then the dignitaries looked with curiosity on Kmita, who was standing as it were before a court; but he, bold by nature and accustomed to intercourse with great people, was not a whit alarmed at sight of so many celebrated persons; and when all had taken their places, he began to describe the whole siege.

Truth was evident in his words; for he spoke with clearness and strength, like a soldier who had seen everything, touched everything, passed through everything. He praised to the skies Pan Zamoyski and Pan Charnyetski; spoke of Kordetski, the prior, as of a holy prophet; exalted other fathers; missed no one save himself; but he ascribed the whole success of the defence, without deviation, to the Most Holy Lady, to Her favor and miracles.

The king and the dignitaries listened to him in amazement. The archbishop raised his tearful eyes to heaven. Father Vydjga interpreted everything hurriedly to the nuncio; other great personages caught their heads; some prayed, or beat their breasts.

At last, when Kmita came to the recent storms—when he began to relate how Miller had brought heavy guns from Krakow, and among them one against which not only the walls of Chenstohova, but no walls in the world could stand—such silence began as though someone were sowing poppy seeds, and all eyes rested on Pan Andrei’s lips.

But he stopped suddenly, and began to breathe quickly; a clear flush came out on his face; he frowned, raised his head, and spoke boldly: “Now I must speak of myself, though I should prefer to be silent. And if I say aught which seems praise, God is my witness that I do so not for rewards, for I do not need them, since the greatest reward for me is to shed my blood for majesty.”

“Speak boldly, I believe you,” said the king. “But that great gun?”

“That great gun—I, stealing out in the night from the fortress, blew into fragments with powder.”

“O loving God!” cried the king.

But after this cry was silence, such astonishment had seized each person. All looked as at a rainbow at the young hero, who stood with flashing eyes, with a flush on his face, and with head proudly erect. And so much was there in him at that moment of a certain terribleness and wild courage that the thought came to each one unwittingly, such a man might dare such a deed. After silence of a moment the primate said—

“This man looks like that!”

“How did you do it?” asked the king.

Kmita explained how he did it.

“I cannot believe my ears,” said Pan Korytsinski, the chancellor.

“Worthy gentlemen,” answered the king, with dignity, “you do not know whom we have before us. There is yet hope that the Commonwealth has not perished while it gives such cavaliers and citizens.”

“This man might say of himself, ‘*Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinæ* (If the broken firmament should fall the ruins would strike him unterrified)!’” said Father Vydjga, who loved to quote authors at every opportunity.

“These are almost impossible things,” said the chancellor again. “Tell, Cavalier, how you brought away your life, and how you passed through the Swedes.”

“The explosion stunned me,” said Kmita, “and next day the Swedes found me in the ditch lying as if lifeless. They judged me at once, and Miller condemned me to death.”

“Then did you escape?”

“A certain Kuklinovski begged me of Miller, so that he might put me to death, for he had a fierce animosity against me.”

“He is a well-known disturber and murderer; we have heard of him,” said the castellan of Kijvinsk. “His regiment is with Miller at Chenstohova. That is true!”

“Previously Kuklinovski was an envoy from Miller to the cloister, and once tried to persuade me in secret to treason when I was conducting him to the gate. I struck him in the face and kicked him. For that insult he was enraged against me.”

“Ah, this I see is a noble of fire and sulphur!” cried the king, amused. “Do not go into such a man’s road. Did Miller then give you to Kuklinovski?”

“He did, Gracious Gentlemen. Kuklinovski shut me with himself and some men in an empty little barn. There he had me tied to a beam with ropes, then he began to torture me and to burn my sides with fire.”

“By the living God!”

“While doing this he was called away to Miller; when he was gone three nobles came, certain Kyemliches, his soldiers, who had served with me previously. They killed the guards, and unbound me from the beam—”

“And you fled! Now I understand,” said the king.

“No, your Royal Grace. We waited for the return of Kuklinovski. Then I gave command to tie him to that same beam, and I burned him better with fire.”

When he had said this, Kmita, roused by remembrance, became red again, and his eyes gleamed like those of a wolf. But the king, who passed easily from grief to joy, from seriousness to sport, began to strike the table with his hand, and exclaim with laughter—

“That was good for him! that was good for him! Such a traitor deserved nothing better!”

“I left him alive,” continued Kmita, “but he must have perished from cold before morning.”

“That’s a deed; he does not give away his own. We need more of such!” cried the king, now completely delighted. “Did you come hither with those soldiers? What are their names?”

“They are Kyemlich, a father and two sons.”

“My mother is from the house of Kyemlich,” said Father Vydjga.

“It is evident that there are great and small Kyemliches,” answered Kmita, smiling; “these are not only small persons, but robbers; they are fierce soldiers, however, and faithful to me.”

Meanwhile the chancellor, who had been whispering for a time in the ear of the Archbishop of Gnyezno, said at last—

“Many come here who for their own praise or for an expected reward are glad to raise dust. They bring false and disturbing news, and are frequently sent by the enemy.”

This remark chilled all present. Kmita’s face became purple.

“I do not know the office of your grace,” said he, “which, I think, must be considerable, therefore I do not wish to offend you; but there is no office, as I think, which would empower anyone to give the lie to a noble, without reason.”

“Man! you are speaking to the grand chancellor of the kingdom,” said Lugovski.

“Whoso gives me the lie, even if he is chancellor, I answer him, it is easier to give the lie than to give your life, it is easier to seal with wax than with blood!”

Pan Korytsinski was not angry; he only said: “I do not give you the lie, Cavalier; but if what you say is true, you must have a burned side.”

“Come to another place, your great mightiness, to another room, and I will show it to you!” roared Kmita.

“It is not needful,” said the king; “I believe you without that.”

“It cannot be, your Royal Grace,” exclaimed Pan Andrei; “I wish it myself, I beg it as a favor, so that here no one, even though I know not how worthy, should make me an exaggerator. My torment would be an ill reward; I wish belief.”

“I believe you,” answered the king.

“Truth itself was in his words,” added Marya Ludvika. “I am not deceived in men.”

“Gracious King and Queen, permit. Let some man go aside with me, for it would be grievous for me to live here in suspicion.”

“I will go,” said Pan Tyzenhauz, a young attendant of the king. So saying, he conducted Kmita to another room, and on the way said to him, “I do not go because I do not believe you, for I believe; but to speak with you. Have we met somewhere in Lithuania? I cannot remember your name, for it may be that I saw you when a youth, and I myself was a youth then?”

Kmita turned away his face somewhat to hide his sudden confusion.

“Perhaps at some provincial diet. My late father took me with him frequently to see public business.”

“Perhaps. Your face is surely not strange to me, though at that time it had not those scars. Still see how *memoria fragilis est* (weak memory is); also it seems to me you had a different name.”

“Years dull the memory,” answered Pan Andrei.

They went to another room. After a while Tyzenhauz returned to the royal pair.

“He is roasted, Gracious King, as on a spit,” said he; “his whole side is burned.”

When Kmita in his turn came back, the king rose, pressed his head, and said—

“We have never doubted that you speak the truth, and neither your pain nor your services will pass unrewarded.”

“We are your debtors,” added the queen, extending her hand to him.

Pan Andrei dropped on one knee and kissed with reverence the hand of the queen, who stroked him on the head like a mother.

“Be not angry with the chancellor,” said the king. “In this place there are really not a few traitors, or, if not traitors, men who are unwise, that wind three after three, and it belongs to the chancellor’s office to discover truth touching public affairs.”

“What does my poor anger mean for such a great man?” answered Pan Andrei. “And I should not dare to murmur against a worthy senator, who gives an example of loyalty and love of country to all.”

The chancellor smiled kindly and extended his hand. “Well, let there be peace! You spoke ill to me of wax; but know this, that the Korytsinskis have sealed often with blood, not with wax only.”

The king was rejoiced. “This Babinich has pleased us,” said he to the senators, “has touched our heart as few have. We will not let you go from our side, and God grant that we shall return together soon to our beloved country.”

“Oh, Most Serene King,” cried Kmita, with ecstasy; “though confined in the fortress of Yasna Gora, I know from the nobles, from the army, and even from those who, serving under Zbrojek and Kalinski, besieged Chenstohova, that all are waiting for the day and the hour of your return. Only show yourself, Gracious Lord, and that day all Lithuania, Poland, and Russia will stand by you as one man! The nobles will join; even insignificant peasants will go with their lord to resist. The army under the hetmans is barely breathing from eagerness to move against the Swedes. I know this, too, that at Chenstohova deputies came from the hetmans’ troops to arouse Zbrojek, Kalinski, and Kuklinovski, against the Swedes. Appear on the boundary today, and in a week there will not be a Swede; only appear, only show yourself, for we are there like sheep without a shepherd.”

Sparks came from Kmita’s eyes while he was speaking, and such great ardor seized him that he knelt in the middle of the hall. His enthusiasm was communicated even to the queen herself, who, being of fearless courage, had long been persuading the king to return.

Therefore, turning to Yan Kazimir, she said with energy and determination: “I hear the voice of the whole people through the mouth of this noble.”

“That is true, that is true, Gracious Lady, our Mother!” exclaimed Kmita.

But certain words in what Kmita had said struck the chancellor and the king.

“We have always been ready,” said the king, “to sacrifice our health and life, and hitherto we have been waiting for nothing else but a change in our subjects.”

“That change has taken place already,” said Marya Ludvika.

“*Majestas infracta malis* (Majesty unbroken by misfortune)!” said Father Vydjga, looking at her with homage.

“It is important,” said the archbishop, “if, really, deputations from the hetmans went to Chenstohova.”

“I know this from my men, those Kyemliches,” answered Pan Andrei. “In the squadrons of Zbrojek and Kalinski all spoke openly of this, paying no attention to Miller and the Swedes. These Kyemliches were not enclosed in the fortress; they had relations with the world, with soldiers and nobles—I can bring them before your Royal Grace and your worthinesses; let them tell how it is seething in the whole country as in a pot. The hetmans joined the Swedes from constraint only; the troops wish to return to duty. The Swedes beat nobles and priests, plunder, violate ancient liberties; it is no wonder then that each man balls his fist and looks anxiously at his sabre.”

“We, too, have had news from the troops,” said the king; “there were here, also, secret envoys who told us of the general wish to return to former loyalty and honor.”

“And that agrees with what this cavalier tells,” said the chancellor. “But if deputations are passing among the regiments it is important, for it means that the fruit is already ripe, that our efforts were not vain, that our work is accomplished, that the time is at hand.”

“But Konyetspolski,” said the king, “and so many others who are still at the side of the invader, who look into his eyes and give assurances of their devotion?”

Then all grew silent, the king became gloomy on a sudden, and as when the sun goes behind a cloud a shadow covers at once the whole world, so did his face grow dark. After a time he said—

“God sees in our heart that even today we are ready to move, and that not the power of Sweden detains us, but the unhappy fickleness of our people, who, like Proteus, take on a new form every moment. Can we believe that this change is sincere, this desire not imagined, this readiness not deceitful? Can we believe that people who so recently deserted us, and with such light hearts joined the invader against their own king, against their own country, against their own liberties? Pain straitens our heart, and we are ashamed of our own subjects! Where does history show such examples? What king has met so many treasons, so much ill-will? Who has been so deserted? Call to mind, your kindnesses, that we in the midst of our army, in the midst of those who were bound to shed their blood for us—it is a danger and a terror to tell it—we were not sure of our life. And if we left the country and had to seek an asylum, it is not from fear of the Swedish enemy, but of our own subjects, to save our own children from the terrible crime of king murder and parricide.”

“Gracious Lord!” exclaimed Kmita; “our people have sinned grievously; they are guilty, and the hand of God is punishing them justly; but still, by the wounds of Christ, there has not been found among that people, and God grant that there will never be found, a man who would raise his hand on the sacred person of the anointed of God.”

“You do not believe, because you are honest,” said the king, “but we have letters and proofs. The Radzivills have paid us badly for the kindness with which we have covered them; but

still Boguslav, though a traitor, was moved by conscience, and not only did he not wish to lend a hand to such a deed, but he was the first to warn us of it.”

“What deed?” asked the astonished Kmita.

“He informed us,” said the king, “that there was a man who offered for one hundred gold ducats to seize us and deliver us, living or dead, to the Swedes.”

A shiver passed through the whole assembly at these words of the king, and Kmita was barely able to groan out the question, “Who was that man?—who was he?”

“A certain Kmita,” answered the king.

A wave of blood suddenly struck Pan Andrei in the head, it grew dark in his eyes, he seized his forelock, and with a terribly wandering voice said: “That is a lie! Prince Boguslav lies like a dog! Gracious King, believe not that traitor; he did that of purpose to bring infamy on an enemy, and to frighten you, my king. He is a traitor! Kmita would not have done such a deed.”

Here Pan Andrei turned suddenly where he was standing. His strength, exhausted by the siege, undermined by the explosion of powder in the great gun, and through the torture given by Kuklinovski, left him altogether, and he fell without consciousness at the feet of the king.

They bore him into the adjoining room, where the king’s physician examined him. But in the assembly of dignitaries they knew not how to explain why the words of the king had produced such a terrible impression on the young man.

“Either he is so honest that horror alone has thrown him off his feet, or he is some relative of that Kmita,” said the castellan of Krakow.

“We must ask him,” replied the chancellor. “In Lithuania nobles are all related one to another, as in fact they are with us.”

“Gracious Lord,” said Tyzenhauz, “God preserve me from wishing to speak evil of this young man; but we should not trust him at present too much. That he served in Chenstohova is certain—his side is burned; this the monks would not have done in any event, for they as servants of God must have every clemency, even for prisoners and traitors; but one thing is coming continually to my head and destroying trust in him, that is, I met him somewhere in Lithuania—still a youth, at a diet or a carnival—I don’t remember—”

“And what of that?” asked the king.

“And it seems to me always that his name was not Babinich.”

“Do not tell every little thing,” said the king; “you are young and inattentive, and a thing might easily enter your head. Whether he is Babinich or not, why should I not trust him? Sincerity and truth are written on his lips, and evidently he has a golden heart. I should not trust myself, if I could not trust a soldier who has shed his blood for us and the country.”

“He deserves more confidence than the letter of Prince Boguslav,” said the queen, suddenly, “and I recommend this to the consideration of your worthinesses, there may not be a word of truth in that letter. It might have been very important for the Radzivils of Birji that we should lose courage completely, and it is easy to admit that Prince Boguslav wished also to ruin some enemy of his, and leave a door open to himself in case of changed fortune.”

“If I were not accustomed,” said the primate, “to hear wisdom itself coming from the mouth of the gracious queen, I should be astonished at the quickness of these words, worthy of the ablest statesman—”

*“Comasque gerens, animosque viriles* (Though wearing tresses, she has the courage of a man),” interrupted Father Vydjga, in a low voice.

Encouraged by these words, the queen rose from her chair and began to speak: “I care not for the Radzivills of Birji, for they, as heretics, listen easily to the whispers of the enemy of the human race; nor of the letter of Prince Boguslav, which may touch private affairs. But I am most pained by the despairing words of my lord and husband, the king, spoken against this people. For who will spare them if their own king condemns them? And still, when I look through the world, I ask in vain, where is there another such people in which the praise of God endures with the manner of ancient sincerity and increases continually? In vain do I look for another people in which such open candor exists. Where is there another State in which no one has heard of those hellish blasphemies, subtle crimes, and never ending feuds with which foreign chronicles are filled. Let people skilled in the history of the world show me another kingdom where all the kings died their own quiet deaths. You have no knives or poisons here; you have no protectors, as among the English. It is true that this nation has grown grievously guilty, has sinned through frivolity and license. But where is the nation that never errs, and where is the one which, as soon as it has recognized its offence, begins penance and reformation? Behold they have already taken thought, they are now coming, beating their breasts to your majesty, ready to spill their blood, to yield their lives, to sacrifice their fortune for you. And will you reject them; will you not forgive the penitent; will you not trust those who have reformed, those who are doing penance; will you not return the affection of a father to children who have erred? Trust them, since they are yearning for their Yagyellon blood, and for your government, which is of their fathers. Go among them; I, a woman, fear no treason, for I see love, I see sorrow for sins and restoration of this kingdom to which they called you after your father and your brother. It does not seem to me likely that God will destroy such a great commonwealth, in which the light of the true faith is burning. For a short period God’s justice has stretched forth the rod to chastise, not to ruin its children, and soon will the fatherly love of that heavenly Lord receive them and cherish them. But do not condemn them, O king, and fear not to confide in their sonly discretion, for in this way alone can you turn evil into good, suffering into comfort, defeat into triumph.”

When she had said this, the queen sat down, with fire still in her eyes, and heaving breast; all looked at her with veneration, and her chancellor, Vydjga, began to speak with a resonant voice—

*“Nulla sors longa est, dolor et voluptas,  
Invicens cedunt.*

*Ima permutat brevis hora summis.”*

(No fortune is long, pain and pleasure  
Yield in turn.

A short hour changes the lowest with the highest.)

But no one heard what he said, for the ardor of the heroic lady was communicated to every heart. The king himself sprang up, with a flush on his sallow face, and said—

“I have not lost the kingdom yet, since I have such a queen. Let her will be done, for she spoke with prophetic inspiration. The sooner I move and appear in my realms the better.”

To this the primate answered with seriousness: “I do not wish to oppose the will of my gracious king and queen, nor to turn them from an undertaking in which there is hazard, but in which there may be also salvation. Still I should consider it a wise thing to assemble in Opol, where a majority of the senators are tarrying, and there listen to the ideas of all; these may develop and explain the affair more clearly and broadly.”

“Then to Opol!” exclaimed the king, “and afterward to the road, and what God will give!”

“God will give a happy return and victory!” said the queen.

“Amen!” said the primate.



## Chapter XLIX

Pan Andrei fretted in his lodgings like a wounded wildcat. The hellish revenge of Boguslav Radzivill brought him almost to madness. Not enough that that prince had sprung out of his hands, killed his men, almost deprived him of life; he had put upon him besides shame such as no one, not merely of his name, but no Pole from the beginning of the world, had ever groaned under.

There were moments when Kmita wished to leave everything—the glory which was opening before him, the service of the king—and fly away to avenge himself on that magnate whom he wanted to eat up alive.

But on the other hand, in spite of all his rage and the whirlwind in his head, he remembered that while the prince lived revenge would not vanish; and the best means, the only way to hurl back his calumny and lay bare all the infamy of his accusation, was precisely the service of the king; for in it he could show the world that not only had he not thought of raising his hand against the sacred person of Yan Kazimir, but that among all the nobles of Lithuania and Poland no person more loyal than Kmita could be found.

But he gnashed his teeth and was boiling like a stew; he tore his clothing, and long, long was it before he could calm himself. He gloated over the thought of revenge. He saw this Radzivill again in his hands; he swore by the memory of his father, that he must reach Boguslav even if death and torments were awaiting him therefor. And though the prince was a mighty lord whom not only the revenge of a common noble, but even the revenge of a king, could not easily touch; still, whoso knew that unrestrained soul better, would not have slept calmly, and more than once would have trembled before his vows.

And still Pan Andrei did not know yet that the prince had not merely covered him with shame and robbed him of repute.

Meanwhile the king, who from the first had conceived a great love for the young hero, sent Pan Lugovski to him that same day, and on the morrow commanded Kmita to accompany his majesty to Opol, where at a general assembly of the senators it was intended to deliberate on the return of the king to the country. Indeed there was something over which to deliberate. Lyubomirski, the marshal of the kingdom, had sent a new letter, announcing that everything in the country was ready for a general war, and urging earnestly the return. Besides this, news was spread of a certain league of nobles and soldiers formed for the defence of the king and the country, concerning which men had really been thinking for some time, but which, as appeared afterward, was concluded a little later, under the name of the Confederation of Tishovtsi.

All minds were greatly occupied by the news, and immediately after a thanksgiving Mass they assembled in a secret council, to which, at the instance of the king, Kmita too was admitted, since he had brought news from Chenstohova.

They began then to discuss whether the return was to take place at once, or whether it were better to defer it till the army, not only by wish, but by deed, should abandon the Swedes.

Yan Kazimir put an end to these discussions by saying: "Do not discuss, your worthinesses, the return, or whether it is better to defer it awhile, for I have taken counsel already concerning that with God and the Most Holy Lady. Therefore I communicate to you that whatever may happen we shall move in person these days. Express your ideas therefore, your

worthinesses, and be not sparing of counsel as to how our return may be best and most safely accomplished.”

Opinions were various. Some advised not to trust too greatly to the marshal of the kingdom, who had once shown hesitation and disobedience, when, instead of giving the crown to the emperor for safe keeping, according to the order of the king, he had carried it to Lyubovlya. “Great,” said they, “is the pride and ambition of that lord, and if he should have the person of the king in his castle, who knows what he might do, or what he would ask for his services; who knows that he would not try, or wish to seize the whole government in his own hands, and become the protector, not only of the entire country, but of the king?”

These advised the king therefore to wait for the retreat of the Swedes and repair to Chenstohova, as to the place from which grace and rebirth had spread over the Commonwealth. But others gave different opinions—

“The Swedes are yet at Chenstohova, and though by the grace of God they will not capture the place, still there are no unoccupied roads. All the districts about there are in Swedish hands. The enemy are at Kjepitsi, Vyelunie, Krakow; along the boundary also considerable forces are disposed. In the mountains near the Hungarian border, where Lyubovlya is situated, there are no troops save those of the marshal; the Swedes have never gone to that distance, not having men enough nor daring sufficient. From Lyubovlya it is nearer to Russia, which is free of hostile occupation, and to Lvoff, which has not ceased to be loyal, and to the Tartars, who, according to information, are coming with succor; all these are waiting specially for the decision of the king.”

“As to Pan Lyubomirski,” said the Bishop of Krakow, “his ambition will be satisfied with this, that he will receive the king first in his starostaship of Spij, and will surround him with protection. The government will remain with the king, but the hope itself of great services will satisfy the marshal. If he wishes to tower above all others through his loyalty, then, whether his loyalty flows from ambition or from love to the king and the country, his majesty will always receive notable profit.”

This opinion of a worthy and experienced bishop seemed the most proper; therefore it was decided that the king should go through the mountains to Lyubovlya, and thence to Lvoff, or whithersoever circumstances might indicate.

They discussed also the day of returning; but the *voevoda* of Lenchytsk, who had just come from his mission to the emperor for aid, said that it was better not to fix the date, but to leave the decision to the king, so that the news might not be spread and the enemy forewarned. They decided only this, that the king would move on with three hundred dragoons, under command of Tyzenhauz, who, though young, enjoyed already the reputation of a great soldier.

But still more important was the second part of the deliberations, in which it was voted unanimously that on his arrival in the country, government and the direction of the war should pass into the hands of the king, whom nobles, troops, and hetmans were to obey in all things. They spoke besides of the future, and touched upon the causes of those sudden misfortunes which, as a deluge, had covered the whole land in such a brief period. And the primate himself gave no other cause for this than the disorder, want of obedience, and excessive contempt for the office and majesty of the king.

He was heard in silence, for each man understood that it was a question here of the fate of the Commonwealth, and of great, hitherto unexampled changes in it, which might bring back the ancient power of the State, and which was long desired by the wise queen who loved her adopted country.

From the mouth of the worthy prince of the church there came words like thunderbolts, and the souls of the hearers opened to the truth, almost as flowers open to the sun.

“Not against ancient liberties do I rise,” said the primate, “but against that license which with its own hands is murdering the country. In very truth men have forgotten in this Commonwealth the distinction between freedom and license; and as excessive pleasure ends in pain, so freedom unchecked has ended in slavery. You have descended to such error, citizens of this illustrious Commonwealth, that only he among you passes for a defender of liberty who raises an uproar, who breaks diets and opposes the king, not when it is needful, but when for the king it is a question of saving the country. In our treasury the bottom of the chest can be seen; the soldier unpaid seeks pay of the enemy; the diets, the only foundation of this Commonwealth, are dissolved after having done nothing, for one disorderly man, one evil citizen, for his own private purpose may prevent deliberation. What manner of liberty is that which permits one man to stand against all? If that is freedom for one man, then it is bondage for all others. And where have we gone with the use of this freedom which seemed such sweet fruit? Behold one weak enemy, against whom our ancestors gained so many splendid victories, now *sicut fulgur exit ab occidente et poret usque ad orientem* (flashes like lightning from the west, and goes as far as the east). No one opposes him, traitorous heretics aided him, and he seized possession of all things; he persecutes the faith, he desecrates churches, and when you speak of your liberties he shows you the sword. Behold what your provincial diets have come to, what your veto has come to, what your license has come to, your degradation of the king at every step. Your king, the natural defender of the country, you have rendered, first of all, powerless, and then you complain that he does not defend you. You did not want your own government, and now the enemy is governing. And who, I ask, can save us in this fall, who can bring back ancient glory to this Commonwealth, if not he who has spent so much of his life and time for it; when the unhappy domestic war with the Cossacks tore it, who exposed his consecrated person to dangers such as no monarch in our time has passed through; who at Zborovo, at Berestechko, and at Jvanyets fought like a common soldier, bearing toils and hardships beyond his station of king? To him now we will confide ourselves; to him, with the example of the ancient Romans, we will give the dictatorship, and take counsel ourselves how to save in time coming this fatherland from domestic enemies, from vice, license, disorder, disobedience, and restore due dignity to the government and the king.”

So spoke the primate; and misfortune with the experience of recent times had changed his hearers in such a degree that no man protested, for all saw clearly that either the power of the king must be strengthened, or the Commonwealth must perish without fail. They began therefore to consider in various ways how to bring the counsels of the primate into practice. The king and queen listened to them eagerly and with joy, especially the queen, who had labored long and earnestly at the introduction of order into the Commonwealth.

The king returned then to Glogov glad and satisfied, and summoning a number of confidential officers, among whom was Kmita, he said—

“I am impatient, my stay in this country is burning me, I could wish to start even tomorrow; therefore I have called you, as men of arms and experience, to provide ready methods. It is a pity that we should lose time, when our presence may hasten considerably a general war.”

“In truth,” said Lugovski, “if such is the will of your Royal Grace, why delay? The sooner the better.”

“While the affair is not noised about and the enemy do not double their watchfulness,” added Colonel Wolf.

"The enemy are already on their guard, and have taken possession of the roads so far as they are able," said Kmita.

"How is that?" asked the king.

"Gracious Lord, your intended return is no news for the Swedes. Almost every day a report travels over the whole Commonwealth, that your Royal Grace is already on the road, or even now in your realms, inter regna. Therefore it is necessary to observe the greatest care, and to hurry by through narrow places stealthily, for Douglas's scouts are waiting on the roads."

"The best carefulness," said Tyzenhauz, looking at Kmita, "is three hundred faithful sabres; and if my gracious lord gives me command over them, I will conduct him in safety, even over the breasts of Douglas's scouts."

"You will conduct if there are just three hundred, but suppose that you meet six hundred or a thousand, or come upon a superior force waiting in ambush, what then?"

"I said three hundred," answered Tyzenhauz, "for three hundred were mentioned. If however that is too small a party, we can provide five hundred and even more."

"God save us from that. The larger the party, the more noise will it make," said Kmita.

"I think that the marshal of the kingdom will come out to meet us with his squadrons," put in the king.

"The marshal will not come out," answered Kmita, "for he will not know the day and the hour, and even if he did know some delay might happen on the road, as is usual; it is difficult to foresee everything."

"A soldier says that, a genuine soldier!" said the king. "It is clear that you are not a stranger to war."

Kmita laughed, for he remembered his attacks on Hovanski. Who was more skilled than he in such actions? To whom could the escort of the king be entrusted with more judgment?

But Tyzenhauz was evidently of a different opinion from the king, for he frowned and said with sarcasm against Kmita, "We wait then for your enlightened counsel."

Kmita felt ill will in the words; therefore he fixed his glance on Tyzenhauz and answered—

"My opinion is that the smaller the party the easier it will pass."

"How is that?"

"The will of your Royal Grace is unfettered," said Kmita, "and can do what it likes, but my reason teaches me this: Let Pan Tyzenhauz go ahead with the dragoons, giving out purposely that he is conducting the king; this he will do to attract the enemy to himself. His affair is to wind out, to escape from the trap safely. And we with a small band in a day or two will move after him with your Royal Grace; and when the enemy's attention is turned in another direction it will be easy for us to reach Lyubovlya."

The king clapped his hands with delight. "God sent us this soldier!" cried he. "Solomon could not judge better. I give my vote for this plan, and there must not be another. They will hunt for the king among the dragoons, and the king will pass by under their noses. It could not be better!"

"Gracious King," cried Tyzenhauz, "that is pastime."

"Soldier's pastime!" said the king. "But no matter, I will not recede from that plan."

Kmita's eyes shone from delight because his opinion had prevailed, but Tyzenhauz sprang from his seat.

"Gracious Lord!" said he, "I resign my command from the dragoons. Let someone else lead them."

"And why is that?"

"For if your Royal Grace will go without defence, exposed to the play of fortune, to every destructive chance which may happen, I wish to be near your person to expose my breast for you and to die should the need be."

"I thank you for your sincere intention," answered Yan Kazimir; "but calm yourself, for in just such a way as Babinich advises shall I be least exposed."

"Let Pan Babinich, or whatever his name may be, take what he advises on his own responsibility! It may concern him that your Royal Grace be lost in the mountains. I take as witness God and my companions here present that I advised against it from my soul."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when Kmita sprang up, and standing face to face with Tyzenhauz asked, "What do you mean by these words?"

Tyzenhauz measured him haughtily with his eyes from head to foot, and said, "Do not strain your head, little man, toward mine, the place is too high for you."

To which Kmita with lightning in his eyes replied, "It is not known for whom it would be too high if—"

"If what?" asked Tyzenhauz, looking at him quickly.

"If I should reach higher people, than you."

Tyzenhauz laughed. "But where would you seek them?"

"Silence!" said the king suddenly, with a frown. "Do not begin a quarrel in my presence."

Yan Kazimir made an impression of such dignity on all surrounding him, that both young men were silent and confused, remembering that in the presence of the king unseemly words had escaped them. But the king added—

"No one has the right to exalt himself above that cavalier who burst the siege gun and escaped from Swedish hands, even though his father lived in a village, which, as I see, was not the case, for a bird from his feathers, and blood from deeds are easily known. Drop your offences." Here the king turned to Tyzenhauz. "You wish it; then remain with our person. We may not refuse that. Wolf or Denhoff will lead the dragoons. But Babinich too will remain, and we will go according to his counsel, for he has pleased our heart."

"I wash my hands!" said Tyzenhauz.

"Only preserve the secret, gentlemen. Let the dragoons go to Ratibor today, and spread as widely as possible the report that I am with them. And then be on the watch, for you know not the day nor the hour—Go, Tyzenhauz, give the order to the captain of the dragoons."

Tyzenhauz went out wringing his hands from anger and sorrow; after him went other officers.

That same day the news thundered through all Glogov that the king had already gone to the boundaries of the Commonwealth. Even many distinguished senators thought that the departure had really taken place. Couriers, sent purposely, took the report to Opol and to the roads on the boundary.

Tyzenhauz, though he had declared that he washed his hands, did not give up the affair as lost; as attendant of the king, he had access to the person of the monarch every moment made easy. That very day therefore, after the dragoons had gone, he stood before the face of Yan Kazimir, or rather before both royal persons, for Marya Ludvika was present.

“I have come for the order,” said he; “when do we start?”

“The day after tomorrow, before dawn.”

“Are many people to go?”

“You will go; Lugovski with the soldiers. The castellan of Sandomir goes also with me. I begged him to take as few men as possible; but we cannot dispense with a few trusty and tried sabres. Besides, his holiness the nuncio wishes to accompany me; his presence will add importance, and will touch all who are faithful to the true church. He does not hesitate therefore to expose his sacred person to hazard. Do you have a care that there are not more than forty horses, for that is Babinich’s counsel.”

“Gracious Lord!” said Tyzenhauz.

“And what do you wish yet?”

“On my knees I implore one favor. The question is settled, the dragoons have gone—we shall travel without defence, and the first scouting party of a few tens of horses may capture us. Listen, your Royal Grace, to the prayer of your servant, on whose faithfulness God is looking, and do not trust in everything to that noble. He is an adroit man, since he has been able in so short a time to steal into your heart and favor; but—”

“Do you envy him?” interrupted the king.

“I do not envy him, Gracious Lord; I do not wish even to suspect him of treason positively; but I would swear that his name is not Babinich. Why does he hide his real name? Why is it somehow inconvenient to tell what he did before the siege of Chenstohova? Why specially has he insisted upon dragoons going out first, and that your Royal Grace should go without an escort?”

The king thought awhile, and began, according to his custom, to pout his lips repeatedly.

“If it were a question of collusion with the Swedes,” said he at last, “what could three hundred dragoons do? What power would they be, and what protection? Babinich would need merely to notify the Swedes to dispose a few hundred infantry along the roads, and they could take us as in a net. But only think if there can be a question of treason here. He would have had to know beforehand the date of our journey, and to inform the Swedes in Krakow; and how could he do so, since we move the day after tomorrow? He could not even guess that we would choose his plan; we might have gone according to your suggestion or that of others. It was at first decided to go with the dragoons; then if he wished to talk with the Swedes this special party would have confused his arrangements, for he would have to send out new messengers and give fresh notice. All these are irrefragable reasons. And besides he did not insist at all on his opinion, as you say; he only offered, as did others, what seemed to him best. No, no! Sincerity is looking forth from the eyes of that noble, and his burned side bears witness that he is ready to disregard even torture.”

“His Royal Grace is right,” said the queen, on a sudden; “these points are irrefragable, and the advice was and is good.”

Tyzenhauz knew from experience that when the queen gave her opinion it would be vain for him to appeal to the king, Yan Kazimir had such confidence in her wit and penetration. And it was a question now with the young man only that the king should observe needful caution.

"It is not my duty," answered he, "to oppose my king and queen. But if we are to go the day after tomorrow, let this Babinich not know of it till the hour of departure."

"That may be," said the king.

"And on the road I will have an eye on him, and should anything happen he will not go alive from my hands."

"You will not have to act," said the queen. "Listen; not you will preserve the king from evil happenings on the road, from treason, and snares of the enemy; not you, not Babinich, not the dragoons, not the powers of earth, but the Providence of God, whose eye is turned continually on the shepherds of nations and the anointed of the Lord. It will guard him. It will protect him and bring him safely; and in case of need, send him assistance, of which you do not even think, you who believe in earthly power only."

"Most Serene Lady!" answered Tyzenhauz, "I believe, too, that without the will of God not a hair will fall from the head of any man; but to guard the king's person through fear of traitors is no sin for me."

Marya Ludvika smiled graciously. "But you suspect too hastily, and thus cast shame on a whole nation, in which, as this same Babinich has said, there has not yet been found one to raise his hand against his own king. Let it not astonish you that after such desertion, after such a breaking of oaths and faith as the king and I have experienced, I say still that no one has dared such a terrible crime, not even those who today serve the Swedes."

"Prince Boguslav's letter, Gracious Lady?"

"That letter utters untruth," said the queen, with decision. "If there is a man in the Commonwealth ready to betray even the king, that man is Prince Boguslav, for he in name only belongs to this people."

"Speaking briefly, do not put suspicion on Babinich," said the king. "As to his name, it must be doubled in your head. Besides, we may ask him; but how can we say to him here, how inquire, 'If you are not Babinich, then what is your name?' Such a question might pain an honest man terribly, and I'll risk my head that he is an honest man."

"At such a price, Gracious Lord, I would not convince myself of his honesty."

"Well, well, we are thankful for your care. Tomorrow for prayer and penance, and the day after to the road, to the road!"

Tyzenhauz withdrew with a sigh, and in the greatest secrecy began preparations that very day for the journey. Even dignitaries who were to accompany the king were not all informed of the time. But the servants were ordered to have horses in readiness, for they might start any day for Ratibor.

The king did not show himself the entire following day, even in the church; but he lay in the form of a cross in his own room till night, fasting and imploring the King of kings for aid, not for himself, but for the Commonwealth.

Marya Ludvika, together with her ladies-in-waiting, was also in prayer.

Then the following night freshened the strength of the wearied ones; and when in darkness the Glogov church-bell sounded to matins, the hour had struck for the journey.

## Chapter L

They rode through Ratibor, merely stopping to feed the horses. No one recognized the king, no one paid much attention to the party, for all were occupied with the recent passage of the dragoons, among whom, as all thought, was the King of Poland. The retinue was about fifty in number, for several dignitaries accompanied the king; five bishops alone, and among others the nuncio, ventured to share with him the toils of a journey not without peril. The road within the boundary of the empire, however, presented no danger. At Oderberg, not far from the junction of the Olsha with the Odra, they entered Moravia.

The day was cloudy, and snow fell so thickly that it was not possible to see the road a few steps ahead. But the king was joyous and full of courage, for a sign had been manifested which all considered most favorable, and which contemporary historians did not neglect to insert in their chronicles. Behold, just as the king was departing from Glogov, a little bird, entirely white, appeared before his horse and began to circle round, rising at times in the air, at times coming down to the head of the king, chirping and twittering joyously meanwhile. They remembered that a similar bird, but black, had circled over the king when he was retreating from Warsaw before the Swedes.

But this was white, exactly of the size and form of a swallow; which fact roused the greater wonder, because it was deep winter, and swallows were not thinking yet of return. But all were rejoiced, and the king for the first few days spoke of nothing else, and promised himself the most successful future. It appeared from the beginning, too, how sound was Kmita's advice to travel apart.

Everywhere in Moravia people were telling of the recent passage of the King of Poland. Some stated that they had seen him with their own eyes, all in armor, with a sword in his hand and a crown on his head. Various stories, also, were current of the forces which he had with him, and in general the number of his dragoons was exaggerated to the fabulous. There were some who had seen ten thousand, and who could not wait till the last horses, men, gunners, and flags had passed.

"Surely," said they, "the Swedes will spring before them, but what they will do with such a force is unknown."

"Well," asked the king of Tyzenhauz, "was not Babinich right?"

"We are not in Lyubovlya yet, Gracious Lord," replied the young magnate.

Babinich was satisfied with himself and with the journey. Generally he went ahead of the king's party with the three Kyemliches, examining the road; sometimes he rode with the rest, entertaining the king with narratives of single incidents in the siege of Chenstohova, of which the king never had enough. And almost every hour that young hero, cheerful, mettlesome, eagle-like, drew nearer the heart of the king. Time passed for the monarch now in prayer, now in pious meditation on eternal life, now in discussing the coming war and the aid hoped from the emperor, and finally in looking at knightly amusements with which the attendant soldiers endeavored to shorten the time of the journey. For Yan Kazimir had this in his nature, that his mind passed easily from seriousness almost to frivolity, from hard labor to amusements, to which, when there was leisure, he gave himself with his whole soul, as if no care, no grief had pressed him at any time.



The soldiers then exhibited themselves, each with what he could do; the Kyemliches, Kosma, and Damian, immense and awkward figures, amused the king by breaking horseshoes, which they broke like canes; he paid them a thaler apiece, though his wallet was empty enough, for all his money, and even the diamonds and *parafanaty* (paraphernalia) of the queen, had been spent on the army.

Pan Andrei exhibited himself by throwing a heavy hatchet, which he hurled upward with such force that it was barely visible, and then he sprang under the instrument with his horse and caught it by the handle as it fell. At sight of this the king clapped his hands.

"I saw that done," said he, "by Pan Slushka, brother of the vice-chancellor's wife, but he threw not so high by half."

"This is customary with us in Lithuania," said Pan Andrei; "and when a man practises it from childhood he becomes skilful."

"Whence have you those scars across the lip?" asked the king of him once, pointing to Kmita's scars. "Someone went through you well with a sabre."

"That is not from a sabre, Gracious Lord, but from a bullet. I was fired at by a man who put the pistol to my mouth."

"An enemy or one of ours?"

"One of ours; but an enemy whom I shall yet call to account, and till that happens it is not proper for me to speak of it."

"Have you such animosity as that?"

"I have no animosity, Gracious Lord, for on my head I bear a still deeper scar from a sabre, through which cut my soul almost left me; but since an honorable man did it I harbor no offence against him." Kmita removed his cap and showed the king a deep furrow, the white edges of which were perfectly visible. "I am not ashamed of this wound," said he, "for it was given me by such a master that there is not another like him in the Commonwealth."

"Who is such a master?"

"Pan Volodyovski."

"For God's sake! I know him. He did wonders at Zbaraj. And I was at the wedding of his comrade, Skshetuski, who was the first to bring me news of the besieged. Those are great cavaliers! And with them was a third, him the whole army glorified as the greatest of all. A fat noble, and so amusing that we almost burst our sides from laughter."

"That is Pan Zagloba, I think!" said Kmita; "he is a man not only brave, but full of wonderful stratagems."

"Do you know what they are doing now?"

"Volodyovski used to lead dragoons with the *voevoda* of Vilna."

The king frowned. "And is he serving the Swedes now with the prince *voevoda*?"

"He! The Swedes? He is with Pan Sapyeha. I saw myself how, after the treason of the prince, he threw his baton at his feet."

"Oh, he is a worthy soldier!" answered the king. "From Pan Sapyeha we have had news from Tykotsin, where he is besieging the *voevoda*. God give him luck! If all were like him, the Swedish enemy would regret their undertaking."

Here Tyzenhauz, who had been listening to the conversation, asked suddenly, "Then were you with Radzivill at Kyedani?"

Kmita was somewhat confused, and began to throw up his hatchet. "I was," answered he.

"Give peace to your hatchet," said Tyzenhauz. "And what were you doing at the prince's house?"

"I was a guest," answered Kmita, impatiently, "and I ate his bread, until I was disgusted with his treason."

"And why did you not go with other honorable soldiers to Pan Sapyeha?"

"Because I had made a vow to go to Chenstohova, which you will more easily understand when I tell you that our Ostra Brama was occupied by the Northerners."

Tyzenhauz began to shake his head and smack his lips; this attracted the attention of the king, so that he looked inquiringly at Kmita. The latter, made impatient, turned to Tyzenhauz and said—

"My worthy sir! Why do I not inquire of you where you have been, and what you have been doing?"

"Ask me," replied Tyzenhauz; "I have nothing to conceal."

"Neither am I before a court; and if I shall ever be, you will not be my judge. Leave me, then, that I lose not my patience."

When he had said this, he hurled the hatchet so sharply that it grew small in the height; the king raised his eyes after it, and at that moment he was thinking of nothing save this, would Babinich catch it in its fall, or would he not catch it?

Babinich put spurs to his horse, sprang forward, and caught it. That same evening Tyzenhauz said to the king—

"Gracious Lord, this noble pleases me less and less."

"But me more and more," answered the king, pursing his lips.

"I heard today one of his people call him colonel; he only looked threateningly, and straightway confused the man. There is something in that."

"And it seems to me sometimes that he does not wish to tell everything," added the king; "but that is his affair."

"No, Gracious Lord," exclaimed Tyzenhauz, forcibly, "it is not his affair, it is our affair, and that of the whole Commonwealth. For if he is some traitor who is planning the death or captivity of your Royal Grace, then with your person will perish all those who at this moment have taken arms; the whole Commonwealth will perish, which you alone are competent to save."

"I will ask him myself tomorrow."

"God grant that I be a false prophet, but nothing good looks out of his eyes. He is too smart, too bold, too daring; and such people are ready for anything."

The king looked troubled. Next morning, when they moved on their journey, he beckoned Kmita to approach him.

"Where were you, Colonel?" asked the king, suddenly.

A moment of silence followed.

Kmita struggled with himself; the wish was burning him to spring from his horse, fall at the feet of the king, and throw off the burden he was bearing—tell the whole truth at once. But he thought of the fearful impression which the name Kmita would make, especially after the letter of Prince Boguslav Radzivill. How could he, who had been the right hand of Radzivill, who had maintained the preponderance of Prince Yanush, who had aided him in scattering his disobedient squadrons, who supported him in treason; how could he, accused and suspected of the most terrible crime—an attack on the person of the king—succeed in convincing the king, the bishops, and senators, that he had corrected himself, that he was transformed? With what could he show the sincerity of his intentions? What proofs could he bring save naked words? His former offences pursue him unceasingly, unsparingly, as furious dogs a wild beast in the forest. He determined on silence. But he felt also unspeakable disgust and hatred of subterfuge. Must he throw dust in the eyes of the king, whom he loved with all the power of his soul, and deceive him with fictitious tales?

He felt that strength failed him for this; therefore he said, after a while: “Gracious King, the time will come, perhaps soon, in which I shall open my whole soul to your Royal Grace as in confession to a priest. But I wish deeds to vouch for me, for my sincere intention, for my loyalty and my love of majesty, not words simply. I have offended against you, my Gracious Lord, and the country, and I have repented too little yet; therefore I am seeking service in which I can find reparation more easily. Besides, who has not offended? Who in the whole Commonwealth does not need to beat his breast? It may be that I have offended more grievously than others, but I was the first also to bethink myself. Do not inquire, Gracious Lord, about anything until the present service will convince you concerning me; do not ask, for I cannot answer without closing the road of salvation to myself, for God is the witness, and the Most Holy Lady, our Queen, that I had no evil intent, that I am ready to give the last drop of my blood for you.”

Here Pan Andrei’s eyes grew moist, and such sincerity and sorrow appeared on his face that his countenance defended him with greater power than his words.

“God is looking at my intentions,” said he, “and will account them to me at judgment, but, Gracious Lord, if you do not trust me, dismiss me, remove me from your person. I will follow at a distance, so as to come in time of difficulty, even without being called, and lay down my life for you. And then, Gracious Lord, you will believe that I am not a traitor, but one of that kind of servants of whom you have not many, even among those who cast suspicion on others.”

“I believe you today,” said the king. “Remain near our person as before, for treason does not speak in such fashion.”

“I thank your Royal Grace,” answered Kmita; and reining in his horse somewhat, he pushed back among the last ranks of the party.

But Tyzenhauz did not limit himself to conveying suspicions to the king. The result was that all began to look askance at Kmita. Audible conversation ceased at his approach, and whispers began. Every movement of his was followed, every word considered. Kmita noticed this, and was ill at ease among these men.

Even the king, though he did not remove confidence from him, had not for Pan Andrei such a joyful countenance as before. Therefore the young hero lost his daring, grew gloomy, sadness and bitterness took possession of his heart. Formerly in front, among the first, he used to make his horse prance; now he dragged on many yards behind the cavalcade, with hanging head and gloomy thoughts.

At last the Carpathians stood white before the travellers. Snow lay on their slopes, clouds spread their unwieldy bodies on the summits; and when an evening came clear at sunset, those mountains put on flaming garments from which marvellously bright gleams went forth till quenched in the darkness embracing the whole world. Kmita gazed on those wonders of nature which to that time he had never seen; and though greatly grieved, he forgot his cares from admiration and wonder.

Each day those giants grew greater, more mighty, till at last the retinue of the king came to them and entered a pass which opened on a sudden, like a gate.

“The boundary must be near,” said the king, with emotion.

Then they saw a small wagon, drawn by one horse, and in the wagon a peasant. The king’s men stopped him at once.

“Man,” said Tyzenhauz, “are we in Poland?”

“Beyond that cliff and that little river is the emperor’s boundary, but you are standing on the king’s land.”

“Which way is it then to Jivyets?”

“Go straight ahead; you will come to the road.” And the mountaineer whipped his horse.

Tyzenhauz galloped to the retinue standing at a distance.

“Gracious Lord,” cried he, with emotion, “you are now inter regna, for at that little river your kingdom begins.”

The king said nothing, only made a sign to hold his horse, dismounted, and throwing himself on his knees, raised his eyes and his hands upward.

At sight of this, all dismounted and followed his example. That king, then a wanderer, fell after a moment in the form of a cross on the snow, and began to kiss that land, so beloved and so thankless, which in time of disaster had refused refuge to his head.

Silence followed, and only sighs interrupted it.

The evening was frosty, clear; the mountains and the summits of the neighboring fir-trees were in purple, farther off in the shadow they had begun to put on violet; but the road on which the king was lying turned as it were into a ruddy and golden ribbon, and rays fell on the king, bishops, and dignitaries.

Then a breeze began from the summits, and bearing on its wings sparks of snow, flew to the valley. Therefore the nearer fir-trees began to bend their snow-covered heads, bow to their lord, and to make a joyous and rustling sound, as if they were singing that old song, “Be welcome to us, thou dear master!”

Darkness had already filled the air when the king’s retinue moved forward. Beyond the defile was spread out a rather roomy plain, the other end of which was lost in the distance. Light was dying all around; only in one place the sky was still bright with red. The king began to repeat “Ave Maria;” after him the others with concentration of spirit repeated the pious words.

Their native land, unvisited by them for a long time; the mountains which night was now covering; the dying twilight, the prayer—all these caused a solemnity of heart and mind; hence after the prayer the king, the dignitaries, and the knights rode on in silence. Night fell, but in the east the sky was shining still more redly.

“Let us go toward that twilight,” said the king, at last; “it is a wonder that it is shining yet.”

Then Kmita galloped up. "Gracious Lord, that is a fire!" cried he.

All halted.

"How is that?" asked the king; "it seems to me that 'tis the twilight."

"A fire, a fire! I am not mistaken!" cried Kmita.

And indeed, of all of the attendants of the king he knew most in that matter. At last it was no longer possible to doubt, since above that supposed twilight were rising as it were red clouds, rolling now brighter, now darker in turn.

"It is as if Jivyets were burning!" cried the king; "maybe the enemy is ravaging it."

He had not finished speaking when to their ears flew the noise of men, the snorting of horses, and a number of dark figures appeared before the retinue.

"Halt, halt!" cried Tyzenhauz.

These figures halted, as if uncertain what to do farther.

"Who are you?" was asked from the retinue.

"Ours!" said a number of voices. "Ours! We are escaping with our lives from Jivyets. The Swedes are burning Jivyets, and murdering people."

"Stop, in God's name! What do you say? Whence have they come?"

"They were waiting for our king. There is a power of them, a power! May the Mother of God have the king in Her keeping!"

Tyzenhauz lost his head for a moment. "See what it is to go with a small party!" cried he to Kmita; "Would that you were killed for such counsel!"

Yan Kazimir began to inquire himself of the fugitives. "But where is the king?"

"The king has gone to the mountains with a great army. Two days ago he passed through Jivyets; they pursued him, and were fighting somewhere near Suha. We have not heard whether they took him or not; but today they returned to Jivyets, and are burning and murdering."

"Go with God!" said Yan Kazimir.

The fugitives shot past quickly.

"See what would have met us had we gone with the dragoons!" exclaimed Kmita.

"Gracious King!" said Father Gembitski, "the enemy is before us. What are we to do?"

All surrounded the monarch, as if wishing to protect him with their persons from sudden danger. The king gazed on that fire which was reflected in his eyes, and he was silent; no one advanced an opinion, so difficult was it to give good advice.

"When I was going out of the country a fire lighted me," said Yan Kazimir, at last; "and when I enter, another gives light."

Again silence, only still longer than before.

"Who has any advice?" inquired Father Gembitski, at last.

Then the voice of Tyzenhauz was heard, full of bitterness, and insult: "He who did not hesitate to expose the king's person to danger, who said that the king should go without a guard, let him now give advice."

At this moment a horseman pushed out of the circle. It was Kmita.

“Very well!” said he. And rising in the stirrups he shouted, turning to his attendants standing at some distance, “Kyemliches, after me!”

Then he urged his horse to a gallop, and after him shot the three horsemen with all the breath that was in the breasts of their horses.

A cry of despair came from Tyzenhauz: “That is a conspiracy!” said he. “These traitors will give us up surely. Gracious King, save yourself while there is time, for the enemy will soon close the pass! Gracious King, save yourself! Back! back!”

“Let us return, let us return!” cried the bishops and dignitaries, in one voice.

Yan Kazimir became impatient, lightnings flashed from his eyes; suddenly he drew his sword from its sheath and cried—

“May God not grant me to leave my country a second time. Come what may, I have had enough of that!” And he put spurs to his horse to move forward; but the nuncio himself seized the reins.

“Your Royal Grace,” said he, seriously, “you bear on your shoulders the fate of the Catholic Church and the country, therefore you are not free to expose your person.”

“Not free,” repeated the bishops.

“I will not return to Silesia, so help me the Holy Cross!” answered Yan Kazimir.

“Gracious Lord! listen to the prayers of your subjects,” said the castellan of Sandomir. “If you do not wish to return to the emperor’s territory, let us go at least from this place and turn toward the Hungarian boundary, or let us go back through this pass, so that our return be not intercepted. There we will wait. In case of an attack by the enemy, escape on horses will remain to us; but at least let them not enclose us as in a trap.”

“Let it be even so,” said the king. “I do not reject prudent counsel, but I will not go wandering a second time. If we cannot appear by this road, we will by another. But I think that you are alarmed in vain. Since the Swedes looked for us among the dragoons, as the people from Jivyets said, it is clear proof that they know nothing of us, and that there is no treason or conspiracy. Just consider; you are men of experience. The Swedes would not have attacked the dragoons, they would not have fired a gun at them if they know that we were following them. Be calm, gentlemen! Babinich has gone with his men for news, and he will return soon of a certainty.”

When he had said this the king turned his horse toward the pass; after him his attendants. They halted on the spot where the first mountaineer had shown them the boundary.

A quarter of an hour passed, then a half-hour and an hour.

“Have you noticed, gentlemen,” asked the *voevoda* of Lenchytsk on a sudden, “that the fire is decreasing?”

“It is going out, going out; you can almost see it die,” said a number of voices.

“That is a good sign,” said the king.

“I will go ahead with a few men,” said Tyzenhauz. “We will halt about a furlong from here, and if the Swedes come we will detain them till we die. In every case there will be time to think of the safety of the king’s person.”

“Remain with the party; I forbid you to go!” said the king.

To which Tyzenhauz answered—

“Gracious Lord, give command later to shoot me for disobedience, but now I will go, for now it is a question of you.” And calling upon a number of soldiers in whom it was possible to trust in every emergency, he moved forward.

They halted at the other end of the defile which opened into the valley, and stood in silence, with muskets ready, holding their ears toward every sound. The silence lasted long; finally the sound of snow trampled by horses’ feet came to them.

“They are coming!” whispered one of the soldiers.

“That is no party; only a few horses are to be heard,” answered the other. “Pan Babinich is returning.”

Meanwhile those approaching came in the darkness within a few tens of yards.

“Who is there?” cried Tyzenhauz.

“Ours! Do not fire there!” sounded the voice of Kmita.

At that moment he appeared before Tyzenhauz, and not knowing him in the darkness, inquired—

“But where is the king?”

“At the end of the pass.”

“Who is speaking, for I cannot see?”

“Tyzenhauz. But what is that great bundle which you have before you?” And he pointed to some dark form hanging before Kmita, on the front of the saddle.

Pan Andrei made no answer, but rode on. When he had reached the king’s escort, he recognized the person of the king, for it was much clearer beyond the pass, and cried—

“Gracious Lord, the road is open!”

“Are there no Swedes in Jivyets?”

“They have gone to Vadovitsi. That was a party of German mercenaries. But here is one of them, Gracious Lord; ask him yourself.” And Pan Andrei pushed to the ground that form which he held before him, so that a groan was heard in the still night.

“Who is that?” asked the astonished king.

“A horseman!”

“As God is dear to me! And you have brought an informant! How is that? Tell me.”

“Gracious Lord; when a wolf prowls in the night around a flock of sheep it is easy for him to seize one; and besides, to tell the truth, this is not the first time with me.”

The king raised his hands. “But this Babinich is a soldier, may the bullets strike him! I see that with such servants I can go even in the midst of Swedes.”

Meanwhile all gathered around the horseman, who did not rise from the ground however.

“Ask him, Gracious Lord,” said Kmita, not without a certain boastfulness in his voice; “though I do not know whether he will answer, for he is throttled a little and there is nothing here to burn him with.”

“Pour some *gorailka* into his throat,” said the king.

And indeed that medicine helped more than burning, for the horseman soon recovered strength and voice. Then Kmita, putting a sword-point to his throat, commanded him to tell the whole truth.

The prisoner confessed that he belonged to the regiment of Colonel Irlehorn, that they had intelligence of the passage of the king with dragoons, therefore they fell upon them near Suha, but meeting firm resistance they had to withdraw to Jivyets, whence they marched on to Vadovitsi and Krakow, for such were their orders.

“Are there other divisions of the Swedes in the mountains?” asked Kmita in German, while squeezing the throat of the horseman somewhat more vigorously.

“Maybe there are some,” answered he in a broken voice. “General Douglas sent scouting-parties around, but they are all withdrawing, for the peasants are attacking them in passes.”

“Were you the only ones in the neighborhood of Jivyets?”

“The only ones.”

“Do you know that the King of Poland has passed?”

“He passed with those dragoons who fought with us at Suha. Many saw him.”

“Why did you not pursue him?”

“We were afraid of the mountaineers.”

Here Kmita began again in Polish: “Gracious Lord, the road is open and you will find a night’s lodging in Jivyets, for only a part of the place is burned.”

But unconfiding Tyzenhauz was speaking at this time with the castellan of Voinik, and said: “Either that is a great warrior and true as gold, or a finished traitor. Consider, your worthiness, that all this may be simulated, from the taking of this horseman to his confederates. And if this is a trick—if the Swedes are in ambush in Jivyets—if the king goes and falls as into a net?”

“It is safer to convince one’s self,” answered the castellan of Voinik.

Then Tyzenhauz turned to the king and said aloud: “Gracious Lord, permit me to go ahead to Jivyets and convince myself that what this cavalier says and what this trooper declares is true.”

“Let it be so! Permit them to go, Gracious Lord,” said Kmita.

“Go,” said the king; “but we will move forward a little, for it is cold.”

Tyzenhauz rushed on at all speed, and the escort of the king began to move after him slowly. The king regained his good humor and cheerfulness, and after a while said to Kmita—

“But with you it is possible to hunt Swedes as birds with a falcon, for you strike from above.”

“That is my fashion,” said Kmita. “Whenever your Royal Grace wishes to hunt, the falcon will always be ready.”

“Tell how you caught him.”

“That is not difficult. When a regiment marches there are always a few men who lag in the rear, and I got this one about half a furlong behind. I rode up to him; he thought that I was one of his own people, he was not on his guard, and before he could think I had seized and gagged him so that he could not shout.”

“You said that this was not your first time. Have you then practised somewhere before?”



Kmita laughed. "Oh, Gracious Lord, I have, and that of the best. Let your Royal Grace but give the order and I will go again, overtake them, for their horses are road-weary, take another man, and order my Kyemliches to take also."

They advanced some time in silence; then the tramp of a horse was heard, and Tyzenhauz flew up. "Gracious King," said he, "the road is free, and lodgings are ready."

"But did not I say so?" cried Yan Kazimir. "You, gentlemen, had no need to be anxious. Let us ride on now, let us ride, for we have earned our rest."

All advanced at a trot, briskly, joyously; and an hour later the wearied king was sleeping a sleep without care on his own territory.

That evening Tyzenhauz approached Kmita. "Forgive me," said he; "out of love for the king I brought you under suspicion."

Kmita refused his hand and said: "Oh, that cannot be! You made me a traitor and a betrayer."

"I would have done more, for I would have shot you in the head; but since I have convinced myself that you are an honest man and love the king, I stretch out my hand to you. If you wish, take it; if not, take it not. I would prefer to have no rivalry with you save that of attachment to the king; but I am not afraid of other rivalry."

"Is that your thought? H'm! perhaps you are right, but I am angry with you."

"Well, stop being angry. You are a strong soldier. But give us your lips, so that we may not lie down to sleep in hatred."

"Let it be so!" said Kmita.

And they fell into each other's arms.

## Chapter LI

The king's party arrived at Jivyets late in the evening, and paid almost no attention to the place, which was terrified by the recent attack of the Swedish detachment. The king did not go to the castle, which had been ravaged by the enemy and burned in part, but stopped at the priest's house. Kmita spread the news that the party was escorting the ambassador of the emperor, who was going from Silesia to Krakow.

Next morning they held on toward Vadovitsi, and then turned considerably to one side toward Suha. From this place they were to pass through Kjechoni to Yordanovo, thence to Novy Targ, and if it appeared that there were no Swedish parties near Chorshtyn to go to Chorshtyn; if there were, they were to turn toward Hungary and advance on Hungarian soil to Lyubovlya. The king hoped, too, that the marshal of the kingdom, who disposed of forces so considerable that no reigning prince had so many, would make the road safe and hasten forth to meet his sovereign. Only this could prevent, that the marshal knew not which road the king would take; but among the mountaineers there was no lack of trusty men ready to bear word to the marshal. There was no need even of confiding the secret to them, for they went willingly when told that it was a question of serving the king. These people, though poor and half wild, tilling little or not at all an ungrateful soil, living by their herds, pious, and hating heretics, were, in truth, given heart and soul to the sovereign. They were the first to seize their axes and move from the mountains when news of the taking of Krakow spread through the country, and especially when news came of the siege of Chenstohova, to which pious women were accustomed to go on pilgrimages. General Douglas, a well-known warrior, furnished with cannon and muskets, scattered them, it is true, on the plains, to which they were not accustomed; but the Swedes only with the greatest caution entered their special districts, in which it was not easy to reach them, and easy to suffer disaster—so that some smaller divisions, having needlessly entered this labyrinth of mountains, were lost.

And now news of the king's passage with an army had already done its own, for all had sprung up as one man to defend him and accompany him with their axes, even to the end of the world. Yan Kazimir might, if he had only disclosed who he was, have surrounded himself in a short time with thousands of half-wild "householders;" but he thought justly that in such an event the news would be carried about everywhere by all the whirlwinds through the whole region, and that the Swedes might send out numerous troops to meet him, therefore he chose to travel unknown even to the mountaineers.

But in all places trusty guides were found, to whom it was enough to say that they were conducting bishops and lords who desired to preserve themselves from Swedish hands. They were led, therefore, among snows, cliffs, and whirlwinds, and over places so inaccessible that you would have said: "A bird cannot fly through them."

More than once the king and the dignitaries had clouds below them, and when there were not clouds their glances passed over a shoreless expanse, covered with white snows, an expanse seemingly as wide as the whole country was wide; more than once they entered mountain throats, almost dark, covered with snow, in which perhaps only a wild beast might have its lair. But they avoided places accessible to the enemy, shortening the road; and it happened that a settlement, at which they expected to arrive in half a day, appeared suddenly under their feet, and in it they awaited rest and hospitality, though in a smoky hut and a sooty room.

The king was in continual good humor; he gave courage to others to endure the excessive toil, and he guaranteed that by such roads they would surely reach Lyubovlya as safely as unexpectedly.

“The marshal does not expect that we shall fall on his shoulders!” repeated the king, frequently.

“What was the return of Xenophon to our journey among the clouds?” asked the nuncio.

“The higher we rise, the lower will Swedish fortune fall,” answered the king.

They arrived at Novy Targ. It seemed that all danger was passed; still the mountaineers declared that Swedish troops were moving about near Chorshtyn and in the neighborhood. The king supposed that they might be the marshal’s German cavalry, of which he had two regiments, or they might be his own dragoons sent in advance and mistaken for the enemy’s scouts. Since in Chorshtyn the bishop of Krakow had a garrison, opinions were divided in the royal party. Some wished to go by the road to Chorshtyn, and then pass along the boundary to Spij; others advised to turn straight to Hungary, which came up in wedge-form to Novy Targ, and go over heights and through passes, taking guides everywhere who knew the most dangerous places.

This last opinion prevailed, for in that way meeting with the Swedes became almost impossible; and besides this “eagle” road over the precipices and through the clouds gave pleasure to the king.

They passed then from Novy Targ somewhat to the south and west, on the right hand of the Byaly Dunayets. The road at first lay through a region rather open and spacious, but as they advanced the mountains began to run together and the valleys to contract. They went along roads over which horses could barely advance. At times the riders had to dismount and lead; and more than once the beasts resisted, pointing their ears and stretching their distended and steaming nostrils forward toward precipices, from the depths of which death seemed to gaze upward.

The mountaineers, accustomed to precipices, frequently considered roads good on which the heads of unaccustomed men turned and their ears rang. At last they entered a kind of rocky chasm long, straight, and so narrow that three men could barely ride abreast in it. Two cliffs bounded it on the right side and the left. At places however the edges inclined, forming slopes less steep, covered with piles of snow bordered on the edges with dark pine-trees. Winds blew away the snow immediately from the bottom of the pass, and the hoofs of horses gritted everywhere on a stony road. But at that moment the wind was not blowing, and such silence reigned that there was a ringing in the ears. Above where between the woody edges a blue belt of sky was visible, black flocks of birds flew past from time to time, shaking their wings and screaming.

The king’s party halted for rest. Clouds of steam rose from the horses, and the men too were tired.

“Is this Poland or Hungary?” inquired, after a time, the king of a guide.

“This is Poland.”

“But why do we not turn directly to Hungary?”

“Because it is impossible. At some distance this pass turns, beyond the turn is a cliff, beyond that we come out on the highroad, turn, then go through one more pass, and there the Hungarian country begins.”

“Then I see it would have been better to go by the highway at first,” said the king.

“Quiet!” cried the mountaineer, quickly. And springing to the cliff he put his ear to it.

All fixed their eyes on him; his face changed in a moment, and he said: “Beyond the turn troops are coming from the waterfall! For God’s sake! Are they not Swedes?”

“Where? How? What?” men began to ask on every side. “We hear nothing.”

“No, for snow is lying on the sides. By God’s wounds, they are near! they will be here straightway!”

“Maybe they are the marshal’s troops,” said the king.

In one moment Kmita urged his horse forward. “I will go and see!” said he.

The Kyemliches moved that instant after him, like hunting-dogs in a chase; but barely had they stirred from their places when the turn of the pass, about a hundred yards distant, was made black by men and horses. Kmita looked at them, and the soul quivered within him from terror.

Swedes were advancing.

They were so near that it was impossible to retreat, especially since the king’s party had wearied horses. It only remained to break through, to perish, or to go into captivity. The unterrified king understood this in a flash; therefore he seized the hilt of his sword.

“Cover the king and retreat!” cried Kmita.

Tyzenhauz with twenty men pushed forward in the twinkle of an eye; but Kmita instead of joining them moved on at a sharp trot against the Swedes.

He wore the Swedish dress, the same in which he disguised himself when going out from the cloister. Seeing a horseman coming toward them in such a dress, the Swedes thought perhaps this was some party of their own belonging to the King of Sweden; they did not hasten their pace, but the captain commanding pushed out beyond the first three.

“What people are you?” asked he in Swedish, looking at the threatening and pale face of the young man approaching.

Kmita rode up to him so closely that their knees almost touched, and without speaking a word fired from a pistol directly into his ear.

A shout of terror was rent from the breasts of the Swedish cavalry; but still louder thundered the voice of Pan Andrei, “Strike!”

And like a rock torn from a cliff rolling down, crushing everything in its course, so did he fall on the first rank, bearing death and destruction. The two young Kyemliches, like two bears, sprang after him into the whirl. The clatter of sabres on mail and helmets was heard, like the sound of hammers, and was followed straightway by outcries and groans.

It seemed at the first moment to the astonished Swedes that three giants had fallen upon them in that wild mountain pass. The first three pushed back confused in the presence of the terrible man, and when the succeeding ones had extricated themselves from behind the bend of the pass, those in the rear were thrown back and confused. The horses fell to biting and kicking. The soldiers in the remoter ranks were not able to shoot, nor come to the assistance of those in front, who perished without aid under the blows of the three giants. In vain did they fall, in vain did they present their weapon points; here sabres were breaking, there men and horses fell. Kmita urged his horse till his hoofs were hanging above the heads of the steeds of his opponents, he was raging himself, cutting and thrusting. The blood rushed to his

face, and from his eyes fire flashed. All thoughts were quenched in him save one—he might perish, but he must detain the Swedes. That thought turned in him to a species of wild ecstasy; therefore his powers were trebled, his movements became like those of a leopard, mad, and swift as lightning. With blows of his sabre, which were blows beyond human, he crushed men as a thunderbolt crushes young trees; the twin Kyemliches followed, and the old man, standing a trifle in the rear, thrust his rapier out every moment between his sons, as a serpent thrusts out its bloody tongue.

Meanwhile around the king there rose confusion. The nuncio, as at Jivyets, seized the reins of his horse, and on the other side the bishop of Krakow pulled back the steed with all his force; but the king spurred him till he stood on his hind legs.

“Let me go!” cried the king. “As God lives! We shall pass through the enemy!”

“My Lord, think of the country!” cried the bishop of Krakow.

The king was unable to tear himself from their hands, especially since young Tyzenhauz with all his men closed the road. Tyzenhauz did not go to help Kmita; he sacrificed him, he wanted only to save the king.

“By the passion of our Lord!” cried he, in despair, “those men will perish immediately! Gracious Lord, save yourself while there is time! I will hold them here yet awhile!”

But the stubbornness of the king when once roused reckoned with nothing and no man. Yan Kazimir spurred his horse still more violently, and instead of retreating pushed forward.

But time passed, and each moment might bring with it final destruction.

“I will die on my own soil! Let me go!” cried the king.

Fortunately, against Kmita and the Kyemliches, by reason of the narrowness of the pass, only a small number of men could act at once, consequently they were able to hold out long. But gradually even their powers began to be exhausted. A number of times the rapiers of the Swedes had struck Kmita’s body, and his blood began to flow. His eyes were veiled as it were by a mist. The breath halted in his breast. He felt the approach of death; therefore he wanted only to sell his life dearly. “Even one more!” repeated he to himself, and he sent down his steel blade on the head or the shoulder of the nearest horseman, and again he turned to another; but evidently the Swedes felt ashamed, after the first moment of confusion and fear, that four men were able to detain them so long, and they crowded forward with fury; soon the very weight of men and horses drove back the four men, and each moment more swiftly and strongly.

With that Kmita’s horse fell, and the torrent covered the rider.

The Kyemliches struggled still for a time, like swimmers who seeing that they are drowning make efforts to keep their heads above the whirl of the sea, but soon they also fell. Then the Swedes moved on like a whirlwind toward the party of the king.

Tyzenhauz with his men sprang against them, and struck them in such fashion that the sound was heard through the mountains.

But what could that handful of men, led by Tyzenhauz, do against a detachment of nearly three hundred strong?

There was no doubt that for the king and his party the fatal hour of death or captivity must come.

Yan Kazimir, preferring evidently the first to the second, freed finally the reins from the hands of the bishops, and pushed forward quickly toward Tyzenhauz. In an instant he halted as if fixed to the earth.

Something uncommon had happened. To spectators it seemed as though the mountains themselves were coming to the aid of the rightful king.

Behold on a sudden the edges of the pass quivered as if the earth were moving from its foundations, as if the pines on the mountain desired to take part in the battle; and logs of wood, blocks of snow and ice, stones, fragments of cliff's, began to roll down with a terrible crash and roar on the ranks of the Swedes crowded in the pass. At the same time an unearthly howl was heard on each side of the narrow place.

Below in the ranks began seething which passed human belief. It seemed to the Swedes that the mountains were falling and covering them. Shouts rose, the lamentations of crushed men, despairing cries for assistance, the whining of horses, the bite and terrible sound of fragments of cliffs on armor.

At last men and horses formed one mass quivering convulsively, crushed, groaning, despairing, and dreadful. But the stones and pieces of cliff's ground them continually, rolling without mercy on the now formless masses, the bodies of horses and men.

"The mountaineers! the mountaineers!" shouted men in the retinue of the king.

"With axes at the dog-brothers!" called voices from the mountain.

And that very moment from both rocky edges appeared long-haired heads, covered with round fur caps, and after them came out bodies, and several hundred strange forms began to let themselves down on the slopes of the snow.

Dark and white rags floating above their shoulders gave them the appearance of some kind of awful birds of prey. They pushed down in the twinkle of an eye; the sound of their axes emphasized their wild ominous shouting and the groans of the Swedes.

The king himself tried to restrain the slaughter; some horsemen, still living, threw themselves on their knees, and raising their defenceless hands, begged for their lives. Nothing availed, nothing could stay the vengeful axes. A quarter of an hour later there was not one man living among the Swedes in the pass.

After that the bloody mountaineers began to hurry toward the escort of the king.

The nuncio looked with astonishment on those people, strange to him, large, sturdy, covered partly with sheepskin, sprinkled with blood, and shaking their still steaming axes.

But at sight of the bishops they uncovered their heads. Many of them fell on their knees in the snow.

The bishop of Krakow raising his tearful face toward heaven said, "Behold the assistance of God, behold Providence, which watches over the majesty of the king." Then turning to the mountaineers, he asked, "Men, who are you?"

"We are of this place," answered voices from the crowd.

"Do you know whom you have come to assist? This is your king and your lord, whom you have saved."

At these words a shout rose in the crowd. "The king! the king! Jesus, Mary! the king!" And the joyful mountaineers began to throng and crowd around Yan Kazimir. With weeping they fell to him from every side; with weeping, they kissed his feet, his stirrups, even the hoofs of

his horse. Such excitement reigned, such shouting, such weeping that the bishops from fear for the king's person were forced to restrain the excessive enthusiasm.

And the king was in the midst of a faithful people, like a shepherd among sheep, and great tears were flowing down his face. Then his countenance became bright, as if some sudden change had taken place in his soul, as if a new, great thought from heaven by birth had flashed into his mind, and he indicated with his hand that he wished to speak; and when there was silence he said with a voice so loud that the whole multitude heard him—

“O God, Thou who hast saved me by the hands of simple people, I swear by the suffering and death of Thy Son to be a father to them from this moment forward.”

“Amen!” responded the bishops.

For a certain time a solemn silence reigned, then a new burst of joy. They inquired of the mountaineers whence they had come into the passes, and in what way they had appeared to rescue the king. It turned out that considerable parties of Swedes had been wandering about Chorshtyn, and, not capturing the castle itself, they seemed to seek someone and to wait. The mountaineers too had heard of a battle which those parties had delivered against troops among whom it was said that the king himself was advancing. Then they determined to push the Swedes into an ambush, and sending to them deceitful guides, they lured them into the pass.

“We saw,” said the mountaineers, “how those four horsemen attacked those dogs; we wanted to assist the four horsemen, but were afraid to fall upon the dog-brothers too soon!”

Here the king seized his head. “Mother of Thy only Son!” cried he, “find Babinich for me! Let us give him at least a funeral! And he is the man who was considered a traitor, the one who first shed his own blood for us.”

“It was I who accused him, Gracious Lord!” said Tyzenhauz.

“Find him, find him!” cried the king. “I will not leave here till I look upon his face and put my blessing on him.”

The soldiers and the mountaineers sprang to the place of the first struggle, and soon they removed from the pile of dead horses and men Pan Andrei. His face was pale, all bespattered with blood, which was hanging in large stiffened drops on his mustaches; his eyes were closed; his armor was bent from the blows of swords and horses' hoofs. But that armor had saved him from being crushed, and to the soldier who raised him it seemed as though he heard a low groan.

“As God is true, he is alive!” cried he.

“Remove his armor,” called others.

They cut the straps quickly. Kmita breathed more deeply.

“He is breathing, he is breathing! He is alive!” repeated a number of voices.

But he lay a certain time motionless; then he opened his eyes. At that time one of the soldiers poured a little *gorailka* into his mouth; others raised him by the armpits.

Now the king, to whose hearing the cry repeated by several voices had come, rode up in haste. The soldiers drew into his presence Pan Andrei, who was hanging on them and slipping from their hands to the ground. Still, at sight of the king consciousness returned to him for a moment, a smile almost childlike lighted his face, and his pale lips whispered clearly—

“My lord, my king, is alive—is free.” And tears shone on his eyelashes.

“Babinich, Babinich! with what can I reward you?” cried the king.

“I am not Babinich; I am Kmita!” whispered the knight.

When he had said this he hung like a corpse in the arms of the soldiers.



## Chapter LII

Since the mountaineers gave sure information that on the road to Chorshtyn there was nothing to be heard of other Swedish parties, the retinue of the king turned toward the castle, and soon found themselves on the highway, along which the journey was easiest and least tiresome. They rode on amid songs of the mountaineers and shouts, "The king is coming! The king is coming!" and along the road new crowds of men joined them, armed with flails, scythes, forks, and guns, so that Yan Kazimir was soon at the head of a considerable division of men, not trained, it is true, but ready at any moment to go with him even to Krakow and spill their blood for their sovereign. Near Chorshtyn more than a thousand "householders" and half-wild shepherds surrounded the king.

Then nobles from Novy Sanch and Stary Sanch began to come in. They said that a Polish regiment, under command of Voynilovich, had defeated, that morning, just before the town of Novy Sanch, a considerable detachment of Swedes, of which almost all the men were either slain, or drowned in the Kamyenna or Dunayets.

This turned out to be really the fact, when soon after on the road banners began to gleam, and Voynilovich himself came up with the regiment of the *voevoda* of Bratslav.

The king greeted with joy a celebrated and to him well-known knight, and amidst the universal enthusiasm of the people and the army, he rode on toward Spij. Meanwhile men on horseback rushed with all breath to forewarn the marshal that the king was approaching, and to be ready to receive him.

Joyous and noisy was the continuation of the journey. New crowds were added continually. The nuncio, who had left Silesia filled with fear for the king's fate and his own, and for whom the beginning of the journey had increased this fear, was beside himself now with delight, for he was certain that the future would surely bring victory to the king, and besides to the church over heretics. The bishops shared his joy; the lay dignitaries asserted that the whole people, from the Carpathians to the Baltic, would grasp their weapons as these crowds had done. Voynilovich stated that for the greater part this had taken place already. And he told what was to be heard in the country, what a terror had fallen upon the Swedes, how they dared go no longer outside fortifications in small numbers, how they were leaving the smaller castles, which they burned, and taking refuge in the strongest.

"The Polish troops are beating their breasts with one hand, and are beginning to beat the Swedes with the other," said he. "Vilchkovski, who commands the hussar regiment of your Royal Grace, has already thanked the Swedes for their service, and that in such fashion that he fell upon them at Zakjevo, under the command of Colonel Altenberg, and slew a large number—destroyed almost all. I, with the assistance of God, drove them out of Novy Sanch, and God gave a noted victory. I do not know whether one escaped alive. Pan Felitsyan Kohovski with the infantry of Navoi helped me greatly, and so they received pay for those dragoons at least whom they attacked two or three days ago."

"What dragoons?" asked the king.

"Those whom your Royal Grace sent ahead from Silesia. The Swedes fell on these suddenly, and though not able to disperse them, for they defended themselves desperately, they inflicted considerable loss. And we were almost dying of despair, for we thought that your Royal Grace was among those men in your own person, and we feared lest some evil might happen

to majesty. God inspired your Royal Grace to send the dragoons ahead. The Swedes heard of it at once, and occupied the roads everywhere.”

“Do you hear, Tyzenhauz?” asked the king. “An experienced soldier is talking.”

“I hear, Gracious Lord,” answered the young magnate.

“And what further, what further? Tell on!” said the king, turning to Voynilovich.

“What I know I shall surely not hide. Jegotski and Kulesha are active in Great Poland; Varshytski has driven Lindorm from the castle of Pilets; Dankoff is defending itself; Lantskoron is in our hands; and in Podlyasye, Sapyeha is gaining every day at Tykotsin. The Swedes are in greater straits in the castle, and with them is failing the prince *voevoda* of Vilna. As to the hetmans, they have moved already from Sandomir to Lyubelsk, showing clearly that they are breaking with the enemy. The *voevoda* of Chernigov is with them, and from the region about is marching to them every living man who can hold a sabre in his hand. They say, too, that there is some kind of federation to be formed there against the Swedes, in which is the hand of Sapyeha as well as that of Stefan Charnyetski.”

“Is Charnyetski now in Lyubelsk?”

“He is, your Royal Grace. But he is here today and there tomorrow. I have to join him, but where to find him I know not.”

“There will be noise around him,” said the king; “you will not need to inquire.”

“So I think too,” answered Voynilovich.

In such conversation was the road passed. Meanwhile the sky had grown perfectly clear, so that the azure was unspotted by even a small cloud. The snow was glittering in the sunlight. The mountains of Spij were extended gloriously and joyously before the travellers, and Nature itself seemed to smile on the king.

“Dear country!” said Yan Kazimir, “God grant me strength to bring thee peace before my bones rest in thy earth.”

They rode out on a lofty eminence, from which the view was open and wide, for beyond, at the foot of it, was spread a broad plain. There they saw below, and at a great distance as it were, the movement of a human anthill.

“The troops of the marshal!” cried Voynilovich.

“Unless they are Swedes,” said the king.

“No, Gracious Lord! The Swedes could not march from Hungary, from the south. I see now the hussar flag.”

In fact a forest of spears soon pushed out in the blue distance, and colored streamers were quivering like flowers moved by the wind; above these flags spear-points were glittering like little flames. The sun played on the armor and helmets.

The throngs of people accompanying the king gave forth a joyous shout, which was heard at a distance, for the mass of horses, riders, flags, horsetail standards, and ensigns began to move more quickly. Evidently they were moving with all speed, for the regiments became each moment more definite, and increased in the eye with incomprehensible rapidity.

“Let us stay on this height. We will await the marshal here,” said the king.

The retinue halted; the men coming toward them moved still more rapidly. At moments they were concealed from the eye by turns of the road, or small hills and cliffs, scattered along the

plain; but soon they appeared again, like a serpent with a skin of splendid colors playing most beautifully. At last they came within a quarter of a mile of the height, and slackened their speed. The eye could take them in perfectly, and gain pleasure from them. First advanced the hussar squadron of the marshal himself, well armored, and so imposing that any king might be proud of such troops. Only nobles of the mountains served in this squadron, chosen men of equal size; their armor was of bright squares inlaid with bronze, gorgets with the image of the Most Holy Lady of Chenstohova, round helmets with steel rims, crests on the top, and at the side wings of eagles and vultures, on their shoulders tiger and leopard skins, but on the officers wolf skins, according to custom.

A forest of green and black streamers waved above them. In front rode Lieutenant Victor; after him a janissary band with bells, trumpets, drums, and pipes; then a wall of the breasts of horses and men clothed in iron.

The king's heart opened at that lordly sight. Next to the hussars came a light regiment still more numerous, with drawn sabres in their hands and bows at their shoulders; then three companies of Cossacks, in colors like blooming poppies, armed with spears and muskets; next two hundred dragoons in red jackets; then escorts belonging to different personages visiting at Lyubovlya, attendants dressed as if for a wedding, guards, haiduks, grooms, Hungarians, and janissaries, attached to the service of great lords.

And all that changed in colors like a rainbow, and came on tumultuously, noisily, amid the neighing of horses, the clatter of armor, the thunder of kettledrums, the roll of other drums, the blare of trumpets, and cries so loud that it seemed as though the snows would rush down from the mountains because of them. In the rear of the troops were to be seen closed and open carriages, in which evidently were riding dignitaries of the church and the world.

The troops took position in two lines along the road, and between them appeared, on a horse white as milk, the marshal of the kingdom, Pan Yerzy Lyubomirski. He flew on like a whirlwind over that road, and behind him raced two equerries, glittering in gold. When he had ridden to the foot of the eminence, he sprang from his horse, and throwing the reins to one of the equerries, went on foot to the king standing above.

He removed his cap, and placing it on the hilt of his sabre, advanced with uncovered head, leaning on a staff all set with pearls. He was dressed in Polish fashion, in military costume; on his breast was armor of silver plates thickly inlaid at the edges with precious stones, and so polished that he seemed to be bearing the sun on his bosom; over his left shoulder was hanging a cloak of Venetian velvet of dark color, passing into violet purple; it was fastened at the throat by a cord with a buckle of diamonds, and the whole cloak was embroidered with diamonds; in like manner a diamond was trembling in his cap, and these stones glittered like many-colored sparks around his whole person, and dazzled the eyes, such was the brightness which came from them.

He was a man in the vigor of life, of splendid form. His head was shaven around the temples; his forelock was rather thin, growing gray, and lay on his forehead in a shaggy tuft; his mustache, as black as the wing of a crow, drooped in fine points at both sides. His lofty forehead and Roman nose added to the beauty of his face, but the face was marred somewhat by cheeks that were too plump, and small eyes encircled with red lids. Great dignity, but also unparalleled pride and vanity were depicted on that face. You might easily divine that that magnate wished to turn to himself eternally the eyes of the whole Commonwealth, nay, of all Europe; and such was the case in reality.

Where Yerzy Lyubomirski could not hold the first place, where he could only share glory and merit with others, his wounded pride was ready to bar the way and corrupt and crush every endeavor, even when it was a question of saving the country.

He was an adroit and fortunate leader, but even in this respect others surpassed him immeasurably; and in general his abilities, though uncommon, were not equal to his ambition and desire of distinction. Endless unrest therefore was boiling in his soul, whence was born that suspiciousness, that envy, which later on carried him so far that he became more destructive to the Commonwealth than the terrible Yanush Radzivill. The black soul which dwelt in Prince Yanush was great also; it stopped before no man and no thing. Yanush wanted a crown, and he went toward it consciously over graves and the ruin of his country. Lyubomirski would have taken a crown if the hands of the nobles had placed it on his head; but having a smaller soul, he dared not desire the crown openly and expressly. Radzivill was one of those men whom failure casts down to the level of criminals, and success elevates to the greatness of demigods; Lyubomirski was a mighty disturber who was always ready to ruin work for the salvation of the country, in the name of his own offended pride, and to build up nothing in place of it. He did not even dare to raise himself, he did not know how. Radzivill died the more guilty, Lyubomirski the more harmful man.

But at that hour, when in gold, velvet, and precious stones he stood in front of the king, his pride was sufficiently satisfied. For he was the first magnate to receive his own king on his own land; he first took him under a species of guardianship, he had to conduct him to a throne which had been overturned, and to drive out the enemy; from him the king and the country expected everything; on him all eyes were turned. Therefore to show loyalty and service coincided with his self-love, in fact flattered it, he was ready in truth for sacrifices and devotion, he was ready to exceed the measure even with expressions of respect and loyalty. When therefore he had ascended one half of that eminence on which the king was standing, he took his cap from the sword-hilt and began, while bowing, to sweep the snow with its diamond plume.

The king urged his horse somewhat toward the descent, then halted to dismount, for the greeting. Seeing this, the marshal sprang forward to hold the stirrup with his worthy hands, and at that moment grasping after his cloak, he drew it from his shoulders, and following the example of a certain English courtier, threw it under the feet of the monarch.

The king, touched to the heart, opened his arms to the marshal, and seized him like a brother in his embrace. For a while neither was able to speak; but at that exalted spectacle the army, the nobles, the people, roared in one voice, and thousands of caps flew into the air, all the guns, muskets, and blunderbusses sounded, cannon from Lyubovlya answered in a distant bass, till the mountains trembled; all the echoes were roused and began to course around, striking the dark walls of pine woods, the cliffs and rocks, and flew with the news to remoter mountains and cliffs.

“Lord Marshal,” said the king, “we will thank you for the restoration of the kingdom!”

“Gracious Lord!” answered Lyubomirski, “my fortune, my life, my blood, all I have I place at the feet of your Royal Grace.”

“Vivat! vivat Yoannes Casimirus Rex!” thundered the shouts.

“May the king live! our father!” cried the mountaineers.

Meanwhile the gentlemen who were riding with the king surrounded the marshal; but he did not leave the royal person. After the first greetings the king mounted his horse again; but the marshal, not wishing to recognize bounds to his hospitality and honor to his guest, seized the

bridle, and going himself on foot, led the king through the lines of the army amid deafening shouts, till they came to a gilded carriage drawn by eight dapple-gray horses; in this carriage Yan Kazimir took his seat, together with Vidon, the nuncio of the Pope.

The bishops and dignitaries took seats in succeeding carriages, then they moved on slowly to Lyubovlya. The marshal rode at the window of the king's carriage, splendid, self-satisfied, as if he were already proclaimed father of the country. At both sides went a dense army, singing songs, thundering out in the following words:—

“Cut the Swedes, cut,  
With sharpened swords.

“Beat the Swedes, beat,  
With strong sticks.

“Roll the Swedes, roll,  
Impale them on stakes.

“Torment the Swedes, torment,  
And torture them as you can.

“Pound the Swedes, pound,  
Pull them out of their skins.

“Cut the Swedes, cut,  
Then there will be fewer.

“Drown the Swedes, drown,  
If you are a good man!”

Unfortunately amidst the universal rejoicing and enthusiasm no one foresaw that later the same troops of Lyubomirski, after they had rebelled against their legal lord and king, would sing the same song, putting the French in place of the Swedes.

But now it was far from such a state. In Lyubovlya the cannon were thundering in greeting till the towers and battlements were covered with smoke, the bells were tolling as at a fire. At the part of the courtyard in which the king descended from the carriage, the porch and the steps were covered with scarlet cloth. In vases brought from Italy were burning perfumes of the East. The greater part of the treasures of the Lyubomirskis—cabinets of gold and silver, carpets, mats, gobelin tapestry, woven wonderfully by Flemish hands, statues, clocks, cupboards, ornamented with precious stones, cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl and amber brought previously to Lyubovlya to preserve them from Swedish rapacity, were now arranged and hung up in display; they dazzled the eye and changed that castle into a kind of fairy residence. And the marshal had arranged all this luxury, worthy of a Sultan, in this fashion of purpose to show the king that though he was returning as an exile, without money, without troops, having scarcely a change of clothing, still he was a mighty lord, since he had servants so powerful, and as faithful as powerful. The king understood this intention, and his heart rose in gratitude; every moment therefore he took the marshal by the shoulder, pressed his head and thanked him. The nuncio, though accustomed to luxury, expressed his astonishment at what he beheld, and they heard him say to Count Apotyngen that hitherto he had had no idea of the power of the King of Poland, and now saw that the previous defeats were merely a temporary reverse of fortune, which soon must be changed.

At the feast, which followed a rest, the king sat on an elevation, and the marshal himself served him, permitting no one to take his place. At the right of the king sat the nuncio, at his left the prince primate, Leshchynski, farther on both sides dignitaries, lay and clerical, such as

the bishops of Krakow, Poznan, Lvoff, Lutsch, Premysl, Helm; the archdeacon of Krakow; farther on keepers of the royal seal and *voevodas*, of whom eight had assembled, and castellans and referendaries; of officers, there were sitting at the feast Voynilovich, Viktor, Stabkowski, and Baldwin Shurski.

In another hall a table was set for inferior nobles, and there were large barracks for peasants, for all had to be joyful on the day of the king's coming.

At the tables there was no other conversation but touching the royal return, and the terrible adventures which had met them on the road, in which the hand of God had preserved the king. Yan Kazimir himself described the battle in the pass, and praised the cavalier who had held back the first Swedish onset.

"And how is he?" asked he of the marshal.

"The physician does not leave him, and guarantees his life; and besides, maidens and ladies in waiting have taken him in care, and surely they will not let the soul go from the body, for the body is shapely and young!" answered the marshal, joyously.

"Praise be to God!" cried the king. "I heard from his lips something which I shall not repeat to you, for it seems to me that I heard incorrectly, or that he said it in delirium; but should it come true you will be astonished."

"If he has said nothing which might make your Royal Grace gloomy."

"Nothing whatever of that nature," said the king; "it has comforted us beyond measure, for it seems that even those whom we had reason to hold our greatest enemies are ready to spill their blood for us if need be."

"Gracious Lord!" cried the marshal, "the time of reform has come; but under this roof your Royal Grace is among persons who have never sinned even in thought against majesty."

"True, true!" answered the king, "and you, Lord Marshal, are in the first rank."

"I am a poor servant of your Royal Grace."

At table the noise grew greater. Gradually they began to speak of political combinations; of aid from the emperor, hitherto looked for in vain; of Tartar assistance, and of the coming war with the Swedes. Fresh rejoicing set in when the marshal stated that the envoy sent by him to the Khan had returned just a couple of days before, and reported that forty thousand of the horde were in readiness, and perhaps even a hundred thousand, as soon as the king would reach Lvoff and conclude a treaty with the Khan. The same envoy had reported that the Cossacks through fear of the Tartars had returned to obedience.

"You have thought of everything," said the king, "in such fashion that we could not have thought it out better ourselves." Then he seized his glass and said: "To the health of our host and friend, the marshal of the kingdom!"

"Impossible, Gracious Lord!" cried the marshal; "no man's health can be drunk here before the health of your Royal Grace."

All restrained their half-raised goblets; but Lyubomirski, filled with delight, perspiring, beckoned to his chief butler.

At this sign the servants who were swarming through the hall rushed to pour out Malvoisie again, taken with gilded dippers from kegs of pure silver. Pleasure increased still more, and all were waiting for the toast of the marshal.

The chief butler brought now two goblets of Venetian crystal of such marvellous work that they might pass for the eighth wonder of the world. The crystal, bored and polished to thinness during whole years, perhaps, cast real diamond light. On the setting great artists of Italy had labored. The base of each goblet was gold, carved in small figures representing the entrance of a conqueror to the Capitol. The conqueror rode in a chariot of gold on a street paved with pearls. Behind him followed captives with bound hands; with them a king, in a turban formed of one emerald; farther followed legionaries with eagles and ensigns. More than fifty small figures found room on each base—figures as high as a hazelnut, but made so marvellously that the features of the faces and the feelings of each one could be distinguished, the pride of the victors, the grief of the vanquished. The base was bound to the goblet with golden filigree, fine as hair bent with wondrous art into grape leaves, clusters, and various flowers. Those filigree were wound around the crystal, and joining at the top in one ring formed the edge of the goblet, which was set with stones in seven colors.

The head butler gave one such goblet to the king and the other to the marshal, both filled with Malvoisie. All rose from their seats; the marshal raised the goblet, and cried with all the voice in his breast—

“Vivat Yoannes Casimirus Rex!”

“Vivat! vivat! vivat!”

At that moment the guns thundered again so that the walls of the castle were trembling. The nobles feasting in the second hall came with their goblets; the marshal wished to make an oration, but could not, for his words were lost in the endless shouts: “Vivat! vivat! vivat!”

Such joy seized the marshal, such ecstasy, that wildness was gleaming in his eyes, and emptying his goblet he shouted so, that he was heard even in the universal tumult—

“*Ego ultimus* (I am the last)!”

Then he struck the priceless goblet on his own head with such force that the crystal sprang into a hundred fragments, which fell with a rattle on the floor, and the head of the magnate was covered with blood. All were astonished, and the king said—

“Lord Marshal, we regret not the goblet, but the head which we value so greatly.”

“Treasures and jewels are nothing to me,” cried the marshal, “when I have the honor of receiving your Royal Grace in my house. Vivat Yoannes Casimirus Rex!”

Here the butler gave him another goblet.

“Vivat! vivat!” shouted the guests without ceasing. The sound of broken glass was mingled with the shout. Only the bishops did not follow the example of the marshal, for their spiritual dignity forbade them.

The nuncio, who did not know of that custom of breaking glasses on the head, bent to the bishop of Poznan, sitting near him, and said—

“As God lives, astonishment seizes me! Your treasury is empty, and for one such goblet two good regiments of men might be equipped and maintained.”

“It is always so with us,” answered the bishop; “when desire rises in the heart there is no measure in anything.”

And in fact the desire grew greater each moment. Toward the end of the feast a bright light struck the windows of the castle.

“What is that?” asked the king.

“Gracious Lord, I beg you to the spectacle,” answered the marshal. And tottering slightly, he conducted the king to the window. There a wonderful sight struck their eyes. It was as clear in the court as when there is daylight. A number of tens of pitch-barrels cast a bright yellow gleam on the pavement, cleared of snow and strewn with leaves of mountain-fern. Here and there were burning tubs of brandy which cast blue light; salt was sprinkled into some to make them burn red.

The spectacle began. First knights cut off Turkish heads, tilted at a ring and at one another; then the dogs of Liptovo fought with a bear; later, a man from the hills, a kind of mountain Samson, threw a millstone and caught it in the air. Midnight put an end to these amusements. Thus did the marshal declare himself, though the Swedes were still in the land.



## Chapter LIII

In the midst of feasting and the throng of new dignitaries, nobles, and knights who were coming continually, the kindly king forgot not his faithful servant who in the mountain-pass had exposed his breast to the Swedish sword with such daring; and on the day following his arrival in Lyubovlya he visited the wounded Pan Andrei. He found him conscious and almost joyful, though pale as death; by a lucky fortune the young hero had received no grievous wound, only blood had left him in large quantities.

At sight of the king, Kmita even rose in the bed to a sitting position, and though the king insisted that he should lie down again, he was unwilling to do so.

“Gracious Lord,” said he, “in a couple of days I shall be on horseback, and with your gracious permission will go farther, for I feel that nothing is the matter with me.”

“Still they must have cut you terribly. It is an unheard of thing for one to withstand such a number.”

“That has happened to me more than once, for I think that in an evil juncture the sabre and courage are best. *Ei*, Gracious Lord, the number of cuts that have healed on my skin you could not count on an ox-hide. Such is my fortune.”

“Complain not of fortune, for it is evident that you go headlong to places where not only blows but deaths are distributed. But how long do you practise such tactics? Where have you fought before now?”

A passing blush covered the youthful face of Kmita.

“Gracious Lord, I attacked Hovanski when all dropped their hands, and a price was set on my head.”

“But listen,” said the king, suddenly; “you told me a wonderful word in that pass. I thought that delirium had seized you and unsettled your reason. Now you say that you attacked Hovanski. Who are you? Are you not really Babinich? We know who attacked Hovanski!”

A moment of silence followed; at last the young knight raised his pale face, and said—

“Not delirium spoke through me, but truth; it was I who battered Hovanski, from which war my name was heard throughout the whole Commonwealth. I am Andrei Kmita, the banneret of Orsha.”

Here Kmita closed his eyes and grew still paler; but when the astonished king was silent, he began to speak farther—

“I am, Gracious Lord, that outlaw, condemned by God and the judgments of men for killing and violence. I served Radzivill, and together with him I betrayed you and the country; but now, thrust with rapiers and trampled with horses’ hoofs, unable to rise, I beat my breast, repeating, *Mea culpa, mea culpa!* and I implore your fatherly mercy. Forgive me, for I have cursed my previous acts, and have long since turned from that road which lies toward hell.”

Tears dropped from the eyes of the knight, and with trembling he began to seek the hand of the king. Yan Kazimir, it is true, did not withdraw his hand; but he grew gloomy, and said—

“Whoso in this land wears a crown should be unceasingly ready to pardon; therefore we are willing to forgive your offence, since on Yasna Gora and on the road you have served us with faithfulness, exposing your breast.”

“Then forgive them, Gracious Lord! Shorten my torment.”

“But one thing we cannot forget—that in spite of the virtue of this people you offered Prince Boguslav to raise hands on majesty, hitherto inviolable, and bear us away living or dead, and deliver us into Swedish hands.”

Kmita, though a moment before he had said himself that he was unable to rise, sprang from the bed, seized the crucifix hanging above him, and with the cuts on his face and fever in his flashing eyes, and breathing quickly, began to speak thus—

“By the salvation of my father and mother, by the wounds of the Crucified, it is untrue! If I am guilty of that sin, may God punish me at once with sudden death and with eternal fires. If you do not believe me, I will tear these bandages, let out the remnant of the blood which the Swedes did not shed. I never made the offer. Never was such a thought in my head. For the kingdom of this world, I would not have done such a deed. Amen! on this cross, amen, amen!” And he trembled from feverish excitement.

“Then did the prince invent it?” asked the astonished king. “Why? for what reason?”

“He did invent it. It was his hellish revenge on me for what I did to him.”

“What did you do to him?”

“I carried him off from the middle of his court and of his whole army. I wanted to cast him bound at the feet of your Royal Grace.”

“It’s a wonder, it’s a wonder! I believe you, but I do not understand. How was it? You were serving Yanush, and carried off Boguslav, who was less guilty, and you wanted to bring him bound to me?”

Kmita wished to answer; but the king saw at that moment his pallor and suffering, therefore he said—

“Rest, and later tell me all from the beginning. I believe you; here is our hand.”

Kmita pressed the king’s hand to his lips, and for some time was silent, for breath failed him; he merely looked at the king’s face with immeasurable affection; at last he collected his strength, and said—

“I will tell all from the beginning. I warred against Hovanski, but I was hard with my own people. In part I was forced to wrong them, and to take what I needed; I did this partly from violence, for the blood was storming within me. I had companions, good nobles, but no better than I. Here and there a man was cut down, here and there a house was burned, here and there someone was chased over the snow with sticks. An outcry was raised. Where an enemy could not touch me, complaint was made before a court. I lost cases by default. Sentences came one after another, but I paid no heed; besides, the devil flattered me, and whispered to surpass Pan Lashch, who had his cloak lined with judgments; and still he was famous, and is famous till now.”

“For he did penance, and died piously,” remarked the king.

When he had rested somewhat, Kmita continued: “Meanwhile Colonel Billevich—the Billeviches are a great family in Jmud—put off his transitory form, and was taken to a better world; but he left me a village and his granddaughter. I do not care for the village, for in continual attacks on the enemy I have gathered no little property, and not only have made good the fortune taken from me by the Northerners, but have increased it. I have still in Chenstohova enough to buy two such villages, and I need ask no one for bread. But when my party separated I went to winter quarters in the Lauda region. There the maiden, Billevich’s

granddaughter, came so near my heart that I forgot God's world. The virtue and honesty in this lady were such that I grew shamefaced in presence of my former deeds. She too, having an inborn hatred of transgression, pressed me to leave my previous manner of life, put an end to disturbances, repair wrongs, and live honestly."

"Did you follow her advice?"

"How could I, Gracious Lord! I wished to do so, it is true—God sees that I wished; but old sins follow a man. First, my soldiers were attacked in Upita, for which I burned some of the place."

"In God's name! that is a crime," said the king.

"That is nothing yet. Later on, the nobles of Lauda slaughtered my comrades, worthy cavaliers though violent. I was forced to avenge them. I fell upon the village of the Butryms that very night, and took vengeance, with fire and sword, for the murder. But they defeated me, for a crowd of homespuns live in that neighborhood. I had to hide. The maiden would not look at me, for those homespuns were made fathers and guardians to her by the will. But my heart was so drawn to her that I could not help myself. Unable to live without her, I collected a new party and seized her with armed hand."

"Why, the Tartars do not make love differently."

"I own that it was a deed of violence. But God punished me through the hands of Pan Volodyovski, and he cut me so that I barely escaped with my life. It would have been a hundred times better for me if I had not escaped, for I should not have joined the Radzivills to the injury of the king and the country. But how could it be otherwise? A new suit was begun against me for a capital offence; it was a question of life. I knew not what to do, when suddenly the *voevoda* of Vilna came to me with assistance."

"Did he protect you?"

"He sent me a commission through this same Pan Volodyovski, and thereby I went under the jurisdiction of the hetman, and was not afraid of the courts. I clung to Radzivill as to a plank of salvation. Soon I put on foot a squadron of men known as the greatest fighters in all Lithuania. There were none better in the army. I led them to Kyedani. Radzivill received me as a son, referred to our kinship through the Kishkis, and promised to protect me. He had his object. He needed daring men ready for all things, and I, simpleton, crawled as it were into birdlime. Before his plans had come to the surface, he commanded me to swear on a crucifix that I would not abandon him in any straits. Thinking it a question of war with the Swedes or the Northerners, I took the oath willingly. Then came that terrible feast at which the Kyedani treaty was read. The treason was published. Other colonels threw their batons at the feet of the hetman, but the oath held me as a chain holds a dog, and I could not leave him."

"But did not all those who deserted us later swear loyalty?" asked the king, sadly.

"I, too, though I did not throw down my baton, had no wish to steep my hands in treason. What I suffered, Gracious Lord, God alone knows. I was writhing from pain, as if men were burning me alive with fire; and my maiden, though even after the seizure the agreement between us remained still unbroken, now proclaimed me a traitor, and despised me as a vile reptile. But I had taken oath not to abandon Radzivill. She, though a woman, would shame a man with her wit, and lets no one surpass her in loyalty to your Royal Grace."

"God bless her!" said the king. "I respect her for that."

"She thought to reform me into a partisan of the king and the country; and when that came to naught, she grew so steadfast against me that her hatred became as great as her love had been

once. At that juncture Radzivill called me before him, and began to convince me. He explained, as two and two form four, that in this way alone could he save the falling country. I cannot, indeed, repeat his arguments, they were so great, and promised such happiness to the land. He would have convinced a man a hundred times wiser, much less me, a simple soldier, he such a statesman! Then, I say, your Royal Grace, that I held to him with both hands and my heart, for I thought that all others were blind; only he saw the truth, all others were sinning, only he was the just man. And I would have sprung into fire for him, as now I would for your Royal Grace, for I know not how to serve or to love with half a heart."

"I see that, this is true!" said Yan Kazimir.

"I rendered him signal service," continued Kmita, gloomily, "and I can say that had it not been for me his treason could not have yielded any poisonous fruits, for his own troops would have cut him to pieces with sabres. They were all ready for that. The dragoons, the Hungarian infantry and the light squadrons were already slaying his Scots, when I sprang in with my men and rubbed them out in one twinkle. But there were other squadrons at various quarters; these I dispersed. Pan Volodyovski alone, who had come out from prison, led his Lauda men to Podlyasye by a wonder and by superhuman resolve, so as to join with Sapyeha. Those who escaped me assembled in Podlyasye in considerable numbers, but before they could do that many good soldiers perished through me. God alone can count them. I acknowledge the truth as if at confession. Pan Volodyovski, on his way to Podlyasye, seized me, and did not wish to let me live; but I escaped because of letters which they found on my person, and from which it transpired that when Volodyovski was in prison and Radzivill was going to shoot him, I interceded persistently and saved him. He let me go free then; I returned to Radzivill and served longer. But the service was bitter for me, the soul began to revolt within me at certain deeds of the prince, for there is not in him either faith, honesty, or conscience, and from his own words it comes out that he works as much for himself as for the King of Sweden. I began then to spring at his eyes. He grew enraged at my boldness, and at last sent me off with letters."

"It is wonderful what important things you tell," said the king. "At least we know from an eyewitness who *pars magna fuit* (took a great part) in affairs, how things happened there."

"It is true that *pars magna fui* (I took a great part)," answered Kmita. "I set out with the letters willingly, for I could not remain in that place. In Pilvishki I met Prince Boguslav. May God give him into my hands, to which end I shall use all my power, so that my vengeance may not miss him for that slander. Not only did I not promise him anything, Gracious Lord, not only is that a shameless lie, but it was just there in Pilvishki that I became converted when I saw all the naked deceit of those heretics."

"Tell quickly how it was, for we were told that Boguslav aided his cousin only through constraint."

"He? He is worse than Prince Yanush, and in his head was the treason first hatched. Did he not tempt the hetman first, pointing out a crown to him? God will decide at the judgment. Yanush at least simulated and shielded himself with *bono publico* (public good); but Boguslav, taking me for an arch scoundrel, revealed his whole soul to me. It is a terror to repeat what he said. 'The devils,' said he, 'must take your Commonwealth, it is a piece of red cloth, and we not only will not raise a hand to save it, but will pull besides, so that the largest piece may come to us. Lithuania,' said he, 'must remain to us, and after Yanush I will put on the cap of Grand Prince, and marry his daughter.'"

The king covered his eyes with his hands. “O passion of our Lord!” said he. “The Radzivills, Radzeyovski, Opalinski—how could that which happened not happen!—they must have crowns, even through rending what the Lord had united.”

“I grew numb, Gracious Lord, I had water poured on my head so as not to go mad. The soul changed in me in one moment, as if a thunderbolt had shaken it. I was terrified at my own work. I knew not what to do, whether to thrust a knife into Boguslav or into myself. I bellowed like a wild beast, they had driven me into such a trap. I wanted service no longer with the Radzivills, but vengeance. God gave me a sudden thought: I went with a few men to the quarters of Prince Boguslav, I brought him out beyond the town, I carried him off and wanted to bring him to the confederates so as to buy myself into their company and into the service of your Royal Grace at the price of his head.”

“I forgive you all!” cried the king, “for they led you astray; but you have repaid them! Kmita alone could have done that, no man besides. I overlook all and forgive you from my heart! But tell me quickly, for curiosity is burning me, did he escape?”

“At the first station he snatched the pistol from my belt and shot me in the mouth—here is the scar. He killed my men and escaped. He is a famous knight, it would be hard to deny that; but we shall meet again, though that were to be my last hour.”

Here Kmita began to tear at the blanket with which he was covered, but the king interrupted him quickly—

“And through revenge he invented that letter against you?”

“And through revenge he sent that letter. I recovered from the wound, in the forest, but my soul was suffering more and more. To Volodyovski, to the confederates I could not go, for the Lauda men would have cut me to pieces with their sabres. Still, knowing that the hetman was about to march against them, I forewarned them to collect in a body. And that was my first good deed, for without that Radzivill would have crushed them out, squadron after squadron; but now they have overcome him and, as I hear, are besieging him. May God aid them and send punishment to Radzivill, amen!”

“That may have happened already; and if not it will happen surely,” said the king. “What did you do further?”

“I made up my mind that, not being able to serve with the confederate troops of your Royal Grace, I would go to your person and there atone for my former offences with loyalty. But how was I to go? Who would receive Kmita, who would believe him, who would not proclaim him a traitor? Therefore I assumed the name Babinich, and passing through the whole Commonwealth, I reached Chenstohova. Whether I have rendered any services there, let Father Kordetski give witness. Day and night I was thinking only how to repair the injuries to the country, how to spill my blood for it, how to restore myself to repute and to honesty. The rest, Gracious Lord, you know already, for you have seen it. And if a fatherly kind heart incline you, if this new service has outweighed my old sins, or even equalled them, then receive me to your favor and your heart, for all have deserted me, no one comforts me save you. You alone see my sorrow and tears—I am an outcast, a traitor, an oath-breaker, and still I love this country and your Royal Grace. God sees that I wish to serve both.”

Here hot tears dropped from the eyes of the young man till he was carried away with weeping; but the king, like a loving father, seizing him by the head began to kiss his forehead and comfort him.

“Yendrek! you are as dear to me as if you were my own son. What have I said to you? That you sinned through blindness; and how many sin from calculation? From my heart I forgive

you all, for you have wiped away your faults. More than one would be glad to boast of such services as yours. I forgive you and the country forgives; and besides, we are indebted to you. Put an end to your grieving."

"God give your Royal Grace everything good for this sympathy," said the knight, with tears. "But as it is I must do penance yet in the world for that oath to Radzivill; for though I knew not to what I was swearing, still an oath is an oath."

"God will not condemn you for that," said the king. "He would have to send half this Commonwealth to hell; namely, all those who broke faith with us."

"I think myself, Gracious King, that I shall not go to hell, for Kordetski assured me of that, though he was not certain that purgatory would miss me. It is a hard thing to roast for a hundred of years. But it is well even to go there! A man can endure much when the hope of salvation is lighting him; and besides prayers can help somewhat and shorten the torment."

"Do not grieve," said Yan Kazimir, "I will prevail on the nuncio himself to say Mass for your intention. With such assistance you will not suffer great harm. Trust in the mercy of God."

Kmita smiled through his tears. "Besides," said he, "God give me to return to strength, then I will shell the soul out of more than one Swede, and through that there will be not only merit in heaven, but it will repair my earthly repute."

"Be of good cheer and do not be troubled about earthly glory. I guarantee that what belongs to you will not miss you. More peaceful times will come; I myself will declare your services, which are not small, and surely they will be greater; and at the Diet, with God's help, I will have this question raised, and you will be restored soon to honor."

"Let that, Gracious Lord, give some comfort; but before then the courts will attack me, from which even the influence of your Royal Grace cannot shield me. But never mind! I will not yield while there is breath in my nostrils, and a sabre in my hand. I am anxious concerning the maiden. Olenka is her name, Gracious Lord; I have not seen her this long time, and I have suffered, oh, I have suffered a world without her and because of her; and though at times I might wish to drive her out of my heart and wrestle with love as with a bear, it's of no use, for such a fellow as he will not let a man go."

Yan Kazimir smiled good-naturedly and kindly: "How can I help you here, my poor man?"

"Who can help me if not your grace? That maiden is an inveterate royalist, and she will never forgive me my deeds at Kyedani, unless your Royal Grace will make intercession, and give witness how I changed and returned to the service of the king and my country, not from constraint, not for profit, but through my own will and repentance."

"If that is the question I will make the intercession; and if she is such a royalist as you say, the intercession should be effectual—if the girl is only free, and if some mishap has not met her such as are frequent in wartime."

"May angels protect her!"

"She deserves it. So that the courts may not trouble you, act thus wise: Levies will be made now in haste. Since, as you say, outlawry weighs on you, I cannot give you a commission as Kmita, but I will give you one as Babinich; you will make a levy which will be for the good of the country, for you are clearly a mettlesome soldier with experience. You will take the field under Stefan Charnyetski; under him death is easiest, but the chances of glory are easiest. And if need comes you will attack the Swedes of yourself as you did Hovanski. Your conversion and good deeds commenced with the day when you called yourself Babinich; call yourself Babinich still further, and the courts will leave you at rest. When you will be as

bright as the sun, when the report of your services will be heard through the Commonwealth, let men discover who this great cavalier is. This and that kind of man will be ashamed to summon such a knight to a court. At that time some will have died, you will satisfy others. Not a few decisions will be lost, and I promise to exalt your services to the skies, and will present them to the Diet for reward, for in my eyes they deserve it.”

“Gracious Lord! how have I earned such favors?”

“Better than many who think they have a right to them. Well, well! be not grieved, dear royalist, for I trust that the royalist maiden will not be lost to you, and God grant you to assemble for me more royalists soon.”

Kmita, though sick, sprang quickly from the bed and fell his whole length at the feet of the king.

“In God’s name! what are you doing?” cried the king. “The blood will leave you! Yendrek! Hither, someone!”

In came the marshal himself, who had long been looking for the king through the castle.

“Holy Yerzy! my patron, what do I see?” cried he, when he saw the king raising Kmita with his own hands.

“This is Babinich, my most beloved soldier and most faithful servant, who saved my life yesterday,” said the king. “Help, Lord Marshal, to raise him to the couch.”

## Chapter LIV

From Lyubovlya the king advanced to Dukla, Krosno, Lantsut, and Lvoff, having at his side the marshal of the kingdom, many dignitaries and senators, with the court squadrons and escorts. And as a great river flowing through a country gathers to itself all the smaller waters, so did new legions gather to the retinue of the king. Lords and armed nobles thronged forward, and soldiers, now singly, now in groups, and crowds of armed peasants burning with special hatred against the Swedes.

The movement was becoming universal, and the military order of things had begun to lead to it. Threatening manifestoes had appeared dated from Sanch: one by Constantine Lyubomirski, the marshal of the Circle of Knights; the other by Yan Vyelopolski, the castellan of Voinik, both calling on the nobles in the province of Krakow to join the general militia; those failing to appear were threatened with the punishments of public law. The manifesto of the king completed these, and brought the most slothful to their feet.

But there was no need of threats, for an immense enthusiasm had seized all ranks. Old men and children mounted their horses. Women gave up their jewels, their dresses; some rushed off to the conflict themselves.

In the forges gypsies were pounding whole nights and days with their hammers, turning the innocent tools of the ploughman into weapons. Villages and towns were empty, for the men had marched to the field. From the heaven-touching mountains night and day crowds of wild people were pouring down. The forces of the king increased with each moment. The clergy came forth with crosses and banners to meet the king; Jewish societies came with their rabbis; his advance was like a mighty triumph. From every side flew in the best tidings, as if borne by the wind.

Not only in that part of the country which the invasion of the enemy had not included did people rush to arms. Everywhere in the remotest lands and provinces, in towns, villages, settlements, and unapproachable wildernesses, the awful war of revenge and retaliation raised its flaming head. The lower the people had fallen before, the higher they raised their heads now; they had been reborn, changed in spirit, and in their exaltation did not even hesitate to tear open their own half-healed wounds, to free their blood of poisoned juices.

They had begun already to speak, and with increasing loudness, of the powerful union of the nobles and the army, at the head of which were to be the old grand hetman Revera Pototski and the full hetman Lantskoronski, Stefan Charnyetski and Sapyeha, Michael Radzivill, a powerful magnate anxious to remove the ill-fame which Yanush had brought on the house, and Pan Kryshtof Tyshkyevich, with many other senators, provincial and military officials and nobles.

Letters were flying every day between these men and the marshal of the kingdom, who did not wish that so noted a union should be formed without him. Tidings more and more certain arrived, till at last it was announced with authority that the hetmans and with them the army had abandoned the Swedes, and formed for the defence of the king and the country the confederation of Tyshovtsi.

The king knew of this first, for he and the queen, though far apart, had labored no little through letters and messengers at the formation of it; still, not being able to take personal part in the affair, he waited for the tenor of it with impatience. But before he came to Lvoff, Pan



Slujevski with Pan Domashevski, judge of Lukoff, came to him bringing assurances of service and loyalty from the confederates and the act of union for confirmation.

The king then read that act at a general council of bishops and senators. The hearts of all were filled with delight, their spirits rose in thankfulness to God; for that memorable confederacy announced not merely that the people had come to their senses, but that they had changed; that people of whom not long before the foreign invader might say that they had no loyalty, no love of country, no conscience, no order, no endurance, nor any of those virtues through which nations and States do endure.

The testimony of all these virtues lay now before the king in the act of a confederation and its manifesto. In it was summed up the perfidy of Karl Gustav, his violation of oaths and promises, the cruelty of his generals and his soldiers, such as are not practised by even the wildest of people, desecration of churches, oppression, rapacity, robbery, shedding of innocent blood, and they declared against the Scandinavian invasion a war of life or death. A manifesto terrible as the trumpet of the archangel, summoned not only knights but all ranks and all people in the Commonwealth. Even *infames* (the infamous), *banniti* (outlaws), and *proscripti* (the proscribed) should go to this war, said the manifesto. The knights were to mount their horses and expose their own breasts, and the land was to furnish infantry—wealthy holders more, the poorer less, according to their wealth and means.

“Since in this state good and evil belong equally to all, it is proper that all should share danger. Whoso calls himself a noble, with hind or without it, and if one noble has a number of sons, they should all go to the war against the enemies of the Commonwealth. Since we all, whether of higher or lower birth, being nobles, are eligible to all the prerogatives of office, dignity, and profit in the country, so we are equal in this, that we should go in like manner with our own persons to the defence of these liberties and benefits.”

Thus did that manifesto explain the equality of nobles. The king, the bishops, and the senators, who for a long time had carried in their hearts the thought of reforming the Commonwealth, convinced themselves with joyful wonder that the people had become ripe for that reform, that they were ready to enter upon new paths, rub the rust and mould from themselves, and begin a new, glorious life.

“With this,” explained the manifesto, “we open to each deserving man of plebeian condition a place, we indicate and offer by this our confederation an opportunity to reach and acquire the honors, prerogatives, and benefits which the noble estate enjoys—”

When this introduction was read at the royal council, a deep silence followed. Those who with the king desired most earnestly that access to rights of nobility should be open to people of lower station thought that they would have to overcome, endure, and break no small opposition; that whole years would pass before it would be safe to give utterance to anything similar; meanwhile that same nobility which hitherto had been so jealous of its prerogatives, so stubborn in appearance, opened wide the gate to the gray crowds of peasants.

The primate rose, encircled as it were by the spirit of prophecy, and said—

“Since you have inserted that *punctum* (paragraph), posterity will glorify this confederation from age to age, and when anyone shall wish to consider these times as times of the fall of ancient Polish virtue, in contradicting him men will point to you.”

Father Gembitski was ill; therefore he could not speak, but with hand trembling from emotion he blessed the act and the envoys.

“I see the enemy already departing in shame from this land!” said the king.

“God grant it most quickly!” cried both envoys.

“Gentlemen, you will go with us to Lvoff,” said the king, “where we will confirm this confederation at once, and besides shall conclude another which the powers of hell itself will not overcome.”

The envoys and senators looked at one another as if asking what power was in question; the king was silent, but his countenance grew brighter and brighter; he took the act again in his hand and read it a second time, smiled, and asked—

“Were there many opponents?”

“Gracious Lord,” answered Pan Domashevski, “this confederacy arose with unanimity through the efforts of the hetmans, of Sapyeha, of Pan Charnyetski; and among nobles not a voice was raised in opposition, so angry are they all at the Swedes, and so have they flamed up with love for the country and your majesty.”

“We decided, moreover, in advance,” added Pan Slujevski, “that this was not to be a diet, but that *pluralitas* (plurality) alone was to decide; therefore no man’s veto could injure the cause; we should have cut an opponent to pieces with our sabres. All said too that it was necessary to finish with the *liberum veto*, since it is freedom for one, but slavery for many.”

“Golden words of yours!” said the primate. “Only let a reform of the Commonwealth come, and no enemy will frighten us.”

“But where is the *voevoda* of Vityebsk?” asked the king.

“He went in the night, after the signing of the manifesto, to his own troops at Tykotsin, in which he holds the *voevoda* of Vilna, the traitor, besieged. Before this time he must have taken him, living or dead.”

“Was he so sure of capturing him?”

“He was as sure as that night follows day. All, even his most faithful servants, have deserted the traitor. Only a handful of Swedes are defending themselves there, and reinforcements cannot come from any side. Pan Sapyeha said in Tyshovtsi, ‘I wanted to wait one day, for I should have finished with Radzivill before evening! but this is more important than Radzivill, for they can take him without me; one squadron is enough.’”

“Praise be to God!” said the king. “But where is Charnyetski?”

“So many of the best cavaliers have hurried to him that in one day he was at the head of an excellent squadron. He moved at once on the Swedes, and where he is at this moment we know not.”

“But the hetmans?”

“They are waiting anxiously for the commands of your Royal Grace. They are both laying plans for the coming war, and are in communication with Pan Yan Zamoyski in Zamost; meanwhile regiments are rolling to them every day with the snow.”

“Have all left the Swedes then?”

“Yes, Gracious King. There were deputies also to the hetmans from the troops of Konyetspolski, who is with the person of Karl Gustav. And they too would be glad to return to their lawful service, though Karl does not spare on them promises or flattery. They said too that though they could not *recedere* (withdraw) at once, they would do so as soon as a convenient time came, for they have grown tired of his feasts and his flattery, his eye-winking and clapping of hands. They can barely hold out.”

“Everywhere people are coming to their senses, everywhere good news,” said the king. “Praise to the Most Holy Lady! This is the happiest day of my life, and a second such will come only when the last soldier of the enemy leaves the boundary of the Commonwealth.”

At this Pan Domashevski struck his sword. “May God not grant that to happen!” said he.

“How is that?” asked the king, with astonishment.

“That the last wide-breeches should leave the boundaries of the Commonwealth on his own feet? Impossible, Gracious Lord! What have we sabres at our sides for?”

“Oh!” said the king, made glad, “that is bravery.”

But Pan Slujevski, not wishing to remain behind Domashevski, said: “As true as life we will not agree to that, and first I will place a veto on it. We shall not be content with their retreat; we will follow them!”

The primate shook his head, and smiled kindly. “Oh, the nobles are on horseback, and they will ride on and on! But not too fast, not too fast! The enemy are still within the boundaries.”

“Their time is short!” cried both confederates.

“The spirit has changed, and fortune will change,” said Father Gembitski, in a weak voice.

“Wine!” cried the king. “Let me drink to the change, with the confederates.”

They brought wine; but with the servants who brought the wine entered an old attendant of the king, who said—

“Gracious Lord, Pan Kryshyporski has come from Chenstohova, and wishes to do homage to your Royal Grace.”

“Bring him here quickly!” cried the king.

In a moment a tall, thin noble entered, with a frowning look. He bowed before the king to his feet, then rather haughtily to the dignitaries, and said—

“May the Lord Jesus Christ be praised!”

“For the ages of ages!” answered the king. “What is to be heard from the monastery?”

“Terrible frost, Gracious Lord, so that the eyelids are frozen to the eyeballs.”

“But for God’s sake! tell us of the Swedes and not of the frost!” cried the king.

“But what can I say of them, Gracious Lord, when there are none at Chenstohova?” asked he, humorously.

“Those tidings have come to us,” replied the king, “but only from the talk of people, and you have come from the cloister itself. Are you an eyewitness?”

“I am, Gracious Lord, a partner in the defence and an eyewitness of the miracles of the Most Holy Lady.”

“That was not the end of Her grace,” said the king, raising his eyes to heaven, “but let us earn them further.”

“I have seen much in my life,” continued the noble; “but such evident miracles I have not seen, touching which the prior Kordetski writes in detail in this letter.”

Yan Kazimir seized hastily the letter handed him by the noble, and began to read. At times he interrupted the reading to pray, then again turned to the letter. His face changed with joyful feelings; at last he raised his eyes to the noble.

“Father Kordetski writes me,” said he, “that you have lost a great cavalier, a certain Babinich, who blew up the Swedish siege gun with powder?”

“He sacrificed himself for all. But some say he is alive, and God knows what they have said; not being certain, we have not ceased to mourn him, for without his gallant deed it would have been hard for us to defend ourselves.”

“If that is true, then cease to mourn him. Pan Babinich is alive, and here with us. He was the first to inform us that the Swedes, not being able to do anything against the power of God, were thinking of retreat. And later he rendered such famous service that we know not ourselves how to pay him.”

“Oh, that will comfort the prior!” cried the noble, with gladness; “but if Pan Babinich is alive, it is only because he has the special favor of the Most Holy Lady. How that will comfort Father Kordetski! A father could not love a son as he loved him. And your Royal Grace will permit me to greet Pan Babinich, for there is not a second man of such daring in the Commonwealth.”

But the king began again to read, and after a while cried—

“What do I hear? After retreating they tried once again to steal on the cloister?”

“When Miller went away, he did not show himself again; but Count Veyhard appeared unexpectedly at the walls, trusting, it seems, to find the gates open. He did, but the peasants fell on him with such rage that he retreated shamefully. While the world is a world, simple peasants have never fought so in the open field against cavalry. Then Pan Pyotr Charnyetski and Pan Kulesha came up and cut him to pieces.”

The king turned to the senators.

“See how poor ploughmen stand up in defence of this country and the holy faith.”

“That they stand up, Gracious King, is true,” cried the noble. “Whole villages near Chenstohova are empty, for the peasants are in the field with their scythes. There is a fierce war everywhere; the Swedes are forced to keep together in numbers, and if the peasants catch one of them they treat him so that it would be better for him to go straight to hell. Who is not taking up arms now in the Commonwealth? It was not for the dog-brothers to attack Chenstohova. From that hour they could not remain in this country.”

“From this hour no man will suffer oppression in this land who resists now with his blood,” said the king, with solemnity; “so help me God and the holy cross!”

“Amen!” added the primate.

Now the noble struck his forehead with his hand. “The frost has disturbed my mind, Gracious Lord, for I forgot to tell one thing, that such a son, the *voevoda* of Poznan, is dead. He died, they say, suddenly.”

Here the noble was somewhat ashamed, seeing that he had called a great senator “that such a son” in presence of the king and dignitaries; therefore he added, confused—

“I did not wish to belittle an honorable station, but a traitor.”

But no one had noticed that clearly, for all looked at the king, who said—

“We have long predestined Pan Yan Leshchynski to be *voevoda* of Poznan, even during the life of Pan Opalinski. Let him fill that office more worthily. The judgment of God, I see, has begun upon those who brought this country to its decline, for at this moment, perhaps,

the *voevoda* of Vilna is giving an account of his deeds before the Supreme Judge.” Here he turned to the bishops and senators—

“But it is time for us to think of a general war, and I wish to have the opinion of all of you, gentlemen, on this question.”

## Chapter LV

At the moment when the king was saying that the *voevoda* of Vilna was standing, perhaps, before the judgment of God, he spoke as it were with a prophetic spirit, for at that hour the affair of Tykotsin was decided.

On December 25 Sapyeha was so sure of capturing Tykotsin that he went himself to Tyshovtsi, leaving the further conduct of the siege to Pan Oskyerko. He gave command to wait for the final storm till his return, which was to follow quickly; assembling, therefore, his more prominent officers, he said—

“Reports have come to me that among the officers there is a plan to bear apart on sabres the *voevoda* of Vilna immediately after capturing the castle. Now if the castle, as may happen, should surrender during my absence, I inform you, gentlemen, that I prohibit most strictly an attack on Radzivill’s life. I receive letters, it is true, from persons of whom you gentlemen do not even dream, not to let him live when I take him. But I do not choose to obey these commands; and this I do not from any compassion, for the traitor is not worthy of that, but because I have no right over his life, and I prefer to bring him before the Diet, so that posterity may have in this case an example that no greatness of family, no office can cover such offence, nor protect him from public punishment.”

In this sense spoke the *voevoda* of Vityebsk, but more minutely, for his honesty was equalled by this weakness: he esteemed himself an orator, and loved on every occasion to speak copiously, and listened with delight to his own words, adding to them the most beautiful sentences from the ancients.

“Then I must steep my right hand well in water,” answered Zagloba, “for it itches terribly. But I only say this, that if Radzivill had me in his hands, surely he would not spare my head till sunset. He knows well who in great part made his troops leave him; he knows well who embroiled him with the Swedes. But even if he does, I know not why I should be more indulgent to Radzivill than Radzivill to me.”

“Because the command is not in your hands and you must obey,” said Sapyeha, with dignity.

“That I must obey is true, but it is well at times also to obey Zagloba. I say this boldly, because if Radzivill had listened to me when I urged him to defend the country, he would not be in Tykotsin today, but in the field at the head of all the troops of Lithuania.”

“Does it seem to you that the baton is in bad hands?”

“It would not become me to say that, for I placed it in those hands. Our gracious lord, Yan Kazimir, has only to confirm my choice, nothing more.”

The *voevoda* smiled at this, for he loved Zagloba and his jokes.

“Lord brother,” said he, “you crushed Radzivill, you made me hetman, and all this is your merit. Permit me now to go in peace to Tyshovtsi, so that Sapyeha too may serve the country in something.”

Zagloba put his hands on his hips, thought awhile as if he were considering whether he ought to permit or not; at last his eye gleamed, he nodded, and said with importance—

“Go, your grace, in peace.”

“God reward you for the permission!” answered the *voevoda*, with a laugh.

Other officers seconded the *voevoda*'s laugh. He was preparing to start, for the carriage was under the window; he took farewell of all, therefore, giving each instructions what to do during his absence; then approaching Volodyovski, he said—

“If the castle surrenders you will answer to me for the life of the *voevoda*.”

“According to order! a hair will not fall from his head,” said the little knight.

“Pan Michael,” said Zagloba to him, after the departure of the *voevoda*, “I am curious to know what persons are urging our Sapyo<sup>32</sup> not to let Radzivill live when he captures him.”

“How should I know?” answered the little knight.

“If you say that what another mouth does not whisper to your ear your own will not suggest, you tell the truth! But they must be some considerable persons, since they are able to command the *voevoda*.”

“Maybe it is the king himself.”

“The king? If a dog bit the king he would forgive him that minute, and give him cheese in addition. Such is his heart.”

“I will not dispute about that; but still, do they not say that he is greatly incensed at Radzivill?”

“First, any man will succeed in being angry—for example, my anger at Radzivill; secondly, how could he be incensed at Radzeyovski when he took his sons in guardianship, because the father was not better? That is a golden heart, and I think it is the queen who is making requests against the life of Radzivill. She is a worthy lady, not a word against that, but she has a woman's mind; and know that if a woman is enraged at you, even should you hide in a crack of the floor, she will pick you out with a pin.”

Volodyovski sighed at this, and said—

“Why should any woman be angry with me, since I have never made trouble for one in my life?”

“Ah, but you would have been glad to do so. Therefore, though you serve in the cavalry, you rush on so wildly against the walls of Tykotsin with infantry, for you think not only is Radzivill there, but Panna Billevich. I know you, you rogue! Is it not true? You have not driven her out of your head yet.”

“There was a time when I had put her thoroughly out of my head; and Kmita himself, if now here, would be forced to confess that my action was knightly, not wishing to act against people in love. I chose to forget my rebuff, but I will not hide this: if Panna Billevich is now in Tykotsin, and if God permits me a second time to save her from trouble, I shall see in that the expressed will of Providence. I need take no thought of Kmita, I owe him nothing; and the hope is alive in me that if he left her of his own will she must have forgotten him, and such a thing will not happen now as happened to me the first time.”

Conversing in this way, they reached their quarters, where they found Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav, Roh Kovalski and the lord tenant of Vansosh, Jendzian.

The cause of Sapyeha's trip to Tyshovtsi was no secret, hence all the knights were pleased that so honorable a confederacy would rise in defence of the faith and the country.

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<sup>32</sup> Sapyeha.

“Another wind is blowing now in the whole Commonwealth,” said Pan Stanislaw, “and, thanks be to God, in the eyes of the Swedes.”

“It began from Chenstohova,” answered Pan Yan. “There was news yesterday that the cloister holds out yet, and repulses more and more powerful assaults. Permit not, Most Holy Mother, the enemy to put Thy dwelling-place to shame.”

Here Jendzian sighed and said: “Besides the holy images how much precious treasure would go into enemies’ hands; when a man thinks of that, food refuses to pass his throat!”

“The troops are just tearing away to the assault; we can hardly hold them back,” said Pan Michael. “Yesterday Stankyeovich’s squadron moved without orders and without ladders, for they said, ‘When we finish this traitor, we will go to relieve Chenstohova;’ and when any man mentions Chenstohova all grit their teeth and shake their sabres.”

“Why have we so many squadrons here when one half would be enough for Tykotsin?” asked Zagloba. “It is the stubbornness of Sapyeha, nothing more. He does not wish to obey me; he wants to show that without my counsel he can do something. As you see yourselves, how are so many men to invest one paltry castle? They merely hinder one another, for there is not room for them all.”

“Military experience speaks through you—it is impossible!” answered Pan Stanislaw.

“Well, I have a head on my shoulders.”

“Uncle has a head on his shoulders!” cried Pan Roh, suddenly; and straightening his mustaches, he began to look around on all present as if seeking someone to contradict him.

“But the *voevoda* too has a head,” answered Pan Yan; “and if so many squadrons are here, there is danger that Prince Boguslav might come to the relief of his cousin.”

“Then send a couple of light squadrons to ravage Electoral Prussia,” said Zagloba; “and summon volunteers there from among common people. I myself would be the first man to go to try Prussian beer.”

“Beer is not good in winter, unless warmed,” remarked Pan Michael.

“Then give us wine, or *gorailka*, or mead,” said Zagloba.

Others also exhibited a willingness to drink; therefore the lord tenant of Vansosh occupied himself with that business, and soon a number of decanters were on the table. Hearts were glad at this sight, and the knights began to drink to one another, raising their goblets each time for a new health.

“Destruction to the Swedes, may they not skin our bread very long!” said Zagloba. “Let them devour their pine cones in Sweden.”

“To the health of his Royal Grace and the Queen!” said Pan Yan.

“And to loyal men!” said Volodyovski.

“Then to our own healths!”

“To the health of Uncle!” thundered Kovalski.

“God reward! Into your hands! and empty though your lips to the bottom. Zagloba is not yet entirely old! Worthy gentlemen! may we smoke this badger out of his hole with all haste, and move then to Chenstohova.”

“To Chenstohova!” shouted Kovalski. “To the rescue of the Most Holy Lady.”



“To Chenstohova!” cried all.

“To defend the treasures of Yasna Gora from the Pagans!” added Jendzian.

“Who pretend that they believe in the Lord Jesus, wishing to hide their wickedness; but in fact they only howl at the moon like dogs, and in this is all their religion.”

“And such as these raise their hands against the splendors of Yasna Gora!”

“You have touched the spot in speaking of their faith,” said Volodyovski to Zagloba, “for I myself have heard how they howl at the moon. They said afterward that they were singing Lutheran psalms; but it is certain that the dogs sing such psalms.”

“How is that?” asked Kovalski. “Are there such people among them?”

“There is no other kind,” answered Zagloba, with deep conviction.

“And is their king no better?”

“Their king is the worst of all. He began this war of purpose to blaspheme the true faith in the churches.”

Here Kovalski, who had drunk much, rose and said: “If that is true, then as sure as you are looking at me, and as I am Kovalski, I’ll spring straight at the Swedish king in the first battle, and though he stood in the densest throng, that is nothing! My death or his! I’ll reach him with my lance—hold me a fool, gentlemen, if I do not!”

When he had said this he clinched his fist and was going to thunder on the table. He would have smashed the glasses and decanters, and broken the table; but Zagloba caught him hastily by the arm and said—

“Sit down, Roh, and give us peace. We will not think you a fool if you do not do this, but know that we will not stop thinking you a fool until you have done it. I do not understand, though, how you can raise a lance on the King of Sweden, when you are not in the hussars.”

“I will join the escort and be enrolled in the squadron of Prince Polubinski; and my father will help me.”

“Father Roh?”

“Of course.”

“Let him help you, but break not these glasses, or I’ll be the first man to break your head. Of what was I speaking, gentlemen? Ah! of Chenstohova. *Luctus* (grief) will devour me, if we do not come in time to save the holy place. *Luctus* will devour me, I tell you all! And all through that traitor Radzivill and the philosophical reasoning of Sapyeha.”

“Say nothing against the *voevoda*. He is an honorable man,” said the little knight.

“Why cover Radzivill with two halves when one is sufficient? Nearly ten thousand men are around this little booth of a castle, the best cavalry and infantry. Soon they will lick the soot out of all the chimneys in this region, for what was on the hearths they have eaten already.”

“It is not for us to argue over the reasons of superiors, but to obey!”

“It is not for you to argue, Pan Michael, but for me; half of the troops who abandoned Radzivill chose me as leader, and I would have driven Karl Gustav beyond the tenth boundary ere now, but for that luckless modesty which commanded me to place the baton in the hands of Sapyeha. Let him put an end to his delay, lest I take back what I gave.”

“You are only so daring after drink,” said Volodyovski.

“Do you say that? Well, you will see! This very day I will go among the squadrons and call out, ‘Gracious gentlemen, whoso chooses come with me to Chenstohova; it is not for you to wear out your elbows and knives against the mortar of Tykotsin! I beg you to come with me! Whoso made me commander, whoso gave me power, whoso had confidence that I would do what was useful for the country and the faith, let him stand at my side. It is a beautiful thing to punish traitors, but a hundred times more beautiful to save the Holy Lady, our Mother and the Patroness of this kingdom from oppression and the yoke of the heretic.’”

Here Zagloba, from whose forelock the steam had for some time been rising, started up from his place, sprang to a bench, and began to shout as if he were before an assembly—

“Worthy gentlemen! whoso is a Catholic, whoso a Pole, whoso has pity on the Most Holy Lady, let him follow me! To the relief of Chenstohova!”

“I go!” shouted Roh Kovalski.

Zagloba looked for a while on those present, and seeing astonishment and silent faces, he came down from the bench and said—

“I’ll teach Sapyeha reason! I am a rascal if by tomorrow I do not take half the army from Tykotsin and lead it to Chenstohova.”

“For God’s sake, restrain yourself, father!” said Pan Yan.

“I’m a rascal, I tell you!” repeated Zagloba.

They were frightened lest he should carry out his threat, for he was able to do so. In many squadrons there was murmuring at the delay in Tykotsin; men really gnashed their teeth thinking of Chenstohova. It was enough to cast a spark on that powder; and what if a man so stubborn, of such immense knightly importance as Zagloba, should cast it? To begin with, the greater part of Sapyeha’s army was composed of new recruits, and therefore of men unused to discipline, and ready for action on their own account, and they would have gone as one man without doubt after Zagloba to Chenstohova.

Therefore both Skshetuskis were frightened at this undertaking, and Volodyovski cried—

“Barely has a small army been formed by the greatest labor of the *voevoda*, barely is there a little power for the defence of the Commonwealth, and you wish with disorder to break up the squadrons, bring them to disobedience. Radzivill would pay much for such counsel, for it is water to his mill. Is it not a shame for you to speak of such a deed?”

“I’m a scoundrel if I don’t do it!” said Zagloba.

“Uncle will do it!” said Kovalski.

“Silence, you horse-skull!” roared out Pan Michael.

Pan Roh stared, shut his mouth, and straightened himself at once.

Then Volodyovski turned to Zagloba: “And I am a scoundrel if one man of my squadron goes with you; you wish to ruin the army, and I tell you that I will fall first upon your volunteers.”

“O Pagan, faithless Turk!” said Zagloba. “How is that? you would attack knights of the Most Holy Lady? Are you ready? Well, I know you! Do you think, gentlemen, that it is a question with him of an army or discipline? No! he sniffs Panna Billevich behind the walls of Tykotsin. For a private question, for your own wishes you would not hesitate to desert the best cause. You would be glad to flutter around a maiden, to stand on one foot, then the other, and display yourself. But nothing will come of this! My head for it, that better than you are running after her, even that same Kmita, for even he is no worse than you.”

Volodyovski looked at those present, taking them to witness what injustice was done him; then he frowned. They thought he would burst out in anger, but because he had been drinking, he fell all at once into tenderness.

“This is my reward,” said he. “From the years of a stripling I have served the country; I have not put the sabre out of my hand! I have neither cottage, wife, nor children; my head is as lone as a lance-point. The most honorable think of themselves, but I have no rewards save wounds in the flesh; nay, I am accused of selfishness, almost held a traitor.”

Tears began to drop on his yellow mustaches. Zagloba softened in a moment, and throwing open his arms, cried—

“Pan Michael, I have done you cruel injustice! I should be given to the hangman for having belittled such a tried friend!”

Then falling into mutual embraces, they began to kiss each other; they drank more to good understanding, and when sorrow had gone considerably out of his heart, Volodyovski said—

“But you will not ruin the army, bring disobedience, and give an evil example?”

“I will not, Pan Michael, I will not for your sake.”

“God grant us to take Tykotsin; whose affair is it what I seek behind the walls of the fortress? Why should any man jeer at me?”

Struck by that question, Zagloba began to put the ends of his mustaches in his mouth and gnaw them; at last he said: “Pan Michael, I love you as the apple of my eye, but drive that Panna Billevich out of your head.”

“Why?” asked Pan Michael, with astonishment.

“She is beautiful, *assentior* (I agree),” answered Zagloba, “but she is distinguished in person, and there is no proportion whatever between you. You might sit on her shoulder, like a canary-bird, and peck sugar out of her mouth. She might carry you like a falcon on her glove, and let you off against every enemy, for though you are little you are venomous like a hornet.”

“Well, have you begun?” asked Volodyovski.

“If I have begun, then let me finish. There is one woman as if created for you, and she is precisely that kernel—What is her name? That one whom Podbipienta was to marry?”

“Anusia Borzobogati!” cried Pan Yan. “She is indeed an old love of Michael’s.”

“A regular grain of buckwheat, but a pretty little rogue; just like a doll,” said Zagloba, smacking his lips.

Volodyovski began to sigh, and to repeat time after time what he always repeated when mention was made of Anusia: “What is happening to the poor girl? Oh, if she could only be found!”

“You would not let her out of your hands, for, God bless me, I have not seen in my life any man so given to falling in love. You ought to have been born a rooster, scratch the sweepings in a house-yard, and cry, *Co, co, co*, at the topknots.”

“Anusia! Anusia!” repeated Pan Michael. “If God would send her to me—But perhaps she is not in the world, or perhaps she is married—”

“How could she be? She was a green turnip when I saw her, and afterward, even if she ripened, she may still be in the maiden state. After such a man as Podbipienta she could not take any common fellow. Besides, in these times of war few are thinking of marriage.”

“You did not know her well,” answered Pan Michael. “She was wonderfully honest; but she had such a nature that she let no man pass without piercing his heart. The Lord God created her thus. She did not miss even men of lower station; for example, Princess Griselda’s physician, that Italian, who was desperately in love with her. Maybe she has married him and he has taken her beyond the sea.”

“Don’t talk such nonsense, Michael!” cried Zagloba, with indignation. “A doctor, a doctor—that the daughter of a noble of honorable blood should marry a man of such low estate! I have already said that that is impossible.”

“I was angry with her myself, for I thought, ‘This is without limit; soon she will be turning the heads of attorneys.’”

“I prophesy that you will see her yet,” said Zagloba.

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Pan Tokarzевич, who had served formerly with Radzivil, but after the treason of the hetman, left him, in company with others, and was now standard-bearer in Oskyerko’s regiment.

“Colonel,” said he to Volodyovski, “we are to explode a petard.”

“Is Pan Oskyerko ready?”

“He was ready at midday, and he is not willing to wait, for the night promises to be dark.”

“That is well; we will go to see. I will order the men to be ready with muskets, so that the besieged may not make a sortie. Will Pan Oskyerko himself explode the petard?”

“He will—in his own person. A crowd of volunteers go with him.”

“And I will go!” said Volodyovski.

“And we!” cried Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav.

“Oh, ’tis a pity that old eyes cannot see in the dark,” said Zagloba, “for of a surety I should not let you go alone. But what is to be done? When dusk comes I cannot draw my sword. In the daytime, in the daytime, in the sunlight, then the old man likes to move to the field. Give me the strongest of the Swedes, if at midday.”

“But I will go,” said, after some thought, the tenant of Vansosh. “When they blow up the gate the troops will spring to the storm in a crowd, and in the castle there may be great wealth in plate and in jewels.”

All went out, for it was now growing dark; in the quarters Zagloba alone remained. He listened for a while to the snow squeaking under the steps of the departing men, then began to raise one after another the decanters, and look through them at the light burning in the chimney to see if there was something yet in any of them.

The others marched toward the castle in darkness and wind, which rose from the north and blew with increasing force, howling, storming, bringing with it clouds of snow broken fine.

“A good night to explode a petard!” said Volodyovski.

“But also for a sortie,” answered Pan Yan. “We must keep a watchful eye and ready muskets.”

“God grant,” said Pan Tokarzevich, “that at Chenstohova there is a still greater storm. It is always warmer for our men behind the walls. But may the Swedes freeze there on guard, may they freeze!”

“A terrible night!” said Pan Stanislav; “do you hear, gentlemen, how it howls, as if Tartars were rushing through the air to attack?”

“Or as if devils were singing a requiem for Radzivill!” said Volodyovski.

## Chapter LVI

But a few days subsequent the great traitor in the castle was looking at the darkness coming down on the snowy shrouds and listening to the howling of the wind.

The lamp of his life was burning out slowly. At noon of that day he was still walking around and looking through the battlements, at the tents and the wooden huts of Sapyeha's troops; but two hours later he grew so ill that they had to carry him to his chambers.

From those times at Kyedani in which he had striven for a crown, he had changed beyond recognition. The hair on his head had grown white, around his eyes red rings had formed, his face was swollen and flabby, therefore it seemed still more enormous, but it was the face of a half corpse, marked with blue spots and terrible through its expression of hellish suffering.

And still, though his life could be measured by hours, he had lived too long, for not only had he outlived faith in himself and his fortunate star, faith in his own hopes and plans, but his fall was so deep that when he looked at the bottom of that precipice to which he was rolling, he would not believe himself. Everything had deceived him: events, calculations, allies. He, for whom it was not enough to be the mightiest lord in Poland, a prince of the Roman Empire, grand hetman, and *voevoda* of Vilna; he, for whom all Lithuania was less than what he desired and was lusting after, was confined in one narrow, small castle in which either Death or Captivity was waiting for him. And he watched the door every day to see which of these two terrible goddesses would enter first to take his soul or his more than half-ruined body.

Of his lands, of his estates and starostaships, it was possible not long before to mark out a vassal kingdom; now he is not master even of the walls of Tykotsin.

Barely a few months before he was treating with neighboring kings; today one Swedish captain obeys his commands with impatience and contempt, and dares to bend him to his will.

When his troops left him, when from a lord and a magnate who made the whole country tremble, he became a powerless pauper who needed rescue and assistance himself, Karl Gustav despised him. He would have raised to the skies a mighty ally, but he turned with haughtiness from the supplicant.

Like Kostka Napierski, the footpad, besieged on a time in Chorshtyn, is he, Radzivill, besieged now in Tykotsin. And who is besieging him? Sapyeha, his greatest personal enemy. When they capture him they will drag him to justice in worse fashion than a robber, as a traitor.

His kinsmen have deserted him, his friends, his connections. Armies have plundered his property, his treasures and riches are blown into mist, and that lord, that prince, who once upon a time astonished the court of France and dazzled it with his luxury, he who at feasts received thousands of nobles, who maintained tens of thousands of his own troops, whom he fed and supported, had not now wherewith to nourish his own failing strength; and terrible to relate, he, Radzivill, in the last moments of his life, almost at the hour of his death, was hungry!

In the castle there had long been a lack of provisions; from the scant remaining supplies the Swedish commander dealt stingy rations, and the prince would not beg of him.

If only the fever which was devouring his strength had deprived him of consciousness; but it had not. His breast rose with increasing heaviness, his breath turned into a rattle, his swollen feet and hands were freezing, but his mind, omitting moments of delirium, omitting the terrible visions and nightmares which passed before his eyes, remained for the greater part of the time clear. And that prince saw his whole fall, all his want, all his misery and humiliation; that former warrior-victor saw all his defeat, and his sufferings were so immense that they could be equalled only by his sins.

Besides, as the Furies tormented Orestes, so was he tormented by reproaches of conscience, and in no part of the world was there a sanctuary to which he could flee from them. They tormented him in the day, they tormented him at night, in the field, under the roof; pride could not withstand them nor repulse them. The deeper his fall, the more fiercely they lashed him. And there were moments in which he tore his own breast. When enemies came against his country from every side, when foreign nations grieved over its hapless condition, its sufferings and bloodshed, he, the grand hetman, instead of moving to the field, instead of sacrificing the last drop of his blood, instead of astonishing the world like Leonidas or Themistocles, instead of pawning his last coat like Sapyeha, made a treaty with enemies against the mother, raised a sacrilegious hand against his own king, and imbrued it in blood near and dear to him. He had done all this, and now he is at the limit not only of infamy, but of life, close to his reckoning, there beyond. What is awaiting him?

The hair rose on his head when he thought of that. For he had raised his hand against his country, he had appeared to himself great in relation to that country, and now all had changed. Now he had become small, and the Commonwealth, rising from dust and blood, appeared to him something great and continually greater, invested with a mysterious terror, full of a sacred majesty, awful. And she grew, increased continually in his eyes, and became more and more gigantic. In presence of her he felt himself dust as prince and as hetman, as Radzivill. He could not understand what that was. Some unknown waves were rising around him, flowing toward him, with roaring, with thunder, flowing ever nearer, rising more terribly, and he understood that he must be drowned in that immensity, hundreds such as he would be drowned. But why had he not seen this awfulness and this mysterious power at first; why had he, mad man, rushed against it? When these ideas roared in his head, fear seized him in presence of that mother, in presence of that Commonwealth; for he did not recognize her features, which formerly were so kind and so mild.

The spirit was breaking within him, and terror dwelt in his breast. At moments he thought that another country altogether, another people, were around him. Through the besieged walls came news of everything that men were doing in the invaded Commonwealth, and marvellous and astonishing things were they doing. A war of life or death against the Swedes and traitors had begun, all the more terrible in that it had not been foreseen by any man. The Commonwealth had begun to punish. There was something in this of the anger of God for the insult to majesty.

When through the walls of Tykotsin came news of the siege of Chenstohova, Radzivill, a Calvinist, was frightened; and fright did not leave his soul from that day, for then he perceived for the first time those mysterious waves which, after they had risen, were to swallow the Swedes and him; then the invasion of the Swedes seemed not an invasion, but a sacrilege, and the punishment of it inevitable. Then for the first time the veil dropped from his eyes, and he saw the changed face of the Commonwealth, no longer a mother, but a punishing queen.

All who had remained true to her and served with heart and soul, rose and grew greater and greater; whoso sinned against her went down. "And therefore it is not free to anyone to

think,” said the prince to himself, “of his own elevation, or that of his family, but he must sacrifice life, strength, and love to her.”

But for him it was now too late; he had nothing to sacrifice; he had no future before him save that beyond the grave, at sight of which he shuddered.

From the time of besieging Chenstohova, when one terrible cry was torn from the breast of an immense country, when as if by a miracle there was found in it a certain wonderful, hitherto unknown and not understood power, when you would have said that a mysterious hand from beyond this world rose in its defence, a new doubt gnawed into the soul of the prince, and he could not free himself from the terrible thought that God stood with that cause and that faith.

And when such thoughts roared in his head he doubted his own faith, and then his despair passed even the measure of his sins. Temporal fall, spiritual fall, darkness, nothingness—behold to what he had come, what he had gained by serving self.

And still at the beginning of the expedition from Kyedani against Podlyasye he was full of hope. It is true that Sapyeha, a leader inferior to him beyond comparison, had defeated him in the field, and the rest of the squadrons left him, but he strengthened himself with the thought that any day Boguslav might come with assistance. That young eagle of the Radzivills would fly to him at the head of Prussian Lutheran legions, who would not pass over to the papists like the Lithuanian squadrons; and at once he would bend Sapyeha in two, scatter his forces, scatter the confederates, and putting themselves on the corpse of Lithuania, like two lions on the carcass of a deer, with roaring alone would terrify all who might wish to tear it away from them.

But time passed; the forces of Prince Yanush melted; even the foreign regiments went over to the terrible Sapyeha; days passed, weeks, months, but Boguslav came not.

At last the siege of Tykotsin began.

The Swedes, a handful of whom remained with Yanush, defended themselves heroically; for, stained already with terrible cruelty, they saw that even surrender would not guard them from the vengeful hands of the Lithuanians. The prince in the beginning of the siege had still the hope that at the last moment, perhaps, the King of Sweden himself would move to his aid, and perhaps Pan Konyetspolski, who at the head of six thousand cavalry was with Karl Gustav. But his hope was vain. No one gave him a thought, no one came with assistance.

“Oh, Boguslav! Boguslav!” repeated the prince, walking through the chambers of Tykotsin; “if you will not save a cousin, save at least a Radzivill!”

At last in his final despair Prince Yanush resolved on taking a step at which his pride revolted fearfully; that was to implore Prince Michael Radzivill of Nyesvyej for rescue. This letter, however, was intercepted on the road by Sapyeha’s men; but the *voevoda* of Vityebsk sent to Yanush in answer a letter which he had himself received from Prince Michael a week before.

Prince Yanush found in it the following passage:—

*“If news has come to you, gracious lord, that I intend to go with succor to my relative, the voevoda of Vilna, believe it not, for I hold only with those who endure in loyalty to the country and our king, and who desire to restore the former liberties of this most illustrious Commonwealth. This course will not, as I think, bring me to protect traitors from just and proper punishment. Boguslav too will not come, for, as I hear, the elector prefers to think of himself, and does not wish to divide his forces; and quod attinet (as to) Konyetspolski, since he will pay court to Prince Yanush’s widow, should she become one, it is to his profit that the prince voevoda be destroyed with all speed.”*



This letter, addressed to Sapyeha, stripped the unfortunate Yanush of the remnant of his hope, and nothing was left him but to wait for the accomplishment of his destiny.

The siege was hastening to its close.

News of the departure of Sapyeha passed through the wall almost that moment; but the hope that in consequence of his departure hostile steps would be abandoned were of short duration, for in the infantry regiments an unusual movement was observable. Still some days passed quietly enough, since the plan of blowing up the gate with a petard resulted in nothing; but December 31 came, on which only the approaching night might incommode the besiegers, for evidently they were preparing something against the castle, at least a new attack of cannon on the weakened walls.

The day was drawing to a close. The prince was lying in the so-called "Corner" hall situated in the western part of the castle. In an enormous fireplace were burning whole logs of pine wood which cast a lively light on the white and rather empty walls. The prince was lying on his back on a Turkish sofa, pushed out purposely into the middle of the room, so that the warmth of the blaze might reach it. Nearer to the fireplace, a little in the shade, slept a page, on a carpet; near the prince were sitting, slumbering in armchairs, Pani Yakimovich, formerly chief lady-in-waiting at Kyedani, another page, a physician, also the prince's astrologer, and Kharlamp.

Kharlamp had not left the prince, though he was almost the only one of his former officers who had remained. That was a bitter service, for the heart and soul of the officer were outside the walls of Tykotsin, in the camp of Sapyeha; still he remained faithful at the side of his old leader. From hunger and watching the poor fellow had grown as thin as a skeleton. Of his face there remained but the nose, which now seemed still greater, and mustaches like bushes. He was clothed in complete armor, breastplate, shoulder-pieces, and morion, with a wire cape which came down to his shoulders. His cuirass was battered, for he had just returned from the walls, to which he had gone to make observations a little while before, and on which he sought death every day. He was slumbering at the moment from weariness, though there was a terrible rattling in the prince's breast as if he had begun to die, and though the wind howled and whistled outside.

Suddenly short quivering began to shake the gigantic body of Radzivill, and the rattling ceased. Those who were around him woke at once and looked quickly, first at him and then at one another. But he said—

"It is as if something had gone out of my breast; I feel easier."

He turned his head a little, looked carefully toward the door, at last he said, "Kharlamp!"

"At the service of your highness!"

"What does Stahovich want here?"

The legs began to tremble under poor Kharlamp, for unterrified as he was in battle he was superstitious in the same degree; therefore he looked around quickly, and said in a stifled voice—

"Stahovich is not here; your highness gave orders to shoot him at Kyedani."

The prince closed his eyes and answered not a word.

For a time there was nothing to be heard save the doleful and continuous howling of the wind.

“The weeping of people is heard in that wind,” said the prince, again opening his eyes in perfect consciousness. “But I did not bring in the Swedes; it was Radzeyovski.”

When no one gave answer, he said after a short time—

“He is most to blame, he is most to blame, he is most to blame.”

And a species of consolation entered his breast, as if the remembrance rejoiced him that there was someone more guilty than he.

Soon, however, more grievous thoughts must have come to his head, for his face grew dark, and he repeated a number of times—

“Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!”

And again choking attacked him; a rattling began in his throat more terrible than before. Meanwhile from without came the sound of musketry, at first infrequent, then more frequent; but amidst the drifting of the snow and the howling of the whirlwind they did not sound too loudly, and it might have been thought that that was some continual knocking at the gate.

“They are fighting!” said the prince’s physician.

“As usual!” answered Kharlamp. “People are freezing in the snowdrifts, and they wish to fight to grow warm.”

“This is the sixth day of the whirlwind and the snow,” answered the doctor. “Great changes will come in the kingdom, for this is an unheard of thing.”

“God grant it!” said Kharlamp. “It cannot be worse.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the prince, to whom a new relief had come.

“Kharlamp!”

“At the service of your highness!”

“Does it seem to me so from weakness, or did Oskyerko try to blow up the gate with a petard two days since?”

“He tried, your highness; but the Swedes seized the petards and wounded him slightly, and Sapyeha’s men were repulsed.”

“If wounded slightly, then he will try again. But what day is it?”

“The last day of December, your highness.”

“God be merciful to my soul! I shall not live to the New Year. Long ago it was foretold me that every fifth year death is near me.”

“God is kind, your highness.”

“God is with Sapyeha,” said the prince, gloomily.

All at once he looked around and said: “Cold comes to me from it. I do not see it, but I feel that it is here.”

“What is that, your highness?”

“Death!”

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

A moment of silence followed; nothing was heard but the whispered “Our Father,” repeated by Pani Yakimovich.

“Tell me,” said the prince, with a broken voice, “do you believe that outside of your faith no one can be saved?”

“Even in the moment of death it is possible to renounce errors,” said Kharlamp.

The sound of shots had become at that moment more frequent. The thunder of cannon began to shake the windowpanes, which answered each report with a plaintive sound.

The prince listened a certain time calmly, then rose slightly on the pillow; his eyes began slowly to widen, his pupils to glitter. He sat up; for a moment he held his head with his hand, then cried suddenly, as if in bewilderment—

“Boguslav! Boguslav! Boguslav!”

Kharlamp ran out of the room like a madman.

The whole castle trembled and quivered from the thunder of cannon.

All at once there was heard the cry of several thousand voices; then something was torn with a ghastly smashing of walls, so that brands and coals from the chimney were scattered on the floor. At the same time Kharlamp rushed into the chamber.

“Sapyeha’s men have blown up the gate!” cried he. “The Swedes have fled to the tower! The enemy is here! Your highness—”

Further words died on his lips. Radzivill was sitting on the sofa with eyes starting out; with open lips he was gulping the air, his teeth bared like those of a dog when he snarls; he tore with his hands the sofa on which he was sitting, and gazing with terror into the depth of the chamber, cried, or rather gave out hoarse rattles between one breath and another—

“It was Radzeyovski—Not I—Save me!—What do you want? Take the crown!—It was Radzeyovski—Save me, people! Jesus! Jesus! Mary!”

These were the last words of Radzivill.

Then a terrible coughing seized him; his eyes came out in still more ghastly fashion from their sockets; he stretched himself out, fell on his back, and remained motionless.

“He is dead!” said the doctor.

“He cried Mary, though a Calvinist, you have heard!” said Pani Yakimovich.

“Throw wood on the fire!” said Kharlamp to the terrified pages.

He drew near to the corpse, closed the eyelids; then he took from his own armor a gilded image of the Mother of God which he wore on a chain, and placing the hands of Radzivill together on his breast, he put the image between the dead fingers.

The light of the fire was reflected from the golden ground of the image, and that reflection fell upon the face of the *voevoda* and made it cheerful so that never had it seemed so calm.

Kharlamp sat at the side of the body, and resting his elbows on his knees, hid his face in his hands.

The silence was broken only by the sound of shots.

All at once something terrible took place. First of all was a flash of awful brightness; the whole world seemed turned into fire, and at the same time there was given forth such a sound as if the earth had fallen from under the castle. The walls tottered; the ceilings cracked with a terrible noise; all the windows tumbled in on the floor, and the panes were broken into

hundreds of fragments. Through the empty openings of the windows that moment clouds of snow drifted in, and the whirlwind began to howl gloomily in the corners of the chamber.

All the people present fell to the floor on their faces, speechless from terror.

Kharlamp rose first, and looked directly on the corpse of the *voevoda*; the corpse was lying in calmness, but the gilded image had slipped a little in the hands.

Kharlamp recovered his breath. At first he felt certain that that was an army of Satans who had broken into the chamber for the body of the prince.

“The word has become flesh!” said he. “The Swedes must have blown up the tower and themselves.”

But from without there came no sound. Evidently the troops of Sapyeha were standing in dumb wonder, or perhaps in fear that the whole castle was mined, and that there would be explosion after explosion.

“Put wood on the fire!” said Kharlamp to the pages.

Again the room was gleaming with a bright, quivering light. Round about a deathlike stillness continued; but the fire hissed, the whirlwind howled, and the snow rolled each moment more densely through the window openings.

At last confused voices were heard, then the clatter of spurs and the tramp of many feet; the door of the chamber was opened wide, and soldiers rushed in.

It was bright from the naked sabres, and more and more figures of knights in helmets, caps, and *kolpaks* crowded through the door. Many were bearing lanterns in their hands, and they held them to the light, advancing carefully, though it was light in the room from the fire as well.

At last there sprang forth from the crowd a little knight all in enamelled armor, and cried—

“Where is the *voevoda* of Vilna?”

“Here!” said Kharlamp, pointing to the body lying on the sofa.

Volodyovski looked at him, and said—

“He is not living!”

“He is not living, he is not living!” went from mouth to mouth.

“The traitor, the betrayer is not living!”

“So it is,” said Kharlamp, gloomily. “But if you dishonor his body and bear it apart with sabres, you will do ill, for before his end he called on the Most Holy Lady, and he holds Her image in his hand.”

These words made a deep impression. The shouts were hushed. Then the soldiers began to approach, to go around the sofa, and look at the dead man. Those who had lanterns turned the light of them on his eyes; and he lay there, gigantic, gloomy, on his face the majesty of a hetman and the cold dignity of death.

The soldiers came one after another, and among them the officers; therefore Stankyevich approached, the two Skshetuskis, Horotkyevich, Yakub Kmita, Oskyerko, and Pan Zagloba.

“It is true!” said Zagloba, in a low voice, as if he feared to rouse the prince. “He holds in his hands the Most Holy Lady, and the shining from Her falls on his face.”

When he said this he removed his cap. That instant all the others bared their heads. A moment of silence filled with reverence followed, which was broken at last by Volodyovski.

“Ah!” said he, “he is before the judgment of God, and people have nothing to do with him.” Here he turned to Kharlamp: “But you, unfortunate, why did you for his sake leave your country and king?”

“Give him this way!” called a number of voices at once.

Then Kharlamp rose, and taking off his sabre threw it with a clatter on the floor, and said—

“Here I am, cut me to pieces! I did not leave him with you, when he was powerful as a king, and afterward it was not proper to leave him when he was in misery and no one stayed with him. I have not grown fat in his service; for three days I have had nothing in my mouth, and the legs are bending under me. But here I am, cut me to pieces! for I confess furthermore [here Kharlamp’s voice trembled] that I loved him.”

When he had said this he tottered and would have fallen; but Zagloba opened his arms to him, caught him, supported him, and cried—

“By the living God! Give the man food and drink!”

That touched all to the heart; therefore they took Kharlamp by the arms and led him out of the chamber at once. Then the soldiers began to leave it one after another, making the sign of the cross with devotion.

On the road to their quarters Zagloba was meditating over something. He stopped, coughed, then pulled Volodyovski by the skirt. “Pan Michael,” said he.

“Well, what?”

“My anger against Radzivill is passed; a dead man is a dead man! I forgive him from my heart for having made an attempt on my life.”

“He is before the tribunal of heaven,” said Volodyovski.

“That’s it, that’s it! H’m, if it would help him I would even give for a Mass, since it seems to me that he has an awfully small chance up there.”

“God is merciful!”

“As to being merciful, he is merciful; still the Lord cannot look without abhorrence on heretics. And Radzivill was not only a heretic, but a traitor. There is where the trouble is!”

Here Zagloba shook his head and began to look upward.

“I am afraid,” said he, after a while, “that some of those Swedes who blew themselves up will fall on my head; that they will not be received there in heaven is certain.”

“They were good men,” said Pan Michael, with recognition; “they preferred death to surrender, there are few such soldiers in the world.”

All at once Volodyovski halted: “Panna Billevich was not in the castle,” said he.

“But how do you know?”

“I asked those pages. Boguslav took her to Taurogi.”

“*Ei!*” said Zagloba, “that was as if to confide a kid to a wolf. But it is not your affair; your predestined is that kernel!”

## Chapter LVII

Lvoff from the moment of the king's arrival was turned into a real capital of the Commonwealth. Together with the king came the greater part of the bishops from the whole country and all those lay senators who had not served the enemy. The calls already issued summoned also to arms the nobles of Rus and of the remoter adjoining provinces, they came in numbers and armed with the greater ease because the Swedes had not been in those regions. Eyes were opened and hearts rose at sight of this general militia, for it reminded one in nothing of that of Great Poland, which at Uistsie offered such weak opposition to the enemy. On the contrary, in this case marched a warlike and terrible nobility, reared from childhood on horseback and in the field, amidst continual attacks of wild Tartars, accustomed to bloodshed and burning, better masters of the sabre than of Latin. These nobles were in fresh training yet from Hmelnitski's uprising, which lasted seven years without interval, so that there was not a man among them who was not as many times in fire as he had years of life. New swarms of these were arriving continually in Lvoff: some had marched from the Byeshchadi full of precipices, others from the Pruth, the Dniester, and the Seret; some lived on the steep banks of the Dniester, some on the wide-spreading Bug; some on the Sinyuha had not been destroyed from the face of the earth by peasant incursions; some had been left on the Tartar boundaries;—all these hurried at the call of the king to the city of the Lion,<sup>33</sup> some to march thence against an enemy as yet unknown. The nobles came in from Volynia and from more distant provinces, such hatred was kindled in all souls by the terrible tidings that the enemy had raised sacrilegious hands on the Patroness of the Commonwealth in Chenstohova.

And the Cossacks dared not raise obstacles, for the hearts were moved in the most hardened, and besides, they were forced by the Tartars to beat with the forehead to the king, and to renew for the hundredth time their oath of loyalty. A Tartar embassy, dangerous to the enemies of the king, was in Lvoff under the leadership of Suba Gazi Bey, offering, in the name of the Khan, a horde a hundred thousand strong to assist the Commonwealth; of these forty thousand from near Kamenyets could take the field at once.

Besides the Tartar embassy a legation had come from Transylvania to carry through negotiations begun with Rakotsy concerning succession to the throne. The ambassador of the emperor was present; so was the papal nuncio, who had come with the king. Every day deputations arrived from the armies of the kingdom and Lithuania, from provinces and lands, with declarations of loyalty, and a wish to defend to the death the invaded country.

The fortunes of the king increased; the Commonwealth, crushed altogether so recently, was rising before the eyes of all to the wonder of ages and nations. The souls of men were inflamed with thirst for war and retaliation, and at the same time they grew strong. And as in springtime a warm generous rain melts the snow, so mighty hope melted doubt. Not only did they wish for victory, but they believed in it. New and favorable tidings came in continually; though often untrue, they passed from mouth to mouth. Time after time men told now of castles recovered, now of battles in which unknown regiments under leaders hitherto unknown had crushed the Swedes, now of terrible clouds of peasants sweeping along, like locusts, against the enemy. The name of Stefan Charnyetski was more and more frequent on every lip.

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<sup>33</sup> Lvoff.

The details in these tidings were often untrue, but taken together they reflected as a mirror what was being done in the whole country.

But in Lvoff reigned as it were a continual holiday. When the king came the city greeted him solemnly, the clergy of the three rites, the councillors of the city, the merchants, the guilds. On the squares and streets, wherever an eye was cast, banners, white, sapphire, purple, and gilded, were waving. The Lvoff people raised proudly their golden lion on a blue field, recalling with self-praise the scarcely passed Cossack and Tartar attacks.

At every appearance of the king a shout was raised among the crowds, and crowds were never lacking.

The population doubled in recent days. Besides senators and bishops, besides nobles, flowed in throngs of peasants also, for the news had spread that the king intended to improve their condition. Therefore rustic coats and horse-blankets were mingled with the yellow coats of the townspeople. The mercantile Armenians with their swarthy faces put up booths for merchandise and arms which the assembled nobles bought willingly.

There were many Tartars also with the embassy; there were Hungarians, Wallachians, and Austrians—a multitude of people, a multitude of troops, a multitude of different kinds of faces, many strange garments in colors brilliant and varied, troops of court servants, hence gigantic grooms, haiduks, janissaries, red Cossacks, messengers in foreign costume.

The streets were filled from morning till evening with the noise of men, now passing squadrons of a quota, now divisions of mounted nobles, the cries of command, the shining of armor and naked sabres, the neighing of horses, the rumble of cannon, and songs full of threatening and curses for the Swedes.

The bells in the churches, Polish, Russian, and Armenian, were tolling continually, announcing to all that the king was in the city, and that Lvoff, to its eternal praise, was the first of the capitals that had received the king, the exile.

They beat to him with the forehead; wherever he appeared caps flew upward, and shouts of “Vivat!” shook the air. They beat with the forehead also before the carriages of bishops, who through the windows blessed the assembled throngs; they bowed to and applauded senators, honoring in them loyalty to the king and country.

So the whole city was seething. At night they even burned on the square piles of wood, at which in spite of cold and frost those men were encamped who could not find lodgings because of the excessive multitude.

The king spent whole days in consultation with senators. Audience was given to foreign embassies, to deputations from provinces and troops; methods of filling the empty treasury with money were considered; all means were used to rouse war wherever it had not flamed up already.

Couriers were flying to the most important towns in every part of the Commonwealth, to distant Prussia, to sacred Jmud, to Tyshovtsi, to the hetmans, to Sapyeha, who after the storming of Tykotsin took his army to the south with forced marches; couriers went also to Konyetspolski, who was still with the Swedes. Where it was needful money was sent; the slothful were roused with manifestoes.

The king recognized, consecrated, and confirmed the confederation of Tyshovtsi and joined it himself; taking the direction of all affairs into his untiring hands, he labored from morning till night, esteeming the Commonwealth more than his own rest, his own health.

But this was not the limit of his efforts; for he had determined to conclude in his own name and the name of the estates a league such that no earthly power, could overcome—a league which in future might serve to reform the Commonwealth.

The moment for this had come at last.

The secret must have escaped from the senators to the nobles, and from the nobles to the peasants, for since morning it had been said that at the hour of services something important would happen—that the king would make some solemn vow, concerning, as was said, the condition of the peasants and a confederation with heaven. There were persons, however, who asserted that these were incredible things, without an example in history; but curiosity was excited, and everywhere something was looked for.

The day was frosty, clear; tiny flakes of snow were flying through the air, glittering like sparks. The land infantry of Lvoff and the district of Jidache, in blue half shubas, hemmed with gold, and half a Hungarian regiment were drawn out in a long line before the cathedral, holding their muskets at their feet in front of them; officers passed up and down with staffs in their hands. Between these two lines a many-colored throng flowed into the church, like a river. In front nobles and knights, after them the senate of the city, with gilded chains on their necks, and tapers in their hands. They were led by the mayor, a physician noted throughout the whole province; he was dressed in a black velvet toga, and wore a calotte. After the senate went merchants, and among them many Armenians with green and gold skullcaps on their heads, and wearing roomy Eastern gowns. These, though belonging to a special rite, went with the others to represent the estate. After the merchants came, with their banners, the guilds, such as butchers, bakers, tailors, goldsmiths, confectioners, embroiderers, linen-drappers, tanners, mead-boilers, and a number of others yet; from each company representatives went with their own banner, which was borne by a man the most distinguished of all for beauty. Then came various brotherhoods and the common throng in coats, in sheepskins, in horse-blankets, in homespun; dwellers in the suburbs, peasants. Admittance was barred to no one till the church was packed closely with people of all ranks and both sexes.

At last carriages began to arrive; but they avoided the main door, for the king, the bishops, and the dignitaries had a special entrance nearer the high altar. Every moment the troops presented arms; at last the soldiers dropped their muskets to their feet, and blew on their chilled hands, throwing out clouds of steam from their breasts.

The king came with the nuncio, Vidon; then arrived the archbishop of Gnyezno and the bishop, Prince Chartoryski; next appeared the bishop of Krakow, the archbishop of Lvoff, the grand chancellor of the kingdom, many *voevodas* and castellans. All these vanished through the side door; and their carriages, retinues, equeuries, and attendants of every description formed as it were a new army, standing at the side of the cathedral.

Mass was celebrated by the apostolic nuncio, Vidon, arrayed in purple, in a white chasuble embroidered with pearls and gold.

For the king a kneeling-stool was placed between the great altar and the pews; before the kneeling-stool was a Turkish sofa. The church armchairs were occupied by bishops and lay senators.

Many colored rays, passing through the windows, joined with the gleam of candles, with which the altar seemed burning, and fell upon the faces of senators in the church chairs, on the white beards, on the imposing forms, on golden chains, on violet velvet. You would have said, "A Roman senate!" such was the majesty and dignity of these old men. Here and there among gray heads was to be seen the face of a warrior senator; here and there gleamed the



blond head of a youthful lord. All eyes were fixed on the altar, all were praying; the flames of the candles were glittering and quivering; the smoke from the censers was playing and curling in the bright air. The body of the church was packed with heads, and over the heads a rainbow of banners was playing, like a rainbow of flowers.

The majesty of the king, Yan Kazimir, prostrated itself, according to his custom, in the form of a cross, and humiliated itself before the majesty of God. At last the nuncio brought from the tabernacle a chalice, and bearing it before him approached the kneeling-stool, then the king raised himself with a brighter face, the voice of the nuncio was heard: "*Ecce Agnus Dei* (Behold the Lamb of God)," and the king received communion.

For a time he remained kneeling, with inclined head; at last he rose, turned his eyes toward heaven, and stretched out both hands.

There was sudden silence in the church, so that breathing was not audible. All divined that the moment had come, and that the king would make some vow; all listened with collected spirit. But he stood with outstretched arms; at last, with a voice filled with emotion, but as far reaching as a bell, he began to speak—

"O Great Mother of Divine humanity, and Virgin! I, Yan Kazimir, king by the favor of Thy Son, King of kings and my Lord, and by Thy favor approaching Thy Most Holy feet, form this, the following pact. I today choose Thee my Patroness and Queen of my dominions. I commit to Thy special guardianship and protection myself, my Polish kingdom, the Grand Principality of Lithuania, Russia, Prussia, Mazovia, Jmud, Livland, and Chernigov, the armies of both nations and all common people. I beg obediently Thy aid and favor against enemies in the present affliction of my kingdom."

Here the king fell on his knees and was silent for a time. In the church a deathlike stillness continued unbroken; then rising he spoke on—

"And constrained by Thy great benefactions, I, with the Polish people, am drawn to a new and ardent bond of service to Thee. I promise Thee in my own name and in the names of my ministers, senators, nobles, and people, to extend honor and glory to Thy Son, Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, through all regions of the Polish kingdom; to make a promise that when, with the mercy of Thy Son, I obtain victory over the Swedes, I will endeavor that an anniversary be celebrated solemnly in my kingdom to the end of the world, in memory of the favor of God, and of Thee, O Most Holy Virgin."

Here he ceased again and knelt. In the church there was a murmur; but the voice of the king stopped it quickly, and though he trembled this time with penitence and emotion, he continued still more distinctly—

"And since, with great sorrow of heart, I confess that I endure from God just punishment, which is afflicting us all in my kingdom with various plagues for seven years, because poor, simple tillers of the soil groan in suffering, oppressed by the soldiery, I bind myself on the conclusion of peace to use earnest efforts, together with the estates of the Commonwealth, to free suffering peasants from every cruelty, in which, O Mother of Mercy, Queen, and my Lady, since Thou hast inspired me to make this vow, obtain for me, by grace of Thy mercy, aid from Thy Son to accomplish what I here promise."

These words of the king were heard by the clergy, the senators, the nobles, and the common people. A great wail was raised in the church, which came first from hearts of the peasants; it burst forth from them, and then became universal. All raised their hands to heaven; weeping voices repeated, "Amen, amen, amen!" in testimony that they had joined their feelings and vows with the promise of the king. Enthusiasm seized their hearts, and at that moment made

them brothers in love for the Commonwealth and its Patroness. Indescribable joy shone on their faces like a clear flame, and in all that church there was no one who doubted that God would overwhelm the Swedes.

After that service the king, amid the thunder of musketry and cannon and mighty shouts of “Victory! victory! may he live!” went to the castle, and there he confirmed the heavenly confederation together with that of Tyshovtsi.

## Chapter LVIII

After these solemnities various tidings flew into Lvoff like winged birds. There were older and fresh tidings more or less favorable, but all increased courage. First the confederation of Tyshovtsi grew like a conflagration; everyone living joined it, nobles as well as peasants. Towns furnished wagons, firearms, and infantry; the Jews money. No one dared to oppose the manifestoes; the most indolent mounted. There came also a terrible manifesto from Wittemberg, turned against the confederation. Fire and sword were to punish those who joined it. This manifesto produced the same effect as if a man tried to quench flames with powder. The manifesto, with the knowledge assuredly of the king, and to rouse hatred more thoroughly against the Swedes, was scattered through Lvoff in great numbers, and it is not becoming to state what common people did with the copies; it suffices to say that the wind bore them terribly dishonored through the streets of the city, and the students showed, to the delight of crowds, “Wittemberg’s Confusion,” singing at the same time the song beginning with these words—

“O Wittemberg, poor man,  
Race across over the sea,  
Like a hare!  
But when thy buttons are lost  
Thou wilt drop down thy trousers,  
While racing away!”

And Wittemberg, as if making the words of the song true, gave up his command in Krakow to the valiant Wirtz, and betook himself hurriedly to Elblang, where the King of Sweden was sojourning with the queen, spending his time at feasts, and rejoicing in his heart that he had become the lord of such an illustrious kingdom.

Accounts came also to Lvoff of the fall of Tykotsin, and minds were gladdened. It was strange that men had begun to speak of that event before a courier had come; only they did not say whether Radzivill had died or was in captivity. It was asserted, however, that Sapyeha, at the head of a considerable force, had gone from Podlyasye to Lyubelsk to join the hetmans; that on the road he was beating the Swedes and growing in power every day.

At last envoys came from Sapyeha himself in a considerable number, for the *voevoda* had sent neither less nor more than one whole squadron to be at the disposal of the king, desiring in this way to show honor to the sovereign, to secure his person from every possible accident, and perhaps specially to increase his significance.

The squadron was brought by Volodyovski, well known to the king; so Yan Kazimir gave command that he should stand at once in his presence, and taking Pan Michael’s head between his hands, he said—

“I greet thee, famous soldier! Much water has flowed down since we lost sight of thee. I think that we saw thee last at Berestechko, all covered with blood.”

Pan Michael bent to the knees of the king, and said—

“It was later, in Warsaw, Gracious Lord; also in the castle with the present castellan of Kiev, Pan Charnyetski.”

“But are you serving all the time? Had you no desire to enjoy leisure at home?”

“No; for the Commonwealth was in need, and besides, in these public commotions my property has been lost. I have no place in which to put my head, Gracious Lord; but I am not sorry for myself, thinking that the first duty of a soldier is to the king and the country.”

“Ah, would there were more such! The enemy would not be so rich. God grant the time for rewards will come; but now tell me what you have done with the *voevoda* of Vilna?”

“The *voevoda* of Vilna is before the judgment of God. The soul went out of him just as we were going to the final storm.”

“How was that?”

“Here is Pan Sapyeha’s report,” said Volodyovski.

The king took Sapyeha’s letter and began to read; he had barely begun when he stopped.

“Pan Sapyeha is mistaken,” said he, “when he writes that the grand baton of Lithuania is unoccupied; it is not, for I give it to him.”

“There is no one more worthy,” said Pan Michael, “and to your Royal Grace the whole army will be grateful till death for this deed.”

The king smiled at the simple soldierly confidence, and read on. After a while he sighed, and said—

“Radzivill might have been the first pearl in this glorious kingdom, if pride and the errors which he committed had not withered his soul. It is accomplished! Inscrutable are the decisions of God! Radzivill and Opalinski—almost in the same hour! Judge them, O Lord, not according to their sins, but according to Thy mercy.”

Silence followed; then the king again began to read.

“We are thankful to the *voevoda*,” said he, when he had finished, “for sending a whole squadron and under the greatest cavalier, as he writes. But I am safe here; and cavaliers, especially such as you, are more needed in the field. Rest a little, and then I will send you to assist Charnyetski, for on him evidently the greatest pressure will be turned.”

“We have rested enough already at Tykotsin, Gracious Lord,” said the little knight, with enthusiasm; “if our horses were fed a little, we might move today, for with Charnyetski there will be unspeakable delights. It is a great happiness to look on the face of our gracious lord, but we are anxious to see the Swedes.”

The king grew radiant. A fatherly kindness appeared on his face, and he said, looking with pleasure on the sulphurous figure of the little knight—

“You were the first little soldier to throw the baton of a colonel at the feet of the late prince *voevoda*.”

“Not the first, your Royal Grace; but it was the first, and God grant the last, time for me to act against military discipline.” Pan Michael stopped, and after a while added, “It was impossible to do otherwise.”

“Certainly,” said the king. “That was a grievous hour for those who understood military duty; but obedience must have its limits, beyond which guilt begins. Did many officers remain in with Radzivill?”

“In Tykotsin we found only one officer, Pan Kharlamp, who did not leave the prince at once, and who did not wish afterward to desert him in misery. Compassion alone kept Kharlamp with Radzivill, for natural affection drew him to us. We were barely able to restore him to health, such hunger had there been in Tykotsin, and he took the food from his own mouth to

nourish the prince. He has come here to Lvoff to implore pardon of your Royal Grace, and I too fall at your feet for him; he is a tried and good soldier.”

“Let him come hither,” said the king.

“He has also something important to tell, which he heard in Kyedani from the mouth of Prince Boguslav, and which relates to the person of your Royal Grace, which is sacred to us.”

“Is this about Kmita?”

“Yes, Gracious Lord.”

“Did you know Kmita?”

“I knew him and fought with him; but where he is now, I know not.”

“What do you think of him?”

“Gracious Lord, since he undertook such a deed there are no torments of which he is not worthy, for he is an abortion of hell.”

“That story is untrue,” said the king; “it is all an invention of Prince Boguslav. But putting that affair aside, what do you know of Kmita in times previous?”

“He was always a great soldier, and in military affairs incomparable. He used to steal up to Hovanski so that with a few hundred people he brought the whole force of the enemy to misery; no other man could have done that. It is a miracle that the skin was not torn from him and stretched over a drum. If at that time someone had placed Prince Radzivill himself in the hands of Hovanski, he would not have given him so much pleasure as he would had he made him a present of Kmita. Why! it went so far that Kmita ate out of Hovanski’s camp-chests, slept on his rugs, rode in his sleighs and on his horse. But he was an infliction on his own people too, terribly self-willed; like Pan Lashch, he might have lined his cloak with sentences, and in Kyedani he was lost altogether.”

Here Volodyovski related in detail all that had happened in Kyedani.

Yan Kazimir listened eagerly, and when at last Pan Michael told how Zagloba had freed first himself and then all his comrades from Radzivill’s captivity, the king held his sides from laughter.

“*Vir incomparabilis! vir incomparabilis* (an incomparable man)!” he repeated. “But is he here with you?”

“At the command of your Royal Grace!” answered Volodyovski.

“That noble surpasses Ulysses! Bring him to me to dinner for a pleasant hour, and also the Skshetuskis; and now tell me what you know more of Kmita.”

“From letters found on Roh Kovalski we learned that we were sent to Birji to die. The prince pursued us afterward and tried to surround us, but he did not take us. We escaped luckily. And that was not all, for not far from Kyedani we caught Kmita, whom I sent at once to be shot.”

“Oh!” said the king, “I see that you had sharp work there in Lithuania.”

“But first Pan Zagloba had him searched to find letters on his person. In fact, a letter from the hetman was found, in which we learned that had it not been for Kmita we should not have been taken to Birji, but would have been shot without delay in Kyedani.”

“But you see!” said the king.

“In view of that we could not take his life. We let him go. What he did further I know not, but he did not leave Radzivill at that time. God knows what kind of man he is. It is easier to form an opinion of anyone else than of such a whirlwind. He remained with Radzivill and then went somewhere. Later he warned us that the prince was marching from Kyedani. It is hard to belittle the notable service he did us, for had it not been for that warning Radzivill would have fallen on unprepared troops, and destroyed the squadrons one after the other. I know not myself, Gracious Lord, what to think—whether that was a calumny which Prince Boguslav uttered.”

“That will appear at once,” said the king; and he clapped his hands. “Call hither Pan Babinich!” said he to a page who appeared on the threshold.

The page vanished, and soon the door of the king’s chamber opened, and in it stood Pan Andrei. Volodyovski did not know him at once, for he had changed greatly and grown pale, as he had not recovered from the struggle in the pass. Pan Michael therefore looked at him without recognition.

“It is a wonder,” said he at last; “were it not for the thinness of lips and because your Royal Grace gives another name, I should say this is Pan Kmita.”

The king smiled and said—

“This little knight has just told me of a terrible disturber of that name, but I explained as on my palm that he was deceived in his judgment, and I am sure that Pan Babinich will confirm what I say.”

“Gracious Lord,” answered Babinich, quickly, “one word from your grace will clear that disturber more than my greatest oath.”

“And the voice is the same,” said Pan Michael, with growing astonishment; “but that wound across the mouth was not there.”

“Worthy sir,” answered Kmita, “the head of a noble is a register on which sometimes a man’s hand writes with a sabre. And here is your note; recognize it.”

He bowed his head, shaven at the sides, and pointed at the long whitish scar.

“My hand!” cried Volodyovski.

“But I say that you do not know Kmita,” put in the king.

“How is that, Gracious Lord?”

“For you know a great soldier, but a self-willed one, an associate in the treason of Radzivill. But here stands the Hector of Chenstohova, to whom, next to Kordetski, Yasna Gora owes most; here stands the defender of the country and my faithful servant, who covered me with his own breast and saved my life when in the pass I had fallen among the Swedes as among wolves. Such is this new Kmita. Know him and love him, for he deserves it.”

Volodyovski began to move his yellow mustaches, not knowing what to say; and the king added—

“And know that not only did he promise Prince Boguslav nothing, but he began on him the punishment for Radzivill intrigues, for he seized him and intended to give him into your hands.”

“And he warned us against Prince Yanush!” cried Volodyovski. “What angel converted you?”

“Embrace each other!” said the king.

“I loved you at once!” said Kmita to Volodyovski.

Then they fell into each other’s embraces, and the king looked on them and pursed out his lips with delight, time after time, as was his habit. But Kmita embraced the little knight with such feeling that he raised him as he would a cat, and not soon did he place him back on his feet.

Then the king went to the daily council, for the two hetmans of the kingdom had come to Lvoff, they were to form the army there, and lead it later to the aid of Charnyetski, and the confederate divisions marching, under various leaders, throughout the country.

The knights were alone.

“Come to my quarters,” said Volodyovski; “you will find there Pan Yan, Pan Stanislav, and Zagloba, who will be glad to hear what the king has told me. There too is Kharlamp.”

But Kmita approached the little knight with great disquiet on his face. “Did you find many people with Radzivill?” asked he.

“Of officers, Kharlamp alone was there.”

“I do not ask about the military, but about women.”

“I know what you mean,” answered Pan Michael, flushing somewhat. “Prince Boguslav took Panna Billevich to Taurogi.”

Kmita’s face changed at once; first it was pale as a parchment, then purple, and again whiter than before. He did not find words at once; but his nostrils quivered while he was catching breath, which apparently failed in his breast. Then he seized his temples with both hands, and running through the room like a madman, began to repeat—

“Woe to me, woe, woe!”

“Come! Kharlamp will tell you better, for he was present,” said Volodyovski.

## Chapter LIX

When they had left the king's chamber the two knights walked on in silence. Volodyovski did not wish to speak; Kmita was unable to utter a word, for pain and rage were gnawing him. They broke through the crowds of people who had collected in great numbers on the streets in consequence of tidings that the first detachment of the Tartars promised by the Khan had arrived, and was to enter the city to be presented to the king. The little knight led on; Kmita hastened after him like one beside himself, with his cap pulled over his eyes and stumbling against men on the way.

When they had come to a more spacious place Pan Michael seized Kmita by the wrist and said—

“Control yourself! Despair will do nothing.”

“I am not in despair,” answered Kmita, “but I want his blood.”

“You may be sure to find him among the enemies of the country.”

“So much the better,” answered Kmita, feverishly; “but even should I find him in a church—”

“In God's name, do not commit sacrilege!” interrupted the little colonel, quickly.

“That traitor will bring me to sin.”

They were silent for a time. Then Kmita asked, “Where is he now?”

“Maybe in Taurogi, and maybe not. Kharlamp will know better.”

“Let us go.”

“It is not far. The squadron is outside the town, but we are here; and Kharlamp is with us.”

Then Kmita began to breathe heavily like a man going up a steep mountain. “I am fearfully weak yet,” said he.

“You need moderation all the more, since you will have to deal with such a knight.”

“I had him once, and here is what remained.” Kmita pointed to the scar on his face.

“Tell me how it was, for the king barely mentioned it.”

Kmita began to tell; and though he gritted his teeth, and even threw his cap on the ground, still his mind escaped from misfortune, and he calmed himself somewhat.

“I knew that you were daring,” said Volodyovski; “but to carry off Radzivill from the middle of his own squadron, I did not expect that, even of you.”

Meanwhile they arrived at the quarters. Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav, Zagloba, Jendzian, and Kharlamp were looking at Crimean coats made of sheepskin, which a trading Tartar had brought. Kharlamp, who knew Kmita better, recognized him at one glance of the eye, and dropping the coat exclaimed—

“Jesus, Mary!”

“May the name of the Lord be praised!” cried Jendzian.

But before all had recovered breath after the wonder, Volodyovski said—



"I present to you, gentlemen, the Hector of Chenstohova, the faithful servant of the king, who has shed his blood for the faith, the country, and the sovereign."

When astonishment had grown still greater, the worthy Pan Michael began to relate with enthusiasm what he had heard from the king of Kmita's services, and from Pan Andrei himself of the seizure of Prince Boguslav; at last he finished thus—

"Not only is what Prince Boguslav told of this knight not true, but the prince has no greater enemy than Pan Kmita, and therefore he has taken Panna Billevich from Kyedani, so as to pour out on him in some way his vengeance."

"And this cavalier has saved our lives and warned the confederates against Prince Yanush," cried Zagloba. "In view of such services, previous offences are nothing. As God lives, it is well that he came to us with you, Pan Michael, and not alone; it is well also that our squadron is outside the city, for there is a terrible hatred against him among the Lauda men, and before he could have uttered a syllable they would have cut him to pieces."

"We greet you with full hearts as a brother and future comrade," said Pan Yan.

Kharlamp seized his head.

"Such men never sink," said he; "they swim out on every side, and besides bring glory to the shore."

"Did I not tell you that?" cried Zagloba. "The minute I saw him in Kyedani I thought at once, 'That is a soldier, a man of courage.' And you remember that we fell to kissing each other straightway. It is true that Radzivill was ruined through me, but also through him. God inspired me in Billeviche not to let him be shot. Worthy gentlemen, it is not becoming to give a dry reception to a cavalier like him; he may think that we are hypocrites."

When he heard this Jendzian packed off the Tartar with his coats, and bustled around with the servant to get drinks.

But Kmita was thinking only how to hear most quickly from Kharlamp about the removal of Olenka.

"Where were you then?" asked he.

"I scarcely ever left Kyedani," answered Great Nose. "Prince Boguslav came to our prince *voevoda*. He so dressed himself for supper that one's eyes ached in looking at him; it was clear that Panna Billevich had pleased him mightily, for he was almost purring from pleasure, like a cat rubbed on the back. It is said that a cat repeats prayers, but if Boguslav prayed he was praising the devil. Oh, but he was agreeable, and sweet and pleasant spoken."

"Let that go!" said Pan Michael, "you cause too great pain to the knight."

"On the contrary. Speak! speak!" cried Kmita.

"He said then at table," continued Kharlamp, "that it was no derogation even to a Radzivill to marry the daughter of a common noble, and that he himself would prefer such a lady to one of those princesses whom the King and Queen of France wished to give him, and whose names I cannot remember, for they sounded as when a man is calling hounds in the forest."

"Less of that!" said Zagloba.

"He said it evidently to captivate the lady; we, knowing that, began one after another to look and mutter, thinking truly that he was setting traps for the innocent."

"But she? but she?" asked Kmita, feverishly.

“She, like a maiden of high blood and lofty bearing, showed no satisfaction, did not look at him; but when Boguslav began to talk about you, she fixed her eyes on him quickly. It is terrible what happened when he said that you offered for so many ducats to seize the king and deliver him dead or alive to the Swedes. We thought the soul would go out of her; but her anger against you was so great that it overcame her woman’s weakness. When he told with what disgust he had rejected your offer, she began to respect him, and look at him thankfully; afterward she did not withdraw her hand from him when he wished to escort her from the table.”

Kmita covered his eyes with his hands. “Strike, strike, whoso believes in God!” said he. Suddenly he sprang from his place. “Farewell, gentlemen!”

“How is this? Whither?” asked Zagloba, stopping the way.

“The king will give me permission; I will go and find him,” said Kmita.

“By God’s wounds, wait! You have not yet learned all, and to find him there is time. With whom will you go? Where will you find him?”

Kmita perhaps might not have obeyed, but strength failed him; he was exhausted from wounds, therefore he dropped on the bench, and resting his shoulders against the wall, closed his eyes. Zagloba gave him a glass of wine; he seized it with trembling hands, and spilling some on his beard and breast, drained it to the bottom.

“There is nothing lost,” said Pan Yan; “but the greatest prudence is needed, for you have an affair with a celebrated man. Through hurried action and sudden impulse you may ruin Panna Billevich and yourself.”

“Hear Kharlamp to the end,” said Zagloba.

Kmita gritted his teeth. “I am listening with patience.”

“Whether the lady went willingly I know not,” said Kharlamp, “for I was not present at her departure. I know that the sword-bearer of Rossyeni protested when they urged him previously; then they shut him up in the barracks, and finally he was allowed to go to Billeviche without hindrance. The lady is in evil hands; this cannot be concealed, for according to what they say of the young prince no Mussulman has such greed of the fair sex. If any fair head strikes his eye, though she be married, he is ready to disregard even that.”

“Woe! woe!” repeated Kmita.

“The scoundrel!” cried Zagloba.

“But it is a wonder to me that the prince *voevoda* gave her to Boguslav,” said Pan Yan.

“I am not a statesman, therefore I repeat only what the officers said, and namely Ganhoff, who knew all the secrets of the prince; I heard with my own ears how someone cried out in his presence, ‘Kmita will have nothing after our young prince!’ and Ganhoff answered, ‘There is more of politics in this removal than love. Prince Boguslav,’ said he, ‘lets no one off; but if the lady resists he will not be able to treat her like others, in Taurogi, for a noise would be made. Yanush’s princess is living there with her daughter; therefore Boguslav must be very careful, for he seeks the hand of his cousin. It will be hard for him to simulate virtue,’ said he, ‘but he must in Taurogi.’”

“A stone has of course fallen from your heart,” cried Zagloba, “for from this it is clear that nothing threatens the lady.”

“But why did they take her away?” cried Kmita.

“It is well that you turn to me,” said Zagloba, “for I reason out quickly more than one thing over which another would break his head for a whole year in vain. Why did he take her away? I do not deny that she must have struck his eye; but he took her away to restrain through her all the Billeviches, who are numerous and powerful, from rising against the Radzivills.”

“That may be!” said Kharlamp. “It is certain that in Taurogi he must curb himself greatly; there he cannot go to extremes.”

“Where is he now?”

“The prince *voevoda* supposed in Tykotsin that he must be at Elblang with the King of Sweden, to whom he had to go for reinforcements. It is certain that he is not in Taurogi at present, for envoys did not find him there.”

Here Kharlamp turned to Kmita. “If you wish to listen to a simple soldier I will tell you what I think. If any misadventure has happened to Panna Billevich in Taurogi, or if the prince has been able to arouse in her affection, you have no reason to go; but if not, if she is with Yanush’s widow and will go with her to Courland, it will be safer there than elsewhere, and a better place could not be found for her in this whole Commonwealth, covered with the flame of war.”

“If you are a man of such courage as they say, and as I myself think,” added Pan Yan, “you have first to get Boguslav, and when you have him in your hands, you have all.”

“Where is he now?” repeated Kmita, turning to Kharlamp.

“I have told you already,” answered Great Nose, “but you are forgetful from sorrow; I suppose that he is in Elblang, and certainly will take the field with Karl Gustav against Charnyetski.”

“You will do best if you go with us to Charnyetski, for in this way you will soon meet Boguslav,” said Volodyovski.

“I thank you, gentlemen, for kindly advice,” cried Kmita. And he began to take hasty farewell of all, and they did not detain him, knowing that a suffering man is not good for the cup or for converse; but Pan Michael said—

“I will attend you to the archbishop’s palace, for you are so reduced that you may fall somewhere on the street.”

“And I!” said Pan Yan.

“Then we will all go!” put in Zagloba.

They girded on their sabres, put on warm burkas, and went out. On the streets there were still more people than before. Every moment the knights met groups of armed nobles, soldiers, servants of magnates and nobles, Armenians, Jews, Wallachians, Russian peasants from the suburbs burned during the two attacks of Hmelnitski.

Merchants were standing before their shops; the windows of the houses were filled with heads of curious people. All were repeating that the *chambul* had come, and would soon march through the city to be presented to the king. Every living person wished to see that *chambul*, for it was a great rarity to look on Tartars marching in peace through the streets of a city. In other temper had Lvoff seen these guests hitherto; the city had seen them only beyond the walls, in the form of impenetrable clouds on the background of flaming suburbs and neighboring villages. Now they were to march in as allies against Sweden. Our knights were barely able to open a way for themselves through the throng. Every moment there were

cries; "They are coming, they are coming!" People ran from street to street, and were packed in such masses that not a step forward was possible.

"Ha!" said Zagloba, "let us stop a little, Pan Michael. They will remind us of the near past, for we did not look sidewise but straight into the eyes of these bull-drivers. And I too have been in captivity among them. They say that the future Khan is as much like me as one cup is like another. But why talk of past follies?"

"They are coming, they are coming!" cried the people again.

"God has changed the hearts of the dog-brothers," continued Zagloba, "so that instead of ravaging the Russian borders they come to aid us. This is a clear miracle! For I tell you that if for every pagan whom this old hand has sent to hell, one of my sins had been forgiven, I should be canonized now, and people would have to fast on the eve of my festival, or I should have been swept up living to heaven in a chariot of fire."

"And do you remember," asked Volodyovski, "how it was with them when they were returning from the Valadynka from Rashkoff to Zbaraj?"

"Of course I do, Pan Michael; but somehow you fell into a hole, and I chased through the thick wood to the highroad. And when we came back to find you, the knights could not restrain their astonishment, for at each bush lay a dead beast of a Tartar."

Pan Volodyovski remembered that at the time in question it was just the opposite; but he said nothing, for he was wonderfully astonished, and before he could recover breath voices were shouting for the tenth time; "They are coming, they are coming!"

The shout became general; then there was silence, and all heads were turned in the direction from which the *chambul* was to come. Now piercing music was heard in the distance, the crowds began to open from the middle of the street toward the walls of the houses, and from the end appeared the first Tartar horsemen.

"See! they have a band even; that is uncommon with Tartars!"

"They wish to make the best impression," said Pan Yan; "but still some *chambuls* after they have lived long in camp, have their own musicians. That must be a choice body."

Meanwhile the horsemen had come up and begun to ride past. In front on a pied horse sat a Tartar holding two pipes in his mouth, and as tawny as if he had been dried and smoked. Bending his head backward and closing his eyes, he ran his fingers over those pipes, obtaining from them notes squeaking, sharp, and so quick that the ear could barely catch them. After him rode two others holding staffs furnished at the ends with brass rattles, and they were shaking these rattles as if in frenzy; farther back some were making shrill sounds with brass plates, some were beating drums, while others were playing in Cossack fashion on *teorbans*; and all, with the exception of the pipers were singing, or rather howling, from moment to moment, a wild song, at the same time showing their teeth and rolling their eyes. After that chaotic music, which went like a brawl past the dwellers in Lvoff, clattered horses four abreast; the whole party was made up of about four hundred men.

This was in fact a chosen body, as a specimen, and to do honor to the King of Poland, for his own use, and as an earnest sent by the Khan. They were led by Akbah Ulan, of the Dobrudja, therefore of the sturdiest Tartars in battle, an old and experienced warrior, greatly respected in the *Uluses* (Tartar villages), because of his bravery and severity. He rode between the music and the rest of the party, dressed in a shuba of rose-colored velvet, but greatly faded, and too narrow for his powerful person; it was lined with tattered marten-skin, he held in front of him a baton, like those used by Cossack colonels. His red face had become blue from

the cold wind, and he swayed somewhat on his lofty saddle; from one moment to another he looked from side to side, or turned his face around to his Tartars, as if not perfectly sure that they could restrain themselves at sight of the crowds, the women, the children, the open shops, the rich goods, and that they would not rush with a shout at those wonders.

But they rode on quietly, like dogs led by chains and fearing the lash, and only from their gloomy and greedy glances might it be inferred what was passing in the souls of those barbarians. The crowds gazed on them with curiosity, though almost with hostility, so great in those parts of the Commonwealth was hatred of the Pagan. From time to time cries were heard: "*Ahu! ahu!*" as if at wolves. Still there were some who expected much from them.

"The Swedes have a terrible fear of the Tartars, and the soldiers tell wonders of them, from which their fear increases," said some, looking at the Tartars.

"And justly," answered others. "It is not for the cavalry of Karl to war with the Tartars, who, especially those of the Dobrudja, are equal sometimes to our cavalry. Before a Swedish horseman can look around, the Tartar will have him on a lariat."

"It is a sin to call sons of Pagans to aid us," said some voice.

"Sin or no sin, they will serve us."

"A very decent *chambul*!" said Zagloba.

Really the Tartars were well dressed in white, black, and particolored sheepskin coats, the wool on the outside; black bows, and quivers full of arrows were shaking on their shoulders; each had besides a sabre, which was not always the case in large *chambuls*, for the poorest were not able to obtain such a luxury, using in hand-to-hand conflict a horse-skull fastened to a club. But these were men, as was said, to be exhibited; therefore some of them had even muskets in felt cases, and all were sitting on good horses, small, it is true, rather lean and short, with long forelocks on their faces, but of incomparable swiftness.

In the centre of the party went also four camels: the crowd concluded that in their packs were presents from the Khan to the king; but in that they were mistaken, for the Khan chose to take gifts, not give them; he promised, it is true, reinforcements, but not for nothing.

When they had passed, Zagloba said: "That aid will cost dear. Though allies, they will ruin the country. After the Swedes and them, there will not be one sound roof in the Commonwealth."

"It is sure that they are terribly grievous allies," said Pan Yan.

"I have heard on the road," said Pan Michael, "that the king has made a treaty, that to every five hundred of the horde is to be given one of our officers, who is to have command and the right of punishment. Otherwise these friends would leave only heaven and earth behind them."

"But this is a small *chambul*; what will the king do with it?"

"The Khan sent them to be placed at the disposal of the king almost as a gift; and though he will make account of them, still the king can do what he likes with them, and undoubtedly he will send them with us to Charnyetski."

"Well, Charnyetski will be able to keep them in bounds."

"Not unless he is among them, otherwise they will plunder. It cannot be, but they will give them an officer at once."

"And will he lead them? But what will that big Agá do?"

“If he does not meet a fool, he will carry out orders.”

“Farewell, gentlemen!” cried Kmita, on a sudden.

“Whither in such haste?”

“To fall at the king’s feet, and ask him to give me command of these people.”

## Chapter LX

That same day Akbah Ulan beat with his forehead to the king, and delivered to him letters of the Khan in which the latter repeated his promise of moving with one hundred thousand of the horde against the Swedes, when forty thousand thalers were paid him in advance, and when the first grass was on the fields, without which, in a country so ruined by war, it would be difficult to maintain such a great number of horses. As to that small *chambul*, the Khan had sent it to his “dearest brother” as a proof of his favor, so that the Cossacks, who were still thinking of disobedience, might have an evident sign that this favor endures steadily, and let but the first sound of rebellion reach the ears of the Khan, his vengeful anger will fall on all Cossacks.

The king received Akbah Ulan affably, and presenting him with a beautiful steed, said that he would send him soon to Pan Charnyetski in the field, for he wished to convince the Swedes by facts, that the Khan was giving aid to the Commonwealth. The eyes of the Tartar glittered when he heard of service under Charnyetski; for knowing him from the time of former wars in the Ukraine, he, in common with all the Agás, admired him.

But he was less pleased with the part of the Khan’s letter which asked the king to attach to the *chambul* an officer, who knew the country well, who would lead the party and restrain the men, and also Akbah Ulan himself from plunder and excesses. Akbah Ulan would have preferred certainly not to have such a patron over him; but since the will of the Khan and the king were explicit, he merely beat with his forehead once more, hiding carefully his vexation, and perhaps promising in his soul that not he would bow down before that patron, but the patron before him.

Barely had the Tartar gone out, and the senators withdrawn, when Kmita, who had an audience at once, fell at the feet of the king, and said—

“Gracious Lord! I am not worthy of the favor for which I ask, but I set as much by it as by life itself. Permit me to take command over these Tartars and move to the field with them at once.”

“I do not refuse,” answered the astonished Yan Kazimir, “for a better leader it would be difficult to find. A cavalier of great daring and resolve is needed to hold them in check, or they will begin straightway to burn and murder our people. To this only am I firmly opposed, that you go tomorrow, before your flesh has healed from the wounds made by Swedish rapiers.”

“I feel that as soon as the wind blows around me in the field, my weakness will pass, and strength will enter me again; as to the Tartars, I will manage them and bend them into soft wax.”

“But why in such haste? Whither are you going?”

“Against the Swedes, Gracious Lord; I have nothing to wait for here, since what I wanted I have, that is your favor and pardon for my former offences. I will go to Charnyetski with Volodyovski, or I will attack the enemy separately, as I did once Hovanski, and I trust in God that I shall have success.”

“It must be that something else is drawing you to the field.”

“I will confess as to a father, and open my whole soul. Prince Boguslav, not content with the calumny which he cast on me, has taken that maiden from Kyedani and confined her in

Taurogi, or worse, for he is attacking her honesty, her virtue, her honor as a woman. Gracious Lord! the reason is confused in my head, when I think in what hands the poor girl is at present. By the passion of the Lord! these wounds pain less. That maiden thinks to this moment that I offered that damned soul, that arch-cur to raise hands on your Royal Grace—and she holds me the lowest of all the degenerate. I cannot endure, I am not able to endure, till I find her, till I free her. Give me those Tartars and I swear that I will not do my own work alone, but I will crush so many Swedes that the court of this castle might be paved with their skulls.”

“Calm yourself,” said the king.

“If I had to leave service and the defence of majesty and the Commonwealth for my own cause, it would be a shame for me to ask, but here one unites with the other. The time has come to beat the Swedes, I will do nothing else. The time has come to hunt a traitor; I will hunt him to Livland, to Courland, and even as far as the Northerners, or beyond the sea to Sweden, should he hide there.”

“We have information that Boguslav will move very soon with Karl, from Elblang.”

“Then I will go to meet them.”

“With such a small *chambul*? They will cover you with a cap.”

“Hovanski, with eighty thousand, was covering me, but he did not succeed.”

“All the loyal army is under Charnyetski. They will strike Charnyetski first of all.”

“I will go to Charnyetski. It is needful to give him aid the more quickly.”

“You will go to Charnyetski, but to Taurogi with such a small number you cannot go. Radzivill delivered all the castles in Jmud to the enemy, and Swedish garrisons are stationed everywhere; but Taurogi, it seems to me, is somewhere on the boundary of Prussia?”

“On the very boundary of Electoral Prussia, but on our side, and twenty miles from Tyltsa. Wherever I have to go, I will go, and not only will I not lose men, but crowds of daring soldiers will gather to me on the road. And consider this, Gracious Lord, that wherever I show myself the whole neighborhood will mount against the Swedes. First, I will rouse Jmud, if no one else does it. What place may not be reached now, when the whole country is boiling like water in a pot? I am accustomed to be in a boil.”

“But you do not think of this—perhaps the Tartars will not like to go so far with you.”

“Only let them not like! only let them try not to like,” said Kmita, gritting his teeth at the very thought, “as there are four hundred, or whatever number there is of them, I’ll have all four hundred hanged—there will be no lack of trees! Just let them try to rebel against me.”

“Yandrek!” cried the king, falling into good humor and pursing his lips, “as God is dear to me, I cannot find a better shepherd for those lambs! Take them and lead them wherever it pleases thee most.”

“I give thanks, Gracious Lord!” said the knight, pressing the knees of the king.

“When do you wish to start?” asked Yan Kazimir.

“God willing, tomorrow.”

“Maybe Akbah Ulan will not be ready, because his horses are road-weary.”

“Then I will have him lashed to a saddle with a lariat, and he will go on foot if he spares his horse.”



“I see that you will get on with him. Still use mild measures while possible. But now, Yendrek, it is late; tomorrow I wish to see you again. Meanwhile take this ring, tell your royalist lady that you have it from the king, and tell her that the king commands her to love firmly his faithful servant and defender.”

“God grant me,” said the young hero, with tears in his eyes, “not to die save in defence of your Royal Grace!”

Here the king withdrew, for it was already late; and Kmita went to his own quarters to prepare for the road, and think what to begin, and whither he ought to go first.

He remembered the words of Kharlamp, that should it appear that Boguslav was not in Taurogi it would really be better to leave the maiden there, for from Taurogi being near the boundary, it was easy to take refuge in Tyłtsa, under care of the elector. Moreover, though the Swedes had abandoned in his last need the *voevoda* of Vilna, it was reasonable to expect that they would have regard for his widow; hence, if Olenka was under her care, no evil could meet her. If they had gone to Courland, that was still better. “And to Courland I cannot go with my Tartars,” said Kmita to himself, “for that is another State.”

He walked then, and worked with his head. Hour followed hour, but he did not think yet of rest; and the thought of his new expedition so cheered him, that though that day he was weak in the morning, he felt now that his strength was returning, and he was ready to mount in a moment.

The servants at last had finished tying the saddle-straps and were preparing to sleep, when all at once someone began to scratch at the door of the room.

“Who is there?” asked Kmita. Then to his attendant, “Go and see!”

He went, and after he had spoken to someone outside the door, he returned.

“Some soldier wants to see your grace greatly. He says that his name is Soroka.”

“By the dear God! let him in,” called Kmita. And without waiting for the attendant to carry out the order, he sprang to the door. “Come in, dear Soroka! come hither!”

The soldier entered the room, and with his first movement wished to fall at the feet of his colonel, for he was a friend and a servant as faithful as he was attached; but soldierly subordination carried the day, therefore he stood erect and said—

“At the orders of your grace!”

“Be greeted, dear comrade, be greeted!” said Kmita, with emotion. “I thought they had cut you to pieces in Chenstohova.” And he pressed Soroka’s head, then began to shake him, which he could do without lowering himself too much, for Soroka was descended from village nobility.

Then the old sergeant fell to embracing Kmita’s knees.

“Whence do you come?” asked Kmita.

“From Chenstohova.”

“And you were looking for me?”

“Yes.”

“And from whom did you learn that I was alive?”

“From Kuklinovski’s men. The prior, Kordetski, celebrated High Mass from delight, in thanksgiving to God. Then there was a report that Pan Babinich had conducted the king through the mountains; so I knew that that was your grace, no one else.”

“And Father Kordetski is well?”

“Well; only it is unknown whether the angels will not take him alive to heaven any day, for he is a saint.”

“Surely he is nothing else. Where did you discover that I came with the king to Lvoff?”

“I thought, since you conducted the king you must be near him; but I was afraid that your grace might move to the field and that I should be late.”

“Tomorrow I go with the Tartars.”

“Then it has happened well, for I bring your grace two full belts, one which I wore and the other you carried, and besides, those precious stones which we took from the caps of boyars, and those which your grace took when we seized the treasury of Hovanski.”

“Those were good times when we gathered in wealth; but there cannot be much of it now, for I left a good bit with Father Kordetski.”

“I do not know how much, but the prior himself said that two good villages might be bought with it.”

Then Soroka drew near the table, and began to remove the belts from his body. “And the stones are in this canteen,” added he, putting the canteen near the belts.

Kmita made no reply, but shook in his hand some gold ducats without counting them, and said to the sergeant—

“Take these!”

“I fall at the feet of your grace. *Ei*, if I had had on the road one such ducat!”

“How is that?”

“Because I am terribly weak. There are few places now where they will give one morsel of bread to a man, for all are afraid; and at last I barely dragged my feet forward from hunger.”

“By the dear God! but you had all this with you!”

“I dared not use it without leave.”

“Take this!” said Kmita, giving him another handful. Then he cried to the servants—

“Now, scoundrels, give him to eat in less time than a man might say ‘Our Father,’ or I’ll take your heads!”

They sprang one in front of another, and in little while there was an enormous dish of smoked sausage before Soroka, and a flask of vodka. The soldier fastened his eyes greedily on the food, and his lips and mustaches were quivering; but he dared not sit in presence of the colonel.

“Sit down, eat!” commanded Kmita.

Kmita had barely spoken when a dry sausage was crunching between the powerful jaws of Soroka. The two attendants looked on him with protruding eyes.

“Be off!” cried Kmita.

They sprang out with all breath through the door; out the knight walked with hasty steps up and down the room, not wishing to interrupt his faithful servant. But he, as often as he poured out a glass of vodka, looked sidewise at the colonel, fearing to find a frown; then he emptied the glass and turned toward the wall.

Kmita walked, walked; at last he began to speak to himself. "It cannot be otherwise!" muttered he; "it is needful to send him. I will give orders to tell her—No use, she will not believe! She will not read a letter, for she holds me a traitor and a dog. Let him not come in her way, but let him see and tell me what is taking place there."

Then he said on a sudden: "Soroka!"

The soldier sprang up so quickly that he came near overturning the table, and straightened as straight as a string.

"According to order!"

"You are an honest man, and in need you are cunning. You will go on a long road, but not on a hungry one."

"According to order!"

"To Tyłtsa, on the Prussian border. There Panna Billevich is living in the castle of Boguslav Radzivill. You will learn if the prince is there, and have an eye on everything. Do not try to see Panna Billevich, but should a meeting happen of itself, tell her, and swear that I brought the king through the mountains, and that I am near his person. She will surely not give you credit; for the prince has defamed me, saying that I wished to attempt the life of the king—which is a lie befitting a dog."

"According to order!"

"Do not try to see her, as I have said, for she will not believe you. But if you meet by chance, tell her what you know. Look at everything, and listen! But take care of yourself, for if the prince is there and recognizes you, or if anyone from his court recognizes you, you will be impaled on a stake. I would send old Kyemlich, but he is in the other world, slain in the pass, and his sons are too dull. They will go with me. Have you been in Tyłtsa?"

"I have not, your grace."

"You will go to Shchuchyn, thence along the Prussian boundary to Tyłtsa. Taurogi is twenty miles distant from Tyłtsa and opposite, on our side. Stay in Taurogi till you have seen everything, then come to me. You will find me where I shall be. Ask for the Tartars and Pan Babinich. And now go to sleep with the Kyemliches. Tomorrow for the road."

After these words, Soroka went out. Kmita did not lie down to sleep for a long time, but at last weariness overcame him; then he threw himself on the bed, and slept a stone sleep.

Next morning he rose greatly refreshed and stronger than the day before. The whole court was already on foot, and the usual activity had begun. Kmita went first to the chancellery, for his commission and safe-conduct; he visited Suba Gazi Bey, chief of the Khan's embassy in Lvoff, and had a long conversation with him.

During that conversation Pan Andrei put his hand twice in his purse; so that when he was going out Suba Gazi Bey changed caps with him, gave him a baton of green feathers and some yards of an equally green cord of silk.

Armed in this fashion, Pan Andrei returned to the king, who had just come from Mass; then the young man fell once more at the knees of the sovereign; after that he went, together with

the Kyemliches and his attendants, directly to the place where Akbah Ulan was quartered with his *chambul*.

At sight of him the old Tartar put his hand to his forehead, his mouth, and his breast; but learning who Kmita was and why he had come, he grew severe at once; his face became gloomy, and was veiled with haughtiness.

“And the king has sent you to me as a guide,” said he to Kmita, in broken Russian; “you will show me the road, though I should be able to go myself wherever it is needed, and you are young and inexperienced.”

“He indicates in advance what I am to be,” thought Kmita, “but I will be polite to him as long as I can.” Then he said aloud: “Akbah Ulan, the king has sent me here as a chief, not as a guide. And I tell you this, that you will do better not to oppose the will of his grace.”

“The Khan makes appointments over the Tartars, not the king,” answered Akbah Ulan.

“Akbah Ulan,” repeated Kmita, with emphasis, “the Khan has made a present of thee to the king, as he would a dog or a falcon; therefore show no disrespect to him, lest thou be tied like a dog with a rope.”

“Allah!” cried the astonished Tartar.

“Hei! have a care that thou anger me not!” said Kmita.

Akbah Ulan’s eyes became bloodshot. For a time he could not utter a word; the veins on his neck were swollen, his hands sought his dagger.

“I’ll bite, I’ll bite!” said he, with stifled voice.

But Pan Andrei, though he had promised to be polite, had had enough, for by nature he was very excitable. In one moment therefore something struck him as if a serpent had stung; he seized the Tartar by the thin beard with his whole hand, and pushing back his head as if he wished to show him something on the ceiling, he began to talk through his set teeth.

“Hear me, son of a goat! Thou wouldst like to have no one above thee, so as to burn, rob, and slaughter! Thou wouldst have me as guide! Here is thy guide! thou hast a guide!” And thrusting him to the wall, he began to pound his head against a corner of it.

He let him go at last, completely stunned, but not looking for his knife now. Kmita, following the impulse of his hot blood, discovered the best method of convincing Oriental people accustomed to slavery; for in the pounded head of the Tartar, in spite of all the rage which was stifling him, the thought gleamed at once how powerful and commanding must that knight be who could act in this manner with him, Akbah Ulan; and with his bloody lips he repeated three times—

“*Bagadyr* (hero), *Bagadyr*, *Bagadyr*!”

Kmita meanwhile placed on his own head the cap of Suba Grazi, drew forth the green baton, which he had kept behind his belt of purpose till that moment, and said—

“Look at these, slave! and these!”

“Allah!” exclaimed the astonished Ulan.

“And here!” added Kmita, taking the cord from his pocket.

But Akbah Ulan was already lying at his feet, and striking the floor with his forehead.

An hour later the Tartars were marching out in a long line over the road from Lvoff to Vyelki Ochi; and Kmita, sitting on a valiant chestnut steed which the king had given him, drove

along the *chambul* as a shepherd dog drives sheep. Akbah Ulan looked at the young hero with wonder and fear.

The Tartars, who were judges of warriors, divined at the first glance that under that leader there would be no lack of blood and plunder, and went willingly with singing and music.

And Kmita's heart swelled within him when he looked at those forms, resembling beasts of the wilderness; for they were dressed in sheepskin and camel-skin coats with the wool outside. The wave of wild heads shook with the movements of the horses; he counted them, and was thinking how much he could undertake with that force.

"It is a peculiar body," thought he, "and it seems to me as if I were leading a pack of wolves; and with such men precisely would it be possible to run through the whole Commonwealth, and trample all Prussia. Wait awhile, Prince Boguslav!"

Here boastful thoughts began to flow into his head, for he was inclined greatly to boastfulness.

"God has given man adroitness," said he to himself; "yesterday I had only the two Kyemliches, but today four hundred horses are clattering behind me. Only let the dance begin; I shall have a thousand or two of such roisterers as my old comrades would not be ashamed of. Wait a while, Boguslav!"

But after a moment he added, to quiet his own conscience: "And I shall serve also the king and the country."

He fell into excellent humor. This too pleased him greatly, that nobles, Jews, peasants, even large crowds of general militia, could not guard themselves from fear in the first moment at sight of his Tartars. And there was a fog, for the thaw had filled the air with a vapor. It happened then every little while that someone rode up near, and seeing all at once whom they had before them, cried out—

"The word is made flesh!"

"Jesus! Mary! Joseph!"

"The Tartars! the horde!"

But the Tartars passed peacefully the equipages, loaded wagons, herds of horses and travellers. It would have been different had the leader permitted, but they dared not undertake anything of their own will, for they had seen how at starting Akbah Ulan had held the stirrup of that leader.

Now Lvoff had vanished in the distance beyond the mist. The Tartars had ceased to sing, and the *chambul* moved slowly amid the clouds of steam rising from the horses. All at once the tramp of a horse was heard behind. In a moment two horsemen appeared. One of them was Pan Michael, the other was the tenant of Vansosh; both, passing the *chambul*, pushed straight to Kmita.

"Stop! stop!" cried the little knight.

Kmita held in his horse. "Is that you?"

Pan Michael reined in his horse. "With the forehead!" said he, "letters from the king: one to you, the other to the *voevoda* of Vityebsk."

"I am going to Pan Charnyetski, not to Sapyeha."

"But read the letter."

Kmita broke the seal and read as follows:—

*We learn through a courier just arrived from the voevoda of Vityebsk that he cannot march hither to Little Poland, and is turning back again to Podlyasye, because Prince Boguslav, who is not with the King of Sweden, has planned to fall upon Tykotsin and Pan Sapyeha. And since he must leave a great part of his troops in garrisons, we order you to go to his assistance with that Tartar chambul. And since your own wish is thus gratified, we need not urge you to hasten. The other letter you will give to the voevoda; in it we commend Pan Babinich, our faithful servant, to the good will of the voevoda, and above all to the protection of God.*

*Yan Kazimir, King.*

“By the dear God! by the dear God! This is happy news for me!” cried Kmita. “I know not how to thank the king and you for it.”

“I offered myself to come,” said the little knight, “out of compassion, for I saw your pain; I came so that the letters might reach you surely.”

“When did the courier arrive?”

“We were with the king at dinner—I, Pan Yan, Pan Stanislav, Kharlamp, and Zagloba. You cannot imagine what Zagloba told there about the carelessness of Sapyeha, and his own services. It is enough that the king cried from continual laughter, and both hetmans were holding their sides all the time. At last the chamber servant came with a letter; when the king burst out, ‘Go to the hangman, maybe evil news will spoil my fun!’ When he learned that it was from Pan Sapyeha, he began to read it. Indeed he read evil news, for that was confirmed which had long been discussed; the elector had broken all his oaths, and against his own rightful sovereign had joined the King of Sweden at last.”

“Another enemy, as if there were few of them hitherto!” cried Kmita; and he folded his hands. “Great God! only let Pan Sapyeha send me for a week to Prussia, and God the Merciful grant that ten generations will remember me and my Tartars.”

“Perhaps you will go there,” said Pan Michael; “but first you must defeat Boguslav, for as a result of that treason of the elector is he furnished with men and permitted to go to Podlyasye.”

“Then we shall meet, as today is today; as God is in heaven, so shall we meet,” cried Kmita, with flashing eyes. “If you had brought me the appointment of *voevoda* of Vilna, it would not have given me more pleasure.”

“The king too cried at once: ‘There is an expedition ready for Yendrek, from which the soul will rejoice in him.’ He wanted to send his servant after you, but I said I will go myself, I will take farewell of him once more.”

Kmita bent on his horse, and seized the little knight in his embrace.

“A brother would not have done for me what you have done! God grant me to thank you in some way.”

“*Tfu!* Did not I want to shoot you?”

“I deserved nothing better. Never mind! May I be slain in the first battle if in all knighthood I love a man more than I love you.”

Then they began to embrace again at parting, and Volodyovski said—

“Be careful with Boguslav, be careful, for it is no easy matter with him.”

“For one of us death is written. *Ei!* if you who are a genius at the sabre could discover your secrets to me. But there is no time. As it is, may the angels help me; and I will see his blood, or my eyes will close forever on the light of day.”

“God aid you! A lucky journey, and give angelica to those traitors of Prussians!” said Volodyovski.

“Be sure on that point. The disgusting Lutherans!”

Here Volodyovski nodded to Jendzian, who during this time was talking to Akbah Ulan, explaining the former successes of Kmita over Hovanski. And both rode back to Lvoff.

Then Kmita turned his *chambul* on the spot, as a driver turns his wagon, and went straight toward the north.

## Chapter LXI

Though the Tartars, and especially those of the Dobrudja, knew how to stand breast to breast against armed men in the field, their most cherished warfare was the slaughter of defenceless people, the seizing of women and peasants captive, and above all, plunder. The road was very bitter therefore to that *chambul* which Kmita led, for under his iron hand these wild warriors had to become lambs, keep their knives in the sheaths, and the quenched tinder and coiled ropes in their saddlebags. They murmured at first.

Near Tarnograd a few remained behind of purpose to let free the “red birds” in Hmyelevsk and to frolic with the women. But Kmita, who had pushed on toward Tomashov, returned at sight of the first gleam of fire, and commanded the guilty to hang the guilty. And he had gained such control of Akbah Ulan, that the old Tartar not only did not resist, but he urged the condemned to hang quickly, or the “*bogadyr*” would be angry. Thenceforth “the lambs” marched quietly, crowding more closely together through the villages and towns, lest suspicion might fall on them. And the execution, though Kmita carried it out so severely, did not rouse even ill will or hatred against him; such fortune had that fighter that his subordinates felt just as much love for him as they did fear.

It is true that Pan Andrei permitted no one to wrong them. The country had been terribly ravaged by the recent attack of Hmelnitski and Sheremetyeff; therefore it was as difficult to find provisions and pasture as before harvest, and besides, everything had to be in time and in plenty; in Krinitsi, where the townspeople offered resistance and would not furnish supplies, Pan Andrei ordered that some of them be beaten with sticks, and the under-starosta he stretched out with the blow of a whirlbat.

This delighted the horde immensely, and hearing with pleasure the uproar of the beaten people, they said among themselves—

“*Ei!* our Babinich is a falcon; he lets no man offend his lambs.”

It is enough that not only did they not grow thin, but the men and horses improved in condition. Old Ulan, whose stomach had expanded, looked with growing wonder on the young hero and clicked with his tongue.

“If Allah were to give me a son, I should like such a one. I should not die of hunger in my old age in the *Ulus*,” repeated he.

But Kmita from time to time struck him on the stomach and said—

“Here listen, wild boar! If the Swedes do not open your paunch, you will hide the contents of all cupboards inside it.”

“Where are the Swedes? Our ropes will rot, our bows will be mildewed,” answered Ulan, who was homesick for war.

They were advancing indeed through a country to which a Swedish foot had not been able to come, but farther they would pass through one in which there had been garrisons afterward driven out by confederates. They met everywhere smaller and larger bands of armed nobles, marching in various directions, and not smaller bands of peasants, who more than once stopped the road to them threateningly, and to whom it was often difficult to explain that they had to do with friends and servants of the King of Poland.



They came at last to Zamost. The Tartars were amazed at sight of this mighty fortress; but what did they think when told that not long before it had stopped the whole power of Hmelnitski?

Pan Zamoyski, the owner by inheritance, permitted them as a mark of great affection and favor to enter the town. They were admitted through a brick gate, while the other two were stone. Kmita himself did not expect to see anything similar, and he could not recover from astonishment at sight of the broad streets, built in straight lines, Italian fashion; at sight of the splendid college, and the academy, the castle, walls, the great cannon and every kind of provision. As few among magnates could be compared with the grandson of the great chancellor, so there were few fortresses that could be compared with Zamost.

But the greatest ecstasy seized the Tartars, when they saw the Armenian part of the town. Their nostrils drew in greedily the odor of morocco, a great manufacture of which was carried on by industrial immigrants from Kaffa; and their eyes laughed at sight of the dried fruits and confectionery, Eastern carpets, girdles, inlaid sabres, daggers, bows, Turkish lamps, and every kind of costly article.

The cupbearer of the kingdom himself pleased Kmita's heart greatly, he was a genuine kinglet in that Zamost of his; a man in the strength of his years, of fine presence though lacking somewhat robustness, for he had not restrained sufficiently the ardors of nature in early years. He had always loved the fair sex, but his health had not been shaken to that degree that joyousness had vanished from his face. So far he had not married, and though the most renowned houses in the Commonwealth had opened wide their doors, he asserted that he could not find in them a sufficiently beautiful maiden. He found her somewhat later, in the person of a young French lady, who though in love with another gave him her hand without hesitation, not foreseeing that the first one, disregarded, would adorn in the future his own and her head with a kingly crown.

The lord of Zamost was not distinguished for quick wit, though he had enough for his own use. He did not strive for dignities and offices, though they came to him of themselves; and when his friends reproached him with a lack of native ambition, he answered—"It is not true that I lack it, for I have more than those who bow down. Why should I wear out the thresholds of the court? In Zamost I am not only Yan Zamoyski, but Sobiepan Zamoyski,"<sup>34</sup> with which name he was very well pleased. He was glad to affect simple manners, though he had received a refined education and had passed his youth in journeys through foreign lands. He spoke of himself as a common noble, and spoke emphatically of the moderateness of his station, perhaps so that others might contradict him, and perhaps so that they might not notice his medium wit. On the whole he was an honorable man, and a better son of the Commonwealth than many others.

And as he came near Kmita's heart, so did Kmita please him; therefore he invited Pan Andrei to the chambers of the castle and entertained him, for he loved this also, that men should exalt his hospitality.

Pan Andrei came to know in the castle many noted persons; above all, Princess Griselda Vishnyevetski, sister of Pan Zamoyski and widow of the great Yeremi—a man who in his time was well-nigh the greatest in the Commonwealth, who nevertheless had lost his whole immense fortune in the time of the Cossack incursion, so that the princess was now living at Zamost, on the bounty of her brother Yan.

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<sup>34</sup> Self-lord Zamoyski.

But that lady was so full of grandeur, of majesty and virtue, that her brother was the first to blow away the dust from before her; and moreover he feared her like fire. There was no case in which he did not gratify her wishes, nor an affair the most important concerning which he did not advise with her. The people of the castle said that the princess ruled Zamost, the army, the treasury, and her brother; but she did not wish to take advantage of her preponderance, being given with her whole soul to grief for her husband and to the education of her son.

That son had recently returned for a short time from the court of Vienna and was living with her. He was a youth in the springtime of life; but in vain did Kmita seek in him those marks which the son of the great Yermi should bear in his features.

The figure of the young prince was graceful; but he had a large, full face, and protruding eyes with a timid look; he had coarse lips, moist, as with people inclined to pleasures of the table; an immense growth of hair, black as a raven's wing, fell to his shoulders. He inherited from his father only that raven hair and dark complexion.

Pan Andrei was assured by those who were more intimate with the prince that he had a noble soul, unusual understanding, and a remarkable memory, thanks to which he was able to speak almost all languages; and that a certain heaviness of body and temperament with a native greed for food were the only defects of that otherwise remarkable young man.

In fact, after he had entered into conversation with him Pan Andrei became convinced that the prince not only had an understanding mind and a striking judgment touching everything, but the gift of attracting people. Kmita loved him after the first conversation with that feeling in which compassion is the greatest element. He felt that he would give much to bring back to that orphan the brilliant future which belonged to him by right of birth.

Pan Andrei convinced himself at the first dinner that what was said of the gluttony of Michael Vishnyevetski was true. The young prince seemed to think of nothing save eating. His prominent eyes followed each dish uneasily, and when they brought him the platter he took an enormous quantity on his plate and ate ravenously, smacking his lips as only gluttons do. The marble face of the princess grew clouded with still greater sorrow at that sight. It became awkward for Kmita, so that he turned away his eyes and looked at Sobiepan.

But Zamoyski was not looking either at Prince Michael or his own guest. Kmita followed his glance, and behind the shoulders of Princess Griselda he saw a wonderful sight indeed, which he had not hitherto noticed.

It was the small pretty head of a maiden, who was as fair as milk, as red as a rose, and beautiful as an image. Short wavy locks ornamented her forehead; her quick eyes were directed to the officers sitting near Zamoyski, not omitting Sobiepan himself. At last those eyes rested on Kmita, and looked at him fixedly, as full of coquetry as if they intended to gaze into the depth of his heart.

But Kmita was not easily confused; therefore he began to look at once into those eyes with perfect insolence, and then he punched in the side Pan Shurski, lieutenant of the armored castle squadron at Zamost, who was sitting near him, and asked in an undertone—

“But who is that tailed farthing?”

“Worthy sir,” answered Shurski, aloud, “do not speak slightly when you do not know of whom you are speaking. That is Panna Anusia Borzobogati. And you will not call her otherwise unless you wish to regret your rudeness.”

“You do not know, sir, that a farthing is a kind of bird and very beautiful, therefore there is no contempt in the name,” answered Kmita, laughing; “but noticing your anger you must be terribly in love.”

“But who is not in love?” muttered the testy Shurski. “Pan Zamoyski himself has almost looked his eyes out, and is as if sitting on an awl.”

“I see that, I see that!”

“What do you see? He, I, Grabovski, Stolangyevich, Konoyadzki, Rubetski of the dragoons, Pyechynga—she has sunk us all. And with you it will be the same, if you stay here. With her twenty-four hours are sufficient.”

“Lord brother! with me she could do nothing in twenty-four months.”

“How is that?” asked Shurski, with indignation; “are you made of metal, or what?”

“No! But if someone had stolen the last dollar from your pocket you would not be afraid of a thief.”

“Is that it?” answered Shurski.

Kmita grew gloomy at once, for his trouble came to his mind, and he noticed no longer that the black eyes were looking still more stubbornly at him, as if asking, “What is thy name, whence dost thou come, youthful knight?”

But Shurski muttered: “Bore, bore away! She bored that way into me till she bored to my heart. Now she does not even care.”

Kmita shook himself out of his seriousness.

“Why the hangman does not some one of you marry her?”

“Each one prevents every other.”

“The girl will be left in the lurch,” said Kmita, “though in truth there must be white seeds in that pear yet.”

Shurski opened his eyes, and bending to Kmita’s ear said very mysteriously—

“They say that she is twenty-five, as I love God. She was with Princess Griselda before the incursion of the rabble?”

“Wonder of wonders, I should not give her more than sixteen or eighteen at the most.”

This time the devil (the girl) guessed apparently that they were talking of her, for she covered her gleaming eyes with the lids, and only shot sidelong glances at Kmita, inquiring continually: “Who art thou, so handsome? Whence dost thou come?” And he began involuntarily to twirl his mustache.

After dinner Zamoyski, who from respect to the courtly manners of Kmita treated him as an unusual guest, took him by the arm. “Pan Babinich,” said he, “you have told me that you are from Lithuania?”

“That is true, Pan Zamoyski.”

“Tell me, did you know the Podbipientas?”

“As to knowing I know them not, for they are no longer in the world, at least those who had the arms Tear-Cowl. The last one fell at Zbaraj. He was the greatest knight that Lithuania had. Who of us does not know of Podbipienta?”

“I have heard also of him; but I ask for this reason: There is in attendance on my sister a lady of honorable family. She was the betrothed of this Podbipienta who was killed at Zbaraj. She is an orphan, without father or mother; and though my sister loves her greatly, still, being the natural guardian of my sister, I have in this way the maiden in guardianship.”

“A pleasant guardianship!” put in Kmita.

Zamoyski smiled, winked, and smacked his tongue. “Sweetcakes! isn’t she?”

But suddenly he saw that he was betraying himself, and assumed a serious air.

“Oh, you traitor!” said he, half jestingly, half seriously, “you want to hang me on a hook, and I almost let it out!”

“What?” asked Kmita, looking him quickly in the eyes.

Here Zamoyski saw clearly that in quickness of wit he was not the equal of his guest, and turned the conversation at once.

“That Podbipienta,” said he, “bequeathed her some estates there in your region. I don’t remember the names of them, for they are strange—Baltupie, Syrutsiani, Myshykishki—in a word, all that he had. Would I could remember them! Five or six estates.”

“They are adjoining estates, not separate. Podbipienta was a very wealthy man, and if that lady should come to his fortune she might have her own ladies-in-waiting, and seek for a husband among senators.”

“Do you tell me that? Do you know those places?”

“I know only Lyubovich and Sheputy, for they are near my land. The forest boundary alone is ten miles long, and the fields and meadows are as much more.”

“Where are they?”

“In Vityebsk.”

“Oh, far away! the affair is not worth the trouble, and the country is under the enemy.”

“When we drive out the enemy we shall come to the property. But the Podbipientas have property in other places—in Jmud very considerable, I know, for I have a piece of land there myself.”

“I see that your substance is not a bag of chopped straw.”

“It brings in nothing now. But I need nothing from others.”

“Advise me how to put that maiden on her feet.”

Kmita laughed.

“I prefer to talk over this matter rather than others. It would be better for her to go to Pan Sapyeha. If he would take the affair in hand, he could do a great deal as *voevoda* of Vityebsk and the most noted man in Lithuania. He could send notices to the tribunals that the will was made to Panna Borzobogati, so that Podbipienta’s more distant relatives should not seize the property.”

“That is true; but now there are no tribunals, and Sapyeha has something else in his head.”

“The lady might be placed in his hands and under his guardianship. Having her before his eyes, he would give aid more speedily.”

Kmita looked with astonishment at Zamoyski. “What object has he in wishing to remove her from this place?” thought he.

Zamoyski continued: "It would be difficult for her to live in camp, in the tent of the *voevoda* of Vityebsk; but she might stay with his daughters."

"I do not understand this," thought Kmita; "would he consent to be only her guardian?"

"But here is the difficulty: how can I send her to those parts in the present time of disturbance? Several hundred men would be needed, and I cannot strip Zamost. If I could only find someone to conduct her. Now, you might take her; you are going to Sapyeha. I would give you letters, and you would give me your word of honor to take her in safety."

"I conduct her to Sapyeha?" asked Kmita, in amazement.

"Is the office unpleasant? Even if it should come to love on the road—"

"Ah," said Kmita, "another one is managing my affections; and though the tenant pays nothing, still I do not think of making a change."

"So much the better; with all the greater satisfaction can I confide her to you."

A moment of silence followed.

"Well, will you undertake it?" asked the starosta,

"I am marching with Tartars."

"People tell me that the Tartars fear you worse than fire. Well, what? Will you undertake it?"

"H'm! why not, if thereby I can oblige your grace? But—"

"Ah, you think that the princess must give permission; she will, as God is dear to me! For she—fancy to yourself—she suspects me."

Here the starosta whispered in Kmita's ear; at last he said aloud—

"She was very angry with me for that, and I put my ears aside; for to war with women—behold you! I would rather have the Swedes outside Zamost. But she will have the best proof that I am planning no evil, when I wish to send the girl away. She will be terribly amazed, it is true; but at the first opportunity I'll talk with her touching this matter."

When he had said this, Zamoyski turned and went away. Kmita looked at him, and muttered—

"You are setting some snare, Pan Sobiepan; and though I do not understand the object, I see the snare quickly, for you are a terribly awkward trapper."

Zamoyski was pleased with himself, though he understood well that the work was only half done; and another remained so difficult that at thought of it despair seized him, and even terror. He had to get permission of Princess Griselda, whose severity and penetrating mind Pan Sobiepan feared from his whole soul. But having begun, he wished to bring the work to completion as early as possible; therefore next morning, after Mass, and breakfast, and after he had reviewed the hired German infantry, he went to the chambers of the princess.

He found the lady embroidering a cope for the college. Behind her was Anusia winding silk hung upon two armchairs; a second skein of rose color she had placed around her neck, and moving her hands quickly, she ran around the chairs in pursuit of the unwinding thread.

Zamoyski's eyes grew bright at sight of her; but he assumed quickly a serious look, and greeting the princess, began as if unwillingly—

"That Pan Babinich who has come here with the Tartars is a Lithuanian—a man of importance, a very elegant fellow, a born knight in appearance. Have you noticed him?"

“You brought him to me yourself,” answered the princess, indifferently, “he has an honest face.”

“I asked him concerning that property left Panna Borzobogati. He says it is a fortune almost equal to that of the Radzivils.”

“God grant it to Anusia; her orphanhood will be the lighter, and her old age as well,” said the lady.

“But there is a danger lest distant relatives tear it apart. Babinich says that Sapyeha might occupy himself with it, if he wished. He is an honest man, and very friendly to us: I would confide my own daughter to him. It would be enough for him to send notices to the tribunals, and proclaim the guardianship. But Babinich says it is needful that Panna Anusia should go to those places in person.”

“Where—to Pan Sapyeha?”

“Or to his daughters, so as to be there, that the formal installation might take place.”

The starosta invented at that moment “formal installation,” thinking justly that the princess would accept this counterfeit money instead of true coin. She thought a moment, and asked—

“How could she go now, when Swedes are on the road?”

“I have news that the Swedes have left Lublin. All this side of the Vistula is free.”

“And who would take Anusia to Pan Sapyeha?”

“Suppose this same Babinich.”

“With Tartars? Lord Brother, fear God; those are wild, chaotic people!”

“I am not afraid,” put in Anusia, curtesying.

But Princess Griselda had noted already that her brother came with some plan all prepared; therefore she sent Anusia out of the room, and began to look at Pan Sobiepan with an inquiring gaze. But he said as if to himself—

“These Tartars are down in the dust before Babinich; he hangs them for any insubordination.”

“I cannot permit this journey,” answered the princess. “The girl is honest but giddy, and rouses enthusiasm quickly. You know that best yourself. I would never confide her to a young, unknown man.”

“Unknown here he is not, for who has not heard of the Babiniches as men of high family and steady people? [Zamoyski had never heard of the Babiniches in his life.] Besides,” continued he, “you might give her some sedate woman as companion, and then decorum would be observed. Babinich I guarantee. I tell you this, too, Lady Sister, that he has in those places a betrothed with whom he is, as he tells me himself, in love; and whoso is in love has something else in his head. The foundation of the matter is this, that another such chance may not come for a long time—the fortune may be lost to the girl, and in ripe years she may be without a roof above her.”

The princess ceased embroidering, raised her head, and fixing her penetrating eyes on her brother, asked—

“What reason have you to send her from here?”

“What reason have I?” repeated he, dropping his glance; “what can I have?—none!”

“Yan, you have conspired with Babinich against her virtue!”

“There it is! As God is dear to me, only that was wanting! You will read the letter which I shall send to Sapyeha, and give your own. I will merely say this to you, that I shall not leave Zamost. Finally examine Babinich himself, and ask him whether he will undertake the office.

“The moment you suspect me I step aside.”

“Why do you insist so that she shall leave Zamost?”

“For I wish her good, and it is the question of an immense fortune. Besides, I confess it concerns me much that she should leave Zamost. Your suspicions have grown disagreeable; it is not to my taste that you should be frowning at me forever and looking stern. I thought that in consenting to the departure of the young lady I should find the best argument against suspicions. God knows I have enough of this, for I am no student who steals under windows at night. I tell you more: my officers are enraged one against the other, and shaking their sabres at one another. There is neither harmony, nor order, nor service as there should be. I have enough of this. But since you are boring me with your eyes, then do as you wish; but look after Michael yourself, for that is your affair, not mine.”

“Michael!” exclaimed the astonished princess.

“I say nothing against the girl. She does not disturb him more than others; but if you do not see his arrowy glances and ardent affection, then I tell you this, that Cupid has not such power to blind as a mother’s love.”

Princess Griselda’s brows contracted, and her face grew pale.

Pan Sobiepan, seeing that he had struck home at last, slapped his knees with his hands and continued—

“Lady Sister, thus it is, thus it is! What is the affair to me? Let Michael give her silk to unwind, let his nostrils quiver when he looks at her, let him blush, let him look at her through keyholes! What is that to me? Still, I know—she has a good fortune—her family—well, she is of nobles, and I do not raise myself above nobles. If you want it yourself, all right. Their years are not the same, but again it is not my affair.”

Zamoyski rose, and bowing to his sister very politely, started to go out.

The blood rushed to her face. The proud lady did not see in the whole Commonwealth a match worthy of Vishnyevetski, and abroad, perhaps among the archduchesses of Austria; therefore these words of her brother burned her like iron red hot.

“Yan!” said she, “wait!”

“Lady Sister,” said Zamoyski, “I wished first to give you proof that you suspect me unjustly; second, that you should watch someone besides me. Now you will do as you please; I have nothing more to say.”

Then Pan Zamoyski bowed and went out.

## Chapter LXII

Pan Zamoyski had not uttered pure calumny to his sister when he spoke of Michael's love for Anusia, for the young prince had fallen in love with her, as had all, not excepting the pages of the castle. But that love was not over-violent, and by no means aggressive; it was rather an agreeable intoxication of the head and mind, than an impulse of the heart, which, when it loves, impels to permanent possession of the object beloved. For such action Michael had not the energy.

Nevertheless, Princess Griselda, dreaming of a brilliant future for her son, was greatly terrified at that feeling. In the first moment the sudden consent of her brother to Anusia's departure astonished her; now she ceased thinking of that, so far had the threatening danger seized her whole soul. A conversation with her son, who grew pale and trembled, and who before he had confessed anything shed tears, confirmed her in the supposition that the danger was terrible.

Still she did not conquer her scruples of conscience at once, and it was only when Anusia, who wanted to see a new world, new people, and perhaps also turn the head of the handsome cavalier, fell at her feet with a request for permission, that the princess did not find strength sufficient to refuse.

Anusia, it is true, covered herself with tears at the thought of parting with her mistress and mother; but for the clever girl it was perfectly evident that by asking for the separation she had cleared herself from every suspicion of having with preconceived purpose turned the head of Prince Michael, or even Zamoyski himself.

Princess Griselda, from desire to know surely if there was a conspiracy between her brother and Kmita, directed the latter to come to her presence. Her brother's promise not to leave Zamost had calmed her considerably, it is true; she wished, however, to know more intimately the man who was to conduct the young lady.

The conversation with Kmita set her at rest thoroughly.

There looked from the blue eyes of the young noble such sincerity and truth that it was impossible to doubt him. He confessed at once that he was in love with another, and besides he had neither the wish nor the head for folly. Finally he gave his word as a cavalier that he would guard the lady from every misfortune, even if he had to lay down his head.

"I will take her safely to Pan Sapyeha, for Pan Zamoyski says that the enemy has left Lublin. But I can do no more; not because I hesitate in willing service for your highness, since I am always willing to shed my blood for the widow of the greatest warrior and the glory of the whole Commonwealth, but because I have my own grievous troubles, out of which I know not whether I shall bring my life."

"It is a question of nothing more," answered the princess, "than that you give her into the hands of Pan Sapyeha, and he will not refuse my request to be her guardian."

Here she gave Kmita her hand, which he kissed with the greatest reverence, and she said in parting—

"Be watchful, Cavalier, be watchful, and do not place safety in this, that the country is free of the enemy."



These last words arrested Kmita; but he had no time to think over them, for Zamoyski soon caught him.

“Gracious Knight,” said he, gayly, “you are taking the greatest ornament of Zamost away from me.”

“But at your wish,” answered Kmita.

“Take good care of her. She is a toothsome dainty. Someone may be ready to take her from you.”

“Let him try! Oh, ho! I have given the word of a cavalier to the princess, and with me my word is sacred.”

“Oh, I only say this as a jest. Fear not, neither take unusual caution.”

“Still I will ask of your serene great mightiness a carriage with windows.”

“I will give you two. But you are not going at once, are you?”

“I am in a hurry. As it is, I am here too long.”

“Then send your Tartars in advance to Krasnystav. I will hurry off a courier to have oats ready for them there, and will give you an escort of my own to that place. No evil can happen to you here, for this is my country. I will give you good men of the German dragoons, bold fellows and acquainted with the road. Besides, to Krasnystav the road is as if cut out with a sickle.”

“But why am I to stay here?”

“To remain longer with us; you are a dear guest. I should be glad to detain you a year. Meanwhile I shall send to the herds at Perespa; perhaps some horse will be found which will not fail you in need.”

Kmita looked quickly into the eyes of his host; then, as if making a sudden decision, said—

“I thank you, I will remain, and will send on the Tartars.”

He went straight to give them orders, and taking Akbah Ulan to one side he said—

“Akbah Ulan, you are to go to Krasnystav by the road, straight as if cut with a sickle. I stay here, and a day later will move after you with Zamoyski’s escort. Listen now to what I say! You will not go to Krasnystav, but strike into the first forest, not far from Zamost, so that a living soul may not know of you; and when you hear a shot on the highroad, hurry to me, for they are preparing some trick against me in this place.”

“Your will,” said Akbah Ulan, placing his hand on his forehead, his mouth, and his breast.

“I have seen through you, Pan Zamoyski,” said Kmita to himself. “In Zamost you are afraid of your sister therefore you wish to seize the young lady, and secret her somewhere in the neighborhood, and make of me the instrument of your desires, and who knows if not to take my life. But wait! You found a man keener than yourself; you will fall into your own trap!”

In the evening Lieutenant Shurski knocked at Kmita’s door. This officer, too, knew something, and had his suspicions; and because he loved Anusia he preferred that she should depart, rather than fall into the power of Zamoyski. Still he did not dare to speak openly, and perhaps because he was not sure; but he wondered that Kmita had consented to send the Tartars on in advance; he declared that the roads were not so safe as was said, that everywhere armed bands were wandering—hands swift to deeds of violence.

Pan Andrei decided to feign that he divined nothing. "What can happen to me?" asked he; "besides, Zamoyski gives me his own escort."

"Bah! Germans!"

"Are they not reliable men?"

"Is it possible to depend upon those dog-brothers ever? It has happened that after conspiring on the road they went over to the enemy."

"But there are no Swedes on this side of the Vistula."

"They are in Lublin, the dogs! It is not true that they have left. I advise you honestly not to send the Tartars in advance, for it is always safer in a large company."

"It is a pity that you did not inform me before. I have one tongue in my mouth, and an order given I never withdraw."

Next morning the Tartars moved on. Kmita was to follow toward evening, so as to pass the first night at Krasnystav. Two letters to Pan Sapyeha were given him—one from the princess, the other from her brother.

Kmita had a great desire to open the second, but he dared not; he looked at it, however, before the light, and saw that inside was blank paper. This discovery was proof to him that both the maiden and the letters were to be taken from him on the road.

Meanwhile the horses came from Perespa, and Zamoyski presented the knight with a steed beautiful beyond admiration; the steed he received with thankfulness, thinking in his soul that he would ride farther on him than Zamoyski expected. He thought also of his Tartars, who must now be in the forest, and wild laughter seized him. At times again he was indignant in soul, and promised to give the master of Zamost a lesson.

Finally the hour of dinner came, which passed in great gloom. Anusia had red eyes; the officers were in deep silence. Pan Zamoyski alone was cheerful, and gave orders to fill the goblets; Kmita emptied his, one after another. But when the hour of parting came, not many persons took leave of the travellers, for Zamoyski had sent the officers to their service. Anusia fell at the feet of the princess, and for a long time could not be removed from her; the princess herself had evident disquiet in her face. Perhaps she reproached herself in secret for permitting the departure of a faithful servant at a period when mishap might come easily. But the loud weeping of Michael, who held his fists to his eyes, crying like a schoolboy, confirmed the proud lady in her conviction that it was needful to stifle the further growth of this boyish affection. Besides, she was quieted by the hope that in the family of Sapyeha the young lady would find protection, safety, and also the great fortune which was to settle her fate for the rest of her life.

"I commit her to your virtue, bravery, and honor," said the princess once more to Kmita; "and remember that you have sworn to me to conduct her to Pan Sapyeha without fail."

"I will take her as I would a glass, and in need will wind oakum around her, because I have given my word; death alone will prevent me from keeping it," answered the knight.

He gave his arm to Anusia, but she was angry and did not look at him; he had treated her rather slightly, therefore she gave him her hand very haughtily, turning her face and head in another direction.

She was sorry to depart, and fear seized her; but it was too late then to draw back.

The moment came; they took their seats—she in the carriage with her old servant, Panna Suvalski, he on his horse—and they started. Twelve German horsemen surrounded the

carriage and the wagon with Anusia's effects. When at last the doors in the Warsaw gate squeaked and the rattle of wheels was heard on the drop-bridge, Anusia burst into loud weeping.

Kmita bent toward the carriage. "Fear not, my lady, I will not eat you!"

"Clown!" thought Anusia.

They rode some time along the houses outside the walls, straight toward Old Zamost; then they entered fields and a pinewood, which in those days stretched along a hilly country to the Bug on one side; on the other it extended, interrupted by villages, to Zavihost.

Night had fallen, but very calm and clear; the road was marked by a silver line; only the rolling of the carriage and the tramp of the horses broke the silence.

"My Tartars must be lurking here like wolves in a thicket," thought Kmita.

Then he bent his ear.

"What is that?" asked he of the officer who was leading the escort.

"A tramp! Some horseman is galloping after us!" answered the officer.

He had barely finished speaking when a Cossack hurried up on a foaming horse, crying—

"Pan Babinich! Pan Babinich! A letter from Pan Zamoyski."

The retinue halted. The Cossack gave the letter to Kmita.

Kmita broke the seal, and by the light of a lantern read as follows:—

*"Gracious and dearest Pan Babinich! Soon after the departure of Panna Borzobogati tidings came to us that the Swedes not only have not left Lublin, but that they intend to attack my Zamost. In view of this, further journeying and peregrination become inconvenient. Considering therefore the dangers to which a fair head might be exposed, we wish to have Panna Borzobogati in Zamost. Those same knights will bring her back; but you, who must be in haste to continue your journey, we do not wish to trouble uselessly. Announcing which will of ours to your grace, we beg you to give orders to the horseman according to our wishes."*

"Still he is honest enough not to attack my life; he only wishes to make a fool of me," thought Kmita. "But we shall soon see if there is a trap here or not."

Now Anusia put her head out of the window. "What is the matter?" asked she.

"Nothing! Pan Zamoyski commends you once more to my bravery. Nothing more."

Here he turned to the driver—

"Forward!"

The officer leading the horsemen reined in his horse. "Stop!" cried he to the driver. Then to Kmita, "Why move on?"

"But why halt longer in the forest?" asked Kmita, with the face of a stupid rogue.

"For you have received some order."

"And what is that to you? I have received, and that is why I command to move on."

"Stop!" repeated the officer.

"Move on!" repeated Kmita.

"What is this?" inquired Anusia again.

“We will not go a step farther till I see the order!” said the officer, with decision.

“You will not see the order, for it is not sent to you.”

“Since you will not obey it, I will carry it out. You move on to Krasnystav, and have a care lest we give you something for the road, but we will go home with the lady.”

Kmita only wished the officer to acknowledge that he knew the contents of the order; this proved with perfect certainty that the whole affair was a trick arranged in advance.

“Move on with God!” repeated the officer now, with a threat.

At that moment the horsemen began one after another to take out their sabres.

“Oh, such sons! not to Zamost did you wish to take the maiden, but aside somewhere, so that Pan Zamoyski might give free rein to his wishes; but you have met with a more cunning man!” When Babinich had said this, he fired upward from a pistol.

At this sound there was such an uproar in the forest, as if the shot had roused whole legions of wolves sleeping near by. The howl was heard in front, behind, from the sides. At once the tramp of horses sounded with the cracking of limbs breaking under their hoofs, and on the road were seen black groups of horsemen, who approached with unearthly howling.

“Jesus! Mary! Joseph!” cried the terrified women in the carriage.

Now the Tartars rushed up like a cloud; but Kmita restrained them with a triple cry, and turning to the astonished officer, began to boast—

“Know whom you have met! Pan Zamoyski wished to make a fool of me, a blind instrument. To you he entrusted the functions of a pander, which you undertook, Sir Officer, for the favor of a master. Bow down to Zamoyski from Babinich, and tell him that the maiden will go safely to Pan Sapyeha.”

The officer looked around with frightened glance, and saw the wild faces gazing with terrible eagerness on him and his men. It was evident that they were waiting only for a word to hurl themselves on the twelve horsemen and tear them in pieces.

“Your grace, you will do what you wish, for we cannot manage superior power,” said he, with trembling voice; “but Pan Zamoyski is able to avenge himself.”

Kmita laughed. “Let him avenge himself on you; for had it not come out that you knew the contents of the order and had you not opposed the advance, I should not have been sure of the trick, and should have given you the maiden straightway. Tell the starosta to appoint a keener pander than you.”

The calm tone with which Kmita said this assured the officer somewhat, at least on this point—that death did not threaten either him or his troopers; therefore he breathed easily, and said—

“And must we return with nothing to Zamost?”

“You will return with my letter, which will be written on the skin of each one of you.”

“Your grace—”

“Take them!” cried Kmita; and he seized the officer himself by the shoulder.

An uproar and struggle began around the carriage. The shouts of the Tartars deadened the cries for assistance and the screams of terror coming from the breasts of the women.

But the struggle did not last long, for a few minutes later the horsemen were lying on the road tied, one at the side of the other.

Kmita gave command to flog them with bullock-skin whips, but not beyond measure, so that they might retain strength to walk back to Zamost. The common soldiers received one hundred, and the officer a hundred and fifty lashes, in spite of the prayers and entreaties of Anusia, who not knowing what was passing around her, and thinking that she had fallen into terrible hands, began to implore with joined palms and tearful eyes for her life.

“Spare my life, knight! In what am I guilty before you? Spare me, spare me!”

“Be quiet, young lady!” roared Kmita.

“In what have I offended?”

“Maybe you are in the plot yourself?”

“In what plot? O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

“Then you did not know that Pan Zamoyski only permitted your departure apparently, so as to separate you from the princess and carry you off on the road, to make an attempt on your honor in some empty castle?”

“O Jesus of Nazareth!” screamed Anusia.

And there was so much truth and sincerity in that cry that Kmita said more mildly—

“How is that? Then you were not in the plot? That may be!”

Anusia covered her face with her hands, but she could say nothing; she merely repeated, time after time—

“Jesus, Mary! Jesus, Mary!”

“Calm yourself,” said Kmita, still more mildly. “You will go in safety to Pan Sapyeha, for Pan Zamoyski did not know with whom he had to deal. See, those men whom they are flogging were to carry you off. I give them their lives, so that they may tell Pan Zamoyski how smoothly it went with them.”

“Then have you defended me from shame?”

“I have, though I did not know whether you would be glad.”

Anusia, instead of making answer or contradiction, seized Pan Andrei’s hand and pressed it to her pale lips; and sparks went from his feet to his head.

“Give peace, for God’s sake!” cried he. “Sit in the carriage, for you will wet your feet—and be not afraid! You would not be better cared for with your mother.”

“I will go now with you even to the end of the world.”

“Do not say such things.”

“God will reward you for defending honor.”

“It is the first time that I have had the opportunity,” said Kmita. And then he muttered in an undertone to himself: “So far I have defended her as much as a cat sheds tears.”

Meanwhile the Tartars had ceased to beat the horsemen and Pan Andrei gave command to drive them naked and bloody along the road toward Zamost. They went, weeping bitterly. Their horses, weapons, and clothing Kmita gave his Tartars; and then moved on quickly, for it was unsafe to loiter.

On the road the young knight could not restrain himself from looking into the carriage to gaze at the flashing eyes and wonderful face of the maiden. He asked each time if she did not need something, if the carriage was convenient, or the quick travelling did not tire her too much.

She answered, with thankfulness, that it was pleasant to her as it had never been. She had recovered from her terror completely. Her heart rose in gratitude to her defender, and she thought: "He is not so rude and surly as I held at first."

"*Ai*, Olenka, what do I suffer for you!" said Kmita to himself; "do you not feed me with ingratitude? Had this been in old times, *u-ha!*"

Then he remembered his comrades and the various deeds of violence which he had committed in company with them; then he began to drive away temptation, began to repeat for their unhappy souls, "Eternal rest."

When they had reached Krasnystav, Kmita considered it better not to wait for news from Zamost, and went on farther. But at parting he wrote and sent to Zamoyski the following letter:—

*Serene Great Mighty Lord Starosta,<sup>35</sup> and to me very Gracious Favourer and Benefactor! Whomsoever God has made great in the world, to him He deals out wit in more bountiful measure. I knew at once that you, Serene Great Mighty Lord, only wished to put me on trial, when you sent the order to give up Panna Borzobogati. I knew this all the better when the horsemen betrayed that they knew the substance of the order, though I did not show them the letter, and though you wrote to me that the idea came to you only after my departure. As on the one hand I admire all the more your penetration, so on the other, to put the careful guardian more completely at rest, I promise anew that nothing will suffice to lead me away from fulfilling the function imposed on me. But since those soldiers, evidently misunderstanding your intention, turned out to be great ruffians, and even threatened my life, I think that I should have hit upon your thought if I had commanded to hang them. Because I did not do so, I beg your forgiveness; still I gave orders to flog them properly with bullock-skin whips, which punishment, if your Great Mighty Lordship considers it too small, you can increase according to your will. With this, hoping that I have earned the increased confidence and gratitude of your Serene Great Mighty Lordship, I subscribe myself the faithful and well-wishing servant of your Serene Great Mighty Lordship.*

*Babinich.*

The dragoons, when they had dragged themselves to Zamost late at night, did not dare to appear before the eyes of their master; therefore he learned of the whole matter from this letter which the Krasnystav Cossack brought next day.

After he had read Kmita's letter, Zamoyski shut himself up in his rooms for three days, admitting no attendant save the chamber servants, who brought him his food. They heard, also, how he swore in French, which he did only when he was in the greatest fury.

By degrees, however, the storm was allayed. On the fourth day and fifth Zamoyski was still very silent; he was ruminating over something and pulling at his mustache; in a week, when he was very pleasant and had drunk a little at table, he began to twirl his mustache, not to pull it, and said to Princess Griselda—

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<sup>35</sup> Zamoyski was starosta of Kaluj.

“Lady Sister, you know that there is no lack of penetration in me; a couple of days ago I tested of purpose that noble who took Anusia, and I can assure you that he will take her faithfully to Pan Sapyeha.”

About a month later, as it seems, Pan Sobiepan turned his heart in another direction; and besides he became altogether convinced that what had happened, happened with his will and knowledge.

## Chapter LXIII

The province of Lyubelsk and the greater part of Podlyasye were almost completely in the hands of Poles, that is, of the confederates and Sapyeha's men. Since the King of Sweden remained in Prussia, where he was treating with the elector, the Swedes, not feeling very powerful in presence of the general uprising, which increased every day, dared not come out of the towns and castles, and still less to cross to the eastern side of the Vistula, where the Polish forces were greatest. In those two provinces, therefore, the Poles were laboring to form a considerable and well-ordered army, able to meet the regular soldiers of Sweden. In the provincial towns they were training infantry, and since the peasants in general had risen, there was no lack of volunteers; it was only necessary to organize in bodies and regular commands those chaotic masses of men frequently dangerous to their own country.

The district captains betook themselves to this labor. Besides, the king had issued a number of commissions to old and tried soldiers; troops were enrolled in all provinces, and since there was no lack of military people in those regions, squadrons of perfect cavalry were formed. Some went west of the Vistula, others to Charnyetski, still others to Sapyeha. Such multitudes had taken arms that Yan Kazimir's forces were already more numerous than those of the Swedes.

A country over whose weakness all Europe had recently wondered, gave now an example of power unsuspected, not only by its enemies, but by its own king, and even by those whose faithful hearts, a few months before, had been rent by pain and despair. Money was found, as well as enthusiasm and bravery; the most despairing souls were convinced that there is no position, no fall, no weakness from which there may not be a deliverance, and that when children are born consolation cannot die.

Kmita went on without hindrance, gathering on his road unquiet spirits, who joined the *chambul* with readiness, hoping to find most blood and plunder in company with the Tartars. These he changed easily into good and prompt soldiers, for he had the gift to make his subordinates fear and obey. He was greeted joyously on the road, and that by reason of the Tartars; for the sight of them convinced men that the Khan was indeed coming with succor to the Commonwealth. It was declaimed openly that forty thousand chosen Tartar cavalry were marching to strengthen Sapyeha. Wonders were told of the "modesty" of these allies—how they committed no violence or murder on the road. They were shown as an example to the soldiers of the country.

Pan Sapyeha was quartered temporarily at Byala. His forces were composed of about ten thousand regular troops, cavalry and infantry. They were the remnants of the Lithuanian armies, increased by new men. The cavalry, especially some of the squadrons, surpassed in valor and training the Swedish horsemen; but the infantry were badly trained, and lacked firearms, powder, and cannon. Sapyeha had thought to find these in Tykotsin; but the Swedes, by blowing themselves up with the powder, destroyed at the same time all the cannons of the castle.

Besides these forces there were in the neighborhood of Byala twelve thousand general militia from all Lithuania, Mazovia, and Podlyasye; but from few of these did the *voevoda* promise himself service, especially since having an immense number of wagons they hindered movement and turned the army into a clumsy, unwieldy multitude.



Kmita thought of one thing in entering Byala. There were under Sapyeha so many nobles from Lithuania and so many of Radzivill's officers, his former acquaintances, that he feared they would recognize him and cut him to pieces before he could cry, "Jesus! Mary!"

His name was detested in Sapyeha's camp and in all Lithuania; for men still preserved in vivid remembrance the fact that while serving Prince Yanush, he had cut down those squadrons which, opposing the hetman, had declared for the country.

Pan Andrei had changed much, and this gave him comfort. First, he had become thin; second, he had the scar on his face from Boguslav's bullet; finally, he wore a beard, rather long, pointed in Swedish fashion, and his mustache he combed upward, so that he was more like some Erickson than a Polish noble.

"If there is not a tumult against me at once, men will judge me differently after the first battle," thought Kmita, when entering Byala.

He arrived in the evening, announced who he was, whence he had come, that he was bearing letters from the king, and asked a special audience of the *voevoda*.

The *voevoda* received him graciously because of the warm recommendation of the king, who wrote—

*"We send to you our most faithful servant, who is called the Hector of Chenstohova, from the time of the siege of that glorious place; and he has saved our freedom and life at the risk of his own during our passage through the mountains. Have him in special care, so that no injustice come to him from the soldiers. We know his real name, and the reasons for which he serves under an assumed one; no man is to hold him in suspicion because of this change, or suspect him of intrigues."*

"But is it not possible to know why you bear an assumed name?" asked the *voevoda*.

"I am under sentence, and cannot make levies in my own name. The king gave me a commission, and I can make levies as Babinich."

"Why do you want levies if you have Tartars?"

"For a greater force would not be in the way."

"And why are you under sentence?"

"Under the command and protection of whomsoever I go, him I ought to tell all as to a father. My real name is Kmita."

The *voevoda* pushed back a couple of steps—

"He who promised Boguslav to carry off our king, living or dead?"

Kmita related with all his energy how and what had happened—how, befogged by Prince Yanush, he had served the Radzivills; how he had learned their real purposes from the mouth of Boguslav, and then carried off the latter and thus incurred his implacable vengeance.

The *voevoda* believed, for he could not refuse belief, especially since the king's letter confirmed the truth of Kmita's words. Besides, his soul was so delighted in the *voevoda* that he would at that moment have pressed his worst enemy to his heart and forgiven his greatest offence. This delight was caused by the following passage in the king's letter:—

*"Though the grand baton of Lithuania, unused now after the death of the voevoda of Vilna, can by usual procedure be given to a successor only at the Diet, still in the present extraordinary circumstances, disregarding the usual course, We give this baton to you, greatly cherished by us, for the good of the Commonwealth and your memorable services,*

*thinking justly that, God giving peace, no voice at the coming Diet will be raised against this our choice, and that our act will find general approval."*

Pan Sapyeha, as was said then in the Commonwealth, "had pawned his coat and sold his last silver spoon;" he had not served his country for profit, nor for honors. But even the most disinterested man is glad to see that his services are appreciated, that they are rewarded with gratitude, that his virtue is recognized. Therefore Sapyeha's serious face was uncommonly radiant.

This act of the king adorned the house of Sapyeha with new splendor; and to this no "kinglet" of that time was indifferent—it were well had there been none to strive for elevation *per nefas* (through injustice). Therefore Pan Sapyeha was ready to do for the king what was in his power and what was out of his power.

"Since I am hetman," said he to Kmita, "you come under my jurisdiction and are under my guardianship. There is a multitude here of the general militia, hence tumult is near; therefore do not show yourself overmuch till I warn the soldiers, and remove that calumny which Boguslav cast on you."

Kmita thanked him from his heart, and then spoke of Anusia, whom he had brought to Byala. In answer the hetman fell to scolding, but being in excellent humor he scolded joyously.

"You made a fool of Sobiepan, as God is dear to me! He sits there with his sister inside the walls of Zamost, as with the Lord God, behind the stove, and thinks that everyone can do as he does—raise the skirts of his coat, turn to the fire, and warm his back. I know the Podbipientas, for they are related to the Bjostovskis, and the Bjostovskis to me. The fortune is a lordly one, that is not to be denied; but though war with the Northerners has weakened it for a time, still people are alive yet in those regions. Where can anything be found, where any courts, any officers? Who will take the property and put the young lady in possession? They have gone stark mad! Boguslav is sitting on my shoulders; I have my duties in the army, but they would have me fill my head with women."

"She is not a woman, but a cherry," said Kmita. "She is nothing however to me. They asked me to bring her here; I have brought her. They asked me to give her to you; I give her."

The hetman then took Kmita by the ear and said: "But who knows, protector, in what form you have brought her? God preserve us, people may say that from the guardianship of Sapyeha she has suffered; and I, old man, shall have to keep my eyes open. What did you do at the stopping-places? Tell me right away, Pagan, did you not learn from your Tartars some heathen customs?"

"At the stopping-places," answered Kmita, jestingly, "I commanded my attendants to plough my skin with discipline, so as to drive out the less worthy motives, which have their seat under the skin, and which I confess were plaguing me worse than horseflies."

"Ah, you see—Is she a worthy maiden?"

"Really so; and terribly pretty."

"And the Turk was at hand?"

"But she is as honest as a nun; that I must say for her. And as to suffering I think that would come sooner from the Zamoyski guardianship than from you."

Here Kmita told what had taken place and how. Then the hetman fell to clapping him on the shoulder and laughing—

“Well, you are a crafty fellow! Not in vain do they tell so much of Kmita. Have no fear! Pan Zamoyski is not a stubborn man, and he is my friend. His first anger will pass, and he will even laugh at it himself and reward you.”

“I need no reward!” interrupted Kmita.

“It is well that you have ambition and are not looking for favor. Only serve me against Boguslav, and you will not need to think of past outlawry.”

Sapyeha was astonished when he looked at the soldier’s face, which a moment before was so open and joyous. Kmita at mention of Boguslav grew pale in an instant, and his face took on wrinkles like the face of a dog, when preparing to bite.

“Would that the traitor were poisoned with his own spittle, if he could only fall into my hands before his death!” said he, gloomily.

“I do not wonder at your venom. Have a care, though, that your anger does not choke your adroitness, for you have to deal with no common man. It is well that the king sent you hither. You will attack Boguslav for me, as you once did Hovanski.”

“I will attack him better!” said Kmita, with the same gloom.

With this the conversation ended. Kmita went away to sleep in his quarters, for he was wearied from the road.

Meanwhile the news spread through the army that the king had sent the baton to their beloved chief. Joy burst out like a flame among thousands of men. The officers of various squadrons hurried to the quarters of the hetman. The sleeping town sprang up from its slumber. Bonfires were kindled. Standard-bearers came with their standards. Trumpets sounded and kettledrums thundered; discharges from muskets and cannon roared. Pan Sapyeha ordered a lordly feast, and they applauded the whole night through, drinking to the health of the king, the hetman, and to the coming victory over Boguslav.

Pan Andrei, as was agreed, was not present at the feast.

The hetman at the table began a conversation about Boguslav, and not telling who that officer was who had come with the Tartars and brought the baton, he spoke in general of the perversity of Boguslav.

“Both Radzivills,” said he, “were fond of intrigues, but Prince Boguslav goes beyond his dead cousin. You remember, gentlemen, Kmita, or at least you have heard of him. Now imagine to yourselves, what Boguslav reported—that Kmita offered to raise his hand on the king our lord—was not true.”

“Still Kmita helped Yanush to cut down good cavaliers.”

“It is true that he helped Yanush; but at last he saw what he was doing, and then not only did he leave the service, but as you know, being a man of daring, he attacked Boguslav. It was close work there for the young prince, and he barely escaped with his life from Kmita’s hands.”

“Kmita was a great soldier!” answered many voices.

“The prince through revenge invented against him a calumny at which the soul shudders.”

“The devil could not have invented a keener!”

“Do you know that I have in my hands proofs in black and white that that was revenge for the change in Kmita?”

“To put infamy in such a way on anyone’s name! Only Boguslav could do that! To sink such a soldier!”

“I have heard this,” continued the hetman: “Kmita, seeing that nothing remained for him to do in this region, hurried off to Chenstohova, rendered there famous services, and then defended the king with his own breast.”

Hearing this, the same soldiers who would have cut Kmita to pieces with their sabres began to speak of him more and more kindly.

“Kmita will not forgive the calumny, he is not such a man; he will fall on Boguslav.”

“Boguslav has insulted all soldiers, by casting such infamy on one of them.”

“Kmita was cruel and violent, but he was not a parricide.”

“He will have vengeance!”

“We will be first to take vengeance for him!”

“If you, serene great mighty hetman, guarantee this with your office, it must have been so.”

“It was so!” said the hetman.

And they lacked little of drinking Kmita’s health. But in truth there were very violent voices against this, especially among the former officers of Radzivill. Hearing these, the hetman said—

“And do you know, gentlemen, how this Kmita comes to my mind? Babinich, the king’s courier, resembles him much. At the first moment I was mistaken myself.”

Here Sapyeha began to look around with more severity and to speak with greater seriousness—

“Though Kmita were to come here himself, since he has changed, since he has defended a holy place with immense bravery, I should defend him with my office of hetman. I ask you therefore, gentlemen, to raise no disturbance here by reason of this newly arrived. I ask you to remember that he has come here by appointment of the king and the Khan. But especially do I recommend this to you who are captains in the general militia, for with you it is harder to preserve discipline.”

Whenever Sapyeha spoke thus, Zagloba alone dared to murmur, all others would sit in obedience, and so they sat now; but when the hetman’s face grew gladsome again, all rejoiced. The goblets moving swiftly filled the measure of rejoicing, and the whole town was thundering till morning, so that the walls of houses were shaking on their foundation, and the smoke of salutes veiled them, as in time of battle.

Next morning Sapyeha sent Anusia to Grodno with Pan Kotchyts. In Grodno, from which Hovanski had long since withdrawn, the *voevoda*’s family was living.

Poor Anusia, whose head the handsome Babinich had turned somewhat, took farewell of him very tenderly; but he was on his guard, and only at the very parting did he say to her—

“Were it not for one devil which sits in my heart like a thorn, I should surely have fallen in love with you to kill.”

Anusia thought to herself that there is no splinter which may not be picked out with patience and a needle; but she feared somewhat this Babinich, therefore she said nothing, sighed quietly, and departed.

## Chapter LXIV

A week after the departure of Anusia with Kotchyts, Sapyeha's camp was still at Byala. Kmita, with the Tartars, was ordered to the neighborhood of Rokitno; he was resting too, for the horses needed food and rest after the long road. Prince Michael Kazimir Radzivill, the owner of the place by inheritance, came also to Byala; he was a powerful magnate of the Nyesveyj branch of Radzivills, of whom it was said that they had inherited from the Kishkis alone seventy towns and four hundred villages. This Radzivill resembled in nothing his kinsmen of Birji. Not less ambitious perhaps than they, but differing in faith, an ardent patriot, and an adherent of the lawful king, he joined with his whole soul the confederacy of Tyshovtsi, and strengthened it as best he could. His immense possessions were, it is true, greatly ravaged by the last war, but still he stood at the head of considerable forces and brought the hetman no small aid.

Not so much, however, did the number of his soldiers weigh in the balance as the fact that Radzivill stood against Radzivill; in this way the last seeming of justice was taken from Boguslav, and his acts were covered with the open character of invasion and treason.

Therefore Sapyeha saw Prince Michael in his camp with delight. He was certain now that he would overcome Boguslav, for he surpassed him much in power; but according to his custom he weighed his plans slowly, stopped, considered, and summoned councils of officers.

Kmita also was at these councils. He so hated the name Radzivill that at first sight of Prince Michael he trembled from anger and rage; but Michael knew how to win people by his countenance alone, on which beauty was united with kindness. The great qualities of this Radzivill, the grievous times which he had recently passed while defending the country from Zolotarenko and Serobryani, his genuine love for the king, made him one of the most honorable cavaliers of his time. His very presence in the camp of Sapyeha, the rival of the house of Radzivill, testified how far the young prince knew how to sacrifice private to public affairs. Whoso knew him was forced to love him. This feeling could not be resisted even by the passionate Kmita, despite his first opposition.

Finally the prince captivated the heart of Pan Andrei by his advice.

This advice was not merely to move against Boguslav, but to move without negotiations, to dash upon him at once: "Do not let him take castles; give him neither rest nor chance to draw breath; make war upon him with his own method." In such decision the prince saw speedy and certain victory.

"It cannot be that Karl Gustav has not moved also; we must have our hands free, therefore, as soon as possible, and hasten to succor Charnyetski."

Of the same opinion was Kmita, who had been fighting three days with his old evil habit of self-will so as to restrain himself from advancing without orders.

But Sapyeha liked to act with certainty, he feared every inconsiderate step; therefore he determined to wait for surer intelligence.

And the hetman had his reasons. The reported expedition of Boguslav against Podlyasye might be only a snare, a trick of war. Perhaps it was a feigned expedition with small forces, to prevent the junction of Sapyeha with the king. That done, Boguslav would escape from before Sapyeha, receiving battle nowhere, or delaying; but meanwhile Karl Gustav with the elector would strike Charnyetski, crush him with superior forces, move against the king

himself, and smother the work in its inception—the work of defence created by the glorious example of Chenstohova. Sapyeha was not only a leader, but a statesman. He explained his reasons with power at the councils, so that even Kmita was forced in his soul to agree with him. First of all, it was incumbent to know what course to take. If Boguslav's invasion proved to be merely a trick, it was sufficient to send a number of squadrons against him, and move with all speed to Charnyetski against the chief power of the enemy. The hetman might leave boldly a few or even more squadrons, for his forces were not all around Byala. Young Pan Krishtof, or the so-called Kryshhtofek Sapyeha, was posted with two light squadrons and a regiment of infantry at Yavorov; Horotkyevich was moving around Tykotsin, having under him half a dragoon regiment very well trained, and five hundred volunteers, besides a light horse squadron named for Sapyeha; and in Byalystok were land infantry.

These forces would more than suffice to stand against Boguslav, if he had only a few hundred horses.

But the clear-sighted hetman sent couriers in every direction and waited for tidings.

At last tidings came; but like thunderbolts, and all the more so that by a peculiar concurrence of circumstances all came in one evening.

They were just at council in the castle of Byala when an officer of orderlies entered and gave a letter to the hetman. Barely had the hetman cast eyes on it when he changed in the face and said—

“My relative is cut to pieces at Yavorov by Boguslav himself; hardly has he escaped with his life.”

A moment of silence followed.

“The letter is written in Bransk, in fright and confusion,” said he; “therefore it contains not a word touching Boguslav's power, which must, I think, be considerable, since, as I read, two squadrons and a regiment of infantry are cut to pieces. It must be, however, that Boguslav fell on them unawares. The letter gives nothing positive.”

“I am certain now,” said Prince Michael, “that Boguslav wants to seize all Podlyasye, so as to make of it a separate or feudal possession in the treaties. Therefore he has surely come with as much power as he could possibly get. I have no other proofs save a knowledge of Boguslav. He cares neither for the Swedes nor the Brandenburgers, only for himself. He is an uncommon warrior, who trusts in his fortunate star. He wants to win a province, to avenge Yanush, to cover himself with glory; and to do this he must have a corresponding power, and has it, otherwise he would not march on us.”

“For everything the blessing of God is indispensable,” said Oskyerko; “and the blessing is with us!”

“Serene great mighty hetman,” said Kmita, “information is needed. Let me loose from the leash with my Tartars, and I will bring you information.”

Oskyerko, who had been admitted to the secret and knew who Babinich was, supported the proposal at once and with vigor.

“As God is good to me, that is the best idea in the world! Such a man is needed there, and such troops. If only the horses are rested.”

Here Oskyerko was stopped, for the officer of orderlies entered the room again.

“Serene great mighty hetman!” said he.

Sapyeha slapped his knees and exclaimed. “They have news! Admit them.”

After a while two light-horsemen entered, tattered and muddy.

“From Horotkyevich?” asked Sapyeha.

“Yes.”

“Where is he now?”

“Killed, or if not killed, we know not where he is.”

The hetman rose, but sat down again and inquired calmly—

“Where is the squadron?”

“Swept away by Prince Boguslav.”

“Were many lost?”

“We were cut to pieces; maybe a few were left who were taken captive like us. Some say that the colonel escaped; but that he is wounded I saw myself. We escaped from captivity.”

“Where were you attacked?”

“At Tykotsin.”

“Why did you not go inside the walls, not being in force?”

“Tykotsin is taken.”

The hetman covered his eyes for a moment with his hand, then he began to pass his hand over his forehead.

“Is there a large force with Boguslav?”

“Four thousand cavalry, besides infantry and cannon; the infantry very well trained. The cavalry moved forward, taking us with them; but luckily we escaped.”

“Whence did you escape?”

“From Drohichyn.”

Sapyeha opened wide his eyes. “You are drunk. How could Boguslav come to Drohichyn? When did he defeat you?”

“Two weeks ago.”

“And is he in Drohichyn?”

“His scouting-parties are. He remained in the rear himself, for some convoy is captured which Pan Kotchyts was conducting.”

“He was conducting Panna Borzobogati!” cried Kmita.

A silence followed. Boguslav’s success, and so sudden, had confused the officers beyond measure. All thought in their hearts that the hetman was to blame for delay, but no one dared say so aloud.

Sapyeha, however, felt that he had done what was proper, and had acted wisely. Therefore he recovered first from the surprise, sent out the men with a wave of his hand, and said—

“These are ordinary incidents of war, which should confuse no one. Do not think, gentlemen, that we have suffered any defeat. Those regiments are a loss surely; but the loss might have been a hundred times greater if Boguslav had enticed us to a distant province. He is coming to us. We will go out to meet him like hospitable hosts.”

Here he turned to the colonels: "According to my orders all must be ready to move?"

"They are ready," said Oskyerko. "Only saddle the horses and sound the trumpet."

"Sound it today. We move in the morning at dawn, without fail. Pan Babinich will gallop ahead with his Tartars, and seize with all haste informants."

Kmita had barely heard this when he was outside the door, and a moment later hurrying on as his horse could gallop to Rokitno.

And Sapyeha also did not delay long.

It was still night when the trumpets gave out their prolonged sounds; then cavalry and infantry poured forth into the field; after them stretched a long train of squeaking wagons. The first gleams of day were reflected on musket-barrels and spear-points.

And they marched, regiment after regiment, squadron after squadron, in great regularity. The cavalry sang their matins, and the horses snorted sharply in the morning coolness, from which the soldiers predicted sure victory for themselves.

Their hearts were full of consolation; for the knighthood knew from experience that Sapyeha weighed everything, that he labored with his head, that he considered every undertaking from both sides, that when he began a thing he would finish it, and when he moved he would strike.

At Rokitno the lairs of the Tartars were cold; they had gone the night before, hence must have pushed far in advance. It surprised Sapyeha that along the road it was difficult to learn anything of them, though the division, numbering, with volunteers, several hundred, could not pass without being seen.

The most experienced officers wondered greatly at this march, and at Pan Babinich for being able to lead in such fashion.

"Like a wolf he goes through the willows, and like a wolf he will bite," said they; "he is as if born for the work."

But Oskyerko, who, as has been said, knew who Babinich was, said to Sapyeha—

"It was not for nothing that Hovanski put a price on his head. God will give victory to whom he chooses; but this is sure, that war with us will soon be bitter for Boguslav."

"But it is a pity that Babinich has vanished as if he had fallen into water," answered the hetman.

Three days passed without tidings. Sapyeha's main forces had reached Drohichyn, had crossed the Bug, and found no enemy in front. The hetman began to be disturbed. According to the statements of the light horse, Boguslav's scouts had reached Drohichyn; it was evident therefore that Boguslav had determined to withdraw. But what was the meaning of this withdrawal? Had Boguslav learned that Sapyeha's forces were superior, and was he afraid to measure strength with him, or did he wish to entice the hetman far toward the north, to lighten for the King of Sweden his attack on Charnyetski and the hetmans of the kingdom? Babinich was to find an informant and let the hetman know. The reports of the light horse as to the number of Boguslav's troops might be erroneous; hence the need of precise information at the earliest.

Meanwhile five days more passed, and Babinich gave no account of himself. Spring was coming; the days were growing warmer; the snow was melting. The neighborhoods were being covered with water, under which were sleeping morasses which hindered the march in an unheard of degree. The greater part of the cannons and wagons the hetman had to leave in



Drohichyn, and go farther on horseback. Hence great inconvenience and murmuring, especially among the general militia. In Bransk they came upon such mud that even the infantry could not march farther. The hetman collected on the road horses from peasants and small nobles, and seated musketeers on them. The light cavalry took others; but they had gone too far already, and the hetman understood that only one thing remained—to advance with all speed.

Boguslav retreated unceasingly. Along the road they found continual traces of him in villages burned here and there, in corpses of men hanging on trees. The small local nobles came every little while with information to Sapyeha; but the truth was lost, as is usual in contradictory statements. One saw a single squadron, and swore that the prince had no more troops; another saw two; a third three, a fourth an army five miles long. In a word they were fables such as men tell who know nothing of armies or war.

They had seen Tartars, too, here and there; but the stories concerning them seemed most improbable, for it was said that they were seen not behind the prince's army, but in front, marching ahead. Sapyeha panted angrily when anyone mentioned Babinich in his presence, and he said to Oskyerko—

“You overrated him. In an evil hour I sent away Volodyovski, for if he were here I should have had long ago as many informants as I need; but Babinich is a whirlwind, or even worse. Who knows, he may in truth have joined Boguslav and be marching in the vanguard.”

Oskyerko himself did not know what to think. Meanwhile another week passed; the army had come to Bialystok.

It was midday.

Two hours later the vanguard gave notice that some detachment was approaching.

“It may be Babinich!” cried the hetman. “I’ll give him *Pater Noster*!”

It was not Babinich himself. But in the camp there rose such commotion over the arrival of this detachment that Sapyeha went out to see what was taking place.

Meanwhile officers from different squadrons flew in, crying—

“From Babinich! Prisoners! A whole band! He seized a crowd of men!”

Indeed the hetman saw a number of tens of men on poor, ragged horses. Babinich's Tartars drove nearly three hundred men with bound hands, beating them with bullock-skin whips. The prisoners presented a terrible sight. They were rather shadows than men. With torn clothing, half naked, so poor that the bones were pushing through their skin, bloody, they marched half alive, indifferent to all things, even to the whistle of the whips which cut them, and to the wild shouts of the Tartars.

“What kind of men are they?” asked the hetman.

“Boguslav's troops!” answered one of Kmita's volunteers who had brought the prisoners together with the Tartars.

“But where did you get so many?”

“Nearly half as many more fell on the road, from exhaustion.”

With this an old Tartar, a sergeant in the horde, approached, and beating with the forehead, gave a letter from Kmita to Sapyeha.

The hetman, without delay, broke the seal and began to read aloud:—

*“Serene great mighty hetman! If I have sent neither news nor informants with news hitherto, it is because I went in front, and not in the rear of Prince Boguslav’s army, and I wished to learn the most possible.”*

The hetman stopped reading.

“That is a devil!” said he. “Instead of following the prince, he went ahead of him.”

“May the bullets strike him!” added Oskyerko, in an undertone.

The hetman read on.

*“It was dangerous work, as Boguslav’s scouts marched in a wide front; but after I had cut down two parties and spared none. I worked to the van of the army, from which movement great confusion came upon the prince, for he fell to thinking at once that he was surrounded, and as it were was crawling into a trap.”*

“That is the reason of this unexpected withdrawal!” cried the hetman. “A devil, a genuine devil!” He read on with still more curiosity—

*“The prince, not understanding what had happened, began to lose his head, and sent out party after party, which we cut up notably, so that none of them returned in the same number. Marching in advance, we seized provisions, cut dams, destroyed bridges, so that Boguslav’s men advanced with great trouble, neither sleeping nor eating, having rest neither day nor night. They could not stir from the camp, for the Tartars seized the unwary; and when the camp was sleeping, the Tartars howled terribly in the willows; so the enemy, thinking that a great army was moving on them, had to stand under arms all night. The prince was brought to great despair, not knowing what to begin, where to go, how to turn—for this reason it is needful to march on him quickly, before his fear passes. He had six thousand troops, but has lost nearly a thousand. His horses are dying. His cavalry is good; his infantry is passable; God, however, has granted that from day to day it decreases, and if our army comes up it will fly apart. I seized in Bialystok the prince’s carriages, some of his provision chests and things of value, with two cannons; but I was forced to throw most of these into the river. The traitor from continual rage has grown seriously ill, and is barely able to sit on his horse; fever leaves him neither night nor day. Panna Borzobogati is taken, but being ill the prince can make no attack on her honor. These reports, with the account of Boguslav’s desperation, I got from the prisoners whom my Tartars touched up with fire, and who if they are touched again will repeat the truth. Now I commend my obedient services to you, serene great mighty hetman, begging for forgiveness if I have erred, the Tartars are good fellows, and seeing a world of plunder, serve marvellously.”*

“Serene great mighty lord,” said Oskyerko, “now you surely regret less that Volodyovski is away, for he could not equal this devil incarnate. Oh, he is an ambitious piece; he even hurled the truth into the eyes of Prince Yanush, not caring whether it was pleasant or unpleasant for that hetman to hear it. This was his style with Hovanski, but Hovanski had fifteen times more troops.”

“If that is true, we need to advance at the greatest speed,” said Sapyeha.

“Before the prince can collect his wits.”

“Let us move on, by the dear God! Babinich will cut the dams, and we will overtake Boguslav!”

Meanwhile the prisoners, whom the Tartars had kept in a group in front of Sapyeha, seeing the hetman, fell to groaning and weeping, showing their misery and calling for mercy in various tongues; for there were among them Swedes, Germans, and the Scottish guards of

Prince Boguslav. Sapyeha took them from the Tartars, and gave command to feed them and take their testimony without torture. Their statements confirmed the truth of Kmita's words; therefore the rest of Sapyeha's army advanced at great speed.

## Chapter LXV

Kmita's next report came from Sokolka, and was brief:

*"The prince, to mislead our troops, has feigned a march toward Shchuchyn, whither he has sent a party. He has gone himself with his main force to Yanov, and has received there a reinforcement of infantry, led by Captain Kyritz, eight hundred good men. From the place where we are the prince's fires are visible. In Yanov he intends to rest one week. The prisoners say that he is ready for battle. The fever is shaking him continually."*

On receipt of this statement Sapyeha, leaving the remainder of his cannon and wagons, moved on with cavalry to Sokolka; and at last the two armies stood eye to eye. It was foreseen too that a battle was unavoidable; for on one side they could flee no longer, the others pursuing. Meanwhile, like wrestlers who after a long chase are to seize each other by the bodies, they lay opposite each other, catching breath in their panting throats, and resting.

When the hetman saw Kmita he seized him by the shoulders, and said—

"I was angry with you for not giving an account of yourself for so long, but I see that you have accomplished more than I could hope for; and if God gives victory, not mine but yours will be the merit. You went like an angel guardian after Boguslav."

An ill-omened light gleamed in Kmita's eyes. "If I am his angel guardian, I must be present at his death."

"God will order that," said the hetman, seriously; "but if you wish the Lord to bless you, then pursue the enemy of the country, not your own."

Kmita bowed in silence; but it could not be learned whether the beautiful words of the hetman made any impression on him. His face expressed implacable hatred, and was the more threatening that the toil of pursuit after Boguslav had emaciated it still more. Formerly in that countenance was depicted only daring and insolent wildness; now it had become also stern and inexorable. You could easily see that he against whom that man had recorded vengeance in his soul ought to guard himself, even if he were Radzivill.

He had, in truth, avenged himself terribly. The services he had rendered in that campaign were immense. By pushing himself in front of Boguslav he had beaten him from the road, had made his reckoning false, had fixed in him the conviction that he was surrounded, and had forced him to retreat. Further he went before him night and day. He destroyed scouting-parties; he was without mercy for prisoners. In Syemyatiche, in Botski, in Orel and Byelsk he had fallen in the dark night on the whole camp.

In Voishki, not far from Zabłudovo, in a purely Radzivill country, he had fallen like a blind hurricane on the quarters of the prince himself, so that Boguslav, who had just sat down to dinner, almost fell into his hands; and thanks to Sakovich alone, did he take out his head alive.

At Bialystok Kmita seized the carriages and camp-chests of Boguslav. He wearied, weakened, and inflicted hunger on Boguslav's troops. The choice German infantry and Swedish cavalry which the prince had brought with him were like walking skeletons, from wandering, from surprises, from sleeplessness. The mad howling of the Tartars and Kmita's volunteers was heard in front of them, at the flanks, and in the rear. Scarcely had a wearied soldier closed his eyes when he had to seize his weapons. The farther on, the worse the condition.

The small nobility inhabiting those neighborhoods joined with the Tartars, partly through hatred of the Radzivils of Birji, partly through fear of Kmita; for he punished beyond measure those who resisted. His forces increased therefore; those of Boguslav melted.

Besides, Boguslav himself was really ill; and though in the heart of that man care never had its nest long, and though the astrologers, whom he believed blindly, had foretold him in Prussia that his person would meet no harm in that expedition, his ambition suffered harshly more than once. He, whose name had been repeated with admiration in the Netherlands, on the Rhine, and in France, was beaten every day in those deep forests by an unseen enemy, and overcome without a battle.

There was, besides, in that pursuit such uncommon stubbornness and impetuosity passing the usual measure of war, that Boguslav with his native quickness divined after a few days that some inexorable personal enemy was following him. He learned the name Babinich easily, for the whole neighborhood repeated it; but that name was strange to him. Not less glad would he be to know the person; and on the road in times of pursuit he arranged tens and hundreds of ambushes—always in vain. Babinich was able to avoid traps, and inflicted defeats where they were least expected.

At last both armies came to the neighborhood of Sokolka. Boguslav found there the reinforcement under Kyritz, who, not knowing hitherto where the prince was, went to Yanov, where the fate of Boguslav's expedition was to be decided.

Kmita closed hermetically all the roads leading from Yanov to Sokolka, Korychyn, Kuznitsa, and Suhovola. The neighboring forests, willow woods, and thickets were occupied by the Tartars. Not a letter could pass; no wagon with provisions could be brought in. Boguslav himself was in a hurry for battle before his last biscuit in Yanov should be eaten.

But as a man of quick wit, trained in every intrigue, he determined to try negotiations first. He did not know yet that Sapyeha in this kind of intrigue surpassed him greatly in reasoning and quickness. From Sokolka then in Boguslav's name came Pan Sakovich, under-chamberlain and starosta of Oshmiana, the attendant and personal friend of Prince Boguslav, with a letter and authority to conclude peace.

This Pan Sakovich was a wealthy man, who reached senatorial dignity later in life, for he became *voevoda* of Smolensk and treasurer of the Grand Principality; he was at that time one of the most noted cavaliers in Lithuania, famed equally for bravery and beauty. Pan Sakovich was of medium stature; the hair of his head and brows was black as a raven's wing, but he had pale blue eyes which gazed with marvellous and unspeakable insolence, so that Boguslav said of him that he stunned with his eyes as with the back of an axe. He wore foreign garments which he brought from journeys made with Boguslav; he spoke nearly all languages; in battle he rushed into the greatest whirl so madly that among his enemies he was called "the doomed man." But, thanks to his uncommon strength and presence of mind, he always came out unharmed. It was said that he had strength to stop a carriage in its course by seizing the hind wheel; he could drink beyond measure, could toss off a quart of cream in vodka, and be as sober as if he had taken nothing in his mouth. With men he was morose, haughty, offensive; in Boguslav's hand he was as soft as wax. His manners were polished, and though in the king's chambers he knew how to bear himself, he had a certain wildness in his spirit which burst forth at times like a flame.

Pan Sakovich was rather a companion than a servant of Boguslav. Boguslav, who in truth had never loved anyone in his life, had an unconquerable weakness for this man. By nature exceedingly sordid, he was generous to Sakovich alone. By his influence he raised him to be under-chamberlain, and had him endowed with the starostaship of Oshmiana. After every

battle Boguslav's first question was: "Where is Sakovich? has he met with no harm?" The prince depended greatly on the starosta's counsels, and employed him in war and in negotiations in which the courage and impudence of Sakovich were very effective.

This time he sent him to Sapyeha. But the mission was difficult—first, because the suspicion might easily fall on the starosta that he had come only to spy out and discover Sapyeha's strength; second, because the envoy had much to ask and nothing to offer.

Happily, Pan Sakovich did not trouble himself with anything. He entered as a victor who comes to dictate terms to the vanquished, and struck Sapyeha with his pale eyes.

Sapyeha smiled when he saw that pride, but half of his smile was compassion. Every man may impose much with daring and impudence, but on people of a certain measure; the hetman was above the measure of Sakovich.

"My master, prince in Birji and Dubinki, commander-in-chief of the armies of his princely highness the elector," said Sakovich, "has sent me with a greeting, and to ask about the health of your worthiness."

"Thank the prince, and say that you saw me well."

Sapyeha took the letter, opened it carelessly enough, read it, and said—

"Too bad to lose time. I cannot see what the prince wants. Do you surrender, or do you wish to try your fortune?"

Sakovich feigned astonishment.

"Whether we surrender? I think that the prince proposes specially in this letter that you surrender; at least my instructions—"

"Of your instructions we will speak later, my dear Pan Sakovich. We have chased you nearly a hundred and fifty miles, as a hound does a hare. Have you ever heard of a hare proposing to a hound to surrender?"

"We have received reinforcements."

"Von Kyritz, with eight hundred men, and so tired that they will lay down their arms before battle. I will give you Hmelnitski's saying 'There is no time to talk!'"

"The elector with all his power is with us."

"That is well—I shall not have far to seek him; for I wish to ask him by what right he sends troops into the Commonwealth, of which he is a vassal, and to which he is bound in loyalty."

"The right of the strongest."

"Maybe in Prussia such a right exists, but not with us. But if you are the stronger, take the field."

"The prince would long since have attacked you, were it not for kindred blood."

"I wonder if that is the only hindrance!"

"The prince wonders at the animosity of the Sapyehas against the house of Radzivill, and that your worthiness for private revenge hesitates not to spill the blood of the country."

"*Tfu!*" cried Kmita, listening behind the hetman's armchair to the conversation.

Pan Sakovich rose, went to Kmita, and struck him with his eyes. But he met his own, or better; and in the eyes of Pan Andrei the starosta found such an answer that he dropped his glance to the floor.

The hetman frowned. "Take your seat, Pan Sakovich. And do you preserve calm" (turning to Kmita). Then he said to Sakovich—

"Conscience speaks only the truth, but mouths chew it and spit it into the world as calumny. He who with foreign troops attacks a country, inflicts wrong on him who defends it. God hears this, and the heavenly chronicler will inscribe."

"Through hatred of the Sapyehas to the Radzivills was the prince *voevoda* of Vilna consumed."

"I hate traitors, not the Radzivills; and the best proof of this is that Prince Michael Radzivill is in my camp now. Tell me what is your wish?"

"Your worthiness, I will tell what I have in my heart; he hates who sends secret assassins."

Pan Sapyeha was astonished in his turn.

"I send assassins against Prince Boguslav?"

"That is the case!"

"You have gone mad!"

"The other day they caught, beyond Yanov, a murderer who once made an attack on the life of the prince. Tortures brought him to tell who sent him."

A moment of silence followed; but in that silence Pan Sapyeha heard how Kmita, standing behind him, repeated twice through his set lips, "Woe, woe!"

"God is my judge," answered the hetman, with real senatorial dignity, "that neither to you nor your prince shall I ever justify myself; for you were not made to be my judges. But do you, instead of loitering, tell directly what you have come for, and what conditions your prince offers."

"The prince, my lord, has destroyed Horotkyevich, has defeated Pan Krishtof Sapyeha, taken Tykotsin; therefore he can justly call himself victor, and ask for considerable advantages. But regretting the loss of Christian blood, he desires to return in quiet to Prussia, requiring nothing more than the freedom of leaving his garrisons in the castles. We have also taken prisoners not a few, among whom are distinguished officers, not counting Panna Anusia Borzobogati, who has been sent already to Taurogi. These may be exchanged on equal terms."

"Do not boast of your victories, for my advance guard, led by Pan Babinich here present, pressed you for a hundred and fifty miles; you retreated before it, lost twice as many prisoners as you took previously; you lost wagons, cannon, camp-chests. Your army is fatigued, dropping from hunger, has nothing to eat; you know not whither to turn. You have seen my army; I did not ask to have your eyes bound purposely, that you might know whether you are able to measure forces with us. As to that young lady, she is not under my guardianship, but that of Pan Zamoyski and Princess Griselda Vishnyevetski. The prince will reckon with them if he does her any injustice. But speak with wisdom; otherwise I shall order Pan Babinich to march at once."

Sakovich, instead of answering, turned to Kmita: "Then you are the man who made such onsets on the road? You must have learned your murderous trade under Kmita—"

"Learn on your own skin whether I practised well!"

The hetman again frowned. "You have nothing to do here," said he to Sakovich; "you may go."

“Your worthiness, give me at least a letter.”

“Let it be so. Wait at Pan Oskyerko’s quarters for a letter.”

Hearing this, Pan Oskyerko conducted Sakovich at once to his quarters. The hetman waved his hand as a parting; then he turned to Pan Andrei. “Why did you say ‘Woe,’ when he spoke of that man whom they seized?” asked he, looking quickly and severely into the eyes of the knight. “Has hatred so deadened your conscience that you really sent a murderer to the prince?”

“By the Most Holy Lady whom I defended, no!” answered Kmita; “not through strange hands did I wish to reach his throat.”

“Why did you say ‘Woe’? Do you know that man?”

“I know him,” answered Kmita, growing pale from emotion and rage. “I sent him from Lvoff to Taurogi—Prince Boguslav took Panna Billevich to Taurogi—I love that lady. We were to marry—I sent that man to get me news of her. She was in such hands—”

“Calm yourself!” said the hetman. “Have you given him any letters?”

“No; she would not read them.”

“Why?”

“Boguslav told her that I offered to carry away the king.”

“Great are your reasons for hating him.”

“True, your worthiness, true.”

“Does the prince know that man?”

“He knows him. That is the sergeant Soroka. He helped me to carry off Boguslav.”

“I understand,” said the hetman; “the vengeance of the prince is awaiting him.”

A moment of silence followed.

“The prince is in a trap,” said the hetman, after a while; “maybe he will consent to give him up.”

“Let your worthiness,” said Kmita, “detain Sakovich, and send me to the prince. Perhaps I may rescue Soroka.”

“Is his fate such a great question for you?”

“An old soldier, an old servant; he carried me in his arms. A multitude of times he has saved my life. God would punish me were I to abandon him in such straits.” And Kmita began to tremble from pity and anxiety.

But the hetman said: “It is no wonder to me that the soldiers love you, for you love them. I will do what I can. I will write to the prince that I will free for him whomsoever he wishes for that soldier, who besides at your command has acted as an innocent agent.”

Kmita seized his head: “What does he care for prisoners? he will not let him go for thirty of them.”

“Then he will not give him to you; he will even attempt your life.”

“He would give him for one—for Sakovich.”

“I cannot imprison Sakovich; he is an envoy.”



“Detain him, and I will go with a letter to the prince. Perhaps I shall succeed—God be with him! I will abandon my revenge, if he will give me that soldier.”

“Wait,” said the hetman; “I can detain Sakovich. Besides that I will write to the prince to send me a safe-conduct without a name.”

The hetman began to write at once. An hour later a Cossack was galloping with a letter to Yanov, and toward evening he returned with Boguslav’s answer:—

*“I send according to request the safe-conduct with which every envoy may return unharmed, though it is a wonder to me that your worthiness should ask for a conduct while you have such a hostage as my servant and friend Pan Sakovich, for whom I have so much love that I would give all the officers in my army for him. It is known also that envoys are not killed, but are usually respected even by wild Tartars with whom your worthiness is making war against my Christian army. Now, guaranteeing the safety of your envoy by my personal princely word, I subscribe myself, etc.”*

That same evening Kmita took the safe-conduct and went with the two Kyemliches. Pan Sakovich remained in Sokolka as a hostage.

## Chapter LXVI

It was near midnight when Pan Andrei announced himself to the advanced pickets of the prince, but no one was sleeping in the whole camp. The battle might begin at any moment, therefore they had prepared for it carefully. Boguslav's troops had occupied Yanov itself; they commanded the road from Sokolka, which was held by artillery, managed by the elector's trained men. There were only three cannons, but abundance of powder and balls. On both sides of Yanov, among the birch groves, Boguslav gave orders to make intrenchments and to occupy them with double-barrelled guns and infantry. The cavalry occupied Yanov itself, the road behind the cannons, and the intervals between the trenches. The position was defensible enough, and with fresh men defence in it might be long and bloody; but of fresh soldiers there were only eight hundred under Kyritz; the rest were so wearied that they could barely stand on their feet. Besides, the howling of the Tartars was heard in Suhovola at midnight, and later in the rear of Boguslav's ranks; hence a certain fear was spread among the soldiers. Boguslav was forced to send in that direction all his light cavalry, which after it had gone three miles dared neither return nor advance, for fear of ambushes in the forest.

Boguslav, though fever together with violent chills was tormenting him more than ever, commanded everything in person; but since he rode with difficulty he had himself carried by four soldiers in an open litter. In this way he had examined the road as well as the birch groves, and was entering Yanov when he was informed that an envoy from Sapyeha was approaching.

They were already on the street. Boguslav was unable to recognize Kmita because of the darkness, and because Pan Andrei, through excess of caution on the part of officers in the advance guard, had his head covered with a bag in which there was an opening only for his mouth.

The prince noticed the bag when Kmita, after dismounting, stood near him; he gave command to remove it at once.

"This is Yanov," said he, "and there is no reason for secrecy." Then he turned in the darkness to Pan Andrei: "Are you from Pan Sapyeha?"

"I am."

"And what is Pan Sakovich doing there?"

"Pan Oskyerko is entertaining him."

"Why did you ask for a safe conduct when you have Sakovich? Pan Sapyeha is too careful, and let him see to it that he is not too clever."

"That is not my affair," answered Kmita.

"I see that the envoy is not over-given to speech."

"I have brought a letter, and in the quarters I will speak of my own affair."

"Is there a private question?"

"There will be a request to your highness."

"I shall be glad not to refuse it. Now I beg you to follow. Mount your horse; I should ask you to the litter, but it is too small."

They moved on. The prince in the litter and Kmita at one side on horseback. They looked in the darkness without being able to distinguish the faces of each other. After a while the prince, in spite of furs, began to shake so that his teeth chattered. At last he said—

“It has come on me grievously; if it were—brr!—not for this, I would give other conditions.”

Kmita said nothing, and only wished to pierce with his eyes the darkness, in the middle of which the head and face of the prince were outlined in indefinite gray and white features. At the sound of Boguslav’s voice and at sight of his figure all the former insults, the old hatred, and the burning desire for revenge so rose in Kmita’s heart that they turned almost to madness. His hand of itself sought the sword, which had been taken from him; but at his girdle he had the baton with an iron head, the ensign of his rank of colonel; the devil then began to whirl in his brain at once, and to whisper: “Cry in his ear who you are, and smash his head into bits. The night is dark, you will escape. The Kyemliches are with you. You will rub out a traitor and pay for injustice. You will rescue Olenka, Soroka—Strike! strike!”

Kmita came still nearer the litter, and with trembling hand began to draw forth the baton. “Strike!” whispered the devil; “you will serve the country.”

Kmita had now drawn out the baton, and he squeezed the handle as if wishing to crush it in his hand. “One, two, three!” whispered the devil.

But at that moment Kmita’s horse, whether because he had hit the helmet of the soldier with his nose, or had shied, it is enough that he stumbled violently. Kmita pulled the reins. During this time the litter had moved on several steps. The hair stood on the head of the young man.

“O Most Holy Mother, restrain my hand!” whispered he, through his set teeth. “O Most Holy Mother, save me! I am here an envoy; I came from the hetman, and I want to murder like a night assassin. I am a noble; I am a servant of Thine. Lead me not into temptation!”

“But why are you loitering?” asked Boguslav, in a voice broken by fever.

“I am here!”

“Do you hear the cocks crowing beyond the fences? It is needful to hurry, for I am sick and want rest.”

Kmita put the baton behind his belt and rode farther, near the litter. Still he could not find peace. He understood that only with cool blood and self-command could he free Soroka; therefore he stipulated with himself in advance what words to use with the prince so as to incline and convince him. He vowed to have only Soroka in view, to mention nothing else, and especially not Olenka. And he felt how in the darkness a burning blush covered his face at the thought that perhaps the prince himself would mention her, and maybe mention something that Pan Andrei would not be able to endure or listen to.

“Let him not mention her,” said he to himself; “let him not allude to her, for in that is his death and mine. Let him have mercy upon himself, if he lacks shame.”

Pan Andrei suffered terribly; his breath failed him, and his throat was so straitened that he feared lest he might not be able to bring forth the words when he came to speak. In this stifling oppression he began the Litany.

After a time relief came; he was quieted considerably, and that grasp as it were of an iron hand squeezing his throat was relaxed.

They had now arrived at the prince’s quarters. The soldiers put down the litter; two attendants took the prince by the armpits; he turned to Kmita, and with his teeth chattering continually, said—

“I beg you to follow. The chill will soon pass; then we can speak.”

After a while they found themselves in a separate apartment in which heaps of coals were glowing in a fireplace, and in which was unendurable heat. His servants placed Prince Boguslav on a long campaign armchair covered with furs, and brought a light. Then the attendants withdrew. The prince threw his head back, closed his eyes, and remained in that position motionless for a time; at last he said—

“Directly—let me rest.”

Kmita looked at him. The prince had not changed much, but the fever had pinched his face. He was painted as usual, and his cheeks touched with color; but just for that reason, when he lay there with closed eyes and head thrown back, he was somewhat like a corpse or a wax figure. Pan Andrei stood before him in the bright light. The prince began to open his lids lazily; suddenly he opened them completely, and a flame, as it were, flew over his face. But it remained only an instant; then again he closed his eyes.

“If thou art a spirit, I fear thee not,” said he; “but vanish.”

“I have come with a letter from the hetman,” answered Kmita.

Boguslav shuddered a little, as if he wished to shake off visions; then he looked at Kmita and asked—

“Have I been deceived in you?”

“Not at all,” answered Pan Andrei, pointing with his finger to the scar.

“That is the second!” muttered the prince to himself; and he added aloud, “Where is the letter?”

“Here it is,” said Kmita, giving the letter.

Boguslav began to read, and when he had finished a marvellous light flashed in his eyes.

“It is well,” said he; “there is loitering enough! Tomorrow the battle—and I am glad, for I shall not have a fever.”

“And we, too, are glad,” answered Kmita.

A moment of silence followed, during which these two inexorable enemies measured each other with a certain terrible curiosity. The prince first resumed the conversation.

“I divine that it was you who attacked me with the Tartars?”

“It was I.”

“And did you not fear to come here?”

Kmita did not answer.

“Did you count on our relationship through the Kishkis? For you and I have our reckonings. I can tear you out of your skin, Sir Cavalier.”

“You can, your highness.”

“You came with a safe-conduct, it is true. I understand now why Pan Sapyeha asked for it. But you have attempted my life. Sakovich is detained there; but Sapyeha has no right to Sakovich, while I have a right to you, cousin.”

“I have come with a prayer to your highness.”

"I beg you to mention it. You can calculate that for you everything will be done. What is the prayer?"

"You have here a captive soldier, one of those men who aided me in carrying you off. I gave orders, he acted as a blind instrument. Be pleased to set that man at liberty."

Boguslav thought awhile.

"I am thinking," said he, "which is greater—your daring as a soldier, or your insolence as a petitioner."

"I do not ask this man from you for nothing."

"And what will you give me for him?"

"Myself."

"Is it possible that he is such a precious soldier? You pay bountifully, but see that that is sufficient; for surely you would like to ransom something else from me."

Kmita came a step nearer to the prince, and grew so awfully pale that Boguslav, in spite of himself, looked at the door, and notwithstanding all his daring he changed the subject of conversation.

"Pan Sapyeha will not entertain such an agreement. I should be glad to hold you; but I have guaranteed with my word of a prince your safety."

"I will write by that soldier to the hetman that I remain of my own will."

"And he will declare that, in spite of your will, I must send you. You have given him services too great. He will not set Sakovich free, and Sakovich I prize higher than you."

"Then, your highness, free that soldier, and I will go on my word where you command."

"I may fall tomorrow; I care nothing for treaties touching the day after."

"I implore your highness for that man. I—"

"What will you do?"

"I will drop my revenge."

"You see, Pan Kmita, many a time have I gone against a bear with a spear, not because I had to do so, but from desire. I am glad when some danger threatens, for life is less dull for me. In this case I reserve your revenge as a pleasure; for you are, I must confess, of that breed of bears which seek the hunter themselves."

"Your highness," said Kmita, "for small mercies God often forgives great sins. Neither of us knows when it will come to him to stand before the judgment of Christ."

"Enough!" said the prince. "I compose psalms for myself in spite of the fever, so as to have some merit before the Lord; should I need a preacher I should summon my own. You do not know how to beg with sufficient humility, and you go in roundabout ways. I will show you the method myself: strike tomorrow in the battle on Sapyeha, and after tomorrow I will let out the soldier and forgive you your sins. You betrayed Radzivill; betray now Sapyeha."

"Is this the last word of your highness? By all the saints, I implore you!"

"No! Devil take you! And you change in the face—But don't come too near, for, though I am ashamed to call attendants—look here! You are too bold!"

Boguslav pointed at a pistol-barrel peeping from under the fur with which it was covered, and looked with sparkling eyes into Kmita's eyes.

“Your highness!” cried Kmita, almost joining his hands in prayer, but with a face changed by wrath.

“You beg, but you threaten,” said Boguslav; “you bend your neck, but the devil is gnashing his teeth at me from behind your collar. Pride is gleaming in your eyes, and in your mouth it sounds as in a cloud. With your forehead to the Radzivill feet when you beg, my little man! Beat with your forehead on the floor, then I will answer.”

Pan Andrei’s face was as pale as a piece of linen; he drew his hand over his moist forehead, his eyes, his face; and he spoke with such a broken voice, as if the fever from which the prince suffered had suddenly sprung upon him.

“If your highness will free for me that old soldier, I am ready to fall at your feet.”

Satisfaction gleamed in Boguslav’s eyes. He had brought down his enemy, bent his proud neck. Better food he could not give to his revenge and hatred.

Kmita stood before him with hair erect in his forelock, trembling in his whole body. His face, resembling even in rest the head of a hawk, recalled all the more an enraged bird of prey. You could not tell whether at the next moment he would throw himself at the feet, or hurl himself at the breast of the prince. But Boguslav not taking his eyes from him, said—

“Before witnesses! before people!” And he turned to the door. “Hither!”

A number of attendants, Poles and foreigners, came in; after them officers entered.

“Gracious gentlemen!” said the prince, “behold Pan Kmita, the banneret of Orsha and envoy of Pan Sapyeha, who has come to beg a favor of me, and he wishes to have all you gentlemen as witnesses.”

Kmita tottered like a drunken man, groaned, and fell at Boguslav’s feet. The prince stretched his feet purposely so that the end of his riding-boot touched the forehead of the knight.

All looked in silence, astonished at the famous name, as well as at this—that he who bore it was now an envoy from Pan Sapyeha. All understood, too, that something uncommon was taking place.

The prince rose, and without saying a word passed into the adjoining chamber, beckoning to two attendants to follow him.

Kmita rose. His face showed no longer either anger or rapacity, merely indifference and insensibility. He appeared unconscious of what was happening to him, and his energy seemed broken completely.

Half an hour passed; an hour. Outside the windows was heard the tramp of horses’ feet and the measured tread of soldiers; he sat continually as if of stone.

Suddenly the door opened. An officer entered, an old acquaintance of Kmita’s from Birji, and eight soldiers—four with muskets, four without firearms—with sabres.

“Gracious Colonel, rise!” said the officer, politely.

Kmita looked on him wanderingly. “Glovbich!” said he, recognizing the officer.

“I have an order,” answered Glovbich, “to bind your hands and conduct you beyond Yanov. The binding is for a time, then you will go free; therefore I beg you not to resist.”

“Bind!” answered Kmita.

And he permitted them to tie him. But they did not tie his feet. The officer led him out of the room and on foot through Yanov. Then they advanced for about an hour. On the road some

horsemen joined them. Kmita heard them speaking in Polish; the Poles, who served with Boguslav, all knew the name of Kmita, and therefore were most curious to know what would happen to him. The party passed the birch grove and came to an open field, on which Pan Andrei saw a detachment of the light Polish squadron of Boguslav.

The soldiers stood in rank, forming a square; in the middle was a space in which were two foot-soldiers holding horses harnessed to draw, and some men with torches.

By the light of the torches Pan Andrei saw a freshly sharpened stake lying on the ground with the large end fastened in a great log.

A shiver passed through Kmita involuntarily. "That is for me," thought he; "Boguslav has ordered them to draw me on the stake with horses. He sacrifices Sakovich to his vengeance."

But he was mistaken; the stake was intended first for Soroka.

By the quivering flames Pan Andrei saw Soroka himself; the old soldier was sitting there at the side of the log on a stool, without a cap and with bound hands, guarded by four soldiers. A man dressed in a short shuba without sleeves was at that moment giving him in a shallow cup *gorailka*, which Soroka drank eagerly enough. When he had drunk, he spat; and since at that very moment Kmita was placed between two horsemen in the first rank, Soroka saw him, sprang from the stool and straightened himself as if on military parade.

For a while they looked the one at the other. Soroka's face was calm and resigned; he only moved his jaws as if chewing.

"Soroka!" groaned Kmita, at last.

"At command!" answered the soldier.

And again silence followed. What had they to say at such a moment? Then the executioner, who had given Soroka the vodka, approached him.

"Well, old man," said he, "it is time for you!"

"And you will draw me on straight?"

"Never fear."

Soroka feared not; but when he felt on his shoulder the hand of the executioner, he began to pant quickly and loudly. At last he said—

"More *gorailka*!"

"There is none!"

Suddenly one of the soldiers pushed out of the rank and gave a canteen—

"Here is some; give it to him."

"To the rank!" commanded Glovich.

Still the man in the short shuba held the canteen to Soroka's mouth; he drank abundantly, and after he had drunk breathed deeply.

"See!" said he, "the lot of a soldier after thirty years' service. Well, if it is time, it is time!"

Another executioner approached and they began to undress him.

A moment of silence. The torches trembled in the hands of those holding them; it became terrible for all.

Meanwhile from the ranks surrounding the square was wrested a murmur of dissatisfaction, which became louder each instant: "A soldier is not an executioner; he gives death himself, but does not wish to see torture."

"Silence!" cried Glovbich.

The murmur became a loud bustle, in which were heard single words: "Devils!" "Thunders!" "Pagan service!"

Suddenly Kmita shouted as if they had been drawing him on to the stake—

"Stop!"

The executioner halted involuntarily. All eyes were turned to Kmita.

"Soldiers!" shouted Pan Andrei, "Prince Boguslav is a traitor to the king and the Commonwealth! You are surrounded, and tomorrow you will be cut to pieces. You are serving a traitor; you are serving against the country! But whoso leaves this service leaves the traitor; to him forgiveness of the king, forgiveness of the hetman! Choose! Death and disgrace, or a reward tomorrow! I will pay wages, and a ducat a man—two ducats a man! Choose! It is not for you, worthy soldiers, to serve a traitor! Long life to the king! Long life to the grand hetman of Lithuania!"

The disturbance was turned into thunder; the ranks were broken. A number of voices shouted—

"Long life to the king!"

"We have had enough of this service!"

"Destruction to traitors!"

"Stop! stop!" shouted other voices.

"Tomorrow you will die in disgrace!" bellowed Kmita.

"The Tartars are in Suhovola!"

"The prince is a traitor!"

"We are fighting against the king!"

"Strike!"

"To the prince!"

"Halt!"

In the disturbance some sabre had cut the ropes tying Kmita's hands. He sprang that moment on one of the horses which were to draw Soroka on the stake, and cried from the horse—

"Follow me to the hetman!"

"I go!" shouted Glovbich. "Long life to the king!"

"May he live!" answered fifty voices, and fifty sabres glittered at once.

"To horse, Soroka!" commanded Kmita.

There were some who wished to resist, but at sight of the naked sabres they grew silent. One, however, turned his horse and vanished from the eye in a moment. The torches went out. Darkness embraced all.



“After me!” shouted Kmita. An orderless mass of men moved from the place, and then stretched out in a long line.

When they had gone two or three furlongs they met the infantry pickets who occupied in large parties the birch grove on the left side.

“Who goes?”

“Glovbich with a party!”

“The word?”

“Trumpets!”

“Pass!”

They rode forward, not hurrying overmuch; then they went on a trot.

“Soroka!” said Kmita.

“At command!” answered the voice of the sergeant at his side.

Kmita said nothing more, but stretching out his hand, put his palm on Soroka’s head, as if wishing to convince himself that he was riding there. The soldier pressed Pan Andrei’s hand to his lips in silence.

Then Glovbich called from the other side—

“Your grace! I wanted long to do what I have done today.”

“You will not regret it!”

“I shall be thankful all my life to you.”

“Tell me, Glovbich, why did the prince send you, and not a foreign regiment, to the execution?”

“Because he wanted to disgrace you before the Poles. The foreign soldiers do not know you.”

“And was nothing to happen to me?”

“I had the order to cut your bonds; but if you tried to defend Soroka we were to bring you for punishment to the prince.”

“Then he was willing to sacrifice Sakovich,” muttered Kmita.

Meanwhile Prince Boguslav in Yanov, wearied with the fever and the toil of the day, had gone to sleep. He was roused from slumber by an uproar in front of his quarters and a knocking at the door.

“Your highness, your highness!” cried a number of voices.

“He is asleep, do not rouse him!” answered the pages.

But the prince sat up in bed and cried—

“A light!”

They brought in a light, and at the same time the officer on duty entered.

“Your highness,” said he, “Sapyeha’s envoy has brought Glovbich’s squadron to mutiny and taken it to the hetman.”

Silence followed.

“Sound the kettledrums and other drums!” said Boguslav at last; “let the troops form in rank!”

The officer went out; the prince remained alone.

“That is a terrible man!” said he to himself; and he felt that a new paroxysm of fever was seizing him.

## Chapter LXVII

It is easy to imagine Sapyeha's amazement when Kmita not only returned safely himself, but brought with him a number of tens of horsemen and his old servant. Kmita had to tell the hetman and Oskyerko twice what had happened, and how it had happened; they listened with curiosity, clapping their hands frequently and seizing their heads.

"Learn from this," said the hetman, "that whoso carries vengeance too far, from him it often slips away like a bird through the fingers. Prince Boguslav wanted to have Poles as witnesses of your shame and suffering so as to disgrace you the more, and he carried the matter too far. But do not boast of this, for it was the ordinance of God which gave you victory, though, in my way, I will tell you one thing—he is a devil; but you too are a devil! The prince did ill to insult you."

"I will not leave him behind in vengeance, and God grant that I shall not overdo it."

"Leave vengeance altogether, as Christ did; though with one word he might have destroyed the Jews."

Kmita said nothing, and there was no time for discussion; there was not even time for rest. He was mortally wearied, and still he had determined to go that night to his Tartars, who were posted in the forests and on the roads in the rear of Boguslav's army. But people of that period slept soundly on horseback. Pan Andrei simply gave command then to saddle a fresh horse, promising himself to slumber sweetly on the road.

When he was mounting Soroka came to him and stood straight as in service.

"Your grace!" said he.

"What have you to say, old man?"

"I have come to ask when I am to start?"

"For what place?"

"For Taurogi."

Kmita laughed: "You will not go to Taurogi, you will go with me."

"At command!" answered the sergeant, striving not to show his delight.

They rode on together. The road was long, for they had to go around by forests, so as not to fall into Boguslav's hands; but Kmita and Soroka slept a hundred fold, and came to the Tartars without any accident.

Akbah Ulan presented himself at once before Babinich, and gave him a report of his activity. Pan Andrei was satisfied. Every bridge had been burned, the dams were cut; that was not all, the water of springtime had overflowed, changing the fields, meadows, and roads in the lower places into muddy quagmires.

Boguslav had no choice but to fight, to conquer or perish; it was impossible for him to think of retreat.

"Very well," said Kmita; "he has good cavalry, but heavy. He will not have use for it in the mud of today."

Then he turned to Akbah Ulan. "You have grown poor," said he, striking him on the stomach with his fist; "but after the battle you will fill your paunch with the prince's ducats."

“God has created the enemy, so that men of battle might have someone to plunder,” said the Tartar, with seriousness.

“But Boguslav’s cavalry stands in front of you.”

“There are some hundreds of good horses, and yesterday a regiment of infantry came and intrenched itself.”

“But could they not be enticed to the field?”

“They will not come out.”

“But turn them, leave them in the rear, and go to Yanov.”

“They occupy the road.”

“Then we must think of something!” Kmita began to stroke his forelock with his hand: “Have you tried to steal up to them? How far will they follow you out?”

“A furlong, two—not farther.”

“Then we must think of something!” repeated Kmita.

But that night they thought of nothing. Next morning, however, Kmita went with the Tartars toward the camp lying between Suhovol and Yanov, and discovered that Akbah Ulan had exaggerated, saying that the infantry was intrenched on that side; for they had little ditches, nothing more. It was possible to make a protracted defence from them, especially against Tartars, who did not go readily to the attack of such places; but it was impossible for men in them to think of enduring any kind of siege.

“If I had infantry,” thought Kmita, “I would go into fire.”

But it was difficult even to dream of bringing infantry; for, first, Sapyeha himself had not very many; second, there was no time to bring them.

Kmita approached so closely that Boguslav’s infantry opened fire on him; but he did not care. He rode among the bullets and examined, looked around; and the Tartars, though less enduring of fire, had to keep pace with him. Then cavalry rushed out and undertook to flank him. He retreated about three thousand yards and turned again. But they had ridden back toward the trenches. In vain did the Tartars let off a cloud of arrows after them. Only one man fell from his horse, and that one his comrades saved, carried in.

Kmita on returning, instead of riding straight to Suhovola, rushed toward the west and came to the Kamyonka.

This swampy river had overflowed widely, for that year the springtime was wonderfully abundant in water. Kmita looked at the river, threw a number of broken branches into it so as to measure the speed of the current, and said to Ulan—

“We will go around their flank and strike them in the rear.”

“Horses cannot swim against the current.”

“It goes slowly. They will swim! The water is almost standing.”

“The horses will be chilled, and the men cannot endure it. It is cold yet.”

“Oh, the men will swim holding to the horses’ tails! That is your Tartar way.”

“The men will grow stiff.”

“They will get warm under fire.”

“Kismet (fate)!”

Before it had grown dark in the world, Kmita had ordered them to cut bunches of willows, dry reeds, and rushes, and tie them to the sides of the horses. When the first star appeared, he sent about eight hundred horses into the water, and they began to swim. He swam himself at the head of them; but soon he saw that they were advancing so slowly that in two days they would not swim past the trenches. Then he ordered them to swim to the other bank.

That was a dangerous undertaking. The other bank was steep and swampy. The horses, though light, sank in it to their bellies. But Kmita’s men pushed forward, though slowly and saving one another, while advancing a couple of furlongs.

The stars indicated midnight. Then from the south came to them echoes of distant fighting.

“The battle has begun!” shouted Kmita.

“We shall drown!” answered Akbah Ulan.

“After me!”

The Tartars knew not what to do, when on a sudden they saw that Kmita’s horse issued from the mud, evidently finding firm footing.

In fact, a bench of sand had begun. On the top of it there was water to the horses’ breasts, but under foot was solid ground. They went therefore more swiftly. On the left distant fires were gleaming.

“Those are the trenches!” said Kmita, quietly. “Let us avoid them, go around!”

After a while they had really passed the trenches. Then they turned to the left, and put their horses into the river again, so as to land beyond the trenches.

More than a hundred horses were swamped at the shore; but almost all the men came out. Kmita ordered those who had lost their beasts to sit behind other horsemen, and they moved toward the trenches. First he left volunteers with the order not to disturb the trenches till he should have gone around them to the rear. When he was approaching he heard shots, at first few, then more frequent.

“It is well!” said he; “Sapyeha is attacking!”

And he moved on.

In the darkness was visible only a multitude of heads jumping with the movement of the horses; sabres did not rattle, armor did not sound; the Tartars and volunteers knew how to move in silence, like wolves.

From the side of Yanov the firing became more and more vigorous; it was evident that Sapyeha was moving along the whole line.

But on the trenches toward which Kmita was advancing shouts were heard also. A number of piles of wood were burning near them, casting around a strong light. By this light Pan Andrei saw infantry firing rarely, more occupied in looking in front at the field, where cavalry was fighting with volunteers.

They saw him too from the trenches, but instead of firing they greeted the advancing body with a loud shout. The soldiers thought that Boguslav had sent them reinforcements.

But when barely a hundred yards separated the approaching body from the trenches, the infantry began to move about unquietly; an increasing number of soldiers, shading their eyes with their hands, were looking to see what kind of people were coming.

When fifty yards distant a fearful howl tore the air, and Kmita's force rushed like a storm, took in the infantry, surrounded them like a ring, and that whole mass of men began to move convulsively. You would have said that a gigantic serpent was stifling a chosen victim.

In this crowd piercing shouts were heard. "Allah!" "Herr Jesus!" "*Mein Gott!*"

Behind the trenches new shouts went up; for the volunteers, though in weaker numbers, recognizing that Pan Babinich was in the trenches, pressed on the cavalry with fury. Meanwhile the sky, which had been cloudy for some time, as is common in spring, poured down a heavy, unexpected rain. The blazing fires were put out, and the battle went on in the darkness.

But the battle did not last long. Attacked on a sudden, Boguslav's infantry went under the knife. The cavalry, in which were many Poles, laid down their arms. The foreigners, namely, one hundred dragoons, were cut to pieces.

When the moon came out again from behind the clouds, it lighted only crowds of Tartars finishing the wounded and taking plunder.

But neither did that last long. The piercing sound of a pipe was heard; Tartars and volunteers as one man sprang to their horses.

"After me!" cried Kmita.

And he led them like a whirlwind to Yanov.

A quarter of an hour later the ill-fated place was set on fire at four corners, and in an hour one sea of flame was spread as widely as Yanov extended. Above the conflagration pillars of fiery sparks were flying toward the ruddy sky.

Thus did Kmita let the hetman know that he had taken the rear of Boguslav's army.

He himself like an executioner, red from the blood of men, marshalled his Tartars amid the fire, so as to lead them on farther.

They were already in line and extending into column, when suddenly, on a field as bright as in day, from the fire, he saw before him a division of the elector's gigantic cavalry.

A knight led them, distinguishable from afar, for he wore silver-plate armor, and sat on a white horse.

"Boguslav!" bellowed Kmita, with an unearthly voice, and rushed forward with his whole Tartar column.

They approached one another, like two waves driven by two winds. A considerable space divided them; the horses on both sides reached their greatest speed, and went with ears down like hounds, almost sweeping the earth with their bellies. On one side large men with shining breastplates, and sabres held erect in their right hands; on the other, a black swarm of Tartars.

At last they struck in a long line on the clear field; but then something terrible took place. The Tartar swarm fell as grain bent by a whirlwind; the gigantic men rode over it and flew farther, as if the men and the horses had the power of thunderbolts and the wings of a storm.

Some of the Tartars sprang up and began to pursue. It was possible to ride over the wild men, but impossible to kill them at once; so more and more of them hastened after the fleeing cavalry. Lariats began to whistle in the air.

But at the head of the retreating cavalry the rider on the white horse ran ever in the first rank, and among the pursuers was not Kmita.

Only in the gray of dawn did the Tartars begin to return, and almost every man had a horseman on his lariat. Soon they found Kmita, and carried him in unconsciousness to Pan Sapyeha.

The hetman himself took a seat at Kmita's bedside. About midday Pan Andrei opened his eyes.

"Where is Boguslav?" were his first words.

"Cut to pieces. God gave him fortune at first; then he came out of the birch groves and in the open field fell on the infantry of Pan Oskyerko; there he lost men and victory. I do not know whether he led away even five hundred men, for your Tartars caught a good number of them."

"But he himself?"

"Escaped!"

Kmita was silent awhile; then said;—

"I cannot measure with him yet. He struck me with a double-handed sword on the head, and knocked me down with my horse. My morion was of trusty steel, and did not let the sword through; but I fainted."

"You should hang up that morion in a church."

"I will pursue him, even to the end of the world!" said Kmita.

To this the hetman answered: "See what news I have received today after the battle!"

Kmita read aloud the following words—

*The King of Sweden has moved from Elblang; he is marching on Zamost, thence to Lvoff against Yan Kazimir. Come, your worthiness, with all your forces, to save king and country, for I cannot hold out alone.*

*Charnyetski.*

A moment of silence.

"Will you go with us, or will you go with the Tartars to Taurogi?"

Kmita closed his eyes. He remembered the words of Father Kordetski, and what Volodyovski had told him of Pan Yan, and said—

"Let private affairs wait! I will meet the enemy at the side of the country!"

The hetman pressed Pan Andrei's head. "You are a brother to me!" said he; "and because I am old, receive my blessing."

## Chapter LXVIII

At a time when all living men in the Commonwealth were mounting their horses Karl Gustav stayed continually in Prussia, busied in capturing the towns of that province and in negotiating with the elector.

After an easy and unexpected conquest, the quick soldier soon saw that the Swedish lion had swallowed more than his stomach could carry. After the return of Yan Kazimir he lost hope of retaining the Commonwealth; but while making a mental abdication of the whole, he wished at least to retain the greater part of his conquest, and above all Royal Prussia—a province fruitful, dotted with large towns, wealthy, and adjoining his own Pomerania. But as that province was first to defend itself, so did it continue faithful to its lord and the Commonwealth. The return of Yan Kazimir, and the war begun by the confederation of Tyshovtsi might revive the courage of Prussia, confirm it in loyalty, give it will for endurance; therefore Karl Gustav determined to crush the uprising, and to wipe out Kazimir's forces so as to take from Prussians the hope of resistance.

He had to do this for the sake of the elector, who was ever ready to side with the stronger. The King of Sweden knew him thoroughly, and doubted not for a moment that if the fortune of Yan Kazimir should preponderate, the elector would be on his side again.

When, therefore, the siege of Marienburg advanced slowly—for the more it was attacked the more stubbornly did Pan Weiher defend it—Karl Gustav marched to the Commonwealth, so as to reach Yan Kazimir again, even in the remotest corner of the land.

And since with him deed followed decision as swiftly as thunder follows lightning, he raised his army disposed in towns; and before anyone in the Commonwealth had looked around, before the news of his march had spread, he had passed Warsaw and had rushed into the greatest blaze of conflagration.

Driven by anger, revenge, and bitterness, he moved on like a storm. Behind him ten thousand horse trampled the fields, which were still covered with snow; and taking the infantry from the garrisons, he went on, like a whirlwind, toward the far south of the Commonwealth.

On the road he burned and pursued. He was not now that recent Karl Gustav, the kindly, affable, and joyous lord, clapping his hands at Polish cavalry, winking at feasts, and praising the soldiers. Now, wherever he showed himself the blood of peasants and nobles flowed in a torrent. On the road he annihilated "parties," hanged prisoners, spared no man.

But as when, in the thick of the pinewoods, a mighty bear rushes forward with heavy body crushing branches and brush on the way, while wolves follow after, and not daring to block his path, pursue, press nearer and nearer behind, so did those "parties" pursuing the armies of Karl join in throngs denser and denser, and follow the Swedes as a shadow a man, and still more enduringly than a shadow, for they followed in the day and the night, in fair and foul weather; before him too bridges were ruined, provisions destroyed, so that he had to march as in a desert, without a place for his head or anything with which to give strength to his body when hungry.

Karl Gustav noted quickly how terrible his task was. The war spread around him as widely as the sea spreads around a ship lost in the waters. Prussia was on fire; on fire was Great Poland, which had first accepted his sovereignty, and first wished to throw off the Swedish yoke; Little Poland was on fire, and so were Russia, Lithuania, and Jmud. In the castles and large



towns the Swedes maintained themselves yet, as if on islands; but the villages, the forests, the fields, the rivers, were already in Polish hands. Not merely a single man, or small detachments, but a whole regiment might not leave the main Swedish army for two hours; for if it did the regiment vanished without tidings, and prisoners who fell into the hands of peasants died in terrible tortures.

In vain had Karl Gustav given orders to proclaim in villages and towns that whoso of peasants should bring an armed noble, living or dead, would receive freedom forever and land as a reward; for peasants, as well as nobles and townsmen, marched off to the woods. Men from the mountains, men from deep forests, men from meadows and fields, hid in the woods, formed ambushes on the roads against the Swedes, fell upon the smaller garrisons, and cut scouting-parties to pieces. Flails, forks, and scythes, no less than the sabres of nobles, were streaming with Swedish blood.

All the more did wrath rise in the heart of Karl, that a few months before he had gathered in that country so easily; hence he could hardly understand what had happened, whence these forces, whence that resistance, whence that awful war for life or death, the end of which he saw not and could not divine.

Frequent councils were held in the Swedish camp. With the king marched his brother Adolph, prince of Bipont, who had command over the army; Robert Douglas; Henry Horn, relative of that Horn who had been slain by the scythe of a peasant at Chenstohova; Waldemar, Prince of Denmark, and that Miller who had left his military glory at the foot of Yasna Gora; Aschemberg, the ablest cavalry leader among the Swedes; Hammerskiold, who commanded the artillery; and the old robber Marshal Arwid Wittemberg, famed for rapacity, living on the last of his health, for he was eaten by the Gallic disease; Forgell, and many others, all leaders skilled in the capture of cities, and in the field yielding in genius to the king only.

These men were terrified in their hearts lest the whole army with the king should perish through toil, lack of food, and the fury of the Poles. Old Wittemberg advised the king directly against the campaign: "How will you go, O King," said he, "to the Russian regions after an enemy who destroys everything on the way, but is unseen himself? What will you do if horses lack not only hay, but even straw from the roofs of cottages, and men fall from exhaustion? Where are the armies to come to our aid, where are the castles in which to draw breath and rest our weary limbs? My fame is not equal to yours; but were I Karl Gustav, I would not expose that glory acquired by so many victories to the fickle fortune of war."

To which Karl Gustav answered: "And neither would I, were I Wittemberg."

Then he mentioned Alexander of Macedon, with whom he liked to be compared, and marched forward, pursuing Charnyetski. Charnyetski, not having forces so great nor so well trained, retreated before him, but retreated like a wolf ever ready to turn on his enemy. Sometimes he went in advance of the Swedes, sometimes at their flanks, and sometimes in deep forests he let them go in advance; so that while they thought themselves the pursuers, he, in fact, was the hunter. He cut off the unwary; here and there he hunted down a whole party, destroyed foot-regiments marching slowly, attacked provision-trains. The Swedes never knew where he was. More than once in the darkness of night they began to fire from muskets and cannons into thickets, thinking that they had an enemy before them. They were mortally wearied; they marched in cold, in hunger, in affliction, and that *vir molestissimus* (most harmful man) hung about them continually, as a hail-cloud hangs over a grainfield.

At last they attacked him at Golamb, not far from the junction of the Vyepr and the Vistula. Some Polish squadrons being ready for battle charged the enemy, spreading disorder and

dismay. In front sprang Volodyovski with his Lauda squadron, and bore down Waldemar, prince of Denmark; but the two Kavetskis, Samuel and Yan, urged from the hill the armored squadron against English mercenaries under Wilkinson, and devoured them in a moment, as a pike gulps a whiting; and Pan Malavski engaged so closely with the Prince of Bipont that men and horses were confounded like dust which two whirlwinds sweeping from opposite quarters bring together and turn into one circling column. In the twinkle of an eye the Swedes were pushed to the Vistula, seeing which Douglas hastened to the rescue with chosen horsemen. But even these reinforcements could not check the onset; the Swedes began to spring from the high bank to the ice, falling dead so thickly that they lay black on the snowfield, like letters on white paper. Waldemar, Prince of Denmark, fell; Wilkinson fell; and the Prince of Bipont, thrown from his horse, broke his leg. But of Poles both Kavetskis fell; killed also were Malavski, Rudavski, Rogovski, Tyminski, Hoinski, and Porvanyetski. Volodyovski alone, though he dived among the Swedish ranks like a seamew in water, came out without having suffered the slightest wound.

Now Karl Gustav himself came up with his main force and with artillery. Straightway the form of the battle changed. Charnyetski's other regiments, undisciplined and untrained, could not take position in season; some had not their horses in readiness, others had been in distant villages, and in spite of orders to be always ready, were taking their leisure in cottages. When the enemy pressed suddenly on these men, they scattered quickly and began to retreat to the Vyepr. Therefore Charnyetski gave orders to sound the retreat so as to spare those regiments that had opened the battle. Some of the fleeing went beyond the Vistula; others to Konskovoli, leaving the field and the glory of the victory to Karl; for specially those who had crossed the Vyepr were long pursued by the squadrons of Zbrojek and Kalinski, who remained yet with the Swedes.

There was delight beyond measure in the Swedish camp. No great trophies fell to the king, it is true—sacks of oats, and a few empty wagons; but it was not at that time a question of plunder for Karl. He comforted himself with this—that victory followed his steps as before; that barely had he shown himself when he inflicted defeat on that very Charnyetski on whom the highest hopes of Yan Kazimir and the Commonwealth were founded. He could trust that the news would run through the whole country; that every mouth would repeat, "Charnyetski is crushed;" that the timid would exaggerate the proportions of the defeat, and thus weaken hearts and take courage from those who had grasped their weapons at the call of the confederation of Tyshovtsi.

So when they brought in and placed at his feet those bags of oats, and with them the bodies of Wilkinson and Prince Waldemar, he turned to his fretful generals and said—

"Unwrinkle your foreheads, gentlemen, for this is the greatest victory which I have had for a year, and may end the whole war."

"Your Royal Grace," answered Wittemberg, who, weaker than usual, saw things in a gloomier light, "let us thank God even for this—that we shall have a farther march in peace, though Charnyetski's troops scatter quickly and rally easily."

"Marshal," answered the king, "I do not think you a worse leader than Charnyetski; but if I had beaten you in this fashion, I think you would not be able to assemble your troops in two months."

Wittemberg only bowed in silence, and Karl spoke on: "Yes, we shall have a quiet march, for Charnyetski alone could really hamper it. If Charnyetski's troops are not before us, there is no hindrance."

The generals rejoiced at these words. Intoxicated with victory, the troops marched past the king with shouts and with songs. Charnyetski ceased to threaten them like a cloud. Charnyetski's troops were scattered; he had ceased to exist. In view of this thought their past sufferings were forgotten and their future toils were sweet. The king's words, heard by many officers, were borne through the camp; and all believed that the victory had uncommon significance, that the dragon of war was slain once more, and that only days of revenge and dominion would come.

The king gave the army some hours of repose; meanwhile from Kozyenitsi came trains with provisions. The troops were disposed in Golamb, in Krovieniki, and in Jyrzynie. The cavalry burned some deserted houses, hanged a few peasants seized with arms in their hands, and a few camp-servants mistaken for peasants; then there was a feast in the Swedish camp, after which the soldiers slept a sound sleep, since for a long time it was the first quiet one.

Next day they woke in briskness, and the first words which came to the mouths of all were: "There is no Charnyetski!"

One repeated this to another, as if to give mutual assurance of the good news. The march began joyously. The day was dry, cold, clear. The hair of the horses and their nostrils were covered with frost. The cold wind froze soft places on the Lyubelsk highroad, and made marching easy. The troops stretched out in a line almost five miles long, which they had never done previously. Two dragoon regiments, under command of Dubois, a Frenchman, went through Markushev and Grabov, five miles from the main force. Had they marched thus three days before they would have gone to sure death, but now fear and the glory of victory went before them.

"Charnyetski is gone," repeated the officers and soldiers to one another.

In fact, the march was made in quiet. From the forest depths came no shouts; from thickets fell no darts, hurled by invisible hands.

Toward evening Karl Gustav arrived at Grabov, joyous and in good humor. He was just preparing for sleep when Aschemberg announced through the officer of the day that he wished greatly to see the king.

After a while he entered the royal quarters, not alone, but with a captain of dragoons. The king, who had a quick eye and a memory so enormous that he remembered nearly every soldier's name, recognized the captain at once.

"What is the news, Freed?" asked he. "Has Dubois returned?"

"Dubois is killed."

The king was confused; only now did he notice that the captain looked as if he had been taken from the grave; and his clothes were torn.

"But the dragoons?" inquired he, "those two regiments?"

"All cut to pieces. I alone was let off alive."

The dark face of the king became still darker; with his hands he placed his locks behind his ears.

"Who did this?"

"Charnyetski."

Karl Gustav was silent, and looked with amazement at Aschemberg; but he only nodded as if wishing to repeat: "Charnyetski, Charnyetski, Charnyetski!"

“All this is incredible,” said the king, after a while. “Have you seen him with your own eyes?”

“As I see your Royal Grace. He commanded me to bow to you, and to declare that now he will recross the Vistula, but will soon be on our track again. I know not whether he told the truth.”

“Well,” said the king, “had he many men with him?”

“I could not estimate exactly, but I saw about four thousand, and beyond the forest was cavalry of some kind. We were surrounded near Krasichyn, to which Colonel Dubois went purposely from the highroad, for he was told that there were some men there. Now, I think that Charnyetski sent an informant to lead us into ambush, since no one save me came out alive. The peasants killed the wounded. I escaped by a miracle.”

“That man must have made a compact with hell,” said the king, putting his hand to his forehead; “for to rally troops after such a defeat, and be on our neck again, is not human power.”

“It has happened as Marshal Wittemberg foresaw,” put in Aschemberg.

“You all know how to foresee,” burst out the king, “but how to advise you do not know.”

Aschemberg grew pale and was silent. Karl Gustav, when joyous, seemed goodness itself; but when once he frowned he roused indescribable fear in those nearest him, and birds do not hide so before an eagle as the oldest and most meritorious generals hid before him. But this time he moderated quickly, and asked Captain Freed again—

“Has Charnyetski good troops?”

“I saw some unrivalled squadrons, such cavalry as the Poles have.”

“They are the same that attacked with such fury in Golamb; they must be old regiments. But Charnyetski himself—was he cheerful, confident?”

“He was as confident as if he had beaten us at Golamb. Now his heart must rise the more, for they have forgotten Golembo and boast of Krasichyn. Your Royal Grace, what Charnyetski told me to repeat I have repeated; but when I was on the point of departing some one of the high officers approached me, an old man, and told me that he was the person who had stretched out Gustavus Adolphus in a hand-to-hand conflict, and he poured much abuse on your Royal Grace; others supported him. So do they boast. I left amid insults and abuse.”

“Never mind,” said Karl Gustav, “Charnyetski is not broken, and has rallied his army; that is the main point. All the more speedily must we march so as to reach the Polish Darius at the earliest. You are free to go, gentlemen. Announce to the army that those regiments perished at the hands of peasants in unfrozen morasses. We advance!”

The officers went out; Karl Gustav remained alone. For something like an hour he was in gloomy thought. Was the victory at Golamb to bring no fruit, no change to the position, but to rouse still greater rage in that entire country?

Karl, in presence of the army and of his generals, always showed confidence and faith in himself; but when he was alone he began to think of that war—how easy it had been at first, and then increased always in difficulty. More than once doubt embraced him. All the events seemed to him in some fashion marvellous. Often he could see no outcome, could not divine the end. At times it seemed to him that he was like a man who, going from the shore of the sea into the water, feels at every step that he is going deeper and deeper and soon will lose the ground under his feet.

But he believed in his star. And now he went to the window to look at the chosen star—that one which in the Wain or Great Bear occupies the highest place and shines brightest. The sky was clear, and therefore at that moment the star shone brightly, twinkled blue and red; but from afar, lower down on the dark blue of the sky, a lone cloud was blackening serpent-shaped, from which extended as it were arms, as it were branches, as it were the feelers of a monster of the sea, and it seemed to approach the king's star continually.

## Chapter LXIX

Next morning the king marched farther and reached Lublin. There he received information that Sapyeha had repulsed Boguslav's invasion, and was advancing with a considerable army; he left Lublin the same day, merely strengthening the garrison of that place.

The next object of his expedition was Zamost; for if he could occupy that strong fortress he would acquire a fixed base for further war, and such a notable preponderance that he might look for a successful end with all hope. There were various opinions touching Zamost. Those Poles still remaining with Karl contended that it was the strongest fortress in the Commonwealth, and brought as proof that it had withstood all the forces of Hmelnitski.

But since Karl saw that the Poles were in no wise skilled in fortification, and considered places strong which in other lands would scarcely be held in the third rank; since he knew also that in Poland no fortress was properly mounted—that is, there were neither walls kept as they should be, not earthworks, nor suitable arms—he felt well touching Zamost. He counted also on the spell of his name, on the fame of an invincible leader, and finally on treaties. With treaties, which every magnate in the Commonwealth was authorized to make, or at least permitted himself to make, Karl had so far effected more than with arms. As an adroit man, and one wishing to know with whom he had to deal, he collected carefully all information touching the owner of Zamost. He inquired about his ways, his inclinations, his wit and fancy.

Yan Sapyeha, who at that time by his treason still spotted the name, to the great affliction of Sapyeha the hetman, gave the fullest explanations to the king concerning Zamoyski. They spent whole hours in council. But Yan Sapyeha did not consider that it would be easy for the king to captivate the master of Zamost.

“He cannot be tempted with money,” said Yan, “for he is terribly rich. He cares not for dignities, and never wished them, even when they sought him themselves. As to titles, I have heard him at the court reprimand Des Noyers, the queen's secretary, because in addressing him he said, ‘*Mon prince.*’ ‘I am not a prince,’ answered he, ‘but I have had archdukes as prisoners in my Zamost.’ The truth is, however, that not he had them, but his grandfather, who among our people is surnamed the Great.”

“If he will open the gates of Zamost, I will offer him something which no Polish king could offer.”

It did not become Yan Sapyeha to ask what that might be; he merely looked with curiosity at Karl Gustav. But the king understood the look, and answered, gathering, as was his wont, his hair behind his ears—

“I will offer him the province of Lyubelsk as an independent principality; a crown will tempt him. No one of you could resist such a temptation, not even the present *voevoda* of Vilna.”

“Endless is the bounty of your Royal Grace,” replied Sapyeha, not without a certain irony in his voice.

But Karl answered with a cynicism peculiar to himself: “I give it, for it is not mine.”

Sapyeha shook his head: “He is an unmarried man and has no sons. A crown is dear to him who can leave it to his posterity.”

“What means do you advise me to take?”

“I think that flattery would effect most. The man is not too quick-witted, and may be easily overreached. It is necessary to represent that on him alone depends the pacification of the Commonwealth; it is necessary to tell him that he alone may save it from war, from all defeats and future misfortunes; and that especially by opening the gates. If the fish will swallow that little hook, we shall be in Zamost; otherwise not.”

“Cannon remain as the ultimate argument.”

“H’m! To that argument there is something in Zamost with which to give answer. There is no lack of heavy guns there; we have none, and when thaws come it will be impossible to bring them.”

“I have heard that the infantry in the fortress is good; but there is a lack of cavalry.”

“Cavalry are needed only in the open field, and besides, since Charnyetski’s army, as is shown, is not crushed, he can throw in one or two squadrons for the use of the fortress.”

“You see nothing save difficulties.”

“But I trust ever in the lucky star of your Royal Grace.”

Yan Sapyeha was right in foreseeing that Charnyetski would furnish Zamost with cavalry needful for scouting and seizing informants. In fact, Zamoyski had enough of his own, and needed no assistance whatever; but Charnyetski sent the two squadrons which had suffered most at Golamb—that is, the Shemberk and Lauda—to the fortress to rest, recruit themselves and change their horses, which were fearfully cut up. Sobiepan received them hospitably, and when he learned what famous soldiers were in them he exalted these men to the skies, covered them with gifts, and seated them every day at his table.

But who shall describe the joy and emotion of Princess Griselda at sight of Pan Yan and Pan Michael, the most valiant colonels of her great husband? Both fell at her feet shedding warm tears at sight of the beloved lady; and she could not restrain her weeping. How many reminiscences of those old Lubni days were connected with them; when her husband, the glory and love of the people, full of the strength of life, ruled with power a wild region, rousing terror amid barbarism with one frown of his brow, like Jove. Such were those times not long past; but where are they now? Today the lord is in his grave, barbarians have taken the land, and she, the widow, sits on the ashes of happiness, of greatness, living only with her sorrow and with prayer.

Still in those reminiscences sweetness was so mingled with bitterness that the thoughts of those three flew gladly to times that were gone. They spoke then of their past lives, of those places which their eyes were never to see, of the past wars, finally of the present times of defeat and God’s anger.

“If our prince were alive,” said Pan Yan, “there would be another career for the Commonwealth. The Cossacks would be rubbed out, the Trans-Dnieper would be with the Commonwealth, and the Swede would find his conqueror. God has ordained as He willed of purpose to punish us for sins.”

“Would that God might raise up a defender in Pan Charnyetski!” said Princess Griselda.

“He will!” cried Pan Michael. “As our prince was a head above other lords, so Charnyetski is not at all like other leaders. I know the two hetmans of the kingdom, and Sapyeha of Lithuania. They are great soldiers; but there is something uncommon in Charnyetski; you would say, he is an eagle, not a man. Though kindly, still all fear him; even Pan Zagloba in his presence forgets his jokes frequently. And how he leads his troops and moves them,

passes imagination. It cannot be otherwise than that a great warrior will rise in the Commonwealth.”

“My husband, who knew Charnyetski as a colonel, prophesied greatness for him,” said the princess.

“It was said indeed that he was to seek a wife in our court,” put in Pan Michael.

“I do not remember that there was talk about that,” answered the princess.

In truth she could not remember, for there had never been anything of the kind; but Pan Michael, cunning at times, invented this, wishing to turn the conversation to her ladies and learn something of Anusia; for to ask directly he considered improper, and in view of the majesty of the princess, too confidential. But the stratagem failed. The princess turned her mind again to her husband and the Cossack wars; then the little knight thought: “Anusia has not been here, perhaps, for God knows how many years.” And he asked no more about her. He might have asked the officers, but his thoughts and occupations were elsewhere. Every day scouts gave notice that the Swedes were nearer; hence preparations were made for defence. Pan Yan and Pan Michael received places on the walls, as officers knowing the Swedes and warfare against them. Zagloba roused courage in the men, and told tales of the enemy to those who had no knowledge of them yet; and among warriors in the fortress there were many such, for so far the Swedes had not come to Zamost.

Zagloba saw through Pan Zamoyski at once; the latter conceived an immense love for the bulky noble, and turned to him on all questions, especially since he heard from Princess Griselda how Prince Yeremi had venerated Zagloba and called him *vir incomparabilis* (the incomparable man). Every day then at table all kept their ears open; and Zagloba discoursed of ancient and modern times, told of the wars with the Cossacks, of the treason of Radzivill, and how he himself had brought Pan Sapyeha into prominence among men.

“I advised him,” said he, “to carry hempseed in his pocket, and use a little now and then. He has grown so accustomed to this that he takes a grain every little while, puts it in his mouth, bites it, breaks it, eats it, spits out the husk. At night when he wakes he does the same. His wit is so sharp now from hempseed that his greatest intimates do not recognize him.”

“How is that?” asked Zamoyski.

“There is an oil in hempseed through which the man who eats it increases in wit.”

“God bless you,” said one of the colonels; “but oil goes to the stomach, not to the head.”

“Oh, there is a method in things!” answered Zagloba. “It is needful in this case to drink as much wine as possible; oil, being the lighter, is always on top; wine, which goes to the head of itself, carries with it every noble substance. I have this secret from Lupul the Hospodar, after whom, as is known to you, gentlemen, the Wallachians wished to create me hospodar; but the Sultan, whose wish is that the hospodar should not have posterity, placed before me conditions to which I could not agree.”

“You must use a power of hempseed yourself,” said Sobiepan.

“I do not need it at all, your worthiness; but from my whole heart I advise you to take it.”

Hearing these bold words, some were frightened lest the starosta might take them to heart; but whether he failed to notice them or did not wish to do so, it is enough that he merely laughed and asked—

“But would not sunflower seeds take the place of hemp?”



“They might,” answered Zagloba; “but since sunflower oil is heavier, it would be necessary to drink stronger wine than that which we are drinking at present.”

The starosta understood the hint, was amused, and gave immediate order to bring the best wines. Then all rejoiced in their hearts, and the rejoicing became universal. They drank and gave vivats to the health of the king, the host, and Pan Charnyetski. Zagloba fell into good humor and let no one speak. He described at great length the affair at Golamb, in which he had really fought well, for, serving in the Lauda squadron, he could not do otherwise. But because he had learned from Swedish prisoners taken from the regiments of Dubois of the death of Prince Waldemar, Zagloba took responsibility for that death on himself.

“The battle,” said he, “would have gone altogether differently were it not that the day before I went to Baranov to the canon of that place, and Charnyetski, not knowing where I was, could not advise with me. Maybe the Swedes too had heard of that canon, for he has splendid mead, and they went at once to Golamb. When I returned it was too late; the king had attacked, and it was necessary to strike at once. We went straight into the fire; but what is to be done when the general militia choose to show their contempt for the enemy by turning their backs? I don’t know how Charnyetski will manage at present without me.”

“He will manage, have no fear on that point,” said Volodyovski.

“I know why. The King of Sweden chooses to pursue me to Zamost rather than seek Charnyetski beyond the Vistula. I do not deny that Charnyetski is a good soldier; but when he begins to twist his beard and look with his wildcat glance, it seems to an officer of the lightest squadron that he is a dragoon. He pays no attention to a man’s office; and this you yourselves saw when he gave orders to drag over the square with horses an honorable man, Pan Jyrski, only because he did not reach with his detachment the place to which he was ordered. With a noble, gracious gentlemen, it is necessary to act like a father, not like a dragoon. Say to him, ‘Lord brother,’ be kind, rouse his feelings—he will call to mind the country and glory, will go farther for you than a dragoon who serves for a salary.”

“A noble is a noble, and war is war,” remarked Zamoyski.

“You have brought that out in a very masterly manner,” answered Zagloba.

“Pan Charnyetski will turn the plans of Karl into folly,” said Volodyovski. “I have been in more than one war, and I can speak on this point.”

“First, we will make a fool of him at Zamost,” said Sobiepan, pouting his lips, puffing, and showing great spirit, staring, and putting his hands on his hips. “Bah! *Tfu!* What do I care? When I invite a man I open the door to him. Well!”

Here Zamoyski began to puff still more mightily, to strike the table with his knees, bend forward, shake his head, look stern, flash his eyes, and speak, as was his habit, with a certain coarse carelessness.

“What do I care? He is lord in Sweden; but Zamoyski is lord for himself in Zamost. *Eques polonus sum* (I am a Polish nobleman), nothing more. But I am in my own house; I am Zamoyski, and he is King of Sweden; but Maximilian was Austrian, was he not? Is he coming? Let him come. We shall see! Sweden is small for him, but Zamost is enough for me. I will not yield it.”

“It is a delight, gracious gentlemen, to hear not only such eloquence, but such honest sentiments,” cried Zagloba.

“Zamoyski is Zamoyski!” continued Pan Sobiepan, delighted with the praise. “We have not bowed down, and we will not. I will not give up Zamost, and that is the end of it.”

“To the health of the host!” thundered the officers.

“Vivat! vivat!”

“Pan Zagloba,” cried Zamoyski, “I will not let the King of Sweden into Zamost, and I will not let you out.”

“I thank you for the favor; but, your worthiness, do not do that, for as much as you torment Karl with the first decision, so much will you delight him with the second.”

“Give me your word that you will come to me after the war is over.”

“I give it.”

Long yet did they feast, then sleep began to overcome the knights; therefore they went to rest, especially as sleepless nights were soon to begin for them, since the Swedes were already near, and the advance guards were looked for at any hour.

“So in truth he will not give up Zamost,” said Zagloba, returning to his quarters with Pan Yan and Volodyovski. “Have you seen how we have fallen in love with each other? It will be pleasant here in Zamost for me and you. The host and I have become so attached to each other that no cabinetmaker could join inlaid work better. He is a good fellow—h’m! If he were my knife and I carried him at my belt, I would whet him on a stone pretty often, for he is a trifle dull. But he is a good man, and he will not betray like those bull-drivers of Birji. Have you noticed how the magnates cling to old Zagloba? I cannot keep them off. I’m scarcely away from Sapyeha when there is another at hand. But I will tune this one as a bass-viol, and play such an aria on him for the Swedes that they will dance to death at Zamost. I will wind him up like a Dantzic clock with chimes.”

Noise coming from the town interrupted further conversation. After a time an officer whom they knew passed quickly near them.

“Stop!” cried Volodyovski; “what is the matter?”

“There is a fire to be seen from the walls. Shchebjeshyn is burning! The Swedes are there!”

“Let us go on the walls,” said Pan Yan.

“Go; but I will sleep, since I need my strength for tomorrow,” answered Zagloba.

## Chapter LXX

That night Volodyovski went on a scouting expedition, and about morning returned with a number of informants. These men asserted that the King of Sweden was at Shchebjeshyn in person, and would soon be at Zamost.

Zamoyski was rejoiced at the news, for he hurried around greatly, and had a genuine desire to try his walls and guns on the Swedes. He considered, and very justly, that even if he had to yield in the end he would detain the power of Sweden for whole months; and during that time Yan Kazimir would collect troops, bring the entire Tartar force to his aid, and organize in the whole country a powerful and victorious resistance.

“Since the opportunity is given me,” said he, with great spirit, at the military council, “to render the country and the king notable service, I declare to you, gentlemen, that I will blow myself into the air before a Swedish foot shall stand here. They want to take Zamoyski by force. Let them take him! We shall see who is better. You, gentlemen, will, I trust, aid me most heartily.”

“We are ready to perish with your grace,” said the officers, in chorus.

“If they will only besiege us,” said Zagloba, “I will lead the first sortie.”

“I will follow, Uncle!” cried Roh Kovalski; “I will spring at the king himself!”

“Now to the walls!” commanded Zamoyski.

All went out. The walls were ornamented with soldiers as with flowers. Regiments of infantry, so splendid that they were unequalled in the whole Commonwealth, stood in readiness, one at the side of the other, with musket in hand, and eyes turned to the field. Not many foreigners served in these regiments, merely a few Prussians and French; they were mainly peasants from Zamoyski’s inherited lands. Sturdy, well-grown men, who, wearing colored jackets and trained in foreign fashion, fought as well as the best Cromwellians of England. They were specially powerful when after firing it came to rush on the enemy in hand-to-hand conflict. And now, remembering their former triumphs over Hmelnitski, they were looking for the Swedes with impatience. At the cannons, which stretched out through the embrasures their long necks to the fields as if in curiosity, served mainly Flemings, the first of gunners. Outside the fortress, beyond the moat, were squadrons of light cavalry, safe themselves, for they were under cover of cannon, certain of refuge, and able at any moment to spring out whithersoever it might be needed.

Zamoyski, wearing inlaid armor and carrying a gilded baton in his hand, rode around the walls, and inquired every moment—

“Well, what—not in sight yet?” And he muttered oaths when he received negative answers on all sides. After a while he went to another side, and again he asked—

“Well, what—not in sight yet?”

It was difficult to see the Swedes, for there was a mist in the air; and only about ten o’clock in the forenoon did it begin to disappear. The heaven shining blue above the horizon became clear, and immediately on the western side of the walls they began to cry—

“They are coming, they are coming, they are coming!”

Zamoyski, with three adjutants and Zagloba, entered quickly an angle of the walls from which there was a distant view, and the four men began to look through field-glasses. The mist was lying a little on the ground yet, and the Swedish hosts, marching from Vyelanchy, seemed to be wading to the knees in that mist, as if they were coming out of wide waters. The nearer regiments had become very distinct, so that the naked eye could distinguish the infantry; they seemed like clouds of dark dust rolling on toward the town. Gradually more regiments, artillery, and cavalry appeared.

The sight was beautiful. From each quadrangle of infantry rose an admirably regular quadrangle of spears; between them waved banners of various colors, but mostly blue with white crosses, and blue with golden lions. They came very near. On the walls there was silence; therefore the breath of the air brought from the advancing army the squeaking of wheels, the clatter of armor, the tramp of horses, and the dull sound of human voices. When they had come within twice the distance of a shot from a culverin, they began to dispose themselves before the fortress. Some quadrangles of infantry broke ranks; others prepared to pitch tents and dig trenches.

“They are here!” said Zamoyski.

“They are the dog-brothers!” answered Zagloba. “They could be counted, man for man, on the fingers. Persons of my long experience, however, do not need to count, but simply to cast an eye on them. There are ten thousand cavalry, and eight thousand infantry with artillery. If I am mistaken in one common soldier or one horse, I am ready to redeem the mistake with my whole fortune.”

“Is it possible to estimate in that way?”

“Ten thousand cavalry and eight thousand infantry. I have hope in God that they will go away in much smaller numbers; only let me lead one sortie.”

“Do you hear? They are playing an aria.”

In fact, trumpeters and drummers stepped out before the regiments, and military music began. At the sound of it the more distant regiments approached, and encompassed the town from a distance. At last from the dense throngs a few horsemen rode forth. When halfway, they put white kerchiefs on their swords, and began to wave them.

“An embassy!” cried Zagloba; “I saw how the scoundrels came to Kyedani with the same boldness, and it is known what came of that.”

“Zamost is not Kyedani, and I am not the *voevoda* of Vilna,” answered Zamoyski.

Meanwhile the horsemen were approaching the gate. After a short time an officer of the day hurried to Zamoyski with a report that Pan Yan Sapyeha desired, in the name of the King of Sweden, to see him and speak with him.

Zamoyski put his hands on his hips at once, began to step from one foot to the other, to puff, to pout, and said at last, with great animation—

“Tell Pan Sapyeha that Zamoyski does not speak with traitors. If the King of Sweden wishes to speak with me, let him send me a Swede by race, not a Pole—for Poles who serve the Swedes may go as ambassadors to my dogs; I have the same regard for both.”

“As God is dear to me, that is an answer!” cried Zagloba, with unfeigned enthusiasm.

“But devil take them!” said the starosta, roused by his own words and by praise. “Well, shall I stand on ceremony with them?”

“Permit me, your worthiness, to take him that answer,” said Zagloba. And without waiting, he hastened away with the officer, went to Yan Sapyeha, and, apparently, not only repeated the starosta’s words, but added something very bad from himself; for Sapyeha turned from the town as if a thunderbolt had burst in front of his horse, and rode away with his cap thrust over his ears.

From the walls and from the squadrons of the cavalry which were standing before the gate they began to hoot at the men riding off—

“To the kennel with traitors, the betrayers! Jew servants! Huz, huz!”

Sapyeha stood before the king, pale, with compressed lips. The king too was confused, for Zamost had deceived his hopes. In spite of what had been said, he expected to find a town of such power of resistance as Krakow, Poznan, and other places, so many of which he had captured; meanwhile he found a fortress powerful, calling to mind those of Denmark and the Netherlands, which he could not even think of taking without guns of heavy calibre.

“What is the result?” asked the king, when he saw Sapyeha.

“Nothing! Zamoyski will not speak with Poles who serve your Royal Grace. He sent out his jester, who reviled me and your Royal Grace so shamefully that it is not proper to repeat what he said.”

“It is all one to me with whom he wants to speak, if he will only speak. In default of other arguments, I have iron arguments; but meanwhile I will send Forgell.”

Half an hour later Forgell, with a purely Swedish suite, announced himself at the gate. The drawbridge was let down slowly over the moat, and the general entered the fortress amid silence and seriousness. Neither the eyes of the envoy nor those of any man in his suite were bound; evidently Zamoyski wished him to see everything, and be able to report to the king touching everything. The master of Zamost received Forgell with as much splendor as an independent prince would have done, and arranged all, in truth, admirably, for Swedish lords had not one twelfth as much wealth as the Poles had; and Zamoyski among Poles was well-nigh the most powerful. The clever Swede began at once to treat him as if the king had sent the embassy to a monarch equal to himself; to begin with, he called him “Princeps,” and continued to address him thus, though Pan Sobiepan interrupted him promptly in the beginning—

“Not princeps, *eques polonus* (a Polish nobleman), but for that very reason the equal of princes.”

“Your princely grace,” said Forgell, not permitting himself to be diverted, “the Most Serene King of Sweden and Lord,” here he enumerated his titles, “has not come here as an enemy in any sense; but, speaking simply, has come on a visit, and through me announces himself, having, as I believe, a well-founded hope that your princely grace will desire to open your gates to him and his army.”

“It is not a custom with us,” answered Zamoyski, “to refuse hospitality to any man, even should he come uninvited. There will always be a place at my table for a guest; but for such a worthy person as the Swedish monarch the first place. Inform then the Most Serene King of Sweden that I invite him, and all the more gladly since the Most Serene Carolus Gustavus is lord in Sweden, as I am in Zamost. But as your worthiness has seen, there is no lack of servants in my house; therefore his Swedish Serenity need not bring his servants with him. Should he bring them I might think that he counts me a poor man, and wishes to show me contempt.”

“Well done!” whispered Zagloba, standing behind the shoulders of Pan Sobiepan.

When Zamoyski had finished his speech he began to pout his lips, to puff and repeat—

“Ah, here it is, this is the position!”

Forgell bit his mustache, was silent awhile, and said—

“It would be the greatest proof of distrust toward the king if your princely grace were not pleased to admit his garrison to the fortress. I am the king’s confidant. I know his innermost thoughts, and besides this I have the order to announce to your worthiness, and to give assurance by word in the name of the king, that he does not think of occupying the possessions of Zamost or this fortress permanently. But since war has broken out anew in this unhappy land, since rebellion has raised its head, and Yan Kazimir, unmindful of the miseries which may fall on the Commonwealth, and seeking only his own fortune, has returned within the boundaries, and, together with pagans, comes forth against our Christian troops, the invincible king, my lord, has determined to pursue him, even to the wild steppes of the Tartars and the Turks, with the sole purpose of restoring peace to the country, the reign of justice, prosperity, and freedom to the inhabitants of this illustrious Commonwealth.”

Zamoyski struck his knee with his hand without saying a word; but Zagloba whispered—

“The Devil has dressed himself in vestments, and is ringing for Mass with his tail.”

“Many benefits have accrued to this land already from the protection of the king,” continued Forgell; “but thinking in his fatherly heart that he has not done enough, he has left his Prussian province again to go once more to the rescue of the Commonwealth, which depends on finishing Yan Kazimir. But that this new war should have a speedy and victorious conclusion, it is needful that the king occupy for a time this fortress. It is to be for his troops a point from which pursuit may begin against rebels. But hearing that he who is the lord of Zamost surpasses all, not only in wealth, antiquity of stock, wit, high-mindedness, but also in love for the country, the king, my master, said at once: ‘He will understand me, he will be able to appreciate my intentions respecting this country, he will not deceive my confidence, he will surpass my hopes, he will be the first to put his hand to the prosperity and peace of this country.’ This is the truth! So on you depends the future fate of this country. You may save it and become the father of it; therefore I have no doubt of what you will do. Whoever inherits from his ancestors such fame should not avoid an opportunity to increase that fame and make it immortal. In truth, you will do more good by opening the gates of this fortress than if you had added a whole province to the Commonwealth. The king is confident that your uncommon wisdom, together with your heart, will incline you to this; therefore he will not command, he prefers to request, he throws aside threats, he offers friendship; not as a ruler with a subject, but as powerful with powerful does he wish to deal.”

Here General Forgell bowed before Zamoyski with as much respect as before an independent monarch. In the hall it grew silent. All eyes were fixed on Zamoyski. He began to twist, according to his custom, in his gilded armchair, to pout his lips, and exhibit stern resolve; at last he thrust out his elbows, placed his palms on his knees, and shaking his head like a restive horse, began—

“This is what I have to say! I am greatly thankful to his Swedish Serenity for the lofty opinion which he has of my wit and my love for the Commonwealth. Nothing is dearer to me than the friendship of such a potentate. But I think that we might love each other all the same if his Swedish Serenity remained in Stockholm and I in Zamost; that is what it is. For Stockholm belongs to his Swedish Serenity, and Zamost to me. As to love for the Commonwealth, this is what I think. The Commonwealth will not improve by the coming in

of the Swedes, but by their departure. That is my argument! I believe that Zamost might help his Swedish Serenity to victory over Yan Kazimir; but your worthiness should know that I have not given oath to his Swedish Grace, but to Yan Kazimir; therefore I wish victory to Yan Kazimir, and I will not give Zamost to the King of Sweden. That is my position!”

“That policy suits me!” said Zagloba.

A joyous murmur rose in the hall; but Zamoyski slapped his knees with his hands, and the sounds were hushed.

Forgell was confused, and was silent for a time; then he began to argue anew, insisted a little, threatened, begged, flattered. Latin flowed from his mouth like a stream, till drops of sweat were on his forehead; but all was in vain, for after his best arguments, so strong that they might move walls, he heard always one answer—

“But still I will not yield Zamost; that is my position!”

The audience continued beyond measure; at last it became awkward and difficult for Forgell, since mirth was seizing those present. More and more frequently some word fell, some sneer—now from Zagloba, now from others—after which smothered laughter was heard in the hall. Forgell saw finally that it was necessary to use the last means; therefore he unrolled a parchment with seals, which he held in his hand, and to which no one had turned attention hitherto, and rising said with a solemn, emphatic voice—

“For opening the gates of the fortress his Royal Grace,” here again he enumerated the titles, “gives your princely grace the province of Lubelsk in perpetual possession.”

All were astonished when they heard this, and Zamoyski himself was astonished for a moment. Forgell had begun to turn a triumphant look on the people around him, when suddenly and in deep silence Zagloba, standing behind Zamoyski, said in Polish—

“Your worthiness, offer the King of Sweden the Netherlands in exchange.”

Zamoyski, without thinking long, put his hands on his hips and fired through the whole hall in Latin—

“And I offer to his Swedish Serenity the Netherlands!”

That moment the hall resounded with one immense burst of laughter. The breasts of all were shaking, and the girdles on their bodies were shaking; some clapped their hands, others tottered as drunken men, some leaned on their neighbors, but the laughter sounded continuously. Forgell was pale; he frowned terribly, but he waited with fire in his eyes and his head raised haughtily. At last, when the paroxysm of laughter had passed, he asked in a short, broken voice—

“Is that the final answer of your worthiness?”

Zamoyski twirled his mustache. “No!” said he, raising his head still more proudly, “for I have cannon on the walls.”

The embassy was at an end.

Two hours later cannons were thundering from the trenches of the Swedes, but Zamoyski’s guns answered them with equal power. All Zamost was covered with smoke, as with an immense cloud; moment after moment there were flashes in that cloud, and thunder roared unceasingly. But fire from the heavy fortress guns was preponderant. The Swedish balls fell in the moat or bounded without effect from the strong angles; toward evening the enemy were forced to draw back from the nearer trenches, for the fortress was covering them with such a rain of missiles that nothing living could endure it. The Swedish king, carried away by

anger, commanded to burn all the villages and hamlets, so that the neighborhood seemed in the night one sea of fire; but Zamoyski cared not for that.

“All right!” said he, “let them burn. We have a roof over our heads, but soon it will be pouring down their backs.”

And he was so satisfied with himself and rejoiced that he made a great feast that day and remained till late at the cups. A resounding orchestra played at the feast so loudly that, in spite of the thunder of artillery, it could be heard in the remotest trenches of the Swedes.

But the Swedes cannonaded continually, so constantly indeed that the firing lasted the whole night. Next day a number of guns were brought to the king, which as soon as they were placed in the trenches began to work against the fortress. The king did not expect, it is true, to make a breach in the walls; he merely wished to instil into Zamoyski the conviction that he had determined to storm furiously and mercilessly. He wished to bring terror on them; but that was bringing terror on Poles.<sup>36</sup> Zamoyski paid no attention to it for a moment, and often while on the walls he said, in time of the heaviest cannonading—

“Why do they waste powder?”

Volodyovski and the others offered to make a sortie, but Zamoyski would not permit it; he did not wish to waste blood. He knew besides that it would be necessary to deliver open battle; for such a careful warrior as the king and such a trained army would not let themselves be surprised. Zagloba, seeing this fixed determination, insisted all the more, and guaranteed that he would lead the sortie.

“You are too bloodthirsty!” answered Zamoyski. “It is pleasant for us and unpleasant for the Swedes; why should we go to them? You might fall, and I need you as a councillor; for it was by your wit that I confounded Forgell so by mentioning the Netherlands.”

Zagloba answered that he could not restrain himself within the walls, he wanted so much to get at the Swedes; but he was forced to obey. In default of other occupation he spent his time on the walls among the soldiers, dealing out to them precautions and counsel with importance, which all heard with no little respect, holding him a greatly experienced warrior, one of the foremost in the Commonwealth; and he was rejoiced in soul, looking at the defence and the spirit of the knighthood.

“Pan Michael,” said he to Volodyovski, “there is another spirit in the Commonwealth and in the nobles. No one thinks now of treason or surrender; and everyone out of goodwill for the Commonwealth and the king is ready to give his life sooner than yield a step to the enemy. You remember how a year ago from every side was heard, ‘This one has betrayed, that one has betrayed, a third has accepted protection;’ and now the Swedes need protection more than we. If the Devil does not protect them, he will soon take them. We have our stomachs so full here that drummers might beat on them, but their entrails are twisted into whips from hunger.”

Zagloba was right. The Swedish army had no supplies; and for eighteen thousand men, not to mention horses, there was no place from which to get supplies. Zamoyski, before the arrival of the enemy, had brought in from all his estates for many miles around food for man and horse. In the more remote neighborhoods of the country swarmed parties of confederates and bands of armed peasants, so that foraging detachments could not go out, since just beyond the camp certain death was in waiting.

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<sup>36</sup> *Strachy na Lachy* (Terror on Poles) is a Polish saying, about equivalent to “impossible.”



In addition to this, Pan Charnyetski had not gone to the west bank of the Vistula, but was circling about the Swedish army like a wild beast around a sheepfold. Again nightly alarms had begun, and the loss of smaller parties without tidings. Near Krasnik appeared certain Polish troops, which had cut communication with the Vistula. Finally, news came that Pavel Sapyeha, the hetman, was marching from the north with a powerful Lithuanian army; that in passing he had destroyed the garrison at Lublin, had taken Lublin, and was coming with cavalry to Zamost.

Old Wittemberg, the most experienced of the Swedish leaders, saw the whole ghastliness of the position, and laid it plainly before the king.

"I know," said he, "that the genius of your Royal Grace can do wonders; but judging things in human fashion, hunger will overcome us, and when the enemy fall upon our emaciated army not a living foot of us will escape."

"If I had this fortress," answered the king, "I could finish the war in two months."

"For such a fortress a year's siege is short."

The king in his soul recognized that the old warrior was right, but he did not acknowledge that he saw no means himself, that his genius was strained. He counted yet on some unexpected event; hence he gave orders to fire night and day.

"I will bend the spirit in them," said he; "they will be more inclined to treaties."

After some days of cannonading so furious that the light could not be seen behind the smoke, the king sent Forgell again to the fortress.

"The king, my master," said Forgell, appearing before Zamoyski, "considers that the damage which Zamost must have suffered from our cannonading will soften the lofty mind of your princely grace and incline it to negotiations."

To which Zamoyski said: "Of course there is damage! Why should there not be? You killed on the market square a pig, which was struck in the belly by the fragment of a bomb. If you cannonade another week, perhaps you'll kill another pig."

Forgell took that answer to the king. In the evening a new council was held in the king's quarters; next day the Swedes began to pack their tents in wagons and draw their cannon out of the trenches, and in the night the whole army moved onward.

Zamost thundered after them from all its artillery, and when they had vanished from the eye two squadrons, the Shemberk and the Lauda, passed out through the southern gate and followed in their track.

The Swedes marched southward. Wittemberg advised, it is true, a return to Warsaw, and with all his power he tried to convince the king that that was the only road of salvation; but the Swedish Alexander had determined absolutely to pursue the Polish Darius to the remotest boundaries of the kingdom.

## Chapter LXXI

The spring of that year approached with wonderful roads; for while in the north of the Commonwealth snow was already thawing, the stiffened rivers were set free, and the whole country was filled with March water, in the south the icy breath of winter was still descending from the mountains to the fields, woods, and forests. In the forests lay snowdrifts, in the open country frozen roads sounded under the hoofs of horses; the days were dry, the sunsets red, the nights starry and frosty. The people living on the rich clay, on the black soil, and in the woods of Little Poland comforted themselves with the continuance of the cold, stating that the field-mice and the Swedes would perish from it. But inasmuch as the spring came late, it came as swiftly as an armored squadron advancing to the attack of an enemy. The sun shot down living fire from heaven, and at once the crust of winter burst; from the Hungarian steppes flew a strong warm wind, and began to blow on the fields and wild places. Straightway in the midst of shining ponds arable ground became dark, a green fleece shot up on the low river-lands, and the forests began to shed tears from bursting buds on their branches.

In the heavens continually fair were seen, daily, rows of cranes, wild ducks, teal, and geese. Storks flew to their places of the past year, and the roofs were swarming with swallows; the twitter of birds was heard in the villages, their noise in the woods and ponds, and in the evening the whole country was ringing with the croaking and singing of frogs, which swam with delight in the waters.

Then came great rains, which were as if they had been warmed; they fell in the daytime, they fell in the night, without interruption.

The fields were turned into lakes, the rivers overflowed, the fords became impassable; then followed the "stickiness and the impossible of muddy roads." Amid all this water, mud, and swamp the Swedish legions dragged onward continually toward the south.

But how little was that throng, advancing as it were to destruction, like that brilliant army which in its time marched under Wittemberg to Great Poland! Hunger had stamped itself on the faces of the old soldiers; they went on more like spectres than men, in suffering, in toil, in sleeplessness, knowing that at the end of the road not food was awaiting, but hunger; not sleep, but a battle; and if rest, then the rest of the dead.

Arrayed in iron these skeletons of horsemen sat on skeletons of horses. The infantry hardly drew their legs along; barely could they hold spears and muskets with trembling hands. Day followed day; they went onward continually. Wagons were broken, cannons were fastened in sloughs; they went on so slowly that sometimes they were able to advance hardly five miles in one day. Diseases fell on the soldiers, like ravens on corpses; the teeth of some were chattering from fever; others lay down on the ground simply from weakness, choosing rather to die than advance.

But the Swedish Alexander hastened toward the Polish Darius unceasingly. At the same time he was pursued himself. As in the nighttime jackals follow a sick buffalo waiting to see if he will soon fall, and he knows that he will fall and he hears the howl of the hungry pack, so after the Swedes went "parties," nobles and peasants, approaching ever nearer, attacking ever more insolently, and snatching away.

At last came Charnyetski, the most terrible of all the pursuers, and followed closely. The rearguards of the Swedes as often as they looked behind saw horsemen, at one time far off on

the edge of the horizon, at another a furlong away, at another twice the distance of a musket-shot, at another time, when attacking, on their very shoulders.

The enemy wanted battle; with despair did the Swedes pray to the Lord of Hosts for battle. But Charnyetski did not receive battle, he bided his time; meanwhile he preferred to punish the Swedes, or let go from his hand against them single parties as one would falcons against water birds.

And so they marched one after the other. There were times, however, when Charnyetski passed the Swedes, pushed on, and blocked the road before them, pretending to prepare for a general battle. Then the trumpet sounded joyously from one end of the Swedish camp to the other, and, oh miracle! new strength, a new spirit seemed to vivify on a sudden the wearied ranks of the Scandinavians. Sick, wet, weak, like Lazaruses, they stood in rank promptly for battle, with flaming faces, with fire in their eyes. Spears and muskets moved with as much accuracy as if iron hands held them; the shouts of battle were heard as loudly as if they came from the healthiest bosoms, and they marched forward to strike breast against breast.

Then Charnyetski struck once, twice; but when the artillery began to thunder he withdrew his troops, leaving to the Swedes as profit, vain labor and the greater disappointment and disgust.

When, however, the artillery could not come up, and spears and sabres had to decide in the open field, he struck like a thunderbolt, knowing that in a hand-to-hand conflict the Swedish cavalry could not stand, even against volunteers.

And again Wittemberg implored the king to retreat and thus avoid ruin to himself and the army; but Karl Gustav in answer compressed his lips, fire flashed from his eyes, and he pointed to the south, where in the Russian regions he hoped to find Yan Kazimir, and also fields open to conquest, rest, provisions, pastures for horses, and rich plunder.

Meanwhile, to complete the misfortune, those Polish regiments which had served him hitherto, and which in one way or another were now alone able to meet Charnyetski, began to leave the Swedes. Pan Zbrojek resigned first; he had held to Karl hitherto not from desire of gain, but from blind attachment to the squadron, and soldierly faithfulness to Karl. He resigned in this fashion, that he engaged in conflict with a regiment of Miller's dragoons, cut down half the men, and departed. After him resigned Pan Kalinski, who rode over the Swedish infantry. Yan Sapyeha grew gloomier each day; he was meditating something in his soul, plotting something. He had not gone hitherto himself, but his men were deserting him daily.

Karl Gustav was marching then through Narol, Tsyeshanov, and Oleshytse, to reach the San. He was upheld by the hope that Yan Kazimir would bar his road and give him battle. A victory might yet repair the fate of Sweden and bring a change of fortune. In fact, rumors were current that Yan Kazimir had set out from Lvoff with the quarter soldiers and the Tartars. But Karl's reckonings deceived him. Yan Kazimir preferred to await the junction of the armies and the arrival of the Lithuanians under Sapyeha. Delay was his best ally; for he was growing daily in strength, while Karl was becoming weaker.

"That is not the march of troops nor of an army, but a funeral procession!" said old warriors in Yan Kazimir's suite.

Many Swedish officers shared this opinion. Karl Gustav however repeated still that he was going to Lvoff; but he was deceiving himself and his army. It was not for him to go to Lvoff, but to think of his own safety. Besides, it was not certain that he would find Yan Kazimir in Lvoff; in every event the "Polish Darius" might withdraw far into Podolia, and draw after him the enemy into distant steppes where the Swedes must perish without rescue.

Douglas went to Premysl to try if that fortress would yield, and returned, not merely with nothing, but plucked. The catastrophe was coming slowly, but inevitably. All tidings brought to the Swedish camp were simply the announcement of it. Each day fresh tidings and ever more terrible.

“Sapyeha is marching; he is already in Tomashov!” was repeated one day. “Lyubomirski is marching with troops and mountaineers!” was announced the day following. And again: “The king is leading the quarter soldiers and the horde one hundred thousand strong! He has joined Sapyeha!”

Among these tidings were “tidings of disaster and death,” untrue and exaggerated, but they always spread fear. The courage of the army fell. Formerly whenever Karl appeared in person before his regiments, they greeted him with shouts in which rang the hope of victory; now the regiments stood before him dull and dumb. And at the fires the soldiers, famished and wearied to death, whispered more of Charnyetski than of their own king. They saw him everywhere. And, a strange thing! when for a couple of days no party had perished, when a few nights passed without alarms or cries of “Allah!” and “Strike, kill!” their disquiet became still greater. “Charnyetski has fled; God knows what he is preparing!” repeated the soldiers.

Karl halted a few days in Yaroslav, pondering what to do. During that time the Swedes placed on flat-bottomed boats sick soldiers, of whom there were many in camp, and sent them by the river to Sandomir, the nearest fortified town still in Swedish hands. After this work had been finished, and just when the news of Yan Kazimir’s march from Lvoff had come in, the King of Sweden determined to discover where Yan Kazimir was, and with that object Colonel Kanneberg with one thousand cavalry passed the San and moved to the east.

“It may be that you have in your hands the fate of the war and us all,” said the king to him at parting.

And in truth much depended on that party, for in the worst case Kanneberg was to furnish the camp with provisions; and if he could learn certainly where Yan Kazimir was, the Swedish King was to move at once with all his forces against the “Polish Darius,” whose army he was to scatter and whose person he was to seize if he could.

The first soldiers and the best horses were assigned, therefore, to Kanneberg. Choice was made the more carefully as the colonel could not take artillery or infantry; hence he must have with him men who with sabres could stand against Polish cavalry in the field.

March 20, the party set out. A number of officers and soldiers took farewell of them, saying: “God conduct you! God give victory! God give a fortunate return!” They marched in a long line, being one thousand in number, and went two abreast over the newly built bridge which had one square still unfinished, but was in some fashion covered with planks so that they might pass.

Good hope shone in their faces, for they were exceptionally well fed. Food had been taken from others and given to them; *gorailka* was poured into their flasks. When they were riding away they shouted joyfully and said to their comrades—

“We will bring you Charnyetski himself on a rope.”

Fools! They knew not that they were going as go bullocks to slaughter at the shambles!

Everything combined for their ruin. Barely had they crossed the river when the Swedish sappers removed the temporary covering of the bridge, so as to lay stronger planks over which cannon might pass. The thousand turned toward Vyelki Ochi, singing in low voices to

themselves; their helmets glittered in the sun on the turn once and a second time; then they began to sink in the dense pinewood.

They rode forward two miles and a half—emptiness, silence around them; the forest depths seemed vacant altogether. They halted to give breath to the horses; after that they moved slowly forward. At last they reached Vyelki Oehi, in which they found not a living soul. That emptiness astonished Kanneberg.

“Evidently they have been waiting for us here,” said he to Major Sweno; “but Charnyetski must be in some other place, since he has not prepared ambushes.”

“Does your worthiness order a return?” asked Sweno.

“We will go on even to Lvoff itself, which is not very far. I must find an informant, and give the king sure information touching Yan Kazimir.”

“But if we meet superior forces?”

“Even if we meet several thousand of those brawlers whom the Poles call general militia, we will not let ourselves be torn apart by such soldiers.”

“But we may meet regular troops. We have no artillery, and against them cannons are the main thing.”

“Then we will draw back in season and inform the king of the enemy, and those who try to cut off our retreat we will disperse.”

“I am afraid of the night!” replied Sweno.

“We will take every precaution. We have food for men and horses for two days; we need not hurry.”

When they entered the pinewood beyond Vyelki Ochi, they acted with vastly more caution. Fifty horsemen rode in advance musket in hand, each man with his gunstock on his thigh. They looked carefully on every side; examined the thickets, the undergrowth; frequently they halted, listened; sometimes they went from the road to one side to examine the depths of the forest, but neither on the roads nor at the sides was there a man.

But one hour later, after they had passed a rather sudden turn, two troopers riding in advance saw a man on horseback about four hundred yards ahead.

The day was clear and the sun shone brightly; hence the man could be seen as something on the hand. He was a soldier, not large, dressed very decently in foreign fashion. He seemed especially small because he sat on a large cream-colored steed, evidently of high breed.

The horseman was riding at leisure, as if not seeing that troops were rolling on after him. The spring floods had dug deep ditches in the road, in which muddy water was sweeping along. The horseman spurred his steed in front of the ditches, and the beast sprang across with the nimbleness of a deer, and again went on at a trot, throwing his head and snorting vivaciously from time to time.

The two troopers reined in their horses and began to look around for the sergeant. He clattered up in a moment, looked, and said: “That is some hound from the Polish kennel.”

“Shall I shout at him?”

“Shout not; there may be more of them. Go to the colonel.”

Meanwhile the rest of the advance guard rode up, and all halted; the small horseman halted too, and turned the face of his steed to the Swedes as if wishing to block the road to them. For a certain time they looked at him and he at them.

“There is another! a second! a third! a fourth! a whole party!” were the sudden cries in the Swedish ranks.

In fact, horsemen began to pour out from both sides of the road; at first singly, then by twos, by threes. All took their places in line with him who had appeared first.

But the second Swedish guard with Sweno, and then the whole detachment with Kanneberg, came up. Kanneberg and Sweno rode to the front at once.

“I know those men!” cried Sweno, when he had barely seen them; “their squadron was the first to strike on Prince Waldemar at Golamb; those are Charnyetski’s men. He must be here himself!”

These words produced an impression; deep silence followed in the ranks, only the horses shook their bridle-bits.

“I sniff some ambush,” continued Sweno. “There are too few of them to meet us, but there must be others hidden in the woods.”

He turned here to Kanneberg: “Your worthiness, let us return.”

“You give good counsel,” answered the colonel, frowning. “It was not worth while to set out if we must return at sight of a few ragged fellows. Why did we not return at sight of one? Forward!”

The first Swedish rank moved at that moment with the greatest regularity; after it the second, the third, the fourth. The distance between the two detachments was becoming less.

“Cock your muskets!” commanded Kanneberg.

The Swedish muskets moved like one; their iron necks were stretched toward the Polish horsemen.

But before the muskets thundered, the Polish horsemen turned their horses and began to flee in a disorderly group.

“Forward!” cried Kanneberg.

The division moved forward on a gallop, so that the ground trembled under the heavy hoofs of the horses.

The forest was filled with the shouts of pursuers and pursued. After half an hour of chasing, either because the Swedish horses were better, or those of the Poles were wearied by some journey, the distance between the two bodies was decreasing.

But at once something wonderful happened. The Polish band, at first disorderly, did not scatter more and more as the flight continued, but on the contrary, they fled in ever better order, in ranks growing more even, as if the very speed of the horses brought the riders into line.

Sweno saw this, urged on his horse, reached Kanneberg, and called out—

“Your worthiness, that is an uncommon party; those are regular soldiers, fleeing designedly and leading us to an ambush.”

“Will there be devils in the ambush, or men?” asked Kanneberg.

The road rose somewhat and became ever wider, the forest thinner, and at the end of the road was to be seen an unoccupied field, or rather a great open space, surrounded on all sides by a dense, deep gray pinewood.

The Polish horsemen increased their pace in turn, and it transpired that hitherto they had gone slowly of purpose; for now in a short time they pushed forward so rapidly that the Swedish leader knew that he could never overtake them. But when he had come to the middle of the open plain and saw that the enemy were almost touching the other end of it, he began to restrain his men and slacken speed.

But, oh marvel! the Poles, instead of sinking in the opposite forest, wheeled around at the very edge of the half-circle and returned on a gallop toward the Swedes, putting themselves at once in such splendid battle order that they roused wonder even in their opponents.

"It is true!" cried Kanneberg, "those are regular soldiers. They turned as if on parade. What do they want for the hundredth time?"

"They are attacking us!" cried Sweno.

In fact, the squadron was moving forward at a trot. The little knight on the cream-colored steed shouted something to his men, pushed forward, again reined in his horse, gave signs with his sabre; evidently he was the leader.

"They are attacking really!" said Kanneberg, with astonishment.

And now the horses, with ears dropped back, were coming at the greatest speed, stretched out so that their bellies almost touched the ground. Their riders bent forward to their shoulders, and were hidden behind the horse manes. The Swedes standing in the first rank saw only hundreds of distended horse-nostrils and burning eyes. A whirlwind does not move as that squadron tore on.

"God with us! Sweden! Fire!" commanded Kanneberg, raising his sword.

All the muskets thundered; but at that very moment the Polish squadron fell into the smoke with such impetus that it hurled to the right and the left the first Swedish ranks, and drove itself into the density of men and horses, as a wedge is driven into a cleft log. A terrible whirl was made, breastplate struck breastplate, sabre struck rapier; and the rattle, the whining of horses, the groan of dying men roused every echo, so that the whole pinewood began to give back the sounds of the battle, as the steep cliffs of mountains give back the thunder.

The Swedes were confused for a time, especially since a considerable number of them fell from the first blow; but soon recovering, they went powerfully against the enemy. Their flanks came together; and since the Polish squadron was pushing ahead anyhow, for it wished to pass through with a thrust, it was soon surrounded. The Swedish centre yielded before the squadron, but the flanks pressed on it with the greater power, unable to break it; for it defended itself with rage and with all that incomparable adroitness which made the Polish cavalry so terrible in hand-to-hand conflict. Sabres toiled then against rapiers, bodies fell thickly; but the victory was just turning to the Swedish side when suddenly from under the dark wall of the pinewood rolled out another squadron, and moved forward at once with a shout.

The whole right wing of the Swedes, under the lead of Sweno, faced the new enemy in which the trained Swedish soldiers recognized hussars. They were led by a man on a valiant dapple gray; he wore a burka, and a wildcat skin cap with a heron feather. He was perfectly visible to the eye, for he was riding at one side some yards from the soldiers.

"Charnyetski! Charnyetski!" was the cry in the Swedish ranks.

Sweno looked in despair at the sky, then pressed his horse with his knees and rushed forward with his men.

But Charnyetski led his hussars a few yards farther, and when they were moving with the swiftest rush, he turned back alone.

With that a third squadron issued from the forest, he galloped to that and led it forward; a fourth came out, he led that on; pointing to each with his baton, where it must strike. You would have said that he was a man leading harvesters to his field and distributing work among them.

At last, when the fifth squadron had come forth from the forest, he put himself at the head of that, and with it rushed to the fight.

But the hussars had already forced the right wing to the rear, and after a while had broken it completely; the three other squadrons, racing around the Swedes in Tartar fashion and raising an uproar, had thrown them into disorder; then they fell to cutting them with steel, to thrusting them with lances, scattering, trampling, and finally pursuing them amid shrieks and slaughter.

Kanneberg saw that he had fallen into an ambush, and had led his detachment as it were under the knife. For him there was no thought of victory now; but he wished to save as many men as possible, hence he ordered to sound the retreat. The Swedes, therefore, turned with all speed to that same road by which they had come to Vyelki Ochi; but Charnyetski's men so followed them that the breaths of the Polish horses warmed the shoulders of the Swedes.

In these conditions and in view of the terror which had seized the Swedish cavalry, that return could not take place in order; and soon Kanneberg's brilliant division was turned into a crowd fleeing in disorder and slaughtered almost without resistance.

The longer the pursuit lasted, the more irregular it became; for the Poles did not pursue in order, each of them drove his horse according to the breath in the beast's nostrils, and attacked and slew whom he wished.

Both sides were mingled and confused in one mass. Some Polish soldiers passed the last Swedish ranks; and it happened that when a Pole stood in his stirrups to strike with more power the man fleeing in front of him, he fell himself thrust with a rapier from behind. The road to Vyelki Ochi was strewn with Swedish corpses; but the end of the chase was not there. Both sides rushed with the same force along the road through the next forest; there however the Swedish horses, wearied first, began to go more slowly, and the slaughter became still more bloody.

Some of the Swedes sprang from their beasts and vanished in the forest; but only a few did so, for the Swedes knew from experience that peasants were watching in the forest, and they preferred to die from sabres rather than from terrible tortures, of which the infuriated people were not sparing. Some asked quarter, but for the most part in vain; for each Pole chose to slay an enemy, and chase on rather than take him prisoner, guard him, and leave further pursuit.

They cut then without mercy, so that no one might return with news of the defeat.

Volodyovski was in the van of pursuit with the Lauda squadron. He was that horseman who had appeared first to the Swedes as a decoy; he had struck first, and now, sitting on a horse which was as if impelled by a whirlwind, he enjoyed himself with his whole soul, wishing to be sated with blood, and avenge the defeat of Golamb. Every little while he overtook a horseman, and when he had overtaken him he quenched him as quickly as he would a candle; sometimes he came on the shoulders of two, three, or four, but soon, only in a moment, that



same number of horses ran riderless before him. More than one hapless Swede caught his own rapier by the point, and turning the hilt to the knight for quarter implored with voice and with eyes. Volodyovski did not stop, but thrusting his sabre into the man where the neck joins the breast, he gave him a light, small push, and the man dropped his hands, gave forth one and a second word with pale lips, then sank in the darkness of death.

Volodyovski, not looking around, rushed on and pushed new victims to the earth.

The valiant Sweno took note of this terrible harvester, and summoning a few of the best horsemen he determined with the sacrifice of his own life to restrain even a little of the pursuit in order to save others. They turned therefore their horses, and pointing their rapiers waited with the points toward the pursuers. Volodyovski, seeing this, hesitated not a moment, spurred on his horse, and fell into the midst of them.

And before anyone could have winked, two helmets had fallen. More than ten rapiers were directed at once to the single breast of Volodyovski; but at that instant rushed in Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav, Yuzva Butrym, Zagloba and Roh Kovalski, of whom Zagloba related, that even when going to the attack he had his eyes closed in sleep, and woke only when his breast struck the breast of an enemy.

Volodyovski put himself under the saddle so quickly that the rapiers passed through empty air. He learned this method from the Tartars of Bailgorod; but being small and at the same time adroit beyond human belief, he brought it to such perfection that he vanished from the eye when he wished, either behind the shoulder or under the belly of the horse. So he vanished this time, and before the astonished Swedes could understand what had become of him he was erect on the saddle again, terrible as a wildcat which springs down from lofty branches among frightened dogs.

Meanwhile his comrades gave him aid, and bore around death and confusion. One of the Swedes held a pistol to the very breast of Zagloba. Roh Kovalski, having that enemy on his left side, was unable to strike him with a sabre; but he balled his fist, struck the Swede's head in passing, and that man dropped under the horse as if a thunderbolt had met him, and Zagloba, giving forth a shout of delight, slashed in the temple Sweno himself, who dropped his hands and fell with his forehead to the horse's shoulder. At sight of this the other Swedes scattered. Volodyovski, Yuzva Footless, Pan Yan, and Pan Stanislav followed and cut them down before they had gone a hundred yards.

And the pursuit lasted longer. The Swedish horses had less and less breath in their bodies, and ran more and more slowly. At last from a thousand of the best horsemen, which had gone out under Kanneberg, there remained barely a hundred and some tens; the rest had fallen in a long belt over the forest road. And this last group was decreasing, for Polish hands ceased not to toil over them.

At last they came out of the forest. The towers of Yaroslav were outlined clearly in the azure sky. Now hope entered the hearts of the fleeing, for they knew that in Yaroslav was the king with all his forces, and at any moment he might come to their aid. They had forgotten that immediately after their passage the top had been taken from the last square of the bridge, so as to put stronger planks for the passage of cannon.

Whether Charnyetski knew of this through his spies, or wished to show himself of purpose to the Swedish king and cut down before his eyes the last of those unfortunate men, it is enough that not only did he not restrain the pursuit, but he sprang forward himself with the Shemberk squadron, slashed, cut with his own hand, pursuing the crowd in such fashion as if he wished with that same speed to strike Yaroslav.

At last they ran to within a furlong of the bridge; shouts from the field came to the Swedish camp. A multitude of soldiers and officers ran out from the town to see what was taking place beyond the river; they had barely looked when they saw and recognized the horsemen who had gone out of camp in the morning.

“Kanneberg’s detachment! Kanneberg’s detachment!” cried thousands of voices.

“Almost cut to pieces! Scarcely a hundred men are running!”

At that moment the king himself galloped up; with him Wittemberg, Forgell, Miller, and other generals.

The king grew pale. “Kanneberg!” said he.

“By Christ and his wounds! the bridge is not finished,” cried Wittemberg; “the enemy will cut them down to the last man.”

The king looked at the river, which had risen with spring waters, roaring with its yellow waves; to give aid by swimming was not to be thought of.

The few men still left were coming nearer.

Now there was a new cry: “The king’s train and the guard are coming! They too will perish!”

In fact, it had happened that a part of the king’s provision-chests with a hundred men of the infantry guard had come out at that moment by another road from adjoining forests. When they saw what had happened, the men of the escort, in the conviction that the bridge was ready, hastened with all speed toward the town.

But they were seen from the field by the Poles. Immediately about three hundred horsemen rushed toward them at full speed; in front of all, with sabre above his head and fire in his eyes, flew the tenant of Vansosh, Jendzian. Not many proofs had he given hitherto of his bravery; but at sight of the wagons in which there might be rich plunder, daring so rose in his heart that he went some tens of yards in advance of the others. The infantry at the wagons, seeing that they could not escape, formed themselves into a quadrangle, and a hundred muskets were directed at once at the breast of Jendzian. A roar shook the air, a line of smoke flew along the wall of the quadrangle; but before the smoke had cleared away the rider had urged on his horse so that the forefeet of the beast were above the heads of the men, and the lord tenant fell into the midst of them like a thunderbolt.

An avalanche of horsemen rushed after him. And as when wolves overcome a horse, and he, lying yet on his back, defends himself desperately with his hoofs, and they cover him completely and tear from him lumps of living flesh, so those wagons and the infantry were covered completely with a whirling mass of horses and riders. But terrible shouts rose from that whirl, and reached the ears of the Swedes standing on the other bank.

Meanwhile still nearer the bank the Poles were finishing the remnant of Kanneberg’s cavalry. The whole Swedish army had come out like one man to the lofty bank of the San. Infantry, cavalry, artillery were mingled together; and all looked as if in an ancient circus in Rome at the spectacle; but they looked with set lips, with despair in their hearts, with terror and a feeling of helplessness. At moments from the breasts of those unwilling spectators was wrested a terrible cry. At moments a general weeping was heard; then again silence, and only the panting of the excited soldiers was audible. For that thousand men whom Kanneberg had led out were the front and the pride of the whole Swedish army; they were veterans, covered with glory in God knows how many lands, and God knows how many battles. But now they are running, like a lost flock of sheep, over the broad fields in front of the Swedish army, dying like sheep under the knife of the butcher. For that was no longer a battle, but a hunt.

The terrible Polish horsemen circled about, like a storm, over the field of struggle, crying in various voices and running ahead of the Swedes. Sometimes a number less than ten, sometimes a group more than ten fell on one man. Sometimes one met one, sometimes the hunted Swede bowed down on the saddle as if to lighten the blow for the enemy, sometimes he withstood the brunt: but oftener he perished, for with edged weapons the Swedish soldiers were not equal to Polish nobles trained in all kinds of fencing.

But among the Poles the little knight was the most terrible of all, sitting on his cream-colored steed, which was as nimble and as swift as a falcon. The whole army noted him; for whomsoever he pursued he killed, whoever met him perished it was unknown how and when, with such small and insignificant movements of his sword did he hurl the sturdiest horsemen to the earth. At last he saw Kanneberg himself, whom more than ten men were chasing; the little knight shouted at them, stopped the pursuit by command, and attacked the Swede himself.

The Swedes on the other bank held the breath in their breasts. The king had pushed to the edge of the river and looked with throbbing heart, moved at once with alarm and hope; for Kanneberg, as a great lord and a relative of the king, was trained from childhood in every species of sword exercise by Italian masters; in fighting with edged weapons he had not his equal in the Swedish army. All eyes therefore were fixed on him now, barely did they dare to breathe; but he, seeing that the pursuit of the crowd had ceased, and wishing after the loss of his troops to save his own glory in the eyes of the king, said to his gloomy soul—

“Woe to me if having first lost my men, I do not seal with my own blood the shame, or if I do not purchase my life by having overturned this terrible man. In another event, though the hand of God might bear me to that bank, I should not dare to look in the eyes of any Swede.” When he had said this he turned his horse and rushed toward the yellow knight.

Since those Poles who had cut him off from the river had withdrawn, Kanneberg had the hope that if he should finish his opponent, he might spring into the water, and then what would be would be; if he could not swim the stormy stream, its current would bear him far with the horse, and his brothers would provide him some rescue.

He sprang therefore like a thunderbolt at the little knight, and the little knight at him. The Swede wished during the rush to thrust the rapier up to the hilt under the arm of his opponent; but he learned in an instant that though a master himself he must meet a master as well, for his sword merely slipped along the edge of the Polish sabre, only quivered somehow wonderfully in his hand, as if his arm had suddenly grown numb; barely was he able to defend himself from the blow which the knight then gave him; luckily at that moment their horses bore them away in opposite directions.

Both wheeled in a circle and returned simultaneously; but they rode now more slowly against each other, wishing to have more time for the meeting and even to cross weapons repeatedly. Kanneberg withdrew into himself so that he became like a bird which presents to view only a powerful beak from the midst of upraised feathers. He knew one infallible thrust in which a certain Florentine had trained him—infallible because deceitful and almost impossible to be warded off—consisting in this: that the point of the sword was directed apparently at the breast, but by avoiding obstacles at the side it passed through the throat till the hilt reached the back of the neck. This thrust he determined to make now.

And, sure of himself, he approached, restraining his horse more and more; but Volodyovski rode toward him with short springs. For a moment he thought to disappear suddenly under the horse like a Tartar, but since he had to meet with only one man, and that before the eyes of

both armies, though he understood that some unexpected thrust was waiting for him, he was ashamed to defend himself in Tartar and not in knightly fashion.

“He wishes to take me as a heron does a falcon with a thrust,” thought Pan Michael to himself; “but I will use that windmill which I invented in Lubni.”

And this idea seemed to him best for the moment; therefore it surrounded him like a glittering shield of light, and he struck his steed with his spurs and rushed on Kanneberg.

Kanneberg drew himself in still more, and almost grew to the horse; in the twinkle of an eye the rapier caught the sabre, and quickly he stuck out his head like a snake and made a ghastly thrust.

But in that instant a terrible whirling began to sound, the rapier turned in the hands of the Swede; the point struck empty space, but the curved end of the sabre fell with the speed of lightning; on the face of Kanneberg, cut through a part of his nose, his mouth and beard, struck his shoulder-blade, shattered that, and stopped only at the sword-belt which crossed his shoulder.

The rapier dropped from the hands of the unfortunate man, and night embraced his head; but before he fell from his horse, Volodyovski dropped his own weapon and seized him by the shoulder.

The Swedes from the other bank roared with one out burst, but Zagloba sprang to the little knight.

“Pan Michael, I knew it would be so, but I was ready to avenge you!”

“He was a master,” answered Volodyovski. “You take the horse, for he is a good one.”

“Ha! if it were not for the river we could rush over and frolic with those fellows. I would be the first—”

The whistle of balls interrupted further words of Zagloba; therefore he did not finish the expression of his thoughts, but cried—

“Let us go, Pan Michael; those traitors are ready to fire.”

“Their bullets have no force, for the range is too great.”

Meanwhile other Polish horsemen came up congratulating Volodyovski and looking at him with admiration; but he only moved his mustaches, for he was a cause of gladness to himself as well as to them.

But on the other bank among the Swedes, it was seething as in a beehive. Artillerists on that side drew out their cannons in haste; and in the nearer Polish ranks trumpets were sounded for withdrawal. At this sound each man sprang to his squadron, and in a moment all were in order. They withdrew then to the forest, and halted again, as if offering a place to the enemy and inviting them across the river. At last, in front of the ranks of men and horses, rode out on his dapple gray the man wearing a burka and a cap with a heron’s feather, and bearing a gilded baton in his hand.

He was perfectly visible, for the reddish rays of the setting sun fell on him, and besides he rode before the regiments as if reviewing them. All the Swedes knew him at once, and began to shout—

“Charnyetski! Charnyetski!”

He said something to the colonels. It was seen how he stopped longer with the knight who had slain Kanneberg, and placed his hand on his shoulder; then he raised his baton, and the squadrons began to turn slowly one after another to the pinewoods.

Just then the sun went down. In Yaroslav the bells sounded in the church; then all the regiments began to sing in one voice as they were riding away, "The Angel of the Lord announced to the Most Holy Virgin Mary;" and with that song they vanished from the eyes of the Swedes.

## Chapter LXXII

That evening the Swedes lay down to sleep without putting food into their mouths, and without hope that they would have anything to strengthen themselves with on the morrow. They were not able to sleep from the torment of hunger. Before the second cockcrow the suffering soldiers began to slip out of the camp singly and in crowds to plunder villages adjoining Yaroslav. They went like night-thieves to Radzymno, to Kanchuya, to Tychyno, where they hoped to find food of some kind. Their confidence was increased by the fact that Charnyetski was on the other side of the river; but even had he been able to cross, they preferred death to hunger. There was evidently a great relaxation in the camp, for despite the strictest orders of the king about fifteen hundred men went out in this way.

They fell to ravaging the neighborhood, burning, plundering, killing; but scarcely a man of them was to return. Charnyetski was on the other side of the San, it is true, but on the left bank were various "parties" of nobles and peasants; of these the strongest, that of Stjalkovski, formed of daring nobles of the mountains, had come that very night to Prohnik, as if led by the evil fate of the Swedes. When he saw the fire and heard the shots, Stjalkovski went straight to the uproar and fell upon the plunderers. They defended themselves fiercely behind fences; but Stjalkovski broke them up, cut them to pieces, spared no man. In other villages other parties did work of the same kind. Fugitives were followed to the very camp, and the pursuers spread alarm and confusion, shouting in Tartar, in Wallachian, in Hungarian, and in Polish; so that the Swedes thought that some powerful auxiliary of the Poles was attacking them, maybe the Khan with the whole horde.

Confusion began, and—a thing without example hitherto—panic, which the officers put down with the greatest effort. The king, who remained on horseback till daylight, saw what was taking place; he understood what might come of that, and called a council of war at once in the morning.

That gloomy council did not last long, for there were not two roads to choose from. Courage had fallen in the army, the soldiers had nothing to eat, the enemy had grown in power.

The Swedish Alexander, who had promised the whole world to pursue the Polish Darius even to the steppes of the Tartars, was forced to think no longer of pursuit, but of his own safety.

"We can return by the San to Sandomir, thence by the Vistula to Warsaw and to Prussia," said Wittemberg; "in that way we shall escape destruction."

Douglas seized his own head: "So many victories, so many toils, such a great country conquered, and we must return."

To which Wittemberg said: "Has your worthiness any advice?"

"I have not," answered Douglas.

The king, who had said nothing hitherto, rose, as a sign that the session was ended, and said, "I command the retreat!"

Not a word further was heard from his mouth that day.

Drums began to rattle, and trumpets to sound. News that the retreat was ordered ran in a moment from one end of the camp to the other. It was received with shouts of delight. Fortresses and castles were still in the hands of the Swedes; and in them rest, food, and safety were waiting.

The generals and soldiers betook themselves so zealously to preparing for retreat that that zeal, as Douglas remarked, bordered on disgrace.

The king sent Douglas with the vanguard to repair the difficult crossings and clear the forests. Soon after him moved the whole army in order of battle; the front was covered by artillery, the rear by wagons, at the flanks marched infantry. Military supplies and tents sailed down the river on boats.

All these precautions were not superfluous; barely had the march begun, when the rearguard of the Swedes saw Polish cavalry behind, and thenceforth they lost it almost never from sight. Charnyetski assembled his own squadrons, collected all the "parties" of that region, sent to Yan Kazimir for reinforcements, and pursued. The first stopping-place, Pjevorsk, was at the same time the first place of alarm. The Polish divisions pushed up so closely that several thousand infantry with artillery had to turn against them. For a time the king himself thought that Charnyetski was really attacking; but according to his wont he only sent detachment after detachment. These attacked with an uproar and retreated immediately. All the night passed in these encounters—a troublesome and sleepless night for the Swedes.

The whole march, all the following nights and days were to be like this one.

Meanwhile Yan Kazimir sent two squadrons of very well trained cavalry, and with them a letter stating that the hetmans would soon march with cavalry, and that he himself with the rest of the infantry and with the horde would hasten after them. In fact, he was detained only by negotiations with the Khan, with Rakotsy, and with the court of Vienna. Charnyetski was rejoiced beyond measure by this news; and when the day after the Swedes advanced in the wedge between the Vistula and the San, he said to Colonel Polyanovski—

"The net is spread, the fish are going in."

"And we will do like that fisherman," said Zagloba, "who played on the flute to the fish so that they might dance, and when they would not, he pulled them on shore; then they began to jump around, and he fell to striking them with a stick, crying: 'Oh, such daughters! you ought to have danced when I begged you to do so.'"

"They will dance," answered Charnyetski; "only let the marshal, Pan Lyubomirski, come with his army, which numbers five thousand."

"He may come any time," remarked Volodyovski.

"Some nobles from the foothills arrived today," said Zagloba; "they say that he is marching in haste; but whether he will join us instead of fighting on his own account is another thing."

"How is that?" asked Charnyetski, glancing quickly at Zagloba.

"He is a man of uncommon ambition and envious of glory. I have known him many years; I was his confidant and made his acquaintance when he was still a lad, at the court of Pan Krakovski. He was learning fencing at that time from Frenchmen and Italians. He fell into terrible anger one day when I told him that they were fools, not one of whom could stand before me. We had a duel, and I laid out seven of them one following the other. After that Lyubomirski learned from me, not only fencing, but the military art. By nature his wit is a little dull; but whatever he knows he knows from me."

"Are you then such a master of the sword?" asked Polyanovski.

"As a specimen of my teaching, take Pan Volodyovski; he is my second pupil. From that man I have real comfort."

"True, it was you who killed Sweno."

“Sweno? If some one of you, gentlemen, had done that deed, he would have had something to talk about all his life, and besides would invite his neighbors often to dinner to repeat the story at wine; but I do not mind it, for if I wished to take in all I have done, I could pave the road from this place to Sandomir with such Swenos. Could I not? Tell me, any of you who know me.”

“Uncle could do it,” said Roh Kovalski.

Charnyetski did not hear the continuation of this dialogue, for he had fallen to thinking deeply over Zagloba’s words. He too knew of Lyubomirski’s ambition, and doubted not that the marshal would either impose his own will on him, or would act on his own account, even though that should bring harm to the Commonwealth. Therefore his stern face became gloomy, and he began to twist his beard.

“Oho!” whispered Zagloba to Pan Yan, “Charnyetski is chewing something bitter, for his face is like the face of an eagle; he will snap up somebody soon.”

Then Charnyetski said: “Some one of you, gentlemen, should go with a letter from me to Lyubomirski.”

“I am known to him, and I will go,” said Pan Yan.

“That is well,” answered Charnyetski; “the more noted the messenger, the better.”

Zagloba turned to Volodyovski and whispered: “He is speaking now through the nose; that is a sign of great change.”

In fact, Charnyetski had a silver palate, for a musket-ball had carried away his own years before at Busha. Therefore whenever he was roused, angry, and unquiet, he always began to speak with a sharp and clinking voice. Suddenly he turned to Zagloba: “And perhaps you would go with Pan Skshetuski?”

“Willingly,” answered Zagloba. “If I cannot do anything, no man can. Besides, to a man of such great birth it will be more proper to send two.”

Charnyetski compressed his lips, twisted his beard, and repeated as if to himself: “Great birth, great birth—”

“No one can deprive Lyubomirski of that,” remarked Zagloba.

Charnyetski frowned.

“The Commonwealth alone is great, and in comparison with it no family is great, all of them are small; and I would the earth swallowed those who make mention of their greatness.”

All were silent, for he had spoken with much vehemence; and only after some time did Zagloba say—

“In comparison with the whole Commonwealth, certainly.”

“I did not grow up out of salt, nor out of the soil, but out of that which pains me,” said Charnyetski; “and the Cossacks who shot this lip through pained me, and now the Swedes pain me; and either I shall cut away this sore with the sabre, or die of it myself, so help me God!”

“And we will help you with our blood!” said Polyanovski.

Charnyetski ruminated some time yet over the bitterness which rose in his heart, over the thought that the marshal’s ambition might hinder him in saving the country; at last he grew calm and said—



“Now it is necessary to write a letter. I ask you, gentlemen, to come with me.”

Pan Yan and Zagloba followed him, and half an hour later they were on horseback and riding back toward Radymno; for there was news that the marshal had halted there with his army.

“Yan,” said Zagloba, feeling of the bag in which he carried Charnyetski’s letter, “do me a favor; let me be the only one to talk to the marshal.”

“But, father, have you really known him, and taught him fencing?”

“Hei! that came out of itself, so that the breath should not grow hot in my mouth, and my tongue become soft, which might easily happen from too long silence. I neither knew him nor taught him. Just as if I had nothing better to do than be a bear-keeper, and teach the marshal how to walk on hind legs! But that is all one; I have learned him through and through from what people tell of him, and I shall be able to bend him as a cook bends pastry. Only one thing I beg of you: do not say that we have a letter from Charnyetski, and make no mention of it till I give the letter myself.”

“How is that? Should I not do the work for which I was sent? In my life such a thing has not happened, and it will not happen! Even if Charnyetski should forgive me, I would not do that for ready treasure.”

“Then I will draw my sabre and hamstring your horse so that you cannot follow me. Have you ever seen anything miscarry that I invented with my own head? Tell me, have you ever come into evil plight yourself with Zagloba’s stratagems? Did Pan Michael come out badly, or your Helena, or any of you, when I freed you all from Radzivill’s hands? I tell you that more harm than good may come of that letter; for Charnyetski wrote it in such agitation that he broke three pens. Finally, you can speak of it when my plans fail. I promise to give it then, but not before.”

“If I can only deliver the letter, it is all one when.”

“I ask for no more. Now on, for there is a terrible road before us.”

They urged the horses, and went at a gallop. But they did not need to ride long, for the marshal’s vanguard had not only passed Radymno, but Yaroslav; and Lyubomirski himself was at Yaroslav, and occupied the former quarters of the King of Sweden.

They found him at dinner, with the most important officers. But when the envoys were announced, Lyubomirski gave orders to receive them at once; for he knew the names, since they were mentioned at that time in the whole Commonwealth.

All eyes were turned on the envoys as they entered; the officers looked with especial admiration and curiosity at Pan Yan. When the marshal had greeted them courteously, he asked at once—

“Have I that famous knight before me who brought the letters from besieged Zbaraj to the king?”

“I crept through,” said Pan Yan.

“God grant me as many such officers as possible! I envy Pan Charnyetski nothing so much; as to the rest, I know that even my small services will not perish from the memory of men.”

“And I am Zagloba,” said the old knight, pushing himself forward.

Here he passed his eye around the assembly; and the marshal, as he wished to attract everyone to himself, exclaimed—

“Who does not know of the man who slew Burlai, the leader of the barbarians; of the man who raised Radzivill’s army in rebellion—”

“And I led Sapyeha’s army, who, if the truth is told, chose me, not him for leader,” added Zagloba.

“And why did you wish, being able to have such a high office, to leave it and serve under Pan Charnyetski?”

Here Zagloba’s eye gleamed at Skshetuski, and he said: “Serene great mighty marshal, from your worthiness I as well as the whole country take example how to resign ambition and self-interest for the good of the Commonwealth.”

Lyubomirski blushed from satisfaction, and Zagloba, putting his hands on his hips, continued—

“Pan Charnyetski has sent us to bow to your worthiness in his name and that of the whole army, and at the same time to inform you of the considerable victory which God has permitted us to gain over Kanneberg.”

“I have heard of it already,” said the marshal, dryly enough, in whom envy had now begun to move, “but gladly do I hear it again from an eyewitness.”

Zagloba began at once to relate, but with certain changes, for the forces of Kanneberg grew in his mouth to two thousand men. He did not forget either to mention Sweno or himself, and how before the eyes of the king the remnant of the cavalry were cut to pieces near the river; how the wagons and three hundred men of the guards fell into the hands of the fortunate conquerors; in a word, the victory increased in his narrative to the dimensions of an unspeakable misfortune for the Swedes.

All listened with attention, and so did the marshal; but he grew gloomier and gloomier, his face was chilled as if by ice, and at last he said—

“I do not deny that Charnyetski is a celebrated warrior, but still he cannot devour all the Swedes himself; something will remain for others to gulp.”

“Serene great mighty lord,” answered Zagloba, “it is not Pan Charnyetski who gained the victory.”

“But who?”

“But Lyubomirski!”

A moment of universal astonishment followed. The marshal opened his mouth, began to wink, and looked at Zagloba with such an astonished gaze, as if he wished to ask: “Is there not a stave lacking in your barrel?”

Zagloba did not let himself be beaten from the track, but pouting his lips with great importance (he borrowed this gesture from Zamoyski), said—

“I heard Charnyetski say before the whole army: ‘It is not our sabres that slay them; ’tis the name of Lyubomirski that cuts them down. Since they have heard that he is right here marching on, their courage has so gone out of them that they see in every one of our soldiers the army of the marshal, and they put their heads under the knife like sheep.’”

If all the rays of the sun had fallen at once on the face of the marshal, that face could not have been more radiant.

“How is that?” asked he; “did Charnyetski himself say that?”

“He did, and many other things; but I do not know that ’tis proper for me to repeat them, for he told them only to intimates.”

“Tell! Every word of Pan Charnyetski deserves to be repeated a hundred times. He is an uncommon man, and I said so long ago.”

Zagloba looked at the marshal, half closing his one eye, and muttered: “You have swallowed the hook; I’ll land you this minute.”

“What do you say?” asked the marshal.

“I say that the army cheered your worthiness in such fashion that they could not have cheered the king better; and in Pjevorsk, where we fought all night with the Swedes, wherever a squadron sprang out the men cried: ‘Lyubomirski! Lyubomirski!’ and that had a better effect than ‘Allah!’ and ‘Slay, kill!’ There is a witness here too—Pan Skshetuski, no common soldier, and a man who has never told a lie in his life.”

The marshal looked involuntarily at Pan Yan, who blushed to his ears, and muttered something through his nose. Meanwhile the officers of the marshal began to praise the envoys aloud—

“See, Pan Charnyetski has acted courteously, sending such polished cavaliers; both are famous knights, and honey simply flows from the mouth of one of them.”

“I have always understood that Pan Charnyetski was a well-wisher of mine, but now there is nothing that I would not do for him,” cried the marshal, whose eyes were veiled with a mist from delight.

At this Zagloba broke into enthusiasm: “Serene great mighty lord, who would not render homage to you, who would not honor you, the model of all civic virtues, who recall Aristides in justice, the Scipios in bravery! I have read many books in my time, have seen much, have meditated much, and my soul has been rent from pain; for what have I seen in this Commonwealth? The Opalinskis, the Radzeyovskis, the Radzivills, who by their personal pride, setting their own ambition above all things, were ready at every moment to desert the country for their own private gain. I thought further, this Commonwealth is lost through the viciousness of its own sons. But who has comforted me, who has consoled me in my suffering? Pan Charnyetski, for he said: ‘The Commonwealth has not perished, since Lyubomirski has risen up in it. These others,’ said he, ‘think of themselves alone; he is only looking, only seeking how to make an offering of his own interests on the common altar. These are pushing themselves forward; he is pushing himself back, for he wants to illustrate by his example. Now,’ said he, ‘he is marching with a powerful conquering army, and I have heard,’ said he, ‘that he wishes to give me the command over it, in order to teach others how they should sacrifice their ambition, though even just, for the country. Go, then,’ said he, ‘to Pan Lyubomirski, declare to him that I do not want the sacrifice, I do not desire it, since he is a better leader than I am; since, moreover, not only as leader, but—God grant our Kazimir a long life!—as king are we ready to choose him, and—we will choose him!’”

Here Zagloba was somewhat frightened lest he had passed the measure, and really after the exclamation, “We will choose him!” followed silence; but before the magnate heaven opened; he grew somewhat pale at first, then red, then pale again, and laboring heavily with his breast, said, after the silence of a moment—

“The Commonwealth is and will ever remain in control of its own will, for on that ancient foundation do our liberties rest. But I am only a servant of its servants, and God is my witness that I do not raise my eyes to those heights at which a citizen should not gaze. As to command over the army, Pan Charnyetski must accept it. I demand it especially for this, to

give an example to those who, having continually the greatness of their family in mind, are unwilling to recognize any authority whenever it is necessary to forget the greatness of their family for the good of the country. Therefore, though perhaps I am not such a bad leader, still I, Lyubomirski, enter willingly under the command of Charnyetski, praying to God only to send us victory over the enemy!”

“Roman! Father of the country!” exclaimed Zagloba, seizing the marshal’s hand and pressing it to his lips.

But at the same moment the old rogue turned his eye on Pan Yan, and began to wink time after time.

Thundering shouts were heard from the officers. The throng in the quarters increased with each moment.

“Wine!” cried the marshal.

And when they brought in goblets he raised at once a toast to the king, then to Charnyetski, whom he called his leader, and finally to the envoys. Zagloba did not remain behind with the toasts, and he so caught the hearts of all that the marshal himself conducted them to the threshold, and the knights to the gates of Yaroslav.

At last Pan Yan and Zagloba were alone; then Zagloba stopped the road in front of Pan Yan, reined in his horse, and putting his hands on his hips, said—

“Well, Yan, what do you think?”

“God knows,” answered Pan Yan, “that if I had not seen it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears, I would not believe, even if an angel had told me.”

“Ha! do you know? I will swear to you that Charnyetski himself at the most asked and begged Lyubomirski to go in company with him. And do you know what he would have done? Lyubomirski would have gone alone; for if Charnyetski has adjured in the letter by the love of country, or if he mentioned private interests, and I am sure that he has, the marshal would have been offended at once, and would have said: ‘Does he want to be my preceptor, and teach me how to serve the country?’ I know those men! Happily old Zagloba took the matter in hand, and hardly had he opened his mouth when Lyubomirski not only wanted to go with Charnyetski, but to go under his command. Charnyetski is killing himself with anxiety, but I will comfort him. Well, Yan, does Zagloba know how to manage the magnates?”

“I tell you that I am not able to let the breath go from my lips from astonishment.”

“I know them! Show one of them a crown and a corner of the ermine robe, and you may rub him against the grain like a hound pup, and besides, he will bend up to you and present his back himself. No cat will so lick his chops, even if you hold before him a dinner of pure cheese. The eyes of the most honest of them will be bursting out from desire; and if a scoundrel happens, such as the *voevoda* of Vilna, he is ready to betray the country. Oh, the vanity of man! Lord Jesus! if Thou hadst given me as many thousands of ducats as Thou hast created candidates for this crown, I should be a candidate myself. For if any of them imagines that I hold myself inferior to him, then may his stomach burst from his own pride. Zagloba is as good as Lyubomirski; in fortune alone is the difference. This is true, Yan. Do you think that I really kissed him on the hand? I kissed my own thumb, and shoved his hand up to my nose. Certain it is that since he is alive no one has so fooled him. I have spread him like butter on toast for Charnyetski. God grant our king as long a life as possible; but in case of election, I would rather give a vote to myself than to Lyubomirski. Roh Kovalski would give me another, and Pan Michael would strike down my opponents. As God lives! I would make you

grand hetman of the kingdom straightway, and Pan Michael, after Sapyeha, grand hetman of Lithuania—but Jendzian, treasurer. He would punish the Jews with taxes! But enough; the main thing is that I have caught Lyubomirski on a hook and put the line in Charnyetski's hand. For whomsoever the flour, it will be ground on the Swedes; and whose is the merit? What do you think? Should the chroniclers inscribe it to someone else? But I have no luck. It will be well even if Charnyetski does not break out on the old man for not having given the letter. Such is human gratitude. This is not my first, not my first—others are sitting in starostaships, and are grown around with fat, like badgers; but do you, old man, shake your poor stomach on a horse as before.”

Here Zagloba waved his hand. “Human gratitude may go to the hangman! And whether in this or that position you must die, still it is pleasant to serve the country. The best reward is good company. As soon as a man is on horseback, then, with such comrades as you and Michael, he is ready to ride to the end of the world—such is our Polish nature. If a German, a Frenchman, an Englishman, or a dark Spaniard is on horseback, he is ready at once to gallop into your eyes; but a Pole, having inborn patience, will endure much, and will permit even a Swedish fellow to pluck him; but when the limit is passed and the Pole whacks him in the snout, such a Swede will cover himself three times with his legs. For there is metal yet in the Poles, and while the metal lasts the Commonwealth will last. Beat that into yourself, Yan.”

And so spoke Zagloba for a long time, for he was very glad; and whenever he was very glad he was talkative beyond usual measure, and full of wise sentences.

## Chapter LXXIII

Charnyetski, in truth, did not even dare to think that the marshal of the kingdom would put himself under his command. He wished merely joint action, and he feared that even that would not be attained because of the great ambition of Lyubomirski; for the proud magnate had mentioned more than once to his officers that he wished to attack the Swedes independently, for thus he could effect something; but if he and Charnyetski won a victory together, the whole glory would flow to Charnyetski.

Such was the case, in fact. Charnyetski understood the marshal's reasons, and was troubled. He was reading now, for the tenth time, the copy of the letter which he had sent from Pjevorsk, wishing to see if he had written anything to offend so irritable a man as Lyubomirski.

He regretted certain phrases; finally he began to regret, on the whole, that he had sent the letter. Therefore he was sitting gloomy in his quarters, and every little while he approached the window and looked out on the road to see if the envoys were not returning. The officers saw him through the window, and divined what was passing in his mind, for evident trouble was on his forehead.

"But look," said Polyanovski to Pan Michael, "there will be nothing pleasant, for the castellan's face has become spotted, and that is a bad sign."

Charnyetski's face bore numerous traces of smallpox, and in moments of great emotion or disquiet it was covered with white and dark spots. As he had sharp features, a very high forehead and cloudy, Jupiter brows, a bent nose, and a glance cutting straight through, when in addition those spots appeared, he became terrible. The Cossacks in their time called him the spotted dog; but in truth, he was more like a spotted eagle, and when he led men to the attack and his burka spread out like great wings, the likeness struck both his own men and the enemy.

He roused fear in these and those. During the Cossack wars leaders of powerful bands lost their heads when forced to act against Charnyetski. Hmelnitski himself feared him, but especially the counsels which he gave the king. They brought upon the Cossacks the terrible defeat of Berestechko. But his fame increased chiefly after Berestechko, when, together with the Tartars, he passed over the steppes like a flame, crushed the uprisen crowds, took towns and trenches by storm, rushing with the speed of a whirlwind from one end of the Ukraine to the other.

With this same raging endurance was he plucking the Swedes now. "Charnyetski does not knock out my men, he steals them away," said Karl Gustav. But Charnyetski was tired of stealing away; he thought that the time had come to strike. But he lacked artillery and infantry altogether, without which nothing decisive could be done, nothing important effected; hence his eagerness for a junction with Lyubomirski, who had a small number of cannon, it is true, but brought with him infantry composed of mountaineers. These, though not overmuch trained as yet, had still been under fire more than once, and might, for want of better, be used against the incomparable infantry legions of Karl Gustav.

Charnyetski, therefore, was as if in a fever. Not being able to endure in the house, he went outside, and seeing Volodyovski and Polyanovski, he asked—

"Are the envoys not in sight?"

“It is clear that they are glad to see them,” answered Volodyovski.

“They are glad to see them, but not glad to read my letter, or the marshal would have sent his answer.”

“Pan Castellán,” said Polyanovski, whom Charnyetski trusted greatly, “why be careworn? If the marshal comes, well; if not, we will attack as of old. As it is, blood is flowing from the Swedish pot; and we know that when a pot once begins to leak, everything will run out of it.”

“There is a leak in the Commonwealth too,” said Charnyetski. “If the Swedes escape this time, they will be reinforced, succor will come to them from Prussia, our chance will be lost.” Then he struck his side with his hand in sign of impatience. Just then was heard the tread of horses and the bass voice of Zagloba singing—

“Kaska to the bakehouse went her way,  
And Stah said to her, ‘Take me in, let me in,  
My love.  
For the snow is falling, and the wind is blowing;  
Where shall I, poor fellow, put my head  
Till morning?’”

“It is a good sign! They are returning joyously,” cried Polyanovski.

That moment the envoys, seeing Charnyetski, sprang from their saddles, gave their horses to an attendant, and went quickly to the entrance. Zagloba threw his cap suddenly into the air, and imitating the voice of the marshal so excellently that whoever was not looking on might be deceived, cried—

“Vivat Pan Charnyetski, our leader!”

The castellan frowned, and asked quickly: “Is there a letter for me?”

“There is not,” answered Zagloba; “there is something better. The marshal with his army passes voluntarily under command of your worthiness.”

Charnyetski pierced him with a look, then turned to Pan Yan, as if wishing to say: “Speak you, for this one has been drinking!”

Zagloba was in fact a little drunk; but Skshetuski confirmed his words, hence astonishment was reflected on the face of the castellan.

“Come with me,” said he to the two. “I beg you also,” said he to Polyanovski and Pan Michael.

All entered his room. They had not sat down yet when Charnyetski asked: “What did he say to my letter?”

“He said nothing,” answered Zagloba, “and why he did not will appear at the end of my story; but now *incipiam* (I will begin).”

Here he told all as it had happened—how he had brought the marshal to such a favorable decision. Charnyetski looked at him with growing astonishment, Polyanovski seized his own head, Pan Michael’s mustaches were quivering.

“I have not known you hitherto, as God is dear to me!” cried Charnyetski, at last. “I cannot believe my own ears.”

“They have long since called me Ulysses,” said Zagloba, modestly.

“Where is my letter?”

“Here it is.”

“I must forgive you for not delivering it. He is a finished rogue! A vice-chancellor might learn from him how to make treaties. As God lives, if I were king, I would send you to Tsargrad.”

“If he were there, a hundred thousand Turks would be here now!” cried Pan Michael.

To which Zagloba said: “Not one, but two hundred thousand, as true as I live.”

“And did the marshal hesitate at nothing?” asked Charnyetski.

“He? He swallowed all that I put to his lips, just as a fat gander gulps pellets; his eyes were covered with mist. I thought that from delight he would burst, as a Swedish bomb bursts. With flattery that man might be taken to hell.”

“If it can only be ground out on the Swedes, if it can only be ground out, and I have hope that it will be,” said Charnyetski, delighted. “You are a man adroit as a fox; but do not make too much sport of the marshal, for another would not have done what he has today. Much depends on him. We shall march to Sandomir itself over the estates of the Lyubomirskis, and the marshal can raise with one word the whole region, command peasants to injure crossings, burn bridges, hide provisions in the forests. You have rendered a service which I shall not forget till death; but I must thank the marshal, for as I believe he has not done this from mere vanity.”

Then he clapped his hands and cried: “A horse for me at once! Let us forge the iron while it is hot!” Then he turned to the colonels: “Come, all of you gentlemen, with me, so that the suite may be the most imposing.”

“And must I go too?” asked Zagloba.

“You have built the bridge between me and the marshal, it is proper that you be the first to pass over. Besides, I think that they will see you gladly. Come, come, lord brother, or I shall say that you wished to leave a half-finished work.”

“Hard to refuse. I must draw my belt tighter, however, lest I shake into nothing. Not much strength is left me, unless I fortify it with something.”

“But with what?”

“Much has been told me of the castellan’s mead which I have not tasted as yet, and I should like to know if it is better than the marshal’s.”

“We will drink a stirrup cup now, but after our return we shall not limit the cups in advance. You will find a couple of decanters of it in your own quarters.”

Then the castellan commanded to bring goblets; they drank enough for brightness and good humor, mounted and rode away.

The marshal received Charnyetski with open arms, entertained him with food and drink, did not let him go till morning; but in the morning the two armies were joined, and marched farther under command of Charnyetski.

Near Syenyava the Poles attacked the Swedes again with such effect that they cut the rearguard to pieces and brought disorder into the main army. Only at daybreak did the artillery disperse them. At Lejaysk, Charnyetski attacked with still greater vigor. Considerable detachments of the Swedes were mired in soft places, caused by rains and inundations, and those fell into the hands of the Poles. The roads became of the worst for the Swedes. Exhausted, hungry, and tortured by desire of sleep, the regiments barely marched.



More and more soldiers stopped on the way. Some were found so terribly reduced that they no longer wished to eat or drink, they only begged for death. Others lay down and died on hillocks; some lost presence of mind, and looked with the greatest indifference on the approaching pursuers. Foreigners, who were counted frequently in the ranks of the Swedes, began to disappear from the camp and go over to Charnyetski. Only the unbroken spirit of Karl Gustav held the remnant of its dying strength in the whole army.

For not only did an enemy follow the army; various “parties” under unknown leaders and bands of peasants crossed its road continually. Those bodies, unformed and not very numerous, could not, it is true, strike it with offensive warfare, but they wearied it mortally. And wishing to instil into the Swedes the conviction that Tartars had already come with assistance, all the Polish troops gave forth the Tartar shout; therefore “Allah! Allah!” was heard night and day without a moment’s cessation. The Swedish soldiers could not draw breath, could not put aside their armor for an instant. More than once a few men alarmed the whole camp. Horses fell by tens, and were eaten immediately; for the transport of provisions had become impossible. From time to time the Polish horsemen found Swedish corpses terribly disfigured; here they recognized at once the hands of peasants. The greater part of the villages in the triangle between the San and the Vistula belonged to the marshal and his relatives; therefore all the peasants in those parts rose up as one man, for the marshal, unsparing of his own fortune, had announced that whoever took up arms would be freed from subjection. Scarcely had this news gone the round of the region when the peasants put their scythes on staffs and began to bring Swedish heads into camp: they brought them in every day till Lyubomirski was forced to prohibit that custom as unchristian. Then they brought in gloves and boots. The Swedes, driven to desperation, flayed those who fell into their hands; and the war became more and more dreadful. Some of the Polish troops adhered yet to the Swedes, but they adhered only through fear. On the road to Lejaysk many of them deserted; those who remained made such tumults in the camp daily that Karl Gustav gave orders to shoot a number of officers. This was the signal for a general withdrawal, which was effected sabre in hand. Few, if any, Poles remained; but Charnyetski, gaining new strength, attacked with still greater vigor.

The marshal gave most effectual assistance. During this period, which by the way was short, the nobler sides of Lyubomirski’s nature gained, perhaps, the upper hand over his pride and self-love; therefore he omitted no toil, he spared neither his health nor his person, he led squadrons frequently, gave the enemy no rest; and as he was a good soldier he rendered good services. These, added to his later ones, would have secured him a glorious memory in the nation, were it not for that shameless rebellion which toward the end of his career he raised in order to hinder the reform of the Commonwealth.

But at this time he did everything to win glory, and he covered himself with it as with a robe. Pan Vitovski, the castellan of Sandomir, an old and experienced soldier, vied with him. Vitovski wished to equal Charnyetski himself; but he could not, for God had denied him greatness.

All three crushed the Swedes more and more, and with such effect that the infantry and cavalry regiments, to whom it came to form the rearguard on the retreat, marched with so much fear that a panic arose among them from the slightest cause. Then Karl Gustav decided to march always with the rearguard, so as to give courage by his presence.

But in the very beginning he almost paid for this position with his life. It happened that having with him a detachment of the lifeguards—the largest of all the regiments, for the soldiers in it were selected from the whole Scandinavian people—the king stopped for refreshment at the village of Rudnik. When he had dined with the parish priest he decided to

sleep a little, since he had not closed his eyes the night preceding. The lifeguards surrounded the house, to watch over the safety of the king. Meanwhile the priest's horse-boy stole away from the village, and coming up to a mare in the field, sprang upon her colt and raced off to Charnyetski.

Charnyetski was ten miles distant at this time; but his vanguard, composed of the regiment of Prince Dymitri Vishnyevetski, was marching under Shandarovski, the lieutenant, about two miles behind the Swedes. Shandarovski was just talking to Roh Kovalski, who had ridden up that moment with orders from Charnyetski, when suddenly both saw the lad flying toward them at all horse speed.

"What devil is that racing up so," asked Shandarovski, "and besides on a colt?"

"Some village lad," said Kovalski.

Meanwhile the boy had ridden to the front of the rank, and only stopped when the colt, frightened at horses and men, stood on his hind legs and dug his hoofs into the earth. The youth sprang off, and holding the colt by the mane, bowed to the knights.

"Well, what have you to say?" asked the lieutenant, approaching him.

"The Swedes are with us at the priest's house; they say that the king himself is among them!" said the youth, with sparkling eyes.

"Many of them?"

"Not more than two hundred horses."

Shandarovski's eyes now flashed in their turn; but he was afraid of an ambush, therefore he looked threateningly at the boy and asked—

"Who sent you?"

"Who was to send me? I jumped myself on the colt, I came near falling, and lost my cap. It is well that the Swedish carrion did not see me!"

Truth was beating out of the sunburned face of the youth; he had evidently a great animosity against the Swedes—he was panting, his cheeks were burning, he stood before the officers holding the mane of the colt with one hand, his hair disordered, the shirt open on his bosom.

"Where is the rest of the Swedish army?" asked the lieutenant.

"At daybreak so many passed that we could not count them; those went farther, only cavalry remained. But there is one sleeping at the priest's, and they say that he is the king."

"Boy," answered Shandarovski, "if you are lying, your head will fall; but if you speak the truth, ask what you please."

"As true as I live! I want nothing unless the great mighty lord officer would command to give me a sabre."

"Give him some blade," cried Shandarovski to his attendants, completely convinced now.

The other officers fell to inquiring of the boy where the house was, where the village, what the Swedes were doing.

"The dogs! they are watching. If you go straight they will see you; but I will take you behind the alder grove."

Orders were given at once, and the squadron moved on, first at a trot and then at a gallop. The youth rode before the first rank bareback on his colt without a bridle. He urged the colt with his heels, and every little while looked with sparkling eyes on the naked sabre.

When the village was in sight, he turned out of the willows and led by a somewhat muddy road to the alder grove, in which it was still muddier; therefore they slackened the speed of the horses.

“Watch!” said the boy; “they are about ten rods on the right from the end of the alder grove.”

They advanced now very slowly, for the road was difficult and heavy; the cavalry horses sank frequently to their knees. At last the alder grove began to grow thinner, and they came to the edge of the open space.

Not more than three hundred yards distant, they saw a broad square rising somewhat, and in it the priest’s house surrounded by poplars, among which were to be seen the tops of straw beehives. On the square were two hundred horsemen in rimmed helmets and breastplates.

The great horsemen sat on enormous lean horses, and were in readiness—some with rapiers at their shoulders, others with muskets on their thighs; but they were looking in another direction toward the main road, from which alone they expected the enemy. A splendid blue standard with a golden lion was waving above their heads.

Farther on, around the house stood guards by twos. One was turned toward the alder grove; but because the sun shone brightly and struck his eyes, and in the alders, which were already covered with thick leaves, it was almost dark, he could not see the Polish horsemen.

In Shandarovski, a fiery horseman, the blood began to boil like water in a pot; but he restrained himself and waited till the ranks should be in order. Meanwhile Roh Kovalski put his heavy hand on the shoulder of the youth—

“Listen, horsefly!” said he; “have you seen the king?”

“I saw him, great mighty lord!” whispered the lad.

“How did he look? How can he be known?”

“He is terribly black in the face, and wears red ribbons at his side.”

“Did you see his horse?”

“The horse is black, with a white face.”

“Look out, and show him to me.”

“I will. But shall we go quickly?”

“Shut your mouth!”

Here they were silent; and Roh began to pray to the Most Holy Lady to permit him to meet Karl, and to direct his hand at the meeting.

The silence continued still a moment, then the horse under Shandarovski himself snorted. At that the horseman on guard looked, quivered as if something had been thrown at his saddle, and fired his pistol.

“Allah! Allah! Kill, slay! *Uha-u*, slay!” was heard in the alder grove; and the squadron, coming out of the shadow like lightning, rushed at the Swedes.

They struck into the smoke before all could turn front to them, and a terrible hewing began; only sabres and rapiers were used, for no man had time to fire. In the twinkle of an eye the

Poles pushed the Swedes to the fence, which fell with a rattle under the pressure of the horses' rumps, and the Poles began to slash them so madly that they were crowded and confused. Twice they tried to close, and twice torn asunder they formed two separate bodies which in a twinkling divided into smaller groups; at last they were scattered as peas thrown by a peasant through the air with a shovel.

All at once were heard despairing voices: "The king, the king! Save the king!"

But Karl Gustav, at the first moment of the encounter, with pistols in hand and a sword in his teeth, rushed out. The trooper who held the horse at the door gave him the beast that moment; the king sprang on, and turning the corner, rushed between the poplars and the beehives to escape by the rear from the circle of battle.

Reaching the fence he spurred his horse, sprang over, and fell into the group of his men who were defending themselves against the right wing of the Poles, who had just surrounded the house and were fighting with the Swedes behind the garden.

"To the road!" cried Karl Gustav. And overturning with the hilt of his sword the Polish horseman who was raising his sabre above him, with one spring he came out of the whirl of the fight; the Swedes broke the Polish rank and sprang after him with all their force, as a herd of deer hunted by dogs rush whither they are led by their leader.

The Polish horsemen turned their horses after them, and the chase began. Both came out on the highroad from Rudnik to Boyanovka. They were seen from the front yard where the main battle was raging, and just then it was that the voices were heard crying—

"The king, the king! Save the king!"

But the Swedes in the front yard were so pressed by Shandarovski that they could not think even of saving themselves; the king raced on then with a party of not more than twelve men, while after him were chasing nearly thirty, and at the head of them all Roh Kovalski.

The lad who was to point out the king was involved somewhere in the general battle, but Roh himself recognized Karl Gustav by the knot of red ribbons. Then he thought that his opportunity had come; he bent in the saddle, pressed his horse with the spurs, and rushed on like a whirlwind.

The pursued, straining the last strength from their horses, stretched along over the broad road. But the swifter and lighter Polish horses began soon to gain on them. Roh came up very quickly with the hindmost Swede; he rose in his stirrups for a better blow, and cut terribly; with one awful stroke he took off the arm and the shoulder, and rushed on like the wind, fastening his eyes again on the king.

The next horseman was black before his eyes; he hurled him down. He split the head and the helmet of the third, and tore farther, having the king, and the king only, in his eye. Now the horses of the Swedes began to pant and fall; a crowd of Polish horsemen overtook them and cut down the riders in a twinkling.

Roh had already passed horses and men, so as not to lose time; the distance between him and Karl Gustav began to decrease. There were only two men between him and the king.

Now an arrow, sent from a bow by some one of the Poles, sang near the ear of Pan Roh, and sank in the loins of the rider rushing before him. The man trembled to the right and the left; at last he bent backward, bellowed with an unearthly voice, and fell from the saddle.

Between Roh and the king there was now only one man. But that one, wishing evidently to save the king, instead of helping turned his horse. Kovalski came up, and a cannonball does

not sweep a man from the saddle as he hurled him to the ground; then, giving a fearful shout, he rushed forward like a furious stag.

The king might perhaps have met him, and would have perished inevitably; but others were flying on behind Roh, and arrows began to whistle; any moment one of them might wound his horse. The king, therefore, pressed his heels more closely, bent his head to the mane, and shot through the space in front of him like a sparrow pursued by a hawk.

But Roh began not only to prick his own horse with the spurs, but to beat him with the side of the sabre; and so they sped on one after the other. Trees, stones, willows, flashed before their eyes; the wind whistled in their ears. The king's hat fell from his head; at last he threw down his purse, thinking that the pitiless rider might be tempted by it and leave the pursuit; but Kovalski did not look at the purse, and rolled his horse on with more and more power till the beast was groaning from effort.

Roh had evidently forgotten himself altogether; for racing onward he began to shout in a voice in which besides threats there was also a prayer—

“Stop, for God's mercy!”

Then the king's horse stumbled so violently that if the king had not held the bridle with all his power the beast would have fallen. Roh bellowed like an aurochs; the distance dividing him from Karl Gustav had decreased notably.

After a while the steed stumbled a second time, and again before the king brought him to his feet Roh had approached a number of yards.

Then he straightened himself in the saddle as if for a blow. He was terrible; his eyes were bursting out, his teeth were gleaming from under his reddish mustaches. One more stumble of the horse, another moment, and the fate of the Commonwealth, of all Sweden, of the entire war would have been decided. But the king's horse began to run again; and the king, turning, showed the barrels of two pistols, and twice did he fire.

One of the bullets shattered the knee of Kovalski's horse; he reared, then fell on his forefeet, and dug the earth with his nose.

The king might have rushed that moment on his pursuer and thrust him through with his rapier; but at the distance of two hundred yards other Polish horsemen were flying forward; so he bent down again in his saddle, and shot on like an arrow propelled from the bow of a Tartar.

Kovalski freed himself from his horse. He looked for a while unconsciously at the fleeing man, then staggered like one drunk, sat on the road, and began to roar like a bear.

But the king was each instant farther, farther, farther! He began to diminish, to melt, and then vanished in the dark belt of pine scrub.

Meanwhile, with shouting and roaring, came on Kovalski's companions. There were fifteen of them whose horses held out. One brought the king's purse, another his hat, on which black ostrich feathers were fastened with diamonds. These two began to cry out—

“These are yours, comrade! they belong to you of right.”

Others asked: “Do you know whom you were chasing? That was Karl himself.”

“As God is true! In his life he has never fled before any man as before you. You have covered yourself with immense glory!”

“And how many men did you put down before you came up with the king?”

“You lacked only little of freeing the Commonwealth in one flash, with your sabre.”

“Take the purse!”

“Take the hat!”

“The horse was good, but you can buy ten such with these treasures.”

Roh gazed at his comrades with dazed eyes; at last he sprang up and shouted—

“I am Kovalski, and this is Pani Kovalski! Go to all the devils!”

“His mind is disturbed!” cried they.

“Give me a horse! I’ll catch him yet,” shouted Roh.

But they took him by the arms, and though he struggled they brought him back to Rudnik, pacifying and comforting him along the road.

“You gave him Peter!” cried they. “See what has come to this victor, this conqueror of so many towns and villages!”

“Ha, ha! He has found out Polish cavaliers!”

“He will grow tired of the Commonwealth. He has come to close quarters.”

“Vivat, Roh Kovalski!”

“Vivat, vivat, the most manful cavalier, the pride of the whole army!”

And they fell to drinking out of their canteens. They gave Roh one, and he emptied the bottle at a draught.

During the pursuit of the king along the Boyanovka road the Swedes defended themselves in front of the priest’s house with bravery worthy of their renowned regiment. Though attacked suddenly and scattered very quickly, they rallied as quickly around their blue standard, for the reason that they were surrounded by a dense crowd. Not one of them asked for quarter, but standing horse to horse, shoulder to shoulder, they thrust so fiercely with their rapiers that for a time victory seemed to incline to their side. It was necessary either to break them again, which became impossible since a line of Polish horsemen surrounded them completely, or to cut them to pieces. Shandarovski recognized the second plan as the better; therefore encircling the Swedes with a still closer ring, he sprang on them like a wounded falcon on a flock of long-billed cranes. A savage slaughter and press began. Sabres rattled against rapiers, rapiers were broken on the hilts of sabres. Sometimes a horse rose, like a dolphin above the sea waves, and in a moment fell in the whirl of men and horses. Shouts ceased; there were heard only the cry of horses, the sharp clash of steel, gasping from the panting breasts of the knights; uncommon fury had mastered the hearts of Poles and Swedes. They fought with fragments of sabres and rapiers; they closed with one another like hawks, caught one another by the hair, by mustaches, gnawed with their teeth; those who had fallen from their horses and were yet able to stand stabbed with their knives horses in the belly and men in the legs; in the smoke, in the steam from horses, in the terrible frenzy of battle, men were turned into giants and gave the blows of giants; arms became clubs, sabres lightning. Steel helmets were broken at a blow, like earthen pots; heads were cleft; arms holding sabres were swept away. They hewed without rest; they hewed without mercy, without pity. From under the whirl of men and horses blood began to flow along the yard in streams.

The great blue standard was waving yet above the Swedish circle, but the circle diminished with each moment. As when harvesters attack grain from two sides, and the sickles begin to glitter, the standing grain disappears and the men see one another more nearly each moment,

thus did the Polish ring become ever narrower, and those fighting on one side could see the bent sabres fighting on the opposite side.

Pan Shandarovski was wild as a hurricane, and ate into the Swedes as a famished wolf buries his jaws in the flesh of a freshly killed horse; but one horseman surpassed him in fury, and that was the youth who had first let them know that the Swedes were in Rudnik, and now had sprung in with the whole squadron on the enemy. The priest's colt, three years old, which till that time had walked quietly over the land, shut in by the horses, could not break out of the throng; you would have said he had gone mad, like his master. With ears thrown back, with eyes bursting out of his head, with erect mane, he pushed forward, bit, and kicked; but the lad struck with his sabre as with a flail; he struck at random, to the right, to the left, straight ahead; his yellow forelock was covered with blood, the points of rapiers had been thrust into his shoulders and legs, his face was cut; but these wounds only roused him. He fought with madness, like a man who has despaired of life and wishes only to avenge his own death.

But now the Swedish body had decreased like a pile of snow on which men are throwing hot water from every side. At last around the king's standard less than twenty men remained. The Polish swarm had covered them completely, and they were dying gloomily, with set teeth; no hand was stretched forth, no man asked for mercy. Now in the crowd were heard voices: "Seize the standard! The standard!"

When he heard this, the lad pricked his colt and rushed on like a flame. When every Swede had two or three Polish horsemen against him, the lad slashed the standard-bearer in the mouth; he opened his arms, and fell on the horse's mane. The blue standard fell with him.

The nearest Swede, shouting terribly, grasped after the staff at once; but the boy caught the standard itself, and pulling, tore it off in a twinkling, wound it in a bundle, and holding it with both hands to his breast, began to shout to the sky—

"I have it, I won't give it! I have it, I won't give it!"

The last remaining Swedes rushed at him with rage; one thrust the flag through, and cut his shoulder.

Then a number of men stretched their bloody hands to the lad, and cried: "Give the standard, give the standard!"

Shandarovski sprang to his aid, and commanded: "Let him alone! He took it before my eyes; let him give it to Charnyetski himself."

"Charnyetski is coming!" cried a number of voices.

In fact, from a distance trumpets were heard; and on the road from the side of the field appeared a whole squadron, galloping to the priest's house. It was the Lauda squadron; and at the head of it rode Charnyetski himself. When the men had ridden up, seeing that all was over, they halted; and Shandarovski's soldiers began to hurry toward them.

Shandarovski himself hastened with a report to the castellan; but he was so exhausted that at first he could not catch breath, for he trembled as in a fever, and the voice broke in his throat every moment.

"The king himself was here: I don't know—whether he has escaped!"

"He has, he has!" answered those who had seen the pursuit.

"The standard is taken! There are many killed!"

Charnyetski, without saying a word, hurried to the scene of the struggle, where a cruel and woeful sight presented itself. More than two hundred bodies of Swedes and Poles were lying

like a pavement, one at the side of the other, and often one above the other. Sometimes one held another by the hair; some had died biting or tearing one another with their nails; and some again were closed as in a brotherly embrace, or they lay one with his head on the breast of his enemy. Many faces were so trampled that there remained nothing human in them; those not crushed by hoofs had their eyes open full of terror, the fierceness of battle, and rage. Blood spattered on the softened earth under the feet of Charnyetski's horse, which were soon red above the fetlocks; the odor of blood and the sweat of horses irritated the nostrils and stopped breath in the breast.

The castellan looked on those corpses of men as the agriculturist looks on bound sheaves of wheat which are to fill out his stacks. Satisfaction was reflected on his face. He rode around the priest's house in silence, looked at the bodies lying on the other side, beyond the garden; then returned slowly to the chief scene.

"I see genuine work here, and I am satisfied with you, gentlemen."

They hurled up their caps with bloody hands.

"Vivat Charnyetski!"

"God grant another speedy meeting. Vivat! vivat!"

And the castellan said: "You will go to the rear for rest. But who took the standard?"

"Give the lad this way!" cried Shandarovski; "where is he?"

The soldiers sprang for him, and found him sitting at the wall of the stable near the colt, which had fallen from wounds and was just breathing out his last breath. At the first glance it did not seem that the lad would last long, but he held the standard with both hands to his breast.

They bore him away at once, and brought him before Charnyetski. The youth stood there barefoot, with disordered hair, with naked breast, his shirt and his jacket in shreds, smeared with Swedish blood and his own, tottering, bewildered, but with unquenched fire in his eyes.

Charnyetski was astounded at sight of him. "How is this?" asked he. "Did he take the royal standard?"

"With his own hand and his own blood," answered Shandarovski. "He was the first also to let us know of the Swedes; and afterward, in the thickest of the whirl, he did so much that he surpassed me and us all."

"It is truth, genuine truth, as if someone had written it!" cried others.

"What is thy name?" asked Charnyetski of the lad.

"Mihalko."

"Whose art thou?"

"The priest's."

"Thou hast been the priest's, but thou wilt be thy own!" said Charnyetski.

Mihalko heard not the last words, for from his wounds and the loss of blood he tottered and fell, striking the castellan's stirrup with his head.

"Take him and give him every care. I am the guaranty that at the first Diet he will be the equal of you all in rank, as today he is the equal in spirit."

"He deserves it! he deserves it!" cried the nobles.



Then they took Mihalko on a stretcher, and bore him to the priest's house.

Charnyetski listened to the further report, which not Shandarovski gave, but those who had seen the pursuit of the king by Roh Kovalski. He was wonderfully delighted with that narrative, so that he caught his head, and struck his thighs with his hands; for he understood that after such an adventure the spirit must fall considerably in Karl Gustav.

Zagloba was not less delighted, and putting his hands on his hips, said proudly to the knights—

“Ha! he is a robber, isn't he? If he had reached Karl, the devil himself could not have saved the king! He is my blood, as God is dear to me, my blood!”

In course of time Zagloba believed that he was Roh Kovalski's uncle.

Charnyetski gave orders to find the young knight; but they could not find him, for Roh, from shame and mortification, had crept into a barn, and burying himself in the straw, had fallen asleep so soundly that he came up with the squadron only two days later. But he still suffered greatly, and dared not show himself before the eyes of his uncle. His uncle, however, sought him out, and began to comfort him—

“Be not troubled, Roh!” said he. “As it is, you have covered yourself with great glory; I have myself heard the castellan praise you: ‘To the eye a fool,’ said he, ‘so that he looks as though he could not count three, and I see that he is a fiery cavalier who has raised the reputation of the whole army.’”

“The Lord Jesus has not blessed me,” said Roh; “for I got drunk the day before, and forgot my prayers.”

“Don't try to penetrate the judgments of God, lest you add blasphemy to other deeds. Whatever you can take on your shoulders take, but take nothing on your mind; if you do, you will fail.”

“But I was so near that the sweat from his horse was flying to me. I should have cut him to the saddle! Uncle thinks that I have no reason whatever!”

“Every creature,” said Zagloba, “has its reason. You are a sprightly lad, Roh, and you will give me comfort yet more than once. God grant your sons to have the same reason in their fists that you have!”

“I do not want that! I am Kovalski, and this is Pani Kovalski.”

## Chapter LXXIV

After the affair at Rudnik the king advanced farther toward the point of the wedge between the San and the Vistula, and did not cease as before to march with the rearguard; for he was not only a famous leader, but a knight of unrivalled daring. Charnyetski, Vitovski, and Lyubomirski followed, and urged him on as a wild beast is urged to a trap. Detached parties made an uproar night and day around the Swedes. The retreating troops had less and less provisions; they were more and more wearied and drooping in courage, looking forward to certain destruction.

At last the Swedes enclosed themselves in the very corner where the two rivers meet, and rested. On one side the Vistula defended them, on the other the San, both overflowed, as usual in springtime; the third side of the triangle the king fortified with strong intrenchments, in which cannons were mounted.

That was a position not to be taken, but it was possible to die there from hunger. But even in that regard the Swedes gained better courage, for they hoped that the commandants would send them provisions by water from Krakow and other river fortresses. For instance, right there at hand was Sandomir, in which Colonel Schinkler had collected considerable supplies. He sent these in at once; therefore the Swedes ate, drank, slept; and when they woke they sang Lutheran psalms, praising God that he had saved them from such dire distress.

But Charnyetski was preparing new blows for them.

Sandomir in Swedish hands could always come to the aid of the main army. Charnyetski planned, therefore, to take the town with the castle at a blow, and cut off the Swedes.

“We will prepare a cruel spectacle for them,” said he, at a council of war. “They will look on from the opposite bank when we strike the town, and they will not be able to give aid across the Vistula; and when we have Sandomir we will not let provisions come from Wirtz in Krakow.”

Lyubomirski, Vitovski, and others tried to dissuade Charnyetski from that undertaking. “It would be well,” said they, “to take such a considerable town, and we might injure the Swedes greatly; but how are we to take it? We have no infantry, siege guns we have not; it would be hard for cavalry to attack walls.”

“But do our peasants,” asked Charnyetski, “fight badly as infantry? If I had two thousand such as Mihalko, I would take not only Sandomir, but Warsaw.”

And without listening to further counsel he crossed the Vistula. Barely had his summons gone through the neighborhood when a couple of thousand men hurried to him, one with a scythe, another with a musket, the third with *carabine*; and they marched against Sandomir.

They fell upon the place rather suddenly, and in the streets a fierce conflict set in. The Swedes defended themselves furiously from the windows and the roofs, but they could not withstand the onrush. They were crushed like worms in the houses, and pushed entirely out of the town. Schinkler took refuge, with the remnant of his forces, in the castle; but the Poles followed him with the same impetuosity. A storm against the gates and the walls began, Schinkler saw that he could not hold out, even in the castle; so he collected what he could of men, articles and supplies of provisions, and putting them on boats, crossed to the king, who looked from the other bank on the defeat of his men without being able to succor them.

The castle fell into the hands of the Poles; but the cunning Swede when departing put under the walls in the cellars kegs of powder with lighted matches.

When he appeared before the king he told him of this at once, so as to rejoice his heart.

“The castle,” said he, “will fly into the air with all the men. Charnyetski may perish.”

“If that is true, I want myself to see how the pious Poles will fly to heaven,” said the king; and he remained on the spot with all the generals.

In spite of the commands of Charnyetski, who foresaw deceit, the volunteers and the peasants ran around through the whole castle to seek hidden Swedes and treasure. The trumpets sounded an alarm for every man to take refuge in the town; but the searchers in the castle did not hear the trumpets, or would not heed them.

All at once the ground trembled under their feet, an awful thunder and a roar tore the air, a gigantic pillar of fire rose to the sky, hurling upward earth, walls, roofs, the whole castle, and more than five hundred bodies of those who had not been able to withdraw.

Karl Gustav held his sides from delight, and his favor-seeking courtiers began at once to repeat his words: “The Poles are going to heaven, to heaven!”

But that joy was premature; for none the less did Sandomir remain in Polish hands, and could no longer furnish food for the main army enclosed between the rivers.

Charnyetski disposed his camp opposite the Swedes, on the other side of the Vistula, and guarded the passage.

Sapyeha, grand hetman of Lithuania and *voevoda* of Vilna, came from the other side and took his position on the San.

The Swedes were invested completely; they were caught as it were in a vise.

“The trap is closed!” said the soldiers to one another in the Polish camps.

For every man, even the least acquainted with military art, understood that inevitable destruction was hanging over the invaders, unless reinforcements should come in time and rescue them from trouble.

The Swedes too understood this. Every morning officers and soldiers, coming to the shore of the Vistula, looked with despair in their eyes and their hearts at the legions of Charnyetski’s terrible cavalry standing black on the other side.

Then they went to the San; there again the troops of Sapyeha were watching day and night, ready to receive them with sabre and musket.

To cross either the San or the Vistula while both armies stood near was not to be thought of. The Swedes might return to Yaroslav by the same road over which they come, but they knew that in that case not one of them would ever see Sweden.

For the Swedes grievous days and still more grievous nights now began, for these days and nights were uproarious and quarrelsome. Again provisions were at an end.

Meanwhile Charnyetski, leaving command of the army to Lyubomirski and taking the Lauda squadron as guard crossed the Vistula above the mouth of the San, to visit Sapyeha and take counsel with him touching the future of the war.

This time the mediation of Zagloba was not needed to make the two leaders agree; for both loved the country more than each one himself, both were ready to sacrifice to it private interests, self-love, and ambition.

The Lithuanian hetman did not envy Charnyetski, nor did Charnyetski envy the hetman, but each did homage to the other; so the meeting between them was of such character that tears stood in the eyes of the oldest soldiers.

“The Commonwealth is growing, the dear country is rejoicing, when such sons of heroes take one another by the shoulders,” said Zagloba to Pan Michael and Pan Yan. “Charnyetski is a terrible soldier and a true soul, but put Sapyeha to a wound and it will heal. Would there were more such men! The skin would fly off the Swedes, could they see this love of the greatest patriots. How did they conquer us, if not through the rancor and envy of magnates? Have they overcome us with force? This is how I understand! The soul jumps in a man’s body at sight of such a meeting. I will guarantee, too, that it will not be dry; for Sapyeha loves a feast wonderfully, and with such a friend he will willingly let himself out.”

“God is merciful! the evil will pass,” said Pan Yan.

“Be careful that you do not blaspheme,” said Zagloba; “every evil must pass, for should it last forever it would prove that the Devil governs the world, and not the Lord Jesus, who has mercy inexhaustible.”

Their further conversation was interrupted by the sight of Babinich, whose lofty form they saw from a distance over the wave of other heads.

Pan Michael and Zagloba began to beckon to him, but he was so much occupied in looking at Charnyetski that he did not notice them at first.

“See,” said Zagloba, “how thin the man has grown!”

“It must be that he has not done much against Boguslav,” said Volodyovski; “otherwise he would be more joyful.”

“It is sure that he has not, for Boguslav is before Marienburg with Steinbock, acting against the fortress.”

“There is hope in God that he will do nothing.”

“Even if he should take Marienburg,” said Zagloba, “we will capture Karl Gustav right away; we shall see if they will not give the fortress for the king.”

“See! Babinich is coming to us!” interrupted Pan Yan.

He had indeed seen them, and was pushing the crowd to both sides; he motioned with his cap, smiling at them from a distance. They greeted one another as good friends and acquaintances.

“What is to be heard? What have you done with the prince?” asked Zagloba.

“Evil, evil! But there is no time to tell of it. We shall sit down to table at once. You will remain here for the night; come to me after the feast to pass the night among my Tartars. I have a comfortable cabin; we will talk at the cups till morning.”

“The moment a man says a wise thing it is not I who will oppose,” said Zagloba. “But tell us why you have grown so thin?”

“That hell-dweller overthrew me and my horse like an earthen pot, so that from that time I am spitting fresh blood and cannot recover. There is hope in the mercy of our Lord Christ that I shall let the blood out of him yet. But let us go now, for Sapyeha and Charnyetski are beginning to make declarations and to be ceremonious about precedence—a sign that the tables are ready. We wait for you here with great pleasure, for you have shed Swedish pig-blood in plenty.”

“Let others speak of what I have done,” said Zagloba; “it does not become me.”

Meanwhile whole throngs moved on, and all went to the square between the tents on which were placed tables. Sapyeha in honor of Charnyetski entertained like a king. The table at which Charnyetski was seated was covert with Swedish flags. Mead and wine flowed from vats, so that toward the end both leaders became somewhat joyous. There was no lack of gladness, of jests, of toasts, of noise; though the weather was marvellous, and the sun warm beyond wonder. Finally the cool of the evening separated the feasters.

Then Kmita took his guests to the Tartars. They sat down in his tent on trunks packed closely with every kind of booty, and began to speak of Kmita's expedition.

"Boguslav is now before Marienburg," said Pan Andrei, "though some say that he is at the elector's, with whom he is to march to the relief of the king."

"So much the better; then we shall meet! You young fellows do not know how to manage him; let us see what the old man will do. He has met with various persons, but not yet with Zagloba. I say that we shall meet, though Prince Yanush in his will advised him to keep far from Zagloba."

"The elector is a cunning man," said Pan Yan; "and if he sees that it is going ill with Karl, he will drop all his promises and his oath."

"But I tell you that he will not," said Zagloba. "No one is so venomous against us as the Prussian. When your servant who had to work under your feet and brush your clothes becomes your master by change of fortune, he will be sterner to you, the kinder you were to him."

"But why is that?" asked Pan Michael.

"His previous condition of service will remain in his mind, and he will avenge himself on you for it, though you have been to him kindness itself."

"What of that?" asked Pan Michael. "It often happens that a dog bites his master in the hand. Better let Babinich tell about his expedition."

"We are listening," said Pan Yan.

Kmita, after he had been silent awhile, drew breath and began to tell of the last campaign of Sapyeha against Boguslav, and the defeat of the latter at Yanov; finally how Prince Boguslav had broken the Tartars, overturned him with his horse, and escaped alive.

"But," interrupted Volodyovski, "you said that you would follow him with your Tartars, even to the Baltic."

"And you told me also in your time," replied Kmita, "how Pan Yan here present, when Bogun carried off his beloved maiden, forgot her and revenge because the country was in need. A man becomes like those with whom he keeps company; I have joined you, gentlemen, and I wish to follow your example."

"May the Mother of God reward you, as she has Pan Yan!" said Zagloba. "Still I would rather your maiden were in the wilderness than in Boguslav's hands."

"That is nothing!" exclaimed Pan Michael; "you will find her!"

"I have to find not only her person, but her regard and love."

"One will come after the other," said Pan Michael, "even if you had to take her person by force, as at that time—you remember?"

"I shall not do such a deed again."

Here Pan Andrei sighed deeply, and after a while he said, "Not only have I not found her, but Boguslav has taken another from me."

"A pure Turk! as God is dear to me!" cried Zagloba.

And Pan Yan inquired: "What other?"

"Oh, it is a long story, a long story," said Kmita. "There was a maiden in Zamost, wonderfully fair, who pleased Pan Zamoyski. He, fearing Princess Vishnyevetski, his sister, did not dare to be overbold before her; he planned, therefore, to send the maiden away with me, as if to Sapyeha, to find an inheritance in Lithuania, but in reality to take her from me about two miles from Zamost, and put her in some wilderness where no one could stand in his way. But I sounded his intention. You want, thought I to myself, to make a pander of me; wait! I flogged his men, and the lady in all maidenly honor I brought to Sapyeha. Well, I say to you that the girl is as beautiful as a goldfinch, but honest. I am now another man, and my comrades, the Lord light their souls! are long ago dust in the earth."

"What sort of maiden was she?" asked Zagloba.

"From a respectable house, a lady-in-waiting on Princess Griselda. She was once engaged to a Lithuanian, Podbipienta, whom you, gentlemen, knew."

"Anusia Borzobogati!" shouted Volodyovski, springing from his place.

Zagloba jumped up too from a pile of felt. "Pan Michael, restrain yourself!"

But Volodyovski sprang like a cat toward Kmita. "Is it you, traitor, who let Boguslav carry her off?"

"Be not unjust to me," said Kmita. "I took her safely to the hetman, having as much care for her as for my own sister. Boguslav seized her, not from me, but from another officer with whom Pan Sapyeha sent her to his own family; his name was Glovbich or something, I do not remember well."

"Where is he now?"

"He is no longer living, he was slain; so at least Sapyeha's officers said. I was attacking Boguslav separately, with the Tartars; therefore I know nothing accurately save what I have told you. But noticing your changed face, I see that a similar thing has met us; the same man has wronged us, and since that is the case let us join against him to avenge the wrong and take vengeance in company. He is a great lord and a great knight, and still I think it will be narrow for him in the whole Commonwealth, if he has two such enemies."

"Here is my hand!" said Volodyovski. "Henceforth we are friends for life and death. Whoever meets him first will pay him for both. God grant me to meet him first, for that I will let his blood out is as sure as that there is Amen in 'Our Father.'"

Here Pan Michael began to move his mustaches terribly and to feel of his sabre. Zagloba was frightened, for he knew that with Pan Michael there was no joking.

"I should not care to be Prince Boguslav now," said he, "even if someone should add Livonia to my title. It is enough to have such a wildcat as Kmita against one, but what will he do with Pan Michael? And that is not all; I will conclude an alliance with you. My head, your sabres! I do not know as there is a potentate in Christendom who could stand against such an alliance. Besides, the Lord God will sooner or later take away his luck, for it cannot be that for a traitor and a heretic there is no punishment; as it is, Kmita has given it to him terribly."

"I do not deny that more than one confusion has met him from me," said Pan Andrei. And giving orders to fill the goblets, he told how he had freed Soroka from captivity. But he did

not tell how he had cast himself first at the feet of Radzivill, for at the very thought of that his blood boiled.

Pan Michael was rejoiced while hearing the narrative, and said at the end—

“May God aid you, Yendrek! With such a daring man one could go to hell. The only trouble is that we shall not always campaign together, for service is service. They may send me to one end of the Commonwealth and you to the other. It is not known which will meet him first.”

Kmita was silent a moment.

“In justice I should reach him—if only I do not come out again with confusion, for I am ashamed to acknowledge that I cannot meet that hell-dweller hand to hand.”

“Then I will teach you all my secrets,” said Pan Michael.

“Or I!” said Zagloba.

“Pardon me, your grace, I prefer to learn from Michael,” said Kmita.

“Though he is such a knight, still I and Pani Kovalski are not afraid of him, if only I had a good sleep,” put in Roh.

“Be quiet, Roh!” answered Zagloba; “may God not punish you through his hand for boasting.”

“Oh, *tfu!* nothing will happen to me from him.”

Poor Kovalski was an unlucky prophet, but it was steaming terribly from his forelock, and he was ready to challenge the whole world to single combat. Others too drank heavily to one another, and to the destruction of Boguslav and the Swedes.

“I have heard,” said Kmita, “that as soon as we rub out the Swedes here and take the king, we shall march straight to Warsaw. Then surely there will be an end of the war. After that will come the elector’s turn.”

“Oh, that’s it! that’s it!” said Zagloba.

“I heard Sapyeha say that once, and he, as a great man, calculates better than others; he said: ‘There will be a truce with the Swedes; with the Northerners there is one already, but with the elector we should not make any conditions. Pan Charnyetski,’ he says, ‘will go with Lyubomirski to Brandenburg, and I with the treasurer of Lithuania to Electoral Prussia; and if after that we do not join Prussia to the Commonwealth, it is because in our chancellery we have no such head as Pan Zagloba, who in autograph letters threatened the elector.’”

“Did Sapyeha say that?” asked Zagloba, flushing from pleasure.

“All heard him. And I was terribly glad, for that same rod will flog Boguslav; and if not earlier, we will surely reach him at that time.”

“If we can finish with these Swedes first,” said Zagloba. “Devil take them! Let them give up Livland and a million, I will let them off alive.”

“The Cossack caught the Tartar, and the Tartar is holding him by the head!” said Pan Yan, laughing. “Karl is still in Poland; Krakow, Warsaw, Poznan, and all the most noted towns are in his hands, and father wants him to ransom himself. Hei, we shall have to work much at him yet before we can think of the elector.”

“And there is Steinbock’s army, and the garrisons, and Wirtz,” put in Pan Stanislaw.

“But why do we sit here with folded hands?” asked Roh Kovalski, on a sudden, with staring eyes; “cannot we beat the Swedes?”

“You are foolish, Roh,” said Zagloba.

“Uncle always says one thing; but as I am alive, I saw a boat at the shore. We might go and carry off even the sentry. It is so dark that you might strike a man on the snout and he wouldn’t know who did it; before they could see we should return and exhibit the courage of cavaliers to both commanders. If you do not wish to go, I will go myself.”

“The dead calf moved his tail, wonder of wonders!” said Zagloba, angrily.

But Kmita’s nostrils began to quiver at once. “Not a bad idea! not a bad idea!” said he.

“Good for camp-followers, but not for him who regards dignity. Have respect for yourselves! You are colonels, but you wish to amuse yourselves with wandering thieves!”

“True, it is not very becoming,” added Volodyovski. “We would better go to sleep.”

All agreed with that idea; therefore they kneeled down to their prayers and repeated them aloud; after that they stretched themselves on the felt cloth, and were soon sleeping the sleep of the just.

But an hour later all sprang to their feet, for beyond the river the roaring of guns was heard; while shouts and tumult rose in Sapyeha’s whole camp.

“Jesus! Mary!” exclaimed Zagloba. “The Swedes are coming!”

“What are you talking about?” asked Volodyovski, seizing his sabre.

“Roh, come here!” cried Zagloba, for in cases of surprise he was glad to have his sister’s son near him.

But Roh was not in the tent.

They ran out on the square. Crowds were already before the tents, and all were making their way toward the river, for on the other side was to be seen flashing of fire, and an increasing roar was heard.

“What has happened, what has happened?” was asked of the numerous guards disposed along the bank.

But the guards had seen nothing. One of the soldiers said that he had heard as it were the splash of a wave, but as fog was hanging over the water he could see nothing; he did not wish therefore to raise the camp for a mere sound.

When Zagloba heard this he caught himself by the head in desperation—

“Roh has gone to the Swedes! He said that he wished to carry off a sentry.”

“For God’s sake, that may be!” cried Kmita.

“They will shoot the lad, as God is in heaven!” continued Zagloba, in despair. “Worthy gentlemen, is there no help? Lord God, that boy was of the purest gold; there is not another such in the two armies! What shot that idea into his stupid head? Oh, Mother of God, save him in trouble!”

“Maybe he will return; the fog is dense. They will not see him.”

“I will wait for him here even till morning. Mother of God, Mother of God!”

Meanwhile shots on the opposite bank lessened, lights went out gradually, and after an hour dull silence set in. Zagloba walked along the bank of the river like a hen with ducklings, and



tore out the remnant of hair in his forelock; but he waited in vain, he despaired in vain. The morning whitened the river, the sun rose, but Roh came not.

## Chapter LXXV

Zagloba in unbroken despair betook himself to Charnyetski, with a request that he would send to the Swedes to see what had happened to Kovalski. Is he alive yet, is he groaning in captivity, or has he paid with his life for his daring?

Charnyetski agreed to this willingly, for he loved Zagloba. Then comforting him in his suffering, he said—

“I think your sister’s son must be alive, otherwise the water would have brought him ashore.”

“God grant that he is!” answered Zagloba; “still it would be hard for the water to raise him, for not only had he a heavy hand, but his wit was like lead, as is shown by his action.”

“You speak justly,” answered Charnyetski. “If he is alive I ought to give orders to drag him with a horse over the square, for disregard of discipline. He might alarm the Swedish army, but he has alarmed both armies; besides, he was not free to touch the Swedes without command and my order. Is this a general militia or what the devil, that every man has a right to act on his own account?”

“He has offended, I agree; I will punish him myself, if only the Lord will bring him back.”

“But I forgive him in remembrance of the Rudnik affair. I have many prisoners to exchange, and more distinguished officers than Kovalski. Do you go to the Swedes and negotiate about exchange; I will give two or three for him if need be, for I do not wish to make your heart bleed. Come to me for a letter to the king, and go quickly.”

Zagloba sprang with rejoicing to Kmita’s tent, and told his comrades what had happened. Pan Andrei and Volodyovski exclaimed at once that they too would go with him, for both were curious to see the Swedes; besides Kmita might be very useful, since he spoke German almost as fluently as Polish.

Preparations did not delay them long. Charnyetski, without waiting for the return of Zagloba, sent the letter by a messenger; then they provided a piece of white cloth fixed to a pole, took a trumpeter, sat in a boat, and moved on.

At first they went in silence, nothing save the plash of oars was to be heard; at last Zagloba was somewhat alarmed and said—

“Let the trumpeter announce us immediately, for those scoundrels are ready to fire in spite of the white flag.”

“What do you say?” answered Volodyovski; “even barbarians respect envoys, and this is a civilized people.”

“Let the trumpeter sound, I say. The first soldier who happens along will fire, make a hole in the boat, and we shall get into the water; the water is cold, and I have no wish to get wet through their courtesy.”

“There, a sentry is visible!” said Kmita.

The trumpeter sounded. The boat shot forward quickly; on the other shore a hurried movement began, and soon a mounted officer rode up, wearing a yellow leather cap. When he had approached the edge of the water he shaded his eyes with his hand and began to look against the light. A few yards from the shore Kmita removed his cap in greeting; the officer bowed to him with equal politeness.

“A letter from Pan Charnyetski to the Most Serene King of Sweden!” cried Pan Andrei, showing the letter.

The guard standing on the shore presented arms. Pan Zagloba was completely reassured; presently he fixed his countenance in dignity befitting his position as an envoy, and said in Latin—

“The past night a certain cavalier was seized on this shore; I have come to ask for him.”

“I cannot speak Latin,” answered the officer.

“Ignoramus!” muttered Zagloba.

The officer turned then to Pan Andrei—

“The king is in the farther end of the camp. Be pleased, gentlemen, to stay here; I will go and announce you.” And he turned his horse.

The envoys looked around. The camp was very spacious, for it embraced the whole triangle formed by the San and the Vistula. At the summit of the triangle lay Panyev, at the base Tarnobjeg on one side, and Rozvadov on the other. Apparently it was impossible to take in the whole extent at a glance; still, as far as the eye could reach, were to be seen trenches, embankments, earthworks, and fascines at which were cannons and men. In the very centre of the place, in Gojytsi, were the quarters of the king; there also the main forces of the army.

“If hunger does not drive them out of this place, we can do nothing with them,” said Kmita.

“The whole region is fortified. There is pasture for horses.”

“But there are not fish for so many mouths,” said Zagloba. “Lutherans do not like fasting food. Not long since they had all Poland, now they have this wedge; let them sit here in safety, or go back to Yaroslav.”

“Very skilful men made these trenches,” added Volodyovski, looking with the eye of a specialist on the work. “We have more swordsmen, but fewer learned officers; and in military art we are behind others.”

“Why is that?” asked Zagloba.

“Why? It does not beseem me as a soldier who has served all his life in the cavalry, to say this, but everywhere infantry and cannon are the main thing; hence those campaigns and military maneuvers, marches, and countermarches. A man in a foreign army must devour a multitude of books and turn over a multitude of Roman authors before he becomes a distinguished officer; but there is nothing of that with us. Cavalry rushes into the smoke in a body, and shaves with its sabres; and if it does not shave off in a minute, then they shave it off.”

“You speak soundly, Pan Michael; but what nation has won so many famous victories?”

“Yes, because others in old times warred in the same way, and not having the same impetus they were bound to lose; but now they have become wiser, and see what they are doing.”

“Wait for the end. Place for me now the wisest Swedish or German engineer, and against him I will put Roh, who has never turned over books, and let us see.”

“If you could put him,” interrupted Kmita.

“True, true! I am terribly sorry for him. Pan Andrei, jabber a little in that dog’s language of those breeches fellows, and ask what has happened to Roh.”

“You do not know regular soldiers. Here no man will open his lips to you without an order; they are stingy of speech.”

“I know that they are surly scoundrels. While if to our nobles, and especially to the general militia, an envoy comes, immediately talk, talk, they will drink *gorailka* with him, and will enter into political discussion with him; and see how these fellows stand there like posts and bulge out their eyes at us! I wish they would smother to the last man!”

In fact, more and more foot-soldiers gathered around the envoys, looking at them curiously. The envoys were dressed so carefully in elegant and even rich garments, that they made an imposing appearance. Zagloba arrested most attention, for he bore himself with almost senatorial dignity; Volodyovski was less considered, by reason of his stature.

Meanwhile the officer who received them first on the bank returned with another of higher rank, and with soldiers leading horses. The superior officer bowed to the envoys and said in Polish—

“His Royal Grace asks you, gentlemen, to his quarters; and since they are not very near we have brought horses.”

“Are you a Pole?” asked Zagloba.

“No, I am a Cheh—Sadovski, in the Swedish service.”

Kmita approached him at once. “Do you know me?”

Sadovski looked at him quickly. “Of course! At Chenstohova you blew up the largest siege gun, and Miller gave you to Kuklinovski. I greet you, greet you heartily as a famous knight.”

“And what is going on with Kuklinovski?” asked Kmita.

“But do you not know?”

“I know that I paid him with that with which he wanted to treat me, but I left him alive.”

“He died.”

“I thought he would freeze to death,” said Pan Andrei, waving his hand.

“Worthy Colonel,” put in Zagloba, “have you not a certain Roh Kovalski?”

Sadovski laughed: “Of course.”

“Praise be to God and the Most Holy Lady! The lad is alive and I shall get him. Praise be to God!”

“I do not know whether the king will be willing to yield him up,” said Sadovski.

“But why not?”

“Because he has pleased him greatly. He recognized him at once as the same man who had pushed after him with such vigor at Rudnik. We held our sides listening to the narrative of the prisoner. The king asked: ‘Why did you pick me out?’ and he answered, ‘I made a vow.’ Then the king asked again, ‘But will you do so again?’ ‘Of course!’ answered the prisoner. The king began to laugh. ‘Put away your vow,’ said he, ‘and I will give you your life and freedom.’ ‘Impossible!’ ‘Why?’ ‘For my uncle would proclaim me a fool.’ ‘And are you so sure that you could manage me in a hand-to-hand fight?’ ‘Oh, I could manage five men like you,’ said he. Then the king asked again: ‘And do you dare to raise your hand against majesty?’ ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘for you have a vile faith.’ They interpreted every word to the king, and he was more and more pleased, and continued to repeat: ‘This man has pleased me.’ Then wishing to see whether in truth he had such strength, he gave orders to choose twelve of

the strongest men in camp and bring them to wrestle in turn with the prisoner. But he is a muscular fellow! When I came away he had stretched out ten one after another, and not a man of them could rise again. We shall arrive just at the end of the amusement.”

“I recognize Roh, my blood!” said Zagloba. “We will give for him even three famous officers!”

“You will find the king in good humor,” said Sadovski, “which is a rare thing nowadays.”

“Oh, I believe that!” answered the little knight.

Meanwhile Sadovski turned to Kmita, and asked how he had not only freed himself from Kuklinovski, but put an end to him. Kmita told him in detail. Sadovski, while listening, seized his own head with amazement; at last he pressed Kmita’s hand again, and said—

“Believe me, I am sincerely glad; for though I serve the Swedes, every true soldier’s heart rejoices when a real cavalier puts down a ruffian. I must acknowledge to you that when a daring man is found among you, one must look with a lantern through the universe to find his equal.”

“You are a courteous officer,” said Zagloba.

“And a famous soldier, we know that,” added Volodyovski.

“I learned courtesy and the soldier’s art from you,” answered Sadovski, touching his cap.

Thus they conversed, vying with one another in courtesy, till they reached Grojytsi, where the king’s quarters were. The whole village was occupied by soldiers of various arms. Our envoys looked with curiosity at the groups scattered among the fences. Some, wishing to sleep away their hunger, were dozing around cottages, for the day was very clear and warm; some were playing dice on drums, drinking beer; some were hanging their clothes on the fences; others were sitting in front of the cottages singing Scandinavian songs, rubbing with brick-dust their breastplates and helmets, from which bright gleams went forth. In places they were cleaning horses, or leading them out; in a word, camp life was moving and seething under the bright sky. There were men, it is true, who bore signs of terrible toil and hunger, but the sun covered their leanness with gold; besides, days of rest were beginning for those incomparable warriors, therefore they took courage at once, and assumed a military bearing. Volodyovski admired them in spirit, especially the infantry regiments, famous through the whole world for endurance and bravery. Sadovski gave explanations as they passed, saying—

“This is the Smaland regiment of the royal guard. This is the infantry of Delekarlia, the very best.”

“In God’s name, what little monsters are these?” cried Zagloba on a sudden, pointing to a group of small men with olive complexions and black hair hanging on both sides of their heads.

“Those are Laplanders, who belong to the remotest Hyperboreans.”

“Are they good in battle? It seems to me that I might take three in each hand and strike with their heads till I was tired.”

“You could surely do so. They are useless in battle. The Swedes bring them for camp servants, and partly as a curiosity. But they are the most skilful of wizards; each of them has at least one devil in his service, and some have five.”

“How do they get such friendship with evil spirits?” asked Kmita, making the sign of the cross.

“Because they wander in night, which with them lasts half a year or more; and you know that it is easier to hold converse with the Devil at night.”

“But have they souls?”

“It is unknown; but I think that they are more in the nature of animals.”

Kmita turned his horse, caught one of the Laplanders by the shoulders, raised him up like a cat, and examined him curiously; then he put him on his feet, and said—

“If the king would give me one such, I would give orders to have him dried and hung up in the church in Orsha, where, among other curiosities, are ostrich eggs.”

“In Lubni, at the parish church, there were jaws of a whale or even of a giant,” said Volodyovski.

“Let us go on, for something evil will fall on us here,” said Zagloba.

“Let us go,” repeated Sadovski. “To tell the truth, I ought to have had bags put on your heads, as is the custom; but we have nothing here to hide, and that you have looked on the trenches is all the better for us.”

They spurred on their horses, and after a while were before the castle at Gojytsi. In front of the gate they sprang from their saddles, and advanced on foot; for the King was before the house.

They saw a large number of generals and very celebrated officers. Old Wittemberg was there, Douglas, Löwenhaupt, Miller, Erickson, and many others. All were sitting on the balcony, a little behind the king, whose chair was pushed forward; and they looked on the amusement which Karl Gustav was giving himself with the prisoner. Roh had just stretched out the twelfth cavalier, and was in a coat torn by the wrestlers, panting and sweating greatly. When he saw his uncle in company with Kmita and Volodyovski, he thought at once that they too were prisoners. He stared at them, opened his mouth, and advanced a couple of steps; but Zagloba gave him a sign with his hand to stand quietly, and the envoy stood himself with his comrades before the face of the king.

Sadovski presented the envoys; they bowed low, as custom and etiquette demanded, then Zagloba delivered Charnyetski's letter.

The king took the letter, and began to read; meanwhile the Polish envoys looked at him with curiosity, for they had never seen him before. He was a man in the flower of his age, as dark in complexion as though born an Italian or a Spaniard. His long hair, black as a raven's wing, fell behind his ears to his shoulders. In brightness and color his eyes brought to mind Yeremi Vishnyevetski; his brows were greatly elevated, as if he were in continual astonishment. In the place where the brows approached, his forehead was raised in a large protuberance, which made him resemble a lion; a deep wrinkle above his nose, which did not leave him even when he was laughing, gave his face a threatening and wrathful expression. His lower lip protruded like that of Yan Kazimir, but his face was heavier and his chin larger; he wore mustaches in the form of cords, brushed out somewhat at the ends. In general, his face indicated an uncommon man, one of those who when they walk over the earth press blood out of it. There was in him grandeur, the pride of a monarch, the strength of a lion, and the quickness of genius; but though a kindly smile never left his mouth, there was lacking that kindness of heart which illuminates a face from within with a mild light, as a lamp placed in the middle of an alabaster urn lights it. He sat in the armchair, with crossed legs, the powerful calves of which were indicated clearly from under the black stockings, and blinking as was his wont,

he read with a smile the letter from Charnyetski. Raising his lids, he looked at Pan Michael, and said—

“I knew you at once; you slew Kanneberg.”

All eyes were turned immediately on Volodyovski, who, moving his mustaches, bowed and answered—

“At the service of your Royal Grace.”

“What is your office?” asked the king.

“Colonel of the Lauda squadron.”

“Where did you serve before?”

“With the *voevoda* of Vilna.”

“And did you leave him with the others? You betrayed him and me.”

“I was bound to my own king, not to your Royal Grace.”

The king said nothing; all foreheads were frowning, eyes began to bore into Pan Michael; but he stood calmly, merely moving his mustaches time after time.

All at once the king said—

“It is pleasant for me to know such a famous cavalier. Kanneberg passed among us as incomparable in hand-to-hand conflict. You must be the first sabre in the kingdom?”

“*In universo* (In the universe)!” said Zagloba.

“Not the last,” answered Volodyovski.

“I greet you, gentlemen, heartily. For Pan Charnyetski I have a real esteem as for a great soldier, though he broke his word to me, for he ought to be sitting quietly till now in Syevej.”

“Your Royal Grace,” said Kmita, “Pan Charnyetski was not the first to break his word, but General Miller, who seized Wolf’s regiment of royal infantry.”

Miller advanced a step, looked in the face of Kmita, and began to whisper something to the king, who, blinking all the time, listened attentively; looking at Pan Andrei, he said at last—

“I see that Pan Charnyetski has sent me chosen cavaliers. I know from of old that there is no lack of daring men among you; but there is a lack of faith in keeping promises and oaths.”

“Holy are the words of your Royal Grace,” answered Zagloba.

“How do you understand that?”

“If it were not for this vice of our people, your Royal Grace would not be here.”

The king was silent awhile; the generals again frowned at the boldness of the envoys.

“Yan Kazimir himself freed you from the oath,” said Karl, “for he left you and took refuge abroad.”

“From the oath we can be freed only by the Vicar of Christ, who resides in Rome; and he has not freed us.”

“A truce to that!” said the king. “I have acquired the kingdom by this,” here he struck his sword, “and by this I will hold it. I do not need your suffrages nor your oaths. You want war, you will have it. I think that Pan Charnyetski remembers Golembo yet.”

“He forgot it on the road from Yaroslav,” answered Zagloba.

The king, instead of being angry, smiled: "I'll remind him of it."

"God rules the world."

"Tell him to visit me; I shall be glad to receive him. But he must hurry, for as soon as my horses are in condition I shall march farther."

"Then we shall receive your Royal Grace," said Zagloba, bowing and placing his hand slightly on his sabre.

"I see," said the king, "that Pan Charnyetski has sent in the embassy not only the best sabres, but the best mouth. In a moment you parry every thrust. It is lucky that the war is not of words, for I should find an opponent worthy of my power. But I will come to the question. Pan Charnyetski asks me to liberate this prisoner, offering two officers of distinction in return. I do not set such a low price on my soldiers as you think, and I have no wish to redeem them too cheaply; that would be against my own and their ambition, but since I can refuse Pan Charnyetski nothing, I will make him a present of this cavalier."

"Gracious Lord," answered Zagloba, "Pan Charnyetski did not wish to show contempt for Swedish officers, but compassion for me; for this is my sister's son, and I, at the service of your Royal Grace, am Pan Charnyetski's adviser."

"In truth," said the king, "I ought not to let the prisoner go, for he has made a vow against me, unless he will give up his vow in view of this favor."

Here he turned to Roh, who was standing in front of the porch, and beckoned: "But come nearer, you strong fellow!"

Roh approached a couple of steps, and stood erect.

"Sadovski," said the king, "ask him if he will let me go in case I free him."

Sadovski repeated the king's question.

"Impossible!" cried Roh.

The king understood without an interpreter, and began to clap his hands and blink.

"Well, well! How can I set such a man free? He has twisted the necks of twelve horsemen, and promises me as the thirteenth. Good, good! the cavalier has pleased me. Is he Pan Charnyetski's adviser too? If he is, I will let him go all the more quickly."

"Keep your mouth shut!" muttered Zagloba to Roh.

"A truce to amusement!" said the king, suddenly. "Take him, and have still one more proof of my clemency. I can forgive, as the lord of this kingdom, since such is my will and favor; but I will not enter into terms with rebels."

Here the king frowned, and the smile left his face: "Whoso raises his hand against me is a rebel, for I am his lawful king. Only from kindness to you have I not punished hitherto as was proper. I have been waiting for you to come to your minds; but the hour will strike when kindness will be exhausted and the day of punishment will rise. Through your self-will and instability the country is flaming with fire; through your disloyalty blood is flowing. But I tell you the last days are passing; you do not wish to hear admonitions, you do not wish to obey laws, you will obey the sword and the gallows!"

Lightnings flashed in Karl's eyes. Zagloba looked on him awhile with amazement, unable to understand whence that storm had come after fair weather; finally he too began to grow angry, therefore he bowed and said only—



“We thank your Royal Grace.”

Then he went off, and after him Kmita, Volodyovski, and Roh Kovalski.

“Gracious, gracious!” said Zagloba, “and before you can look around he bellows in your ear like a bear. Beautiful end to an embassy! Others give honor with a cup at parting, but he with the gallows! Let him hang dogs, not nobles! O my God! how grievously we have sinned against our king, who was a father, is a father, and will be a father, for there is a Yagyellon heart in him. And such a king traitors deserted, and went to make friendship with scarecrows from beyond the sea. We are served rightly, for we were not worthy of anything better. Gibbets! gibbets! He is fenced in, and we have squeezed him like curds in a bag, so that whey is coming out, and still he threatens with sword and gibbet. Wait awhile! The Cossack caught a Tartar, and the Tartar has him by the head. It will be closer for you yet.—Roh, I wanted to give you a slap on the face or fifty blows on a carpet, but I forgive you now since you acted so like a cavalier and promised to hunt him still farther. Let me kiss you, for I am delighted with you.”

“Uncle is still glad!” said Roh.

“The gibbet and the sword! And he told that to my eyes,” said Zagloba again, after a while. “You have protection! The wolf protects in the same fashion a sheep for his own eating. And when does he say that? Now, when there is goose skin on his own back. Let him take his Laplanders for counsellors, and with them seek Satan’s aid. But the Most Holy Lady will help us, as she did Pan Bobola in Sandomir when powder threw him and his horse across the Vistula, and he was not hurt. He looked around to see where he was, and arrived in time to dine with the priest. With such help we will pull them all by the necks like lobsters out of a wicker trap.”

## Chapter LXXVI

Almost twenty days passed. The king remained continually at the junction of the rivers, and sent couriers to fortresses and commands in every direction toward Krakow and Warsaw, with orders for all to hasten to him with assistance. They sent him also provisions by the Vistula in as great quantities as possible, but insufficient. After ten days the Swedes began to eat horseflesh; despair seized the king and the generals at thought of what would happen when the cavalry should lose their horses, and when there would be no beasts to draw cannon. From every side too there came unpleasant news. The whole country was blazing with war, as if someone had poured pitch over it and set fire. Inferior commands and garrisons could not hasten to give aid, for they were not able to leave the towns and villages. Lithuania, held hitherto by the iron hand of Pontus de la Gardie, rose as one man. Great Poland, which had yielded first of all, was the first to throw off the yoke, and shone before the whole Commonwealth as an example of endurance, resolve, and enthusiasm. Parties of nobles and peasants rushed not only on the garrisons in villages, but even attacked towns. In vain did the Swedes take terrible vengeance on the country, in vain did they cut off the hands of prisoners, in vain did they send up villages in smoke, cut settlements to pieces, raise gibbets, bring instruments of torture from Germany to torture insurgents. Whoso had to suffer, suffered; whoso had to die, died; but if he was a noble, he died with a sabre; if a peasant, with a scythe in his hand. And Swedish blood was flowing throughout all Great Poland; the peasants were living in the forests, even women rushed to arms; punishments merely roused vengeance and increased rage. Kulesha, Jegotski, and the *voevoda* of Podlyasye moved through the country like flames, and besides their parties all the pinewoods were filled with other parties. The fields lay untilled, fierce hunger increased in the land; but it twisted most the entrails of the Swedes, for they were confined in towns behind closed gates, and could not go to the open country. At last breath was failing in their bosoms.

In Mazovia the condition was the same. There the Barkshoe people dwelling in forest gloom came out of their wildernesses, blocked the roads, seized provisions and couriers. In Podlyasye a numerous small nobility marched in thousands either to Sapyeha or to Lithuania. Lyubelsk was in the hands of the confederates. From the distant Russias came Tartars, and with them the Cossacks constrained to obedience.

Therefore all were certain that if not in a week in a month, if not in a month in two, that river fork in which Karl Gustav had halted with the main army of the Swedes would be turned into one great tomb to the glory of the nation; a great lesson for those who would attack the Commonwealth.

The end of the war was foreseen already; there were some who said that one way of salvation alone remained to Karl—to ransom himself and give Swedish Livland to the Commonwealth.

But suddenly the fortune of Karl and the Swedes was bettered. Marienburg, besieged hitherto in vain, surrendered, March 20, to Steinbock. His powerful and valiant army had then no occupation, and could hasten to the rescue of the king.

From another direction the Markgraf of Baden, having finished levies, was marching also to the river fork with ready forces, and soldiers yet unwearied.

Both pushed forward, breaking up the smaller bands of insurgents, destroying, burning, slaying. Along the road they gathered in Swedish garrisons, took the smaller commands, and increased in power, as a river increases the more it takes streams to its bosom.

Tidings of the fall of Marienburg, of the army of Steinbock, and the march of the Markgraf of Baden came very quickly to the fork of the river, and grieved Polish hearts. Steinbock was still far away; but the markgraf, advancing by forced marches, might soon come up and change the whole position at Sandomir.

The Polish leaders then held a council in which Charnyetski, Sapyeha, Michael Radzivil, Vitovski, and Lyubomirski, who had grown tired of being on the Vistula, took part. At this council it was decided that Sapyeha with the Lithuanian army was to remain to watch Karl, and prevent his escape, Charnyetski was to move against the Markgraf of Baden and meet him as quickly as possible; if God gave him victory, he would return to besiege Karl Gustav.

Corresponding orders were given at once. Next morning the trumpets sounded to horse so quietly that they were barely heard; Charnyetski wished to depart unknown to the Swedes. At his recent campground a number of unoccupied parties of nobles and peasants took position at once. They kindled fires and made an uproar, so that the enemy might think that no one had left the place; but Charnyetski's squadrons moved out one after another. First marched the Lauda squadron, which by right should have remained with Sapyeha; but since Charnyetski had fallen greatly in love with this squadron, the hetman was loath to take it from him. After the Lauda went the Vansovich squadron, chosen men led by an old soldier half of whose life had been passed in shedding blood; then followed the squadron of Prince Dymitri Vishnyevetski, under the same Shandarovski who at Rudnik had covered himself with immeasurable glory; then two regiments of Vitovski's dragoons, two regiments of the starosta of Yavorov; the famed Stapkovski led one; then Charnyetski's own regiment, the king's regiment under Polyanovski, and Lyubomirski's whole force. No infantry was taken, because of haste; nor wagons, for the army went on horseback.

All were drawn up together at Zavada in good strength and great willingness. Then Charnyetski himself went out in front, and after he had arranged them for the march, he withdrew his horse somewhat and let them pass so as to review well the whole force. The horse under him sniffed, threw up his head and nodded, as if wishing to greet the passing regiments; and the heart swelled in the castellan himself. A beautiful view was before him. As far as the eye reached a river of horses, a river of stern faces of soldiers, welling up and down with the movement of the horses; above them still a third river of sabres and lances, glittering and gleaming in the morning sun. A tremendous power went forth from them, and Charnyetski felt the power in himself; for that was not some kind of collection of volunteers, but men forged on the anvil of battle, trained, exercised, and in conflict so "venomous" that no cavalry on earth of equal numbers could withstand them. Therefore Charnyetski felt with certainty, without doubt, that he would bear asunder with sabres and hoofs the army of the Markgraf of Baden; and that victory, felt in advance, made his face so radiant that it gleamed on the regiments.

"With God to victory!" cried he at last.

"With God! We will conquer!" answered mighty voices.

And that shout flew through all the squadrons like deep thunder through clouds. Charnyetski spurred his horse to come up with the Lauda squadron, marching in the van.

The army moved forward.

They advanced not like men, but like a flock of ravening birds which having wind of a battle from afar, fly to outstrip the tempest. Never, even among Tartars in the steppes, had any man heard of such a march. The soldiers slept in the saddles; they ate and drank without dismounting; they fed the horses from their hands. Rivers, forests, villages, were left behind them. Scarcely had peasants hurried out from their cottages to look at the army when the

army had vanished behind clouds of dust in the distance. They marched day and night, resting only just enough to escape killing the horses.

At Kozyenitsi they came upon eight Swedish squadrons under Torneskiold. The Lauda men, marching in the van, first saw the enemy, and without even drawing breath sprang at them straightway and into the fire. Next advanced Shandarovski, then Vansovich, and then Stapkovski.

The Swedes, thinking that they had to deal with some mere common parties, met them in the open field, and two hours later there was not a living man left to go to the markgraf and tell him that Charnyetski was coming. Those eight squadrons were simply swept asunder on sabres, without leaving a witness of defeat. Then the Poles moved straight on to Magnushev, for spies informed them that the markgraf was at Varka with his whole army.

Volodyovski was sent in the night with a party to learn how the army was disposed, and what its power was.

Zagloba complained greatly of that expedition, for even the famed Vishnyevetski had never made such marches as this; therefore the old man complained, but he chose to go with Pan Michael rather than remain with the army.

"It was a golden time at Sandomir," said he, stretching himself in the saddle; "a man ate, drank, and looked at the besieged Swedes in the distance; but now there is not time even to put a canteen to your mouth. I know the military arts of the ancients, of the great Pompey and Caesar; but Charnyetski has invented a new style. It is contrary to every rule to shake the stomach so many days and nights. The imagination begins to rebel in me from hunger, and it seems to me continually that the stars are buckwheat pudding and the moon cheese. To the dogs with such warfare! As God is dear to me, I want to gnaw my own horses' ears off from hunger."

"Tomorrow, God grant, we shall rest after finishing the Swedes."

"I would rather have the Swedes than this tediousness! O Lord! O Lord! when wilt Thou give peace to this Commonwealth, and to Zagloba a warm place at the stove and heated beer, even without cream? Batter along, old man, on your nag, batter along, till you batter your body to death. Has anyone there snuff? Maybe I could sneeze out this sleepiness through my nostrils. The moon is shining through my mouth, looking into my stomach, but I cannot tell what the moon is looking for there; it will find nothing. I repeat, to the dogs with such warfare!"

"If Uncle thinks that the moon is cheese, then eat it, Uncle," said Roh Kovalski.

"If I should eat you I might say that I had eaten beef; but I am afraid that after such a roast I should lose the rest of my wit."

"If I am an ox and Uncle is my uncle, then what is Uncle?"

"But, you fool, do you think that Althea gave birth to a firebrand because she sat by the stove?"

"How does that touch me?"

"In this way. If you are an ox, then ask about your father first, not about your uncle: for a bull carried off Europa, but her brother, who was uncle to her children, was a man for all that. Do you understand?"

"To tell the truth, I do not; but as to eating I could eat something myself."

"Eat the devil and let me sleep! What is it, Pan Michael? Why have we halted?"

“Varka is in sight,” answered Volodyovski. “See, the church tower is gleaming in the moonlight.”

“But have we passed Magnushev?”

“Magnushev is behind on the right. It is a wonder to me that there is no Swedish party on this side of the river. Let us go to those thickets and stop; perhaps God may send us some informant.”

Pan Michael led his detachment to the thicket, and disposed it about a hundred yards from the road on each side, ordering the men to remain silent, and hold the bridles closely so the horses might not neigh.

“Wait,” said he. “Let us hear what is being done on the other side of the river, and perhaps we may see something.”

They stood there waiting; but for a long time nothing was to be heard. The wearied soldiers began to nod in the saddles. Zagloba dropped on the horse’s neck and fell asleep; even the horses were slumbering. An hour passed. The accurate ear of Volodyovski heard something like the tread of a horse on a firm road.

“Hold! silence!” said he to the soldiers.

He pushed out himself to the edge of the thicket, and looked along the road. The road was gleaming in the moonlight like a silver ribbon; there was nothing visible on it, still the sound of horses came nearer.

“They are coming surely!” said Volodyovski.

All held their horses more closely, each one restraining his breath. Meanwhile on the road appeared a Swedish party of thirty horsemen. They rode slowly and carelessly enough, not in line, but in a straggling row. Some of the soldiers were talking, others were singing in a low voice; for the night, warm as in May, acted on the ardent souls of the soldiers. Without suspicion they passed near Pan Michael, who was standing so hard by the edge of the thicket that he could catch the odor of horses and the smoke of pipes which the soldiers had lighted.

At last they vanished at the turn of the road. Volodyovski waited till the tramp had died in the distance; then only did he go to his men and say to Pan Yan and Pan Stanislav—

“Let us drive them now, like geese, to the camp of the castellan. Not a man must escape, lest he give warning.”

“If Charnyetski does not let us eat then and sleep,” said Zagloba, “I will resign his service and return to Sapyo. With Sapyo, when there is a battle, there is a battle; but when there is a respite, there is a feast. If you had four lips, he would give each one of them enough to do. He is the leader for me! And in truth tell me by what devil are we not serving with Sapyo, since this regiment belongs to him by right?”

“Father, do not blaspheme against the greatest warrior in the Commonwealth,” said Pan Yan.

“It is not I that blaspheme, but my entrails, on which hunger is playing, as on a fiddle—”

“The Swedes will dance to the music,” interrupted Volodyovski. “Now, gentlemen, let us advance quickly! I should like to come up with them exactly at that inn in the forest which we passed in coming hither.”

And he led on the squadron quickly, but not too quickly. They rode into a dense forest in which darkness enclosed them. The inn was less than two miles distant. When Volodyovski

had drawn near, he went again at a walk, so as not to alarm the Swedes too soon. When not more than a cannon-shot away, the noise of men was heard.

“They are there and making an uproar!” said Pan Michael.

The Swedes had, in fact, stopped at the inn, looking for some living person to give information. But the place was empty. Some of the soldiers were shaking up the main building; others were looking in the cow-house, in the shed, or raising the thatch on the roof. One half of the men remained on the square holding the horses of those who were searching.

Pan Michael’s division approached within a hundred yards, and began to surround the inn with a Tartar crescent. Those of the Swedes standing in front heard perfectly, and at last saw men and horses; since, however, it was dark in the forest they could not see what kind of troops were coming; but they were not alarmed in the least, not admitting that others than Swedes could come from that point. At last the movement of the crescent astonished and disturbed them. They called at once to those who were in the buildings.

Suddenly a shout of “Allah!” was heard, and the sound of shots, in one moment dark crowds of soldiers appeared as if they had grown out of the earth. Now came confusion, a flash of sabres, oaths, smothered shouts; but the whole affair did not last longer than the time needed to say the Lord’s Prayer twice.

There remained on the ground before the inn five bodies of men and horses; Volodyovski moved on, taking with him twenty-five prisoners.

They advanced at a gallop, urging the Swedish horses with the sides of their sabres, and arrived at Magnushev at daybreak. In Charnyetski’s camp no one was sleeping; all were ready. The castellan himself came out leaning on his staff, thin and pale from watching.

“How is it?” asked he of Pan Michael. “Have you many informants?”

“Twenty-five prisoners.”

“Did many escape?”

“All are taken.”

“Only send you, soldier, even to hell! Well done! Take them at once to the torture, I will examine them.”

Then the castellan turned, and when departing said—

“But be in readiness, for perhaps we may move on the enemy without delay.”

“How is that?” asked Zagloba.

“Be quiet!” said Volodyovski.

The prisoners, without being burned, told in a moment what they knew of the forces of the markgraf—how many cannons he had, what infantry and cavalry. Charnyetski grew somewhat thoughtful; for he learned that it was really a newly levied army, but formed of the oldest soldiers, who had taken part in God knows how many wars. There were also many Germans among them, and a considerable division of French; the whole force exceeded that of the Poles by several hundred. But it appeared from the statements of the prisoners that the markgraf did not even admit that Charnyetski was near, and believed that the Poles were besieging Karl Gustav with all their forces at Sandomir.

The castellan had barely heard this when he sprang up and cried to his attendant: “Vitovski, give command to sound the trumpet to horse!”

Half an hour later the army moved and marched in the fresh spring morning through forests and fields covered with dew. At last Varka—or rather its ruins, for the place had been burned almost to the ground six years before—appeared on the horizon.

Charnyetski's troops were marching over an open flat; therefore they could not be concealed from the eyes of the Swedes. In fact they were seen; but the markgraf thought that they were various "parties" which had combined in a body with the intent of alarming the camp.

Only when squadron after squadron, advancing at a trot, appeared from beyond the forest, did a feverish activity rise in the Swedish camp. Charnyetski's men saw smaller divisions of horsemen and single officers hurrying between the regiments. The bright-colored Swedish infantry began to pour into the middle of the plain; the regiments formed one after another before the eyes of the Poles and were numerous, resembling a flock of many-colored birds. Over their heads were raised toward the sun quadrangles of strong spears with which the infantry shielded themselves against attacks of cavalry. Finally, were seen crowds of Swedish armored cavalry advancing at a trot along the wings; the artillery was drawn up and brought to the front in haste. All the preparations, all the movements were as visible as something on the palm of the hand, for the sun had risen clearly, splendidly, and lighted up the whole country.

The Pilitsa separated the two armies.

On the Swedish bank trumpets and kettledrums were heard, and the shouts of soldiers coming with all speed into line. Charnyetski ordered also to sound the crooked trumpets, and advanced with his squadrons toward the river.

Then he rushed with all the breath of his horse to the Vansovich squadron, which was nearest the Pilitsa.

"Old soldier!" cried he to Vansovich, "advance for me to the bridge, there dismount and to muskets! Let all their force be turned on you! Lead on!"

Vansovich merely flushed a little from desire, and waved his baton. The men shouted and shot after him like a cloud of dust driven by wind.

When they came within three hundred yards of the bridge, they slackened the speed of their horses; then two thirds of them sprang from the saddles and advanced on a run to the bridge.

But the Swedes came from the other side; and soon muskets began to play, at first slowly, then every moment more briskly, as if a thousand flails were beating irregularly on a barn-floor. Smoke stretched over the river. Shouts of encouragement were thundering from one and the other command. The minds of both armies were bent to the bridge, which was wooden, narrow, difficult to take, but easy to defend. Still over this bridge alone was it possible to cross to the Swedes.

A quarter of an hour later Charnyetski pushed forward Lyubomirski's dragoons to the aid of Vansovich.

But the Swedes now attacked the opposite front with artillery. They drew up new pieces one after another, and bombs began to fly with a howl over the heads of Vansovich's men and the dragoons, to fall in the meadow and dig into the earth, scattering mud and turf on those fighting.

The markgraf, standing near the forest in the rear of the army, watched the battle through a field-glass. From time to time he removed the glass from his eyes, looked at his staff, shrugged his shoulders and said with astonishment: "They have gone mad; they want

absolutely to force the bridge. A few guns and two or three regiments might defend it against a whole army.”

Vansovich advanced still more stubbornly with his men; hence the defence grew still more resolute. The bridge became the central point of the battle, toward which the whole Swedish line was approaching and concentrating. An hour later the entire Swedish order of battle was changed, and they stood with flank to their former position. The bridge was simply covered with a rain of fire and iron. Vansovich's men were falling thickly; meanwhile orders came more and more urgent to advance absolutely.

“Charnyetski is murdering those men!” cried Lyubomirski on a sudden.

Vitovski, as an experienced soldier, saw that evil was happening, and his whole body quivered with impatience; at last he could endure no longer. Spurring his horse till the beast groaned piteously, he rushed to Charnyetski, who during all this time, it was unknown why, was pushing men toward the river.

“Your grace,” cried Vitovski, “blood is flowing for nothing; we cannot carry that bridge!”

“I do not want to carry it!” answered Charnyetski.

“Then what does your grace want? What must we do?”

“To the river with the squadrons! to the river! And you to your place!”

Here Charnyetski's eyes flashed such lightnings that Vitovski withdrew without saying a word.

Meanwhile the squadrons had come within twenty paces of the bank, and stood in a long line parallel with the bed of the river. None of the officers or the soldiers had the slightest suspicion of what they were doing.

In a flash Charnyetski appeared like a thunderbolt before the front of the squadrons. There was fire in his face, lightning in his eyes. A sharp wind had raised the burka on his shoulders so that it was like strong wings: his horse sprang and reared, casting fire from his nostrils. The castellan dropped his sword on its pendant, took the cap from his head, and with hair erect shouted to his division—

“Gentlemen! the enemy defends himself with this water, and jeers at us! He has sailed through the sea to crush our fatherland, and he thinks that we in defence of it cannot swim through this river!”

Here he hurled his cap to the earth, and seizing his sabre pointed with it to the swollen waters. Enthusiasm bore him away, for he stood in the saddle and shouted more mightily still—

“To whom God, faith, fatherland, are all, follow me!”

And pressing the horse with the spurs so that the steed sprang as it were into space, he rushed into the river. The wave plashed around him; man and horse were hidden under water, but they rose in the twinkle of an eye.

“After my master!” cried Mihalko, the same who had covered himself with glory at Rudnik; and he sprang into the water.

“After me!” shouted Volodyovski, with a shrill but thin voice; and he sprang in before he had finished shouting.

“O Jesus! O Mary!” bellowed Zagloba, raising his horse for the leap.



With that an avalanche of men and horses dashed into the river, so that it struck both banks with wild impetus. After the Lauda squadron went Vishnyevetski's, then Vitovski's, then Stapkovski's, after that all the others. Such a frenzy seized the men that the squadrons crowded one another in emulation; the shouts of command were mingled with the roar of the soldiers; the river overflowed the banks and foamed itself into milk in a moment. The current bore the regiments down somewhat; but the horses, pricked with spurs, swam like a countless herd of dolphins, snorting and groaning. They filled the river to such a degree that the mass of heads of horses and riders formed as it were a bridge on which a man might have passed with dry foot to the other bank.

Charnyetski swam over first; but before the water had dropped from him the Lauda squadron had followed him to land; then he waved his baton, and cried to Volodyovski—

“On a gallop! Strike!”

And to the Vishnyevetski squadron under Shandarovski—

“With them!”

And so he sent the squadrons one after another, till he had sent all. He stood at the head of the last himself, and shouting, “In the name of God! with luck!” followed the others.

Two regiments of Swedish cavalry posted in reserve saw what was happening; but such amazement had seized the colonels that before they could move from their tracks the Lauda men, urging their horses to the highest speed, and sweeping with irresistible force, struck the first regiment, scattered that, as a whirlwind scatters leaves, hurled it against the second, brought that to disorder; then Shandarovski came up, and a terrible slaughter began, but of short duration; after a while the Swedish ranks were broken, and a disordered throng plunged forward toward the main army.

Charnyetski's squadron pursued them with a fearful outcry, slashing, thrusting, strewing the field with corpses.

At last it was clear why Charnyetski had commanded Vansovich to carry the bridge, though he had no thought of crossing it. The chief attention of the whole army had been concentrated on that point; therefore no one defended, or had time to defend, the river itself. Besides nearly all the artillery and the entire front of the Swedish army was turned toward the bridge; and now when three thousand cavalry were rushing with all impetus against the flank of that army, it was needful to change the order of battle, to form a new front, to defend themselves even well or ill against the shock. Now rose a terrible haste and confusion; infantry and cavalry regiments turned with all speed to face the enemy, straining themselves in their hurry, knocking one against another, not understanding commands in the uproar, acting independently. In vain did the officers make superhuman efforts; in vain did the markgraf move straightway the regiments of cavalry posted at the forest; before they came to any kind of order, before the infantry could put the butt ends of their lances in the ground to hold the points to the enemy, the Lauda squadron fell, like the spirit of death, into the very midst of their ranks; after it a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth squadron. Then began the day of judgment! The smoke of musketry fire covered, as if with a cloud, the whole scene of conflict; and in that cloud screams, seething, unearthly voices of despair, shouts of triumph, the sharp clang of steel, as if in an infernal forge, the rattling of muskets; at times a flag shone and fell in the smoke; then the gilded point of a regimental banner, and again you saw nothing; but a roar was heard more and more terrible, as if the earth had broken on a sudden under the river, and its waters were tumbling down into fathomless abysses.

Now on the flank other sounds were heard. This was Vansovich, who had crossed the bridge and was marching on the new flank of the enemy. After this the battle did not last long.

From out that cloud large groups of men began to push, and run toward the forest in disorder, wild, without caps, without helmets, without armor. Soon after them burst out a whole flood of people in the most dreadful disorder. Artillery, infantry, cavalry mingled together fled toward the forest at random, in alarm and terror. Some soldiers cried in sky-piercing voices; others fled in silence, covering their heads with their hands. Some in their haste threw away their clothing; others stopped those running ahead, fell down themselves, trampled one another; and right there behind them, on their shoulders and heads, rushed a line of Polish cavaliers. Every moment you saw whole ranks of them spurring their horses and rushing into the densest throngs of men. No one defended himself longer; all went under the sword. Body fell upon body. The Poles hewed without rest, without mercy, on the whole plain; along the bank of the river toward the forest, as far as the eye could reach you saw merely pursued and pursuing; only here and there scattered groups of infantry offered an irregular, despairing resistance; the cannons were silent. The battle ceased to be a battle; it had turned into a slaughter.

All that part of the army which fled toward the forest was cut to pieces; only a few squadrons of Swedish troopers entered it. After them the light squadrons of Poles sprang in among the trees.

But in the forest peasants were waiting for that unslain remnant—the peasants who at the sound of the battle had rushed together from all the surrounding villages.

The most terrible pursuit, however, continued on the road to Warsaw, along which the main forces of the Swedes were fleeing. The young Markgraf Adolph struggled twice to cover the retreat; but beaten twice, he fell into captivity himself. His auxiliary division of French infantry, composed of four hundred men, threw away their arms; three thousand chosen soldiers, musketeers and cavalry, fled as far as Mnishev. The musketeers were cut down in Mnishev; the cavalry were pursued toward Chersk, until they were scattered completely through the forest, reeds, and brush; there the peasants hunted them out one by one on the morrow.

Before the sun had set, the army of Friederich, Markgraf of Baden, had ceased to exist.

On the first scene of battle there remained only the standard-bearers with their standards, for all the troops had followed the enemy. And the sun was well inclined to its setting when the first bodies of cavalry began to appear from the side of the forest and Mnishev. They returned with singing and uproar, hurling their caps in the air, firing from pistols. Almost all led with them crowds of bound prisoners. These walked at the sides of the horses they were without caps, without helmets, with heads drooping on their breasts, torn, bloody, stumbling every moment against the bodies of fallen comrades. The field of battle presented a terrible sight. In places, where the struggle had been fiercest, there lay simply piles of bodies half a spear-length in height. Some of the infantry still held in their stiffened hands long spears. The whole ground was covered with spears. In places they were sticking still in the earth; here and there pieces of them formed as it were fences and pickets. But on all sides was presented mostly a dreadful and pitiful mingling of bodies, of men mashed with hoofs, broken muskets, drums, trumpets, caps, belts, tin boxes which the infantry carried; hands and feet sticking out in such disorder from the piles of bodies that it was difficult to tell to what body they belonged. In those places specially where the infantry defended itself whole breastworks of corpses were lying.

Somewhat farther on, near the river, stood the artillery, now cold, some pieces overturned by the onrush of men, others as it were ready to be fired. At the sides of them lay the cannoneers now held in eternal sleep. Many bodies were hanging across the guns and embracing them with their arms, as if those soldiers wished still to defend them after death. The brass, spotted with blood and brains, glittered with ill omen in the beams of the setting sun. The golden rays were reflected in stiffened blood, which here and there formed little lakes. Its nauseating odor was mingled over the whole field with the smell of powder, the exhalation from bodies, and the sweat of horses.

Before the setting of the sun Charnyetski returned with the king's regiment, and stood in the middle of the field. The troops greeted him with a thundering shout. Whenever a detachment came up it cheered without end. He stood in the rays of the sun, wearied beyond measure, but all radiant, with bare head, his sword hanging on his belt, and he answered to every cheer—

“Not to me, gentlemen, not to me, but to the name of God!”

At his side were Vitovski and Lyubomirski, the latter as bright as the sun itself, for he was in gilded plate armor, his face splashed with blood; for he had worked terribly and labored with his own hand as a simple soldier, but discontented and gloomy, for even his own regiments shouted—

“Vivat Charnyetski, *dux et victor* (commander and conqueror)!”

Envy began then to dive into the soul of the marshal.

Meanwhile new divisions rolled in from every side of the field; each time an officer came up and threw a banner, captured from the enemy, at Charnyetski's feet. At sight of this rose new shouts, new cheers, hurling of caps into the air, and the firing of pistols.

The sun was sinking lower and lower.

Then in the one church that remained after the fire in Varka they sounded the Angelus; that moment all uncovered their heads. Father Pyekarski, the company priest, began to intone: “The Angel of the Lord announced unto the Most Holy Virgin Mary!” and a thousand iron breasts answered at once, with deep voices: “And she conceived of the Holy Ghost!”

All eyes were raised to the heavens, which were red with the evening twilight; and from that bloody battlefield began to rise a pious hymn to the light playing in the sky before night.

Just as they had ceased to sing, the Lauda squadron began to come up at a trot; it had chased the enemy farthest. The soldiers throw more banners at Charnyetski's feet. He rejoiced in heart, and seeing Volodyovski, urged his horse toward him and asked—

“Have many of them escaped?”

Pan Michael shook his head as a sign that not many had escaped, but he was so near being breathless that he was unable to utter one word; he merely gasped with open mouth, time after time, so that his breast was heaving. At last he pointed to his lips, as a sign that he could not speak. Charnyetski understood him and pressed his head.

“He has toiled!” said he; “God grant us more such.”

Zagloba hurried to catch his breath, and said, with chattering teeth and broken voice—

“For God's sake! The cold wind is blowing on me, and I am all in a sweat. Paralysis will strike me. Pull the clothes off some fat Swede and give them to me, for everything on me is wet—wet, and it is wet in this place. I know not what is water, what is my own sweat, and what is Swedish blood. If I have ever expected in my life to cut down so many of those scoundrels, I am not fit to be the crupper of a saddle. The greatest victory of this war! But I

will not spring into water a second time. Eat not, drink not, sleep not, and then a bath! I have had enough in my old years. My hand is benumbed; paralysis has struck me already; *gorailka*, for the dear God!"

Charnyetski, hearing this, and seeing the old man really covered completely with the blood of the enemy, took pity on his age and gave him his own canteen.

Zagloba raised it to his mouth, and after a while returned it empty; then he said—

"I have gulped so much water in the Pilitsa, that we shall soon see how fish will hatch in my stomach; but that *gorailka* is better than water."

"Dress in other clothes, even Swedish," said Charnyetski.

"I'll find a big Swede for Uncle!" said Roh.

"Why should I have bloody clothes from a corpse?" said Zagloba; "take off everything to the shirt from that general whom I captured."

"Have you taken a general?" asked Charnyetski, with animation.

"Whom have I not taken, whom have I not slain?" answered Zagloba.

Now Volodyovski recovered speech: "We have taken the younger markgraf, Adolph; Count Falckenstein, General Wegier, General Poter Benzij, not counting inferior officers."

"But the Markgraf Friederich?" asked Charnyetski.

"If he has not fallen here, he has escaped to the forest; but if he has escaped, the peasants will kill him."

Volodyovski was mistaken in his previsions. The Markgraf Friederich with Counts Schlippenbach and Ehrenhain, wandering through the forest, made their way in the night to Chersk; after sitting there in the ruined castle three days and nights in hunger and cold, they wandered by night to Warsaw. That did not save them from captivity afterward; this time, however, they escaped.

It was night when Charnyetski came to Varka from the field. That was perhaps the gladdest night of his life, for such a great disaster the Swedes had not suffered since the beginning of the war. All the artillery, all the flags, all the officers, except the chief, were captured. The army was cut to pieces, driven to the four winds; the remnants of it were forced to fall victims to bands of peasants. But besides, it was shown that those Swedes who held themselves invincible could not stand before regular Polish squadrons in the open field. Charnyetski understood at last what a mighty result this victory would work in the whole Commonwealth—how it would raise courage, how it would rouse enthusiasm; he saw already the whole Commonwealth, in no distant future, free from oppression, triumphant. Perhaps, too, he saw with the eyes of his mind the gilded baton of the grand hetman on the sky.

He was permitted to dream of this, for he had advanced toward it as a true soldier, as a defender of his country, and he was of those who grow not from salt nor from the soil, but from that which pains them.

Meanwhile he could hardly embrace with his whole soul the joy which flowed in upon him; therefore he turned to Lyubomirski, riding at his side, and said—

"Now to Sandomir! to Sandomir with all speed! Since the army knows now how to swim rivers, neither the San nor the Vistula will frighten us!"

Lyubomirski said not a word; but Zagloba, riding a little apart in Swedish uniform, permitted himself to say aloud—

“Go where you like, but without me, for I am not a weathercock to turn night and day without food or sleep.”

Charnyetski was so rejoiced that he was not only not angry, but he answered in jest—

“You are more like the belfry than the weathercock, since, as I see, you have sparrows in your head. But as to eating and rest it belongs to all.”

To which Zagloba said, but in an undertone. “Whoso has a beak on his face has a sparrow on his mind.”

## Chapter LXXVII

After that victory Charnyetski permitted at last the army to take breath and feed the wearied horses; then he was to return to Sandomir by forced marches, and bend the King of Sweden to his fall.

Meanwhile Kharlamp came to the camp one evening with news from Sapyeha. Charnyetski was at Chersk, whither he had gone to review the general militia assembled at that town. Kharlamp, not finding the chief, betook himself at once to Pan Michael, so as to rest at his quarters after the long journey.

His friends greeted him joyously; but he, at the very beginning, showed them a gloomy face and said—

“I have heard of your victory. Fortune smiled here, but bore down on us in Sandomir. Karl Gustav is no longer in the sack, for he got out, and, besides, with great confusion to the Lithuanian troops.”

“Can that be?” cried Pan Michael, seizing his head.

Pan Yan, Pan Stanislav, and Zagloba were as if fixed to the earth.

“How was it? Tell, by the living God, for I cannot stay in my skin!”

“Breath fails me yet,” said Kharlamp; “I have ridden day and night, I am terribly tired. Charnyetski will come, then I will tell all from the beginning. Let me now draw breath a little.”

“Then Karl has gone out of the sack. I foresaw that, did I not? Do you not remember that I prophesied it? Let Kovalski testify.”

“Uncle foretold it,” said Roh.

“And whither has Karl gone?” asked Pan Michael.

“The infantry sailed down in boats; but he, with cavalry, has gone along the Vistula to Warsaw.”

“Was there a battle?”

“There was and there was not. In brief, give me peace, for I cannot talk.”

“But tell me one thing. Is Sapyeha crushed altogether?”

“How crushed! He is pursuing the king; but of course Sapyeha will never come up with anybody.”

“He is as good at pursuit as a German at fasting,” said Zagloba.

“Praise be to God for even this, that the army is intact!” put in Volodyovski.

“The Lithuanians have got into trouble!” said Zagloba. “Ah, it is a bad case! Again we must watch a hole in the Commonwealth together.”

“Say nothing against the Lithuanian army,” said Kharlamp. “Karl Gustav is a great warrior, and it is no wonder to lose against him. And did not you, from Poland, lose at Uistsie, at Volbor, at Suleyov, and in ten other places? Charnyetski himself lost at Golembo. Why should not Sapyeha lose, especially when you left him alone like an orphan?”

“But why did we go to a dance at Varka?” asked Zagloba, with indignation.

“I know that it was not a dance, but a battle, and God gave you the victory. But who knows, perhaps it had been better not to go; for among us they say that the troops of both nations (Lithuanian and Poland) may be beaten separately, but together the cavalry of hell itself could not manage them.”

“That may be,” said Volodyovski; “but what the leaders have decided is not for us to discuss. This did not happen, either, without your fault.”

“Sapyo must have blundered; I know him!” said Zagloba.

“I cannot deny that,” muttered Kharlamp.

They were silent awhile, but from time to time looked at one another gloomily, for to them it seemed that the fortune of the Commonwealth was beginning to sink, and yet such a short time before they were full of hope and confidence.

“Charnyetski is coming!” said Volodyovski; and he went out of the room.

The castellan was really returning; Volodyovski went to meet him, and began to call from a distance—

“The King of Sweden has broken through the Lithuanian army, and escaped from the sack. There is an officer here with letters from the *voevoda* of Vilna.”

“Bring him here!” cried Charnyetski. “Where is he?”

“With me; I will present him at once.”

Charnyetski took the news so much to heart that he would not wait, but sprang at once from his saddle and entered Volodyovski’s quarters.

All rose when they saw him enter; he barely nodded and said—

“I ask for the letter!”

Kharlamp gave him a sealed letter. The castellan went to the window, for it was dark in the cottage, and began to read with frowning brow and anxious face. From instant to instant anger gleamed on his countenance.

“The castellan has changed,” whispered Zagloba to Pan Yan; “see how his beak has grown red. He will begin to lisp right away, he always does when in anger.”

Charnyetski finished the letter. For a time he twisted his beard with his whole hand; at last he called out with a jingling, indistinct voice—

“Come this way, officer!”

“At command of your worthiness!”

“Tell me the truth,” said Charnyetski, with emphasis, “for this narrative is so artfully put together that I am unable to get at the affair. But—tell me the truth, do not color it—is the army dispersed?”

“Not dispersed at all, your grace.”

“How many days are needed to assemble it?”

Here Zagloba whispered to Pan Yan: “He wants to come at him from the left hand as it were.”

But Kharlamp answered without hesitation—

“Since the army is not dispersed, it does not need to be assembled. It is true that when I was leaving, about five hundred horse of the general militia could not be found, were not among the fallen; but that is a common thing, and the army does not suffer from that; the hetman has even moved after the king in good order.”

“You have lost no cannon?”

“Yes, we lost four, which the Swedes, not being able to take with them, spiked.”

“I see that you tell the truth; tell me then how everything happened.”

“*Incipiam* (I will begin),” said Kharlamp. “When we were left alone, the enemy saw that there was no army on the Vistula, nothing but parties and irregular detachments. We thought—or, properly speaking, Pan Sapyeha thought—that the king would attack those, and he sent reinforcements, but not considerable, so as not to weaken himself. Meanwhile there was a movement and a noise among the Swedes, as in a beehive. Toward evening they began to come out in crowds to the San. We were at the *voevoda*’s quarters. Pan Kmita, who is called Babinich now, a soldier of the first degree, came up and reported this. But Pan Sapyeha was just sitting down to a feast, to which a multitude of noble women from Krasnik and Yanov had assembled—for the *voevoda* is fond of the fair sex—”

“And he loves feasting!” interrupted Charnyetski.

“I am not with him; there is no one to incline him to temperance,” put in Zagloba.

“Maybe you will be with him sooner than you think; then you can both begin to be temperate,” retorted Charnyetski. Then he turned to Kharlamp: “Speak on!”

“Babinich reported, and the *voevoda* answered: ‘They are only pretending to attack; they will undertake nothing! First,’ said he, ‘they will try to cross the Vistula; but I have an eye on them, and I will attack myself. At present,’ said he, ‘we will not spoil our pleasure, so that we may have a joyous time! We will eat and drink.’ The music began to tear away, and the *voevoda* invited those present to the dance.”

“I’ll give him dancing!” interrupted Zagloba.

“Silence, if you please!” said Charnyetski.

“Again men rush in from the bank saying that there is a terrible uproar. ‘That’s nothing!’ the *voevoda* whispered to the page; ‘do not interrupt me!’ We danced till daylight, we slept till midday. At midday we see that the intrenchments are bristling, forty-eight pound guns on them; and the Swedes fire from time to time. When a ball falls it is the size of a bucket; it is nothing for such a one to fill the eyes with dust.”

“Give no embellishments!” interrupted Charnyetski; “you are not with the hetman.”

Kharlamp was greatly confused, and continued: “At midday the *voevoda* himself went out. The Swedes under cover of these trenches began to build a bridge. They worked till evening, to our great astonishment; for we thought that as to building they would build, but as to crossing they would not be able to do that. Next day they built on. The *voevoda* put the troops in order, for he expected a battle.”

“All this time the bridge was a pretext, and they crossed lower down over another bridge, and turned your flank?” interrupted Charnyetski.

Kharlamp stared and opened his mouth, he was silent in amazement; but at last said—

“Then your worthiness has had an account already?”



“No need of that!” said Zagloba; “our grandfather guesses everything concerning war on the wing, as if he had seen it in fact.”

“Speak on!” said Charnyetski.

“Evening came. The troops were in readiness, but with the first star there was a feast again. This time the Swedes passed over the second bridge lower down, and attacked us at once. The squadron of Pan Koshyts, a good soldier, was at the edge. He rushed on them. The general militia which was next to him sprang to his aid; but when the Swedes spat at them from the guns, they took to their heels. Pan Koshyts was killed, and his men terribly cut up. Now the general militia, rushing back in a crowd on the camp, put everything in disorder. All the squadrons that were ready advanced; but we effected nothing, lost cannon besides. If the king had had more cannon and infantry, our defeat would have been severe; but fortunately the greater number of the infantry regiments with the cannon had sailed away in boats during the night. Of this no one of us knew.”

“Sapyo has blundered! I knew it beforehand!” cried Zagloba.

“We got the correspondence of the king,” added Kharlamp, “which the Swedes dropped. The soldiers read in it that the king is to go to Prussia to return with the elector’s forces, for, he writes, that with Swedish troops alone he cannot succeed.”

“I know of that,” said Charnyetski. “Pan Sapyeha sent me that letter.” Then he muttered quietly, as if speaking to himself: “We must follow him to Prussia.”

“That is what I have been saying this long time,” put in Zagloba.

Charnyetski looked at him for a while in thoughtfulness. “It is unfortunate,” said he, aloud; “for if I had returned to Sandomir the hetman and I should not have let a foot of them out alive. Well! it has passed and will not return. The war will be longer; but death is fated to this invasion and to these invaders.”

“It cannot be otherwise!” cried the knights in chorus; and great consolation entered their hearts, though a short time before they had doubted.

Meanwhile Zagloba whispered something in Jendzian’s ear; he vanished through the door, and soon returned with a decanter. Seeing this, Volodyovski inclined to the knee of the castellan.

“It would be an uncommon favor for a simple soldier,” he began.

“I will drink with you willingly,” said Charnyetski; “and do you know why?—because we must part.”

“How is that?” cried the astonished Pan Michael.

“Sapyeha writes that the Lauda squadron belongs to the Lithuanian army, and that he sent it only to assist the forces of the kingdom; that now he will need it himself, especially the officers, of whom he has a great lack. My Volodyovski, you know how much I love you; it is hard for me to part with you, but here is the order. It is true Pan Sapyeha as a courteous man leaves the order in my power and discretion. I might not show it to you.—Well, it is as pleasant to me as if the hetman had broken my best sabre. I give you the order precisely because it is left to my discretion, and do your duty. To your health, my dear soldier!”

Volodyovski bowed again to the castellan’s knees; but he was so distressed that he could not utter a word, and when Charnyetski embraced him tears ran in a stream over his yellow mustaches.

“I would rather die!” cried he, pitifully. “I have grown accustomed to toil under you, revered leader, and there I know not how it will be.”

“Pan Michael, do not mind the order,” cried Zagloba, with emotion. “I will write to Sapyo myself, and rub his ears for him fittingly.”

But Pan Michael first of all was a soldier; therefore he flew into a passion—

“But the old volunteer is ever sitting in you. You would better be silent when you know not the question. Service!”

“That is it,” said Charnyetski.

## Chapter LXXVIII

Zagloba when he stood before the hetman did not answer his joyous greeting, but put his hands behind his back, pouted his lips, and looked on him like a just but stern judge. Sapycha was pleased when he saw that mien, for he expected some pleasantry and said—

“How are you, old rogue? Why twist your nose as if you had found some unvirtuous odor?”

“In the whole camp of Sapycha it smells of hashed meat and cabbage.”

“Why? Tell me.”

“Because the Swedes have cut up a great many cabbage-heads!”

“There you are! You are already criticising us. It is a pity they did not cut you up too.”

“I was with a leader under whom we are the cutters, not the cut.”

“The hangman take you! if they had even clipped your tongue!”

“Then I should have nothing to proclaim Sapycha’s victory with.”

“Ah, lord brother, spare me! The majority already forget my service to the country, and belittle me altogether. I know too that there are many who make a great outcry against my person; still, had it not been for that rabble of a general militia, affairs might have gone differently. They say that I have neglected the enemy for night feasting; but the whole Commonwealth has not been able to resist that enemy.”

Zagloba was somewhat moved at the words of the hetman, and answered—

“Such is the custom with us, always to put the blame on the leader. I am not the man to speak evil of feasting, for the longer the day, the more needful the feast. Pan Charnyetski is a great warrior; still, according to my head, he has this defect—that he gives his troops for breakfast, for dinner, and for supper nothing but Swedes’ flesh. He is a better leader than cook; but he acts ill, for from such food war may soon become disgusting to the best cavaliers.”

“Was Charnyetski very much enraged at me?”

“No, not very! In the beginning he showed a great change; but when he discovered that the army was unbroken, he said at once: ‘The will of God, not the might of men! That is nothing! any general may lose a battle. If we had Sapychas only in the land, we should have a country in which every man would be an Aristides.’”

“For Pan Charnyetski I would not spare my blood!” answered Sapycha. “Every other would have lowered me, so as to exalt himself and his own glory, especially after a fresh victory; but he is not that kind of man.”

“I will say nothing against him but this—that I am too old for such service as he expects of soldiers, and especially for those baths which he gives the army.”

“Then are you glad to return to me?”

“Glad and not glad, for I hear of feasting for an hour, but somehow I don’t see it.”

“We will sit down to the table this minute. But what is Charnyetski undertaking now?”

“He is going to Great Poland to help those poor people; from there he will march against Steinbock and to Prussia, hoping to get cannon and infantry from Dantzig.”

“The citizens of Dantzic are worthy people, and give a shining example to the whole Commonwealth. We shall meet Charnyetski at Warsaw, for I shall march there, but will stop a little first around Lublin.”

“Then have the Swedes besieged Lublin again?”

“Unhappy place! I know not how many times it has been in the hands of the enemy. There is a deputation here now from Lubelsk, and they will appear with a petition asking me to save them. But as I have letters to despatch to the king and the hetmans, they must wait awhile.”

“I will go gladly to Lublin, for there the fair heads are comely beyond measure, and sprightly. When a woman of that place is cutting bread, and puts the loaf against herself, the crust on the lifeless bread blushes from delight.”

“Oh, Turk!”

“Your worthiness, as a man advanced in years, cannot understand this; but I, like May, must let my blood out yet.”

“But you are older than I.”

“Only in experience, not in years. I have been able *conservare juventutem meam* (to preserve my youth), and more than one man has envied me that power. Permit me, your worthiness, to receive the Lubelsk deputation. I will promise to aid them at once; let the poor men comfort themselves before we comfort the poor women.”

“That is well,” said the hetman; “then I will write the letters.” And he went out.

Immediately after were admitted the deputies from Lubelsk, whom Zagloba received with uncommon dignity and seriousness. He promised assistance on condition that they would furnish the army with provisions, especially with every kind of drink. When the conditions were settled, he invited them in the name of the *voevoda* to supper. They were glad, for the army marched that night toward Lublin. The hetman himself was active beyond measure, for it was a question with him of effacing the memory of the Sandomir defeat by some military success.

The siege began, but advanced rather slowly. During this time Kmita was learning from Volodyovski to work with the sabre, and made uncommon progress. Pan Michael, knowing that his art was to be used against Boguslav’s neck, held back no secret. Often too they had better practice; for, approaching the castle, they challenged to single combat the Swedes, many of whom they slew. Soon Kmita had made such advance that he could meet Pan Yan on equal terms; no one in the whole army of Sapyeha could stand before him. Then such a desire to try Boguslav seized his soul that he was barely able to remain at Lublin, especially since the spring brought back to him strength and health. His wounds had healed, he ceased to spit blood, life played in him as of old, and fire gleamed in his eyes. At first the Lauda men looked at him frowningly; but they dared in not attack, for Volodyovski held them with iron hand; and later, when they considered his acts and his deeds, they were reconciled completely, and his most inveterate enemy, Yuzva Butrym, said—

“Kmita is dead; Babinich is living, let him live.”

The Lubelsk garrison surrendered at last, to the great delight of the army; then Sapyeha moved his squadrons toward Warsaw. On the road they received tidings that Yan Kazimir himself, with the hetmans and a fresh army, was advancing to aid them. News came too from Charnyetski, who was marching to the capital from Great Poland. The war, scattered through the whole country, was gathering at Warsaw, as a cloud scattered in the sky gathers and thickens to give birth to a storm with thunders and lightnings.

Sapyeha marched through Jelehi, Garvolin, and Minsk to the Syedlets highway, to join the general militia of Podlyasye. Pan Yan took command of this multitude; for though living in Lubelsk, he was near the boundary of Podlyasye, and was known to all the nobles, and greatly esteemed by them as one of the most famous knights in the Commonwealth. In fact, he soon changed that nobility, gallant by nature, into a squadron second in no way to regular troops.

Meanwhile they moved from Minsk forward to Warsaw very hastily, so as to stop at Praga one day. Fair weather favored the march. From time to time May showers sped past, cooling the ground and settling the dust; but on the whole the weather was marvellously fair—not too hot, not too cold. The eye saw far through the transparent air. From Minsk they went mounted; the wagons and cannon were to follow next day. An immense eagerness reigned in the regiments; the dense forests on both sides of the whole road were ringing with echoes of military songs, the horses nodded as a good omen. The squadrons regularly and in order flowed on, one after the other, like a river shining and mighty; for Sapyeha led twelve thousand men, besides the general militia. The captains leading the regiments were gleaming in their polished cuirasses; the red flags waved like gigantic flowers above the heads of the knights.

The sun was well toward its setting when the first squadron, that of Lauda, marching in advance, beheld the towers of the capital. At sight of this, a joyful shout tore from the breasts of the soldiers.

“Warsaw! Warsaw!”

That shout flew like thunder through all the squadrons, and for some time was to be heard over two miles of road the word, “Warsaw! Warsaw!”

Many of Sapyeha’s knights had never been in the capital; many of them had never seen it; therefore the sight made an uncommon impression on them. Involuntarily all reined in their horses; some removed their caps, others made the sign of the cross; tears streamed from the eyes of others, and they stood in silent emotion. All at once Sapyeha came out from the rear ranks on a white horse, and began to fly along the squadrons.

“Gentlemen!” cried he, in a piercing voice, “we are here first! To us luck, to us honor! We will drive the Swedes out of the capital!”

“We’ll drive them! We’ll drive them! We’ll drive them!”

And there rose a sound and a thunder. Some shouted continually, “We’ll drive them!” Others cried, “Strike, whoso has manhood!” Others, “Against them, the dog-brothers!” The rattle of sabres was mingled with the shouts of the knights. Eyes flashed lightning, and from under fierce mustaches teeth were gleaming. Sapyeha himself was sputtering like a pine torch. All at once he raised his baton, and cried—

“Follow me!”

Near Praga the *voevoda* restrained the squadron and commanded a slow march. The capital rose more and more clearly out of the bluish distance. Towers were outlined in a long line on the azure of the sky. The red many-storied roofs of the Old City were gleaming in the evening light. The Lithuanians had never seen anything more imposing in their lives than those white lofty walls pierced with multitudes of narrow windows; those walls standing like lofty swamp-reeds over the water. The houses seemed to grow some out of others, high and still higher; but above that dense and close mass of walls with windows and roofs, pointed towers pierced the sky. Those of the soldiers who had been in the capital previously, either at an election or on private affairs, explained to the others what each pile meant and what name it

bore. Zagloba especially, as a person of experience, told all to the Lauda men, and they listened to him eagerly, wondering at his words and the city itself.

“Look at that tower in the very centre of Warsaw! That is the citadel of the king. Oh that I could live as many years as I have eaten dinners at the king’s table! I would twist Methuselah into a ram’s horn. The king had no nearer confidant than me; I could choose among starostaships as among nuts, and give them away as easily as hobnails. I have given promotion to multitudes of men, and when I came in senators used to bow to me to the girdle, in Cossack fashion. I fought duels also in presence of the king, for he loved to see me at work; the marshal of the palace had to close his eyes.”

“That is a tremendous building!” said Roh Kovalski: “and to think that these dogs have it all in hand!”

“And they plunder terribly,” added Zagloba. “I hear that they even take columns out of the walls and send them to Sweden; these columns are of marble and other valuable stones. I shall not recognize the dear corners; various writers justly describe this castle as the eighth wonder of the world. The King of France has a respectable palace, but it is a fool in comparison with this one.”

“And that other tower over there near it, on the right?”

“That is St. Yan. There is a gallery from the castle to it. I had a vision in that church, for I remained behind once after vespers; I heard a voice from the arches, crying, ‘Zagloba, there will be war with such a son the Swedish king, and great calamities will follow.’ I was running with all my breath to the king to tell him what I had heard, when the primate caught me by the neck with his crosier. ‘Don’t tell follies,’ said he; ‘you were drunk!’ That other church just at the side belongs to the Jesuit college; the third tower at a distance is the law courts; the fourth at the right is the marshals, and that green roof is the Dominicans. I could not name them all, even if I could wield my tongue as well as I do my sabre.”

“It must be that there is not another such city in the world,” said one of the soldiers.

“That is why all nations envy us!” answered Zagloba.

“And that wonderful pile on the left of the castle?”

“Behind the Bernardines?”

“Yes.”

“That is the Radzeyovski Palace, formerly the Kazanovski. It is considered the ninth wonder of the world; but there is a plague on it, for in those walls began the misfortune of the Commonwealth.”

“How is that?” asked a number of voices.

“When the vice-chancellor Radzeyovski began to dispute and quarrel with his wife, the king took her part. You know, gentlemen, what people said of this; and it is true that the vice-chancellor thought that his wife was in love with the king, and the king with her; then afterward, through hatred, he fled to the Swedes, and war began. To tell the truth, I was in the country at the moment, and did not see the end of the affair, I got it from hearsay; but I know this, that she made sweet eyes, not at the king, but at someone else.”

“At whom?”

Zagloba began to twirl his mustaches: “At him to whom all are hurrying like ants to honey; but it does not beseem me to mention his name, for I have always hated boastfulness.

Besides, the man has grown old, and from sweeping out the enemy of the country, I am worn as a broom; but once there was no greater beauty and love maker than I. Let Roh Kovalski—”

Here Zagloba saw that by no means could Roh remember those times; therefore he waved his hand, and said—

“But what does he know of this affair?”

Then he pointed out the palaces of Ossolinski and Konyetspolski, palaces which were in size almost equal to the Radzeyovski; finally the splendid villa Regia; and then the sun went down, and the darkness of night began to fill the air.

The thunder of guns was heard on the walls of Warsaw, and trumpets were sounded a considerable time and prolonged, in sign that the enemy was approaching.

Sapyeha also announced his coming by firing from muskets, to give courage to the inhabitants; and that night he began to transport his army across the Vistula. First the Lauda squadron passed; second the squadron of Pan Kotvich; then Kmita’s Tartars; then Vankovich’s squadron; after that, eight thousand men. In this way the Swedes, with their accumulated plunder, were surrounded and deprived of communication; but nothing remained to Sapyeha except to wait till Charnyetski from one side, and from the other Yan Kazimir with the hetmans of the kingdom, marched up, and meanwhile to see that no reinforcements stole through to the city.

The first news came from Charnyetski, but not overfavorable, for he reported that his troops and horses were so exhausted that at that moment he could not take part in the siege. From the time of the battle of Varka, they were under fire day after day; and from the first months of the year they had fought twenty-one great battles with the Swedes, not counting the engagements of scouting-parties and the attacks on smaller detachments. He had not obtained infantry in Pomerania, and had not been able to advance to Dantzic; he promised, at most, to hold in check with the rest of his forces that Swedish army which under the brother of the king, Radzivill, and Douglas, was stationed at Narev, and apparently was preparing to come to the aid of the besieged.

The Swedes prepared for defence with the bravery and skill peculiar to them. They burned Praga before the arrival of Sapyeha; they had begun already to throw bombs into all the suburbs, such as the Krakow and the Novy-Sviat, and on the other side against the church of St. Yerzy and the Virgin Mary. Then houses, great buildings, and churches flamed up. In the daytime smoke rolled over the city like clouds, thick and dark. At night those clouds became red, and bundles of sparks burst forth from them toward the sky. Outside the walls, crowds of people were wandering, without roofs over their heads, without bread; women surrounded Sapyeha’s camp, and cried for charity; people were seen as thin as pincers from hunger; children were dying for want of food, in the arms of emaciated mothers; the suburbs were turned into a vale of tears and misery.

Sapyeha, having neither infantry nor cannon, waited and waited for the coming of the king. Meanwhile he aided the poor, sending them in groups to the less injured neighborhoods, in which they might survive in some way. He was troubled not a little when he foresaw the difficulties of the siege, for the skilled engineers of Sweden had turned Warsaw into a strong fortress. Behind the walls were three thousand trained soldiers, led by able and experienced generals; on the whole, the Swedes passed as masters in besieging and defending great fortresses. To solace this trouble, Sapyeha arranged daily feasts, during which the goblets circled freely; for that worthy citizen and uncommon warrior had this failing—he loved company and the clatter of glasses above all things, and therefore neglected frequently service for pleasure.

His diligence in the daytime he balanced by negligence at night. Till sunset he worked faithfully, sent out scouts, despatched letters, inspected pickets himself, examined the informants brought in; but with the first star even fiddles were heard in his quarters. And when once he felt joyous he permitted everything, sent for officers even though on guard or appointed to scouting expeditions, and was angry if anyone failed to appear, since for him there was no feast without a throng. In the morning Zagloba reproached him seriously, but in the night the servants bore Zagloba himself without consciousness to Volodyovski's quarters.

"Sapyeha would make a saint fall," he explained next day to his friends; "and what must happen to me, who have been always fond of sport? Besides, he has some kind of special passion to force goblets on me, and I, not wishing to seem rude, yield to his pressing; this I do to avoid offending the host. But I have made a vow that at the coming Advent I shall have my back well covered with discipline (stripes), for I understand myself that this yielding cannot remain without penance; but now I have to keep on good terms with him, out of fear that I might fall into worse company and indulge myself altogether."

There were officers who without the eye of the hetman accomplished their service; but some neglected it terribly in the evenings, as ordinary soldiers do when they feel no iron hand above them.

The enemy was not slow to take advantage of this. Two days before the coming of the king and the hetmans, Sapyeha arranged his most splendid feast, for he was rejoiced that all the troops were coming, and that the siege would begin in earnest. All the best known officers were invited; the hetman, ever in search of an opportunity, announced that that feast would be in honor of the king. To Kmita, Zagloba, Pan Yan, Pan Stanislav, and Kharlamp were sent special orders to come without fail, for the hetman wished to honor them particularly for their great services. Pan Andrei had just mounted his horse to go with a party, so that the orderly found the Tartars outside the gate.

"You cannot show the hetman disrespect, and return rudeness for kindness," said the officer.

Kmita dismounted and went to ask advice of his comrades.

"This is dreadfully awkward for me," said he. "I have heard that a considerable body of cavalry has appeared near Babitsi. The hetman himself commanded me to learn absolutely who they are, and now he asks me to the feast. What must I do?"

"The hetman has sent an order to let Akbah Ulan go with the scouting-party," answered the officer.

"An order is an order!" said Zagloba, "and whoso is a soldier must obey. Be careful not to give an evil example; and besides it would not be well for you to incur the ill-will of the hetman."

"Say that I will come," said Kmita to the orderly.

The officer went out. The Tartars rode off under Akbah Ulan; and Kmita began to dress a little, and while dressing said to his comrades—

"Today there is a feast in honor of his Royal Grace; tomorrow there will be one in honor of the hetmans of the kingdom, and so on to the end of the siege."

"Only let the king come and this will be at an end," answered Volodyovski; "for though our gracious lord is fond of amusing himself in every trouble, still service must go on more diligently, since every man, and among others Pan Sapyeha, will endeavor to show his zeal."



“We have had too much of this, too much! There is no question on that point,” said Pan Yan. “Is it not a wonder to you that such a laborious leader, such a virtuous man, such a worthy citizen, has this weakness?”

“Just let night come and straightway he is another person, and from a grand hetman turns into a reveller.”

“But do you know why these banquets are not to my taste?” asked Kmita. “It was the custom of Yanush Radzivill to have them almost every evening. Imagine that, as if by some wonder, whenever there was a banquet, either some misfortune happened, some evil tidings came, or some new treason of the hetman was published. I do not know whether it was blind chance or an ordinance of God; but it is enough that evil never came except in time of a banquet. I tell you that at last it went so far that whenever they were setting the table the skin began to creep on us.”

“True, as God is dear to me!” added Kharlamp. “But it came from this, that the prince hetman chose that time to announce his intrigues with the enemy of the country.”

“Well,” said Zagloba, “at least we have nothing to fear from the honest Sapyeha. If he will ever be a traitor, I am of as much value as my boot-heel.”

“There is nothing to be said on that point. He is as honest as bread without a raw spot,” put in Pan Michael.

“And what he neglects in the evening he repairs in the daytime,” added Kharlamp.

“Then we will go,” said Zagloba, “for to tell the truth I feel a void in my stomach.”

They went out, mounted their horses, and rode off; for Sapyeha was on the other side of the city and rather far away. When they arrived at the hetman’s quarters they found in the yard a multitude of horses, and a crowd of grooms, for whom a keg of beer had been set out, and who, as is usual, drinking without measure, had begun to quarrel; they grew quiet, however, at sight of the approaching knights, especially when Zagloba fell to striking with the side of his sabre those who were in his way, and to crying with a stentorian voice: “To your horses, rascals, to your horses! You are not the persons invited to the banquet.”

Sapyeha received the officers as usual, with open arms; and since he had been drinking a little with his guests, he began at once to tease Zagloba.

“With the forehead, Lord Commander!” said he.

“With the forehead, Lord Kiper,” answered Zagloba.

“If you call me that,” said Sapyeha, “I will give you wine which is working yet.”

“Very good, if it will make a tippler of a hetman!”

Some of the guests, hearing this, were alarmed; but Zagloba, when he saw the hetman in good humor, permitted himself everything, and Sapyeha had such a weakness for Zagloba that he not only was not angry, but he held his sides, and called those present to witness what he endured from that noble.

Then began a noisy and joyous banquet. Sapyeha drank to each guest separately, raised toasts to the king, the hetmans, the armies of both peoples (Poland and Lithuania), Pan Charnyetski, the whole Commonwealth. Pleasure increased, and with it noise and talk. From toasts it came to songs. The room was filled with steam from the heads of the guests, and the odor of mead and wines. From outside the windows came in no less of an uproar, and even the noise of steel. The servants had begun to fight with sabres. Some nobles rushed out to restore order, but they increased the confusion.

Suddenly there rose a shout so great that the banqueters in the hall became silent.

“What is that?” asked one of the colonels. “The grooms cannot make such an uproar as that.”

“Silence, gentlemen!” said the hetman, disturbed.

“Those are not ordinary shouts!”

All at once the windows shook from the thunder of cannon and discharges of musketry.

“A sortie!” cried Volodyovski; “the enemy is advancing!”

“To horse! To sabres!”

All sprang to their feet. There was a throng at the door; then a crowd of officers rushed to the yard, calling to their grooms for horses.

But in the disturbance it was not easy for each one to find his own. Meanwhile from beyond the yard alarmed voices began to shout in the darkness—

“The enemy is advancing! Pan Kotvich is under fire!”

All rushed with what breath was in their horses to their squadrons, jumping over fences and breaking their necks in the darkness. An alarm began in the whole camp. Not all the squadrons had horses at hand, and those who had not began the uproar first of all. Throngs of soldiers on foot and on horseback struck against one another, not being able to come to order, not knowing who was a friend and who an enemy, shouting and roaring in the middle of the dark night. Some cried that the King of Sweden was advancing with his whole army.

The Swedish sortie had really struck with a mighty impetus on Kotvich’s men. Fortunately, being sick, he was not at the banquet, and therefore could offer some kind of immediate resistance; still it was not a long one, for he was attacked by superior numbers and covered with musketry fire, hence was forced to retreat. Oskyerko came first to his assistance with his dragoons. They answered musketry fire with musketry fire. But neither could Oskyerko’s dragoons withstand the pressure, and in a moment they began to withdraw more and more hastily, leaving the ground covered with corpses. Twice did Oskyerko endeavor to bring them to order, and twice was he beaten back, so that the soldiers could only cover their retreat by firing in groups. At last they scattered completely; but the Swedes pressed on like an irrepressible torrent toward the hetman’s quarters. More and more regiments issued from the city to the field; after the infantry came cavalry; they brought out even field-guns. It looked like a general battle, and it seemed as though the enemy sought one.

Volodyovski, rushing from the hetman’s quarters, met his own squadron, which was always in readiness, half way, going toward the sound of the alarm and the shots. It was led by Roh Kovalski, who, like Kotvich, was not at the banquet; but Roh was not there because he had not been invited. Volodyovski gave orders to set fire with all speed to a couple of sheds, so as to light up the field, and he hurried to the battle. On the road he was joined by Kmita with his terrible volunteers, and that half of the Tartars which had not gone on the scouting expedition. Both came just in time to save Kotvich and Oskyerko from utter disaster.

The sheds had now blazed up so well that everything could be seen as at noontide. In this light the Lauda men, aided by Kmita, struck the infantry regiments, and passing through their fire took them on sabres. The Swedish cavalry sprang to assist their own men, and closed mightily with the Lauda squadron. For a certain time they struggled exactly like two wrestlers who seizing each other by the bodies use their last strength—now this one bends the other, and now the other bends this; but men fell so frequently in their ranks that at last the Swedes began to be confused. Kmita with his fighters rushed into the thick of the struggle.

Volodyovski as usual cleared an opening; near him the two gigantic Skshetuskis fought, and Kharlamp with Roh Kovalski; the Lauda men emulated Kmita's fighters—some shouting terribly, others, as the Butryms, rolling on in a body and in silence.

New regiments rushed forward to the aid of the broken Swedes; but Vankovich, whose quarters were near Volodyovski's and Kmita's, was a little later than they and supported them. At last the hetman led all the troops to the engagement, and began to advance in order. A fierce battle sprang up along the whole line from Mokotov to the Vistula.

Then Akbah Ulan, who had gone with the scouts, appeared on a foaming horse before the hetman.

"Effendi!" cried he; "a *chambul* of cavalry is marching from Babitsi to the city, and convoying wagons; they wish to enter the gates."

Sapyeha understood in one moment what that sortie in the direction of Mokotov meant. The enemy wished to draw away troops on the meadow road, so that that auxiliary cavalry and a provision train might enter the gates.

"Run to Volodyovski!" cried the hetman to Akbah Ulan; "let the Lauda squadron, Kmita, and Vankovich stop the road. I will send them reinforcements at once."

Akbah Ulan put spurs to his horse; after him flew one, and a second, and a third orderly. All rushed to Volodyovski and repeated the order of the hetman.

Volodyovski turned his squadron immediately; Kmita and the Tartars caught up with him; going across the field, they shot on together, and Vankovich after them.

But they arrived too late. Nearly two hundred wagons had entered the gate; a splendid detachment of cavalry following them was almost within radius of the fortress. Only the rearguard, composed of about one hundred men, had not come yet under cover of the artillery. But these too were going with all speed. The officer, riding behind, urged them on.

Kmita, seeing them by the light of the burning shed, gave forth such a piercing and terrible shout, that the horses at his side were frightened; he recognized Boguslav's cavalry, that same which had ridden over him and his Tartars at Yanov.

Mindful of nothing, he rushed like a madman toward them, passed his own men, and fell first blindly among their ranks. Fortunately the two Kyemliches, Kosma and Damian, sitting on the foremost horses, rode with him. At that moment Volodyovski struck the flank like lightning, and with this one blow cut off the rearguard from the main body.

Cannon began to thunder from the walls; but the main division, sacrificing their comrades, rushed in with all speed after the wagons. Then the Lauda men and Kmita's forces surrounded the rearguard as with a ring, and a merciless slaughter began.

But it was of short duration. Boguslav's men, seeing that there was no rescue on any side, sprang from their horses in a moment, threw down their weapons, and shouted with sky-piercing voices, heard in the throng and the uproar, that they surrendered.

Neither the volunteers nor the Tartars regarded their shouts, but hewed on. At this moment was heard the threatening and shrill voice of Volodyovski, who wanted informants—

"Stop! stop! take them alive!"

"Take them alive!" cried Kmita.

The biting of steel ceased. The Tartars were commanded to bind the enemy, and with the skill peculiar to them they did this in a twinkling; then the squadrons pushed back hastily from the

cannon-fire. The colonels marched toward the sheds—the Lauda men in advance, Vankovich in the rear, and Kmita, with the prisoners, in the centre, all in perfect readiness to repulse attack should it come. Some of the Tartars led prisoners on leashes; others of them led captured horses. Kmita, when he came near the sheds, looked carefully into the faces of the prisoners to see if Boguslav was among them; for though one of them had sworn under a sword-point that the prince was not in the detachment, still Kmita thought that perhaps they were hiding him purposely. Then some voice from under the stirrup of a Tartar cried to him—

“Pan Kmita! Colonel! Rescue an acquaintance! Give command to free me from the rope on parole.”

“Hassling!” cried Kmita.

Hassling was a Scot, formerly an officer in the cavalry of the *voevoda* of Vilna, whom Kmita knew in Kyedani, and in his time loved much.

“Let the prisoner go free!” cried he to the Tartar, “and down from the horse yourself!”

The Tartar sprang from the saddle as if the wind had carried him off, for he knew the danger of loitering when the *bagadyr* commanded.

Hassling, groaning, climbed into the Tartar’s lofty saddle. Kmita then caught him above the palm, and pressing his hand as if he wished to crush it, began to ask insistently—

“Whence do you come? Tell me quickly, whence do you come? For God’s sake, tell quickly!”

“From Taurogi,” answered the officer.

Kmita pressed him still more.

“But—Panna Billevich—is she there?”

“She is.”

Pan Andrei spoke with still greater difficulty, for he pressed his teeth still more closely.

“And—what has the prince done with her?”

“He has not succeeded in doing anything.”

Silence followed; after a while Kmita removed his lynx-skin cap, drew his hand over his forehead and said—

“I was struck in the battle; blood is leaving me, and I have grown weak.”

## Chapter LXXIX

The sortie had attained its object only in part; though Boguslav's division had entered the city, the sortie itself had not done great things. It is true that Pan Kotvich's squadron and Oskyerko's dragoons had suffered seriously; but the Swedes too had strewn the field with many corpses, and one regiment of infantry, which Volodyovski and Vankovich had struck, was almost destroyed. The Lithuanians boasted that they had inflicted greater loss on the enemy than they had endured themselves. Pan Sapyeha alone suffered internally, because a new "confusion" had met him from which his fame might be seriously affected. The colonels attached to the hetman comforted him as well as they could; and to tell the truth this lesson was useful, for henceforward he had no more such wild banquets, and if there was some pleasure the greatest watchfulness was observed during the time of its continuance. The Swedes were caught the day after. Supposing that the hetman would not expect a repetition of the sortie so soon, they came outside the walls again; but driven from their ground and leaving a number of dead, they returned.

Meanwhile they were examining Hassling in the hetman's quarters; this made Pan Andrei so impatient that he almost sprang out of his skin, for he wished to have the Scot to himself at the earliest, and talk with him touching Taurogi. He prowled about the quarters all day, went in every little while, listened to the statements, and sprang up whenever Boguslav's name was mentioned in the question.

But in the evening he received an order to go on a scouting expedition. He said nothing, only set his teeth; for he had changed greatly already, and had learned to defer private affairs for public service. But he pushed the Tartars terribly during the expedition, burst out in anger at the least cause, and struck with his baton till the bones cracked. They said one to another that the *bagadyr* was mad, and marched silently, as silently as cowards, looking only to the eyes of the leader and guessing his thoughts on the wing.

On returning he found Hassling in his quarters, but so ill that he could not speak, for his capture had affected him so cruelly that after the additional torture of a whole day's inquisition he had a fever, and did not understand what was said to him. Kmita therefore was forced to be satisfied with what Zagloba told of Hassling's statements; but they touched only public, not private affairs. Of Boguslav the young officer said only this—that after his return from the expedition to Podlyasie and the defeat at Yanov he had become terribly ill from rage and melancholy; he fell into a fever, but as soon as he had recovered somewhat, he moved with his troops to Pomerania, whither Steinbock and the elector invited him most earnestly.

"But where is he now?" asked Kmita.

"According to what Hassling tells me, and he has no reason to lie, he is with the king's brother, at the fortified camp on the Narev and the Bug, where Boguslav is commanding a whole cavalry division," answered Zagloba.

"Ha! and they think to come here with succor to the besieged. We shall meet, as God is in heaven, even if I had to go to him in disguise."

"Do not grow angry for nothing! To Warsaw they would be glad to come with succor, but they cannot, for Charnyetski has placed himself in their way. Having neither infantry nor cannon, he cannot attack their camp, and they are afraid to go out against him, for they know that their soldiers could not withstand his in the field, and they know too that if they went out,

they could not shield themselves with the river. If the king himself were there he would give battle, for under his command the soldiers fight better, being confident that he is a great warrior; but neither Douglas, nor the king's brother, nor Prince Boguslav, though all three are daring men, would venture against Charnyetski."

"But where is the king?"

"He has gone to Prussia. The king does not believe that we are before Warsaw already, and that we shall capture Wittemberg. But whether he believes or not, he had to go for two reasons—first, because he must win over the elector, even at the price of all Great Poland; second, because the army, which he led out of the sack, is of no use until it has rested. Toil, watching, and continual alarms have so gnawed it that the soldiers are not able to hold muskets in their hands; and still they are the choicest regiments in the whole army, which through all the German and Danish regions have won famous victories."

Further conversation was interrupted by the coming of Volodyovski.

"How is Hassling?" asked he on the threshold.

"He is sick and imagines every folly," answered Kmita.

"And you, my dear Michael, what do you want of Hassling?" asked Zagloba.

"Just as if you do not know!"

"I could not know that it is a question with you of that cherry-tree which Prince Boguslav has planted in his garden. He is a diligent gardener; he does not need to wait a year for fruit."

"I wish you were killed for such jokes!" cried the little knight.

"Look at him, tell him the most innocent thing, and immediately his mustaches are quivering like the horns of a mad grasshopper. In what am I to blame? Seek vengeance on Boguslav, not on me."

"God grant me to seek and to find!"

"Just now Babinich has said the same! Before long I see that he will raise the whole army against the prince; but Boguslav is taking good care of himself, and without my stratagems you will not be able to succeed."

Here both young men sprang to their feet and asked—

"Have you any stratagems?"

"But do you think it is as easy to take a stratagem out of the head as a sabre out of the sheath? If Boguslav were here, surely I should find more than one; but at that distance, not only a stratagem, but a cannon will not strike. Pan Andrei, give orders to bring me a goblet of mead, for it is hot here today."

"I'll give you a keg of it if you will invent something."

"First, why do you stand over this Hassling like an executioner? He is not the only man captured; you can ask others."

"I have already tortured others, but they are common soldiers; they know nothing, but he, as an officer, was at the court," answered Kmita.

"That is a reason!" answered Zagloba. "I must talk with him too; from what he tells me of the person and ways of Prince Boguslav, stratagems may be important. Now the main thing is to finish the siege soon, for afterward we shall move surely against that army on the Narev. But somehow our gracious lord and the hetmans are a long time invisible."

“How so?” asked Volodyovski. “I have returned this minute from the hetman, who has just received news that the king will take up position here this evening with the auxiliary divisions, and the hetmans with cavalry will come tomorrow. They are advancing from Sokal itself, resting but little, making forced marches. Besides, it has been known for two days that they are almost in sight.”

“Are they bringing many troops?”

“Nearly five times as many as Sapyeha has, infantry Russian and Hungarian, very excellent; six thousand Tartars under Suba Gazi, but probably it is impossible to let them out for even a day, for they are very self-willed and plunder all around.”

“Better give them to Pan Andrei to lead,” said Zagloba.

“Yes,” said Kmita, “I should lead them straightway from Warsaw, for they are of no use in a siege; I should take them to the Bug and the Narev.”

“They are of use,” replied Volodyovski, “for none can see better than they that provisions do not enter the fortress.”

“Well, it will be warm for Wittemberg. Wait, old criminal!” cried Zagloba. “You have warred well, I will not deny that, but you have robbed and plundered still better; you had two mouths—one for false oaths, the other for breaking promises—but this time you will not beg off with both of them. The Gallic disease will dry up your skin, and doctors will tear it from you; but we will flay you better, Zagloba’s head for that!”

“Nonsense! he will surrender on conditions to the king, who will not do anything to him,” answered Pan Michael; “and we shall have to give him military honors besides.”

“He will yield on conditions, will he? Indeed!” cried Zagloba. “We shall see!”

Here he began to pound the table with such force that Roh Kovalski, who was coming in at the moment, was frightened and stood as if fixed to the threshold.

“May I serve as a waiting-lad to Jews,” shouted the old man, “if I let free out of Warsaw that blasphemer of the faith, that robber of churches, that oppressor of widows, that executioner of men and women, that hangman’s assistant, that ruffian, that blood-spiller and money-grabber, that purse-gnawer, that flayer! All right! The king will let him out on conditions; but I, as I am a Catholic, as I am Zagloba, as I wish for happiness during life and desire God at death, will make such a tumult against him as no man has ever heard of in this Commonwealth before! Don’t wave your hand, Pan Michael! I’ll make a tumult! I repeat it, I’ll make a tumult!”

“Uncle will make a tumult!” thundered Roh Kovalski.

Just then Akbah Ulan thrust in his beast-like face at the door.

“Effendi!” said he to Kmita, “the armies of the king are visible beyond the Vistula.”

All sprang to their feet and rushed forth.

The king had come indeed. First arrived the Tartar squadrons, under Suba Gazi, but not in such numbers as was expected; after them came the troops of the kingdom, many and well armed, and above all full of ardor. Before evening the whole army had passed the bridge freshly built by Oskyerko. Sapyeha was waiting for the king with squadrons drawn out as if ready for battle, standing one by the side of the other, like an immense wall, the end of which it was difficult to reach with the eye. The captains stood before the regiments; near them the standard-bearers, each with lowered ensign; the trumpets, kettledrums, crooked trumpets, and drums made a noise indescribable. The squadrons of the kingdom, in proportion as they

passed, stood just opposite the Lithuanians in line; between one and the other army was an interval of a hundred paces.

Sapyeha with baton in hand went on foot to that open space; after him the chief civil and military dignitaries. On the other side, from the armies of the kingdom approached the king on a splendid Frisian horse, given him by Lyubomirski; he was arrayed as if for battle, in light armor of blue and gold, from under which was to be seen a black velvet kaftan, with a lace collar coming out on the breastplate, but instead of a helmet he wore the ordinary Swedish hat, with black feathers; but he wore military gloves, and long yellow boots coming far above his knees.

After him rode the papal nuncio, the archbishop of Lvoff, the bishop of Kamenyets, the priest Tsyetsishovski, the *voevoda* of Krakow, the *voevoda* of Rus, Baron Lisola, Count Pöttingen, Pan Kamenyetski, the ambassador of Moscow, Pan Grodzitski, general of artillery, Tyzenhauz, and many others. Sapyeha advanced as marshal of the kingdom to hold the king's stirrup; but the king sprang lightly from the saddle, hurried to Sapyeha and without saying a word, seized him in his embrace.

And Yan Kazimir held him a long time, in view of both armies; silent all the while, but tears flowed down his cheeks in a stream, for he pressed to his bosom the truest servant of the king and the country—a man who, though he did not equal others in genius, though he even erred at times, still soared in honesty above all the lords of that Commonwealth, never wavered in loyalty, sacrificed without a moment's thought his whole fortune, and from the beginning of the war exposed his breast for his king and the country.

The Lithuanians, who had whispered previously among themselves that perhaps reprimands would meet Pan Sapyeha because he had let Karl Gustav escape from near Sandomir and for the recent carelessness at Warsaw, or at least a cool reception, seeing this heartiness of the king, raised in honor of the kindly monarch a tremendous heaven-echoing shout. The armies of the kingdom answered it immediately with one thunder-roll, and for some time above the noise of the music, the rattle of drums, the roar of musketry, were heard only these shouts—

“Vivat Yoannes Casimirus!”

“Long life to the armies of the crown!”

“Long life to the Lithuanians!”

So they greeted one another at Warsaw. The walls trembled, and behind the walls the Swedes.

“I shall bellow, as God is dear to me!” cried Zagloba, with emotion; “I cannot restrain myself. See our king, our father!—gracious gentlemen, I am blubbing—our father, our king! the other day a wanderer deserted by all; now here—now here are a hundred thousand sabres at call! merciful God! I cannot keep from tears; yesterday a wanderer, today the Emperor of Germany has not such good soldiers—”

Here the sluices were opened in the eyes of Zagloba, and he began to sob time after time; then he turned suddenly to Roh—

“Be silent! what are you whimpering about?”

“And is Uncle not whimpering?” answered Roh.

“True, as God is dear to me!—I was ashamed, gracious gentlemen, of this Commonwealth. But now I would not change with any nation! A hundred thousand sabres—let others show the like. God has brought them to their minds; God has given this, God has given it!”



Zagloba had not made a great mistake, for really there were nearly seventy thousand men at Warsaw, not counting Charnyetski's division, which had not arrived yet, and not counting the armed camp attendants who rendered service when necessary, and who straggled after every camp in countless multitudes.

After the greeting and a hurried review of the troops, the king thanked Sapyeha's men, amid universal enthusiasm, for their faithful services, and went to Uyazdov. The troops occupied the positions assigned them. Some squadrons remained in Praga; others disposed themselves around the city. A gigantic train of wagons continued to cross the Vistula till the following midday.

Next morning the suburbs of the city were as white with tents as if they had been covered with snow. Countless herds of horses were neighing on the adjoining meadows. After the army followed a crowd of Armenians, Jews, Tartars; another city, more extensive and tumultuous than that which was besieged, grew up on the plain.

The Swedes, amazed during the first days at the power of the King of Poland, made no sorties, so that Pan Grodzitski, general of artillery, could ride around the city quietly and form his plan of siege.

On the following day the camp attendants began to raise intrenchments here and there, according to Grodzitski's plan; they placed on them at once the smaller cannon, for the larger ones were to appear only a couple of weeks later.

Yan Kazimir sent a message to old Wittemberg summoning him to surrender the city and lay down his arms, giving favorable conditions, which, when known, roused discontent in the army. That discontent was spread mainly by Zagloba, who had a special hatred of the Swedish commander.

Wittemberg, as was easy to foresee, rejected the conditions and resolved on a defence to continue till the last drop of blood was shed, and to bury himself in the ruins of the city rather than yield it to the king. The size of the besieging army did not frighten him a whit, for he knew that an excessive number was rather a hindrance than help in a siege. He was informed also in good season that in the camp of Yan Kazimir there was not one siege gun, while the Swedes had more than enough of them, not taking into consideration their inexhaustible supply of ammunition.

It was in fact to be foreseen that they would defend themselves with frenzy, for Warsaw had served them hitherto as a storehouse for booty. All the immense treasures looted in castles, in churches, in cities, in the whole Commonwealth, came to the capital, whence they were despatched in parties to Prussia, and farther to Sweden. But at the present time, when the whole country had risen, and castles defended by the smaller Swedish garrisons did not insure safety, booty was brought to Warsaw all the more. The Swedish soldier was more ready to sacrifice his life than his booty. A poor people who had seized the treasures of a wealthy land had acquired the taste of them to such a degree that the world had never seen more grasping robbers. The king himself had grown famous for greed; the generals followed his example, and Wittemberg surpassed them all. When it was a question of gain, neither the honor of a knight nor consideration for the dignity of rank restrained officers. They seized, they extorted, they skinned everything that could be taken. In Warsaw itself colonels of high office and noble birth were not ashamed to sell spirits and tobacco to their own soldiers, so as to cram their purses with the pay of the army.

This too might rouse the Swedes to fury in defence, that their foremost men were at that time in Warsaw. First was Wittemberg himself, next in command to Karl Gustav. He was the first who had entered the Commonwealth and brought it to decline at Uistsie. In return for that

service a triumph was prepared for him in Sweden as for a conqueror. In the city was Oxenstiern, the chancellor, a statesman renowned throughout the world, respected for honesty even by his enemies. He was called the Minerva of the king. To his counsel Karl was indebted for all his victories in negotiation. In the capital was also Wrangel, the younger Horn, Erickson, the second Löwenhaupt, and many Swedish ladies of high birth, who had followed their husbands to the country as to a new Swedish colony.

The Swedes had something to defend. Yan Kazimir understood, therefore, that the siege, especially through the lack of heavy guns on his side, would be long and bloody. The hetmans understood this also, but the army would not think of it. Barely had Grodzitski raised the intrenchments in some fashion, barely had he pushed forward somewhat to the walls, when deputations went from all the squadrons to ask the king to permit volunteers to storm the walls. The king had to explain to them a long time that fortresses were not taken with sabres, before he could restrain their ardor.

Meanwhile the works were pushed forward as rapidly as possible. The troops, not being able to storm, took eager part with the camp servants in raising these works; men from the foremost regiments, nay, even officers brought earth in wheelbarrows, carried fascines, labored. More than once the Swedes tried to hinder, and not a day passed without sorties; but barely were the Swedish musketeers outside the gate, when the Poles, working at the intrenchments, throwing aside wheelbarrows, bundles of twigs, spades and pickaxes, ran with sabres into the smoke so furiously that the Swedes had to hide in the fortress with all haste. In these engagements bodies fell thickly; the fosses and the open space as far as the intrenchments were full of graves, in which were placed sometimes small bundles of the weapons of the dead. At last even time failed for burial, so that bodies lay on the ground spreading a terrible odor around the city and the besiegers.

In spite of the greatest difficulty citizens stole forth to the king's camp every day, reporting what happened in the city, and imploring on their knees to hasten the storm. The Swedes, they said, had a plenty of provisions as yet, but the people were dying of hunger on the streets; they lived in want, in oppression under the terrible hand of the garrison. Every day echoes brought to the Polish camp sounds of musket-shots in the city, and fugitives brought intelligence that the Swedes were shooting citizens suspected of goodwill to Yan Kazimir. The hair stood on end at the stories of the fugitives. They said that the whole population, sick women, newly born infants, old men, all lived at night on the streets, for the Swedes had driven them from their houses, and made passages from wall to wall, so that the garrison, in case Yan Kazimir's troops should enter, might withdraw and defend themselves. Rains fell on the people in their camping-places; on clear days the sun burned them, at night the cold pinched them. Citizens were not allowed to kindle fires; they had no means of preparing warm food. Various diseases spread more and more, and carried away hundreds of victims.

Yan Kazimir's heart was ready to burst when he heard these narratives. He sent therefore courier after courier to hasten the coming of the heavy guns. Days and weeks passed; but it was impossible to undertake anything more important than the repulse of sorties. Still the besiegers were strengthened by the thought that the garrison must fail of provisions at last, since the roads were blocked in such fashion that a mouse could not reach the fortress. The besieged lost hope of assistance; the troops under Douglas, which were posted nearest, were not only unable to come to the rescue, but had to think of their own skin; for Yan Kazimir, having even too many men, was able to harass them.

At last the Poles, even before the coming of the heavy guns, opened on the fortress with the smaller ones. Pan Grodzitski from the side of the Vistula, raised in front of himself, like a mole, earth defences, pushed to within six yards of the moat, and vomited a continual fire on

the unfortunate city. The magnificent Kazanovski Palace was ruined; and the Poles did not regret it, for the building belonged to the traitor Radzeyovski. The shattered walls were barely standing, shining with their empty windows; day and night balls were dropping on the splendid terraces and in the gardens, smashing the beautiful fountains, bridges, arbors, and marble statues, terrifying the peacocks which with pitiful screams gave notice of their unhappy condition.

Pan Grodzitski hurled fire on the Bernardine bell-tower, for he had decided to begin the assault on that side.

Meanwhile the camp servants begged permission to attack the city, for they wished greatly to reach the Swedish treasures earliest. The king refused at first, but finally consented. A number of prominent officers undertook to lead them, and among others Kmita, who was embittered by delay, and not only that, but in general he knew not what to do with himself; for Hassling, having fallen into a grievous fever, lay without consciousness for some weeks and could speak of nothing.

Men therefore were summoned to the storm. Grodzitski opposed this to the last moment, insisting that until a breach was made the city could not be taken, even though the regular infantry were to go to the assault. But as the king had given permission, Grodzitski was forced to yield.

June 15, about six thousand camp servants assembled; ladders, bundles of brush, and bags of sand were prepared. Toward evening a throng, barefoot and armed for the greater part only with sabres, began to approach the city where the trenches and earth defences came nearest the moat. When it had become perfectly dark, the men rushed, at a given signal, toward the moat with a terrible uproar, and began to fill it. The watchful Swedes received them with a murderous fire from muskets and cannons, and a furious battle sprang up along the whole eastern side of the city. Under cover of darkness the Poles filled the moat in a twinkling and reached the walls in an orderless mass. Kmita, with two thousand men, fell upon an earth fort, which the Poles called "the molehill," and which stood near the Krakow gate. In spite of a desperate defence he captured this place at a blow; the garrison was cut to pieces with sabres, not a man was spared. Pan Andrei gave command to turn the guns on the gate and some of them to the farther walls, so as to aid and cover somewhat those crowds who were striving to scale the walls.

These men, however, were not so fortunate. They put the ladders in position, and ascended them so furiously that the best trained infantry could not have done better; but the Swedes, safe behind battlements, fired into their very faces, and hurled stones and blocks prepared for the purpose; under the weight of these the ladders were broken into pieces, and at last the infantry pushed down the assaulters with long spears, against which sabres had no effect.

More than five hundred of the best camp servants were lying at the foot of the wall; the rest passed the moat under an incessant fire, and took refuge again in the Polish intrenchments.

The storm was repulsed, but the little fort remained in the hands of the Poles. In vain did the Swedes roll at it all night from their heaviest guns; Kmita answered them in like manner from those cannon which he had captured. Only in the morning, when light came, were his guns dismounted to the last one. Wittemberg, for whom that intrenchment was as his head, sent infantry at once with the order not to dare return without retaking what had been lost; but Grodzitski sent reinforcements to Kmita, by the aid of which he not only repulsed the infantry, but fell upon and drove them to the Krakow gate.

Grodzitski was so delighted that he ran in person to the king with the report.

“Gracious Lord,” said he, “I was opposed to yesterday’s work, but now I see that it was not lost. While that intrenchment was in the enemy’s hands I could do nothing against the gate; but now only let the heavy guns come, and in one night I will make a breach.”

The king, who was grieved that so many good men had fallen, was rejoiced at Grodzitski’s words, and asked at once—

“But who has command in that intrenchment?”

“Pan Babinich,” answered a number of voices.

The king clapped his hands. “He must be first everywhere! Worthy General, I know him. He is a terribly stubborn cavalier, and will not let himself be smoked out.”

“It would be a mistake beyond forgiveness, Gracious Lord, if we should permit that. I have already sent him infantry and small cannon; for that they will try to smoke him out is certain. It is a question of Warsaw! That cavalier is worth his weight in gold.”

“He is worth more; for this is not his first, and not his tenth achievement,” said the king.

Then Yan Kazimir gave orders to bring quickly a horse and a field-glass, and he rode out to look at the earthwork. But it was not to be seen from behind the smoke, for a number of forty-eight-pounders were blowing on it with ceaseless fire; they hurled long balls, bombs, and grapeshot. Still the intrenchment was so near the gate that musket-balls almost reached it; the bombshells could be seen perfectly when they flew up like cloudlets, and, describing a closely bent bow, fell into that cloud of smoke, bursting with terrible explosion. Many fell beyond the intrenchment, and they prevented the approach of reinforcements.

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!” said the king. “Tyzenhauz, look! A pile of torn earth is all that remains. Tyzenhauz, do you know who is there?”

“Gracious King, Babinich is there. If he comes out living, he will be able to say that he was in hell during life.”

“We must send him fresh men. Worthy General—”

“The orders are already given, but it is difficult for them to go, since bombs pass over and fall very thickly on this side of the fort.”

“Turn all the guns on the walls so as to make a diversion,” said the king.

Grodzitski put spurs to his horse and galloped to the trenches. After a while cannonading was heard on the whole line, and somewhat later it was seen that a fresh division of Mazovian infantry went out of the nearest trenches, and on a run to the molehill.

The king stood there, looking continually. At last he cried: “Babinich should be relieved in the command. And who, gentlemen, will volunteer to take his place?”

Neither Pan Yan, Pan Stanislaw, nor Volodyovski was near the king, therefore a moment of silence followed.

“I!” said suddenly Pan Topor Grylevski, an officer of the light squadron of the primate.

“I!” said Tyzenhauz.

“I! I! I!” called at once a number of voices.

“Let the man go who offered himself first,” said the king.

Pan Topor Grylevski made the sign of the cross, raised the canteen to his mouth, then galloped away.

The king remained looking at the cloud of smoke with which the molehill was covered, and the smoke rose above it like a bridge up to the very wall. Since the fort was near the Vistula, the walls of the city towered above it, and therefore the fire was terrible.

Meanwhile the thunder of cannon decreased somewhat, though the balls did not cease to describe arcs, and a rattle of musketry was given out as if thousands of men were beating threshing-floors with flails.

"It is evident that they are going to the attack again," said Tyzenhauz. "If there were less smoke, we should see the infantry."

"Let us approach a little," said the king, urging his horse.

After him others moved on, and riding along the bank of the Vistula from Uyazdov they approached almost to the Solets itself; and since the gardens of the palaces and the cloisters coming down to the Vistula had been cleared by the Swedes in the winter for fuel, trees did not cover the view, they could see even without field-glasses that the Swedes were really moving again to the storm.

"I would rather lose that position," said the king all at once, "than that Babinich should die."

"God will defend him!" said the priest Tsyetsishovski.

"And Pan Grodzitski will not fail to send him reinforcements," added Tyzenhauz.

Further conversation was interrupted by some horseman who was approaching from the direction of the city at all speed. Tyzenhauz, having such sight that he saw better with the naked eye than others through field-glasses, caught his head at sight of him, and said—

"Grylevski is returning! It must be that Kmita has fallen, and the fort is captured."

The king shaded his eyes with his hands. Grylevski rushed up, reined in his horse, and, panting for breath, exclaimed—

"Gracious Lord!"

"What has happened? Is he killed?" asked the king.

"Pan Babinich says that he is well, and does not wish anyone to take his place; he begs only to send him food, for he has had nothing to eat since morning."

"Is he alive then?" cried the king.

"He says that he is comfortable there!" repeated Grylevski.

But others, catching breath from wonder, began to cry: "That is courage! He is a soldier!"

"But it was necessary to stay there and relieve him absolutely," said the king to Grylevski. "Is it not a shame to come back? Were you afraid, or what? It would have been better not to go."

"Gracious Lord," answered Grylevski, "whoso calls me a coward, him I will correct on any field, but before majesty I must justify myself. I was in the anthill itself, but Babinich flew into my face because of my errand: 'Go,' said he, 'to the hangman! I am at work here, I am almost creeping out of my skin, and I have no time to talk, but I will not share either my glory or command with any man. I am well here and I will stay here, but I'll give orders to take you outside the trench! I wish you were killed!' said he. 'We want to eat, and they send us a commandant instead of food!' What had I to do, Gracious Lord? I do not wonder at his temper, for their hands are dropping from toil."

"And how is it?" asked the king; "is he holding the place?"

“Desperately. What would he not hold? I forgot to tell besides that he shouted to me when I was going: ‘I’ll stay here a week and will not surrender, if I have something to eat!’”

“Is it possible to hold out there?”

“There, Gracious Lord, is the genuine day of judgment! Bomb is falling after bomb; pieces of shells are whistling, like devils, around the ear; the earth is dug out into ditches; it is impossible to speak from smoke. The balls hurl around sand and earth, so that every moment a man must shake himself to avoid being buried. Many have fallen, but those who are living lie in furrows in the intrenchments, and have made defences before their heads of stakes strengthened with earth. The Swedes constructed the place carefully, and now it serves against them. While I was there, infantry came from Grodzitski, and now there is fighting again.”

“Since we cannot attack the walls until a breach is made,” said the king, “we will strike the palace on the Krakow suburbs today; that will be the best diversion.”

“The palace is wonderfully strengthened, almost changed into a fortress,” remarked Tyzenhauz.

“But they will not hurry from the city to give aid, for all their fury will be turned on Babinich,” said the king. “So will it be, as I am here alive, so will it be! I will order the storm at once; but first I will bless Babinich.”

Then the king took from the priest a golden crucifix in which were splinters of the true cross, and raising it on high he began to bless the distant mound, covered with fire and smoke, saying—

“O God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have mercy on Thy people, and give salvation to the dying! Amen! amen! amen!”

## Chapter LXXX

A bloody storm followed from the side of the Novy Svyat against the Krakow suburbs, not over-successful, but in so far effective that it turned the attention of the Swedes from the intrenchment defended by Kmita, and permitted the garrison enclosed in it to rest somewhat. The Poles pushed forward however, to the Kazimirovski Palace, but they could not hold that point.

On the other side they stormed up to the Danillovich Palace and to Dantzig House, equally without result. A number of hundreds of people fell again. The king, however, had this consolation: he saw that even the general militia rushed to the walls with the greatest daring and devotion, and that after those attempts, more or less unsuccessful, their courage not only had not fallen, but on the contrary assurance of victory was growing strong in the army.

The most fortunate event of the day was the arrival of Pan Yan Zamoyski and Pan Charnyetski. The first brought very excellent infantry and guns from Zamost, so heavy that the Swedes had nothing like them in Warsaw. The second, in agreement with Sapyeha, having besieged Douglas, and with some Lithuanian troops and the general militia of Podlyasye, under command of Pan Yan, had come to Warsaw to take part in the general storm. It was hoped by Charnyetski as well as others that this would be the last storm.

Zamoyski's heavy guns were placed in the position taken by Kmita; they began work immediately against the walls and the gate, and forced the Swedish howitzers to silence at once. General Grodzitski himself occupied the "molehill," and Kmita returned to his Tartars.

But he had not reached his quarters when he was summoned to Uyazdov. The king in presence of the whole staff applauded the young knight; neither Charnyetski, Sapyeha, Lyubomirski, nor the hetmans spared praises on him. He stood there in torn garments covered with earth, his face entirely discolored with powder smoke; without sleep, soiled, but joyous because he had held the place, had won so much praise, and gained immeasurable glory in both armies. Among other cavaliers Pan Michael and Pan Yan congratulated him.

"You do not know indeed, Pan Andrei," said the little knight, "what great weight you have with the king. I was at the council of war yesterday, for Pan Charnyetski took me with him. They talked of the storm, and then of the news which had just come in from Lithuania, the war there, and the cruelties which Pontus de la Gardie and the Swedes permit. They were considering at the council how to strengthen resistance. Sapyeha said it was best to send thither a couple of squadrons and a man who could be there what Charnyetski was at the beginning of the war in Poland. To which the king answered: 'There is only one such man, Babinich.' The others confirmed this at once."

"I would go most willingly to Lithuania, and especially to Jmud," answered Kmita. "I resolved to ask of the king myself permission to go, but I am waiting till Warsaw is taken."

"There will be a general storm tomorrow," said Zagloba.

"I know, but how is Kettling?"

"Who is that? Hassling?"

"All one, for he has two names, as is the custom among the English, the Scots, and many other nations."

“True,” answered Zagloba, “and a Spaniard every day of the week has a new name for himself. Your servant told me that Hassling, or Kettling, is well; he has begun to talk, walks, the fever has left him, he calls for food every hour.”

“Have you been with him?” asked Kmita of Pan Michael.

“I have not, for I have had no time. Who has a head for anything but the storm?”

“Then let us go now.”

“Go to sleep first,” said Zagloba.

“True! true! I am barely standing on my feet.”

So when he came to his own quarters Pan Andrei followed Zagloba’s advice, especially as he found Hassling asleep. But Zagloba and Volodyovski came to see him in the evening; they sat down in the broad summerhouse which the Tartars had made for their *bagadyr*. The Kyemliches poured out for them mead a hundred years old, which the king had sent to Kmita; and they drank it willingly, for the air was hot outside. Hassling, pale and emaciated, seemed to draw life and strength from the precious liquid. Zagloba clicked with his tongue, and wiped perspiration from his forehead.

“Hei! how the great guns are thundering!” said the young Scot, listening. “Tomorrow you will go to the storm—it is well!—for the healthy—God give you blessing! I am of foreign blood, and serve him whom it was my duty to serve, but you have my best wishes. Ah, what mead this is! Life enters me.”

Thus speaking, he threw back his golden hair and raised his blue eyes toward heaven; he had a wonderful face, half childlike as yet. Zagloba looked at him with a certain emotion.

“You speak Polish as well as any of us,” said he. “Become a Pole, love this our country, and you will do an honorable deed, and mead will not be lacking to you. It is not difficult for a soldier to receive naturalization with us.”

“All the more easy since I am a noble,” answered Hassling. “My name is Hassling-Kettling of Elgin. My family come from England, though settled in Scotland.”

“Those countries beyond the sea are far away, and somehow it is more decent for a man to live here,” said Zagloba.

“It is pleasant for me here.”

“But unpleasant for us,” said Kmita, who from the beginning was twisting impatiently on the bench, “for we are anxious to hear what is going on in Taurogi; but you are talking genealogies.”

“Ask me; I will answer.”

“Have you seen Panna Billevich often?”

Over the pale face of Hassling blushes passed. “Every day!” said he.

Kmita looked at him quickly. “Were you such a confidant? Why do you blush? Every day—how every day?”

“For she knew that I wished her well, and I rendered her some services. That will appear from the further narrative, but now it is necessary to commence at the beginning. You, gentlemen, know, perhaps, that I was not at Kyedani when Prince Boguslav came and took that lady to Taurogi? Therefore I will not repeat why that happened, for different people gave



different accounts. I will only say that they had scarcely arrived when all saw at once that the prince was terribly in love—”

“God punish him!” cried Kmita.

“Amusements followed, such as had not been before—tilting at the ring and tournaments. Anyone would have thought it a time of the greatest peace; but letters were coming in every day, as well as envoys from the elector and from Prince Yanush. We knew that Prince Yanush was pushed by Sapyeha and the confederates; he implored for rescue by the mercy of God, for destruction was threatening him. We did nothing. On the elector’s boundary troops were standing ready, captains were coming with letters; but we did not go with assistance, for the prince had no success with the lady.”

“Is that why Boguslav did not give aid to his cousin?” asked Zagloba.

“It is. Patterson said the same, and all the persons nearest the prince. Some complained of this; others were glad that the Radzivills were falling. Sakovich conducted all public business for the prince, answered letters, and held council with the envoys; but the prince was laboring on one idea only, to contrive some kind of amusement, either a cavalcade or hunt. He, a miser, scattered money on every side. He gave orders to fell forests for whole miles, so that the lady might have a better view from her windows; in a word, he really scattered flowers under her feet, and received her in such fashion that had she been Queen of Sweden he could have invented nothing better. Many pitied her and said, ‘All this is for her ruin; as to marrying, the prince will not marry, and if he can only catch her heart he will deceive her.’ But it appeared that she was not a lady to be conducted whither virtue does not go. Oh!”

“Well, what?” cried Kmita, springing up. “I know that better than others!”

“How did Panna Billevich receive these royal homages?” asked Pan Michael.

“At first with affable face, though it was evident that she was bearing some sorrow in her heart. She was present at the hunts, at the masquerades, cavalcades, and tournaments, thinking indeed that these were usual court amusements with the prince. It happened on a time that the prince, straining his imagination over various spectacles, wished to show the lady the counterfeit of war; he had a settlement burned near Taurogi, infantry defended it, the prince stormed the place. Evidently he gained a great victory, after which, being sated with praise, he fell at the lady’s feet and begged for a return of his love. It is not known what he proposed to her, but from that time their friendship was at an end. She began to hold night and day to the sleeve of her uncle, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni; but the prince—”

“Began to threaten her, did he?” cried Kmita.

“What, threaten! He dressed himself as a Greek shepherd, as Philemon; special couriers were flying to Königsberg for patterns of shepherd’s garments, for ribbons and wigs. He feigned despair, he walked under her windows, and played on a lute. And here I tell you, gentlemen, what I really think. He was a savage executioner of the virtue of ladies, and it may be boldly said of him, as is said in our country of such people, his sighs filled out the sails of more than one lady; but this time he fell in love in earnest—which is no wonder, for the lady reminds one more of a goddess than a dweller in this earthly vale.”

Here Hassling blushed again, but Pan Andrei did not see it; for seizing his sides with satisfaction and pride, he looked with a triumphant glance at Zagloba and Volodyovski.

“We know her, a perfect Diana; she needs only the moon in her hair!” said the little knight.

“What, Diana! Diana’s dogs would howl at Diana if they could see Panna Billevich.”

“Therefore I said it is ‘no wonder,’” answered Hassling.

“Well! But for that ‘no wonder’ I would burn him with a slow fire; for that ‘no wonder’ I would have him shod with hobnails—”

“Give us peace!” interrupted Zagloba. “Get him first, then play pranks; but now let this cavalier speak.”

“More than once I was on watch before the room in which he slept,” continued Hassling. “I know how he turned on his bed, sighed, talked to himself, and hissed, as if from pain; evidently desires were burning him. He changed terribly, dried up. It may be, too, that the illness under which he afterward fell was diving into him. Meanwhile news flew through the whole court that the prince had become so distracted that he wanted to marry. This came to Yanush’s princess, who with her daughter was living at Taurogi. Then began anger and disputes; for, as you know, Boguslav, according to agreement, is to marry Yanush’s daughter when she comes of age. But he forgot everything, so pierced was his heart. Yanush’s princess, falling into a rage, went with her daughter to Courland. That same evening he made a proposal to Panna Billevich.”

“Did he make proposals?” cried Zagloba, Kmita, and Pan Michael, with astonishment.

“He did. First to the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, who was no less astonished than you, and would not believe his own ears; but convinced at last he was barely able to control himself from delight, for it was no small splendor for the house of Billevich to be united with the Radzivills. It is true, as Patterson said, that there is some connection already, but it is old and forgotten.”

“Tell on!” said Kmita, trembling from impatience.

“Both went to the lady with all ostentation, as is the custom on such occasions. The whole court was trembling. Evil tidings came from Prince Yanush. Sakovich alone read them, but no one paid attention to them, nor even to Sakovich, for he had fallen out of favor because he had proposed the marriage. But among us some said that it was no novelty for the Radzivills to marry ordinary noble women; that in the Commonwealth all nobles were equal, and that the house of Billevich went back to Roman times. And this was said by those who wished to gain for themselves the favor of the coming princess. Others asserted that this was a stratagem of the prince to come to great intimacy with the lady, which happens not infrequently between persons betrothed.”

“That was it! Nothing else,” said Zagloba.

“And so I think,” said Hassling; “but listen further. When we were deliberating in the court among ourselves in this fashion, the report went out like a thunderbolt that the lady had cut all doubt as with a sabre, for she refused him directly.”

“God bless her!” cried Kmita.

“She refused him directly,” continued Hassling. “It was enough to look at the prince to know that. He, to whom princesses yielded, could not endure resistance, and almost went mad. It was dangerous to appear before him. We all saw that it would not remain long thus, and that the prince would use force sooner or later. In fact, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni was carried off the next day to Tyłtsa, beyond the elector’s boundary. That day the lady implored the officer keeping guard before her door to give her a loaded pistol. The officer did not refuse that, for being a noble and man of honor he felt compassion for the lady and homage for her beauty and resolution.”

“Who was that officer?” asked Kmita.

“I,” answered Hassling, dryly.

Pan Andrei seized him by the shoulders, so that the young Scot, being weak, called out from pain.

“That is nothing!” cried Kmita. “You are not a prisoner; you are my brother, my friend! Tell me what you wish! In God’s name, tell me what you wish!”

“To rest awhile,” answered Hassling, breathing heavily; and he was silent. He merely pressed the hands which Pan Michael and Zagloba gave him. At last, seeing that all were burning with curiosity, he continued—

“I forewarned her too of what all knew, that the prince’s physician was preparing some intoxicating drug. Meanwhile fears turned out to be groundless, for God interfered in the affair. He touched the prince with his finger, threw him on a bed of sickness, and kept him there a month. It is a marvel, gentlemen, but it happened as if he had been cut from his feet, as with a scythe, that same day, when he intended to attack the virtue of this lady. The hand of God, I say, nothing else! He thought that himself, and was afraid; may be too that during his sickness the desire left him, may be he was waiting to regain his strength; it is enough, that when he came to himself he left her in peace, and even permitted the sword-bearer to come from Tyłtsa. It is true, also, that the sickness which confined him to his bed left him, but not the fever, which is, I believe, crushing him to this day. It is true, also, that soon after he left the bed he had to go on the expedition to Tykotsin, where defeat met him. He returned with a still greater fever; then the elector sent for him. But meanwhile a change took place at Taurogi, of which it is wonderful and laughable to tell; it is enough that the prince cannot count on the loyalty of any officer or any attendant, unless on very old ones, who neither hear nor see perfectly, and therefore guard nothing well.”

“What happened?” asked Zagloba.

“During the Tykotsin campaign, before the defeat at Tanov, they captured a certain Panna Anusia Borzobogati, and sent her to Taurogi.”

“There, Grandmother, you have cakes!” exclaimed Zagloba.

Pan Michael began to blink and move his mustaches; at last he said: “Say nothing bad of her, or when you recover you will have to meet me.”

“Even if I wished I could say nothing bad of that lady. But if she is your betrothed, I say that you take poor care of her; and if she is a relative, you know her too well to deny what I say. It is enough that in one week she made all in the company, old and young, in love with her, and only by using her eyes with the addition of some tricks of witchcraft, of which I can give no account.”

“She! I should know her in hell by this,” muttered Zagloba.

“It is a wonderful thing!” said Hassling. “Panna Billevich is equal to her in beauty, but has such dignity and unapproachableness that a man while admiring and doing homage to her does not dare to raise his eyes, much less to conceive any hope. You know yourselves, gentlemen, that there are different kinds of ladies: some are like ancient vestals; others, you have barely seen them and you wish—”

“Worthy sir!” said Pan Michael, threateningly.

“Don’t make a fool of yourself, Michael, for he tells the truth,” said Zagloba. “You go around like a young cockerel and show the whites of your eyes; but that she is a coquette we all know, and you have said so more than a hundred times.”

“Let us leave this matter,” said Hassling. “I wished simply to explain to you, gentlemen, why only a few were in love with Panna Billevich, those who could really appreciate her unrivalled perfection [here he blushed again], and with Panna Borzobogati nearly all. As God is dear to me, I had to laugh, for it was just as if some plague had come upon hearts. Disputes and duels increased in the twinkling of an eye. And about what? For what? You must know that there was no one who could boast of the love of the lady; each one believed blindly in this alone, that earlier or later he would have some success—”

“He has painted her, as it were!” muttered Pan Michael.

“But these two young ladies became wonderfully fond of each other,” continued Hassling; “one would not move a step without the other, and Panna Borzobogati manages in Taurogi as it pleases her.”

“How is that?” asked the little knight.

“For she rules everybody. Sakovich did not go on a campaign this time, because he is in love; and Sakovich is absolute master in all the possessions of Prince Boguslav. And Panna Anusia governs through him.”

“Is he so much in love with her?” asked Pan Michael.

“He is, and has the greatest confidence in himself, for he is a very rich man.”

“And his name is Sakovich?”

“You wish, I see, to remember him well.”

“Certainly!” answered Pan Michael, as it were, carelessly, but at the same time he moved his mustaches so ominously that a shudder went through Zagloba.

“I only wish to add,” continued Hassling, “that if Panna Borzobogati should command Sakovich to betray the prince and lighten her escape and that of her friend, I think he would do it without hesitation; but so far as I know she wishes to do that without his knowledge, maybe to spite him, who knows? It is enough that an officer, a relative of mine, but not a Catholic, assured me that the departure of the sword-bearer with the ladies is arranged; officers are involved in the conspiracy, and it is to take place soon.”

Here Hassling began to breathe heavily, for he was weary and was using the last of his strength.

“And this is the most important thing that I had to tell you,” added he, hurriedly.

Volodyovski and Kmita seized their heads.

“Whither are they going to flee?”

“To the forests and through the forests to Byalovyej.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Sapyeha’s orderly, who delivered to Pan Michael and Kmita a quarter of a sheet of paper folded in four. Volodyovski had barely unfolded his when he said—

“The order to occupy positions for tomorrow’s work.”

“Do you hear how the cannons are roaring?” asked Zagloba.

“Well, tomorrow! tomorrow!”

“*Uf!* hot!” said Zagloba, “a bad day for a storm—may the devil take such heat! Mother of God! But more than one will grow cold in spite of the heat; but not those—not those who

commend themselves to Thee, our Patroness—But the cannons are thundering! I am too old for storms; the open field is something else.”

Another officer appeared in the door.

“Is his grace Pan Zagloba here?” asked he.

“I am here.”

“By the command of our Gracious King, you are to be near his person tomorrow.”

“Ha! he wishes to keep me from the storm, for he knows that the old man will move first, only let the trumpets sound. He is a kind lord, mindful; I should not like to annoy him; but whether I shall restrain myself I know not, for when the desire presses me I think of nothing, and roll straight into the smoke. Such is my nature! A kind lord! Do you hear how the trumpets are sounding for everyone to take his place? Well, tomorrow, tomorrow. Saint Peter will have work; he must have his books ready. In hell too they have put fresh pitch in the kettles, a bath for the Swedes. *Uf! uf!* tomorrow!”

## Chapter LXXXI

July 1, between Povanski and the settlement afterward called Marymont, was celebrated a great field Mass, which ten thousand men of the quarter-soldiers heard with attentive mind. The king made a vow that in case of victory he would build a church to the Most Holy Lady. Dignitaries, the hetmans, the knights made vows, and even simple soldiers, following the example, each according to his means, for this was to be the day of the final storm.

After the Mass each of the leaders moved to his own command. Sapyeha took his position opposite the Church of the Holy Ghost, which at that time was outside the walls; but because it was the key to the walls, it was greatly strengthened by the Swedes, and occupied in fitting manner by the troops. Charnyetski was to capture Dantzic House, for the rear wall of that building formed a part of the city wall, and by passing through the building it was possible to reach the city. Pyotr Opalinski, the *voevoda* of Podlyasye, with men from Great Poland and Mazovia, was to attack from the Krakow suburbs and the Vistula. The quarter-regiments were to attack the gates of New City. There were so many men that they almost exceeded the approaches to the walls; the entire plain, all the neighboring suburban villages and the meadows were overflowed with a sea of soldiers. Beyond the men were white tents, after the tents wagons far away; the eye was lost in the blue distance before it could reach the end of that swarm.

Those legions were standing in perfect readiness, with weapons point forward, and one foot in advance for the run; they were ready at any moment to rush to the breaches made by the guns of heavy calibre, and especially by Zamoyski's great guns. The guns did not cease to play for a moment; the storm was deferred only because they were waiting for the final answer of Wittemberg to the letter which the grand chancellor Korytsinski had sent him. When about midday the officer returned with a refusal, the ominous trumpets rang out around the city, and the storm began.

The armies of the kingdom under the hetmans, Charnyetski's men, the regiments of the king, the infantry regiments of Zamoyski, the Lithuanians of Sapyeha, and the legions of the general militia rushed toward the walls like a swollen river. But from behind the walls bloomed out against them rolls of white smoke and darts of flame; heavy cannon, arquebuses, double-barrelled guns, muskets thundered simultaneously; the earth was shaken in its foundations. The balls broke into that throng of men, ploughed long furrows in it; but the men ran on and tore up to the fortress, regarding neither fire nor death. Clouds of powder smoke hid the sun.

Each attacked furiously what was nearest him—the hetmans the gates of New City; Charnyetski, Dantzic House; Sapyeha with the Lithuanians, the Church of the Holy Ghost; the Mazovians and men of Great Poland, the Krakow suburbs.

The heaviest work fell to the last-mentioned men, for the palaces and houses along the Krakow suburbs were turned into fortresses. But that day such fury of battle had seized the Mazovians that nothing could stand before their onset. They took by storm house after house, palace after palace; they fought in windows, in doors, in passages.

After the capture of one house, before the blood was dry on their hands and faces, they rushed to another; again a hand-to-hand battle, and again they rushed farther. The private regiments vied with the general militia, and the general militia with the infantry. They had been commanded before advancing to the storm to carry at their breasts bundles of unripe

grain to ward off the bullets, but in the ardor and frenzy of battle they hurled aside every defence, and ran forward with bare bosoms. In the midst of a bloody struggle the chapel of the Tsar Shuiski and the lordly palace of the Konyetspolskis were captured. The Swedes were destroyed to the last man in the smaller buildings, in the stables of the magnates, in the gardens descending to the Vistula. Near the Kazanovski Palace the Swedish infantry tried to make a stand in the street, and reinforced from the walls of the palace, from the church and the bell-tower of the Bernardines, which was turned into a strong fortress, they received the attack with a cutting fire.

But the hail of bullets did not stop the attack for a moment; and the nobles, with the cry of "Mazovians victorious!" rushed with sabres into the centre of the quadrangle; after them came the land infantry, servants armed with poles, pickaxes, and scythes. The quadrangle was broken in a twinkling, and hewing began. Swedes and Poles were so mingled together that they formed one gigantic mass, which squirmed, twisted, and rolled in its own blood between the Kazanovski Palace, the house of Radzeyovski, and the Krakow gate.

But new legions of warriors breathing blood came on continually, like a foaming river, from the direction of the Krakow gate. The Swedish infantry was cut to pieces at last, and then began that famous storm of the Kazanovski Palace and the Bernardines' Church which in great part decided the fate of the day.

Zagloba commanded, for he was mistaken the day before in thinking that the king called him to his person only to be present; for, on the contrary, he confided to him, as to a famous and experienced warrior, command over the camp servants, who with the quarter-soldiers and the general militia were to go as volunteers to storm from that side. Zagloba was willing, it is true, to go with these men in the rear, and content himself with occupying the palaces already captured; but when in the very beginning all vying with one another were mingled completely, the human current bore him on with the others. So he went; for although he had from nature great circumspection as a gift, and preferred, where it was possible, not to expose his life to danger, he had for so many years become accustomed to battles in spite of himself, had been present in so many dreadful slaughters, that when the inevitable came he fought with others, and even better than others, for he fought with desperation and rage in a manful heart.

So at this time he found himself at the gate of the Kazanovski Palace, or rather in the hell which was raging dreadfully in front of that gate; that is, amid a whirlpool, heat, crushing, a storm of bullets, fire, smoke, groans and shouts of men. Thousands of scythes, picks, and axes were driven against the gate; a thousand arms pressed and pushed it furiously. Some men fell as if struck by lightning; others pushed themselves into their places, trampled their bodies, and forced themselves forward, as if seeking death of purpose. No one had seen or remembered a more stubborn defence, but also not a more resolute attack. From the highest stories bullets were rained and pitch poured down on the gate; but those who were under fire, even had they wished could not withdraw, so powerfully were they pressed from behind. You saw single men, wet from perspiration, black from smoke, with set teeth, with wild eyes, hurling at the gate beams of such size that at an ordinary time three strong men would not have been able to lift them. So their strength was trebled by frenzy. All the windows were stormed simultaneously, ladders were placed at the upper stories, lattices were hewn from the walls. But still from those lattices and windows, from openings cut in the walls, were sticking out musket-barrels, which did not cease to smoke for a moment. But at last such smoke ascended, such dust rose, that on that bright sunny day the assailants could scarcely recognize one another. In spite of that they did not desist from the struggle, but climbed ladders the

more fiercely, attacked the gate the more wildly, because the sounds from the Church of the Bernardines announced that there other parties were storming with similar energy.

Now Zagloba cried with a voice so piercing that it was heard amid the uproar and shots: "A box with powder under the gate!"

It was brought to him in a twinkling; he gave command at once to cut just beneath the bolt an opening of such size that the box alone would find place in it. When the box was fitted in, Zagloba himself set fire to the sulphur thread, then commanded—

"Aside! Close to the wall!"

Those standing near rushed to both sides, toward those who had placed the ladders at the farther windows. A moment of expectation followed.

A mighty report shook the air, and new bundles of smoke rose toward the sky. Zagloba sprang forward with his men; they saw that the explosion had not rent the gate to small pieces, but had torn the hinges from the right side, wrested away a couple of strong beams, already partly cut, turned the handle, and pulled off one half of the lower part, so that a passage was open through which large men might enter easily.

Sharpened stakes, axes, and scythes began to beat violently on the weakened door; a hundred arms pushed it with utmost effort, a sharp crash was heard, and all one half fell, uncovering the depth of the dark antechamber.

In that darkness gleamed discharges of musketry; but the human river rushed forward with an irresistible torrent—the palace was captured.

At the same time they broke in through the windows, and a terrible battle with cold weapons began in the interior of the palace. Chamber was taken after chamber, corridor after corridor, story after story. The walls had been so shattered and weakened beforehand that the ceiling in many rooms fell with a crash, covering with their ruins Poles and Swedes. But the Mazovians advanced like a conflagration; they penetrated every place, overturning with their long knives, cutting and thrusting. No man of the Swedes asked for quarter, but neither was it given. In some corridors and passages the piles of bodies so blocked the way that the Swedes made barricades of them; the Poles pulled them out by the feet, by the hair, and hurled them through the windows. Blood flowed in streams through the passages. Groups of Swedes defended themselves yet here and there, and repelled with weakening hands the furious blows of the stormers. Blood had covered their faces, darkness was covering their eyes, more than one sank on his knees, and still fought; pressed on every side, suffocated by the throng of opponents, the Scandinavians died in silence, in accord with their fame, as beseemed warriors. The statues of divinities and ancient heroes, bespattered with blood, looked with lifeless eyes on that death.

Roh Kovalski raged specially in the upper stories; but Zagloba rushed with his men to the terraces, and when he had cut to pieces the infantry defending themselves there, he hurried from the terraces to those wonderful gardens which were famed throughout Europe. The trees were already cut down, the rare plants destroyed by Polish balls, the fountains broken, the earth ploughed up by bombshells—in a word, everywhere a desert and destruction, though the Swedes had not raised their robber hands against this place, out of regard for the person of Radzeyovski. A savage struggle set in there, too; but it lasted only a short time, for the Swedes gave but feeble resistance, and were cut to pieces under the personal command of Zagloba. The soldiers dispersed now through the garden, and the whole palace was plundered.



Zagloba betook himself to a corner of the garden, to a place where the walls formed a strong “angle,” and where the sun did not come, for the knight wished to rest somewhat; and he rubbed the sweat from his heated forehead. All at once he espied some strange monsters, looking at him with hostility through an iron grating.

The cage was fixed in a corner of the wall, so that balls falling from the outside could not reach it. The door of the cage was wide open; but those meagre and ugly creatures did not think of taking advantage of this. Evidently terrified by the uproar, the whistling of bullets, and the fierce slaughter at which they had looked a moment before, they crowded into a corner of the cage, and hidden in the straw, gave note of their terror only by muttering.

“Are those monkeys or devils?” said Zagloba to himself.

Suddenly anger seized him, courage swelled in his breast, and raising his sabre he fell upon the cage.

A terrible panic was the answer to the first blow of his sabre. The monkeys, which the Swedish soldiers had treated kindly and fed from their own slender rations, fell into such a fright that madness simply seized them; and since Zagloba stopped their exit, they began to rush through the cage with unnatural springs, hanging to the sides, to the top, screaming and biting. At last one in frenzy sprang on Zagloba’s shoulder, and seizing him by the head, fastened to it with all his power; another hung to his right shoulder, a third caught him in front by the neck, the fourth hung to his long split sleeves which were tied together behind; and Zagloba, stifled, sweating, struggled in vain, in vain struck blindly toward the rear. Breath soon failed him, his eyes were standing out of his head, and he began to cry with despairing voice—

“Gracious gentlemen! save me!”

The cry brought a number of men, who, unable to understand what was happening, rushed to his aid with blood-streaming sabres; but they halted at once in astonishment, they looked at one another, and as if under the influence of some spell they burst out in one great laugh. More soldiers ran up, a crowd was formed; but laughter was communicated to all as an epidemic. They staggered as if drunk, they held their sides; their faces, besmeared with the gore of men, were twisting spasmodically, and the more Zagloba struggled the more did they laugh. Now Roh Kovalski ran down from an upper story, scattered the crowd, and freed his uncle from the Simian embraces.

“You rascals!” cried the panting Zagloba, “I would you were slain! You are laughing to see a Catholic in oppression from these African monsters. I would you were slain! Were it not for me you would be butting your heads to this moment against the gate, for you deserve nothing better. I wish you were dead, because you are not worth these monkeys.”

“I wish you were dead yourself, king of the monkeys!” cried the man standing nearest.

“*Simiarum destructor* (destroyer of monkeys)!” cried another.

“Victor!” cried the third.

“What, victor! he is *victus* (conquered)!”

Here Roh Kovalski came again to the aid of his uncle, and struck the nearest man in the breast with his fist; the man dropped to the earth that instant with blood coming from his mouth. Others retreated before the anger of Kovalski, some drew their sabres; but further disputes were interrupted by the uproar and shots coming from the Bernardines’ Church. Evidently the storm continued there yet in full force, and judging from the feverish musketry-fire, the Swedes were not thinking of surrender.

“With succor! to the church! to the church!” cried Zagloba.

He sprang himself to the top of the palace; there, from the right wing, was to be seen the church, which seemed to be in flames. Crowds of stormers were circling around it convulsively, not being able to enter and perishing for nothing in a cross fire; for bullets were rained on them from the Krakow gate as thickly as sand.

“Cannon to the windows!” shouted Zagloba.

There were guns enough, large and small, in the Kazanovski Palace, therefore they were drawn to the windows; from fragments of costly furniture and pedestals of statues, platforms were constructed; and in the course of half an hour a number of guns were looking out through the empty openings of the windows toward the church.

“Roh!” said Zagloba, with uncommon irritation, “I must do something considerable, or my glory is lost through those monkeys—would that the plague had stifled them! The whole army will ridicule me; and though there is no lack of words in my mouth, still I cannot meet the whole world. I must wipe away this confusion, or wide as this Commonwealth is they will herald me through it as king of the monkeys!”

“Uncle must wipe away this confusion!” repeated Roh, with a thundering voice.

“And the first means will be that, as I have captured the Kazanovski Palace—for let anyone say that it was not I who did it—”

“Let anyone say that it was not Uncle who did it!” repeated Roh.

“I will capture that church, so help me the Lord God, amen!” concluded Zagloba.

Then he turned to his attendants who were there at the guns—

“Fire!”

Fear seized the Swedes, who were defending themselves with despair in the church, when the whole side wall began on a sudden to tremble. Bricks, rubbish, lime, fell on those who were sitting in the windows, at the portholes, on the fragments of the inside cornices, at the pigeonholes, through which they were firing at the besiegers. A terrible dust rose in the house of God, and mixed with the smoke began to stifle the wearied men. One man could not see another in the darkness. Cries of “I am suffocating, I am suffocating!” still increased the terror. The noise of balls falling through the windows, of leaden lattice falling to the floor, the heat, the exhalations from bodies, turned the retreat of God into a hell upon earth. The frightened soldiers stood aside from entrances, windows, and portholes. The panic is changed into frenzy. Again terrified voices call: “I am suffocating! Air! Water!” Hundreds of voices begin to roar—

“A white flag! a white flag!”

Erskine, who is commanding, seizes the flag with his own hand to display it outside. At that moment the entrance bursts, a line of stormers rush in like an avalanche of Satans, and a slaughter follows. There is sudden silence in the church; there is heard only the beast-like panting of the strugglers, the bite of steel on bones, and on the stone floor groans, the patter of blood; and at times some voice in which there is nothing human cries, “Quarter! Quarter!” After an hour’s fighting the bell on the tower begins to thunder, and thunders, thunders—to the victory of the Mazovians, to the funeral of the Swedes.

The Kazanovski Palace, the cloister, and the bell-tower are captured.

Pyotr Opalinski himself, the *voevoda* of Podlyasye, appeared in the bloodstained throng before the palace on his horse.

“Who came to our aid from the palace?” cried he, wishing to outcriy the sound and the roar of men.

“He who captured the palace!” said a powerful man, appearing before the *voevoda*—“I!”

“What is your name?”

“Zagloba.”

“Vivat Zagloba!” bellowed thousands of throats.

But the terrible Zagloba pointed with his stained sabre toward the gate—

“We have not done enough yet. Turn the cannon toward the wall and against the gate. Advance! follow me!”

The mad throng rush in the direction of the gate. Meanwhile, oh wonder! the fire of the Swedes instead of increasing is growing weak. At the same moment some voice unexpected and piercing cries from the top of the bell-tower—

“Charnyetski is in the city! I see our squadrons!”

The Swedish fire was weakening more and more.

“Halt! halt!” commanded the *voevoda*.

But the throng did not hear him and rushed at random. That moment a white flag appeared on the Krakow gate.

In truth, Charnyetski, having forced his way through Dantzic House, rushed like a hurricane into the precincts of the fortress; when the Danillovich Palace was taken, and when a moment later the Lithuanian colors glittered on the walls near the Church of the Holy Ghost, Wittemberg saw that further resistance was vain. The Swedes might defend themselves yet in the lofty houses of Old and New City; but the inhabitants had already taken arms, and the defence would end in a terrible slaughter of the Swedes without hope of victory.

The trumpeters began then to sound on the walls and to wave white flags. Seeing this, the Polish commanders withheld the storm. General Löwenhaupt, attended by a number of colonels, went out through the gate of New City, and rushed with all breath to the king.

Yan Kazimir had the city in his hands now; but the kind king wished to stop the flow of Christian blood, therefore he settled on the conditions offered to Wittemberg at first. The city was to be surrendered, with all the booty collected in it. Each Swede was permitted to take with him only what he had brought from Sweden. The garrison with all the generals and with arms in hand were to march out of the city, taking their sick and wounded and the Swedish ladies, of whom a number of tens were in Warsaw. To the Poles who were serving with the Swedes, amnesty was given, with the idea that surely none were serving of their own will. Boguslav Radzivill alone was excepted. To this Wittemberg agreed the more readily since the prince was at that moment with Douglas on the Bug.

The conditions were signed at once. All the bells in the churches announced to the city and the world that the capital had passed again into the hands of its rightful monarch. An hour later a multitude of the poorest people came out from behind the walls, seeking charity and bread in the Polish camp; for all in the city except the Swedes were in want of food. The king commanded to give what was possible, and went himself to look at the departure of the Swedish garrison.

He was surrounded by church and lay dignitaries, by a suite so splendid that it dazzled the people. Nearly all the troops—that is, the troops of the kingdom under the hetmans,

Charnyetski's division, the Lithuanians under Sapyeha, and an immense crowd of general militia, together with the camp servants—assembled around his Majesty; or all were curious to see those Swedes with whom a few hours before they had fought so terribly and bloodily. Polish commissioners were posted at all the gates, from the moment of signing the conditions; these commissioners were entrusted with the duty of seeing that the Swedes bore off no booty. A special commission was occupied with receiving the booty in the city itself.

In the van came the cavalry, which was not numerous, especially since Boguslav's men were excluded from the right of departure; next came the field artillery with light guns; the heavy pieces were given to the Poles. The men marched at the sides of the guns with lighted matches. Before them waved their unfurled flags, which as a mark of honor were lowered before the Polish king, recently a wanderer. The artillerists marched proudly, looking straight into the eyes of the Polish knights, as if they wished to say, "We shall meet again!" And the Poles wondered at their haughty bearing and courage unbent by misfortune. Then appeared the wagons with officers and wounded. In the first one lay Benedikt Oxenstiern the chancellor, before whom Yan Kazimir had commanded the infantry to present arms, wishing to show that he knew how to respect virtue even in an enemy.

Then to the sound of drums, and with waving flags, marched the quadrangle of unrivalled Swedish infantry, resembling, according to the expression of Suba Gazi, moving castles. After them advanced a brilliant party of cavalry, armored from foot to head, and with a blue banner on which a golden lion was embroidered. These surrounded the chief of staff. At sight of them a murmur passed through the crowd—

"Wittemberg is coming! Wittemberg is coming!"

In fact, the field-marshal himself was approaching; and with him the younger Wrangel, Horn, Erskine, Löwenhaupt, Forgell. The eyes of the Polish knights were turned with eagerness toward them, and especially toward the face of Wittemberg. But his face did not indicate such a terrible warrior as he was in reality. It was an aged face, pale, emaciated by disease. He had sharp features, and above his mouth a thin, small mustache turned up at the ends. The pressed lips and long, pointed nose gave him the appearance of an old and grasping miser. Dressed in black velvet and with a black hat on his head, he looked more like a learned astrologer or a physician; and only the gold chain on his neck, the diamond star on his breast, and a field-marshal's baton in his hand showed his high office of leader.

Advancing, he cast his eyes unquietly on the king, on the king's staff, on the squadrons standing in rank; then his eyes took in the immense throngs of the general militia, and an ironical smile came out on his pale lips.

But in those throngs a murmur was rising ever greater, and the word "Wittemberg! Wittemberg!" was in every mouth.

After a while the murmur changed into deep grumbling, but threatening, like the grumbling of the sea before a storm. From instant to instant it was silent; and then far away in the distance, in the last ranks, was heard some voice in peroration. This voice was answered by others; greater numbers answered them; they were heard ever louder and spread more widely, like ominous echoes. You would swear that a storm was coming from a distance, and that it would burst with all power.

The officers were anxious and began to look at the king with disquiet.

"What is that? What does that mean?" asked Yan Kazimir.

Then the grumbling passed into a roar as terrible as if thunders had begun to wrestle with one another in the sky. The immense throng of general militia moved violently, precisely like

standing grain when a hurricane is sweeping around it with giant wing. All at once some tens of thousands of sabres were glittering in the sun.

“What is that? What does that mean?” asked the king, repeatedly.

No one could answer him. Then Volodyovski, standing near Sapyeha, exclaimed: “That is Pan Zagloba!”

Volodyovski had guessed aright. The moment the conditions of surrender were published and had come to the ears of Zagloba, the old noble fell into such a terrible rage that speech was taken from him for a while. When he came to himself his first act was to spring among the ranks of the general militia and fire up the minds of the nobles. They heard him willingly; for it seemed to all that for so much bravery, for such toil, for so much bloodshed under the walls of Warsaw, they ought to have a better vengeance against the enemy. Therefore great circles of chaotic and stormy men surrounded Zagloba, who threw live coals by the handful on the powder, and with his speech fanned into greater proportions the fire which all the more easily seized their heads, that they were already smoking from the usual libations consequent on victory.

“Gracious gentlemen!” said he, “behold these old hands have toiled fifty years for the country; fifty years have they been shedding the blood of the enemy at every wall of the Commonwealth; and today—I have witnesses—they captured the Kazanovski Palace and the Bernardines’ Church! And when, gracious gentlemen, did the Swedes lose heart, when did they agree to capitulate? It was when we turned our guns from the Bernardines to the Old City. We have not spared our blood, brothers; it has been shed bountifully, and no one has been spared but the enemy. But we, brothers, have left our lands without masters, our servants without lords, our wives without husbands, our children without fathers—oh, my dear children, what is happening to you now?—and we have come here with our naked breasts against cannon. And what is our reward for so doing? This is it: Wittemberg goes forth free, and besides, they give him honor for the road. The executioner of our country departs, the blasphemer of religion departs; the raging enemy of the Most Holy Lady, the burner of our houses, the thief of our last bit of clothing, the murderer of our wives and children—oh, my children, where are you now?—the disgracer of the clergy and virgins consecrated to God! Woe to thee, country! Shame to you, nobles! A new agony is awaiting you. Oh, our holy faith! Woe to you, suffering churches! weeping to thee and complaint, O Chenstohova! for Wittemberg is departing in freedom, and will return soon to press out tears and blood, to finish killing those whom he has not yet killed, to burn that which he has not yet burned, to put shame on that which he has not yet put to shame! Weep, O Poland and Lithuania! Weep, ranks of people, as I weep—an old soldier who, descending to the grave, must look on your agony! Woe to thee, Ilion, the city of aged Priam! Woe! woe! woe!”

So spoke Zagloba; and thousands listened to him, and wrath raised the hair on the heads of the nobles; but he moved on farther. Again he complained, tore his clothing, and laid bare his breast. He entered also into the army, which gave a willing ear to his complaints; for, in truth, there was a terrible animosity in all hearts against Wittemberg. The tumult would have burst out at once; but Zagloba himself restrained it, lest, if it burst too early, Wittemberg might save himself somehow; but if it broke out when he was leaving the city and would show himself to the general militia, they would bear him apart on their sabres before anyone could see what was done.

And his reckoning was justified. At sight of the tyrant frenzy seized the brains of the chaotic and half-drunken nobles, and a terrible storm burst forth in the twinkle of an eye. Forty thousand sabres were flashing in the sun, forty thousand throats began to bellow—

“Death to Wittemberg! Give him here! Make mincemeat of him! make mincemeat of him!”

To the throngs of nobles were joined throngs more chaotic still and made brutal by the recent shedding of blood, the camp servants; even the more disciplined regular squadrons began to murmur fiercely against the oppressor, and the storm began to fly with rage against the Swedish staff.

At the first moment all lost their heads, though all understood what the matter was. “What is to be done?” cried voices near the king. “Oh, merciful Jesus!” “Rescue! defend! It is a shame not to observe the conditions!”

Enraged crowds rush in among the squadrons, press upon them; the squadrons are confused, cannot keep their places. Around them are sabres, sabres, and sabres; under the sabres are inflamed faces, threatening eyes, howling mouths; uproar, noise, wild cries grow with amazing rapidity. In front are rushing camp servants, camp followers, and every kind of army rabble, more like beasts or devils than men.

Wittemberg understood what was happening. His face grew pale as a sheet; sweat, abundant and cold, covered his forehead in a moment; and, oh wonder! that field-marshal who hitherto was ready to threaten the whole world, that conqueror of so many armies, that captor of so many cities, that old soldier was then so terribly frightened at the howling mass that presence of mind left him utterly. He trembled in his whole body, he dropped his hands and groaned, spittle began to flow from his mouth to the golden chain, and the field-marshal’s baton dropped from his hand. Meanwhile the terrible throng was coming nearer and nearer; ghastly forms were surrounding already the hapless generals; a moment more, they would bear them apart on sabres, so that not a fragment of them would remain.

Other Swedish generals drew their sabres, wishing to die weapon in hand, as be seemed knights; but the aged oppressor grew weak altogether, and half closed his eyes.

At this moment Volodyovski, with his men, sprang to the rescue of the staff. Going wedge-form on a gallop, he split the mob as a ship moving with all sails bears apart the towering waves of the sea. The cry of the trampled rabble was mingled with the shouts of the Lauda squadron; but the horsemen reached the staff first, and surrounded it in the twinkling of an eye with a wall of horses, a wall of their own breasts and sabres.

“To the king!” cried the little knight.

They moved on. The throng surrounded them from every side, ran along the flanks and the rear, brandished sabres and clubs, howled more and more terribly; but the Lauda men pushed forward, thrusting out their sabres from moment to moment at the sides, as a strong stag thrusts with his antlers when surrounded by wolves.

Then Voynilovich sprang to the aid of Volodyovski; after him Vilchkovski with a regiment of the king, then Prince Polubinski; and all together, defending themselves unceasingly, conducted the staff to the presence of Yan Kazimir.

The tumult increased instead of diminishing. It seemed, after a time, that the excited rabble would try to seize the Swedish generals without regard to the king. Wittemberg recovered; but fear did not leave him in the least. He sprang from his horse then; and as a hare pressed by dogs or wolves takes refuge under a wagon in motion, so did he, in spite of his gout, throw himself at the feet of Yan Kazimir.

Then he dropped on his knees, and seizing the king’s stirrup, began to cry: “Save me, Gracious Lord, save me! I have your royal word; the agreement is signed. Save me, save me! Have mercy on us! Do not let them murder me!”

The king, at sight of such abasement and such shame turned away his eyes with aversion and said—

“Field-marshal, pray be calm.”

But he had a troubled face himself, for he knew not what to do. Around them were gathering crowds ever greater, and approaching with more persistence. It is true that the squadrons stood as if for battle, and Zamoyski’s infantry had formed a terrible quadrangle round about; but what was to be the end of it all?

The king looked at Charnyetski; but Charnyetski only twisted his beard with rage, his soul was storming with such anger against the disobedience of the general militia. Then the chancellor, Korytsinski, said—

“Gracious Lord, we must keep the agreement.”

“We must!” replied the king.

Wittemberg, who was looking carefully into their eyes, breathed more freely.

“Gracious Lord,” said he, “I believe in your words as in God.”

To which Pototski, the old hetman of the kingdom, cried—

“And why have you broken so many oaths, so many agreements, so many terms of surrender? With what any man wars, from that will he perish. Why did you seize, in spite of the terms of capitulation, the king’s regiment commanded by Wolf?”

“Miller did that, not I,” answered Wittemberg.

The hetman looked at him with disdain; then turned to the king—

“Gracious Lord, I do not say this to incite your Royal Grace to break agreements also, for let perfidy be on their side alone.”

“What is to be done?” asked the king. “If we send them to Prussia, fifty thousand nobles will follow and cut them to pieces before they reach Pultusk, unless we give them the whole regular army as a guard, and we cannot do that. Hear, your Royal Grace, how the militia are howling! In truth, there is a well-founded animosity against Wittemberg. It is needful first to safeguard his person, and then to send all away when the fire has cooled down.”

“There is no other way!” said Korytsinski.

“But where are they to be kept? We cannot keep them here; for here, devil take it! civil war would break out,” said the *voevoda* of Rus.

Now Sobiepan Zamoyski appeared, and pouting his lips greatly, said with his customary spirit—

“Well, Gracious Lord, give them to me at Zamost; let them sit there till calm comes. I will defend Wittemberg there from the nobles. Let them try to get him from me!”

“But on the road will your worthiness defend the field-marshal?” asked the chancellor.

“I can depend on my servants yet. Or have I not infantry and cannon? Let anyone take him from Zamoyski! We shall see.”

Here he put his hands on his hips, struck his thighs, and bent from one side of the saddle to the other.

“There is no other way,” said the chancellor.

“I see no other,” added Lantskoronski.

“Then take them,” said the king to Zamoyski.

But Wittemberg, seeing that his life was threatened no longer, considered it proper to protest.

“We did not expect this!” said he.

“Well, we do not detain you; the road is open,” said Pototski, pointing to the distance with his hand.

Wittemberg was silent.

Meanwhile the chancellor sent a number of officers to declare to the nobles that Wittemberg would not depart in freedom, but would be sent to Zamost. The tumult, it is true, was not allayed at once; still the news had a soothing effect. Before night fell attention was turned in another direction. The troops began to enter the city, and the sight of the recovered capital filled all minds with the delight of triumph.

The king rejoiced; still the thought that he was unable to observe the conditions of the agreement troubled him not a little, as well as the endless disobedience of the general militia.

Charnyetski was chewing his anger. “With such troops one can never be sure of tomorrow,” said he to the king. “Sometimes they fight badly, sometimes heroically, all from impulse; and at any outbreak rebellion is ready.

“God grant them not to disperse,” said the king, “for they are needed yet, and they think that they have finished everything.”

“The man who caused that outbreak should be torn asunder with horses, without regard to the services which he has rendered,” continued Charnyetski.

The strictest orders were given to search for Zagloba, for it was a secret to no man that he had raised the storm; but Zagloba had as it were dropped into water. They searched for him in the tents, in the tabor, even among the Tartars, all in vain. Tyzenhauz even said that the king, always kind and gracious, wished from his whole soul that they might not find him, and even undertook a nine days’ devotion to that effect.

But a week later, after some dinner when the heart of the monarch was big with joy, the following words were heard from the mouth of Yan Kazimir—

“Announce that Pan Zagloba is not to hide himself longer, for we are longing for his jests.”

When Charnyetski was horrified at this, the king said—

“Whoso in this Commonwealth should have justice without mercy in his heart would be forced to carry an axe in his bosom, and not a heart. Faults come easier here than anywhere, but in no land does repentance follow so quickly.”

Saying this, the king had Babinich more in mind than Zagloba; and he was thinking of Babinich because the young man had bowed down to the king’s feet the day before with a petition that he would not hinder him from going to Lithuania. He said that he wished to freshen the war there, and attack the Swedes, as he had once attacked Hovanski. And as the king intended to send there a soldier experienced in partisan warfare, he permitted Babinich to go, gave him the means, blessed him, and whispered some wish in his ear, after which the young knight fell his whole length at his feet.

Then, without loitering, Kmita moved briskly toward the east. Suba Gazi, captured by a considerable present, permitted him to take five hundred fresh Dobrudja Tartars; fifteen hundred other good men marched with him—a force with which it was possible to begin something. And the young man’s head was fired with a desire for battle and warlike



achievements. The hope of glory smiled on him; he heard already how all Lithuania was repeating his name with pride and wonder. He heard especially how one beloved mouth repeated it, and his soul gave him wings.

And there was another reason why he rode forward so briskly. Wherever he appeared he was the first to announce the glad tidings: "The Swede is defeated, and Warsaw is taken!" Wherever his horse's hoofs sounded, the whole neighborhood rang with these words; the people along the roads greeted him with weeping; they rang bells in the church-towers and sang "Te Deum Laudamus!" When he rode through the forest the dark pines, when through the fields the golden grain, rocked by the wind, seemed to repeat and sound joyously—"The Swede is defeated! Warsaw is taken! Warsaw is taken!"

## Chapter LXXXII

Though Kettling was near the person of Prince Boguslav, he did not know all, and could not tell of all that was done in Taurogi, for he was blinded himself by love for Panna Billevich.

Boguslav had also another confidant, Pan Sakovich, the starosta of Oshmiana; and he alone knew how deeply the prince was involved by love for his charming captive, and what means he was using to gain her heart and her person.

That love was merely a fierce desire, for Boguslav's heart was not capable of other feelings; but the desire was so violent that that experienced cavalier lost his head. And often in the evening, when alone with the starosta, he seized his own hair and cried—

“I am burning, Sakovich, I am burning!”

Sakovich found means at once.

“Whoso wishes to take honey must drug the bees,” said he. “And has your physician few of such intoxicating herbs? Give him the word today, and tomorrow the affair will be over.”

But the prince did not like such a method, and that for various reasons. First, on a time, old Heraclius Billevich, the grandfather of Olenka, appeared to him in a dream, and standing at his pillow, looked with threatening eyes till the first crowing of the cocks. Boguslav remembered the dream; for that knight, without fear, was superstitious, dreaded charms, dream warnings, and supernatural apparitions so much that a shiver passed through him at thought of the terror and the shape in which that phantom might come a second time should he follow Sakovich's counsel. The starosta of Oshmiana himself, who did not believe greatly in God, but who, like the prince, dreaded dreams and enchantments, staggered somewhat in giving advice.

The second reason of Boguslav's delay was that the “Wallachian woman” was living with her stepdaughter in Taurogi. They called Princess Radzivill, the wife of Yanush, “the Wallachian woman.” That lady, coming from a country in which her sex have rather free manners, was not, in truth, over-stern; nay, maybe she understood too well the amusements of courtiers and ladies-in-waiting; still she could not endure that at her side a man, the coming husband of her stepdaughter, should do a deed calling to heaven for vengeance.

But even later, when through the persuasions of Sakovich, and with the consent of the prince *voevoda* of Vilna, “the Wallachian woman” went with Yanush's daughter to Courland, Boguslav did not dare to do the deed. He feared the terrible outcry which would rise throughout all Lithuania. The Billeviches were wealthy people; they would not fail to crush him with a prosecution. The law punished such deeds with loss of property, honor, and life.

The Radzivills, it is true, were powerful, and might trample on law; but when victory in war was inclining to the side of Yan Kazimir, the young prince might fall into serious difficulties, in which he would lack power, friends, and henchmen. And just then it was hard to foresee how the war would end. Forces were coming every day to Yan Kazimir; the power of Karl Gustav was decreasing absolutely by the loss of men and the exhaustion of money.

Prince Boguslav, an impulsive but calculating man, reckoned with the position. His desires tormented him with fire, his reason advised restraint, superstitious fear bridled the outbursts of his blood. At the same time disease fell upon him; great and urgent questions rose, involving frequently the fate of the whole war; and all these causes rent the soul of the prince till he was mortally wearied.

Still, it is unknown how the struggle might have ended had it not been for Boguslav's self-love. He was a man of immense self-esteem. He counted himself an unequalled statesman, a great leader, a great knight, and an invincible captor of the hearts of women. Was he to use force or intoxicating drugs—he who carried around with him a bound casket filled with love-letters from various foreign ladies of celebrity? Were his wealth, his titles, his power almost royal, his great name, his beauty and courtliness not equal to the conquest of one timid noble woman?

Besides, how much greater the triumph, how much greater the delight, when the resistance of the maiden drops, when she herself willingly, and with a heart beating like that of a seized bird, with burning face and eyes veiled with mist, falls into those arms which are stretched toward her!

A quiver passed through Boguslav at thought of that moment, and he desired it as greatly as he did Olenka herself. He hoped always that that moment would come. He writhed, he was impatient, he deceived himself. At one time it seemed to him nearer, at another farther; and then he cried that he was burning. But he did not cease to work.

To begin with, he surrounded the maiden with minute care, so that she must be thankful to him and think that he is kind; for he understood that the feeling of gratitude and friendship is that mild and warm flame which only needs to be fanned and it will turn into a great fire. Their frequent intercourse was to bring this about the more surely; hence Boguslav showed no insistence, not wishing to chill confidence or frighten it away.

At the same time every look, every touch of the hand, every word was calculated; nothing passed in vain, everything was the drop wearing the stone. All that he did for Olenka might be interpreted as the hospitality of a host, that innocent friendly attraction which one person feels for another; but still it was done to create love. The boundary was purposely blurred and indefinite, so that to pass it would become easy in time; and thus the maiden might the more lightly wander into those labyrinths where each form might mean something or nothing. That play did not agree, it is true, with the native impulsiveness of Boguslav. Still he restrained himself, for he judged that that alone would lead to the object; and at the same time he found in it such satisfaction as the spider finds when weaving his web, the traitorous bird-catcher when spreading his net, or the hunter tracking patiently and with endurance the wild beast. His own penetration, subtlety, and quickness, developed by life at the French court, amused the prince.

He entertained Panna Aleksandra as if she were a sovereign princess; but in such a way that again it was not easy for her to divine whether this was done exclusively for her, or whether it flowed from his innate and acquired politeness toward the fair sex in general. It is true that he made her the chief person in all the entertainments, plays, cavalcades, and hunting expeditious; but this came somewhat from the nature of things. After the departure of Yanush's princess to Courland, she was really first among the ladies at Taurogi. A multitude of noble ladies from all Jmud had taken refuge in Taurogi, as in a place lying near the boundary, so as to be protected by the Swedes under the guardianship of the prince; but they recognized Panna Billevich as first among all, since she was the daughter of the most noted family. And while the whole Commonwealth was swimming in blood, there was no end to entertainments. You would have said that the king's court with all the courtiers and ladies had gone to the country for leisure and entertainment.

Boguslav ruled as an absolute monarch in Taurogi and in all adjoining Electoral Prussia, in which he was frequently a guest; therefore everything was at his orders. Towns furnished money and troops on his notes; the Prussian nobles came gladly, in carriages and on

horseback, to his feasts, hunts, and tournaments. Boguslav even renewed, in honor of his lady, the conflicts of knights within barriers, which were already in disuse.

On a certain occasion he took active part in them; dressed in silver armor, and girded with a silver sash which Panna Billevich had to bind on him, he hurled from their horses four of the first knights of Prussia, Kettling the fifth, and Sakovich the sixth, though the last had such gigantic strength that he stopped carriages in their course by seizing a hind wheel. And what enthusiasm rose in the crowd of spectators when afterward the silver-clad knight, kneeling before his lady, took from her hand the crown of victory! Shouts rang like the thunder of cannon, handkerchiefs were waving, flags were lowered; but he raised his visor and looked into her blushing face with his beautiful eyes, pressing at the same time her hand to his lips.

Another time when in the enclosure a raging bear was fighting with dogs and had torn them all one after another, the prince, dressed only in light Spanish costume, sprang in with his spear, and pierced not only the savage beast, but also a soldier, who, seeing the moment of danger had sprung to his aid.

Panna Aleksandra, the granddaughter of an old soldier, reared in traditions of blood, war, and reverence for knightly superiority, could not restrain at sight of these deeds her wonder, and even homage; for she had been taught from childhood to esteem bravery as almost the highest quality of man.

Meanwhile the prince gave daily proofs of daring almost beyond human, and always in honor of her. The assembled guests in their praises and enthusiasm for the prince, which were so great that even a deity might be satisfied with them, were forced involuntarily to connect in their conversations the name of Panna Billevich with the name of Boguslav. He was silent, but with his eyes he told her what he did not dare to utter with his lips. The spell surrounded her perfectly.

Everything was so combined as to bring them together, to connect them, and at the same time to separate them from the throng of other people. It was difficult for anyone to mention him without mentioning her. Into the thoughts of Olenka herself Boguslav was thrust with an irresistible force. Every moment of the day was so arranged as to lend power to the spell.

In the evening, after amusements, the chambers were lighted by many colored lamps casting mysterious rays, as if from the land of splendid dreams transferred to reality; intoxicating eastern odors filled the air; the low sounds of invisible harps, lutes, and other instruments fondled the hearing; and in the midst of these odors, lights, sounds, he moved in the glory of universal homage, like an enchanted king's son in a myth-tale, beautiful, knightly, sun-bright from jewels, and as deeply in love as a shepherd.

What maiden could resist these spells, what virtue would not grow faint amid such allurements? But to avoid the prince there was no possibility for one living with him under the same roof and enjoying his hospitality, which, though given perforce, was still dispensed with sincerity and in real lordly fashion. Besides, Olenka had gone without unwillingness to Taurogi, for she wished to be far from hideous Kyedani, as she preferred to Yanush, an open traitor, the knightly Boguslav, who feigned love for the deserted king and the country. Hence in the beginning of her visit at Taurogi she was full of friendly feeling for the young prince; and seeing soon how far he was striving for her friendship, she used her influence more than once to do good to people.

During the third month of her stay a certain artillery officer, a friend of Kettling, was condemned by the prince to be shot; Panna Billevich, hearing of this from the young Scot, interceded for him.

“A divinity may command, not implore,” said Boguslav to her; and tearing the sentence of death he threw it at her feet. “Ordain, command! I will burn Taurogi, if at that price I can call forth on your face even a smile. I ask no other reward save this, that you be joyous and forget that which once pained you.”

She could not be joyous, having pain in her heart, pity and an unutterable contempt for the man whom she had loved with first love, and who at that time was in her eyes a worse criminal than a parricide. That Kmita, promising to sell the king for gold, as Judas sold Christ, became fouler and more repulsive in her eyes, till in the course of time he was turned into a human monster, a grief and reproach to her. She could not forgive herself for having loved him, and at the same time she could not forget him while she hated.

In view of these feelings it was indeed difficult for her even to feign gladness; but still she had to be thankful to the prince even for this, that he would not put his hand to Kmita’s crime, and for all that he had done for her. It was a wonder to her that the prince, such a knight and so full of noble feeling, did not hasten to the rescue of the country, since he had not consented to the intrigues of Yanush; but she judged that such a statesman knew what he was doing, and was forced by a policy which she, with her simple maiden’s mind, could not sound. Boguslav told her also, explaining his frequent journeys to Prussian Tyłtsa, which was near by, that his strength was failing him from overwork; that he was conducting negotiations between Yan Kazimir, Karl Gustav, and the elector, and that he hoped to bring the country out of difficulty.

“Not for rewards, not for offices, do I do this,” said he to her. “I will sacrifice my cousin Yanush, who was to me a father, for I know not whether I shall be able to implore his life for him from the animosity of Queen Ludvika; but I will do what my conscience and love for the dear mother, my country, demands.”

When he spoke thus with sadness on his delicate face, with eyes turned to the ceiling, he seemed to her as lofty as those heroes of antiquity of which Heraclius Billevich had told her, and of whom he himself had read in Cornelius Nepos. And the heart swelled within her with admiration and homage. By degrees it went so far that when thoughts of the hated Andrei Kmita had tortured her too much, she thought of Boguslav to cure and strengthen herself. Kmita became for her a terrible and gloomy darkness; Boguslav, light in which every troubled soul would gladly bathe itself. The sword-bearer and Panna Kulvyets, whom they had brought also from Vodokty, pushed Olenka still more along that incline by singing hymns of praise from morning till night in honor of Boguslav. The sword-bearer and the aunt wearied the prince, it is true, so that he had been thinking how to get rid of them politely; but he won them to himself, especially the sword-bearer, who though at first displeased and even enraged, still could not fight against the friendship and favors of Boguslav.

If Boguslav had been merely a noble of noted stock, but not Radzivill, nor a prince, not a magnate invested with almost the majesty of a monarch, perhaps Panna Billevich might have loved him for life and death, in spite of the will of the old colonel, which left her a choice only between the cloister and Kmita. But she was a stern lady for her own self, and a very just soul; therefore she did not even admit to her head a dream of anything save gratitude and admiration so far as the prince was concerned.

Her family was not so great that she could become the wife of Radzivill, and was too great for her to become his mistress; she looked on him, therefore, as she would on the king, were she at the king’s court. In vain did Boguslav endeavor to give her other thoughts; in vain did he, forgetting himself in love, partly from calculation, partly from enthusiasm, repeat what he had said the first evening in Kyedani—that the Radzivills had married ordinary noble women

more than once; these thoughts did not cling to her, as water does not cling to the breast of a swan; and she remained as she had been, thankful, friendly, homage-giving, seeking consolation in the thought of a hero, but undisturbed in heart.

He could not catch her through her feelings, though often it seemed to him that he was near his object. But he saw himself with shame and internal anger that he was not so daring with her as he had been with the first ladies in Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam. Perhaps this was because he was really in love, and perhaps because in that lady, in her face, in her dark brows and stern eyes, there was that which enforced respect. Kmita was the one and only man who in his time did not submit to that influence and paid no regard, prepared boldly to kiss those proud eyes and stern lips; but Kmita was her betrothed.

All other cavaliers, beginning with Pan Volodyovski and ending with the very vulgar Prussian nobles in Taurogi and the prince himself, were less confident with her than with other ladies in the same condition. Impulsiveness carried away the prince; but when once in a carriage he pressed against her feet, whispering at the same time, "Fear not!" she answered that she did fear to regret the confidence reposed in him, Boguslav was confused, and returned to his former method of conquering her heart by degrees.

But his patience was becoming exhausted. Gradually he began to forget the terrible dream, he began to think more frequently of what Sakovich had counselled, and that the Billeviches would all perish in the war; his desires tormented him more powerfully, when a certain event changed completely the course of affairs in Taurogi.

One day news came like a thunderbolt that Tykotsin was taken by Pan Sapyeha, and that Prince Yanush had lost his life in the ruins of the castle.

Everything began to seethe in Taurogi. Boguslav himself sprang up and went off that same day to Königsberg, where he was to see the ministers of the King of Sweden and the elector.

His stay there exceeded his original plan. Meanwhile bodies of Prussian and even of Swedish troops were assembling at Taurogi. Men began to speak of an expedition against Sapyeha. The naked truth was coming to the surface more and more clearly, that Boguslav was a partisan of the Swedes, as well as his cousin Yanush.

It happened that at the same time the sword-bearer of Rossyeni received news of the burning of his native Billeviche by the troops of Löwenhaupt, who, after defeating the insurgents in Jmud, at Shavli, ravaged the whole country with fire and sword.

The old noble sprang up and set out, wishing to see the damage with his own eyes; and Prince Boguslav did not detain him, but sent him off willingly, adding at parting—

"Now you will understand why I brought you to Taurogi; for, speaking plainly, you owe your life to me."

Olenka remained alone with Panna Kulvyets. They shut themselves up in their own chambers at once, and received no one but a few women. When these women brought tidings that the prince was preparing an expedition against the Poles, Olenka would not believe them at first: but wishing to be certain, she gave orders to summon Kettling, for she knew that from her the young Scot would hide nothing.

He appeared before her at once, happy that he was called, that for a time he could speak with her who had taken possession of his soul.

"Cavalier," said Panna Billevich, "so many reports are circulating about Taurogi that we are wandering as in a forest. Some say that the prince *voevoda* died a natural death; others that he was borne apart on sabres. What was the cause of his death?"

Kettling hesitated for a while. It was evident that he was struggling with innate indecision. At last he blushed greatly, and said—

“You are the cause of the fall and the death of Prince Yanush.”

“I?” asked Panna Billevich, with amazement.

“You; for our prince chose to remain in Taurogi rather than go to relieve his cousin. He forgot everything near you, my lady.”

Now she blushed in her turn like a purple rose, and a moment of silence followed.

The Scot stood, hat in hand, with downcast eyes, his head bent, in a posture full of homage and respect. At last he raised his head, shook his bright curls, and said—

“My lady, if these words have offended you, let me kneel down and beg forgiveness.”

“Do not,” said she, quickly, seeing that the young knight was bending his knees already. “I know that what you have said was said with a clean heart; for I have long noticed that you wish me well.”

The officer raised his blue eyes, and putting his hand on his heart, with a voice as low as the whisper of a breeze and as sad as a sigh, replied—

“Oh, my lady! my lady!”

At this moment he was frightened lest he had said too much, and again he bent his head toward his bosom, and took the posture of a courtier who is listening to the commands of a queen.

“I am here among strangers, without a guardian,” said Olenka; “and though I shall be able to watch over myself alone, and God will preserve me from harm, still I need the aid of men also. Do you wish to be my brother? Do you wish to warn me in need, so that I may know what to do, and avoid every snare?”

As she said this, she extended her hand; but he kneeled, in spite of her prohibition, and kissed the tips of her fingers.

“Tell me,” said she, “what is happening around me.”

“The prince loves you,” said Kettling. “Have you not seen that?”

She covered her face with her hands. “I saw and I did not see. At times it seemed to me that he was only very kind.”

“Kind!” repeated Kettling, like an echo.

“But when it came into my head that I, unfortunate woman, might rouse in him unhappy wishes, I quieted myself with this, that no danger threatened me from him. I was thankful to him for what he had done, though God sees that I did not look for new kindnesses, since I feared those he had already shown me.”

Kettling breathed more freely.

“May I speak boldly?” asked he.

“Speak.”

“The prince has only two confidants—Pan Sakovich and Patterson; but Patterson is very friendly to me, for we come from the same country, and he carried me in his arms. What I know, I know from him. The prince loves you; desires are burning in him as pitch in a pine torch. All things done here—all these feasts, hunts, tournaments, through which, thanks to the

prince's hand, blood is flowing from my mouth yet—were arranged for you. The prince loves you, my lady, to distraction, but with an impure fire; for he wishes to disgrace, not to marry you. For though he could not find a worthier, even if he were king of the whole world, not merely a prince, still he thinks of another—the princess, Yanush's daughter, and her fortune are predestined to him. I learned this from Patterson; and the great God, whose gospel I take here to witness, knows that I speak the pure truth. Do not believe the prince, do not trust his kindness, do not feel safe in his moderation. Watch, guard yourself; for they are plotting treason against you here at every step. The breath is stopping in my breast from what Patterson has told me. There is not a criminal in the world equal to Sakovich—I cannot speak of him, I cannot. Were it not for the oath which I have taken to guard the prince, this hand and this sword would free you from continual danger. But I would slay Sakovich first. This is true. Him first, before all men—even before those who in my own country shed my father's blood, took my fortune, made me a wanderer and a hireling.”

Here Kettling trembled from emotion. For a while he merely pressed the hilt of his sword with his hand, not being able to utter a word; then he recovered, and in one breath told what methods Sakovich had suggested to the prince.

Panna Aleksandra, to his great surprise, bore herself calmly enough while looking at the threatening precipice before her; only her face grew pale and became still more serious. Unbending resolution was reflected in her stern look.

“I shall be able to save myself,” said she, “so help me God and the holy cross!”

“The prince has not consented hitherto to follow Sakovich's counsel,” added Kettling. “But when he sees that the road he has chosen leads to nothing—” and he began to tell the reasons which restrained Boguslav.

The lady listened with frowning brow, but not with superfluous attention, for she had already begun to ponder on means to wrest herself free of this terrible guardianship. But there was not a place in the whole country unsprinkled with blood, and plans of flight did not seem to her clear; hence she preferred not to speak of them.

“Cavalier,” said she at last, “answer me one question. Is Prince Boguslav on the side of the King of Sweden or the King of Poland?”

“It is a secret to none of us,” answered the young officer, “that the prince wishes the division of this Commonwealth, so as to make of Lithuania an independent principality for himself.”

Here Kettling was silent, and you would have thought that his mind was following involuntarily the thoughts of Olenka; for after a while he added—

“The elector and the Swedes are at the service of the prince; and since they will occupy the Commonwealth, there is no place in which to hide from him.”

Olenka made no answer.

The young man waited awhile longer, to learn if she would ask him other questions; but when she was silent, occupied with her own thoughts, he felt that it was not proper for him to interrupt her; therefore he bent double in a parting bow, sweeping the floor with the feathers in his cap.

“I thank you, cavalier,” said Olenka, extending her hand to him.

The officer, without turning, withdrew toward the door. All at once there appeared on her face a slight flush. She hesitated a moment, and then said—

“One word, cavalier.”



“Every word is for me a favor.”

“Did you know Pan Andrei Kmita?”

“I made his acquaintance, my lady, in Kyedani. I saw him the last time in Pilvishki, when we were marching hither from Podlyasye.”

“Is what the prince says true, that Pan Kmita offered to do violence to the person of the King of Poland?”

“I know not, my lady. It is known to me that they took counsel together in Pilvishki; then the prince went with Pan Kmita to the forest, and it was so long before he returned that Patterson was alarmed and sent troops to meet him. I led those troops. We met the prince. I saw that he was greatly changed, as if strong emotion had passed through his soul. He was talking to himself, which never happens to him. I heard how he said: ‘The devil would have undertaken that—’ I know nothing more. But later, when the prince mentioned what Kmita offered, I thought, ‘If this was it, it must be true.’”

Panna Billevich pressed her lips together.

“I thank you,” said she. And after a while she was alone.

The thought of flight mastered her thoroughly. She determined at any price to tear herself from those infamous places, and from the power of that treacherous prince. But where was she to find refuge? The villages and towns were in Swedish hands, the cloisters were ruined, the castles levelled with the earth; the whole country was swarming with soldiers, and with worse than soldiers—with fugitives from the army, robbers, all kinds of ruffians. What fate could be waiting for a maiden cast as a prey to that storm? Who would go with her? Her aunt Kulvyets, her uncle, and a few of his servants. Whose power would protect her? Kettling would go, perhaps; maybe a handful of faithful soldiers and friends might even be found who would accompany him. But as Kettling had fallen in love with her beyond question, then how was she to incur a debt of gratitude to him, which she would have to pay afterward with a great price? Finally, what right had she to close the career of that young man, scarcely more than a youth, and expose it to pursuit, to persecution, to ruin, if she could not offer him anything in return save friendship? Therefore, she asked herself, what was she to do, whither was she to flee, since here and there destruction threatened her, here and there disgrace?

In such a struggle of soul she began to pray ardently; and more especially did she repeat one prayer with earnestness to which the old colonel had constant recourse in evil times, beginning with the words—

“God saved Thee with Thy Infant  
From the malice of Herod;  
In Egypt he straightened the road  
For Thy safe passage—”

At this moment a great whirlwind rose, and the trees in the garden began to make a tremendous noise. All at once the praying lady remembered the wilderness on the borders of which she had grown up from infancy; and the thought that in the wilderness she would find the only safe refuge flew through her head like lightning.

Then Olenka breathed deeply, for she had found at last what she had been seeking. To Zyelonka, to Rogovsk! There the enemy would not go, the ruffian would not seek booty. There a man of the place, if he forgot himself, might go astray and wander till death; what must it be to a stranger not knowing the road? There the Domasheviches, the Smoky

Stakyans; and if they are gone, if they have followed Pan Volodyovski, it is possible to go by those forests far beyond and seek quiet in other wildernesses.

The remembrance of Pan Volodyovski rejoiced Olenka. Oh, if she had such a protector! He was a genuine soldier; his was a sabre under which she might take refuge from Kmita and the Radzivills themselves. Now it occurred to her that he was the man who had advised, when he caught Kmita in Billeviche, to seek safety in the Byalovyej wilderness.

And he spoke wisely! Rogovsk and Zyelonka are too near the Radzivills, and near Byalovyej stands that Sapyeha who rubbed from the face of the earth the most terrible Radzivill.

To Byalovyej then, to Byalovyej, even today, tomorrow! Only let her uncle come, she would not delay.

The dark depths of Byalovyej will protect her, and afterward, when the storm passes, the cloister. There only can be real peace and forgetfulness of all men, of all pain, sorrow, and contempt.

## Chapter LXXXIII

The sword-bearer of Rossyeni returned a few days later. In spite of the safe-conduct of Boguslav, he went only to Rossyeni; to Billeviche itself he had no reason to go, for it was no longer in the world. The house, the buildings, the village, everything was burned to the ground in the last battle, which Father Strashevich, a Jesuit, had fought at the head of his own detachment against the Swedish captain Rossa. The inhabitants were in the forests or in armed parties. Instead of rich villages there remained only land and water.

The roads were filled with “ravagers,”—that is, fugitives from various armies, who, going in considerable groups, were busied with robbery, so that even small parties of soldiers were not safe from them. The sword-bearer then had not even been able to convince himself whether the barrels filled with plate and money and buried in the garden were safe, and he returned to Taurogi, very angry and peevish, with a terrible animosity in his heart against the destroyers.

He had barely put foot out of his carriage, when Olenka hurried him to her own room, and recounted all that Hassling-Kettling had told her.

The old soldier shivered at the recital, since, not having children of his own, he loved the maiden as his daughter. For a while he did nothing but grasp his sword-hilt, repeating, “Strike, who has courage!” At last he caught himself by the head, and began to say—

“*Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* (It is my fault, my greatest fault); for at times it came into my head, and this and that man whispered that that hell-dweller was melting from love of you, and I said nothing, was even proud, thinking: ‘Well, he will marry! We are relatives of the Gosyevskis, of the Tyzenhauzes; why should we not be relatives of the Radzivills?’ For pride, God is punishing me. The traitor prepared a respectable relationship. That’s the kind of relative he wanted to be. I would he were killed! But wait! this hand and this sabre will moulder first.”

“We must think of escape,” said Olenka.

“Well, give your plans of escape.”

The sword-bearer, having finished panting, listened carefully; at last he said—

“Better collect my subjects and form a party! I will attack the Swedes as Kmita did Hovanski. You will be safer in the forest and in the field than in the court of a traitor and a heretic.”

“That is well,” answered the lady.

“Not only will I not oppose,” said the sword-bearer, “but I will say the sooner the better. And I lack neither subjects nor scythes. They burned my residence, never mind that! I will assemble peasants from other villages. All the Billeviches in the field will join us. We will show you relationship, young man—we will show what it is to attack the Billevich honor. You are a Radzivill! What of that? There are no hetmans in the Billevich family, but there are also no traitors! We shall see whom all Jmud will follow! We will put you in Byalovyvej and return ourselves,” said he, turning to Olenka. “It cannot be otherwise! He must give satisfaction for that affair, for it is an injustice to the whole estate of nobles. Infamous is he who does not declare for us! God will help us, our brethren will help us, citizens will help us, and then fire and sword! The Billeviches will meet the Radzivills! Infamous he who is not with us! infamous he who will not flash his sword in the eyes of the traitor! The king is with us; so is the Diet, so is the whole Commonwealth.”

Here the sword-bearer, red as blood and with bristling forelock, fell to pounding the table with his fist.

“This war is more urgent than the Swedish, for in us the whole order of knighthood, all laws, the whole Commonwealth is injured and shaken in its deepest foundations. Infamous is he who does not understand this! The land will perish unless we measure out vengeance and punishment on the traitor!”

And the old blood played more and more violently, till Olenka was forced to pacify her uncle. He sat calmly, then, though he thought that not only the country, but the whole world was perishing when the Billeviches were touched; in this he saw the most terrible precipice for the Commonwealth, and began to roar like a lion.

But the lady, who had great influence over him, was able at last to pacify her uncle, explaining that for their safety and for the success of their flight it was specially needful to preserve the profoundest secrecy, and not to show the prince that they were thinking of anything.

He promised sacredly to act according to her directions; then they took counsel about the flight itself. The affair was not over-difficult, for it seemed that they were not watched at all. The sword-bearer decided to send in advance a youth, with letters to his overseers to assemble peasants at once from all the villages belonging to him and the other Billeviches, and to arm them.

Six confidential servants were to go to Billeviche, as it were, for the barrels of money and silver, but really to halt in the Girlakol forests, and wait there with horses, bags, and provisions. They decided to depart from Taurogi in sleighs and accompanied by two servants, as if going merely to the neighboring Gavna; afterward they would mount horses and hurry on with all speed. To Gavna they used to go often to visit the Kuchuk-Olbrotovskis, where sometimes they passed the night; they hoped therefore that their journey would not attract the attention of anyone, and that no pursuit would follow, unless two or three days later, at which time they would be in the midst of armed bands and in the depth of impenetrable forests. The absence of Prince Boguslav strengthened them in this hope.

Meanwhile the sword-bearer was greatly busied with preparations. A messenger with letters went out on the following morning. The day after that, Pan Tomash talked in detail with Patterson of his buried money, which, as he said, exceeded a hundred thousand, and of the need of bringing it to safe Taurogi. Patterson believed easily; for Billevich was a noble and passed as a very rich man, which he was in reality.

“Let them bring it as soon as possible,” said the Scot; “if you need them, I will give you soldiers.”

“The fewer people who see what I am bringing the better. My servants are faithful, and I will order them to cover the barrels with hemp, which is brought often from our villages to Prussia, or with staves which no one will covet.”

“Better with staves,” said Patterson; “for people could feel with a sabre or a spear through the hemp that there was something else in the wagon. But you would better give the coin to the prince on his recognition. I know, too, that he needs money, for his revenues do not come regularly.”

“I should like so to serve the prince that he would never need anything,” answered the old man.

The conversation ended there, and all seemed to combine most favorably, for the servants started at once, while the sword-bearer and Olenka were to go next morning. But in the evening Boguslav returned most unexpectedly at the head of two regiments of Prussian cavalry. His affairs seemed to advance not too favorably, for he was angry and fretful.

That evening he summoned a council of war, which was composed of the representatives of the elector. Count Seydevitz, Patterson, Sakovich, and Kyritz, a colonel of cavalry. They sat till three in the morning; and the object of their deliberation was the campaign to Podlyasye against Sapyeha.

“The elector and the King of Sweden have reinforced me in proportion to their strength,” said the prince. “One of two things will happen—either I shall find Sapyeha in Podlyasye, and in that event I must rub him out; or I shall not find him, and I shall occupy Podlyasye without resistance. For all this, however, money is needed; and money neither the elector nor the King of Sweden has given me, for they haven’t it themselves.”

“Where is money to be found if not with your highness?” asked Seydevitz. “Through the whole world men speak of the inexhaustible wealth of the Radzivills.”

“Pan Seydevitz,” answered Boguslav, “if I received all the income from my inherited estates, I should surely have more money than five of your German princes taken together. But there is war in the country; revenues do not come in, or are intercepted by rebels. Ready money might be obtained for notes from the Prussian towns; but you know best what is happening in them, and that purses are opened only for Yan Kazimir.”

“But Königsberg?”

“I took what I could get, but that was little.”

“I think myself fortunate to be able to serve you with good counsel,” said Patterson.

“I would rather you served me with ready money.”

“My counsel means ready money. Not longer ago than yesterday Pan Billevich told me that he had a good sum hidden in the garden of Billeviche, and that he wishes to bring it here for safety, and give it to your highness for a note.”

“Well, you have really fallen from heaven to me, and this noble as well!” cried Boguslav.

“But has he much money?”

“More than a hundred thousand, besides silver and valuables, which are worth perhaps an equal amount.”

“The silver and valuables he will not wish to turn into money, but they can be pawned. I am thankful to you, Patterson, for this comes to me in time. I must talk to Billevich in the morning.”

“Then I will forewarn him, for he is preparing to go tomorrow with the lady to Gavna to the Kuchuk-Olbrotovskis.”

“Tell him not to go till he sees me.”

“He has sent the servants already; I am only alarmed for their safety.”

“A whole regiment can be sent after them; but we will talk later. This is timely for me, timely! And it will be amusing if I rend Podlyasye from the Commonwealth with the money of this royalist and patriot.”

Then the prince dismissed the council, for he had to put himself yet in the hands of his chamber attendants, whose task it was every night before he went to rest to preserve his

uncommon beauty with baths, ointments, and various inventions known only in foreign lands. This lasted usually an hour, and sometimes two; besides, the prince was road-weary and the hour late.

Early in the morning Patterson detained Billevich and Olenka with the announcement that the prince wished to see them. It was necessary to defer their journey; but this did not disturb them overmuch, for Patterson told what the question was.

An hour later the prince appeared. In spite of the fact that Pan Tomash and Olenka had promised each other most faithfully to receive him in former fashion, they could not do so, though they tried with every effort.

Olenka's countenance changed, and blood came to the face of the sword-bearer at sight of Prince Boguslav; for a time both stood confused, excited, striving in vain to regain their usual calmness.

The prince, on the contrary, was perfectly at ease. He had grown a little meagre about the eyes, and his face was less colored than common; but that paleness of his was set off wonderfully by the pearl-colored morning dress, interwoven with silver. He saw in a moment that they received him somewhat differently, and were less glad than usual to see him. But he thought at once that those two royalists had learned of his relations with the Swedes; hence the coolness of the reception. Therefore he began at once to throw sand in their eyes, and, after the compliments of greeting, said—

“Lord Sword-bearer, my benefactor, you have heard, without doubt, what misfortunes have met me.”

“Does your highness wish to speak of the death of Prince Yanush?” asked the sword-bearer.

“Not of his death alone. That was a cruel blow; still, I yielded to the will of God, Who, as I hope, has rewarded my cousin for all the wrongs done him; but He has sent a new burden to me, for I must be leader in a civil war; and that for every citizen who loves his country is a bitter portion.”

The sword-bearer said nothing; he merely looked a little askance at Olenka. But the prince continued—

“By my labor and toil, and God alone knows at what outlay, I had brought peace to the verge of realization. It was almost a question of merely signing the treaties. The Swedes were to leave Poland, asking no remuneration save the consent of the king and the estates that after the death of Yan Kazimir Karl Gustav would be chosen to the throne of Poland. A warrior so great and mighty would be the salvation of the Commonwealth. And what is more important, he was to furnish at once reinforcements for the war in the Ukraine and against Moscow. We should have extended our boundaries; but this was not convenient for Pan Sapyeha, for then he could not crush the Radzivils. All agreed to this treaty. He alone opposes it with armed hand. The country is nothing to him, if he can only carry out his personal designs. It has come to this, that arms must be used against him. This function has been confided to me, according to the secret treaty between Yan Kazimir and Karl Gustav. This is the whole affair! I have never shunned any service, therefore I must accept this; though many will judge me unjustly, and think that I begin a brother-killing war from pure revenge only.”

“Whoso knows your highness,” said the sword-bearer, “as well as we do will not be deceived by appearances, and will always be able to understand the real intentions of your highness.”

Here the sword-bearer was so delighted with his own cunning and courtesy, and he muttered so expressively at Olenka, that she was alarmed lest the prince should notice those signs.

And he did notice them. "They do not believe me," thought he. And though he showed no wrath on his face, Billevich had pricked him to the soul. He was convinced with perfect sincerity that it was an offence not to believe, a Radzivill, even when he saw fit to lie.

"Patterson has told me," continued he, after a while, "that you wish to give me ready money for my paper. I agree to this willingly; for I acknowledge that ready money is useful to me at the moment. When peace comes, you can do as you like—either take a certain sum, or I will give you a couple of villages as security, so that the transaction will be profitable for you.—Pardon," said the prince, turning to Olenka, "that in view of such material questions we are not speaking of sighs or ideals. This conversation is out of place; but the times are such that it is impossible to give their proper course to homage and admiration."

Olenka dropped her eyes, and seizing her robe with the tips of her fingers, made a proper courtesy, not wishing to give an answer. Meanwhile the sword-bearer formed in his mind a project of unheard-of unfitness, but which he considered uncommonly clever.

"I will flee with Olenka and will not give the money," thought he.

"It will be agreeable to me to accommodate your highness. Patterson has not told of all, for there is about half a pot of gold ducats buried apart, so as not to lose all the money in case of accident. Besides, there are barrels belonging to other Billeviches; but these during my absence were buried under the direction of this young lady, and she alone is able to calculate the place, for the man who buried them is dead."

Boguslav looked at him quickly. "How is that? Patterson said that you have already sent men; and since they have gone, they must know where the money is."

"But of the other money no one knows, except her."

"Still it must be buried in some definite place, which can be described easily in words or indicated on paper."

"Words are wind; and as to pictures, the servants know nothing of them. We will both go; that is the thing."

"For God's sake! you must know your own gardens. Therefore go alone. Why should Panna Aleksandra go?"

"I will not go alone!" said Billevich, with decision.

Boguslav looked at him inquiringly a second time; then he seated himself more comfortably, and began to strike his boots with a cane which he held in his hand.

"Is that final?" asked he. "Well! In such an event I will give a couple of regiments of cavalry to take you there and bring you back."

"We need no regiments. We will go and return ourselves. This is our country. Nothing threatens us here."

"As a host, sensitive to the good of his guests, I cannot permit that Panna Aleksandra should go without armed force. Choose, then. Either go alone, or let both go with an escort."

Billevich saw that he had fallen into his own trap; and that brought him to such anger that, forgetting all precautions, he cried—

"Then let your highness choose. Either we shall both go unattended, or I will not give the money!"

Panna Aleksandra looked on him imploringly; but he had already grown red and begun to pant. Still, he was a man cautious by nature, even timid, loving to settle every affair in good

feeling; but when once the measure was exceeded in dealing with him, when he was too much excited against anyone, or when it was a question of the Billevich honor, he hurled himself with a species of desperate daring at the eyes of even the most powerful enemy. So that now he put his hand to his left side, and shaking his sabre began to cry with all his might—

“Is this captivity? Do they wish to oppress a free citizen, and trample on cardinal rights?”

Boguslav, with shoulders leaning against the arms of the chair, looked at him attentively; but his look became colder each moment, and he struck the cane against his boots more and more quickly. Had the sword-bearer known the prince better, he would have known that he was bringing down terrible danger on his own head.

Relations with Boguslav were simply dreadful. It was never known when the courteous cavalier, the diplomat accustomed to self-control, would be overborne by the wild and unrestrained magnate who trampled every resistance with the cruelty of an Eastern despot. A brilliant education and refinement, acquired at the first courts of Europe; reflection and studied elegance, which he had gained in intercourse with men—were like wonderful and strong flowers under which was secreted a tiger.

But the sword-bearer did not know this, and in his angry blindness shouted on—

“Your highness, dissemble no further, for you are known! And have a care, for neither the King of Sweden nor the elector, both of whom you are serving against your own country, nor your princely position, will save you before the law; and the sabres of nobles will teach you manners, young man!”

Boguslav rose; in one instant he crushed the cane in his iron hands, and throwing the pieces at the feet of the sword-bearer, said with a terrible, suppressed voice—

“That is what your rights are for me! That your tribunals! That your privileges!”

“Outrageous violence!” cried Billevich.

“Silence, paltry noble!” cried the prince. “I will crush you into dust!” And he advanced to seize the astonished man and hurl him against the wall.

Now Panna Aleksandra stood between them. “What do you think to do?” inquired she.

The prince restrained himself. But she stood with nostrils distended, with flaming face, with fire in her eyes like an angry Minerva. Her breast heaved under her bodice like a wave of the sea, and she was marvellous in that anger, so that Boguslav was lost in gazing at her; all his desires crept into his face, like serpents from the dens of his soul.

After a time his anger passed, presence of mind returned; he looked awhile yet at Olenka. At last his face grew mild; he bent his head toward his breast, and said—

“Pardon, angelic lady! I have a soul full of gnawing and pain, therefore I do not command myself.” Then he left the room.

Olenka began to wring her hands; and Billevich, coming to himself, seized his forelock, and cried—

“I have spoiled everything; I am the cause of your ruin!”

The prince did not show himself the whole day. He even dined in his own room with Sakovich. Stirred to the bottom of his soul, he could not think so clearly as usual. Some kind of ague was wasting him. It was the herald of a grievous fever which was to seize him soon with such force that during its attacks he was benumbed altogether, so that his attendants had



to rub him most actively. But at this time he ascribed his strange state to the power of love, and thought that he must either satisfy it or die. When he had told Sakovich the whole conversation with the sword-bearer, he said—

“My hands and feet are burning, ants are walking along my back, in my mouth are bitterness and fire; but, by all the horned devils, what is this? Never has this attacked me before!”

“Your highness is as full of scruples as a baked capon of buckwheat grits. The prince is a capon, the prince is a capon. Ha, ha!”

“You are a fool!”

“Very well.”

“I don’t need your ideas.”

“Worthy prince, take a lute and go under the windows of the maiden. Billevich may show you his fist. *Tfu!* to the deuce! is that the kind of bold man that Boguslav Radzivill is?”

“You are an idiot!”

“Very well. I see that your highness is beginning to speak with yourself and tell the truth to your own face. Boldly, boldly! Pay no heed to rank.”

“You see, Sakovich, that my Castor is growing familiar with me; as it is, I kick him often in the ribs, but a greater accident may meet you.”

Sakovich sprang up as if red with anger, like Billevich a little while before; and since he had an uncommon gift of mimicry, he began to cry in a voice so much like that of Billevich that anyone not seeing who was talking, might have been deceived.

“What! is this captivity? Do they wish to oppress a free citizen, to trample on cardinal rights?”

“Give us peace! give us peace!” said the prince, fretfully. “She defended that old fool with her person, but here there is one to defend you.”

“If she defended him, she should have been taken in pawn!”

“There must be some witchcraft in this place! Either she must have given me something, or the constellations are such that I am simply leaving my mind. If you could have seen her when she was defending that mangy old uncle of hers! But you are a fool! It is growing cloudy in my head. See how my hands are burning! To love such a woman, to gain her—with such a woman to—”

“To have posterity!” added Sakovich.

“That’s so, that’s so!—as if you knew that must be; otherwise I shall burst as a bomb. For God’s sake! what is happening to me? Must I marry, or what, by all the devils of earth and hell?”

Sakovich grew serious. “Your princely highness, you must not think of that!”

“I am thinking of just that, precisely because I wish it. I will do that, though a regiment of Sakoviches repeated a whole day to me, ‘Your princely highness must not think of that!’”

“Oh, I see this is no joke.”

“I am sick, enchanted.”

“Why do you not follow my advice at last?”

“I must follow it—may the plague take all the dreams, all the Billeviches, all Lithuania with the tribunals, and Yan Kazimir to boot! I shall not succeed otherwise; I see that I shall not! I have had enough of this, have I not? A great question! And I, the fool, was considering both sides hitherto; was afraid of dreams, of Billeviches, of lawsuits, of the rabble of nobles, the fortune of Yan Kazimir. Tell me that I am a fool! Do you hear? I command you to tell me that I am a fool!”

“But I will not obey, for now you are really Radzivill, and not a Calvinist minister. But in truth you must be ill, for I have never seen you so changed.”

“True! In the most difficult positions I merely waved my hand and whistled, but now I feel as if someone were thrusting spurs into my sides.”

“This is strange, for if that maiden has given you something designedly, she has not done so to run away afterward; but still, from what you say, it seems that they wish to flee in secret.”

“Ryff told me that this is the influence of Saturn, on which burning exhalations rise during this particular month.”

“Worthy prince, rather take Jove as a model, for he was happy without marriage. All will be well; only do not think of marriage, unless of a counterfeit one.”

All at once the starosta of Oshmiana struck his forehead.

“But wait, your highness! I have heard of such a case in Prussia.”

“Is the Devil whispering something into your ear? Tell me!”

But Sakovich was silent for a long time; at last his face brightened, and he said—

“Thank the fortune that gave you Sakovich as friend.”

“What news, what news?”

“Nothing. I will be your highness’s best man” (here Sakovich bowed)—“no small honor for such a poor fellow!”

“Don’t play the jester; speak quickly!”

“There is in Tyltsa one Plaska, or something like that, who in his time was a priest in Nyevorani, but who falling away from the faith became a Lutheran, got married, took refuge under the elector, and now is dealing in dried fish with people of this region. Bishop Parchevski tried to lure him back to Jmud, where in good certainty there was a fire waiting for him; but the elector would not yield up a fellow-believer.”

“How does that concern me? Do not loiter.”

“How does that concern your highness? In this way it must concern you; for he will sew you and her together with stitches on the outside, you understand? And because he is a fool of a workman, and does not belong to the guild, it will be easy to rip the work after him. Do you see? The guild does not recognize this sewing as valid; but still there will be no violence, no outcry; you can twist the neck of the workman afterward, and you will complain that you were deceived, do you understand? But before that time *crescite et multiplicamini*. I’ll be the first to give you my blessing.”

“I understand, and I don’t understand,” said the prince. “The devil I understand there perfectly. Sakovich, you must have been born, like a witch, with teeth in your mouth. The hangman is waiting for you; it cannot be otherwise, O Starosta! But while I live a hair will not fall from your head; a fitting reward will not miss you. I then—”

“Your highness will make a formal proposal to Panna Billevich, to her and to her uncle. If they refuse, if they do not consent, then give command to tear the skin from me, make sandal strings out of it, and go on a pilgrimage of penance to—to Rome. It is possible to resist a Radzivill if he wishes simply to be a lover; but if he wishes to marry, he need not try to please any noble. You must only tell Billevich and the lady that out of regard for the elector and the King of Sweden, who want you to marry the Princess of Bipont, your marriage must remain secret till peace is declared. Besides, you will write the marriage contract as you like. Both churches will be forced to declare it invalid. Well, what do you think?”

Boguslav was silent for a while, but on his face red fever-spots appeared under the paint; then he cried—

“There is no time in three days. I must move against Sapyeha.”

“That is just the position! Were there more time, it would be impossible to justify the pretext. Is not this true? Only through lack of time can you explain that the first priest at hand officiates, as happens in sudden emergencies, and marries on a bolting-cloth. They will think too, ‘It is sudden, for it must be sudden!’ She is a knightly maiden; you can take her with you to the field. Dear bridegroom, if Sapyeha conquers, even then you will have half the victories of the campaign.”

“That is well, that is well!” said the prince.

But at that moment the first paroxysm seized him so that his jaws closed and he could not say another word. He grew rigid, and then began to quiver and flounder like a fish out of water. But before the terrified Sakovich could bring the physician, the paroxysm had passed.

## Chapter LXXXIV

After his conversation with Sakovich, Prince Boguslav betook himself on the afternoon of the morrow directly to Billevich.

“My benefactor,” said he, to begin with, “I was grievously to blame the last time we met, for I fell into anger in my own house. It is my fault, and all the more so that I gave this affront to a man of a family friendly to the Radzivills. But I come to implore forgiveness. Let a sincere confession be satisfaction to you, and my atonement. You know the Radzivills of old; you know that we are not in haste to beg pardon; still, since I was to blame before age and dignity, I come without considering who I am, with a penitent head. And you, old friend of our house, will not refuse me your hand, I am certain.”

Then he extended his hand; and Billevich, in whose soul the first outburst had passed, did not dare to refuse his own, though he gave it with hesitation.

“Your highness, return to us our freedom; that will be the best satisfaction.”

“You are free, and may go, even today.”

“I thank your highness,” said the astonished Billevich.

“I interpose only one condition, which you, God grant, will not reject.”

“What is that?” asked Billevich, with fear.

“That you listen patiently to what I am going to say.”

“If that is all, I will listen even till evening.”

“Do not give me your answer at once, but think an hour or two.”

“God sees that if I receive my freedom I wish peace.”

“You will receive your freedom; but I do not know whether you will use it, or whether you will be urgent to leave my threshold. I should be glad were you to consider my house and all Taurogi as your own; but listen to me now. Do you know, my benefactor, why I was opposed to the departure of Panna Billevich? This is why—because I divined that you wished to flee simply; and I have fallen in love with your niece, so that to see her I should be ready to swim a Hellespont each day, like Leander.”

Billevich grew red again in a moment. “Does your highness dare to say that to me?”

“To you especially, my benefactor.”

“Worthy prince, seek your fortune with court ladies, but touch not noble maidens. You may imprison her, you may confine her in a vault, but you may not disgrace her.”

“I may not disgrace her,” said the prince; “but I may bow down to the old man Billevich, and say to him, ‘Listen, father, give me your niece as wife, for I cannot live without her.’”

The sword-bearer was so amazed that he could not utter a word; for a time he merely moved his mustaches, and his eyes were staring; then he began to rub his hands and look, now on the prince, now around the room; at last he said—

“Is this in a dream, or is it real?”

“Do not hasten! To convince you still better, I will repeat with all the titles: I, Boguslav, Prince Radzivill, Marshal of the Grand Principality of Lithuania, ask you, Tomash Billevich,

sword-bearer of Rosssyeni, for the hand of your niece, Panna Aleksandra, chief-hunter's daughter."

"Is this true? In God's name! have you considered the matter?"

"I have considered; now do you consider, my benefactor, whether the cavalier is worthy of the lady."

"My breath is stopped from wonder."

"Now see if I had any evil intentions."

"And would your highness not consider our small station?"

"Are the Billeviches so cheap? Do you value your shield of nobility and the antiquity of your family thus? Does a Billevich say this?"

"I know, gracious prince, that the origin of our family is to be sought in ancient Rome; but—"

"But," interrupted the prince, "you have neither hetmans nor chancellors. That is nothing! You are soldiers, like my uncle in Brandenburg. Since a noble in our Commonwealth may be elected king, there are no thresholds too lofty for his feet. My sword-bearer and, God grant, my uncle, I was born of a Brandenburg princess; my father's mother was an Ostrogski; but my grandfather of mighty memory, Kryshtof I, he whom they called Thunder, grand hetman, chancellor, and *voevoda* of Vilna, was married the first time to Panna Sobek; but for this reason the coronet did not fall from his head, for Panna Sobek was a noble woman, as honorably born as others. When my late father married the daughter of the elector, they wondered why he did not remember his own dignity, though he allied himself with a reigning house. Such is the devilish pride of you nobles! But acknowledge, my benefactor, you do not think a Sobek better than a Billevich, do you?"

Speaking thus, the prince began to tap the old man on the shoulder with great familiarity. The noble melted like wax, and answered—

"God reward your highness for honorable intentions! A weight has fallen from my heart! But now, if it were not for difference of faith!"

"A Catholic priest will perform the ceremony. I do not want another myself."

"I shall be thankful for this all my life, since here it is a question of the blessing of God, which certainly the Lord Jesus would withdraw if some vile—"

Here the old man bit his tongue, for he saw that he was saying something disagreeable to the prince. But Boguslav did not notice it; he smiled graciously and said—

"And as to posterity, I shall not be stubborn; for there is nothing that I would not do for that beauty of yours."

Billevich's face grew bright as if a ray of the sun had fallen on it; "Indeed, God has not been sparing of beauty to her, it is true. Oh! there will be a shout all over Jmud. And what will the Sitsinskis say when the Billeviches increase so? They would not leave the old colonel at rest, though he was a man of Roman mould, respected by the whole Commonwealth."

"We will drive them out of Jmud, worthy Sword-bearer."

"O great God, merciful God! undiscoverable are Thy judgments; but if in them it lies that the Sitsinskis are to burst from envy, then let Thy will be done!"

"Amen!" added Boguslav.

“Your highness, do not take it ill that I do not clothe myself in dignity, as befits a person of whom a man asks a maiden, and that I show too evident rejoicing. But we have been here in vexation, not knowing what was awaiting us and interpreting everything for the worst. It came to this that we thought evil of your highness, until it turns out that our fears and judgments were not just, and that we may return to our previous homage. I say this as if someone had taken a burden from my shoulders.”

“And did Panna Aleksandra judge me thus?”

“She? Even Cicero could not have described properly her previous admiration for your highness. I think that only virtue and a certain inborn timidity stood in the way of love. But when she hears of the sincere intentions of your highness, then I am sure she will at once give the reins to her heart.”

“Cicero could not have said that better!” said Boguslav.

“With happiness comes eloquence. But since your highness has been pleased to listen to everything I have said, then I will be sincere to the last.”

“Be sincere, Pan Billevich.”

“Though this maiden is young, she is a woman with a man’s cast of mind altogether; it is wonderful what a character she has. Where more than one man of experience would hesitate, she hesitates not a moment. What is evil she puts on the left, what is good on the right, and goes herself to the right as if it were sweet. When she has once chosen the road, even though there were cannon before her, that is nothing to her! She would not go aside for the cannon. She is like her grandfather and me. Her father was a born soldier, but mild; her mother, from the house of Voynilovich, was also strong-willed.”

“I am glad to hear this, Pan Billevich.”

“Your highness will not believe how incensed she is against the Swedes, and all enemies of the Commonwealth. If she held anyone guilty of treason, she would feel an utter detestation of him, though he were an angel and not a human being. Your highness—forgive an old man who might be your father in years, if not in dignity—leave the Swedes; they are worse for the country than Tartars! Move your troops against such sons, and not only I, but she, will follow you to the field. Pardon me, your highness, pardon me. Now I have said what I had on my mind.”

Boguslav mastered himself after a moment’s silence, and said: “My benefactor, you might have supposed yesterday, but you may not suppose today that I wish merely to throw sand in your eyes, when I say that I am on the side of the king and the country. Here under oath to you as a relative I repeat that what I stated touching peace and its conditions was the pure truth. I, too, should prefer to march to the field, for my nature draws me thither; but because I saw that salvation was not in the field, I was forced through simple devotion to seize another method. And I can say that I have accomplished an unheard of thing; for after a last war to conclude a peace of such kind that the conquering power serves the conquered—of this Mazarin, the most cunning of men, need not be ashamed. Not Panna Aleksandra alone, but I equally with her, bear hatred to the enemy. But what is to be done? How save this country? Not even Hercules against many can conquer. Therefore I thought thus, ‘Instead of destroying, which would be easier and more amusing, it is needful to save.’ And since I had practised in affairs of this kind with great statesmen, since I am a relative of the elector, and since, by reason of my cousin Yanush, I am well considered by the Swedes, I began negotiations; and what their course was and what the benefit to the Commonwealth was, that you know—an end of the war, freedom from oppression for your Catholic faith, for churches,

for clergy, for the estate of nobles, and for the common people; the assistance of the Swedes in the war against Moscow and the Cossacks; and, God grant, an extension of boundary. And this all on one condition—that Karl Gustav be king after Yan Kazimir. Whoso has done more for his country in these times, let him stand before my eyes.”

“True, a blind man could see that; but it will be very sad for the nobles that a free election will cease.”

“And which is more important—an election or the country?”

“They are the same, your highness; for an election is the main basis of the Commonwealth. And what is the country, if not a collection of laws, privileges, and liberties serving the nobles? A king can be found even in a foreign land.”

Anger and disgust flew like lightning over Boguslav’s face.

“Karl Gustav,” said he, “will sign the *pacta conventa*, as his predecessors have signed it; and after his death we will elect whom we choose, even that Radzivill who will be born of your niece.”

The sword-bearer stood for a while as if dazzled by the thought; at last he raised his hand and cried with great enthusiasm—

“*Consentior* (I agree)!”

“I think, too, that you would agree, even if the throne should become hereditary in our family. Such are you all! But that is a later question. Now it is necessary that the stipulations come to reality. You understand, my uncle?”

“As true as life, it is necessary!” repeated Billevich, with deep conviction.

“They must for this reason—that I am a mediator agreeable to his Swedish Majesty, and do you know for what reasons? Karl Gustav has one sister married to De la Gardie, and another, Princess Bipont, still unmarried; and he wishes to give her to me, so as to be allied to our house and have a party in Lithuania. Hence his favor toward me, to which my uncle, the elector, inclines him.”

“How is that?” asked the disquieted sword-bearer.

“I would give all the princesses of Bipont<sup>37</sup> for your dove, together with the principalities, not only of the two, but of all the bridges in the world. But I may not anger the Swedish beast, therefore I give willing ear to their discussions; but only let them sign the treaty, then we shall see.”

“Would they be ready then not to sign if they should discover that you were married?”

“Worthy sword-bearer,” said the prince, with seriousness, “you have condemned me of crookedness toward the country; but I, as a true citizen, ask you, have I a right to sacrifice public affairs to my private interests?”

Pan Tomash listened. “What will happen then?”

“Think to yourself what must happen.”

“As God is true, I see already that the marriage must be deferred; and the proverb says; ‘What is deferred, escapes.’”

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<sup>37</sup> “Two-bridged” or “of two bridges,” from *bis* and *pons*.

"I will not change my heart, for I have fallen in love for life. You must know that for faithfulness I could put to shame the most enduring Penelope."

Billevich was alarmed still more; for he had an entirely opposite opinion touching the prince's constancy, confirmed as it was by Boguslav's general reputation. But the prince added, as if for a finishing stroke—

"You are right, that no one is sure of his tomorrow. I may fall ill; nay, some kind of sickness is coming on me even now, for yesterday I grew so rigid that Sakovich barely saved me. I may fall in a campaign against Sapyeha; and what delays, what troubles and vexations there will be, could not be written on an ox-hide."

"By the wounds of God, give advice, your highness."

"What advice can I give?" asked the prince. "Though I should be glad myself to have the latch fall as soon as possible."

"Well, let it fall. Marry, and then what will be, will be."

Boguslav sprang to his feet.

"By the holy Gospel! With your wit you should be chancellor of Lithuania. Another man would not have thought out in three days what has come to your mind in a twinkle. That is it! marry, and remain quiet. There is sense in that! As it is, I shall march in two days against Sapyeha, for I must. During that time secret passages to the lady's chamber can be made; and then to the road! That is the head of a statesman! We will let two or three confidants into the secret, and take them as witnesses, so that the marriage may be formal. I will write a contract, secure the jointure, to which I will add a bequest; and let there be silence for the time. My benefactor, I thank you; from my heart, I thank you. Come to my arms, and then go to my beauty. I will wait for her answer, as if on coals. Meanwhile I will send Sakovich for the priest. Be well, father, and, God grant soon, the grandfather of a Radzivill."

When he had said this, he let the astonished noble go from his embrace, and rushed out of the room.

"For God's sake!" said the sword-bearer, recovering himself. "I gave such wise advice that Solomon himself would not be ashamed of it, and I should prefer to do without it. A secret is a secret; but break your head, crush your forehead against a wall, it cannot be otherwise. A blind man can see that! Would that the frost might oppress and kill those Swedes to the last! If it were not for those negotiations, the marriage would take place with ceremony, and all Jmud would come to the wedding. But here a husband must walk to his wife on felt, so as not to make noise. *Tfu*, to the deuce! The Sitsinskis will not burst so soon. Yet, praise be to God! that bursting will not miss them."

When he had said this, he went to Olenka. Meanwhile the prince was taking further counsel with Sakovich.

"The old man danced on two paws like a bear," said the prince; "but he tormented the life out of me. *Uf!* but I squeezed him so that I thought that the boots and straw would fly off his feet. And when I called him 'Uncle,' his eyes stuck out, as if a keg of cabbage hash were choking him. *Tfu! tfu!* wait! I will make you uncle; but I have scores upon scores of such uncles throughout the whole world. Sakovich, I see how she is waiting for me in her room; and she will receive me with her eyes closed and her hands crossed. Wait, I will kiss those eyes for you—Sakovich, you will receive for life the estate of Prudy, beyond Oshmiana. When can Plaska be here?"

"Before evening. I thank your highness for Prudy."



“That is nothing! Before evening? That means any moment. If the ceremony could be performed today, even before midnight! Have you the contract ready?”

“I have. I was liberal in the name of your highness. I assigned Birji as the jointure of the lady. The sword-bearer will howl like a dog when it is taken from him afterward.”

“He will sit in a dungeon, then he will be quiet.”

“Even that will not be needed. As soon as the marriage is invalid, all will be invalid. But did I not tell you that they would agree?”

“He did not make the least difficulty. I am curious to know what she will say. I care nothing about him!”

“Oh, they have fallen each into the arms of the other, are weeping from emotion, are blessing your highness, and are carried away by your kindness and beauty.”

“I don’t know that they are by my beauty; for in some way I look wretched. I am all the time out of health, and I am afraid that yesterday’s numbness will come again.”

“No; you will take something warm.”

The prince was already before the mirror.

“It is blue under my eyes. And that fool, Fouret, darkened my eyebrows crooked. See if they are not crooked! I’ll give orders to thumbscrew him, and make a monkey my body-servant. Why does the old man not come? I should like to go to the lady now, for she will permit me to kiss her before the marriage. How quickly it grows dark today! If Plaska flinches, we must put pincers into the fire.”

“Plaska will not flinch. He is a scoundrel from under a dark star.”

“And he will perform the marriage in scoundrel fashion?”

“A scoundrel will perform the marriage for a scoundrel in scoundrel fashion.”

The prince fell into good humor, and said—

“When there is a pander for best man, there cannot be another kind of marriage.”

For a while they were silent; then both began to laugh. But their laughter sounded with marvellous ill-omen through the dark room. Night fell deeper and deeper.

The prince began to walk through the room, striking audibly with his hammer-staff, on which he leaned heavily, for his feet did not serve him well after the last numbness.

Now the servants brought in candelabra with candles, and went out; but the rush of air bent the flames of the candles, so that for a long time they did not burn straight upward, melting meanwhile much wax.

“See how the caudles are burning!” said the prince. “What do you prophesy from that?”

“That one virtue will melt today like wax.”

“It is wonderful how long that talk lasts.”

“Maybe the spirit of old Billevich is flying over the flames.”

“You are a fool!” answered Boguslav, abruptly. “You have chosen a time to talk of spirits!”

Silence followed.

“They say in England,” said the prince, “that when there is a spirit in the room every light burns blue; but see, now they are burning yellow, as usual.”

“Trash!” answered Sakovich. “There are people in Moscow—”

“But be still!” interrupted Boguslav. “The sword-bearer is coming. No! that is the wind moving the shutters. The devils have brought that old maid of an aunt, Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus! Has anyone ever heard of the like? And she looks like a chimera.”

“If you wish, your highness, I’ll marry her; then she will not be in the way, Plaska will solder us while you are waiting.”

“Well, I will give her a maple spade as a marriage present, and you a lantern, so as to have something to light her way.”

“I will not be your uncle—Bogus.”

“Remember Castor,” answered the prince.

“Do not stroke Castor, my Pollux, against the grain, for he can bite.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the sword-bearer and Panna Kulvyets. The prince stepped up to him quickly, leaning on his hammer. Sakovich rose.

“Well, what? May I go to Olenka?” asked the prince.

The sword-bearer spread out his arms and dropped his head on his breast.

“Your highness, my niece says that Colonel Billevich’s will forbids her to decide her own fate; and even if it did not forbid, she would not marry your highness, not having the heart to do so.”

“Sakovich, do you hear?” said Boguslav, with a terrible voice.

“I too knew of that will,” continued the sword-bearer, “but at the first moment I did not think it an invincible impediment.”

“I jeer at the wills of you nobles,” said the prince; “I spit on your wills! Do you understand?”

“But we do not jeer at them,” said the aroused Pan Tomash; “and according to the will the maiden is free to enter the cloister or marry Kmita.”

“Whom, you sorry fellow? Kmita? I’ll show you Kmita! I’ll teach you!”

“Whom do you call sorry fellow—a Billevich?”

And the sword-bearer caught at his side in the greatest fury; but Boguslav, in one moment, struck him on the breast with his hammer, so that Billevich groaned and fell to the floor. The prince then kicked him aside, to open a way to the door, and rushed from the room without a hat.

“Jesus! Mary! Joseph!” cried Panna Kulvyets.

But Sakovich, seizing her by the shoulder, put a dagger to her breast, and said—

“Quiet, my little jewel, quiet, dearest dove, or I will cut thy sweet throat, like that of a lame hen. Sit here quietly, and go not upstairs to thy niece’s wedding.”

But in Panna Kulvyets there was knightly blood too; therefore she had barely heard the words of Sakovich, when straightway her terror passed into despair and frenzy.

“Ruffian! bandit! pagan!” cried she; “slay me, for I will shout to the whole Commonwealth. The brother killed, the niece disgraced, I do not wish to live! Strike, slay, robber! People, come see!”

Sakovich stifled further words by putting his powerful hand over her month.

“Quiet, crooked distaff, dried rue!” said he; “I will not cut thy throat, for why should I give the Devil that which is his anyhow? But lest thou scream like a peacock before roosting, I will tie up thy pretty mouth with thy kerchief, and take a lute and play to thee of ‘sighs.’ It cannot be but thou wilt love me.”

So saying, the starosta of Oshmiana, with the dexterity of a genuine pickpocket, encircled the head of Panna Kulvyets with her handkerchief, tied her hands in the twinkle of an eye, and threw her on the sofa; then he sat by her, and stretching himself out comfortably, asked her as calmly as though he had begun an ordinary conversation—

“Well, what do you think? I suppose Bogus will get on as easily as I have.”

With that he sprang to his feet, for the door opened, and in it appeared Panna Aleksandra. Her face was as white as chalk, her hair was somewhat dishevelled, her brows were frowning, and threat was in her eyes. Seeing her uncle on the floor, she knelt near him and passed her hand over his head and breast.

The sword-bearer drew a deep breath, opened his eyes, half raised himself, and began to look around in the room, as if roused from sleep; then resting his hand on the floor, he tried to rise, which he did after a while with the help of the lady; then he came with tottering step to a chair, into which he threw himself. Only now did Olenka see Panna Kulvyets lying on the sofa.

“Have you murdered her?” asked she of Sakovich.

“God preserve me!” answered the starosta of Oshmiana.

“I command you to unbind her!”

There was such power in that voice that Sakovich said not a word, as if the command had come from Princess Radzivill herself, and began to unbind the unconscious Panna Kulvyets.

“And now,” said the lady, “go to your master, who is lying up there.”

“What has happened?” cried Sakovich, coming to himself. “You will answer for him!”

“Not to thee, serving-man! Be off!”

Sakovich sprang out of the chamber as if possessed.

## Chapter LXXXV

Sakovich did not leave Boguslav's bedside for two days, the second paroxysm being worse than the first. The prince's jaws closed so firmly that attendants had to open them with a knife to pour medicine into his mouth. He regained consciousness immediately after; but he trembled, quivered, floundered in the bed, and stretched himself like a wild beast mortally wounded. When that had passed, a wonderful weakness came; he gazed all night at the ceiling without saying a word. Next day, after he had taken drugs, he fell into a sound sleep, and about midday woke covered with abundant perspiration.

"How does your highness feel?" asked Sakovich.

"I am better. Have any letters come?"

"Letters from the elector and Steinbock are lying on the table; but the reading must be put off till later, for you have not strength enough yet."

"Give them at once!—do you hear?"

Sakovich brought the letters, and Boguslav read them twice; then he thought awhile and said—

"We will move for Podlyasye tomorrow."

"You will be in bed tomorrow, as you are today."

"I will be on horseback as well as you. Be silent, no interference!"

The starosta ceased, and for a while silence continued, broken only by the tick-tick of the Dantzig clock.

"The advice was stupid, the idea was stupid, and I too was stupid to listen."

"I knew that if it did not succeed the blame would fall on me," answered Sakovich.

"For you blundered."

"The counsel was clever; but if there is some devil at their service who gives warning of everything, I am not to blame."

The prince rose in the bed. "Do you think that they employ a devil?" asked he, looking quickly at Sakovich.

"But does not your highness know the Papists?"

"I know, I know! And it has often come into my head that there might be enchantment. Since yesterday I am certain. You have struck my idea; therefore I asked if you really think so. But which of them could enter into company with unclean power? Not she, for she is too virtuous; not the sword-bearer, for he is too stupid."

"But suppose the aunt?"

"That may be."

"To make certain I bound her yesterday, and put a dagger to her throat; and imagine—I look today, the dagger is as if melted in fire."

"Show it."

“I threw it into the river, though there was a good turquoise in the hilt. I preferred not to touch it again.”

“Then I’ll tell you what happened to me yesterday. I ran into her room as if mad. What I said I do not remember; but I know this—that she cried, ‘I’ll throw myself into the fire first.’ You know what an enormous chimney there is there; she sprang right into it, I after her. I dragged her out on the floor. Her clothes were already on fire. I had to quench the fire and hold her at the same time. Meanwhile dizziness seized me, my jaws became fixed—you would have said that someone had torn the veins in my neck; then it seemed to me that the sparks flying near us were turned into bees, were buzzing like bees. And this is as true as that you see me here.”

“And what came later?”

“I remember nothing, but such terror as if I were flying into an immense well, into some depth without bottom. What terror! I tell you what terror! Even now the hair is standing on my head. And not terror alone, but—how can I explain it?—an emptiness, a measureless weariness and torment beyond understanding. Luckily the powers of heaven were with me, or I should not be speaking with you this day.”

“Your highness had a paroxysm. Sickness itself often brings visions before the eye; but for safety’s sake we may have a hole cut in the river ice, and let the old maid float down.”

“Oh, devil take her! We will march tomorrow in any event, and afterward spring will come; there will soon be other stars, and the nights will be short, weakening every unclean power.”

“If we must march tomorrow, then you would better let the girl go.”

“Even if I wished not, I must. All desire has fallen away from me.”

“Never mind them; let them go to the devil!”

“Impossible!”

“Why?”

“The old man has confessed that he has a tremendous lot of money buried in Billeviche. If I let them alone, they will dig up the money and go to the forests. I prefer to keep them here, and take the money in requisition. There is war now, and this is permissible. Besides, he offered it himself. We shall give orders to dig up the whole garden, foot by foot; we must find the money. While Billevich is sitting here, at least, he will not make a noise and shout over all Lithuania that he is plundered. Rage seizes me when I think how much I have spent on those amusements and tournaments—and all for nothing, for nothing!”

“Rage against that maiden seized me long ago. And I tell your highness that when she came yesterday and said to me, as to the last camp follower, ‘Be off, serving-man! go up, for thy master is lying there!’ I came near twisting her head like a starling; for I thought that she had stabbed you with a knife or shot you from a pistol.”

“You know that I do not like to have anyone manage in my house like a gray goose. It is well that you did not do as you say, for I should have given orders to nip you with those pincers which were heated for Plaska. Keep away from her!”

“I sent Plaska back. He was terribly astonished, not knowing why he was brought nor why he was sent home. He wanted something for his fatigue, ‘because this,’ said he, ‘is loss in my trade;’ but I told him, ‘You bear home a sound skin as reward.’ Do we really march tomorrow for Podlyasye?”

“As God is in heaven. Are the troops sent off according to my orders?”

“The cavalry has gone already to Kyedani, whence it is to march to Kovno and wait there. Our Polish squadrons are here yet; I did not like to send them in advance. The men seem reliable; still they might meet the confederates. Glovlich will go with us; also the Cossacks under Vrotynski. Karlström marches with the Swedes in the vanguard. He has orders to exterminate rebels, and especially peasants on the way.”

“That is well.”

“Kyritz with infantry is to march slowly, so that we may have someone to fall back upon in difficulty. If we are to advance like a thunderbolt—and our entire calculation lies in swiftness—I do not know whether the Prussian and Swedish cavalry will be useful. It is a pity that the Polish squadrons are not reliable; for between us, there is nothing superior to Polish cavalry.”

“Has the artillery gone?”

“It has.”

“And Patterson too?”

“No, Patterson is here; he is nursing Kettling, of whom he is very fond, and who wounded himself rather badly with his own sword. If I did not know Kettling to be a daring officer, I should think that he had cut himself of purpose to avoid the campaign.”

“It will be needful to leave about a hundred men here, also in Rossyeni and in Kyedani. The Swedish garrisons are small, and De la Gardie, as it is, is asking men every day from Löwenhaupt. Besides, when we march out, the rebels, forgetting the defeat of Shavli, will raise their heads.”

“They are growing strong as it is. I have heard again that the Swedes are cut down in Telshi.”

“By nobles or peasants?”

“By peasants under the leadership of a priest; but there are parties of nobles, particularly near Lauda.”

“The Lauda men have gone out under Volodyovski.”

“There is a multitude of youths and old men at home. These have taken arms, for they are warriors by blood.”

“The rebellion can do nothing without money.”

“But we shall get a supply of that in Billeviche.”

“A man must be a genius like your highness to find means in everything.”

“There is more esteem in this country,” said Boguslav, with a bitter smile, “for the man who can please the queen and the nobles. Neither genius nor virtue has value. It is lucky that I am also a prince of the Empire, and therefore they will not tie me by the legs to a pine-tree. If I could only have the revenues regularly from my estates, I should not care for the Commonwealth.”

“But will they not confiscate these estates?”

“We will first confiscate Podlyasye, if not all Lithuania. Now summon Patterson.”

Sakovich went out, and returned soon with Patterson. At Boguslav’s bedside a council was held, at which it was determined to move before daylight next morning and go to Podlyasye by forced marches. The prince felt so much better in the evening that he feasted with the officers and amused himself with jests till late, listening with pleasure to the neighing of

horses and the clatter of arms in the squadrons preparing to march. At times he breathed deeply, and stretched himself in the chair.

"I see that this campaign will bring back my health," said he to the officers, "for amid all these negotiations and amusements I have neglected the field notably. But I hope in God that the confederates and our ex-cardinal (the king) in Poland will feel my hand."

To this Patterson made bold to answer: "It is lucky that Delilah did not clip Samson's hair."

Boguslav looked at him for a while with a strange expression, from which the Scot was growing confused; but after a time the countenance of the prince grew bright with a threatening smile, and he said—

"If Sapyeha is my pillar, I will shake him so that the whole Commonwealth will fall on his head."

The conversation was carried on in German; therefore all the foreign officers understood it perfectly, and answered in chorus—

"Amen!"

The column, with Boguslav at the head of it, marched before daybreak next morning. The Prussian nobles whom the brilliant court attracted, began at the same time to return to their homes. After them marched to Tyltsa those who in Taurogi had sought refuge from the terrors of war, and to whom now Tyltsa seemed safer. Only Billevich, Olenka, and Panna Kulvyets remained, not counting Kettling and the old officer Braun, who held command over the slender garrison.

Billevich, after that blow of the hammer, lay for some days bleeding from the mouth at intervals; but since no bone was broken, he recovered by degrees and began to think of flight.

Meanwhile an official came from Billevich with a letter from Boguslav himself. The sword-bearer did not wish at first to read the letter, but soon changed his mind, following in this the advice of Olenka, who thought it better to know all the plans of the enemy.

*Very Gracious Pan Billevich!—Concordia res parvæ crescunt; discordia maximæ dilabuntur (By concord small things grow great; by discord the greatest are ruined)! The fates brought it about that we did not part in such harmony as my love for you and your charming niece demands, in which God knows I am not to blame, for you know yourself that you fed me with ingratitude in return for my sincere intentions. But for friendship's sake what is done in anger should not be remembered; I think, therefore, that you will excuse my deeds of impulse, because of the injustice which I experienced at your hands. I, too, forgive you from my heart, as Christian charity enjoins, and I wish to return to a good understanding. To give you a proof that no offence has remained in my heart, I have not thought it proper to refuse the service which you have asked of me, and I accept your money.*

Here Billevich stopped reading, struck the table with his fist, and cried—

"He will see me in dreams rather than receive one coin from my caskets!"

"Read on!" said Olenka.

Billevich raised the letter again to his eyes.

*"Not wishing to trouble you and expose your health to hazard in the present stormy times while getting this money, we have ordered ourselves to get it and count it."*

At this point Billevich's voice failed, and the letter fell from his hands to the floor. For a while it seemed that speech was taken from the noble, for he only caught after his hair and pulled it with all his power.

"Strike, whoso believes in God!" cried he at last.

"One injustice the more, the punishment of God nearer; for the measure will soon be filled," said Olenka.



## Chapter LXXXVI

The despair of the sword-bearer was so great that Olenka had to comfort him, and give assurance that the money was not to be looked on as lost, for the letter itself would serve as a note; and Radzivill, the master of so many estates in Lithuania and Russia, had something from which to recover.

But since it was difficult to foresee what might still meet them, especially if Boguslav returned to Taurogi victorious, they began to think of flight the more eagerly.

Olenka advised to defer everything till Kettling's recovery; for Braun was a gloomy and surly old soldier, carrying out commands blindly, and it was impossible to influence him.

As to Kettling, the lady knew well that he had wounded himself to remain in Taurogi; hence her deep faith that he would do everything to aid her. It is true that conscience disturbed her incessantly with the question whether for self-safety she had the right to sacrifice the career, and perhaps the life, of another; but the terrors hanging over her in Taurogi were so dreadful that they surpassed a hundredfold the dangers to which Kettling could be exposed.

Kettling, as an excellent officer, might find service, and a more noble service, elsewhere, and with it powerful protectors, such as the king. Pan Sapyeha, or Pan Charnyetski; and he would, besides, serve a just cause, and would find a career grateful to that country which had received him as an exile. Death threatened him only in case he fell into Boguslav's hands; but Boguslav did not command yet the whole Commonwealth.

Olenka ceased to hesitate; and when the health of the young officer had improved, she sent for him.

Kettling stood before her, pale, emaciated, without a drop of blood in his face, but always full of respect, homage, and submission. At sight of him tears came to Olenka's eyes; for he was the only friendly soul in Taurogi, and at the same time so thin and suffering that when Olenka asked how his health was, he answered—

“Alas, my lady, health is returning, and it would be so pleasant to die.”

“You should leave this service,” said she, looking at him with sympathy; “for such an honorable man needs assurance that he is serving a just cause and a worthy master.”

“Alas!” repeated the officer.

“When will your service end?”

“In half a year.”

Olenka was silent awhile; then she raised her wonderful eyes, which at that moment had ceased to be stern, and said—

“Listen to me. I will speak to you as to a brother, as to a sincere confidant. You can, and you should resign.”

When she had said this, she confessed to him everything—both their plans of escape, and that she relied on his assistance. She represented to him that he could find service everywhere, and a service as good as was his spirit, and honorable as knightly honor could obtain. At last she finished with the following words:—

"I shall be grateful to you till death. I wish to take refuge under the guardianship of God, and to make a vow to the Lord in a cloister. But wherever you may be, far or near, in war or in peace, I shall pray for you. I will implore God to give peace and happiness to my brother and benefactor; for I can give him nothing save gratitude and prayer."

Here her voice trembled; and the officer listened to her words, growing pale as a kerchief. At last he knelt, put both hands to his forehead, and said, in a voice like a groan—

"I cannot, my lady; I cannot!"

"Do you refuse me?" asked Olenka, with amazement.

"O great, merciful God!" said he. "From childhood no lie has risen on my lips, no unjust deed has ever stained me. While still a youth, I defended with this weak hand my king and country. Why, Lord, dost Thou punish me so grievously, and send on me suffering for which, as Thou seest, strength fails me?" Here he turned to Olenka: "My lady, you do not know what an order is for a soldier. In obedience is not only his duty, but his honor and reputation. An oath binds me, my lady—and more than an oath, the word of a knight—that I shall not throw up my service before the time, and that I will fulfil what belongs to it blindly. I am a soldier and a noble; and, so help me God, never in my life will I follow the example of those who betray honor and service. And I will not break my word, even at your command, at your prayer, though I say this in suffering and pain. If, having an order not to let anyone out of Taurogi, I were on guard at the gate, and if you yourself wished to pass against the order, you would pass only over my corpse. You did not know me, my lady; and you were mistaken in me. But have pity on me; understand that I cannot aid you to escape. I ought not to hear of such a thing. The order is express, for Braun and the five remaining officers of us here have received it. My God, my God! if I had foreseen such an order, I should have preferred to go on the campaign. I shall not convince you; you will not believe me. And still God sees—let God judge me after death whether it is true—that I would give my life without hesitation. But my honor—I cannot, I cannot!"

Then Kettling wrung his hands, was silent from exhaustion, and began to breathe quickly.

Olenka had not recovered yet from her amazement. She had not time to pause, or estimate properly that spirit, exceptional in its nobleness. She felt only that the last plank of salvation was slipping from her hands, the only means of escape from hated captivity was failing her. But still she tried to resist.

"I am," said she, after a while, "the granddaughter and the daughter of a soldier. My grandfather and father also valued honor above life; but, precisely for that reason, they would not let themselves be used blindly for every service."

Kettling drew, with trembling hand, from his coat a letter, gave it to Olenka, and said—

"Judge, my lady, if this command does not concern service."

Olenka cast her eyes over the letter, and read as follows:—

*"Since it has come to our knowledge that Billevich, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, intends to leave our residence in secret, with plans hostile to us—namely, to excite his acquaintances, connections, relatives, and clients to rebellion against his Swedish Majesty and us—we recommend to the officers remaining in garrison at Taurogi to guard Billevich and his niece as hostages and prisoners of war, and not to permit their flight under pain of loss of honor and court-martial," etc.*

"The order came from the first stopping-place after the departure of the prince," said Kettling; "therefore it is in writing."

“The will of God be done!” said Olenka, after a while. “It is accomplished!”

Kettling felt that he ought to go; still he did not stir. His pale lips moved from moment to moment, as if he wished to say something and could not get the voice.

He was oppressed by the desire to fall at her feet and implore forgiveness; but on the other hand he felt that she had enough of her own misfortune, and he found a certain wild delight in this—that he was suffering and would suffer without complaint.

At last he bowed and went out in silence; but in the corridor he tore the bandages from his fresh wound, and fell fainting to the floor. When an hour later the palace guard found him lying near the staircase and took him to the barracks, he became seriously ill and did not leave his bed for a fortnight.

Olenka, after the departure of Kettling, remained some time as if dazed. Death had seemed to her more likely to come than that refusal; and therefore, at first, in spite of all her firm temper of spirit, strength, energy failed her; she felt weak, like an ordinary woman, and though she repeated unconsciously, “Let the will of God be done!” sorrow for the disappointment rose above her resignation, copious and bitter tears flowed from her eyes.

At that moment her uncle entered, and looking at his niece, divined at once that she had evil news to impart; hence he asked quickly—

“For God’s sake, what is it?”

“Kettling refuses!”

“All here are ruffians, scoundrels, arch-curs! How is this? And he will not help?”

“Not only will he not help,” answered she, complaining like a little child, “but he says that he will prevent, even should it come to him to die.”

“Why? by the Lord’s wounds, why?”

“For such is our fate! Kettling is not a traitor; but such is our fate, for we are the most unhappy of all people.”

“May the thunderbolts crush all those heretics!” cried Billevich. “They attack virtue, plunder, steal, imprison. Would that all might perish! It is not for honest people to live in such times!”

Here he began to walk with hurried step through the chamber, threatening with his fists; at last he said, gritting his teeth—

“The *voevoda* of Vilna was better; I prefer a thousand times even Kmita to these perfumed ruffians without honor and conscience.”

When Olenka said nothing, but began to cry still more, Billevich grew mild, and after a while said—

“Do not weep. Kmita came to my mind only because that he at least would have been able to wrest us out of this Babylonian captivity. He would have given it to all the Brauns, Kettlings, Pattersons, to Boguslav himself! But they are all the same type of traitors. Weep not! You can do nothing with weeping; here it is necessary to counsel. Kettling will not help—may he be twisted! We will do without him. You have as it were a man’s courage in you, but in difficulty you are only able to sob. What does Kettling say?”

“He says that the prince has given orders to guard us as prisoners of war, fearing, Uncle, that you would collect a party and go to the confederates.”

Billevich put his hands on his hips: “Ha, ha, ha! he is afraid, the scoundrel! And he is right, for I will do so, as God is in heaven.”

“Having a command relating to service, Kettling must carry it out on his honor.”

“Well! we shall get on without the assistance of heretics.”

Olenka wiped her eyes. “And does my uncle think it is possible?”

“I think it is necessary; and if it is necessary it is possible, though we had to let ourselves down by ropes from these windows.”

“It was wrong for me to shed tears; let us make plans as quickly as we can.”

Her tears were dry, her brows contracted again from thought and her former endurance and energy.

It appeared, in fact, that Billevich could find no help, and that the imagination of the lady was much richer in means. But it was difficult for her, since it was clear that they were guarded carefully.

They determined, therefore, not to try before the first news came from Boguslav. In this they placed all their hope, trusting that the punishment of God would come on the traitor and the dishonorable man. Besides, he might fall, he might be confined to his bed, he might be killed by Sapyeha, and then without fail there would rise in all Taurogi a panic, and the gate would not be guarded so carefully.

“I know Sapyeha,” said Billevich, comforting himself and Olenka; “he is a slow warrior, but accurate and wonderfully stubborn. An example of this, his loyalty to the king and country. He pledged and sold everything, and thus has gained a power before which Boguslav is as nothing. One is a dignified senator, the other a fop; one a true Catholic, the other a heretic; one is cleverness itself, the other a water-burner. With whom may victory and the blessing of God be? This Radzivill might well yield to Sapyeha’s day. Just as if there are not punishment and justice in this world! We will wait for news, and pray for Sapyeha’s success.”

Then they began to wait; but a month passed—long, wearisome for afflicted hearts—before the first courier came; and he was sent not to Taurogi, but to Steinbock in Royal Prussia.

Kettling, who from the time of the last conversation dared not appear before Olenka’s eyes, sent her at once a card with the following announcement:—

*“Prince Boguslav has defeated Pan Kryshtof Sapyeha near Bransk; some squadrons of cavalry and infantry are cut to pieces. He is marching on Tykotsin, where Horotkyevich is stationed.”*

For Olenka this was simply a thunderbolt. The greatness of a leader and the bravery of a knight meant for her the same thing. Since she had seen Boguslav, at Taurogi, overcoming the most valiant knights with ease, she imagined him to herself, especially after that news, as an evil but invincible power, against which no one could stand.

The hope that Boguslav might be defeated died in her completely. In vain did her uncle quiet her and comfort her with this—that the prince had not yet met Sapyeha; in vain did he guarantee to her that the very dignity of hetman with which the king had invested him recently, must give positive preponderance over Boguslav; she did not believe this, she dared not.

“Who can conquer Boguslav; who can meet him?” asked she, continually.

Further news seemed to confirm her fears.

A few days later Kettling sent another card with information touching the defeat of Horotkyevich and the capture of Tykotsin. "All Podlyasye," writes he, "is in the hands of the prince, who, without waiting for Sapyeha, is moving against him with forced marches."

"And Sapyeha will be routed!" thought the maiden.

Meanwhile news from other directions flew to them, like a swallow heralding springtime. To that seashore of the Commonwealth this news came late; but because of its lateness it was decked in all the rainbow gleams of wonderful legend from the first ages of Christianity, when saints proclaiming truth and justice still travelled over the earth.

"Chenstohova! Chenstohova!" was repeated by every mouth.

Ice thawed from hearts which bloomed like flowers in the earth warmed by the sun of spring. "Chenstohova has defended itself. Men had seen the Queen of Poland Herself (the Virgin Mary) shielding the walls with Her heavenly mantle; the bombs of the robbers at Her holy feet, crouching like house-dogs; the hands of the Swedes were withered, their muskets grew fast to their faces, till they retreated in terror and shame."

Men, strangers to one another, when they heard these tidings fell the one into the embraces of the other, weeping from delight. Others complained that the tidings came too late.

"But we were here in weeping," said they, "we were in pain, we lived in torment so long, when we should have been rejoicing."

Then it began to roar through the whole Commonwealth, and terrible thunders were heard from the Euxine to the Baltic, so that the waves of both seas were trembling; then faithful people, pious people rose up like a storm in defence of their queen. Consolation entered all hearts, all eyes were flashing with fire; what hitherto had seemed terrible and invincible grew small in their eyes.

"Who will finish him?" said Billevich. "Who will be his equal? Now do you know who? The Most Holy Lady."

The old man and his niece lay for whole days in the form of a cross, thanking God for his mercy on the Commonwealth, and doubting their own rescue no longer.

But for a long period there was silence concerning Boguslav, as if he with all his forces had fallen into water. The officers remaining in Taurogi began to be disquieted and to think of their uncertain future. They would have preferred defeat to that deep silence. But no news could come, for just then the terrible Babinich was rushing with his Tartars in front of the prince and stopping all couriers.

## Chapter LXXXVII

But a certain day Panna Anusia Borzobogati arrived at Taurogi with a convoy of some tens of soldiers.

Braun received her very politely, for he had to do so, since he was thus commanded by a letter from Sakovich, signed by Boguslav himself, enjoining him to have every regard for this lady-in-waiting of Princess Griselda Vishnyevetski. The young lady herself was full of vivacity; from the first moment she began to pierce Braun with her eyes, so that the sullen German moved about as if someone were touching him with fire; she began also to command other officers—in a word, to manage in Taurogi as in her own house. In the evening of the same day she made the acquaintance of Olenka, who received her with distrust, it is true, but politely, in the hope that she would get news from her.

In fact, Anusia had news in plenty. Her conversation began with Chenstohova, since the prisoners in Taurogi were most eager for that news. The sword-bearer listened with special diligence; he held his hands behind his ears so as to lose no word, merely interrupting Anusia's narrative from time to time with the exclamation—

“Praise be to God on high!”

“It is a wonder to me,” said Anusia, at last, “that news of these miracles of the Most Holy Lady have only just reached you, for that is an old story. I was still in Zamost, and Pan Babinich had not come for me—*ai!* how many weeks was it before that? Then they began to beat the Swedes everywhere, in Great Poland and with us; but most of all Pan Charnyetski, before whose very name they fly.”

“Oh, Charnyetski!” cried the sword-bearer, rubbing his hands; “he will give them pepper! I heard of him even from the Ukraine, as of a great warrior.”

Anusia merely shook her dress, and exclaimed to herself with aversion, as if it were a question of the smallest matter: “Oh, it is all over with the Swedes!”

Old Pan Tomash could not restrain himself. Seizing her small hand, he buried the little thing entirely in his enormous mustaches and kissed it eagerly; at last he cried—

“Oh, my beauty! honey flows from your mouth, as God is dear to me! It cannot be but an angel has come to Taurogi.”

Anusia began at once to twist the ends of her tresses, tied with rosy ribbons, and cutting with her eyes from under her brows, said—

“Oh, it is far from me to the angels! But the hetmans of the kingdom have begun to beat the Swedes, and all the quarter soldiers with them, and the knights; and they have formed a confederation in Tyshovtsi. The king has joined it, and they have given out manifestoes; even the peasants are beating the Swedes, and the Most Holy Lady gives Her blessing.”

She spoke as if a bird were warbling, but from that warbling Billevich's heart grew soft, though some of the news was already known to him. He bellowed at last like an aurochs from delight; tears, too, began to flow over the face of Olenka, silent and many.

Seeing this, Anusia, having a good heart from nature, sprang to her at once, and putting her arms around her neck, began to say quickly—

“Do not cry; I am sorry for you, and cannot see you shed tears. Why do you weep?”

There was so much sincerity in her voice that Olenka's distrust vanished at once; but the poor girl wept still more.

"You are so beautiful," said Anusia, comforting her. "Why do you cry?"

"From joy," answered Olenka, "but also from suffering; for we are here in grievous captivity, knowing neither the day nor the hour."

"How is that? Are you not with Prince Boguslav?"

"That traitor! that heretic!" roared Billevich.

"The same has happened to me," said Anusia; "but I do not cry for that reason. I do not deny that the prince is a traitor and a heretic; but he is a courteous cavalier, and respects our sex."

"God grant that in hell they will respect him in the same fashion! Young lady, you know him not, for he has not attacked you as he has this maiden. He is an arch-ruffian, and that Sakovich is another. God give Sapyeha to defeat them both!"

"As to defeating, he will defeat them. Prince Boguslav is terribly sick, and he has not a great force. It is true that he advanced quickly, scattered some squadrons, and took Tykotsin and me; but it is not for him to measure with the forces of Pan Sapyeha. You may trust me, for I saw both armies. With Pan Sapyeha are the greatest cavaliers, who will be able to manage Prince Boguslav."

"Well, do you see! have I not told you?" asked the old man, turning to Olenka.

"I know Prince Boguslav from of old," continued Anusia, "for he is a relative of the Vishnyevetskis and Zamoyski; he came once to us at Lubni, when Prince Yeremi himself was campaigning against the Tartars in the Wilderness. He remembered that I was at home there and nearest the princess. I was such a little thing then, not as I am today. My God! who could think at that time that he would be a traitor? But grieve not; for either he will fail to return, or we shall escape from this place in some way."

"We have tried that already," said Olenka.

"And you did not succeed?"

"How could we?" asked Billevich. "We told the secret to an officer whom we thought ready to aid us; but it turned out that he was ready to hinder, not to help. Seniority over all here is with Braun—the Devil himself could not win that man."

Anusia dropped her eyes.

"Maybe I can. If Pan Sapyeha would only come, so that we might have someone with whom to take refuge."

"God give him at the earliest," answered Pan Tomash, "for among his men we have many relatives, acquaintances, and friends. Among them, too, are former officers of the great Yeremi—Volodyovski, Skshetuski, Zagloba—I know them."

"But they are not with Sapyeha. Oh, if they were, especially Volodyovski, for Shshetuski is married, I should not be here, for Pan Volodyovski would not let himself be picked up as Pan Kotchyts did."

"He is a great cavalier," said Billevich.

"The glory of the whole Commonwealth," added Olenka.

"Have they not fallen, since you did not see them?"

“Oh, no!” answered Anusia, “for the loss of such knights would be spoken of; but nothing was said. You do not know them, they will never yield; only a bullet will kill them, for no man can stand before Skshetuski, Zagloba, or Pan Michael. Though Pan Michael is small, I remember what Prince Yeremi said of him—that if the fate of the whole Commonwealth depended on a battle between one man and another, he would choose Pan Michael for the battle. He was the man who conquered Bogun. Oh, no, Pan Michael will help himself always.”

Billevich, satisfied that he had someone with whom to talk, began to walk with long strides through the room, asking—

“Well, well! Then do you know Pan Volodyovski so intimately?”

“Yes; for we lived in the same place so many years.”

“Indeed! Then certainly not without love!”

“I’m not to blame for that,” answered Anusia, taking a timid posture; “but before this time surely Pan Michael is married.”

“And he is just not married.”

“Even if he were, it is all one to me.”

“God grant you to meet! But I am troubled because you say that they are not with the hetman, for with such soldiers victory would be easier.”

“There is someone there who is worth them all.”

“Who is he?”

“Pan Babinich from Vityebsk. Have you heard of him?”

“Not a word; which is a wonder to me.”

Anusia began to relate the history of her departure from Zamost, and everything that happened on the road. Babinich grew in her narrative to such a mighty hero that the sword-bearer was at a loss to know who he was.

“I know all Lithuania,” said he. “There are houses, it is true, with similar names, such as Babonaubek, Babill, Babinovski, Babinski, and Babiski. Babinich I have not heard, and I think it must be an assumed name; for many who are in parties take such names, so that their property and relatives may not suffer from the enemy. Hm! Babinich! He is some fiery cavalier, since he was able to settle Zamoyski in that fashion.”

“Oh, how fiery!” cried Anusia.

The old man fell into good humor. “How is that?” asked he, stopping before Anusia and putting his hands on his hips.

“If I tell you, you’ll suppose God knows what.”

“God preserve me, I will suppose nothing.”

“Barely had we come out of Zamost when Pan Babinich told me that someone else had occupied his heart, and though he received no rent, still he did not think of changing the tenant.”

“And do you believe that?”

“Of course I believe it,” answered Anusia, with great vivacity; “he must be in love to his ears, since after so long a time—since—since—”



“Oh, there is some ‘since he would not,’” said the old man, laughing.

“But I say that,” repeated Anusia, stamping her foot, “since—Well, we shall soon hear of him.”

“God grant it!”

“And I will tell you why. As often as Pan Babinich mentioned Prince Boguslav, his face grew white, and his teeth squeaked like doors.”

“He will be our friend!” said the sword-bearer,

“Certainly! And we will flee to him, if he shows himself.”

“If I could escape from this place, I would have my own party, and you would see that war is no novelty to me either, and that this old hand is good for something yet.”

“Go under command of Pan Babinich.”

“You have a great wish to go under his command.”

They chatted yet for a long time in this fashion, and always more joyously; so that Olenka, forgetting her grief, became notably more cheerful, and Anusia began at last to laugh loudly at the sword-bearer. She was well rested; for at the last halting-place in Rossyeni she had slept soundly; she left them then only late in the evening.

“She is gold, not a maiden!” said Billevich, after she had gone.

“A sincere sort of heart, and I think we shall soon come to confidence,” answered Olenka.

“But you looked at her frowningly at first.”

“For I thought that she was someone sent here. Do I know anything surely? I fear everyone in Taurogi.”

“She sent? Perhaps by good spirits! But she is as full of tricks as a weasel. If I were younger I don’t know to what it might come; even as it is a man is still desirous.”

Olenka was delighted, and placing her hands on her knees, she put her head on one side, mimicking Anusia, and looking askance at her uncle.

“So, dear uncle! you wish to bake an aunt for me out of that flour?”

“Oh, be quiet, be quiet!” said the sword-bearer.

But he laughed and began to twist his mustache with his whole hand; after a time he added—

“Still she roused such a staid woman as you; I am certain that great friendship will spring up between you.”

In truth, Pan Tomash was not deceived, for in no long time a very lively friendship was formed between the maidens; and it grew more and more, perhaps just for this reason—that the two were complete opposites. One had dignity in her spirit, depths of feeling, invincible will, and reason; the other, with a good heart and purity of thought, was a tufted lark. One, with her calm face, bright tresses, and an unspeakable repose and charm in her slender form, was like an ancient Psyche; the other, a real brunette, reminded one rather of an *ignis fatuus*, which in the night hours entices people into pathless places and laughs at their vexation. The officers in Taurogi, who looked at both every day, were seized with the desire to kiss Olenka’s feet, but Anusia’s lips.

Kettling, having the soul of a Scottish mountaineer, hence full of melancholy, revered and adored Olenka; but from the first glance he could not endure Anusia, who paid him in kind,

making up for her losses on Braun and others, not excepting the sword-bearer of Rossyeni himself.

Olenka soon won great influence over her friend, who with perfect sincerity of heart said to Pan Tomash—

“She can say more in two words than I in a whole day.”

But the dignified lady could not cure her vain friend of one defect, coquetry; for let Anusia only hear the rattle of spurs in the corridor, immediately she would pretend that she had forgotten something, that she wanted to see if there were tidings from Sapyeha; would rush into the corridor, fly like a whirlwind, and coming up against an officer, cry out—

“Oh, how you frightened me!”

Then a conversation would begin, intermingled with twisting of her skirts, glancing from under her brows, and various artful looks, through the aid of which the hardest heart may be conquered.

This coquetry Olenka took ill of her, all the more that Anusia after a few days confessed to a secret love for Babinich. They discussed this among themselves more than once.

“Others beg like minstrels,” said Anusia; “but this dragon chose to look at his Tartars rather than at me, and he never spoke otherwise than in command—‘Come out, my lady! eat, my lady! drink, my lady!’ And if he had been rude at the same time, but he was not; if he had not been painstaking, but he was! In Krasnystav I said to myself, ‘Do not look at me—wait!’ And in Lanchna I was so overcome that it was terrible. I tell you that when I looked into his blue eyes, and when he laughed, gladness seized me, such a prisoner was I.”

Olenka dropped her head, for blue eyes came to her memory too; and that one spoke in the same way, and he had command ever on his lips, activity ever in his face, but neither conscience nor the fear of God.

Anusia, following her own thoughts, continued—

“When he flew over the field on his horse, with his baton, I thought, That is an eagle or some hetman. The Tartars feared him more than fire. When he came, there had to be obedience; and when there was a battle, fires were striking him from desire of blood. I saw many worthy cavaliers in Lubni, but one such that fear seized me in his presence I have never seen.”

“If the Lord God has predestined him to you, you will get him; but that he did not love you, I cannot believe.”

“As to love, he loves me a little, but the other more. He told me himself more than once, ‘It is lucky that I am not able to forget or cease loving, for it would be better to confide a kid to a wolf than such a maiden as you are to me.’”

“What did you say to that?”

“I said, ‘How do you know that I would return your love?’ And he answered, ‘I should not have asked you.’ Now, what are you to do with such a man? That other woman is foolish not to love him, and she must have callousness in her heart. I asked what her name is, but he would not tell me. ‘Better,’ said he, ‘not to touch that, for it is a sore; and another sore,’ said he, ‘is the Radzivills—the traitors!’ And then he made such a terrible face that I would have hidden in a mouse-hole. I simply feared him. But what is the use in talking? He is not for me!”

“Ask Saint Michael for him; I know from Aunt Kulvyets that he is the best aid in such cases. Only be careful not to offend the saint by duping more men.”

"I never will, except so much—the least little bit."

Here Anusia showed on her finger how much; and she indicated at most about half the length of the nail, so as not to anger Saint Michael.

"I do not act so from waywardness," explained she to Billevich, who also had begun to take her frivolity to heart; "but I must, for if these officers do not help us we shall never escape."

"Braun will not let us out."

"Braun is overcome!" replied Anusia, with a thin voice, dropping her eyes.

"But Fitz-Gregory?"

"He is overcome too!" with a voice still thinner.

"And Ottenhagen?"

"Overcome!"

"And Von Irhen?"

"Overcome!"

"May the forest surround you! I see that Kettling is the only man whom you could not manage."

"I cannot endure him! But someone else will manage him. Besides, we can go without his permission."

"And you think that when we wish to flee they will not hinder?"

"They will go with us!" said Anusia, stretching her neck and blinking.

"For God's sake! then why do we stay here? I should like to be far away this day."

But from the consultation which followed at once, it appeared needful to await the decision of Boguslav's fate and Pan Sapyeha's arrival in the neighborhood of Jmud. Otherwise they would be threatened by terrible destruction from even their own people. The society of foreign officers not only would not be a defence, but would add to their danger; for the peasants were so terribly envenomed against foreigners that they murdered without mercy everyone who did not wear a Polish dress. Even Polish dignitaries wearing foreign costume, not to speak of Austrian and French diplomats, could not travel save under the protection of powerful bodies of troops.

"You will believe me, for I have passed through the whole country," said Anusia. "In the first village, in the first forest, ravagers would kill us without asking who we are. It is impossible to flee except to an army."

"But I shall have my own party."

"Before you could collect it, before you could reach a village where you are known, you would lose your life. News from Prince Boguslav must come soon. I have ordered Braun to inform me at once."

But Braun reported nothing for a long time.

Kettling, however, began to visit Olenka; for she, meeting him on a certain day, extended her hand to him. The young officer prophesied evil from this profound silence. According to him the prince, out of regard for the elector and the Swedes, would not hold silence touching the least victory, and would rather exaggerate by description than weaken by silence the significance of real successes.

“I do not suppose that he is cut to pieces,” said the young officer; “but he is surely in such a difficult position that it is hard to find a way out.”

“All tidings arrive here so late,” said Olenka, “and the best proof is that we learned first from Panna Borzobogati, the particulars of the miraculous defence of Chenstohova.”

“I, my lady, knew of that long ago, but, as a foreigner, not knowing the value which that place has for Poles, I did not mention it. That in a great war some small castle defends itself for a time, and repulses a number of storms, happens always, and importance is not attached to it usually.”

“But still for me that would have been the most welcome news!”

“I see in truth that I did ill; for from what has happened since the defence, as I hear now, I know that to be an important event, which may influence the whole war. Still, returning to the campaign of the prince in Podlyasye, it is different. Chenstohova is far away, Podlyasye is nearer. And when the prince succeeded at first, you remember how quickly news came. Believe me, my lady, I am a young man, but from the fourteenth year of my life I am a soldier, and experience tells me that this silence is prophetic of evil.”

“Rather good,” said the lady,

“Let it be good!” answered Kettling. “In half a year my service will be ended. In half a year my oath will cease.”

A few days after this conversation news came at last. It was brought by Pan Byes of the shield Kornie; called, at Boguslav’s court, Cornutus.<sup>38</sup> He was a Polish noble, but altogether foreignized; for serving in foreign armies almost from years of boyhood, he had well-nigh forgotten Polish, or at least spoke it like a German. He had also a foreignized soul, hence was greatly attached to Prince Boguslav. He was going on an important mission to Königsberg, and stopped in Taurogi merely to rest.

Braun and Kettling brought him at once to Olenka and Anusia, who at that time lived and slept together.

Braun stood like a soldier before Anusia; then turned to Byes and said—

“This lady is a relative of Pan Zamoyski, therefore of the prince our lord, who has commanded to show her every attention; and she wishes to hear news from the mouth of an eyewitness.”

Pan Byes in his turn stood erect, as if on service, and awaited the questions.

Anusia did not deny relationship with Boguslav, for the homage of the military pleased her; therefore she motioned to Pan Byes to sit down. When he had taken his place she asked—

“Where is the prince at present?”

“The prince is retreating on Sokolka, God grant successfully,” said the officer.

“Tell the pure truth: how is it with him?”

“I will tell the pure truth and hide nothing, thinking that your worthiness will find strength in your soul to hear news less favorable.”

“I will!” said Anusia, striking one heel against the other under her robe, with satisfaction that she was called “worthiness,” and that the news was “less favorable.”

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<sup>38</sup> *Byes* means “devil;” so *Byes Cornutus* is “horned devil.”

“At first everything went well with us,” said Byes. “We rubbed out on the road several bands of peasants; we scattered the forces of the younger Sapyeha, and cut up two squadrons of cavalry with a regiment of good infantry, sparing no one. Then we defeated Pan Horotkyevich, so that he barely escaped, and some say that he was killed. After that we occupied the ruins of Tykotsin.”

“We know all this. Tell us quickly the unfavorable news,” interrupted Anusia, on a sudden.

“Be pleased, my lady, to listen calmly. We came to Drohichyn, and there the map was unfolded. We had news that Sapyeha was still far away; meanwhile two of our scouting parties were as if they had sunk through the earth. Not a witness returned from the slaughter. Then it appeared that some troops were marching in front of us. A great confusion rose out of that. The prince began to think that all preceding information was false, and that Sapyeha had not only advanced, but had cut off the road. Then we began to retreat, for in that way it was possible to catch the enemy and force him to a general battle, which the prince wished absolutely. But the enemy did not give the field; he attacked and attacked without ceasing. From that everything began to melt in our hands; we had rest neither day nor night. The roads were ruined before us, the dams cut, provisions intercepted. Reports were soon circulated that Charnyetski himself was crushing us. The soldiers did not eat, did not sleep; their courage fell. Men perished in the camp itself, as if the ground were swallowing them. In Bialystok the enemy seized a whole party again, camp-chests, the prince’s carriages and guns. I have never seen anything like it. It was not seen in former wars, either. The prince was changed. He wanted nothing but a general battle, and he had to fight ten small ones every day, and lose them. Order became relaxed. And how can our confusion and alarm be described when we learned that Sapyeha himself had not come up yet, and that in front of us was merely a strong party which had caused so many disasters? In this party were Tartar troops.”

Further words of the officer were interrupted by a scream from Anusia, who, throwing herself suddenly on Olenka’s neck, cried—

“Pan Babinich!”

The officer was surprised when he heard the name; but he judged that terror and hatred had wrested this cry from the breast of the worthy lady; so only after a while did he continue his narrative:—

“To whomsoever God has given greatness, he has given also strength to bear grievous misfortunes; be pleased, therefore, my lady, to calm yourself. Such indeed is the name of this hell-dweller who has undermined the success of the whole expedition, and become the cause of other immense evils. His name, which your worthiness has divined with such wonderful quickness, is repeated now with fear and rage by every mouth in our camp.”

“I saw that Babinich at Zamost,” said Anusia, hastily; “and could I have guessed—”

Here she was silent, and no one knew what would have happened in such an event. The officer, after a moment’s silence, continued—

“Thaws and heat set in, despite, it may be said, the regular order of nature; for we had news that in the south of the Commonwealth there was still severe winter; but we were wading in spring mud, which fastened our heavy cavalry to the earth. But he, having light troops, advanced with more ease. We lost wagons and cannon at every step, and were forced at last to go on horseback. The inhabitants round about, in their blind venom, favored the attackers. What God gives will happen; but I left the whole camp in a desperate condition, as well as the prince himself, whom a malignant fever does not leave, and who loses his power for

whole days. A general battle will come quickly; but how it will end, God knows. If He favors, we may hope for wonders.”

“Where did you leave the prince?”

“A day’s journey from Sokolka. The prince intends to intrench himself at Suhovola or Yanov and receive battle. Sapyeha is two days distant. When I came away, we had a little more freedom; for from a captured informant we learned that Babinich himself had gone to the main camp; without him the Tartars dare not attack, satisfying themselves with annoying scouting parties. The prince, who is an incomparable leader, places all his hopes on a general battle, but, of course, when he is well; if the fever seizes him, he must think of something else, the best proof of which is that he has sent me to Prussia.”

“Why do you go?”

“Either the prince will win the battle or lose it. If he loses it, all Electoral Prussia will be defenceless, and it may happen easily that Sapyeha will pass the boundaries, force the elector to a decision—I say this, for it is no secret, I go to forewarn them to have some defence prepared for those provinces; for the unbidden guests may come in too great numbers. That is the affair of the elector and the Swedes, with whom the prince is in alliance, and from whom he has the right to expect rescue.”

The officer finished.

Anusia heaped a multitude of other questions on him, preserving with difficulty dignity sufficient. When he went out, she gave way to herself completely. She fell to striking her skirts with her hands, turning on her heels like a top, kissing Olenka on the eyes, pulling Billevich by the sleeves, and crying—

“Well, now, what did I say? Who has crushed Prince Boguslav? Maybe Pan Sapyeha? A fig for Sapyeha! Who will crush the Swedes in the same style? Who will exterminate traitors? Who is the greatest cavalier, who is the greatest knight? Pan Andrei, Pan Andrei!”

“What Andrei?” asked Olenka, growing pale suddenly.

“Have I not told you that his name is Andrei? He told me that himself. Pan Babinich! Long life to Babinich! Volodyovski could not have done better!—What is the matter, Olenka?”

Panna Billevich shook herself as if wishing to throw off a burden of grievous thoughts.

“Nothing! I was thinking that traitors themselves bear that name. For there was one who offered to sell the king, dead or alive, to the Swedes or to Boguslav; and he had the same name—Andrei.”

“May God condemn him!” roared Billevich. “Why mention traitors at night? Let us be glad when we have reason.”

“Only let Pan Babinich come here!” added Anusia. “That’s what is needed! I will fool Braun still more. I will, I will, of purpose to raise the whole garrison, and go over with men and horses to Pan Babinich.”

“Do that, do that!” cried Billevich, delighted.

“And afterward—a fig for all those Germans! Maybe he will forget that good-for-nothing woman, and give me his lo—”

Then again her thin voice piped; she covered her face with her hands. All at once an angry thought must have come to her, for she clapped her hands, and said—

“If not, I will marry Volodyovski!”

## Chapter LXXXVIII

Two weeks later it was boiling in all Taurogi. On a certain evening disorderly parties of Boguslav's troops came in—thirty or forty horsemen in a body, reduced, torn, more like spectres than men—and brought news of the defeat of Boguslav at Yanov. Everything had been lost—arms, horses, cannon, the camp. Six thousand choice men went out on that expedition with the prince; barely four hundred returned—these the prince himself led out of the ruin.

Of the Poles no living soul came back save Sakovich; for all who had not fallen in battle, all whom the terrible Babinich had not destroyed in his attacks, went over to Sapyeha. Many foreign officers chose of their own will to stand at the chariot of the conqueror. In one word, no Radzivill had ever yet returned from an expedition more crushed, ruined, and beaten.

And as formerly court adulation knew no bounds in exalting Boguslav as a leader, so now all mouths sounded loudly an unceasing complaint against the incompetent management of the war. Among the remaining soldiers there was endless indignation, which in the last days of the retreat brought complete disorder, and rose to that degree that the prince considered it wiser to remain somewhat in the rear.

The prince and Sakovich halted in Rossyeni. Kettling, hearing of this from soldiers, went immediately with the news to Olenka.

"The main thing," said she, when the news came, "is whether Sapyeha and that Babinich are pursuing the prince, and whether they intend to bring the war to this region."

"I could learn nothing from the statements of the soldiers," answered Kettling, "for fear exaggerates every danger. Some say even that Babinich is here; but since the prince and Sakovich have remained behind, I infer that the pursuit cannot be rapid."

"Still it must come, for it is difficult to think otherwise. Who after victory would not pursue the defeated enemy?"

"That will be shown. I wished to speak of something else. The prince by reason of illness and defeat must be irritated, therefore inclined to deeds of violence. Do not separate now from your aunt and Panna Borzobogati. Do not consent to the journey of your uncle to Tyłtsa, as the last time, before the campaign."

Olenka said nothing. Her uncle had, in fact, not been sent to Tyłtsa; he had merely been ill for some days after the hammer-stroke given by Prince Boguslav. Sakovich, to hide the prince's deed from the people, spread the report that the old man had gone to Tyłtsa. Olenka preferred to be silent on this before Kettling, for the proud maiden was ashamed to confess that any man living had struck a Billevich.

"I thank you for the warning," said she, after a moment's silence.

"I considered it my duty."

But her heart swelled with bitterness; for not long before Kettling might have enabled her to avoid this new danger. If he had consented to the flight, she would have been far away, free of Boguslav forever.

"It is really fortunate for me," said she, "that this warning does not touch your honor, that the prince has not issued an order for you not to warn me."

Kettling understood the reproach, and uttered a speech which Olenka did not expect of him:—

“As to what touches my military service, to guard which my honor commands, I will accomplish that or forfeit my life. Other choice I have not, and do not wish to have. Outside my service I am free to provide against lawlessness. Therefore, as a private man, I leave with you this pistol, and I say, Defend yourself, for danger is near; in case of need, kill! Then my oath will be at an end, and I will hasten to save you.”

He bowed and turned toward the door, but Olenka detained him.

“Cavalier, free yourself from that service! Defend a good cause; defend the injured, for you are worthy to do so; you are honorable. It is a pity that you should be lost on a traitor!”

“I should have freed myself long since, and resigned,” said Kettling, “had I not thought that by remaining I might serve you. Now it is too late. If the prince had returned victorious, I should not have hesitated a moment; but when he is coming back conquered—when, perhaps, the enemy is pursuing him—it would be cowardice to ask for dismissal before the end of the term itself will free me. You will see sufficiently how people of small heart desert in crowds a defeated man. This pistol will send a ball even through armor with ease.”

Kettling went out, leaving on the table the weapon, which Olenka secreted at once. Fortunately the provisions of the young officer and her own fear proved groundless.

The prince arrived in the evening with Sakovich and Patterson, but so crushed and ill that he was barely able to hold himself on his feet. Besides, he did not know well whether Sapyeha was advancing or had sent Babinich in pursuit with the light squadrons. Boguslav had overthrown, it is true, the latter in his attack, together with his horse; but he dared not hope that he had killed him, since it seemed to him that the double-handed sword had turned in the blow on Babinich’s helmet. Besides, he had fired before from a pistol straight into his face, and that had not taken effect.

The prince’s heart was aching at the thought of what such a Babinich would do with his estates should he reach them with his Tartars—and he had nothing with which to defend them; and not only his estates, but his own person. Among his hirelings there were not many like Kettling, and it was just to suppose that at the first news of the coming of Sapyeha’s troops they would desert him to a man.

The prince did not purpose to remain in Taurogi longer than two or three days, for he had to hasten to Royal Prussia to the elector and Steinbock, who might furnish him with new forces, and employ him either in capturing Prussian towns, or send him to aid the king himself, who intended an expedition to the heart of the Commonwealth.

In Taurogi he had to leave some one of the officers to bring order into the remnant of the army, ward off patriot peasants and nobles, defend the property of the two Radzivills, and continue the understanding with Löwenhaupt, commander-in-chief of the Swedes in Jmud.

With this object, after he had come to Taurogi, and after a night’s rest, the prince summoned to council Sakovich, the only man whom he could trust, and to whom alone he could open his heart.

That first “good day” in Taurogi was wonderful, when the two friends saw each other after the ill-starred campaign. For some time they gazed on each other without a word. The prince broke the silence first—

“Well, the devils! they carried the day.”



“They carried the day!” repeated Sakovich.

“It must have been so with such weather. If I had had more light squadrons, or if some devil had not brought that Babinich—twice the same man! The gallows’ bird changed his name. Do not tell anyone of him, so as not to increase his glory.”

“I will not tell. But will not the officers trumpet it, for you presented him before your boots as Banneret of Orsha?”

“The German officers know nothing of Polish names. It is all one to them—Kmita or Babinich. But by the horns of Lucifer, if I could get him! I had him; and the scoundrel brought my men into rebellion, besides leading off Glovich’s troops. He must be some bastard of our blood; it cannot be otherwise! I had him, and he escaped—that gnaws me more than the whole lost campaign.”

“You had him, Prince, but at the price of my head.”

“I tell you sincerely that I would let them flay you, if I might make a drum out of Kmita’s skin!”

“Thank you, Bogus; I could not expect less from your friendship.”

The prince laughed: “But you would have squirmed on Sapyeha’s gridiron. All your scoundrelism would have been fried out of you. I should have been glad to see that!”

“I should be glad to see you in the hands of Kmita, your dear relative. You have a different face, but in form you are like each other, and you have feet of the same size; you are sighing for the same maiden, only she without experience divines that he is stronger, and that he is a better soldier.”

“I could manage two such as you, and I rode over his breast. If I had had two minutes’ time, I should be able to give you my word now that my cousin is not living. You have always been rather dull, hence I took a fancy to you; but in these recent days your wit has left you completely.”

“You have always had your wit in your heels, and therefore you swept away in such fashion before Sapyeha that I have lost all fancy for you, and am ready myself to go to Sapyeha.”

“On a rope?”

“On that with which they will bind Radzivill.”

“Enough!”

“At the service of your highness!”

“It would be well to shoot some of the noisiest of those horsemen, and introduce order.”

“I commanded this morning to hang six of them. They are cold now, and are dancing stubbornly on the ropes, for the wind is fierce.”

“You have done well. But listen! Do you wish to remain in the garrison at Taurogi, for I must leave someone here?”

“I do, and I ask for that office. No one can manage better. The soldiers fear me more than others, for they know that with me there is no trifling. With respect to Löwenhaupt, it is necessary that someone be here more important than Patterson.”

“Can you manage the rebels?”

"I assure your highness that the pine-trees of Jmud will bear weightier fruit than the cones of last year. I will form about two regiments of infantry out of the peasants, and train them in my fashion. I will have my eyes on the estates; and if the rebels attack one of them, I will throw suspicion immediately on some rich noble and squeeze him like cheese in a bag. At first I shall need merely money to pay wages and equip the infantry."

"I will leave what I can."

"From the dowry money?"

"How is that?"

"That means from the Billevich money which you took out of the dowry for yourself in advance."

"If you could only twist the neck of old Billevich in some polite way, it would be well; for it could be done easily, and he has my letter."

"I will try. But the point is in this—has he not sent the note somewhere, or has the maiden not sewed it into her shift? Would you not like to discover?"

"It will come to that; but now I must go, and besides that cursed fever has taken all my strength."

"Your highness, envy me for staying in Taurogi."

"You have a strange kind of wish; but if you meanwhile—I should have you torn apart with hooks. Why do you insist on this office?"

"For I want to marry."

"Whom?" asked the prince, sitting up in bed. "Panna Borzobogati."

"That is a good idea, an excellent idea!" said Boguslav. "I have heard of some will."

"There is a will from Pan Longin Podbipienta. Your highness knows what a powerful family that is, and the estates of Pan Longin are in a number of districts. It is true that the Moscow troops have occupied some; there will be lawsuits, fights, disputes, and attacks without number; but I will help myself, and will not yield one point to any man. Besides, the girl has pleased me greatly; she is pretty and enticing. I noticed in a moment when we captured her that she feigned terror, and shot at me with her eyes at the same time. Only let me stay here as commandant, and from idleness alone the lovemaking will begin."

"One thing I tell you. I will not forbid you to marry; but listen well—no excesses, you understand? That maiden is from the Vishnyevetskis; she is a confidant of Princess Griselda herself; and because of my esteem for the princess, I do not wish to offend her, nor do I wish to offend Pan Zamoyiski."

"There is no need of warning," answered Sakovich; "for since I wish to marry regularly, I must make regular approaches."

"I wish you might get a refusal."

"I know a man who got a refusal, though he is a prince; but I think that that will not come to me. That eye-cutting gives me great consolation."

"Don't tell that man who got a refusal not to give you horns! I will give an addition to your shield, or you will receive a surname, Sakovich Rogaty.<sup>39</sup> She is Borzobogaty, and he is

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<sup>39</sup> *Rogaty* means "horned." *Borzobogaty* means "quickly rich." *Bardzorogaty* means "greatly horned."

Bardzorogaty. You will be a chosen pair. But marry, yes, marry, and let me know of the wedding. I will be your best man.”

Fierce anger appeared on Sakovich’s face, terrible without that. His eyes were covered for a moment as if by smoke; but he soon recovered, and turning the prince’s words into a jest, he said—

“Poor man! you are not able to go downstairs alone, and you make threats. You have your Panna Billevich here; go your way, skeleton! go your way! You’ll nurse Babinich’s children yet!”

“God break your tongue, such a son! You are making sport of the sickness which came within a hair of killing me. I would you were enchanted as I was.”

“What enchantments are there here? At times, when I see how everything goes in the natural world, I think enchantment is stupid.”

“You are stupid yourself! Be silent! do not summon the Devil. You disgust me more and more.”

“Would that I were not the last Pole who has remained faithful to your highness! For my loyalty you feed me with ingratitude. I will return to my dens at home, and sit quietly awaiting the end of the war.”

“Oh, give us peace! You know that I love you.”

“It is grievous for me to see that. The Devil thrust this love for your highness on me. If there is enchantment in anything, it is in that.”

The starosta told the truth; for he loved Boguslav really. The prince knew this, and therefore paid him, if not with strong attachment, with gratitude, which vain people ever have for those who do them homage. Therefore Boguslav agreed willingly to Sakovich’s plans touching Anusia, and determined to aid him in person. In view of this, about midday, when he felt better, he had himself dressed and went to Anusia.

“I have come because of old acquaintance,” said he, “to inquire after your health and ask if the visit to Taurogi has pleased you.”

“In captivity one must be pleased with all things,” answered Anusia, sighing.

The prince laughed. “You are not in captivity. You were taken together with Sapyeha’s soldiers, that is true; and I gave orders to send you here, but only for safety. Not a hair will fall from your head. Be convinced that there are few people whom I respect as I do Princess Griselda, to whose heart you are near; and the Vishnyevetskis and Zamoyskis are connections of mine. You will find here every freedom and every care. I come to you as a well-wishing friend, and I say if you wish to go I will give you an escort, though I have few soldiers myself. I advise you to stay. You, as I have heard, were sent here to seek property willed to you. Be assured that this is not the time to think of such business; and even in time of peace the aid of Sapyeha would not avail in these regions, for he could act only in Vityebsk; here he can do nothing. I shall not touch that affair personally, but through an agent. You need a friendly man, and adroit, esteemed, and feared. If such a man were to take up this matter, surely he would not let people thrust straw instead of grain into his hand.”

“Where shall I, an orphan, find such a protector?” asked Anusia.

“Precisely in Taurogi.”

“Your highness would be pleased yourself—”

Here Anusia put her hands together, and looked so prettily into Boguslav's eyes that if the prince had not been wearied and broken, he would surely have begun to think less sincerely of Sakovich's cause; but since he had no gallantry in his head at that moment, he said quickly—

“Could I do it myself, I should not entrust such a pleasant office to any man; but I am going away, for I must go. I leave in my place, as commandant of Taurogi, the starosta of Oshmiana, Pan Sakovich, a great cavalier, a famous soldier, and a man so adroit that there is not another such in all Lithuania. So I repeat: Stay in Taurogi, for you have no place to go to, since every point is full of ravagers and ruffians, while rebels infest all the roads. Sakovich will protect you here; Sakovich will defend you. Sakovich will see what can be done to obtain those estates; and once he undertakes the affair, I guarantee that no man on earth could bring it to a favorable issue sooner. He is my friend, therefore I know him, and I will say only this: if I had taken those estates from you, and afterward learned that Sakovich was coming to oppose me, I would give them up of my own will, for it is dangerous to struggle with him.”

“If Pan Sakovich would be ready to come to the aid of an orphan—”

“Only be not unjust to him, and he will do anything for you, for your beauty has touched his heart deeply. He is going around sighing now—”

“How could I touch the heart of any man?”

“She is a rascal, the maiden!” thought the prince. But he added aloud: “Let Sakovich explain how that happened. Only do him no wrong; for he is a worthy man and of a noted family, therefore I do not wish that disdain should be shown such a person.”

## Chapter LXXXIX

Next morning the prince received a summons from the elector to go with all speed to Königsberg to take command of the newly levied troops which were to march to Marienburg or Dantzig. The letter contained also news of the daring campaign of Karl Gustav through the whole length of the Commonwealth to Russian regions. The elector foresaw a disastrous end to the campaign; but just for that reason he desired to be at the head of as many troops as possible, that he might in case of need be indispensable to one side or the other, sell himself dearly, and decide the fate of the war. For those reasons he enjoined on the young prince all possible haste, so greatly was he concerned about avoiding delay; but after the first courier he sent a second, who arrived twelve hours later.

The prince, therefore, had not a moment to lose, and not time enough to rest, for the fever returned with its previous violence. Still he had to go. So when he had delegated his authority to Sakovich, he said—

“Perhaps we shall have to transport Billevich and the maiden to Königsberg. There it will be easier in quiet to handle a hostile man firmly; but the girl I will take to the camp, for I have had enough of these ceremonies.”

“It is well, and the cavalry may be increased,” answered Sakovich at parting.

An hour later the prince was no longer in Taurogi. Sakovich remained, an unlimited despot, recognizing no power above himself but that of Anusia. And he began to blow away the dust from before her feet, as on a time the prince had before the feet of Olenka. Restraining his wild nature, he was courteous, anticipating her wishes, divining her thoughts, and at the same time he held himself at a distance, with all the respect which a polished cavalier should have toward a lady for whose hand and heart he is striving.

It must be confessed that this reigning in Taurogi pleased Anusia; it was grateful to her to think that when evening came, in the lower halls, in the corridors, in the barracks, in the garden still covered with winter frost, the sighs of old and young officers were heard; that the astrologer was sighing while looking at the stars from his tower; that even old Billevich interrupted his evening rosary with sighs.

While the best of maidens, she was still glad that those swift affections went not to Olenka, but to her. She was glad also with respect to Babinich; for she felt her power, and it came to her head that if no man had resisted her anywhere, she must have burned on his heart also permanent marks with her eyes.

“He will forget that woman, it cannot be otherwise, for she feeds him with ingratitude; and when he forgets her he knows where to seek me—and he will seek me, the robber!”

Then she threatened him in her soul: “Wait! I will pay you before I console you.”

Meanwhile, though not in real truth caring much for Sakovich, she saw him with pleasure. It is true that he justified himself in her eyes from reproaches of treason in the same way in which Boguslav had explained himself to the sword-bearer. He said, therefore, that peace was already concluded with the Swedes; that the Commonwealth might recover and flourish, had not Pan Sapyeha ruined everything for his own private ends.

Anusia, not knowing overmuch of these matters, let the words pass her ears; but she was struck by something else in Sakovich’s narrative.

“The Billeviches,” said he, “scream in heaven-piercing voices of injustice and captivity; but nothing has happened to them here, and nothing will happen. The prince has not let them go from Taurogi, it is true; but that is for their good, for three furlongs beyond the gate they would perish from ravagers or forest bandits. He has not let them go also, because he loves Panna Billevich, and that also is true. But who will not justify him? Who would act otherwise, who had a feeling heart and a breast burdened with sighs? If he had had less honorable intentions, being such a powerful man, he might have given rein to himself; but he wanted to marry her, he wanted to elevate that stubborn lady to his princely estate, to cover her with happiness, place the coronet of the Radzivills on her head; and these thankless people are hurling invectives at him, thus trying to diminish his honor and fame.”

Anusia, not believing this greatly, asked Olenka that same day if the prince wished to marry her. Olenka could not deny; and because they had become intimate, she explained her reasons for refusal. They seemed just and sufficient to Anusia; but still she thought to herself that it was not so grievous for the Billeviches in Taurogi, and that the prince and Sakovich were not such criminals as Pan Tomash had proclaimed.

Then, also, came news that Sapyeha and Babinich were not only not approaching Taurogi, but had gone with forced marches against the King of Sweden, faraway toward Lvoff. Anusia fell into a rage at first, and then began to understand that if the hetman and Babinich had gone, there was no reason to flee from Taurogi, for they might lose their lives, or in the most favorable event change a quiet existence into a captivity full of dangers.

For this reason it came to disputes between her on one side, and Olenka and Billevich on the other; but even they were forced to admit that the departure of Sapyeha rendered their flight very difficult, if not quite impossible, especially since the country was growing more and more excited, and no inhabitant could be certain of the morrow. Finally, even should they not accept Anusia’s reason, flight without her aid was impossible, in view of the watchfulness of Sakovich and the other officers. Kettling alone was devoted to them, but he would not let himself be involved in any plot against his service; besides, he was absent often, for Sakovich was glad to employ him against armed bands of confederates and ravagers, since he was an experienced soldier and a good officer, therefore he sent him frequently from Taurogi.

But it was pleasanter and pleasanter for Anusia. Sakovich made a declaration to her a month after the departure of the prince; but, the deceiver! she answered cunningly that she did not know him, that men spoke variously concerning him, that she had not time yet to love, that without permission of Princess Griselda she could not marry, and finally, that she wished to subject him to a year’s trial.

The starosta gnawed his anger, gave orders that day to give three thousand stripes to a cavalry soldier for a trifling offence—after this the poor soldier was buried; but the starosta had to agree to Anusia’s conditions. She told the lordling that if he would serve still more faithfully, diligently, and obediently, in a year he would receive whatever love she had.

In this way she played with the bear; and she so succeeded in mastering him that he stifled even his growling. He merely said—

“With the exception of treason to the prince, ask anything of me, even ask me to walk on my knees.”

If Anusia had seen what terrible results of Sakovich’s impatience were falling on the whole neighborhood, she would not have teased him so greatly. Soldiers and residents in Taurogi trembled before him, for he punished grievously and altogether without cause, punished beyond every measure. Prisoners died in chains from hunger, or were burned with hot iron.

More than once it seemed that the wild starosta wished to cool in the blood of men his spirit, at once raging and burning with love, for he started up suddenly and went on an expedition. Victory followed him nearly everywhere. He cut to pieces parties of rebels, and ordered, as an example, that the right hands be cut from captured peasants, who were then sent home free.

The terror of his name girded Taurogi as with a wall; even the most considerable bodies of patriots did not dare to go beyond Rossyeni. Peace was established in all parts, and he formed new regiments of German vagrants and the local peasants with the money extorted from neighboring citizens and nobles, and increased in power so as to furnish men to the prince in case of urgent necessity.

A more loyal and terrible servant Boguslav could not have found.

But Sakovich gazed more and more tenderly at Anusia with his terrible, pale-blue eyes, and played to her on a lute. Life, therefore, in Taurogi passed for Anusia joyously and with amusement; for Olenka it was sore and monotonous. From one there went gleams of gladness, like that light which issues at night from the firefly; the face of the other grew paler and paler, more serious, sterner; her dark brows were contracted more resolutely on her white forehead, so that finally they called her a nun. And she had something in her of the nun; she began to accept the thought that she would become one—that God himself would through suffering and disappointment lead her to peace behind the grating. She was no longer that maiden with beautiful bloom on her face and happiness in her eyes; not that Olenka who on a time while riding in a sleigh with her betrothed, Andrei Kmita, cried, “Hei! hei!” to the pine woods and forests.

Spring appeared in the world. A wind strong and warm shook the waters of the Baltic, now liberated from ice; later on, trees bloomed, flowers shot out from their harsh leafy enclosures; then the sun grew hot, and the poor girl was waiting in vain for the end of Taurogi captivity—for Anusia did not wish to flee, and in the country it was ever more terrible.

Fire and sword were raging as though the pity of God were never to be manifest. Nay more, whoso had not seized the sabre or the lance in winter, seized it in spring; snow did not betray his tracks, the pine wood gave better concealment, and warmth made war the easier.

News flew swallow-like to Taurogi—sometimes terrible, sometimes comforting; and to these and to those the maiden devoted her prayers, and shed tears of sorrow or joy.

Previous mention had been made of a terrible uprising of the whole people. As many as the trees in the forests of the Commonwealth, as many as the ears of grain waving on its fields, as many as the stars shining on it at night between the Carpathians and the Baltic, were the warriors who rose up against the Swedes. These men, being nobles, were born to the sword and to war by God’s will and nature’s order; those who cut furrows with the plough, sowed land with grain; those who were occupied with trade and handicraft in towns; those who lived in the wilderness, from beekeeping, from pitch-making, who lived with the axe or by hunting; those who lived on the rivers and labored at fishing; those who were nomads in the steppes with their cattle—all seized their weapons to drive out the invader.

The Swede was now drowning in that multitude as in a swollen river.

To the wonder of the whole world, the Commonwealth, powerless but a short time before, found more sabres in its defence than the Emperor of Germany or the King of France could have.

Then came news of Karl Gustav—how he was marching ever deeper into the Commonwealth, his feet in blood, his head in smoke and flames, his lips blaspheming. It was hoped any moment to hear of his death and the destruction of all the Swedish armies.

The name of Charnyetski was heard with increasing force from boundary to boundary, transfixing the enemy with terror, pouring consolation into the hearts of the Poles.

“He routed them at Kozyenitsi!” was said one day. “He routed them at Yaroslav!” was repeated a few weeks later; a distant echo repeated: “He has beaten them at Sandomir!” The only wonder was where so many Swedes could still come from after so many defeats.

Finally a new flock of swallows flew in, and with them the report of the imprisonment of the king and the whole Swedish army in the fork of the rivers. It seemed that the end was right there. Sakovich stopped his expeditions; he merely wrote letters at night and sent them in various directions.

Billevich seemed bewildered. He rushed in every evening with news to Olenka. Sometimes he gnawed his hands, when he remembered that he had to sit in Taurogi. The old soldier soul was yearning for the field. At last he began to shut himself up in his room, and to ponder over something for hours at a time. Once he seized Olenka in his arms, burst out into great weeping, and said—“You are a dear girl, my only daughter, but the country is dearer.” And next day he vanished, as if he had fallen through the earth. Olenka found merely a letter, and in it the following words:—

*“God bless thee, beloved child! I understood well that they are guarding thee and not me, and that it would be easier for me to escape alone. Let God judge me, thou poor orphan, if I did this from hardness of heart and lack of fatherly love for thee. But the torment surpassed my endurance. I swear, by Christ’s wounds, that I could endure no longer. For when I thought that the best Polish blood was flowing in a river pro patria el libertate (for the country and liberty), and in that river there was not one drop of my blood, it seemed to me that the angels of heaven were condemning me. If I had not been born in our sacred Jmud, where love of country and bravery are cherished, if I had not been born a noble, a Billevich, I should have remained with thee and guarded thee. But thou, if a man, wouldst have done as I have; therefore thou’lt forgive me for leaving thee alone, like Daniel in the lions’ den, whom God in His mercy preserved; so I think that the protection of our Most Holy Lady the Queen will be better over thee than mine.”*

Olenka covered the letter with tears: but she loved her uncle still more because of this act, for her heart rose with pride. Meanwhile no small uproar was made in Taurogi. Sakovich himself rushed to the maiden in great fury, and without removing his cap asked—

“Where is your uncle?”

“Where all, except traitors, are—in the field!”

“Did you know of this?” cried he.

But she, instead of being abashed, advanced some steps and measuring him with her eyes, said with inexpressible contempt—

“I knew—and what?”

“Ah, if it were not for the prince! You will answer to the prince!”

“Neither to the prince nor to his serving-lad. And now I beg you—” And she pointed to the door.

Sakovich gnashed his teeth and went out.



That same day news of the victory at Varka was ringing through Taurogi, and such fear fell on all partisans of the Swedes that Sakovich himself dared not punish the priests who sang publicly in the neighboring churches “Te Deum.”

A great burden fell from his heart, when a few weeks later a letter came from Boguslav, who was before Marienburg, with information that the king had escaped from the river sack. But the other news was very disagreeable. The prince asked reinforcements, and directed to leave in Taurogi no more troops than were absolutely needed for defence.

All the cavalry ready marched the next day, and with it Kettling, Oettingen, Fitz-Gregory—in a word, all the best officers, except Braun, who was indispensable to Sakovich.

Taurogi was still more deserted than after the prince’s departure. Anusia grew weary, and annoyed Sakovich all the more. The starosta thought of removing to Prussia; for parties, made bold by the departure of the troops, began again to push beyond Rossyeni. The Billeviches themselves had collected about five hundred horse, small nobles and peasants. They had inflicted a sensible defeat on Bützov, who had marched against them, and they ravaged without mercy all villages belonging to Radzivill.

Men rallied to them willingly; for no family, not even the Hleboviches, enjoyed such general honor and respect. Sakovich was sorry to leave Taurogi at the mercy of the enemy; he knew that in Prussia it would be difficult for him to get money and reinforcements, that he managed here as he liked, there his power must decrease; still he lost hope more and more of being able to maintain himself.

Bützov, defeated, took refuge under him; and the tidings which he brought of the power and growth of the rebellion made Sakovich decide at last on the Prussian journey.

As a positive man, and one loving to bring into speedy effect that which he had planned, he finished his preparations in ten days, issued orders, and was ready to march.

Suddenly he met with an unlooked for resistance, and from a side from which he had least expected it—from Anusia Borzobogati.

Anusia did not think of going to Prussia. She was comfortable in Taurogi. The advances of confederate “parties” did not alarm her in the least; and if the Billeviches had attacked Taurogi itself, she would have been glad. She understood also that in a strange place, among Germans, she would be at Sakovich’s mercy completely, and that she might the more easily be brought there to obligation, for which she had no desire; therefore she resolved to insist on remaining. Olenka, to whom she explained her reasons, not only confirmed the justness of them, but implored with all her power, with tears in her eyes, to oppose the journey.

“Here,” said she, “salvation may come—if not today, tomorrow; there we should both be lost utterly.”

“But see, you almost abused me because I wanted to conquer the starosta, though I knew of nothing; as I love Princess Griselda, it only came somehow of itself. But now would he regard my resistance were he not in love? What do you think?”

“True, Anusia, true,” responded Olenka.

“Do not trouble yourself, my most beautiful flower! We shall not stir a foot out of Taurogi; besides, I shall annoy Sakovich terribly.”

“God grant you success!”

“Why should I not have it? I shall succeed, first, because he cares for me, and second, as I think he cares for my property. It is easy for him to get angry with me; he can even wound me with his sabre; but then all would be lost.”

And it turned out that she was right. Sakovich came to her joyful and confident; but she greeted him with disdainful mien.

“Is it possible,” asked she, “that you wish to flee to Prussia from dread of the Billeviches?”

“Not before the Billeviches,” answered he, frowning; “not from fear; but I go there from prudence, so as to act against those robbers with fresh forces.”

“Then a pleasant journey to you.”

“How is that? Do you think that I will go without you, my dearest hope?”

“Whoso is a coward may find hope in flight, not in me.”

Sakovich was pale from anger. He would have punished her; but seeing before whom he was standing, he restrained himself, softened his fierce face with a smile, and said, as if jesting—

“Oh, I shall not ask. I will seat you in a carriage and take you along.”

“Will you?” asked she. “Then I see that I am held here in captivity against the will of the prince. Know then, sir, that if you do that, I shall not speak another word to you all my life, so help me the Lord God! for I was reared in Lubni, and I have the greatest contempt for cowards. Would that I had not fallen into such hands! Would that Pan Babinich had carried me off for good into Lithuania, for he was not afraid of any man!”

“For God’s sake!” cried Sakovich. “Tell me at least why you are unwilling to go to Prussia.”

But Anusia feigned weeping and despair.

“Tartars as it were have taken me into captivity, though I was reared by Princess Griselda, and no one had a right to me. They seize me, imprison me, take me beyond the sea by force, will condemn me to exile. It is soon to be seen how they will tear me with pincers! O my God! my God!”

“Have the fear of that God on whom you are calling!” cried the starosta. “Who will tear you with pincers?”

“Oh, save me, all ye saints!” cried Anusia, sobbing.

Sakovich knew not what to do; he was choking with rage. At times he thought that he would go mad, or that Anusia had gone mad. At last he threw himself at her feet and said that he would stay in Taurogi. Then she began to entreat him to go away, if he was afraid; with which she brought him to final despair, so that, springing up and going out, he said—

“Well! we shall remain in Taurogi, and whether I fear the Billeviches will soon be seen.”

And collecting that very day the remnant of Bützov’s defeated troops and his own, he marched, but not to Prussia, only to Rossyeni, against the Billeviches, who were encamped in the forests of Girlakol. They did not expect an attack, for news of the intended withdrawal of the troops from Taurogi had been repeated in the neighborhood for several days. The starosta struck them while off their guard, cut them to pieces, and trampled them. The sword-bearer himself, under whose leadership the party was, escaped from the defeat; but two Billeviches of another line fell, and with them a third part of the soldiers; the rest fled to the four points of the world. The starosta brought a number of tens of prisoners to Taurogi, and gave orders to slay everyone, before Anusia could intercede in their defence.

There was no further talk of leaving Taurogi; and the starosta had no need of doing so, for after this victory parties did not go beyond the Dubisha.

Sakovich put on airs and boasted beyond measure, saying that if Löwenhaupt would send him a thousand good horse he would rub out the rebellion in all Jmud. But Löwenhaupt was not in those parts then. Anusia gave a poor reception to this boasting.

“Oh, success against the sword-bearer was easy,” said she; “but if he before whom both you and the prince fled had been there, of a certainty you would have left me and fled to Prussia beyond the sea.”

These words pricked the starosta to the quick.

“First of all, do not imagine to yourself that Prussia is beyond the sea, for beyond the sea is Sweden; and second, before whom did the prince and I flee?”

“Before Pan Babinich!” answered she, courtesying with great ceremony.

“Would that I might meet him at a sword’s length!”

“Then you would surely lie a sword’s depth in the ground; but do not call the wolf from the forest.”

Sakovich, in fact, did not call that wolf with sincerity; for though he was a man of incomparable daring, he felt a certain, almost superstitious, dread of Babinich—so ghastly were the memories that remained to him after the recent campaign. He did not know, besides, how soon he would hear that terrible name.

But before that name rang through all Jmud, there came in time other news—for some the most joyful of joyful, but for Sakovich most terrible—which all mouths repeated in three words throughout the whole Commonwealth—

“Warsaw is taken!”

It seemed that the earth was opening under the feet of traitors; that the whole Swedish heaven was falling on their heads, together with all the deities which had shone in it hitherto like suns. Ears would not believe that the chancellor Oxenstiern was in captivity; that in captivity were Erskine, Löwenhaupt, Wrangel; in captivity the great Wittemberg himself, who had stained the whole Commonwealth with blood, who had conquered one half of it before the coming of Karl Gustav; that the king, Yan Kazimir, was triumphing, and after the victory would pass judgment on the guilty.

And this news flew as if on wings; roared like a bomb through the Commonwealth; went through villages, for peasant repeated it to peasant; went through the fields, for the wheat rustled it; went through the forest, for pine-tree told it to pine-tree; the eagles screamed it in the air; and all living men still the more seized their weapons.

In a moment the defeat of Giralakol was forgotten around Taurogi. The recently terrible Sakovich grew small in everything, even in his own eyes. Parties began again to attack bodies of Swedes; the Billeviches, recovering after their last defeat, passed the Dubisha again, at the head of their own men and the remainder of the Lauda nobles.

Sakovich knew not himself what to begin, whither to turn, from what side to look for salvation. For a long time he had no news from Prince Boguslav, and he racked his head in vain. Where was he, with what troops could he be? And at times a mortal terror seized him: had not the prince too fallen into captivity? He called to mind the prince’s saying that he would turn his tabor toward Warsaw, and that if they would make him commandant over the

garrison in the capital, he would prefer to be there, for he could look more easily on every side.

There were not wanting also people who asserted that the prince must have fallen into the hands of Yan Kazimir.

“If the prince were not in Warsaw,” said they, “why should our gracious lord the king exclude him alone from amnesty, which he extended in advance to all Poles in the garrison? He must be already in the power of the king; and since it is known that Prince Yanush’s head was destined for the block, it is certain that Prince Boguslav’s will fall.”

In consequence of these thoughts Sakovich came to the same conviction, and wrestled with despair—first, because he loved the prince; second, because he saw that if this powerful protector were dead, the wildest beast would more easily find a place to hide its head in the Commonwealth than he, the right hand of the traitor.

All that seemed left to him was to flee to Prussia without regard to Anusia’s opposition, and seek there bread, service.

“But what would happen?” asked the starosta of himself more than once, “if the elector, fearing the anger of Yan Kazimir, should give up all fugitives?”

There was no issue but to seek safety beyond the sea, in Sweden itself.

Fortunately, after a week of this torment and doubt, a courier came from Prince Boguslav with a long autograph letter.

*“Warsaw is taken from the Swedes,” wrote the prince. “My tabor and effects are lost. It is too late for me to recede, for the king’s advisers are so envenomed against me that I was excepted from amnesty. Babinich harassed my troops at the very gates of Warsaw. Kettling is in captivity. The King of Sweden, the elector, and I, with Steinbock and all forces, are marching to the capital, where there will be a general battle soon. Karl Gustav swears that he will win it, though the skill of Yan Kazimir in leading armies confounds him not a little. Who could have foreseen in that ex-Jesuit such a strategist? But I recognized him as early as Berestechko, for there everything was done with his head and Vishnyevetski’s. We have hope in this—that the general militia, of which there are several tens of thousands with Yan Kazimir, will disperse to their homes, or that their first ardor will cool and they will not fight as at first. God grant some panic in that rabble; then Karl Gustav can give them a general defeat, though what will come later is unknown, and the generals themselves tell one another in secret that the rebellion is a hydra on which new heads are growing every moment. First of all, ‘Warsaw must be taken a second time.’ When I heard this from the mouth of Karl, I asked, ‘What next?’ He said nothing. Here our strength is crumbling, theirs is increasing. We have nothing with which to begin a new war. And courage is not the same; no Poles will join the Swedes as at first. My uncle the elector is silent as usual; but I see well that if we lose a battle, he will begin tomorrow to beat the Swedes, so as to buy himself into Yan Kazimir’s favor. It is bitter to bow down, but we must. God grant that I be accepted, and come out whole without losing my property. I trust only in God; but it is hard to escape fear, and we must foresee evil. Therefore what property you can sell or mortgage for ready money, sell and mortgage; even enter into relations with confederates in secret. Go yourself with the whole tabor to Birji, as from there to Courland is nearer. I should advise you to go to Prussia; but soon it will not be safe from fire and sword in Prussia, for immediately after the taking of Warsaw Babinich was ordered to march through Prussia to Lithuania, to excite the rebellion and burn and slay on the road. And you know that he will carry out that order. We tried to catch him at the Bug; and Steinbock himself sent a considerable force against him, of*

*which not one man returned to give news of the disaster. Do not try to measure yourself with Babinich, for you will not be able, but hasten to Birji.*

*“The fever has left me entirely; here there are high and dry plains, not such swamps as in Jmud. I commit you to God, etc.”*

The starosta was as much grieved at the news as he was rejoiced that the prince was alive and in health; for if the prince foresaw that the winning of a general battle could not much better the shattered fortune of Sweden, what could be hoped for in future? Perhaps the prince might save himself from ruin under the robe of the crafty elector, and he, Sakovich, under the prince; but what could be done in the mean while? Go to Prussia?

Pan Sakovich did not need the advice of the prince to restrain him from meeting Babinich. Power and desire to do that were both lacking. Birji remained, but too late for that also. On the road was a Billevich party; then a second party—nobles, peasants, people of the prince, and God knows what others—who at a mere report would assemble and sweep him away as a whirlwind sweeps withered leaves; and even if they did not assemble, even if he could anticipate them by a swift and bold march, it would be needful to fight on the road with others; at every village, at every swamp, in every field and forest, a new battle. What forces should he have to take even thirty horses to Birji? Was he to remain in Taurogi? That was bad, for meanwhile the terrible Babinich would come at the head of a powerful Tartar legion; all the parties would fly to him; they would cover Taurogi as with a flood, and wreak a vengeance such as man had not heard of till that day.

For the first time in his life the hitherto insolent starosta felt that he lacked counsel in his head, strength in undertaking, and decision in danger; and the next day he summoned to counsel Bützov, Braun, and some of the most important officers.

It was decided to remain in Taurogi and await tidings from Warsaw.

But Braun from that council went straight to another, to one with Anusia.

Long, long did they deliberate together. At last Braun came out with face greatly moved; but Anusia rushed like a storm to Olenka—

“Olenka, the time has come!” cried she, on the threshold. “We must flee!”

“When?” asked the valiant girl, growing a little pale, but rising at once in sign of immediate readiness.

“Tomorrow, tomorrow! Braun has the command, and Sakovich will sleep in the town, for Pan Dzyeshuk has invited him to a banquet. Pan Dzyeshuk was long ago prepared, and he will put something in Sakovich’s wine. Braun says that he will go himself and take fifty horse. Oh, Olenka, how happy I am! how happy!”

Here Anusia threw herself on Panna Billevich’s neck, and began to press her with such an outburst of joy that she asked—

“What is the matter, Anusia? You might have brought Braun to this long ago.”

“I might, I might. I have told you nothing yet! O my God! my God! Have you heard of nothing? Pan Babinich is marching hither! Sakovich and all of them are dying of fear! Pan Babinich is marching, burning, and slaying. He has destroyed one party, has beaten Steinbock himself, and is advancing with forced marches, so as to hurry. And to whom can he hurry hither? Tell me, am I not a fool?”

Here tears glistened in Anusia’s eyes. Olenka placed her hands together as if in prayer, and raising her eyes said—

“To whomsoever he is hastening, may God straighten his paths, bless him, and guard him!”

## Chapter XC

Kmita, wishing to pass from Warsaw to Royal Prussia and Lithuania, had really no easy task in the very beginning, for not farther from Warsaw than Serotsk was a great Swedish force. Karl Gustav in his time had commanded it to take position there purposely to hinder the siege of the capital. But since Warsaw was captured, that army had nothing better to do than stop the divisions which Yan Kazimir might send to Lithuania or Prussia. At the head of the Swedish force were two Polish traitors, Radzeyovski and Radzivill, with Douglas, a skilful warrior, trained as no other of the Swedish generals in sudden warfare; with them were two thousand chosen infantry and cavalry, with artillery of equal number. When the leaders heard of Kmita's expedition, since it was necessary for them in every event to approach Lithuania to save Tykotsin, besieged anew by Mazovians and men of Podlyasye, they spread widely their nets for Pan Andrei in the triangle on the Bug, between Serotsk on one side and Zlotorya on the other, and Ostrolenko at the point.

Kmita had to pass through that triangle, for he was hurrying, and there lay his nearest road. He noticed in good season that he was in a net, but because he was accustomed to that method of warfare he was not disconcerted. He counted on this—that the net was too greatly extended, and therefore the meshes in it were so widely stretched that he would be able to pass through them. What is more, though they hunted him diligently, not only did he double back, not only did he escape, but he hunted them. First, he passed the Bug behind Serotsk, pushed along the bank of the river to Vyshkov in Branshchyk; he cut to pieces three hundred horse sent on a reconnoissance, so that, as the prince had written, not a man returned to give account of the disaster. Douglas himself pushed him into Dlugosyodle; but Kmita, dispersing the cavalry, turned back, and instead of fleeing with all his might, went straight to the eyes of the enemy as far as the Narev, which he crossed by swimming. Douglas stood on the bank waiting for boats; but before they were brought Kmita returned in the dark through the river, and striking the vanguard of the Swedes brought panic and disorder to Douglas's whole division.

The old general was amazed at this movement; but next day his amazement was greater, when he learned that Kmita had gone around the whole army, and doubling back to the spot from which they had started him like a wild beast, had seized at Branshchyk Swedish wagons following the army, together with booty and money, cutting down at the same time fifty men of the infantry convoy.

Sometimes the Swedes saw Kmita's Tartars for whole days with the naked eye on the edge of the horizon, but could not reach them. Still Pan Andrei carried off something every moment. The Swedish soldiers were wearied, and the Polish squadrons which held yet with Radzeyovski, though formed of dissenters, served unwillingly. But the population served Kmita with enthusiasm. He knew every movement of the smallest scouting-party, of each wagon which went forward or remained in the rear. Sometimes it seemed that he was playing with the Swedes, but that was tiger-play. He spared no prisoners; he ordered the Tartars to hang them, for the Swedes did the same. At times you would say that irrepressible fury had come upon him, for he hurled himself with blind insolence on superior forces.

"An insane man leads that division!" said Douglas.

"Or a mad dog!" said Radzeyovski.

Boguslav thought he was one and the other, but underneath both a consummate soldier. The prince related boastfully to the generals that he had hurled that cavalier twice to the earth, with his own hand.

In fact, Babinich attacked Boguslav most furiously. He sought him evidently; the pursued became himself the pursuer.

Douglas divined that there must be some personal hatred in the matter.

The prince did not deny this, though he gave no explanations. He paid Babinich with the same coin; for following the example of Hovanski, he put a price on his head; and when that availed nothing, he thought to take advantage of Kmita's hatred and through it bring him into a trap.

"It is a shame for us to bother so long with this robber," said he to Douglas and Radzeyovski; "he is prowling around us like a wolf around a sheepfold. I will go against him with a small division as a decoy; and when he strikes me I will detain him till you come up; then we will not let the crawfish out of the net."

Douglas, whom this chase had long since annoyed, made only small opposition, asserting that he could not and should not expose the life of such a great dignitary and relative of kings to the chance of being seized by one marauder. But when Boguslav insisted, he agreed.

It was determined that the prince should go with a detachment of five hundred troopers, that each man should have behind him a foot soldier with a musket. This stratagem was to lead Babinich into error.

"He will not restrain himself when he hears of only five hundred horsemen, and he will attack undoubtedly," said the prince. "When the infantry spit in his eyes, his Tartars will scatter like sand; he will fall himself, or we shall take him alive."

This plan was carried out quickly and with great accuracy. First, news was sent out, two days in advance, that a party of five hundred horse was to march under Prince Boguslav. The generals calculated with certainty that the local inhabitants would inform Babinich of this. In fact, they did inform him.

The prince marched in the deep and dark night toward Vansosh and Yelonka, passed the river at Cherevino, and leaving his cavalry in the open field, stationed his infantry in the neighboring groves, whence they might issue unexpectedly. Meanwhile Douglas was to push along by the bank of the Narev, feigning to march on Ostrolenko. Radzeyovski was in advance, with the lighter cavalry from Ksyenjopole.

Neither of the three leaders knew well where Babinich was at that moment, for it was impossible to learn anything from the peasants, and the cavalry were not able to seize Tartars. But Douglas supposed that Babinich's main forces were in Snyadovo, and he wished to surround them, so that if Babinich should move on Boguslav, he would intercept him on the side of the Lithuanian boundary and cut off his retreat.

Everything seemed to favor the Swedish plans. Kmita was really in Snyadovo; and barely had the news of Boguslav's approach reached him, when he fell at once into the forest, so as to come out unexpectedly near Cherevino.

Douglas, turning aside from the Narev, struck in a few days upon the traces of the Tartar march, and advanced by the same road, therefore from the rear after Babinich. Heat tormented the horses greatly, as well as the men encased in iron armor; but the general advanced without regard to those hindrances, absolutely certain that he would come upon Babinich's army unexpectedly and in time of battle.



Finally, after two days' march he came so near Cherevino that the smoke of the cottages was visible. Then he halted, and occupying all the passages and narrow pathways, waited.

Some officers wished to advance as a forlorn hope and strike at once; but Douglas restrained them, saying—

“Babinich, after attacking the prince, when he sees that he has to do not with cavalry alone, but also with infantry, will be obliged to retreat; and as he can retreat only by the old road, he will fall as it were into our open arms.”

In fact, it seemed that all they had to do was to listen, and soon Tartar howling would be heard, and the first discharges of musketry.

Meanwhile one day passed, and in the forests of Cherevino it was as silent as if a soldier's foot had never been in it.

Douglas grew impatient, and toward night sent forward a small party to the field, enjoining on them the utmost caution.

The party returned in the depth of the night, without having seen or done anything. At daylight Douglas himself advanced with his whole force. After a march of some hours he reached a place filled with traces of the presence of soldiers. His men found remnants of biscuits, broken glass, bits of clothing, and a belt with cartridges such as the Swedish infantry use; it became certain that Boguslav's infantry had stopped in that place, but they were not visible anywhere. Farther on in the damp forest Douglas's vanguard found many tracks of heavy cavalry horses, but on the edge tracks of Tartar ponies; still farther on lay the carcass of a horse, from which the wolves had recently torn out the entrails. About a furlong beyond they found a Tartar arrow without the point, but with the shaft entire. Evidently Boguslav was retreating, and Babinich was following him.

Douglas understood that something unusual must have happened. But what was it? To this there was no answer. Douglas fell to pondering. Suddenly his meditation was interrupted by an officer from the vanguard.

“Your worthiness!” said the officer, “through the thicket about a furlong away are some men in a crowd. They do not move, as if they were on watch. I have brought the guard to a halt, so as to report to you.”

“Cavalry or infantry?” asked Douglas.

“Infantry. There are four or five of them in a group; it was not possible to count them accurately, for the branches hide them. But they seem yellow, like our musketeers.”

Douglas pressed his horse with his knees, pushed forward quickly to the vanguard, and advanced with it. Through the thickets, now thinner, were to be seen in the remoter deep forest a group of soldiers perfectly motionless, standing under a tree.

“They are ours, they are ours!” said Douglas. “The prince must be in the neighborhood.”

“It is a wonder to me,” said the officer; “they are on watch, and none of them calls, though we march noisily.”

Here the thickets ended, and the forest was clean of undergrowth. The men approached and saw four persons standing in a group, one at the side of the other, as if they were looking at something on the ground. From the head of each one rose a dark strip directly upward.

“Your worthiness!” said the officer at once, “these men are hanging.”

“That is true!” answered Douglas.

They sprang forward, and stood for a while near the corpses. Four foot-soldiers were hanging together by ropes, like a bunch of thrushes, their feet barely an inch above the ground, for they were on the lower branches.

Douglas looked at them indifferently enough; then said as if to himself, "Now we know that the prince and Babinich have passed this way."

Then he fell to thinking again, for he did not know well whether to continue on by the forest path or go out on the Ostrolenko highway.

Half an hour later they found two other corpses. Evidently they were marauders or sick men whom Babinich's Tartars had seized while pursuing the prince.

"But why did the prince retreat?"

Douglas knew him too well—that is, both his daring and his military experience—to admit even for a moment that the prince had not sufficient reasons. Therefore something must have intervened.

Only next day was the affair explained. Pan Byes Kornie had come from Prince Boguslav, with a party of thirty horse, to report that Yan Kazimir had sent beyond the Bug against Douglas the full hetman Pan Gosyevski, with six thousand Lithuanians and Tartar horse.

"We learned this," said Pan Byes, "before Babinich came up; for he advanced very carefully and attacked frequently, therefore annoyingly. Gosyevski is twenty or twenty-five miles distant. When the prince received the tidings, he was forced to retreat in haste, so as to join Radzeyovski, who might be cut to pieces easily. But by marching quickly we made the junction. The prince sent out at once parties of a few tens of men in every direction, with a report to your worthiness. Many of them will fall into Tartar or peasant hands, but in such a war it cannot be otherwise."

"Where are the prince and Radzeyovski?"

"Ten miles from here, at the river."

"Did the prince bring back all his forces?"

"He was forced to leave the infantry, which is coming through the thickest forest, so as to escape the Tartars."

"Such cavalry as the Tartar is made to go through the densest forests. I do not expect to see that infantry again. But no one is to blame, and the prince acted like an experienced leader."

"The prince threw out one party the most considerable to Ostrolenko, to lead Gosyevski into error. He will go to Ostrolenko at once, thinking that our whole force is there."

"That is well!" said Douglas, comforted. "We will manage Gosyevski."

And he marched without delay to join Boguslav and Radzeyovski. They met that same day, to the great delight, especially, of Radzeyovski, who feared captivity more than death, for he knew that as a traitor and the originator of all the misfortunes of the Commonwealth he would have to give a terrible answer. But now, after the junction with Douglas, the Swedish army had more than four thousand men; therefore it was able to offer an effective resistance to the forces of the full hetman. He had, it is true, six thousand cavalry; but Tartars—except those of Babinich, who were trained—could not be used in offensive battle, and Pan Gosyevski himself, though a skilled and learned warrior, was not able, like Charnyetski, to inspire men with an enthusiasm which nothing could resist.

But Douglas was at a loss to understand why Yan Kazimir should send the full hetman beyond the Bug. The Swedish king with the elector was marching on Warsaw; a general battle must therefore follow, sooner or later. And though Yan Kazimir was at the head of a force superior in numbers to the Swedes and the Brandenburgers, still six thousand men formed too great a force for the King of Poland to set aside voluntarily.

It is true that Gosyevski had saved Babinich from trouble, but still the king did not need to send out a whole division to the rescue of Babinich. Hence there was in this expedition some secret object, which the Swedish general, despite all his penetration, could not divine.

In the letter of the King of Sweden sent a week later great alarm was evident, and as it were astonishment caused by that expedition, but a few words explained the reasons of this. According to the opinion of Karl Gustav, the hetman was not sent to attack Douglas's army, nor to go to Lithuania to aid the uprising there, for in Lithuania the Swedes, as it was, were not able to do anything but to threaten Royal Prussia, namely, the eastern part of it, which was completely stripped of troops.

"The calculation is," wrote the king, "to make the elector waver in faithfulness to the treaty of Marienburg and to us; which may easily happen, since the elector is ready to enter into alliance with Christ against the Devil and at the same time with the Devil against Christ, so as to win something from both."

The letter ended by enjoining on Douglas to strive with all his forces not to let the hetman go to Prussia, "who if he cannot reach there in the course of a few weeks, will be forced beyond doubt to return to Warsaw."

Douglas saw that the task given him did not surpass his powers at all. Not so long before he had met with a certain success in opposing Charnyetski himself; therefore Gosyevski was not terrible. The Swedish general did not hope, it is true, to crush Gosyevski's division, but he felt certain that he would be able to stop him and curb all his movements.

In fact, from that moment began very skilful approaches of the two armies, which, avoiding on both sides a general battle, endeavored each to flank the other. Both leaders emulated each other; but the experienced Douglas was in so far superior that he did not let Gosyevski advance beyond Ostrolenko. But Babinich, saved from Boguslav's attack, did not hasten to join the Lithuanian division, for he occupied himself with great zeal on that infantry which Boguslav in his hurried march to Radzeyovski was forced to leave behind. Babinich's Tartars, guided by local woodmen, pursued night and day, finishing every moment the incautious or those who dropped into the rear. Lack of provisions forced the Swedes at last to separate into small detachments which could find food more easily; this was all that Babinich was waiting for.

He divided his forces into three commands, under lead of Akbah Ulan, Soroka, and himself, and in a few days he destroyed the greater part of that infantry. It was an untiring hunt after men in forest thickets, in willows, in reeds—a hunt full of noise, uproar, shouting, shooting, and death.

Widely did it spread the glory of Babinich's name among the Mazovians. Bands collected and joined Gosyevski at Ostrolenko itself, when the full hetman, whose march was only a demonstration, received a command from the king to march back to Warsaw. For a short period only could Babinich rejoice with his acquaintances; namely, with Zagloba and Volodyovski, who at the head of the Lauda squadron attended the hetman. But they greeted one another very cordially, for great friendship and intimacy existed already between them. The young colonels were sharply annoyed that they could not act now against Boguslav; but Zagloba consoled them by pouring frequently into their glasses, and saying—

“That is nothing! My head has been working since May over stratagems, and I have never racked it over anything in vain. I have a number ready—very excellent stratagems; but there is no time to apply them, unless at Warsaw, whither we are all marching.”

“I must go to Prussia,” said Babinich, “and cannot be at Warsaw.”

“Can you reach Prussia?” asked Volodyovski.

“As God is in heaven, I shall spring through; and I promise you sacredly to make not the worst cabbage-hash, for I shall say to my Tartars, ‘Riot, my soul!’ They would be glad even here to draw the knife across people’s throats; but I have told them that pay for every violence is the rope. But in Prussia I will give way even to my own will. Why should I not spring through? You were not able; but that is another thing, for it is easier to stop a large force than such a party as mine, with which it is easy to hide. More than once was I sitting in the rushes, and Douglas’s men passed right there, knowing nothing of me. Douglas too will surely follow you, and leave the field free to me.”

“But, as we hear, you have wearied him out too,” said Pan Michael, with satisfaction.

“Ah, the scoundrel!” added Zagloba. “He had to change his shirt every day, he sweated so. You never stole up to Hovanski better than to him, and I must acknowledge that I could not have done better myself, though, in his time, Konyetspolski said that Zagloba in partisan warfare was unsurpassed.”

“It seems to me,” said Pan Michael to Kmita, “that if Douglas returns he will leave Boguslav here to attack you.”

“God grant it! I have the same hope,” answered Kmita, quickly. “Were I to seek him, and he me, we should find each other. He will not pass through me a third time; and if he does, then I shall not rise again. I remember your secrets well; and all the Lubni thrusts I have in memory like ‘Our Father.’ Every day, too, I try them with Soroka, so as to train my hand.”

“What are stratagems good for?” exclaimed Pan Michael; “the sabre is the main thing.”

This maxim touched Zagloba somewhat; therefore he said at once: “Every windmill thinks that the main thing is to whirl its wings. Do you know why, Michael? Because it has chaff under its roof; that is, in its head. Military art rests on stratagems; if not, Roh Kovalski might be grand hetman and you full hetman.”

“And what is Pan Kovalski doing?” asked Kmita.

“Pan Kovalski has now an iron helmet on his head, and justly, for cabbage is best out of a pot. He has grown rich on plunder in Warsaw, has come into good repute, and gone to the hussars, to Prince Polubinski, and all so as to be able to put a spear into Karl Gustav. He comes every day to our tent, and stares to see if the neck of the decanter is sticking out of the straw. I cannot break that lad of drinking. Good example goes for nothing; but I prophesied to him that this desertion of the Lauda squadron would turn out evil. The rogue! the thankless fellow! in return for all the benefits which I have shown him, such a son for a lance!”

“But did you rear him?”

“My dear sir, do not make me a bear-trainer! To Sapyeha, who asked me the same question. I answered that he and Roh had the same preceptor, but not me; for I in youthful years was a cooper, and knew how to set staves very well.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This means that if Zagloba had been preceptor to the hetman or Kovalski, they would have had better wit. “Having a stave loose or lacking in his barrel,” means, in Polish, that a man’s mind is not right.

“To begin with, you would not dare to tell that to Sapyeha,” said Volodyovski; “and secondly, though you grumble at Kovalski, you love him as the apple of your eye.”

“I prefer him to you, Pan Michael; for I could never endure May-bugs, nor soapy little fellows who at the sight of the first woman who comes along play antics like German dogs.”

“Or like those monkeys in the Kazanovski Palace, with which you were carrying on war.”

“Oh, laugh, laugh! You can take Warsaw without me next time.”

“Was it you, then, who took Warsaw?”

“But who captured the Krakow Gate? Who invented captivity for the generals? They are sitting now on bread and water in Zamost; and when Wittemberg looks at Wrangel, he says, ‘Zagloba put us here!’ and both fall to weeping. If Sapyeha were not ill, and if he were present, he would tell you who first drew the Swedish claw from the skin of Warsaw.”

“For God’s sake!” said Kmita, “do this for me—send news of that battle for which they are preparing at Warsaw. I shall be counting the days and nights on my fingers till I know something certain.”

Zagloba put his finger to his forehead. “Listen to my forecast,” said he, “for what I tell you will be accomplished as surely as that this glass is standing before me—Is it not standing before me?”

“It is, it is! Speak on.”

“We shall either lose this general battle, or we shall win it—”

“Every man knows that!” put in Volodyovski.

“You might be silent, Michael, and learn something. Supposing that we lose this battle, do you know what will happen? You see you do not know, for you are moving those little awls under your nose like a rabbit. Well, I will tell you that nothing will happen—”

Kmita, who was very quick, sprang up, struck his glass on the table, and said—

“You are beating around the bush!”

“I say nothing will happen!” repeated Zagloba. “You are young, therefore you do not know. As affairs now stand, our king, our dear country, our armies may lose fifty battles one after another, and the war will go on in the old fashion—the nobles will assemble, and with them the lower ranks. But if they do not succeed one time, they will another, until the enemy’s force has melted away. But when the Swedes lose one great battle, the Devil will take them without salvation, and with them the elector to boot.”

Here Zagloba grew animated, emptied his glass, struck it on the table, and continued—

“Listen—for you will not hear this from every mouth, for not everyone knows how to take a general view of things. Many a man is thinking, ‘What is waiting for us now? how many battles, how many defeats,’—which, in warring with Karl, are not unlikely—‘how many tears, how much bloodshed, how many grievous paroxysms?’ And many a one will doubt and blaspheme against the mercy of God and the Most Holy Mother. But I tell you this: do you know what is waiting for those vandal enemies?—destruction; do you know what is waiting for us?—victory! If they beat us one hundred times, very well; but we will beat them the hundred and first time, and that will be the end.”

When he had said this, Zagloba closed his eyes for a moment, but soon opened them. He looked ahead with gleaming vision, and suddenly shouted with the whole force of his breast: “Victory! victory!”

Kmita was flushed from delight: "In God's name, he is right, he speaks justly. It cannot be otherwise! Such an end has to come!"

"It must be acknowledged that you are not lacking here," said Volodyovski, putting his finger on his forehead. "The Commonwealth may be occupied; but to stay in it is impossible, so at last the Swedes will have to go out."

"Well, is that it? I am not lacking!" said Zagloba, rejoiced at the praise. "If that is true, then I will prophesy further. God is with the just!" Here he turned to Kmita. "You will finish the traitor Radzivill; you will go to Taurogi, recover the maiden, marry her, rear posterity. May I have the pip on my tongue if this will not happen as I say! But for God's sake, don't smother me!"

Zagloba was rightfully cautious, for Kmita seized him in his arms, raised him, and began to hug him so that the old man's eyes were bursting out. He had barely come to his feet and recovered breath, when Pan Michael, greatly delighted, seized him by the hand—

"It is my turn! Tell what awaits me."

"God bless you, Michael! your pretty tufted lark will hatch out a whole brood—never fear. *Uf!*"

"Vivat!" cried Volodyovski.

"But first, we will make an end of the Swedes," added Zagloba.

"We will, we will!" cried the young colonels, shaking their sabres.

"Vivat! victory!"

## Chapter XCI

A week later Kmita crossed the boundaries of Electoral Prussia at Raygrad. It came to him easily enough; for before the departure of the full hetman he disappeared in the woods so secretly that Douglas felt sure that his party too had marched with the whole Tartar-Lithuanian division to Warsaw, and he left merely small garrisons in the castles for the defence of those parts.

Douglas, with Radzeyovski and Radzivill, followed Gosyevski.

Kmita heard of this before passing the boundary, and grieved greatly that he could not meet his mortal enemy eye to eye, and lest punishment might come to Boguslav from other hands—namely, from Volodyovski, who also had made a vow against him.

Hence, not being able to wreak vengeance on the person of the traitor for the wrongs done the Commonwealth and himself, he wreaked it in terrible fashion on the lands of the elector.

That very night in which the Tartars had passed the boundary pillar, the heavens grew red from flames. An uproar was heard, with the weeping of people trampled by the foot of war. Whoso was able to beg for mercy in the Polish tongue was spared at command of the leader; but German settlements, colonies, villages, and hamlets were turned into a river of fire, and the terrified inhabitants went under the knife.

And not so swiftly does oil spread over the sea when the sailor pours it to pacify the waves, as that *chambul* of Tartars and volunteers spread over quiet and hitherto safe regions. It seemed that every Tartar was able to double and treble himself, to be at the same time in a number of places, to burn, to slay. They spared not even grain in the field, nor trees in the gardens.

Kmita had held his Tartars so long in the leash that at last, when he let them free like a flock of birds of prey, they grew almost wild in the midst of slaughter and destruction. One surpassed the other; and since they could not take captives, they swam from morning till evening in blood.

Kmita himself, having in his heart no little fierceness, gave it full freedom, and though he did not steep his own hands in the blood of defenceless people, he looked with pleasure on the flow of blood. In his soul he was at rest, and conscience reproached him with nothing; for this was not Polish blood, and besides it was the blood of heretics; therefore he judged that he was doing a work pleasing to God, and especially to the saints of the Lord.

The elector, a vassal, therefore a servant of the Commonwealth and living from its bounties, was the first to raise his sacrilegious hand against it; therefore punishment was his due, and Kmita was purely an instrument of God's vengeance.

For this reason, when in the evening he was repeating his Litany in peace by the blaze of burning German settlements, and when the screams of the murdered interrupted the tally of his prayers, he began again from the beginning, so as not to burden his soul with the sin of inattention to the service of God.

But he did not cherish in his heart savage feelings alone; for, besides piety, various other feelings moved it, connected by memory with distant years. Therefore those times came frequently to his mind when he attacked Hovanski with such glory, and his former comrades stood as if alive before his eyes—Kokosinski; the gigantic Kulvyets-Hippocentaurus; the

spotted Ranitski, with senatorial blood in his veins; Uhlik, playing on the flageolet; Rekuts, on whom human blood was not weighing; and Zend, imitating birds and every kind of beast.

They all, save perhaps Rekuts alone, were burning in hell; and behold, if they were living now, they might wallow in blood without bringing sin on their souls, and with profit to the Commonwealth.

Here Pan Andrei sighed at the thought of how destructive a thing license is, since in the morning of youth it stops the road for the ages of ages to beautiful deeds.

But he sighed more than all for Olenka. The deeper he entered the Prussian country, the more fiercely did the wounds of his heart burn him, as if those fires which he kindled roused at the same time his old love. Almost every day then he said in his heart to the maiden—

“Dearest dove, you may have forgotten me, or if you remember, disgust fills your heart; but I, at a distance or near, in the night or the daytime, in labor for the country and toils, am thinking ever of you, and my soul flies to you over pinewoods and waters, like a tired bird, to drop down at your feet. Only to the country and to you would I give all my blood; but woe is me, if in your heart you proclaim me an outlaw forever.”

Thus meditating, he went ever farther to the north along the boundary belt. He burned and slew, sparing no one. Sadness throttled him terribly. He would like to be in Taurogi on the morrow; but the road was still long and difficult, for at last they began to ring all the bells in the province of Prussia.

Everyone living seized arms to resist the dreadful destroyers; garrisons were brought in from towns the remotest, regiments were formed of even village youths, and soon they were able to place twenty men against every Tartar.

Kmita rushed at these commands like a thunderbolt, beat them, hanged men, escaped, hid, and again sailed out on a wave of fire; but still he could not advance so swiftly as at first. More than once it was necessary to attack in Tartar fashion, and hide for whole weeks in thickets or reeds at the banks of a lake. The inhabitants rushed forth more and more numerous, as if against a wolf; and he bit too like a wolf—with one snap of his jaws he gave death, and not only defended himself, but did not desist from attack.

Loving genuine work, he did not leave a given district, in spite of pursuit, until he had annihilated it for miles around with fire and sword. His name reached, it is unknown by what means, the mouths of the people, and bearing terror and fright, thundered on to the shores of the Baltic.

Babinich might, it is true, return within the boundaries of the Commonwealth, and in spite of Swedish detachments, move quickly to Taurogi; but he did not wish to do so, for he desired to serve not only himself but the country.

Now came news which gave courage for defence and revenge to the people in Prussia, but pierced the heart of Babinich with savage sorrow. News came like a thunderclap of a great battle at Warsaw, which the King of Poland had lost. “Karl Gustav and the elector have beaten all the troops of Yan Kazimir,” people repeated to one and another with delight throughout Prussia. “Warsaw is recaptured!” “This is the greatest victory of the war, and now comes the end of the Commonwealth!” All men whom the Tartars seized and put on the coals to obtain information, repeated the same; there was also exaggerated news, as is common in time of war and uncertainty. According to this news the Poles were cut to pieces, the hetmans had fallen, and Yan Kazimir was captured.



Was all at an end, then? Was that rising and triumphing Commonwealth naught but an empty illusion? So much power, so many troops, so many great men and famous warriors; the hetmans, the king, Charnyetski with his invincible division, the marshal of the kingdom, other lords with their attendants—had all perished, had all rolled away like smoke? And are there no other defenders of this hapless country, save detached parties of insurgents who certainly at news of the disaster will pass away like a fog?

Kmita tore the hair from his head and wrung his hands; he seized the wet earth, pressed palms-full of it to his burning head.

“I shall fall too,” said he; “but first this land will swim in blood.”

And he began to fight like a man in despair. He did not hide longer, he did not attack in the forest and reeds, he sought death; he rushed like a madman on forces three times greater than his own, and cut them to pieces with sabres and hoofs. In his Tartars all traces of human feeling died out, and they were turned into a herd of wild beasts. A predatory people, but not overmuch fitted for fighting in the open field, without losing their genius for surprises and ambush, they, by continual exercise, by continual conflict, had trained themselves so that breast to breast they could hold the field against the first cavalry, and scatter quadrangles even of the Swedish guard. In their struggles with the armed mob of Prussia, a hundred of those Tartars scattered with ease two and even three hundred sturdy men armed with spears and muskets.

Kmita weaned them from weighting themselves with plunder; they took only money and gold, which they sewed up in their saddles, so that when one of them fell the survivors fought with rage for his horse and his saddle. Growing rich in this manner, they lost none of their swiftness, well-nigh superhuman. Recognizing that under no leader on earth could they find such rich harvests, they grew attached to Babinich, as hounds to the hunter, and with real Mohammedan honesty placed after battle in the hands of Soroka and the Kyemliches the lion’s share of the plunder which belonged to the *bagadyr*.

“Allah!” said Akbah Ulan, “few of them will see Bagche-Serai, but all who go back will be *murzas*.”

Babinich, who from of old knew how to live upon war, collected great riches; but death, which he sought more than gold, he found not.

A month passed again in battles and labors surpassing belief. The Tartar horses, though fed with barley and Prussian wheat, needed absolutely even a couple of days’ rest; therefore the young colonel, wishing also to gain news and fill the gaps in his ranks with fresh volunteers, withdrew, near Dospada, to the Commonwealth.

News soon came, and so joyful that Kmita almost lost his wits. It turned out to be true that the equally valiant and unfortunate Yan Kazimir had lost a great three-days’ battle at Warsaw, but for what reason?

The general militia in an immense majority had gone home, and the part which remained did not fight with such spirit as at the taking of Warsaw, and on the third day of the battle a panic set in. But for the first two days the victory was inclining to the side of Poland. The regular troops, not in sudden partisan warfare, but in a great battle with the most highly trained soldiers of Europe, exhibited such skill and endurance that amazement seized the Swedish and Brandenburg generals themselves.

Yan Kazimir had won immortal glory. It was said that he had shown himself a leader equal to Karl Gustav, and that if all his commands had been carried out the enemy would have lost the general battle, and the war would have been ended.

Kmita received these tidings from eyewitnesses, for he had stumbled upon nobles who, serving in the general militia, had taken part in the battle. One of them told him of the brilliant attack of the hussars, during which Karl himself, who, despite the entreaties of his generals, would not withdraw, came near perishing. All showed the falsehood of the report that the army had been routed or the hetmans had fallen. On the contrary, the whole force, except the general militia, remained intact, and withdrew in good order along the country.

From the bridge of Warsaw which was giving way cannon had fallen; but they were pulled through the Vistula in a breath. The army swore by everything that under such a leader as Yan Kazimir they would, in the coming battle, conquer Karl Gustav, the elector, and whomsoever it might be necessary to conquer. As to the recent battle it was only a trial, though unfavorable, but full of solace for the future.

Kmita was at a loss to know how the first news could have been so terrible. They explained to him that Karl Gustav had sent out exaggerated reports purposely; in fact, he did not know well what to do. The Swedish officers whom Pan Andrei seized a week later confirmed this opinion.

He learned also from them that beyond others the elector lived in fear, and was thinking more and more of his own safety; for a multitude of his men had fallen at Warsaw, and disease had seized those remaining so terribly that it was destroying them more quickly than battles. At the same time the men of Great Poland, eager to make good Uistsie and all wrongs, had attacked the monarchy of Brandenburg itself, burning and slaying, leaving nothing behind them but land and water. According to the officers, the hour was near in which the elector would abandon the Swedes, and join the more powerful.

“It is needful to touch him with fire somewhat,” thought Kmita, “so that he may do this the more quickly.”

And since his horses were rested already, and he had made good the losses among his men, he passed the boundary again at Dospada, and rushed on the German settlements like a spirit of destruction.

Various “parties” followed his example. He found a weaker defence; hence he accomplished more. News came ever more joyful, more gladdening, so that it was difficult to believe it.

First of all, it was said that Karl Gustav, who, after the Warsaw battle, had pushed on to Radom, was retreating at breakneck speed to Royal Prussia. What had happened? Why was he retreating? There was no answer to this for a time, till at last the name of Charnyetski thundered again through the Commonwealth. He was victorious at Lipets, victorious at Stjemeshno; at Rava itself he had cut to pieces the rearguard of the retreating Karl; then, learning that two thousand cavalry were returning from Krakow, he attacked that body, and did not let one man escape to announce the defeat. Colonel Forgell, brother of the general, thirteen captains, and twenty-four lieutenants went into captivity. Others gave the numbers as twice greater; some insisted in their enthusiasm that Yan Kazimir had not suffered a defeat, but had won a victory at Warsaw, and that his march along the country was only a stratagem for the destruction of the enemy.

Kmita himself began to think the same; for being a soldier from youthful years, he understood war, but had never heard of a victory after which the victor was in a worse condition than before. The Swedes were evidently in a worse condition, and just after the battle at Warsaw.

Pan Andrei called to mind at that moment the words of Zagloba, when at their last meeting he said that victories would not improve the Swedish cause, but that one defeat might destroy it.

“That is a chancellor’s head,” pondered Kmita, “which reads in the future as in a book.”

Here he remembered the further predictions—how he, Kmita or Babinich, would go to Taurogi, find his Olenka, persuade her, marry her, and have descendants to the glory of the Commonwealth. When he remembered this, fire entered his veins; he wished not to lose a moment, but to leave Prussians and slaughter for a time, and fly to Taurogi.

On the eve of his starting there came to him a noble of Lauda, of Volodyovski’s squadron, with a letter from the little knight.

*“We are going with Sapyeha and Prince Michael Radzivill against Boguslav and Waldeck,” wrote Pan Michael. “Join us, since a field for just vengeance will be found, and it is proper to pay the Prussians for harm done the Commonwealth.”*

Pan Andrei could not believe his own eyes, and for some time he suspected the noble of being sent by some Prussian or Swedish commandant of purpose to lead him with the *chambul* into ambush. Had Gosyevski come a second time to Prussia? It was impossible not to believe. The handwriting was Volodyovski’s, the arms Volodyovski’s, and Pan Andrei remembered the noble too. Then he inquired where Gosyevski was, and to what point he intended to go.

The noble was rather dull. It was not for him to know whither the hetman was marching; he knew only that he was two days distant, and that the Lauda squadron was with him. Charnyetski had borrowed it for a while, but had sent it back long ago, and now it was marching under lead of the hetman. “They say,” concluded the noble, “that we must go to Prussia, and the soldiers are greatly delighted. But our work is to obey and to strike.”

Kmita, when he had heard the narrative, did not hesitate long. He turned his *chambul*, went with forced marches to the hetman, and after two days fell late at night into the arms of Volodyovski, who, pressing him, said at once—

“Count Waldeck and Prince Boguslav are in Prostki, making intrenchments to secure themselves with a fortified camp. We shall march on them.”

“Today?” asked Kmita.

“Tomorrow before daybreak—that is, in two or three hours.”

Here they embraced each other again. “Something tells me that God will give him into our hands!” exclaimed Kmita, with emotion. “And I think so too.”

“I have made a vow to fast till death on the day in which I meet him.”

“The protection of God will not fail you,” said Volodyovski. “I shall not be envious, either, if this lot falls to you, for your wrong is greater. Yendrek, let me look at you! You have grown perfectly black from the weather; but you have acquitted yourself. The whole division looks with the greatest esteem on your labor. Nothing behind you but ruins and corpses! You are a born soldier; and it would go hard with Zagloba himself, were he here, to invent in self-praise deeds better than those you have done.”

“But where is Zagloba?”

“He remained with Sapyeha; for he fell into weeping and despair after Kovalski.”

“Then has Kovalski fallen?”

Volodyovski pressed his lips. “Do you know who killed him?”

“Whence should I know? Tell me!”

“Prince Boguslav!”

Kmita turned in his place, as if thrust with a point, and began to draw in air with a hiss; at last he gritted his teeth, and casting himself on the bench, rested his head on his palms in silence.

Volodyovski clapped his hands, and ordered the attendant to bring drink; then he sat near Kmita, filled a cup for him, and began—

“Ron Kovalski died such a cavalier’s death that God grant any man of us to die no worse. It is enough to inform you that Karl Gustav himself after the battle celebrated his funeral, and a whole regiment of the guards fired a salute over his coffin.”

“If only not at those hands, at those hellish hands!” exclaimed Kmita.

“Yes, at the hands of Boguslav; we know that from hussars who with their own eyes saw the sad end.”

“Were you not there then?”

“In battle places are not chosen, but a man stands where he is ordered. If I had been there, either I should not be here now, or Boguslav would not be making trenches at Prostki.”

“Tell me how it all happened. It will only increase the anger.”

Pan Michael drank, wiped his yellow mustaches, and began:—

“Of a certainty you are not lacking in narratives of the Warsaw battle, for everyone is speaking of it; therefore I shall not dwell on it too long. Our gracious lord—God give him health and long years! for under another king the country would have perished amid disasters—has shown himself a famous leader. Had there been such obedience as there was command, had we been worthy of the king, the chroniclers would have to describe a new Polish victory at Warsaw equal to those at Grünwald and Berestechko. Speaking briefly, on the first day we beat the Swedes; on the second, fortune inclined now to one, now to the other, but still we were uppermost. At that time the Lithuanian hussars, in which Kovalski served under Prince Polubinski, a great soldier, went to the attack. When they were passing I saw them as I see you this moment, for I was with the Lauda men on a height near the intrenchments. They were twelve hundred strong—men and horses such as the world had not seen. They passed twenty rods distant from our flank; and I tell you that the earth trembled under them. We saw the Brandenburg infantry planting their pikes in the ground in a hurry, to meet the first onrush. Then began firing from muskets, till the smoke covered them entirely. We looked. The hussars had given rein to their horses. O God, what a sweep! They fell into the smoke—disappeared! My soldiers began to shout, ‘They will break them, they will break them!’ For a while the hussars were invisible; then something thundered, and there was a sound as if in a thousand forges men were beating anvils with hammers. We look. Jesus! Mary! The elector’s men are lying like stones on a street, like wheat through which a tempest has passed; and the hussars far away beyond, their streamers glittering. They are bearing down on the Swedes! They struck cavalry; the cavalry were down like a pavement! They struck a second regiment; they left that like a pavement! There was a roar, cannon were thundering; we saw them when the wind bore the smoke aside. They were smashing Swedish infantry. Everything was fleeing, rolling, opening; they went on as if over a highway. They had passed almost through the whole army, when they struck a regiment of the horse-guard, in which was Karl Gustav himself; and like a whirlwind they scattered the horse-guard.”

Here Pan Michael stopped, for Kmita had closed his eyes with his fists and was exclaiming—

“O Mother of God! To see such a thing once and then die!”

“Such an attack my eyes will never see again,” continued the little knight. “We too were commanded to spring forward. I saw no more, but what I tell I heard from the mouth of a Swedish officer who was at the side of Karl and saw with his own eyes the end. That Forgell who fell into our hands afterward at Rava, rushed up to Karl. ‘O King,’ cried he, ‘save Sweden! save yourself! Aside, aside! Nothing can stop them!’ But Karl answered: ‘No use to yield; we must meet them or perish.’ Other generals rush up, implore, entreat, in vain. The king moved forward; they strike. The Swedes are broken more quickly than you can count ten. One fell, another was trampled, others were scattered like peas. The king defended himself single-handed. Kovalski rode up and knew Karl Gustav, for he had seen him twice before. A horseman shielded the king; but those who were present said that lightning does not kill more quickly than Kovalski cut him in two. Then the king rushed at Pan Roh.”

Volodyovski again interrupted his narrative and breathed deeply; but Kmita cried at once—

“Oh, finish, or the soul will go out of me!”

“They rushed at each other so that the breasts of the horses struck. They raged. ‘I look,’ said the officer; ‘the king with his horse is on the ground.’ He freed himself, touched the trigger of his pistol, missed. The king’s hat had fallen. Roh then made for the head of Karl Gustav—had his sword raised; the Swedes were weak from terror, for there was no time to save Karl, when Boguslav rose as if from under the earth, fired into the very ear of Kovalski, broke his head and his helmet.”

“O my God! he had not time to bring down the sword?” screamed Pan Andrei, tearing his hair.

“God did not grant him that grace,” said Pan Michael. “Zagloba and I talked of what had happened. The man had served with the Radzivills from years of youth; he considered them his masters, and at sight of Radzivill it must be that he was confused. Perhaps the thought had never come to his head to raise a hand on Radzivill. It happens that way! Well, he paid with his life. Zagloba is a wonderful man, for he is not Roh’s uncle at all, and not his relative; still another man would not have been in such despair for a son. And, to tell the truth, there was no reason, for one might envy Kovalski such a glorious death; a noble and a soldier is born to give his life, if not on the present day then on the morrow; men will write of Kovalski, and posterity will celebrate his name.”

Pan Michael was silent; after a while he made the sign of the cross and said—

“Eternal rest give him, O Lord, and may light shine on him forever!”

“For the ages of ages!” said Kmita.

Both whispered prayers for a certain time, maybe asking for themselves a similar death, if only not at the hands of Prince Boguslav. At last Pan Michael said—

“Father Pyekarski assured us that Roh went straight to heaven.”

“Of course he did, and our prayers are not needed for him.”

“Prayers are always needed; for they are inscribed to the credit of others, and maybe to our own.”

“My hope is in the mercy of God,” said Kmita, sighing. “I trust that for what I have done in Prussia, even a couple of years will be taken from me in purgatory.”

“Everything there is reckoned. What a man works out here with his sabre, the heavenly secretary records.”

“I too served with Radzivill,” said Kmita, “but I shall not be confused at sight of Boguslav. My God, my God! Prostki is not far away! Remember, O Lord, that he is Thy enemy too, for he is a heretic who more than once has blasphemed Thy true faith.”

“And is an enemy of the country,” added Pan Michael. “We have hope that his end is approaching. Zagloba, speaking in grief and in tears and as if inspired, foretold the same after that attack of the hussars. He cursed Boguslav so that the hair stood on the head of every man listening. Prince Michael Radzivill, who is marching with us against him, saw also in a dream two golden trumpets, which the Radzivills have on their shield, gnawed by a bear, and he said at once next day, ‘Misfortune will meet me or some other Radzivill.’”

“By a bear?” asked Kmita, growing pale.

“By a bear.”

Pan Andrei’s face became clear as if a gleam of the morning dawn had fallen on it; he raised his eyes, stretched his hands toward heaven and said with a solemn voice—

“I have a bear on my shield. Praise to Thee, O Lord on high! Praise to Thee, Most Holy Mother! O Lord, O Lord! I am not worthy of this grace.”

When he heard this Pan Michael was greatly moved, for he recognized at once that that was an omen from heaven.

“Yendrek!” cried he, “to make sure, press the feet of Christ before the battle; and I will implore him against Sakovich.”

“Prostki! Prostki!” repeated Kmita, as in a fever. “When do we move?”

“Before day, and soon it will begin to dawn.”

Kmita approached the broken window of the cottage and cried: “The stars are paling already. Ave, Maria.”

Then came the distant crowing of a cock, and with it low trumpeting. A few “Our Fathers” later, movement began in the whole village. The clatter of steel was heard, and the snorting of horses. Dark masses of cavalry assembled on the highway.

The air began to be filled with light; a pale gleam was silvering the points of the spears, twinkling on the naked sabres, bringing out of the shade mustached threatening faces, helmets, kolpaks, Tartar sheepskin caps, fur cloaks, quivers. At last the advance with Kmita in the vanguard was moving toward Prostki; the troops stretched in a long line over the road, and marched quickly.

The horses in the first ranks fell to snorting greatly, after them others, as a good portent for the soldiers.

White mists hid the meadows yet, and the fields.

Round about was silence; only land-rails were playing in the grass, wet with dew.

## Chapter XCII

September 6, the Polish troops arrived at Vansosh and disposed themselves for rest, so that before battle horses and men might gain strength. Pan Gosyevski, the hetman, decided to halt there four or five days; but events interfered with his reckoning.

Babinich, as a man knowing the boundary well, was sent on a reconnoissance; he was given two light Lithuanian squadrons and a fresh *chambul* of Tartars, for his own Tartars were overmuch wearied.

Gosyevski enjoined on him earnestly, before starting, to obtain an informant and not to return empty-handed. But Babinich merely laughed, thinking to himself that he needed no urging, and that he would bring prisoners, even if he had to find them in the intrenchments of Prostki.

In fact, he returned in forty-eight hours, bringing a number of Prussians and Swedes, and among them an officer of note, Von Rössel, captain in a Prussian regiment under Boguslav.

The party was received in the camp with great applause. There was no need of torturing the captain, for Babinich had already done that on the road by putting the sword-point to his throat. From his statements it transpired that not only the Prussian regiments of Count Waldeck were in Prostki, but also six Swedish regiments under command of Major-General Israel; of these, four were of cavalry under Peters, Frytjotson, Tauben, and Ammerstein, with two of infantry under the brothers Engel. Of Prussian regiments, which were very well equipped, besides that of Count Waldeck himself, there were four—those of the Prince of Wismar, Bruntsl, Konnaberg, General Wahlrat—with four squadrons of Boguslav's command, two being of Prussian nobles, and two of his own men.

Supreme command was held by Count Waldeck; in reality, however, he obeyed in everything Prince Boguslav, to whose influence the Swedish general Israel also yielded.

But the most important intelligence given by Rössel was this—that two thousand chosen infantry of Pomerania were hastening from Elko to reinforce Prostki; but Count Waldeck, fearing lest these men might be taken by the horde, wished to leave the fortified camp, join the Pomeranians, and then make intrenchments a second time. Boguslav, according to Rössel, was so far rather strongly opposed to leaving Prostki, and only during the last days began to incline toward this action. Gosyevski on hearing this news was greatly rejoiced, for he was certain that victory would not miss him. The enemy might defend themselves for a long time in the intrenchments, but neither the Swedish nor the Prussian cavalry could resist the Poles in the open field.

Prince Boguslav seemed to understand this fact as well as Gosyevski, and for this special reason he did not much approve Waldeck's plans. But he was too vain not to yield before even the reproach of excessive caution. Besides, he was not distinguished for patience. It might be reckoned almost with certainty that he would grow weary of waiting in trenches, and would seek fame and victory in the open field. Gosyevski had simply to hasten his advance on the enemy at the moment when they were leaving the intrenchments.

So thought he; so thought other colonels, such as Hassan Bey, who led the horde; Voynilovich, who led the king's regiment; Korsak, a light-horse colonel; Volodyovski, Kotvich, and Babinich. All agreed on one point—that it was necessary to give up further rest, and march in the night; that is, in a few hours. Meanwhile Korsak sent his banneret, Byeganski, to Prostki to inform the advancing army every hour of what was taking place in

the camp. Volodyovski and Babinich took Rössel to their quarters to learn something more of Boguslav. The captain was greatly alarmed at first, for he felt still at his throat Kmita's sabre-point, but wine soon loosened his tongue. Since he had served once in the Commonwealth in a foreign command, he had learned Polish; therefore he was able to answer the questions of the little knight, who did not know German.

"Have you been long in the service of Prince Boguslav?" asked Volodyovski.

"I do not serve in his army," answered Rössel, "but in the elector's regiment, which was put under his command."

"Then do you know Pan Sakovich?"

"I have seen him in Königsberg."

"Is he with the prince?"

"He is not; he remained in Taurogi."

Volodyovski sighed and moved his mustaches. "I have no luck, as usual," said he.

"Be not grieved, Michael," said Babinich. "You will find him; if not, I shall."

Then he turned to Rössel: "You are an old soldier; you have seen both armies, and you know our cavalry of old: what do you think—on whose side will be victory?"

"If they meet you outside the trenches, on yours; but you cannot take the trenches without infantry and cannon, especially since everything is done there with Radzivill's head."

"Then do you consider him such a great leader?"

"Not only is that my opinion, but it is the general opinion in both armies. They say that at Warsaw the Most Serene King of Sweden followed his advice, and therefore won a great battle. The prince, as a Pole, has a better knowledge of your method of warfare and can manage more quickly. I saw myself that the King of Sweden after the third day of battle embraced him in front of the army and kissed him. It is true that he owed his life to him; for had it not been for the shot of the prince—But it is a terror to think of it! He is besides an incomparable knight, whom no man can meet with any weapon."

"H'm!" said Volodyovski, "maybe there is such a man."

When he had said this, his mustaches trembled threateningly. Rössel looked at him, and grew suddenly red. For a time it seemed that either he would burst a blood-vessel or break into laughter; but at last he remembered that he was in captivity, and controlled himself quickly. But Kmita with his steel eyes looked at him steadily and said—

"That will be shown tomorrow."

"But is Boguslav in good health?" asked Volodyovski; "for the fever shook him a long time, and must have weakened him."

"He is, and has been this long time, as healthy as a fish, and takes no medicine. The doctor at first wanted to give him many preservatives, but immediately after the first came a paroxysm. Prince Boguslav gave orders to toss that doctor up from sheets; and that helped him, for the doctor himself got a fever from fright."

"To toss him up from sheets?" asked Volodyovski.

"I saw it myself," answered Rössel. "Two sheets were placed one above the other, and the doctor put in the centre of them. Four strong soldiers took the sheets by the corners, and threw up the poor doctor. I tell you, gentlemen, that he went nearly ten ells into the air, and



he had hardly come down when they hurled him up again. General Israel, Count Waldeck, and the prince were holding their sides from laughter. Many of the officers too were looking at the spectacle, till the doctor fainted. Then the prince was free of his fever, as if some hand had removed it."

Though Pan Michael and Babinich hated Boguslav, still they could not restrain themselves from laughter when they heard of this joke. Babinich struck his knees and cried—

"Ah, the scoundrel! how he helped himself!"

"I must tell Zagloba of this medicine," said Pan Michael.

"It cured him of the fever," said Rössel; "but what is that, when the prince does not restrain sufficiently the impulses of his blood, and therefore will not live to ripe age?"

"I think so too," muttered Babinich. "Such as he do not live long."

"Does he give way to himself in the camp?" asked Pan Michael.

"Of course," answered Rössel. "Count Waldeck laughed, saying that his princely grace takes with him waiting-maids. I saw myself two handsome maidens; his attendants told me that they were there to iron his lace—but God knows."

Babinich, when he heard this, grew red and pale; then he sprang up, and seizing Rössel by the arm began to shake him violently.

"Are they Poles or Germans?"

"Not Poles," said the terrified Rössel. "One is a Prussian noblewoman; the other is a Swede, who formerly served the wife of General Israel."

Babinich looked at Pan Michael and drew a deep breath; the little knight was relieved too, and began to move his mustaches.

"Gentlemen, permit me to rest," said Rössel. "I am dreadfully tired, for the Tartar led me ten miles with a lariat."

Kmita clapped his hands for Soroka, and committed the prisoner to him; then he turned with quick step to Pan Michael.

"Enough of this!" said he. "I would rather perish a hundred times than live in this ceaseless alarm and uncertainty. When Rössel mentioned those women just now, I thought that someone was going at my temple with a club."

"It is time to finish!" said Volodyovski, shaking his sabre.

At that moment trumpets sounded at the hetman's quarters; soon trumpets answered in all the Lithuanian squadrons, and pipes in the *chambuls*.

The troops began to assemble, and an hour later were on the march.

Before they had gone five miles a messenger hurried up from Byeganski of Korsak's squadron, with intelligence for the hetman that a number of troopers had been seized from a considerable body occupied in collecting on that side of the river all the wagons and horses of the peasants. Interrogated on the spot, they acknowledged that the tabor of the whole army was to leave Prostki about eight o'clock in the morning, and that commands were issued already.

"Let us praise God and urge on our horses," said Gosyevski. "Before evening that army will be no longer in existence."

He sent the horde neck and head to push with utmost endeavor between Waldeck's troops and the Pomeranian infantry hastening to aid them. After the horde went Lithuanians; being mainly of the light squadrons, they came right after the horde.

Kmita was in the front rank of the Tartars, and urged on his men till the horses were steaming. On the road he bowed down on the saddle, struck his forehead on the neck of his horse, and prayed with all the powers of his soul—

“Grant me, O Christ, to take vengeance, not for my own wrongs, but for the insults wrought on the country! I am a sinner; I am not worthy of Thy grace; but have mercy on me! Permit me to shed the blood of heretics, and for Thy praise I will fast and scourge myself every week on this day till the end of my life.”

Then to the Most Holy Lady of Chenstohova, whom he had served with his blood, and to his own patron besides, did he commit himself; and strong with such protection, he felt straightway that an immense hope was entering his soul, that an uncommon power was penetrating his limbs—a power before which everything must fall in the dust. It seemed to him that wings were growing from his shoulders; joy embraced him like a whirlwind, and he flew in front of his Tartars, so that sparks were scattered from under the hoofs of his steed. Thousands of wild warriors bent forward to the necks of their ponies, and shot along after him.

A river of pointed caps rose and fell with the rush of the horses; bows rattled behind the men's shoulders; in front went the sound from the tramp of iron hoofs; from behind flew the roar of the oncoming squadrons, like the deep roar of a great swollen river.

And thus they flew on in the rich starry night which covered the roads and the fields. They were like a mighty flock of ravening birds which had smelled blood in the distance. Fields, oak-groves, meadows, sped past, till at last the waning moon became pale and inclined in the west. Then they reined in their beasts, and halted for final refreshment. It was not farther now than two miles from Prostki.

The Tartars fed their horses with barley from their hands, so that the beasts might gain strength before battle; but Kmita sat on a fresh pony and rode farther to look at the camp of the enemy.

After half an hour's ride he found in the willows the light-horse party which Korsak had sent to reconnoitre.

“Well,” asked Kmita, “what is to be heard?”

“They are not sleeping, they are bustling like bees in a hive,” answered the banneret. “They would have started already, but have not wagons sufficient.”

“Can the camp be seen from some point near at hand?”

“It can from that height which is covered with bushes. The camp lies over there in the valley of the river. Does your grace wish to see it?”

“Lead on.”

The banneret put spurs to his horse, and they rode to the height. Day was already in the sky, and the air was filled with a golden light; but along the river on the opposite low bank there lay still a dense fog. Hidden in the bushes, they looked at that fog growing thinner and thinner.

At last about two furlongs distant a square earthwork was laid bare. Kmita's glance was fixed on it with eagerness; but at the first moment he saw only the misty outlines of tents and

wagons standing in the centre along the intrenchments. The blaze of fires was not visible; he saw only smoke rising in lofty curls to the sky in sign of fine weather. But as the fog vanished Pan Andrei could distinguish through his field-glass blue Swedish and yellow Prussian banners planted on the intrenchments; then masses of soldiers, cannon, and horses.

Around there was silence, broken only by the rustle of bushes moved by the breeze, and the glad morning twitter of birds; but from the camp came a deep sound.

Evidently no one was sleeping, and they were preparing to march, for in the centre of the intrenchment was an unusual stir. Whole regiments were moving from place to place; some went out in front of the intrenchments; around the wagons there was a tremendous bustle. Cannon also were drawn from the trenches.

"It cannot be but they are preparing to march," said Kmita.

"All the prisoners said: 'They wish to make a junction with the infantry; and besides they do not think that the hetman can come up before evening; and even if he were to come up, they prefer a battle in the open field to yielding that infantry to the knife.'"

"About two hours will pass before they move, and at the end of two hours the hetman will be here."

"Praise be to God!" said the banneret.

"Send to tell our men not to feed too long."

"According to order."

"But have they not sent away parties to this side of the river?"

"To this side they have not sent one. But they have sent some to their infantry, marching from Elko."

"It is well!" said Kmita.

And he descended the height, and commanding the party to hide longer in the rushes, moved back himself with all the breath in his horse to the squadron.

Gosyevski was just mounting when Babinich arrived. The young knight told quickly what he had seen and what the position was; the hetman listened with great satisfaction, and urged forward the squadrons without delay.

Babinich's party went in advance; after it the Lithuanian squadrons; then that of Voynilovich, that of Lauda, the hetman's own, and others. The horde remained behind; for Hassan Bey begged for that with insistence, fearing that his men might not withstand the first onset of the heavy cavalry. He had also another reckoning.

He wished, when the Lithuanians struck the enemy's front, to seize the camp with his Tartars; in the camp he expected to find very rich plunder. The hetman permitted this, thinking justly that the Tartars would strike weakly on the cavalry, but would fall like madmen on the tabor and might raise a panic, especially since the Prussian horses were less accustomed to their terrible howling.

In two hours, as Kmita had predicted, they halted in front of that elevation from which the scouting-party had looked into the intrenchments, and which now concealed the march of all the troops. The banneret, seeing the troops approaching, sprang forward like lightning with intelligence that the enemy, having withdrawn the pickets from this side of the river, had already moved, and that the rear of the tabor was just leaving the intrenchments.

When he heard this, Gosyevski drew his baton from the holsters of the saddle, and said—

“They cannot return now, for the wagons block the way. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! There is no reason to hide longer!”

He beckoned to the *bunchuck*-bearer; and he, raising the horsetail standard aloft, waved it on every side. At this sign all the horsetail standards began to wave, trumpets thundered, Tartar pipes squeaked, six thousand sabres were gleaming in the air, and six thousand throats shouted—

“Jesus! Mary!”

“Allah uh Allah!”

Then squadron after squadron rose in a trot from behind the height. In Waldeck’s camp they had not expected guests so soon, for a feverish movement set in. The drums rattled uninterruptedly; the regiments turned with front to the river.

It was possible to see with the naked eye generals and colonels flying between the regiments; they hurried to the centre with the cannon, so as to bring them forward to the river.

After a while both armies were not farther than a thousand yards from each other. They were divided only by a broad meadow, in the centre of which a river flowed. Another moment, and the first streak of white smoke bloomed out from the Prussian side toward the Poles.

The battle had begun.

The hetman himself sprang toward Kmita’s troops—

“Advance, Babinich! advance in God’s name against that line!” And he pointed with his baton to the gleaming regiment of cavalry.

“Follow me!” commanded Pan Andrei. And pressing his horse with spurs, he moved at a gallop toward the river.

More swiftly than an arrow from a bow did they shoot forward. The horses had gained their highest speed, and were running with ears dropped back, and bodies stretched out like the bodies of hounds. The riders bent forward to the manes of their horses, and howling, lashed onward the beasts, which now did not seem to touch earth; they rushed with that impetus into the river. The water did not restrain them, for they came upon a broad ford, level and sandy; they reached the other bank, and sprang on in a body.

Seeing this, the regiment of armored cavalry moved toward them, first at a walk, then at a trot, and did not go faster; but when Kmita’s front had come within twenty yards, the command “Fire!” was heard, and a thousand arms with pistols were stretched forward.

A line of smoke ran from one end of the rank to the other; then the two bodies struck each other with a crash. The horses reared at the first blow; over the heads of the combatants glittered sabres through the whole length of the line. A serpent as it were of lightning flew from end to end. The ominous clang of blades against helmets and breastplates was heard to the other side of the river. It seemed as if hammers were ringing in forges on plates of steel. The line bent in one moment into a crescent; for since the centre of the German cavalry yielded, pushed back by the first onset, the wings, against which less force was directed, kept their places. But the armored soldiers did not let the centre be broken, and a terrible slaughter began. On one side enormous men covered with armor resisted with the whole weight of horses; on the other the gray host of Tartars pushed with the force of accumulated impetus, cutting and thrusting with an inconceivable rapidity which only uncommon activity and ceaseless practice can give. As when a host of woodcutters rush at a forest of pine-trees there is heard only the sound of axes, and time after time some lofty tree falls to the ground with a

fearful crash, so every moment someone of the cavalry bent his shining head and rolled under his horse. The sabres of Kmita's men glittered in their eyes, cut around their faces, eyes, hands. In vain does a sturdy soldier raise his heavy sword; before he can bring it down, he feels a cold point entering his body; then the sword drops from his hand, and he falls with bloody face on the neck of his horse. When a swarm of wasps attack in an orchard him who is shaking down fruit, vainly does the man ward them off with his hands, try to free himself, dodge aside; they reach his face skilfully, reach his neck, and each one drives into him a sharp sting. So did Kmita's raging men, trained in so many battles, rush forward, hew, cut, thrust, spread terror and death more and more stubbornly, surpassing their opponents as much as a skilful craftsman surpasses the sturdiest apprentice who is wanting in practice. Therefore the German cavalry began to fall more quickly; and the centre, against which Kmita himself was fighting, became so thin that it might break at any moment. Commands of officers, summoning soldiers to shattered places, were lost in the uproar and wild shouting; the line did not come together quickly enough, and Kmita pressed with increasing power. Wearing chain-mail, a gift from Sapyeha, he fought as a simple soldier, having with him the young Kyemliches and Soroka. Their office was to guard their master; and every moment someone of them turned to the right or the left, giving a terrible blow; but Kmita rushed on his chestnut horse to the thickest of the fight, and having all the secrets of Pan Michael, and gigantic strength, he quenched men's lives quickly. Sometimes he struck with his whole sabre; sometimes he barely reached with the point; sometimes he described a small circle merely, but quick as lightning, and a horseman flew head downward under his beast, as if a thunderbolt had hurled him from the saddle. Others withdrew before the terrible man.

At last Pan Andrei slashed the standard-bearer in the temple; he gave forth a sound like that which a cock gives if his throat is cut, and dropped the standard from his hand. At that moment the centre broke, and the disordered wings forming two chaotic bodies fled swiftly to the farther lines of the Prussian army.

Kmita looked through the broken centre into the depth of the field, and saw at once a regiment of red dragoons flying like wind to the aid of the broken cavalry.

"That is nothing!" thought he; "Volodyovski will cross the ford in a moment to aid me."

At that instant was heard the thunder of cannon so loud that the earth trembled in its foundations; musketry rattled from the intrenchment to those ranks of the Poles who had pushed forward most. The whole field was covered with smoke, and in that smoke Kmita's volunteers and Tartars closed with the dragoons.

But from the side of the river no one came with assistance.

The enemy had let Kmita pass the ford purposely, and then covered the ford with such a dreadful shower from cannons and muskets that no living foot could pass through it.

The troops of Pan Korsak tried first, and turned back in disorder; next the squadron of Voynilovich went to the middle of the ford, and turned back—slowly, it is true, for that was the king's regiment, one of the most valiant in the army, but with a loss of twelve noted nobles and nineteen soldiers.

The water in the ford which was the only passage through the river was plashing under the blows of balls as under a dense pouring rain. Cannonballs flew to the other bank, casting around clouds of sand.

Gosyevski himself rode up on a gallop, and when he had seen this, he knew that it was impossible for one living man to reach the opposite bank.

And still that might decide the fate of the battle. Then the forehead of the hetman frowned sternly. For a while he looked through his glass along the whole line of the enemy's troops, and cried to the orderly—

“Rush to Hassan Bey; let the horde pass the deep bank as it can, and strike the tabor. What they find in the wagons will be theirs! There are no cannon there; it will be only hand to hand.”

The horseman sprang forward with what breath was in his horse; but the hetman advanced to where under willows on the meadow stood the Lauda squadron, and halted before it.

Volodyovski was at the head of the squadron, gloomy and silent; but he looked in the eyes of the hetman, and his mustaches quivered.

“What do you think?” asked the hetman; “will the Tartars cross?”

“The Tartars will cross, but Kmita will perish!” answered the little knight.

“As God lives!” cried the hetman, suddenly; “this Kmita, if he had a head on his shoulders, might win the battle, not perish!”

Volodyovski said nothing; still he thought: “It was necessary either not to send any regiment across the river, or to send five.”

The hetman looked awhile yet through his glass at the distant confusion which Kmita was making beyond the river; but the little knight, not being able to endure any longer, drew near him, and holding his sabre-point upward, said—

“Your worthiness, if there were an order, I would try the ford again.”

“Stop!” said Gosyevski, rather sharply; “it is enough that those will perish.”

“They are perishing already,” replied Volodyovski.

And in truth the uproar was becoming more definite and greater every moment. Evidently Kmita was retreating to the river.

“As God lives, I wanted that!” cried the hetman, suddenly; and he sprang like a thunderbolt to Voynilovich's squadron.

In fact, Kmita was retreating. After they had met the red dragoons, his men fought with their last strength; but the breath was already failing in their breasts, their wearied hands were drooping, and bodies were falling faster and faster; only hope that aid might come any moment from beyond the river kept courage in them yet.

Half an hour more passed, and the cry of “Strike!” was heard no longer; but to the aid of the red dragoons sprang Boguslav's regiment of heavy cavalry.

“Death is coming!” thought Kmita, seeing them approaching from the flank.

But he was a soldier who never had a doubt, for a moment, not only of his life, but of victory. Long and hazardous practice had given him also great knowledge of war; therefore lightning at dusk does not flash and then die out so quickly as the following thought flashed to the head of Pan Andrei: Evidently the Poles could not cross the ford to the enemy; and since they could not, he would lead the enemy to them.

Boguslav's regiment was coming on at full sweep, and not more than a hundred yards distant; in a moment they could strike and scatter his Tartars. Pan Andrei raised the pipe to his mouth, and whistled so shrilly that the nearest dragoon horses rose on their haunches.

That instant other pipes of the Tartar leaders repeated the whistle; and not so swiftly does the whirlwind twist the sand as that *chambul* turned its horses in flight.

The remnant of the mailed cavalry, the red dragoons, and Boguslav's regiment sprang after them with all speed.

The shouts of the officers—"Naprzod (Forward)!" and "*Gott mit uns* (God with us)!"—rang like a storm, and a marvellous sight was seen then. Over the broad meadow rushed the disordered and confused *chambul* of Tartars, straight to the ford, which was rained on with bullets and balls; and they tore onward, as if carried with wings. Every Tartar lay on the horse, flattened himself, hid himself in the mane and the neck, in such fashion that had it not been for the cloud of arrows flying back toward the cavalry, it might be said that the horses were rushing on riderless; after them, with roaring, shouting, and trampling, followed gigantic men, with upraised swords gleaming in their right hands.

The ford was nearer and nearer; there was half a furlong left yet, and evidently the Tartar horses were using their last strength, for the distance between them and the cavalry was quickly decreasing.

A few moments later the front ranks of the pursuers began to cut with their swords the Tartars closing the rear. The ford was right there; it seemed that in a few springs the horses would be in it.

Suddenly something wonderful happened.

Behold, when the *chambul* had run to the ford, a shrill whistle of pipes was heard again on the wings, and the whole body, instead of rushing into the river to seek safety on the other bank, opened in two, and with the speed of swallows sprang to the right and left, with and against the flow of the river.

But the heavy regiments, rushing right on their shoulders with the highest horse-speed, raced into the ford with the same force, and only when in the water did the horsemen begin to hold in their furious beasts.

The cannon, which up to that moment had been showering a rain of iron on the gravel, were silent in a second; the gunners had to spare their own army.

But Gosyevski was waiting for precisely that instant as for salvation.

The cavalry were hardly in the water when the terrible royal squadron of Voynilovich rushed at it like a hurricane; then the Lauda, the Korsak, the two squadrons of the hetman, and the volunteer squadron; after that, the armored squadron of Prince Michael Radzivill.

A terrible shout, "Kill, slay!" thundered in the air; and before the Prussian regiments could halt, concentrate, use their swords, the Voynilovich squadron had scattered them as a whirl of air scatters leaves; they crushed the red dragoons, pushed back Boguslav's regiment, cut it in two, and drove it over the field toward the main army of Prussia.

In one moment the river was red with blood. The cannon began to play again; but too late, for eight squadrons of Lithuanian cavalry were sweeping with thunder and roar over the meadow, and the whole battle was transferred to the other side of the river.

The hetman was flying with one of his own squadrons, his face radiant with joy, and with fire in his eyes; for once he had the cavalry beyond the river, he was certain of victory.

The squadrons, emulating one another in slashing and thrusting, drove before them the remnant of the dragoons and the cavalry, which fell in a dense body; for the heavy horses were not able to flee swiftly, and merely covered the pursuers against missiles from the front.

Meanwhile Waldeck, Boguslav, Radzivill, and Israel sent forward all their cavalry to restrain the onset, and hastened themselves to put the infantry in line. Regiment after regiment ran out of the tabor, and took their places on the plain. They thrust the butts of their heavy spears into the earth, with the heads pointing forward, inclined like a fence to the enemy.

In the next rank musketeers stretched forward the barrels of their muskets. Between the quadrangles of regiments they placed cannon in hot haste. Neither Boguslav nor Waldeck nor Israel flattered themselves that their cavalry could restrain that of the Poles very long, and their whole hope was in the artillery and the infantry. Meanwhile in front of the infantry the mounted regiments struck breast against breast. But that happened which the Prussian leaders foresaw.

The pressure of the Lithuanian cavalry was so terrible that their opponents could not restrain them for one moment, and the first hussar regiments split them as a wedge splits wood, and went without breaking a lance through the dense mass, as a ship driven by strong wind goes through waves. The streamers were visible nearer and nearer; at times the heads of the hussar horses rose above the throng of the Prussians.

“On your guard!” cried the officers, standing in the quadrangle of infantry.

At this word the Prussian soldiers braced themselves more firmly on their feet, and strained their arms holding the spears; and all hearts were beating violently, for the terrible hussars had come wholly in sight, and were bearing down straightway against them.

“Fire!” was the word of command.

Muskets rattled in the second and third ranks of the quadrangle. Smoke covered the men. A moment later the roar of the coming squadron was nearer. They are right there! All at once, amid the smoke, the first rank of infantry see there above them, almost over their heads, thousands of horses’ hoofs, wide nostrils, inflamed eyes; a crash of broken spears is heard; a fearful shout rends the air; Polish voices shouting, “Slay!” and German voices, “*Gott erbarme Dich meiner* (God have mercy on me)!”

That regiment is broken, crushed; but in the spaces between other regiments cannon begin to play. Other squadrons come up. Each one strikes after a moment on a forest of lances; but perhaps not every one will break the forest which it strikes, for none has such terrible force as Voynilovich’s squadron. Shouting increases on the whole field of battle. Nothing can be seen; but from the mass of combatants groups of yellow infantry escape in disorder, fleeing from some regiment which evidently was also beaten.

Horsemen in gray colors pursue, cut, and trample these men, and shout—

“Lauda! Lauda!”

That was Volodyovski, who with his squadron had fought against a second quadrangle.

But others were “sticking” yet; victory might still incline to the Prussians, especially as at the tabor stood two regiments intact, which, since the tabor was safe, might be summoned at any moment.

Waldeck had in truth lost his head. Israel was not present, for he had been sent with the cavalry; but Boguslav was watching and managing everything. He led the whole battle, and seeing the increase of great peril, sent Pan Byes for those regiments.

Byes urged on his horse, and half an hour later returned bareheaded, with terror and despair in his face.

“The horde is in the tabor!” shouted he, hurrying up to Boguslav.



At that moment unearthly howling was heard on the right wing; this howling came nearer and nearer.

Suddenly appeared crowds of Swedish horsemen approaching in terrible panic; after them were fleeing weaponless, bareheaded infantry; after the infantry, in confusion and disorder, came wagons drawn by wild and terrified horses. All this mass was rushing at random from the tabor toward the infantry in the meadow. In a moment they fell on the infantry, put them into disorder, scattered them, especially when in front they were pressed by Lithuanian cavalry.

“Hassan Bey has reached the tabor!” cried Gosyevski, with ecstasy; and he let out his last two squadrons like falcons from their rest.

At the same moment that these two squadrons strike the infantry in front, their own wagons rush against them on the flank. The last quadrangles burst as if under the stroke of a hammer. Of the whole brilliant Swedish-Prussian army there is formed one gigantic mass, in which the cavalry are mingled with the infantry. Men are overturning, trampling, and suffocating one another; they throw off their clothing, cast away their arms. The cavalry press them, cut them, crush them, mash them. It is no longer a battle lost; it is a ruin, one of the most ghastly of the war.

Boguslav, seeing that all was lost, resolved to save at least himself and some of the cavalry. With superhuman exertion he collected a few hundred horsemen, and was fleeing along the left wing in the direction of the river’s course.

He had already escaped from the main whirl, when Prince Michael Radzivill, leading his own hussars, struck him on the flank and scattered his whole detachment at a blow. After this Boguslav’s men fled singly or in small groups. They could be saved only by the speed of their horses.

In fact, the hussars did not pursue, but struck on the main body of infantry, which all the other squadrons were cutting to pieces. The broken detachment fled over the field like a scattered herd of deer.

Boguslav, on Kmita’s black steed, is rushing like the wind, striving in vain by cries to gather around him even a few tens of men. No one obeys him; each man flees on his own account, glad that he has escaped from the disaster, and that he has no enemy in front of him. But rejoicing was vain. They had not gone a thousand yards when howling was heard in front, and a gray host of Tartars sprang forth from the river, near which they had been lurking till then.

This was Kmita with his men. Leaving the field, after he had brought the enemy to the ford, he turned so as to cut off retreat to the fugitives.

The Tartars, seeing the cavalry scattered, scattered themselves in a moment to catch them more easily, and a murderous pursuit began. Two or three Tartars cut off one trooper, and he rarely defended himself; more frequently he seized his rapier by the point, and extended the hilt to the Tartars, calling for mercy. But the Tartars, knowing that they could not lead these prisoners home, took only officers who could give ransom; the common soldiers received a knife in the throat, and died, unable to say even “God!” Those who fled to the last were stabbed in the back and shoulders; those under whom the horses did not fall were caught with lariats.

Kmita rushed for a time over the field, hurling down horsemen and seeking Boguslav with his eyes; at last he beheld him, and knew him at once by the horse, by the blue ribbon, and the hat with black ostrich feathers.

A cloud of white steam surrounded the prince; for just the moment before two Nogais had attacked him. One he killed with a pistol-shot, and the other he thrust through with a rapier; then seeing a larger party rushing from one side, and Kmita from the other, he pressed his horse with spurs, and shot on like a hunted deer followed by hounds.

More than fifty men rushed in a body after him; but not all the horses ran equally, so that soon the fifty formed a long serpent, the head of which was Boguslav and the neck Kmita.

The prince bent forward in his saddle; the black horse appeared not to touch the earth with his feet, but was black over the green grass, like a swallow sweeping close to the ground; the chestnut stretched his neck like a crane, put back his ears, and seemed as if trying to spring from his skin. Single willows, clumps of them, groups of alder, shot past; the Tartars were behind, a furlong, two, three furlongs, but they ran and ran. Kmita threw his pistols from the holsters to lighten the horse's burden; with eyes fastened on Boguslav, with fixed lips, he almost lay on the neck of the horse, pricked his foaming sides with spurs, till soon the foam falling to the earth became rose-colored.

But the distance between him and the prince not only did not decrease a single inch, but began to increase.

"Woe!" thought Pan Andrei, "no horse on earth can overtake that one."

And when after a few springs the distance increased still more, he straightened himself in the saddle, let the sword drop on its pendant, and putting his hands around his mouth, shouted in a trumpet-like voice: "Flee, traitor, flee before Kmita! I will get you, if not today, tomorrow."

These words had barely sounded in the air, when on a sudden the prince, who heard them, looked around, and seeing that Kmita alone was pursuing, instead of fleeing farther described a circle, and with rapier in hand rushed upon him.

Pan Andrei gave forth a terrible cry of joy, and without lessening speed raised his sabre for a blow.

"Corpse! corpse!" shouted the prince; and wishing to strike the more surely, he restrained his horse.

Kmita, when he had come up, held in his own beast till his hoofs sank in the earth, and rapier met sabre.

They closed in such fashion that the two horses formed almost one body. A terrible sound of steel was heard, quick as thought; no eye could catch the lightning-like movement of rapier and sabre, nor distinguish the prince from Kmita. At times Boguslav's hat appeared black, at times Kmita's steel morion gleamed. The horses whirled around each other. The swords clinked more and more terribly.

Boguslav, after a few strokes, ceased to despise his opponent. All the terrible thrusts which he had learned from French masters were parried. Sweat was now flowing freely from his face with the rouge and white; he felt weariness in his right arm already. Wonder seized him, then impatience, then rage; therefore he determined to finish, and he thrust so terribly that the hat fell from his head.

Kmita warded with such force that the prince's rapier flew to the side of the horse; and before Boguslav could defend himself again, Kmita cut him with the very end of the sabre in the forehead.

"Christ!" cried the prince in German, rolling to the earth.

He fell on his back.

Pan Andrei was as if stunned for the moment, but recovered quickly. He dropped his sabre on its pendant, made the sign of the cross, sprang from his horse, and seizing the hilt, again approached the prince.

He was terrible; for pale as a sheet from emotion, his lips were pressed, and inexorable hatred was in his face.

Behold his mortal enemy, and such a powerful one, lying now at his feet in blood, still alive and conscious, but conquered, and not with foreign weapons nor with foreign aid.

Boguslav looked at him with widely opened eyes, watching carefully every move of the victor; and when Kmita stood there above him, he cried quickly—

“Do not kill me! Ransom!”

Kmita, instead of answering, stood with his foot on Boguslav’s breast, and pressed with all his power; then he placed the point of his sabre on the prince’s throat so that the skin yielded under the point—he only needed to move his hand, to press more firmly. But he did not kill him at once. He wished to sate himself yet with the sight, and make the death of his enemy more grievous. He transfixed Boguslav’s eyes with his own eyes, and stood above him, as a lion stands above an overthrown buffalo.

The prince, from whose forehead blood was flowing more and more copiously, so that the whole upper part of his head was as if in a pool, spoke again, but now with a greatly stifled voice, for the foot of Pan Andrei was crushing his breast—

“The maiden—listen—”

Barely had Pan Andrei heard these words when he took his foot from Boguslav’s breast, and raised his sword. “Speak!” said he.

But Boguslav only breathed deeply for a time; at last, with a voice now stronger, he said—

“The maiden will die, if you kill me. The orders are given.”

“What have you done with her?” asked Kmita.

“Spare me, and I will give her to you. I swear on the Gospel.”

Pan Andrei struck his forehead with his fist. It was to be seen for a time that he was struggling with himself and with his thoughts; then he said—

“Hear me, traitor! I would give a hundred such degenerate ruffians for one hair of hers. But I do not believe you, you oath-breaker!”

“On the Gospel!” repeated the prince. “I will give you a safe-conduct and an order in writing.”

“Let it be so. I will give you your life, but I will not let you out of my hands. You will give me the letter; but meanwhile I will give you to the Tartars, with whom you will be in captivity.”

“Agreed,” answered Boguslav.

“Remember,” said Pan Andrei, “your princely rank did not preserve you from my hand, nor your army, nor your fencing. And be assured that as many times as you cross my path, or do not keep word, nothing will save you—even though you were made Emperor of Germany. Recognize me! Once I had you in my hands, now you are lying under my feet!”

“Consciousness is leaving me,” said the prince. “Pan Kmita, there must be water near by. Give me to drink, and wash my wound.”

“Die, parricide!” answered Kmita.

But the prince, secure of life, recovered all his self-command, and said—

“You are foolish, Pan Kmita. If I die, she too—” Here his lips grew pale.

Kmita ran to see if there was not some ditch near at hand, or even some pool. The prince fainted, but for a short time; he revived, happily for himself, when the first Tartar, Selim, son of Gazi Aga, the banneret among Kmita’s Tartars, was coming up, and seeing the enemy weltering in blood, determined to pin him to the earth with the spear-point of the banner. The prince in that terrible moment still had strength sufficient to seize the point, which, being loosely fastened, fell from the staff.

The sound of that short struggle brought back Pan Andrei.

“Stop! son of a dog!” cried he, running from a distance.

The Tartar, at the sound of the familiar voice, pushed up to his horse with fear. Kmita commanded him to go for water, and remained himself with the prince; for from afar were to be seen approaching at a gallop the Kyemliches, Soroka, and the whole *chambul*, who, after they had caught all the horsemen, came to seek their leader.

Seeing Pan Andrei, the faithful Nogais threw up their caps with loud shouts.

Akbah Ulan sprang from his horse and began to bow to him, touching with his hand his forehead, his mouth, and his breast. Others smacking their lips, in Tartar fashion, looked with greediness into the eyes of the conquered; some rushed to seize the two horses, the chestnut and the black, which were running at a distance each with flying mane.

“Akbah Ulan,” said Kmita, “this is the leader of the army which we conquered this morning, Prince Boguslav Radzivill. I give him to you; and do you keep him, for dead or alive they will pay you for him liberally. Now take care of him; put on him a lariat, and lead him to camp.”

“Allah! Allah! We thank the leader! We thank the conqueror!” cried all the Tartars in one voice; and again was heard the smacking of a thousand lips.

Kmita mounted and went with a part of the Tartars to the field of battle. From a distance he saw the standard-bearers with their standards, but of the squadrons there were only a few men present; the rest had gone in pursuit of the enemy. Crowds of camp servants were busy on the battlefield, plundering the corpses and fighting here and there with the Tartars, who were plundering also. The latter looked specially terrible, with knives in their hands, and with arms stained to the elbows. You would have said that a flock of crows had dropped from the clouds to the battle-plain. Their wild laughter and shouts were heard over the whole meadow.

Some holding in their lips knives still steaming drew with both hands dead men by the feet; others in sport threw at one another severed heads. Some were filling bags; others, as in a bazaar, were holding up bloody garments, praising their value, or examining the weapons which they had taken.

Kmita passed over the field where he had first met the cavalry. Bodies of men and horses, cut with swords, lay scattered there; but where squadrons had cut infantry, there were whole piles of corpses, and pools of stiffened blood plashed under foot like muddy water in a swamp.

It was difficult to advance through the fragments of broken lances, muskets, corpses, overturned wagons, and troops of Tartars pushing around.

Gosyevski was still on the intrenchment of the fortified camp, and with him were Prince Michael Radzivill, Voynilovich, Volodyovski, Korsak, and a number of men. From this

height they took in with their eyes the field far away to its uttermost edges, and were able to estimate the whole extent of the victory and the enemy's defeat.

Kmita, on beholding these gentlemen, hastened his pace; and Gosyevski, since he was not only a fortunate warrior but an honorable man without a shadow of envy in his heart, had barely seen Pan Andrei, when he cried—

“Here comes the real victor! He is the cause of winning the day. I first declare this in public. Gracious gentlemen, thank Pan Babinich; for had it not been for him we could not have crossed the river.”

“Vivat Babinich!” cried a number of voices. “Vivat, vivat!”

“Where did you learn war, O soldier,” cried the hetman, with enthusiasm, “that you know what to do in a moment?”

Kmita did not answer, for he was too tired. He merely bowed on every side, and passed his hand over his face, soiled with sweat and with powder-smoke. His eyes gleamed with an uncommon light, and still the vivats sounded incessantly. Division after division returned from the field on foaming horses; and those who came joined their voices from full breasts in honor of Babinich. Caps flew into the air; whoso had a pistol still loaded gave fire.

Suddenly Kmita stood in the saddle, and raising both hands high, shouted—

“Vivat Yan Kazimir, our lord and gracious father!”

Here there was such a shout as if anew battle had begun. Unspeakable enthusiasm seized all. Prince Michael ungirded his sabre, which had a hilt set with diamonds, and gave it to Kmita. The hetman threw his own costly cloak on the shoulders of the hero, who again raised his hands—

“Vivat our hetman, victorious leader!”

“May he increase and flourish!” answered all, in a chorus.

Then they brought together the captured banners, and thrust them into the embankment at the feet of the leaders. The enemy had not taken one of theirs. There were Prussian, Prussian of the general militia, nobles', Swedish, and Boguslav flags; the whole rainbow of them was waving at the embankment.

“One of the greatest victories of this war!” cried the hetman. “Israel and Waldeck are in captivity, the colonels have fallen or are in captivity, the army is cut to pieces.” Here he turned to Kmita: “Pan Babinich, you were on that side, you must have met Boguslav; what has happened to him?”

Here Pan Michael looked diligently into Kmita's eyes, but Kmita said quickly—

“God has punished Boguslav with this hand.” Then he stretched forth his right hand; but at that moment the little knight threw himself into his arms.

“Yendrek,” cried he, “I am not envious! May God bless you!”

“You formed my hand!” answered Pan Andrei, with effusion.

But a further expression of brotherly feeling was stopped by Pan Michael Radzivill.

“Is my cousin killed?” asked he, quickly.

“Not killed,” answered Kmita, “for I granted him life; but he is wounded and captive, and over there my Nogais are bringing him.”

At these words astonishment was depicted on Volodyovski's face, and the eyes of the knight were turned to the plain, on which appeared a party of some tens of Tartars approaching slowly; at last, when they had passed a group of broken wagons, they came within some tens of yards of the intrenchment.

The hetman and the officers saw that the Tartar riding in advance was leading a prisoner; all recognized Boguslav, but in what a change of fortune!

He, one of the most powerful lords in the Commonwealth; he, who even yesterday was dreaming of independent rule; he, a prince of the German Empire—was walking now with a lariat around his neck, at the side of a Tartar horse, without a hat, with bloody head bound in a filthy rag! But such was the venom in the hearts of the knights against this magnate that his terrible humiliation did not excite the pity of any, and nearly all mouths shouted at the same moment—

“Death to the traitor! Bear him apart on sabres! Death, death!”

Prince Michael covered his eyes with his hand, for still that was a Radzivill led with such humiliation. Suddenly he grew red and shouted—

“Gracious gentlemen! that is my cousin, that is my blood, and I have spared neither life nor property for the country. He is my enemy who will raise a hand against that ill-fated man.”

The knights were silent at once.

Prince Michael was universally beloved for his bravery, liberality, and devotion to the country. Even when all Lithuania fell into the hands of the Northerners, he alone defended himself in Nyesvyej, and in the time of the Swedish wars he contemned the persuasions of Prince Yanush, and was one of the first to join the confederacy of Tyshovtsi. His voice therefore found hearing at once. Finally, it may be that no one wished to oppose so powerful a man; it is enough that the sabres were placed at once in the scabbards, and even some officers, clients of the Radzivills, exclaimed—

“Take him from the Tartars! Let the Commonwealth judge him, but let not honorable blood be insulted by Pagans.”

“Take him from the Tartars!” repeated the prince; “we will find surety, and he will pay the ransom himself. Pan Voynilovich, move your men and let them take him by force, if it is impossible otherwise.”

“I offer myself as a surety to the Tartars,” said Pan Gnoinski.

Then Volodyovski pushed up to Kmita and said: “Yendrek, what have you done? He will go safely out of this trouble!”

Kmita sprang forward like a wounded wildcat.

“With the permission of your highness,” cried he. “This is my prisoner! I granted him life, but under conditions to which he swore by his heretical gospel; and may I fall dead here if he will go out of the hands into which I gave him before he fulfils everything!”

When he had said this, he struck his horse, blocked the road, and his inborn impulsiveness had almost carried him away; for his face began to writhe, he distended his nostrils, and his eyes began to cast lightning.

Meanwhile Voynilovich pressed him with his horse. “Aside, Pan Babinich!” cried he.

“Aside, Pan Voynilovich!” roared Kmita, and struck with the hilt of his sabre Voynilovich's horse with such force that the steed tottered on his legs as if struck by a ball and dug the

ground with his nostrils. Then there rose a fierce shout among the knights, so that Gosyevski pushed forward and cried—

“Silence, gentlemen! Gracious prince, in virtue of my authority as hetman, I declare that Pan Babinich has a right to the prisoner, and that whoso wishes to free him from Tartar hands must give guarantee to his conqueror.”

Prince Michael mastered his indignation, calmed himself, and said, directing his speech to Pan Andrei—

“Say what you wish.”

“That he observe the conditions with me before he leaves captivity.”

“But he will keep them when he is free.”

“Impossible! I do not believe him.”

“Then I swear for him, by the Most Holy Mother, whom I recognize, and on the word of a knight, that all will be observed to you. In the opposite case you may make demand on my honor and property.”

“That is sufficient for me!” said Kmita. “Let Pan Gnoinski go as hostage, for otherwise the Tartars will make resistance. I will give way on your word.”

“I thank you, Cavalier!” answered Prince Michael. “Do not fear, either, that he will receive his freedom at once, for I will give him to the hetman by right, and he will remain a prisoner until the king pronounces sentence.”

“That will be so!” answered the hetman; and ordering Voynilovich to sit on a fresh horse, for that one was hardly able to stand, he sent him with Pan Gnoinski for the prince.

But the affair did not pass easily yet; for Hassan Bey made a terrible resistance, and only the sight of Pan Gnoinski and the promise of a ransom of a hundred thousand thalers could pacify him.

In the evening Prince Boguslav found himself in the tents of Gosyevski. He was cared for with attention; two physicians did not leave him for a moment, and both guaranteed his life, for the wound, since it had been given with the very end of the sabre, was not too serious.

Volodyovski could not forgive Kmita for having granted the prince his life, and from sorrow avoided him all day. It was only in the evening that Pan Andrei himself went to Pan Michael’s tent.

“Fear the wounds of God!” cried the little knight, at sight of him; “I should have expected this of any other than of you, to let that traitor go alive!”

“Listen to me, Michael, before you condemn me,” said Kmita, gloomily. “I had him under my foot and held my sabre point at his throat, and then do you know what the traitor said? That there were commands given to kill Olenka in Taurogi if he should be slain. What had I, unfortunate man, to do? I purchased her life with his life. What had I to do? By the cross of Christ, what had I to do?”

Here Pan Andrei began to pull his hair, to stamp, from bewilderment; and Volodyovski thought for awhile, then said—

“I understand your despair; but still—you see, you have let go a traitor who may bring grievous suffering to the country. There is no denying, Yendrek, that you have rendered wonderful service today; but at last you sacrificed the public good to your own private ends.”

“And what would you have done if you were told that there was a knife at the throat of Panna Anusia?”

Pan Michael’s mustaches quivered fiercely. “I do not offer myself as an example. H’m! what would I have done? But Pan Yan, who has a Roman soul, would not have let him live; and besides, I am certain that God would not have let innocent blood flow for the reason he mentioned.”

“Let me do penance. Punish me, O God, not according to my heavy sin, but according to Thy mercy; for to sign a sentence against that dove—” Here Kmita closed his eyes. “Angels forefend! Never, never!”

“It is passed,” said Volodyovski.

Here Pan Andrei took a paper out of his bosom. “See, Michael, what I obtained. This is a command to Sakovich, to all the officers of Radzivill, and to the Swedish commandants. We forced him to write it, though he could barely move his hand. Prince Michael himself saw to that. This is freedom for her, safety for her. I will lie in the form of a cross every day for a year, I will have myself scourged, I will build a church, but I will not sacrifice her life. I have not a Roman soul. Well, I am not a Cato like Pan Yan, true! But I will not sacrifice her; no, by a hundred thunders, I will not, even if at last I am roasted in hell on a spit—”

Kmita did not finish, for Pan Michael sprang up to him and stopped his mouth with his hand, crying in a terrified voice—

“Do not blaspheme, for you will draw the vengeance of God on her. Beat your breast, quickly, quickly!”

And Pan Andrei began to beat his breast: “Mea culpa! mea culpa! mea maxima culpa!” At last the poor soldier burst into loud weeping, for he did not know himself what to do.

Pan Michael let him have his cry out; then he pacified him, and asked—

“And what will you undertake now?”

“I will go with my men whither I am sent, as far as Birji. Only let the men and horses draw breath first. On the road I will shed as much heretical blood as I can, to the glory of God.”

“And you will have your merit. Do not lose heart, Yendrek. God is merciful!”

“I will go directly ahead. All Prussia is open at present; only here and there shall I light upon small garrisons.”

Pan Michael sighed: “Oh, I would go with you as gladly as to paradise. But I must keep my command. You are fortunate to lead volunteers. Yendrek, listen, brother! and when you find both, take care of that one, so that no evil befall her. God knows, she may be predestined to me.”

When he had said this, the little knight cast himself into the arms of Pan Andrei.



## Chapter XCIII

Olenka and Anusia, having freed themselves from Taurogi, under the protection of Braun, came successfully to the sword-bearer's party, which at that time was near Olsha, therefore not very far from Taurogi.

The old noble when he saw them both in good health would not believe his eyes at first; then he fell to weeping from delight, and finally came to such military enthusiasm that for him danger existed no longer. Let not only Boguslav appear, but the King of Sweden himself with all his power, Pan Billevich was ready to defend his maidens against every enemy.

"I will fall," said he, "before a hair shall drop from your heads. I am no longer the man whom you knew in Taurogi, and I think that the Swedes will long remember Girlakole, Yasvoynya, and those beatings which I gave them at Rossyeni itself. It is true that the traitor Sakovich attacked us unawares and routed us, but you see several hundred sabres on service."

Pan Billevich did not exaggerate greatly, for in truth it was difficult to recognize in him the former prisoner of Taurogi fallen in courage. He had another mind now; his energy had revived in the field, on his horse; he found himself in his element, and being a good soldier, he had really handled the Swedes several times roughly. And since he had great authority in the neighborhood, the nobles and common people flocked to him willingly, and even from some remote districts a Billevich brought him now between ten and twenty horsemen, now some tens of horsemen.

Pan Tomash's party was composed of three hundred peasant infantry and about five hundred horsemen. It was rare that any man in the infantry had a gun; the greater number were armed with scythes and forks. The cavalry was a collection of the wealthier nobles, who betook themselves to the forest with their attendants, and of the poorer nobles from villages. Their arms were better than those of the infantry, but greatly varied. Hop-poles served as lances for many; some carried rich family weapons, but frequently of a past age; the horses, of various breeds and quality, were not fitted for one rank.

With such troops the sword-bearer could block the road to Swedish patrols, he might cut off even detachments of cavalry, he might clear forests and villages of plunderers, whose numerous bands, composed of Swedish fugitives, Prussian and local ruffians, were busied with robbery; but he could not attack any town.

The Swedes had grown wiser. Immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion those who were scattered in quarters in the villages were cut down throughout Jmud and Lithuania; but now those who had survived remained mostly in fortified towns, which they left only for short expeditions. Therefore the fields, forests, hamlets, and smaller towns were in Polish hands; but the larger towns were held by Swedes, and there was no power to dislodge them.

The sword-bearer's party was one of the best; others could effect still less than he. On the boundary of Livonia the insurgents had grown so bold, it is true, that they besieged Birji twice, and at the second attack it was forced to surrender; but that temporary preponderance came from this—that Pontus de la Gardie had assembled to the defence of Riga against the forces of the Tsar all the troops from the neighboring districts of Livonia.

His brilliant victories, rarely equalled in history, caused the belief, however, that war in that quarter would soon be at an end, and that he would bring to Jmud new Swedish troops intoxicated with triumphs. Still there was safety enough in the forests at that time; and

numerous parties of insurgents capable of undertaking little alone might still be certain that the enemy would not seek them in deep wildernesses.

Therefore Pan Billevich rejected the thought of hiding in Byalovyej; for the road to it was very long, and on the way were many considerable places with large garrisons.

“The Lord God has given a dry autumn,” said he to the maidens, “therefore it is easier to live *sub Jove* (in the open air). I will have a regular tent made for you; I will find a woman to wait on you, and you will stay in the camp. In these times there is no safer refuge than the forest. My Billeviche is burned to the ground; country houses are infested by ravagers and sometimes even by Swedish parties. Where could you incline your heads more safely than with me, who have several hundred sabres at my command? Rains will come later, then some cabin will be found for you in the forest.”

This idea pleased Panna Anusia greatly; for in the party were many young Billeviches, polite cavaliers, and besides it was said continually that Pan Babinich was marching in that direction.

Anusia hoped that when he came he would drive out the Swedes in a twinkling, and then—then would be what God would give. Olenka judged also that it was safest with the party; but she wished to retreat far from Taurogi, fearing the pursuit of Sakovich.

“Let us go to Vodokty,” said she; “there we shall be among our own people. Although it is burned, Mitruny and all the neighboring villages are there. It is impossible that the whole country is turned into a desert. Lauda will defend us in case of danger.”

“But all the Lauda men have gone with Volodyovski,” said Yur Billevich, in opposition.

“The old men and the youths have remained, and even the women there are able to defend in case of need. Besides, forests are greater there than here; the Domasheviches, the hunters, or the Smoky Gostyeviches will take us to Rogovsk, where no enemy will find us.”

“And when I have secured the camp and you, I will attack the Swedes, and cut to pieces those who dare to touch the rim of the wilderness,” said Pan Billevich. “This is an excellent idea! We have nothing to do here; it is possible to render greater service.”

Who knows whether the sword-bearer did not seize that idea of Olenka so quickly because he too in his soul was somewhat afraid of Sakovich, who brought to despair, might be terrible?

The advice, however, was wise in itself; therefore it pleased all immediately. The sword-bearer sent out infantry that very day under command of Yur Billevich, so as to push forward by the forest in the direction of Krakinov; but he went forward himself with the cavalry two days later, obtaining in advance reliable intelligence as to whether there had not gone out from Kyedani or Rosseyeni, between which he had to march, some considerable bodies of Swedish troops.

Pan Billevich marched slowly and carefully. The ladies travelled in peasants’ wagons, and sometimes on ponies which the sword-bearer had provided.

Anusia, who had received as a gift from Yur Billevich a light sabre, hung it bravely at her side, and in a cap, placed jauntily on her head, brought up the squadron like some captain. The march amused her, the sabres glittering in the sun, and the fires disposed around at night. Young officers and soldiers were greatly pleased with the lady, and she shot her eyes around in every direction on the march; she let her tresses fall so as to braid them three times daily over the banks of bright brooks, which for her took the place of a mirror. She said often that she wished to see a battle, so as to give an example of bravery; but in very truth she did not

want a battle at all. She wanted only to subdue the hearts of all the young warriors; in fact, she did subdue an unreckoned number of them.

Olenka too revived again, as it were, after leaving Taurogi. There the uncertainty of her future and continual fear were killing her; now in the depths of the forest she felt safer. The wholesome air brought back her strength. The sight of soldiers, of weapons, the movement and bustle of camp life, acted like balsam on her wearied soul. And the march of troops acted agreeably on her also; possible dangers did not alarm her in the least, for knightly blood was in her veins. Appearing less frequently before the soldiers, not permitting herself to gallop on a pony in front of the ranks, she attracted fewer glances, but general respect surrounded her. The mustached faces of the soldiers were laughing at sight of Anusia; heads were uncovered when Olenka drew near the fires. That was changed later to homage. But it did not pass without this—that some heart beat for her in a youthful breast; but eyes did not dare to gaze at her so directly as at that brunette of the Ukraine.

They advanced through forests and thickets, often sending scouts ahead; and only on the seventh day did they arrive late at night in Lyubich, which, lying on the border of the Lauda region, formed as it were the entrance to it. The horses were so tired that in spite of Olenka's opposition it was impossible to go farther; Billevich therefore forbade the lady to find fault, and disposed his party for the halt. He himself with the young ladies occupied the house, for the night was foggy and very cold. By a marvellous chance the house had not been burned. The enemy had spared it probably through the command of Prince Yanush Radzivill, because it was Kmita's; and though the prince learned later of Pan Andrei's secession, he forgot or had not time to give a new order. The insurgents considered the estate as belonging to the Billeviches; the ravagers did not dare to plunder near Lauda. Therefore nothing had changed in it. Olenka went under that roof with a terrible feeling of bitterness and pain. She knew every corner there, but almost with each one was bound up some memory of Kmita's betrayal. Before her is the dining-hall ornamented with the portraits of the Billeviches and with skulls of wild beasts of the forest; the skulls cracked with bullets are still on the nails; the portraits slashed with sabres are gazing from the walls, as if wishing to say, "Behold, O maiden! behold, our granddaughter! it was he who slashed with sacrilegious hand the pictures of our earthly forms, now resting long in their graves."

Olenka felt that she could not close an eye in that branded house. It seemed to her that in the dark corners of the rooms were prowling around yet the ghosts of those terrible comrades breathing fire from their nostrils. And how quickly that man, so loved by her, had passed from violence to transgression, from transgression to crimes, from the slashing of portraits to profligacy, to the burning of Upita and Volmontovichi, to carrying her off from Vodokty; further to the service of Radzivill, to treason, crowned with the promise of raising his hand against the king, against the father of the whole Commonwealth!

The night went on swiftly, but sleep did not seize the lids of unhappy Olenka. All the wounds of her soul were reopened and began to burn painfully. Shame again was scorching her cheeks; her eyes dropped no tears in that time, but immeasurable grief surrounded her heart, because it could not find place within that poor heart. Grief for what? For what might have been had he been other—if with his bad habits, wildness, and violence, he had even had an honest heart; if finally he had even a measure in his crimes, if there existed some boundary over which he was incapable of passing? And her heart would have forgiven so much.

Anusia saw the suffering of her companion, and understood the cause; for the old sword-bearer had detailed the whole history to her previously. Since she had a kind heart, she came up to Panna Billevich, and throwing her arms around her neck, said—

“Olenka, you are writhing from pain in this house.”

Olenka at first did not wish to speak; then her whole body trembled like an aspen leaf, and at last a terrible, despairing cry burst from her bosom. Seizing Anusia’s hand convulsively, she rested her bright head on that maiden’s shoulder; sobbing now tore her as a whirlwind tears a thicket.

Anusia had to wait long before it passed; at last she whispered when Olenka was pacified somewhat, “Let us pray for him.”

Olenka covered her eyes with both hands. “I—cannot,” said she, with an effort.

After a while, gathering back feverishly the hair which had fallen on her forehead, she began to speak with a gasping voice—

“You see—I cannot—You are happy; your Babinich is honorable, famous, before God and the country. You are happy; I am not free even to pray—Here, everywhere, is the blood of people, and here are burned ruins. If at least he had not betrayed the country, if he had not undertaken to sell the king! I had forgiven everything before, in Kyedani; for I thought—for I loved him with my whole heart. But now I cannot—O merciful God! I cannot! I could wish not to live myself, and that he were not living.”

“It is permitted to pray for every soul,” said Anusia; “for God is more merciful than men, and knows reasons which often men do not know.”

When she had said this, Anusia knelt down to pray, and Olenka threw herself on the floor in the form of a cross, and lay thus till daybreak.

Next morning the news thundered through the neighborhood that Pan Billevich was in Lauda. At that news all who were living came forth with greeting. Therefore out of the neighboring forests issued decrepit old men, and women with small children. For two years no one had sowed any seed, no one had ploughed any land. The villages were partly burned and were deserted. The people lived in the forests. Men in the vigor of life had gone with Volodyovski or to various parties; only youths watched and guarded the remnant of cattle, and guarded well, but under cover of the wilderness.

They greeted the sword-bearer then as a savior, with a great cry of joy; for to those simple people it seemed that if the sword-bearer had come and the “lady” was returning to the ancient nest, then there must be an end to war and disasters. In fact, they began at once to return to the villages, and to drive out the half-wild cattle from the deepest forest enclosures.

The Swedes, it is true, were not far away, defended by intrenchments in Ponyevyej; but in presence of Billevich’s forces and other neighboring parties which might be summoned in case of need, less attention was paid to them.

Pan Tomash even intended to attack Ponyevyej, so as to clear out the whole district; but he was waiting for more men to rally to his banner, and waiting especially till guns were brought to his infantry. These guns the Domasheviches had secreted in considerable number in the forest; meanwhile he examined the neighborhood, passing from village to village.

But that was a gloomy review at Vodokty. The mansion was burned, and half the village; Mitruny in like manner; Volmontovichi of the Butryms, which Kmita had burned in his time, and which had been rebuilt after the fire, by a marvellous chance was untouched; but Drojeykani and Mozgi of the Domasheviches was burned to the ground; Patsuneli was half consumed, and Morezi altogether. Goshchuni experienced the harshest fate; for half the people were cut to pieces, and all the men to boys of a few years had their hands cut off by command of Colonel Rossa.

So terribly had war trampled those neighborhoods! such were the results of the treason of Yanush Radzivill!

But before Billevich had finished his review and stationed his infantry, fresh tidings came, at once joyful and terrible, which rang with thousandfold echo from cottage to cottage.

Yurek Billevich, who had gone with a few tens of horses on a reconnoissance to Ponyevyej and had seized some Swedes, was the first to learn of the battle at Prostki. Then every report brought more details, so wondrous that they resembled a fable.

Pan Gosyevski, it was said, had routed Count Waldeck, Israel, and Prince Boguslav. The army was cut to pieces, the leaders in captivity. All Prussia was blazing in one conflagration.

A few weeks later the mouths of men began to repeat one terrible name—the name of Babinich.

Babinich, said they, was the main cause of the victory at Prostki. Babinich cut down with his own hand and captured Prince Boguslav. The next news was: “Babinich is burning Electoral Prussia, is advancing like death toward Jmud, slaying, leaving behind only earth and sky.”

Then came the end: “Babinich has burned Taurogi. Sakovich has fled before him, and is hiding in forests.” The last event had happened too near to remain long in doubt. In fact, the news was verified perfectly.

Anusia during the whole time that news was arriving lived as if dazed; she laughed and wept in turn, stamped her feet when no one believed, and repeated to everyone, whether that one would listen or not—

“I know Pan Babinich. He brought me from Zamost to Pan Sapyeha. He is the greatest warrior in the world. I do not know whether Pan Charnyetski is his equal. He is the man who serving under Sapyeha crushed Boguslav utterly in the first campaign. He—I am sure that it is no other—conquered him at Prostki. Yes, he can finish Sakovich and ten like Sakovich; and he will sweep out the Swedes in a month from all Jmud.”

In fact, her assurances began to be justified speedily. There was not the least doubt that the terrible warrior called Babinich had moved forward from Taurogi toward the northern country.

At Koltyni he defeated Colonel Baldon and cut his troops to pieces; at Varni he scattered the Swedish infantry, which retreated before him at Telshi; at Telshi he won a greater victory over two colonels, Norman and Hudenskiöld, in which the latter fell, and Norman with the survivors did not halt till he reached Zagori, on the very boundary of Jmud.

From Telshi Babinich marched to Kurshani, driving before him smaller divisions of Swedes, who took refuge in haste with the more important garrisons.

From Taurogi and Polangi to Birji and Vilkomir the name of the victor was ringing. They told of the cruelties which he permitted himself against the Swedes. It was said that his forces, composed at first of a small *chambul* of Tartars and little squads of volunteers, increased day after day; for all who were living rushed to him, all parties joined him, but he bound them in bonds of iron and led them against the enemy.

Minds were so far occupied by his victories that tidings of the defeat which Pan Gosyevski had sustained from Steinbock at Filipovo passed almost without an echo. Babinich was nearer, and with Babinich they were more occupied.

Anusia implored Billevich daily to advance and join the great warrior. Olenka supported her; all the officers and nobles urged, excited by curiosity alone.

But to join the warrior was not easy. First, Babinich was in another district; second, he often disappeared, and was not heard of for weeks, and then appeared again with news of a new victory; third, all the Swedish soldiers and garrisons, protecting themselves from him, had stopped the road with large forces; finally, beyond Rossyeni a considerable body of troops had appeared under Sakovich, of whom tidings were brought saying that he was destroying everything before him, and torturing people terribly while questioning them concerning Billevich's party.

The sword-bearer not only could not march to Babinich, but he feared that it would soon be too narrow for him near Lauda. Not knowing himself what to begin, he confided to Yurek Billevich that he intended to withdraw to the forest of Rogovsk on the east. Yurek immediately gave this information to Anusia, and she went straight to the sword-bearer.

"Dearest uncle," said she, for she always called him uncle when she wanted to gain something from him, "I hear that we have to flee. Is it not a shame for so celebrated a warrior to flee at the mere report of an enemy?"

"Your ladyship must thrust your three coppers into everything," said the anxious sword-bearer. "This is not your affair."

"Very well, then, retreat, but I will stay here."

"So that Sakovich will catch you—you'll see!"

"Sakovich will not catch me, for Pan Babinich will defend me."

"Especially when he knows where you are. I have said already that we are unable to go to him."

"But he can come to us. I am his acquaintance; if I could only send a letter to him, I am certain he would come here, after he had beaten Sakovich. He loved me a little, and he would come to rescue me."

"But who will undertake to carry a letter?"

"It can be sent through the first peasant that comes."

"It will do no harm, it will do no harm; in no case will it do harm. Olenka has quick wit, but neither are you without it. Even if we had to retreat to the woods this moment before superior force, it would still be well to have Babinich come to these parts, for we can then join him more easily. Try! Messengers will be found, and trusty men."

The delighted Anusia began to try so well that that same day she found two messengers—and not peasants; for one was Yurek Billevich, the other Braun. Each was to take a letter of the same contents as that which the other carried, so that if one failed the other might deliver the missive to Babinich. With the letter itself Anusia had more trouble; but at last she wrote it in the following words:—

*"In the last extremity I write to you. If you remember me, though I doubt if you do, come to rescue me. By the kindness which you showed me on the road from Zamost, I dare to hope that you will not leave me in misfortune. I am in the party of Pan Billevich, the sword-bearer of Rossyeni, who gave me refuge because I brought his relative, Panna Billevich, out of captivity in Taurogi. And him and us both the enemy, namely, the Swedes, have surrounded on every side, and a certain Pan Sakovich, before whose sinful importunities I had to flee and seek safety in the camp. I know that you did not love me, though God sees that I did you no harm. I wished you well, and I shall wish you well from my whole heart. But though you do not love, rescue a poor orphan from the savage hand of the enemy. God will reward you for it*

*a hundred fold, and I will pray for you, whom today I call only my good protector, but hereafter my savior."*

When the messengers were leaving the camp, Anusia, considering to what dangers they were exposed, was alarmed, and at last wished to stop them. Even with tears in her eyes she began to implore the sword-bearer not to permit them to go; for peasants might carry the letters, and it would be easier for the peasants to deliver them.

But Braun and Yurek Billevich were so stubborn that no remonstrance could avail. One wished to surpass the other in readiness to serve, but neither foresaw what was awaiting him. A week later Braun fell into the hands of Sakovich, who gave command to flay him; but poor Yurek was shot beyond Ponyevyej while fleeing before a Swedish party.

Both letters fell into the hands of the enemy.

## Chapter XCIV

Sakovich, after he had seized and flayed Braun, arranged at once a joint attack on the Billevich party with Hamilton, the commandant of Ponyevyej, an Englishman in the Swedish service.

Babinich had just disappeared somewhere in the forest, and for a number of days no report of him had come. But Sakovich would not have regarded him, even had he been in the neighborhood. He had, it is true, in spite of all his daring, a certain instinctive dread of Babinich; but this time he was ready to perish himself, if he could accomplish his vengeance. From the time of Anusia's flight rage had not ceased for a moment to tear his soul. Deceived calculations, and wounded love especially, brought him to frenzy; and besides the heart was suffering in him. At first he wished to marry Anusia only for the property willed her by her first betrothed, Pan Podbipienta; but later he fell in love with her blindly, and to the death, as only such a man can fall in love. And it went so far that he who feared no one on earth save Boguslav, he before whose glance alone people grew pale, gazed like a dog into the eyes of that maiden, yielded to her, endured her caprices, carried out all her wishes, strove to divine her thoughts.

She used and abused her influence, deluding him with words, with a look; used him as a slave, and finally betrayed him.

Sakovich was of those men who consider that only as good and virtuous which is good for them, and as evil and criminal that which brings them harm. In his eyes, therefore, Anusia had committed the most terrible crime, and there was no punishment sufficiently great for her. If the mishap had met another, the starosta would have laughed and jeered at the man; but when it touched his own person, he roared as a wounded wild beast, and thought only of vengeance. He wished to get the guilty woman into his hands, dead or alive. He would have preferred her alive, for then he could exercise a cavalier's vengeance before her death; but if the maiden had to fall in time of attack, he cared little, if only she did not come into possession of another.

Wishing to act with certainty, he sent a bribed man to the sword-bearer with a letter as if from Babinich, in which he announced, in the name of the latter, that he would be in Volmontovichi in the course of a week.

Billevich believed easily, trusting therefore in the invincible power of Babinich; and he made no secret of the arrangement. He not only took up his headquarters for good in Volmontovichi, but by the announcement of the news he attracted almost all the population of Lauda. What remained of it assembled from the forests—first, because the end of autumn had come, and there were heavy frosts; and second, through pure curiosity alone to see the great warrior.

Meanwhile, from the direction of Ponyevyej marched toward Volmontovichi Hamilton's Swedes, and from the direction of Kyedani was stealing forward in wolf-fashion Sakovich.

But Sakovich had no suspicion that on his tracks was advancing in wolf-fashion also a third man, who without invitation had the habit of coming where people expected him least.

Kmita knew not that Olenka was with the Billevich party. In Taurogi, which he ruined with fire and sword, he learned that she had gone with Anusia; but he supposed that they had gone to Byalovyje, where Pan Yan's wife was in hiding as well as many other noble women. He



might the more easily suppose this, since he knew that Billevich had long intended to take his niece to those impassable forests.

It tortured Pan Andrei immensely that he had not found her in Taurogi, but at the same time he was glad that she had escaped from the hands of Sakovich, and would find safe refuge till the end of the war. Not being able to go for her at once to the wilderness, he determined to attack and destroy the enemy in Jmud, until he had crushed them completely. And fortune went with him. For a month and a half victory followed victory; armed men rushed to him in such numbers that soon his *chambul* was barely one fourth of his force. Finally, he drove the enemy out of all western Jmud; but hearing of Sakovich, and having old scores to settle with the starosta, he set out for his own former district, and followed him. In this way both were now drawing near Volmontovichi.

Billevich, who at first had taken a position not far from the village, had been living there a week, and the thought did not even come to his head that he would soon have such terrible guests. One evening the youthful Butryms, herding horses beyond Volmontovichi, informed him that troops had issued from the forest, and were advancing from the south. Billevich was too old and experienced a soldier not to take precautions. Some of his infantry, partly furnished with firearms by the Domasheviches, he placed in the houses recently rebuilt, and some he stationed at the gate; with the cavalry he took possession himself of a broad pasture somewhat in the rear, beyond the fences, and which touched with one side the river. He did this mainly to gain the praise of Babinich, who must understand skilful dispositions; the place he had chosen was really a strong one.

After Kmita had burned Volmontovichi, in vengeance for the slaughter of his comrades, the village was rebuilt by degrees; but as later on the Swedish war had stopped work on it, a multitude of beams, planks, and boards were lying on the principal street. Whole piles of them rose up near the gate; and infantry, even slightly trained, might make a protracted defence from behind them.

In every case the infantry protected the cavalry from the first onset. Billevich was so eager to exhibit his military skill to Babinich, that he sent forward a small party to reconnoitre.

What was his amazement, and at the first moment alarm, when from a distance and beyond the grove there came to him the sound of musketry; then his party appeared on the road, but coming at a gallop, with a crowd of enemies at its shoulders.

The sword-bearer sprang at once to the infantry to give final orders; but from the grove rushed forth dense groups of the enemy, and advanced locust-like toward Volmontovichi, with arms glittering in the setting sun.

The grove was near. When they had approached somewhat, the cavalry pushed forward at once on a gallop, wishing to pass the gate at a blow; but the sudden fire of the infantry stopped them on the spot. The first ranks fell back, and even in considerable disorder; only a few brought their horses' breasts to the defences.

The sword-bearer recovered meanwhile, and galloping to the cavalry ordered all who had pistols or guns to advance to the aid of the infantry.

Evidently the enemy were equally provided with muskets; for after the first onset they began a very violent, though irregular fire.

From both sides it thundered now more quickly, now more slowly; the balls whistling came up to the cavalry, struck on the houses, fence, piles of timber; the smoke rose over Volmontovichi, the smell of powder filled the street.

Anusia had what she wanted—a battle. Both ladies mounted ponies at the first moment, by command of Billevich, so that at a given signal they might retreat with the party should the enemy's forces turn out too great. They were stationed therefore in the rear ranks of the cavalry.

But though Anusia had a small sabre at her side and a lynx-skin cap on her head, her soul fled at once into her arms. She who knew so well how to take counsel in peace with officers, had not one pinch of energy when she had to stand eye to eye with the sons of Bellona in the field. The whistle and knocking of balls terrified her; the uproar, the racing of orderlies, the rattle of muskets, and the groans of the wounded took away her presence of mind, and the smell of powder stopped the breath in her breast. She grew faint and weak, her face became pale as a kerchief, and she squirmed and whimpered like a little child, till young Pan Olesha from Kyemnar had to hold her by the arms. He held her firmly, more firmly than was needed; and he was ready to hold her in that way to the end of the world.

The soldiers around her began to laugh. "A knight in petticoats!" called voices. "Better set hens and pluck feathers!" Others cried: "Pan Olesha, that shield has come to your arm; but Cupid will shoot you all the more easily through it!" And good-humor seized the soldiers.

But others preferred to look at Olenka, who bore herself differently. At first, when bullets flew past at some distance she grew pale too, not being able to forbear inclining her head and closing her eyes; but later knightly blood began to act in her, then with face flushed like a rose she reared her head and looked forward with fearless eye. Her distended nostrils drew in as it were with pleasure the smell of powder. Since the smoke grew thicker and thicker at the gate and decreased the view greatly, the daring lady, seeing that the officers were advancing, went with them, to follow more accurately the course of battle, not even thinking of what she was doing.

In the throng of cavalry there rose a murmur of praise.

"Oh, that is blood! that is the wife for a soldier; she is the right kind of volunteer!"

"Vivat Panna Billevich!"

"Let us hasten, gracious gentlemen, for it is worth while before such eyes."

"The Amazons did not meet muskets better!" cried one of the younger men, forgetting in his enthusiasm that the Amazons lived before the invention of powder.

"It is time to finish. The infantry have borne themselves well, and the enemy are seriously shattered!"

In fact, the enemy could do nothing with their cavalry. Every moment they urged on their horses, attacked the gate, but after a salvo drew back in disorder. And as a wave which has fallen upon the flat shore leaves behind mussels, stones, and dead fish, so after each attack a number of bodies of horses and men were left on the road before the gate.

At last the onsets ceased. Only volunteers came up, firing in the direction of the village with pistols and guns rather thickly, so as to occupy the attention of Billevich's men. But the sword-bearer, coming out along the gutter of the house, saw a movement in the rear ranks of the enemy toward the fields and thickets extending along the left side of Volmontovichi.

"They will try from that side!" cried he; and sent immediately a part of the cavalry between the houses so as to give resistance to the enemy from the gardens.

In half an hour a new battle was begun on the left wing of the party and also with firearms. The fenced gardens rendered difficult a hand-to-hand struggle, and equally difficult for both sides.

The enemy, however, being extended over a longer line, were less exposed to bullets.

The battle was becoming more stubborn and more active, and the enemy did not cease to attack the gate.

Billevich was growing uneasy. On the right flank he had a field behind him still free, ending with a stream not very wide, but deep and swampy, through which a passage, especially if in haste, might be difficult. In one place only was there a trodden road to a flat shore along which villagers drove cattle to the forest.

The sword-bearer began to look around oftener toward that side. All at once among willows which could be seen through, for they had lost their leaves, he saw in the evening light glittering weapons and a dark cloud of soldiers.

“Babinich is coming!” thought he.

But at that moment Pan Hjanstovski, who led the cavalry, rushed up to him.

“Swedish infantry are visible from the river!” cried he, in terror.

“Some treason!” cried Pan Tomash. “By Christ’s wounds, gallop with your cavalry against that infantry; otherwise it will attack us on the flank.”

“There is a great force!” answered Hjanstovski.

“Oppose it even for an hour, and we will escape in the rear to the forests.”

The officer galloped away, and was soon rushing over the field at the head of two hundred men; seeing which the enemy’s infantry began to form in the willows to receive the Poles. The squadron urged the horses, and in the willow-bushes a musketry fire was soon rattling.

Billevich had doubts, not only of victory, but of saving his own infantry. He might withdraw to the rear with a part of the cavalry with the ladies, and seek safety in the forest; but such a withdrawal would be a great defeat, for it meant leaving to the enemy’s sword most of the party and the remnant of the population of Lauda, which had collected in Volmontovichi to see Billevich. Volmontovichi itself would be levelled to the ground. There remained still the lone hope that Hjanstovski would break the infantry. Meanwhile it was growing dark in the sky; but in the village the light increased every moment, for the chips, splinters, and shavings, lying in a heap at the first house near the gate, had caught fire. The house itself caught fire from them, and a red conflagration was rising.

By the light of the burning Billevich saw Hjanstovski’s cavalry returning in disorder and panic; after it the Swedish infantry were rushing from the willows, advancing to the attack on a run.

He understood then that he must retreat by the only road open. He rushed to the rest of the cavalry, waved his sword and cried—

“To the rear, gentlemen, and in order, in order!”

Suddenly shots were heard in the rear also, mingled with shouts of soldiery.

Billevich saw then that he was surrounded, that he had fallen as it were into a trap from which there was neither issue nor rescue. It remained for him only to perish with honor; therefore he sprang out before the line of cavalry, and cried—

“Let us fall one upon the other! Let us not spare our blood for the faith and the country!”

Meanwhile the fire of the infantry defending the gate and the left side of the village had grown weak, and the increasing shout of the enemy announced their near victory.

But what mean those hoarse trumpet sounds in the ranks of Sakovich’s party, and the rattle of drums in the ranks of the Swedes?

Outcries shriller and shriller are heard, in some way wonderful, confused, as if not triumph but terror rings through them.

The fire at the gate stops in a moment, as if someone had cut it off with a knife. Groups of Sakovich’s cavalry are flying at breakneck speed from the left flank to the main road. On the right flank the infantry halt, and then, instead of advancing, begin to withdraw to the willows. “What is this?” cried Billevich.

Meanwhile the answer comes from that grove out of which Sakovich had issued; and now emerge from it men, horses, squadrons, horsetail standards, sabres, and march—no, they fly like a storm, and not like a storm—like a tempest! In the bloody gleams of the fire they are as visible as a thing on the hand. They are hastening in thousands! The earth seems to flee from beneath them, and they speed on in dense column; one would say that some monster had issued from the oak-grove, and is sweeping across the fields to the village to swallow it. The air flies before them, driven by the impetus; with them go terror and ruin. They are almost there! Now the attack! Like a whirlwind they scatter Sakovich’s men.

“O God! O great God!” cries Billevich, in bewilderment; “these are ours! That must be Babinich!”

“Babinich!” roared every throat after him.

“Babinich! Babinich!” called terrified voices in Sakovich’s party.

And all the enemy’s cavalry wheel to the right, to escape toward the infantry. The fence is broken with a sharp crash, under the pressure of horses’ breasts. The pasture is filled with the fleeing; but the newcomers, on their shoulders already, cut, slash—cut without resting, cut without pity. The whistling of sabres, cries, groans, are heard. Pursuers and pursued fall upon the infantry, overturn, break, and scatter them. At last the whole mass rolls on toward the river, disappears in the brush, clambers out on the opposite bank. Men are visible yet; the chasing continues, with cutting and cutting. They recede. Their sabres flash once again; then they vanish in bushes, in space, and in darkness.

Billevich’s infantry began to withdraw from the gate and the houses, which needed no further defence. The cavalry stood for a time in such wonder that deep silence reigned in the ranks; and only when the flaming house had fallen with a crash was some voice heard on a sudden—

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the storm has gone by!”

“Not a foot will come out alive from that hunt!” said another voice.

“Gracious gentlemen!” cried the sword-bearer, suddenly, “shall we not spring at those who came at us in the rear? They are retreating, but we will come up.”

“Kill, slay!” answered a chorus of voices.

All the cavalry wheeled around and urged their horses after the last division of the enemy. In Volmontovich remained only old men, women, children, and “the lady” with her friend.

They quenched the fire in a twinkling; joy inconceivable seized all hearts. Women with weeping and sobbing raised their hands heavenward, and turning to the point where Babinich had rushed away, cried—

“God bless thee, invincible warrior! savior who rescued us, with our children and houses, from ruin!”

The ancient, decrepit Butryms repeated in chorus—

“God bless thee, God guide thee! Without thee this would have been the end of Volmontovichi.”

Ah, had they known in that crowd that the very same hand that had now saved the village from fire and the people from steel had two years before brought fire and the sword to that Volmontovichi!

After the fire was quenched, all began to collect in Billevich’s wounded; the youths in a rage ran through the battlefield, and killed, with poles from wagon-racks, the wounded left by the Swedes and Sakovich’s ravagers.

Olenka took command of the nursing. Ever keeping her presence of mind, full of energy and power, she did not cease her labor till every wounded man was resting in a cottage, with dressed wounds. Then all the people followed her example in repeating at the cross a litany for the dead. Through the whole night no one closed an eye in Volmontovichi; all were waiting for the return of the sword-bearer and Babinich, hurrying around at the same time to prepare for the victors a fitting reception. Oxen and sheep, herded in the forests, went under the knife; and fires were roaring till morning.

Anusia alone could take no part in anything; for at first fear deprived her of power, and later her joy was so great that it had the seeming of madness. Olenka had to care for her; she was laughing and weeping in turn, and again she threw herself in the arms of her friend, repeating without system or order—

“Well, what? Who saved Billevich and the party and all Volmontovichi? Before whom did Sakovich flee; who overwhelmed him, and the Swedes with him? Pan Babinich! Well, now! I knew he would come, for I wrote to him. But he did not forget! I knew, I knew he would come. It was I who brought him! Olenka, Olenka! I am happy. Have I not told you that no one could conquer him? Charnyetski is not his equal. O my God, my God! Is it true that he will return? Will it be today? If he was not going to return, he would not have come, is it not true? Do you hear, Olenka? Horses are neighing in the distance!”

But in the distance nothing was neighing. Only toward morning a tramp was heard, shouting, singing, and Billevich came back. The cavalry on foaming horses filled the whole village. There was no end to the songs, to the shouts, to the stories.

The sword-bearer, covered with blood, panting, but joyful, related till sunrise how he had broken a body of the enemy’s cavalry, how he had followed them ten miles, and cut them almost to pieces.

Billevich, as well as the troops and all the Lauda people, were convinced that Babinich might return at any moment. The forenoon came; then the sun went to the other half of the sky, and was descending; but Babinich came not.

Anusia toward evening had sunburned spots on her face. “If he cared only for the Swedes, and not for me!” thought she, in her soul; “still, he got the letter, for he came to the rescue!”

Poor woman! she knew not that the souls of Yurek Billevich and Braun were long since in the other world, and that Babinich had received no letter; for if he had received the letter he would have returned like a lightning-flash to Volmontovichi—but not for thee, Anusia.

Another day passed. Billevich did not lose hope yet, and did not leave the village. Anusia held stubborn silence.

“He has belittled me terribly! But it is good for me, for my giddiness and my sins!” said she to herself.

On the third day Billevich sent some men on a reconnoissance. They returned four days later with information that Babinich had taken Ponyevyej, and spared not a Swede. Then he marched on, it was unknown whither, for tidings of him had ceased.

“I shall not find him till he comes up again,” said Billevich.

Anusia became a nettle; whoever of the nobles or younger officers touched her drew back quickly. But the fifth day she said to Olenka—

“Pan Volodyovski is just as good a soldier, but less rude.”

“And maybe,” answered Olenka, meditatively, “maybe Pan Babinich has retained his constancy for that other woman, of whom he spoke to you on the road from Zamost.”

“Well, all one to me!” said Anusia.

But she told not the truth; for it was not all one to her yet, by any means.

## Chapter XCV

Sakovich's forces were cut up to such a degree that he was barely able himself to take refuge in the forests near Ponyevyej with four other men. Then he wandered through the forests disguised as a peasant for a whole month, not daring to put his head out into the open light.

But Babinich rushed upon Ponyevyej, cut down the infantry posted there as a garrison, and pursued Hamilton, who was unable to flee to Livonia because of the considerable Polish forces assembled in Shavli, and farther on, near Birji, turned toward the east in hope of being able to break through to Vilkomir. He had doubts about saving his own regiment, but did not wish to fall into the hands of Babinich; for the report was spread everywhere that that stern warrior, not to burden himself, gave orders to slay every prisoner.

The ill-fated Englishman therefore fled like a deer hunted by wolves, and Babinich hunted him all the more venomously. Hence he did not return to Volmontovichi, and he did not even inquire what party it was that he had saved.

The first hoar-frosts had begun to cover the earth in the morning; escape became more difficult thereby, for the tracks of hoofs remained on the earth. In the forest there was no pasture, in the field the horses suffered stern hunger. The foreign cavalry did not dare to remain longer in villages, lest the stubborn enemy might reach them any moment.

At last their misery surpassed all bounds; they lived only on leaves, bark, and those of their own horses which fell from fatigue. After a week they began to implore their colonel to turn, face Babinich, and give him battle, for they chose to die by the sword rather than by hunger. Hamilton yielded, and drew up for battle in Andronishki. The Swedish forces were inferior to that degree that the Englishman could not even think of victory, especially against such an opponent. But he was himself greatly wearied, and wanted to die. The battle, begun at Andronishki, ended near Troüpi, where fell the last of the Swedes.

Hamilton died the death of a hero, defending himself at a cross by the roadside against a number of Tartars, who wished at first to take him alive, but infuriated by his resistance bore him apart on their sabres at last.

But Babinich's squadrons were so wearied too that they had neither the strength nor the wish to advance even to the neighboring Troüpi; but wherever one of them stood during battle there it prepared at once for the night's rest, kindling fires in the midst of the enemy's corpses. After they had eaten, all fell asleep with the sleep of stones. Even the Tartars themselves deferred till next morning the plunder of corpses.

Kmita, who was concerned mainly about the horses, did not oppose that rest. But next morning he rose rather early, so as to count his own loss after the stubborn conflict and divide the spoils justly. Immediately after eating he stood on the eminence, at that same cross under which Hamilton had died; the Polish and Tartar officers came to him in their turn, with the loss of their men notched on staffs, and made reports. He listened as a country proprietor listens in summer to his overseers, and rejoices in his heart at the plentiful harvest.

Then Akbah Ulan came up, more like a fright than a human being, for his nose had been broken at Volmontovichi by the hilt of a sabre; he bowed, gave Kmita a bloody paper, and said—

“Effendi, some papers were found on the Swedish leader, which I give according to order.”

Kmita had indeed given a rigorous order that all papers discovered on corpses should be brought to him straightway after battle, for often he was able to learn from them the plans of the enemy, and act accordingly.

But at this time he was not so urgent; therefore he nodded and put the paper in his bosom. But Akbah Ulan he sent to the *chambul* with the order to move at once to Troüpi, where they were to have a longer rest.

The squadrons then passed before him, one after the other. In advance marched the *chambul*, which now did not number five hundred completely; the rest had been lost in continual battles; but each Tartar had so many Swedish riks thalers, Prussian thalers and ducats sewed up in his saddle, in his coat, and in his cap, that he was worth his own weight. They were in no wise like common Tartars, for whoso of them was weaker had perished from hardship; there remained only men beyond praise, broad-shouldered, of iron endurance, and venomous as hornets. Continual practice had so trained them that in hand-to-hand conflict they could meet even the regular cavalry of Poland; on the heavy cavalry or dragoons of Prussia, when equal in number, they rushed like wolves upon sheep. In battle they defended with terrible fierceness the bodies of their comrades, so as to divide afterward their booty. They passed now before Kmita with great animation, sounding their trumpets, blowing their pipes, and shaking their horsetail standard; they went in such order that regular troops could not have marched better.

Next came the dragoons, formed with great pains by Pan Andrei from volunteers of every description, armed with rapiers and muskets. They were led by the old sergeant, Soroka, now raised to the dignity of officer, and even to that of captain. The regiment, dressed in one fashion in captured uniforms taken from Prussian dragoons, was composed chiefly of men of low station; but Kmita loved specially that kind of people, for they obeyed blindly and endured every toil without uttering a murmur.

In the two following squadrons of volunteers only smaller and higher nobles served. They were stormy spirits and restive, who under another leader would have been turned into a herd of robbers, but in Kmita's iron hands they had become like regular squadrons, and gladly called themselves "light horsemen." These were less steady under fire than the dragoons, but were more terrible in their first fury, and were more skilful in hand-to-hand conflict, for they knew every point of fencing.

After these marched, finally, about a thousand fresh volunteers—good men, but over whom it was needful to work yet to make them like regular troops.

Each of these squadrons in passing raised a shout, saluting meanwhile Pan Andrei with their sabres. And he was more and more rejoiced. That was a considerable and not a poor force. He had accomplished much with it, had shed much of the enemy's blood, and God knows how much he might do yet. His former offences were great, but his recent services were not slight. He had risen from his fall, from his sin; and had gone to repent, not in the church, but in the field.—not in ashes, but in blood. He had defended the Most Holy Lady, the country, and the king; and now he felt that it was easier in his soul and more joyous. Nay, the heart of the young man swelled with pride, for not everyone would have been able to make head as he had.

For how many fiery nobles are there, how many cavaliers in that Commonwealth! and why does no one of them stand at the head of such forces—not even Volodyovski, nor Pan Yan? Besides, who defended Chenstohova, who defended the king in the pass, who slashed down Boguslav, who first brought fire and sword into Electoral Prussia? And behold even now in Jmud there is hardly an enemy.



Here Pan Andrei felt what the falcon feels, when, stretching his wings, he rises higher and higher. The passing squadrons greeted him with a thundering shout, and he raised his head and asked himself, "Whither shall I fly?" And his face flushed, for in that moment it seemed to him that within himself he bore a hetman. But that baton, if it comes to him, will come from the field, from wounds, from service, from praise. No traitor will flash it before his eyes as in his time Prince Yanush had done, but a thankful country will place it in his hand, with the will of the king. But it is not for him to think when it will come, but to fight, and to fight tomorrow as he fought yesterday!

Here the excited imagination of the cavalier returned to reality. Whither should he march from Troüpi, in what new place strike the Swedes?

Then he remembered the letter given him by Akbah Ulan and found on the body of Hamilton. He put his hand in his bosom, took it out and looked, and astonishment at once was reflected on his face; for on the letter was written plainly, in a woman's hand: "To his Grace Pan Babinich, Colonel of Tartar forces and volunteers."

"For me!" said Pan Andrei.

The seal was broken; therefore he opened the letter quickly, struck the paper with the back of his hand, and began to read. But he had not finished when his hands began to quiver, his face changed, and he cried—

"Praised be the name of the Lord! O merciful God, the reward comes to me from Thy hand!"

Here he seized the foot of the cross with both hands, and began to beat his yellow hair against the wood. In another manner he was not able to thank God at that moment; he found no other words for prayer, because delight like a whirlwind had seized him and borne him far, far away to the sky.

That letter was from Anusia. The Swedes had found it on the body of Yurek Billevich, and now it had come to Kmita's hands through a second corpse. Through Pan Andrei's head thousands of thoughts were flying with the speed of Tartar arrows.

Therefore Olenka was not in the wilderness, but in Billevich's party; and he had just saved her, and with her that Volmontovich which on a time he had sent up in smoke in avenging his comrades. Evidently the hand of God had directed his steps, so that with one blow he had made good all wrongs done Olenka and Lauda. Behold, his offences are washed away! Can she refuse now to forgive him, or can that grave brotherhood of Lauda? Can they refuse to bless him? And what will she say, that beloved maiden who holds him a traitor, when she learns that that Babinich who brought down Radzivill, who waded to his girdle in German and Swedish blood, who crushed the enemy out of Jmud, destroyed them, drove them to Prussia and Livonia, was he—was Kmita; no longer, however, the disorderly, the outlaw, the traitor, but the defender of the faith, of the king, of the country?

Immediately after he had crossed the boundary of Jmud, Pan Andrei wished to proclaim to the four sides of the world who that far-famed Babinich was; and if he did not do so, it was only because he feared that at the very sound of his real name all would turn from him, all would suspect him, would refuse him aid and confidence. Two years had barely passed, since bewildered by Radzivill he had cut down those squadrons which were not willing to rise with Radzivill against king and country. Barely two years before, he had been the right hand of the traitor.

Now all was changed. Now, after so many victories, in such glory, he had a right to come to the maiden and say, "I am Kmita, but your savior." He had a right to shout to all Jmud, "I am Kmita, but thy savior!"

Besides, Volmontovich was not distant. Kmita had followed Hamilton a week; but Kmita would be at the feet of Olenka in less time than a week. Here Pan Andrei stood up, pale with emotion, with flaming eyes, with gleaming face, and cried to his attendant—

“My horse quickly! Be alive, be alive!” The attendant brought the black steed, and sprang down to hold the stirrup; but when he had reached the ground he said—

“Your grace, some strange men are approaching from Troüpi with Pan Soroka, and they are coming at a trot.”

“I do not care for them!” answered Pan Andrei.

Now both horsemen approached to within some yards; then one of them with Soroka pushed forward on a gallop, arrived, and removing his panther-skin cap, uncovered a head red as fire.

“I see that I am standing before Pan Babinich!” said he; “I am glad that I have found you.”

“With whom have I the honor to speak?” asked Kmita, impatiently.

“I am Vyershul, once captain of the Tartar squadron with Prince Yeremi Vishnyevetski. I come to my native place to make levies for a new war; and besides I bring you a letter from the grand hetman, Sapyea.”

“For a new war?” asked Kmita, frowning. “What do you say?”

“This letter will explain better than I,” replied Vyershul, giving the letter of the hetman. Kmita opened the letter feverishly. It read as follows:—

*My Very Dear Pan Babinich—A new deluge is on the country. A league of Sweden with Rakotsy has been concluded, and a division of the Commonwealth agreed upon. Eighty thousand Hungarians, Transylvanians, Wallachians, and Cossacks may cross the southern boundary at any moment. And since in these last straits it is necessary for us to exert all our forces so as to leave even a glorious name after our people for coming ages, I send to your grace this order, according to which you are to turn straight to the south without losing a moment of time, and come to us by forced marches. You will find us in Brest, whence we will send you farther without delay. This time periculum in mora (there is danger in delay). Prince Boguslav is freed from captivity; but Pan Gosyevski is to have an eye on Prussia and Jmud. Enjoining haste on you once more, I trust that love for the perishing country will be your best spur.*

When Kmita had finished reading, he dropped the letter to the earth, and began to pass his hands over his moistened face; at last he looked wandringly on Vyershul, and inquired in a low, stifled voice—

“Why is Pan Gosyevski to remain in Jmud, and why must I go to the south?”

Vyershul shrugged his shoulders: “Ask the hetman in Brest for his reason; I answer nothing.”

All at once terrible anger seized Pan Andrei by the throat. His eyes flashed, his face was blue, and he cried with a shrieking voice: “I will not go from here! Do you understand?”

“Is that true?” asked Vyershul. “My office was to deliver the order; the rest is your affair. With the forehead, with the forehead! I wished to beg your company for a couple of hours, but after what I have heard I prefer to look for another.”

Then he wheeled his horse and rode off. Pan Andrei sat again under the cross, and began to look around on the sky, as if wishing to take note of the weather. The attendant drew back some distance with the horses, and stillness set in all around.

The morning was clear, pale, half autumnal, half wintry. The wind was not blowing, but from the birch bushes growing at the foot of the crucifix the last leaves were dropping noiselessly, yellow and shrivelled from frost. Countless flocks of crows and jackdaws were flying over the forest; some were letting themselves down with mighty cawing right there near the crucifix, for the field and the road were covered with corpses of Swedes still unburied. Pan Andrei looked at those dark birds, blinking his eyes; you would say that he wanted to count them. Then he closed his lids and sat long without motion; at last he shuddered, frowned; presence of mind came back to his face, and he began to speak thus to himself—

“It cannot be otherwise! I will go in two weeks, but not now. Let happen what may. It was not I who brought Rakotsy. I cannot! What is too much is too much! Have I hammered and pounded but little, passed sleepless nights in the saddle, shed my own blood and that of other men? What reward for this? If I had not received the first letter, I should have gone; but both have come in one hour, as if for the greater pain, the greater sorrow. Let the world perish, I will not go! The country will not be lost in two weeks; and besides the anger of God is evidently on it, and it is not in the might of man to oppose that. O God! the Hyperboreans [Northern Russians], the Swedes, the Prussians, the Hungarians, the Transylvanians, the Wallachians, the Cossacks, and all of them at once! Who can resist? O Lord, in what has this unfortunate land offended, in what this pious king, that Thou hast turned from them Thy face, and givest neither mercy nor rescue, and sendest new lashes? Is the bloodshed yet too little, the tears too few? People here have forgotten to rejoice—so the wind does not blow here, it groans; so the rains do not fall, they weep—and Thou art lashing and lashing! Mercy, O Lord! Salvation, O Father! We have sinned, but still repentance has come. We have yielded our fortunes, we have mounted our horses, we are fighting and fighting. We have abandoned violence, we have abjured private ends. Why not pardon us? Why not comfort us?”

Here conscience seized him by the hair suddenly, and shook him till he screamed; for at the same time it seemed to him that he heard some strange voice from the whole dome of heaven, saying—

“Have you abandoned private ends? But, unfortunate, what are you doing at this moment? You are exalting your services; and when the first moment of trial comes, you rise like a wild horse, and shout, ‘I will not go!’ The mother is perishing; new swords are piercing her breast, and you turn away from her. You do not wish to support her with your arm; you are running after your own fortune, and crying, ‘I will not go!’ She is stretching forth bleeding hands; she is just falling, just fainting, just dying, and with her last voice cries, ‘Rescue me, children!’ But you answer, ‘I will not go!’ Woe to you! Woe to such people, woe to the Commonwealth!”

Here terror raised the hair on Pan Andrei’s head, and his whole body began to tremble as if fever had seized it; and that moment he fell with his face to the earth, and began not to cry, but to scream in terror—

“O Jesus, do not punish! Jesus, have mercy! Thy will be done! I will go, I will go!”

Then he lay some time without speaking, and sobbed; and when he rose at last, he had a face full of resignation and perfectly calm; and thus he prayed further—

“Wonder not, O Lord, that I grieve, for I was on the eve of my happiness; but let it be as Thou hast ordained. I understand now that Thou didst wish to try me, and therefore didst place me as it were on the parting of the roads. Let Thy will be done. Once more I will not look behind. To Thee, O Lord, I offer this my terrible sorrow, this my yearning, this my grievous suffering. Let it all be accounted to me in punishment because I spared Prince Boguslav, at which the country wept. Thou seest now, O Lord, that that was my last work for

self-interest. There will be no other. O merciful Father! But now I will kiss once more this beloved earth; yes, I will press Thy bleeding feet again, and I go, O Christ! I go—”

And he went.

In the heavenly register in which are written the evil and good deeds of men, his sins were at that moment all blotted out, for he was completely corrected.

## Chapter XCVI

It is written in no book how many battles the armies, the nobles, and the people of the Commonwealth fought with the enemy. They fought in forests, in fields, in villages, in hamlets, in towns; they fought in Prussia, in Mazovia, in Great Poland, in Little Poland, in Russia, in Lithuania, in Jmud; they fought without resting, in the day or the night.

Every clod of earth was drenched in blood. The names of knights, their glorious deeds, their great devotion, perished from the memory; for the chronicler did not write them down, and the lute did not celebrate them. But under the force of these exertions the power of the enemy bent at last. And as when a lordly lion, pierced the moment before with missiles, rises suddenly, and shaking his kingly mane, roars mightily, pale terror pierces straightway the hunters, and their feet turn to flight; so that Commonwealth rose ever more terrible, filled with anger of Jove, ready to meet the whole world. Into the bones of the aggressors there entered weakness and fear; not of plunder were they thinking then, but of this only—to bear away home from the jaws of the lion sound heads.

New leagues, new legions of Hungarians, Transylvanians, Wallachians, and Cossacks were of no avail. The storm passed once more, it is true, between Brest, Warsaw, and Krakow; but it was broken against Polish breasts, and soon was scattered like empty vapor.

The King of Sweden, being the first to despair of his cause, went home to the Danish war; the traitorous elector, humble before the strong, insolent to the weak, beat with his forehead before the Commonwealth, and fell upon the Swedes; the robber legions of Rakotsy's "slaughterers" fled with all power to their Transylvanian reed-fields, which Pan Lyubomirski ruined with fire and sword.

But it was easier for them to break into the Commonwealth than to escape without punishment; therefore when they were attacked at the passage, the Counts of Transylvania, kneeling before Pototski, Lyubomirski, and Charnyetski, begged for mercy in the dust.

"We will surrender our weapons, we will give millions!" cried they; "only let us go!"

And receiving the ransom, the hetmans took pity on that army of unfortunate men; but the horde trampled them under hoofs at the very thresholds of their homes.

Peace began to return gradually to the plains of Poland. The king was still taking Prussian fortresses; Charnyetski was to take the Polish sword to Denmark, for the Commonwealth did not wish to limit itself to driving out the enemy.

Villages and towns were rebuilt on burned ruins; the people returned from the forests; ploughs appeared in the fields.

In the autumn of 1657, immediately after the Hungarian war, it was quiet in the greater part of the provinces and districts; it was quiet especially in Jmud.

Those of the Lauda men who in their time had gone with Volodyovski, were still somewhere far off in the field; but their return was expected.

Meanwhile in Morezi, in Volmontovichi, in Drojeykani, Mozgi, Goshchuni, and Patsuneli, women, boys, and girls, with old men, were sowing the winter grain, building with joint efforts houses in those "neighborhoods" through which fire had passed, so that the warriors on their return might find at least roofs over their heads, and not be forced to die of hunger.

Olenka had been living for some time at Vodokty, with Anusia and the sword-bearer. Pan Tomash did not hasten to his Billeviche—first, because it was burned, and second, because it was pleasanter for him with the maidens than alone. Meanwhile, with the aid of Olenka, he managed Vodokty.

The lady wished to manage Vodokty in the best manner, for it was to be with Mitruny her dowry for the cloister; in other words, it was to become the property of the Benedictine nuns, with whom on the very day of the coming New Year poor Olenka intended to begin her novitiate.

For after she had considered everything that had met her—those changes of fortune, disappointments, and sufferings—she came to the conviction that thus, and not otherwise, must be the will of God. It seemed to her that some all-powerful hand was urging her to the cell, that some voice was saying to her—

“In that place is the best pacification, and the end of all earthly anxiety.”

She had determined therefore to follow that voice. Feeling, however, in the depth of her conscience that her soul had not been able yet to tear itself from the earth with completeness, she desired first to prepare it with ardent piety, with good works and labor. Frequently also in those efforts echoes from the world hindered her.

For example, people began to buzz around that that famous Babinich was Kmita. Some contradicted excitedly; others repeated the statement with stubbornness.

Olenka believed not. All Kmita's deeds, Kmita and his service with Yanush Radzivill, were too vividly present in her memory to let her suppose for one instant that he was the crusher of Boguslav, and such a trusty worker for the king, such an ardent patriot. Still her peace was disturbed, and sorrow with pain rose up afresh in her bosom.

This might be remedied by a hurried entrance to the cloister; but the cloisters were scattered. The nuns who had not perished from the violence of soldiers during wartime were only beginning to assemble.

Universal misery reigned in the land, and whoso wished to take refuge behind the walls of a convent had not only to bring bread for personal use, but also to feed the whole convent.

Olenka wished to come with bread to the cloister—to become not merely a sister, but a nourisher of nuns.

The sword-bearer, knowing that his labor was to go to the glory of God, labored earnestly.

He went around the fields and the buildings, carrying out the labors of the autumn which with the coming spring were to bear fruit. Sometimes he was accompanied by Anusia, who, unable to endure the affront which Babinich had put upon her, threatened also to enter the cloister, and said she was merely waiting for Volodyovski to bring back the Lauda men, for she wished to bid adieu to her old friend. But more frequently the sword-bearer went with Olenka only on these circuits, for land management was irksome to Anusia.

A certain time both rode out on ponies to Mitruny, where they were rebuilding barns and cow-houses burned in time of war.

On the road they were to visit the church; for that was the anniversary of the battle of Volmontovichi, in which they were saved from the last straits by the coming of Babinich. The whole day had passed for them in various occupations, so that only toward evening could they start from Mitruny. In going there they went by the church-road, but in returning they had to pass through Lyubich and Volmontovichi. Panna Aleksandra had barely looked at the

first smoke of Lyubich when she turned aside her eyes and began to repeat prayers to drive away painful thoughts; but the sword-bearer rode on in silence, and only looked around. At last, when they had passed the gate, he said—

“That is land for a senator! Lyubich is worth two like Mitruny.”

Olenka continued to say her prayers.

But in Pan Tomash was roused the old landlord by nature, and perhaps also he was given somewhat to lawsuits; for after a while he said again, as if to himself—

“And yet it is ours by right—old Billevich property, our sweat, our toil. That unfortunate man must have perished long since, for he has not announced himself; and if he had, the right is with us.” Here he turned to Olenka: “What do you think?”

“That is a cursed place,” answered she. “Let happen with it what may!”

“But you see the right is with us. The place was cursed in bad hands, but it will be blessed in good ones. The right is with us.”

“Never! I do not wish to know anything of it. My grandfather willed it without restriction; let Kmita’s relatives take it.”

Then she urged on the pony. Billevich put spurs also to his beast, and they did not slacken speed till they were in the open field. Meanwhile night had fallen; but there was perfect light, for an enormous red moon had risen from behind the forest of Volmontovichi and lighted up the whole region with a golden shining.

“Well! God has given a beautiful night,” said the sword-bearer, looking at the circle of the moon.

“How Volmontovichi gleams from a distance!” said Olenka.

“For the wood in the houses has not become black.”

Their further conversation was interrupted by the squeaking of a wagon, which they could not see at first, for the road was undulating; soon, however, they saw a pair of horses, and following behind them a pair at a pole, and at the end of the pole a wagon surrounded by a number of horsemen.

“What kind of people can these be?” asked the sword-bearer; and he held in his horse. Olenka stopped at his side.

“Halt!” cried Billevich. “Whom are you carrying there?”

One of the horsemen turned to them and said—

“We are bringing Pan Kmita, who was shot by the Hungarians at Magyerovo.”

“The word has become flesh!” said Billevich.

The whole world went around suddenly in Olenka’s eyes; the heart died within her, breath failed her breast. Certain voices were calling in her soul: “Jesus! Mary! that is he!” Then consciousness of where she was or what was happening left her entirely.

But she did not drop from the horse to the ground, for she seized convulsively with her hand the wagon-rack; and when she came to herself her eyes fell on the motionless form of a man lying in the wagon. True, that was he—Pan Andrei Kmita, the banneret of Orsha; and he was lying on his back in the wagon. His head was bound in a cloth, but by the ruddy light of the moon his pale and calm face was perfectly visible. His eyes were deeply sunk and closed; life did not discover itself by the least movement.

“With God!” said Billevich, removing his cap.

“Stop!” cried Olenka. And she asked with a low but quick voice, as in a fever: “Is he alive or dead?”

“He is alive, but death is over him.”

Here the sword-bearer, looking at Kmita’s face, said: “You will not take him to Lyubich?”

“He gave orders to take him to Lyubich without fail, for he wants to die there.”

“With God! hasten forward.”

“We beat with the forehead!”

The wagon moved on; and Olenka with Billevich galloped in the opposite direction with what breath was in their horses. They flew through Volmontovichi like two night phantoms, and came to Vodokty without speaking a word on the road; only when dismounting, Olenka turned to her uncle—

“It is necessary to send a priest to him,” said she, with a panting voice; “let someone go this moment to Upita.”

The sword-bearer went quickly to carry out her wish; she rushed into her room, and threw herself on her knees before the image of the Most Holy Lady.

A couple of hours after, in the late evening, a bell was heard beyond the gate at Vodokty. That was the priest passing on his way with the Lord Jesus to Lyubich.

Panna Aleksandra was on her knees continually. Her lips were repeating the litany for the dying. And when she had finished she struck the floor three times with her head, repeating: “Reckon to him, O God, that he dies at the hands of the enemy; forgive him, have mercy on him!”

In this way the whole night passed for her. The priest remained in Lyubich till morning, and on his way home called at Vodokty. Olenka ran out to meet him.

“Is it all over?” asked she; and could say no more, for breath failed her.

“He is alive yet,” answered the priest.

During each of the following days a number of messengers flew from Vodokty to Lyubich, and each returned with the answer that the banneret was “alive yet.” At last one brought the intelligence, which he had heard from the barber brought from Kyedani, that he was not only alive, but would recover; for the wounds were healing successfully, and strength was coming back to the knight.

Panna Aleksandra sent bountiful offerings to Upita for a thanksgiving Mass; but from that day messengers ceased to visit Lyubich, and a wonderful thing took place in the maiden’s heart. Together with peace, the former pity for Kmita began to rise. His offences came to her mind again every moment, so grievous that they were not to be forgiven. Death alone could cover them with oblivion. If he returned to health, they weighed on him anew. But still everything that could be brought to his defence Olenka repeated to herself daily.

So much had she suffered in these days, so many conflicts were there in her soul, that she began to fail in health. This disturbed Pan Tomash greatly; hence on a certain evening when they were alone, he said—

“Olenka, tell me sincerely, what do you think of the banneret of Orsha?”

“It is known to God that I do not wish to think of him.”



“For see, you have grown thin—H’m! Maybe that you still—I insist on nothing, but I should be glad to know what is going on in your mind. Do you not think that the will of your grandfather should be accomplished?”

“Never!” answered Olenka. “My grandfather left me this door open, and I will knock at it on the New Year. Thus will his will be accomplished.”

“Neither do I believe at all,” answered Billevich, “what some buzz around here—that Babinich and Kmita are one; but still at Magyerovo he was with the country, fought against the enemy, and shed his blood. The reform is late, but still it is a reform.”

“Even Prince Boguslav is serving the king and the country now,” answered the lady, with sorrow. “Let God forgive both, and especially him who shed his blood; but people will always have the right to say that in the moment of greatest misfortune, in the moment of disaster and fall, he rose against the country, and returned to it only when the enemy’s foot was tottering, and when his personal profit commanded him to hold to the victor. That is their sin! Now there are no traitors, for there is no profit from treason! But what is the merit? Is it not a new proof that such men are always ready to serve the stronger? Would to God it were otherwise, but Magyerovo cannot redeem such transgression.”

“It is true! I cannot deny it,” answered Billevich. “It is a bitter truth, but still true. All the former traitors have gone over in a *chambul* to the king.”

“On the banneret of Orsha,” continued the lady, “there rests a still more grievous reproach than on Boguslav, for Pan Kmita offered to raise his hand against the king, at which act the prince himself was terrified. Can a chance shot remove that? I would let this hand be cut off had that not happened; but it has, and it will never drop away. It seems clear that God has left him life of purpose for penance. My uncle, my uncle! we should be tempting our souls if we tried to beat into ourselves that he is innocent. And what good would come of this? Will conscience let itself be tempted? Let the will of God be done. What is broken cannot be bound again, and should not. I am happy that the banneret is alive, I confess; for it is evident that God has not yet turned from him His favor altogether. But that is sufficient for me. I shall be happy when I hear that he has effaced his fault; but I wish for nothing more, I desire nothing more, even if my soul had to suffer yet. May God assist him!”

Olenka was not able to speak longer, for a great and pitiful weeping overpowered her; but that was her last weeping. She had told all that she carried in her heart, and from that time forth peace began to return to her anew.

## Chapter XCVII

The horned, daring soul in truth was unwilling to go out of its bodily enclosure, and did not go out. In a month after his return to Lyubich Pan Andrei's wounds began to heal; but still earlier he regained consciousness, and looking around the room, he saw at once where he was. Then he called the faithful Soroka.

"Soroka," said he, "the mercy of God is upon me. I feel that I shall not die."

"According to order!" answered the old soldier, brushing away a tear with his fist.

And Kmita continued as if to himself: "The penance is over—I see that clearly. The mercy of God is upon me!"

Then he was silent for a moment; only his lips were moving in prayer.

"Soroka!" said he again, after a time.

"At the service of your grace!"

"Who are in Vodokty?"

"The lady and the sword-bearer of Rossyeni."

"Praised be the name of the Lord! Did anyone come here to inquire about me?"

"They sent from Vodokty until we told them that you would be well."

"And did they stop then?"

"Then they stopped."

"They know nothing yet, but they shall know from me," said Kmita. "Did you tell no one that I fought as Babinich?"

"There was no order," answered the soldier.

"And the Lauda men with Pan Volodyovski have not come home yet?"

"Not yet; but they may come any day."

With this the conversation of the first day was at an end. Two weeks later Kmita had risen and was walking on crutches; the following week he insisted on going to church.

"We will go to Upita," said he to Soroka; "for it is needful to begin with God, and after Mass we will go to Vodokty."

Soroka did not dare to oppose; therefore he merely ordered straw to be placed in the wagon. Pan Andrei arrayed himself in holiday costume, and they drove away.

They arrived at an hour when there were few people yet in the church. Pan Andrei, leaning on Soroka's arm, went to the high altar itself, and knelt in the collator's seat; his face was very thin, emaciated, and besides he wore a long beard which had grown during the war and his sickness. Whoever looked at him thought that he was some passing personage who had come in to Mass; for there was movement everywhere, the country was full of passing nobles who were going from the field to their own estates.

The church filled slowly with people and with neighboring nobles; then owners of inherited land from a distance began to arrive, for in many places churches had been burned, and it was necessary to come to Mass as far as Upita.

Kmita, sunk in prayer, saw no one. He was roused first from his pious meditation by the squeaking of footstools under the tread of persons entering the pew. Then he raised his head, looked, and saw right there above him the sweet, sad face of Olenka.

She also saw him, and recognized him that moment; for she drew back suddenly, as if frightened. First a flush, and then a deathly pallor came out on her face; but with the greatest exercise of will she overcame her emotion, and knelt there near him; the third place was occupied by the sword-bearer.

And Kmita and she bowed their heads, and rested their faces on their hands; they knelt there in silence side by side, and their hearts beat so that both heard them perfectly. At last Pan Andrei spoke—

“May Jesus Christ be praised!”

“For the ages of ages,” answered Olenka, in an undertone. And they said no more. Now the priest came out to preach. Kmita listened to him; but in spite of his efforts he could not distinguish the words, he could not understand the preacher. Here she is, the desired one, for whom he had yearned during years, who had not left his mind nor his heart; she was here now at his side. He felt her near; and he dared not turn his eyes to her, for he was in the church, but closing his lids, he caught her breathing with his ear.

“Olenka! Olenka is near me!” said he to himself, “see, God has commanded us to meet in the church after absence.” Then his thoughts and his heart repeated without ceasing: “Olenka, Olenka, Olenka!”

And at moments a weeping joy caught him by the throat, and again he was carried away by such an enthusiasm of thankful prayer that he lost consciousness of what was happening to him.

She knelt continually, with her face hidden in her hands.

The priest had finished the sermon, and descended from the pulpit.

All at once a clatter of arms was heard in front of the church, and a tramp of horses’ hoofs. Someone cried before the threshold of the church, “Lauda returning!” and suddenly in the sanctuary itself were heard murmurs, then a bustle, then a still louder calling—

“Lauda! Lauda!”

The crowd began to sway; all heads were turned at once toward the door.

With that there was a throng in the door, and a body of armed men appeared in the church. At the head of them marched with a clatter of spurs Volodyovski and Zagloba. The crowd opened before them; they passed through the whole church, knelt before the altar, prayed a short time, and then entered the vestry.

The Lauda men halted halfway, not greeting anyone, out of respect for the place.

Ah, what a sight! Grim faces, swarthy from winds, grown thin from toils of war, cut with sabres of Swedes, Germans, Hungarians, and Wallachians! The whole history of the war and the glory of God-fearing Lauda was written on them with swords. There were the gloomy Butryms, the Stakyans, the Domasheviches, the Gostsyeviches, a few of all; but hardly one fourth returned of those who on a time had left Lauda.

Many women are seeking in vain for their husbands, many old men are searching in vain for their sons; therefore the weeping increases, for those too who find their own are weeping from joy. The whole church is filled with sobbing. From time to time someone cries out a

beloved name, and is silent; and they stand in glory, leaning on their sabres, but over their deep scars tears too are falling on their mustaches.

Now a bell, rung at the door of the vestry, quieted the weeping and the murmur. All knelt; the priest came to finish Mass, and after him Volodyovski and Zagloba.

But the priest was so moved that when he turned to the people, saying, "*Dominus vobiscum!*" his voice trembled. When he came to the Gospel, and all the sabres were drawn at once from the scabbards, as a sign that Lauda was ever ready to defend the faith, and in the church it was bright from steel, the priest had barely strength to finish the Gospel.

Then amid universal emotion the concluding prayer was sung, and Mass was ended; but the priest, when he had placed the sacrament in the tabernacle, turned, after the last Gospel, to the people, in sign that he wished to say something.

There was silence, therefore, and the priest with cordial words greeted first the returning soldiers; then he gave notice that he would read a letter from the king, brought by the colonel of the Lauda squadron.

The silence grew deeper, and after a while the voice from the altar was heard through the whole church—

*"We, Yan Kazimir, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania, Mazovia, Prussia, etc., etc., etc. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen!"*

*"Since wicked people must receive punishment in this temporal life for their crimes against king and country before they stand in presence of the heavenly tribunal, it is equally just that virtue receive a reward, which should add the lustre of glory to virtue itself, and give posterity the desire to follow its examples."*

*"Therefore we make it known to the whole order of knighthood, namely, to men of arms and civilians having office, together with all the inhabitants of the Grand Principality of Lithuania and our Starostaship of Jmud, that whatever accusations have rested on Pan Andrei Kmita, the banneret of Orsha, who is greatly beloved by us, are to vanish from the memory of men, in view of the following services and merit, and are to detract in nowise from the honor and glory of the said banneret of Orsha."*

Here the priest ceased to read, and looked toward the bench on which Pan Andrei was sitting. Kmita rose for a moment, and sitting down again, rested his haggard head on the railing and closed his lids, as if in a faint.

But all eyes were turned to him; all lips began to whisper—

"Pan Kmita! Kmita! There, near the Billeviches."

But the priest beckoned, and began to read on amid deep silence—

*"Which banneret of Orsha, though in the beginning of this unfortunate Swedish invasion he declared himself on the side of the prince voevoda, did it not from any selfishness, but from the purest goodwill to the country, brought to this error by Prince Yanush Radzivill, who persuaded him that no road of safety remained to the Commonwealth save that which the prince himself took."*

*"But when he visited Prince Boguslav, who, thinking him a traitor, discovered to him clearly all the hostile intrigues against the country, the said banneret of Orsha not only did not promise to raise his hand against our person, but with armed force carried away Prince Boguslav himself, so as to avenge us and the suffering country."*

“O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” cried the voice of a woman right there near Pan Andrei; and in the church there broke out anew a murmur of amazement.

The priest read on—

*“He was shot by Boguslav, but had barely recovered when he went to Chenstohova, and there defended with his own breast that most sacred Retreat, giving an example of endurance and valor to all; there, in danger of his life and health, he blew up with powder the greatest siege-gun. Seized after that daring deed, he was condemned to death by cruel enemies, and tortured with living fire.”*

With this the weeping of women was heard here and there through the church. Olenka was trembling as in a paroxysm of fever.

*“But rescued by the power of the Queen of the Angels from those terrible straits, he came to us in Silesia, and on our return to this dear country, when the treacherous enemy prepared an ambush for us, the said banneret of Orsha rushed himself, with his three attendants, on the whole power of the enemy, to save our person. There, cut down and thrust through with rapiers, swimming in his own blood, he was borne from the field as if lifeless—”*

Olenka placed both her hands on her temples, and raising her head, began to catch the air into her parted lips. From her bosom came out the groan—

“O God! O God! O God!”

And again the voice of the priest sounded, also more and more moved:—

*“And when with our endeavors he returned to health, he did not rest, but continued the war, standing forth with immeasurable praise in every necessity, held up as a model to knighthood by the hetmans of both people, till the fortunate capture of Warsaw, after which he was sent to Prussia under the assumed name of Babinich—”*

When that name was heard in the church, the noise of the people changed as it were into the roar of a river.

“Then he is Babinich? Then he is that crusher of the Swedes, the savior of Volmontovich, the victor in so many battles—that is Kmita?”

The murmur increased still more; throngs began to push toward the altar to see him more closely.

“God bless him! God bless him!” said hundreds of voices.

The priest turned to the seat and blessed Pan Andrei, who, leaning continually against the railing, was more like a dead than a living man, for the soul had gone out of him with happiness and had risen toward the sky.

The priest read on—

*“He visited the enemy’s country with fire and sword, was the main cause of the victory at Prostki; with his own hand he overthrew and captured Prince Boguslav. Called late to our starostaship of Jmud, what immense service he rendered there, how many towns and villages he saved from the hands of the enemy, must be known to the inhabitants of that starostaship better than to others.”*

“It is known, it is known, it is known!” was thundered through the whole church.

“Silence!” said the priest, raising the king’s letter.

*“Therefore we, considering all his services to us and the country, so many that a son could not have done more for his father and his mother, have determined to publish them in this our letter, so that so great a cavalier, so great a defender of the faith, of king and Commonwealth, should no longer be pursued by the ill-will of men, but go clothed with the praise and universal love proper to the virtuous. Before then the next Diet, confirming these our wishes, shall remove from him every stain, and before we shall reward him with the starostaship of Upita, which is vacant, we ask earnestly of the inhabitants dear to us of our starostaship of Jmud to retain in their hearts and thoughts these our words, which justice itself, the foundation of States, has commanded us to put into their memory.”*

Here the priest concluded, and turning to the altar began to pray; but Pan Andrei felt on a sudden that a soft hand was seizing his hand. He looked. It was Olenka; and before he had time to come to himself, to withdraw his hand, she had raised it and pressed it to her lips in presence of all, before the altar and the people.

“Olenka!” cried the astonished Kmita.

But she had arisen, and covering her face with a veil, said to old Billevich—

“Uncle, let us go, let us go from here quickly!”

And they went out through the door of the vestry.

Pan Andrei tried to rise to follow her, but he could not. His strength left him entirely.

But a quarter of an hour later he was in front of the church, supported on one side by Pan Volodyovski, on the other by Zagloba.

The throng of people, small nobles and common men, crowded around. Women, some barely able to tear away from the breast of a husband returned from the war, led by curiosity special to the sex, ran to look at that Kmita, once terrible, now the savior of Lauda and the coming starosta. The throng became greater every instant, till the Lauda men had at last to surround him and protect him from the crush.

“Pan Andrei!” cried Zagloba, “see, we have brought you a present. You did not expect such a one. Now to Vodokty, to Vodokty, to the betrothal and the wedding!”

Further words of Zagloba were lost in the thundering shout raised at once by the Lauda men, under the leadership of Yuzva Footless—

“Long life to Pan Kmita!”

“Long life!” repeated the crowd. “Long life to our starosta of Upita! Long life!”

“All to Vodokty!” roared Zagloba, again.

“To Vodokty! to Vodokty!” shouted a thousand throats. “As best men to Vodokty with Pan Kmita, with our savior! To the lady! to Vodokty!”

And an immense movement began. Lauda mounted its horses; every man living rushed to wagons, carts, ponies. People on foot began to run across field and forest. The shout “To Vodokty!” rang through the whole place. The roads were thronged with many-colored crowds.

Kmita rode in his little wagon between Volodyovski and Zagloba, and time after time he embraced one or the other of them. He was not able to speak yet, he was too much excited; but they pushed on as if Tartars were attacking Upita. All the wagons and carts rushed in like manner around them.

They were well outside the place, when Pan Michael suddenly bent to Kmita's ear. "Yendrek," asked he, "but do you not know where the other is?"

"In Vodokty."

Then, whether it was the wind or excitement that began to move the mustaches of Pan Michael, is unknown; it is enough that during the whole way they did not cease to thrust forward like two awls, or like the feelers of a maybug.

Zagloba was singing with delight in such a terrible bass voice that he frightened the horses—

"There were two of us, Kasyenko, two in this world;  
But methinks, somehow, that three are now riding."

Anusia was not at church that Sunday, for she had in her turn to stay with the weakly Panna Kulvyets, with whom she and Olenka remained on alternate days.

The whole morning she had been occupied with watching and taking care of the sick woman, so that it was late when she could go to her prayers. Barely had she said the last "Amen," when there was a thundering before the gate, and Olenka rushed into the room like a storm.

"Jesus! Mary! What has happened?" screamed Anusia, looking at her.

"Anusia, you do not know who Pan Babinich is? He is Pan Kmita!"

Anusia sprang to her feet: "Who told you?"

"The king's letter was read—Pan Volodyovski brought it—the Lauda men—"

"Has Pan Volodyovski returned?" screamed Anusia; and she threw herself into Olenka's arms.

Olenka took this outburst of feeling as a proof of Anusia's love for her; for she had become feverish, was almost unconscious. On her face were fiery spots, and her breast rose and fell as if from great pain.

Then Olenka began to tell without order and in a broken voice everything which she had heard in the church, running at the same time through the room as if demented, repeating every moment, "I am not worthy of him!" reproaching herself terribly, saying that she had done him more injustice than all others, that she had not even been willing to pray for him, when he was swimming in his own blood in defence of the Holy Lady, the country, and the king.

In vain did Anusia, while running after her through the room, endeavor to comfort her. She repeated continually one thing—that she was not worthy of him, that she would not dare to look in his eyes; then again she would begin to speak of the deeds of Babinich, of the seizure of Boguslav, of his revenge, of saving the king, of Prostki, Volmontovichi, and Chenstohova; and at last of her own faults, of her stubbornness, for which she must do penance in the cloister.

Further reproaches were interrupted by Pan Tomash, who, falling into the room like a bomb, cried—

"In God's name, all Upita is rolling after us! They are already in the village, and Babinich is surely with them!"

Indeed, a distant shout at that moment announced the approach of the crowds. The sword-bearer, seizing Olenka, conducted her to the porch; Anusia rushed after them.

At that moment the throng of men and horses looked black in the distance; and as far as the eye could reach the whole road was packed with them. At last they reached the yard. Those on foot were storming over ditches and fences; the wagons rolled in through the gates, and all were shouting and throwing up their caps.

At last appeared the crowd of armed Lauda men, and the wagon, in which sat three persons—Kmita, Volodyovski, and Zagloba.

The wagon stopped at some distance, for so many people had crowded up before the entrance that it was impossible to approach. Zagloba and Volodyovski sprang out first, and helping Kmita to descend, took him at once by the arms.

“Give room!” cried Zagloba.

“Give room!” repeated the Lauda men.

The people pushed back at once, so that in the middle of the crowd there was an open road along which the two knights led Kmita to the porch. He was very pale, but walked with head erect, at once confused and happy.

Olenka leaned against the doorpost, and dropped her arms without control at her sides; but when he was near she looked into the face of the emaciated man—who after such a time of separation approached, like Lazarus, without a drop of blood in his face—then sobbing, rent her breast again. He, from weeping, from happiness, and from confusion, did not know himself what to say—

“What, Olenka, what?”

But she dropped suddenly to his knees—

“Yendrek!” cried she, “I am not worthy to kiss thy wounds!”

At that moment strength came back to the knight; he seized her from the ground like a feather, and pressed her to his bosom.

One immense shout, from which the walls of the house trembled and the last of the leaves fell from the trees, dinned every ear. The Lauda men began to fire from pistols; caps flew into the air; around nothing was to be seen but faces carried away by joy, gleaming eyes, and open mouths shouting—

“Vivat Kmita! vivat Panna Billevich! vivat the young couple!”

“Vivat two couples!” roared Zagloba; but his voice was lost in the general storm.

Vodokty was turned as it were into a camp. All day they were slaughtering oxen and sheep at command of the sword-bearer, and digging out of the ground barrels of mead and beer. In the evening all sat down to a feast—the oldest and most noted in the rooms, the younger in the servants’ hall; the simple people rejoiced equally at fires in the yard.

At the chief table the cup went around in honor of two happy pairs; but when good feeling had reached the highest degree, Zagloba raised the following toast:—

“To thee I return, worthy Pan Andrei, and to thee old friend, Pan Michael! It was not enough to expose your breasts, to shed blood, to cut down the enemy! Your work is not finished; for since a multitude of people have fallen in time of this terrible war, you must now give new inhabitants, new defenders to this Commonwealth. For this I think you will not lack either in manhood or good will. Worthy gentlemen! to the honor of those coming generations! May God bless them, and permit them to guard this legacy which we leave them, restored by our toil, by our sweat, by our blood. When grievous times come, let them remember us and never



despair, considering that there are no straits out of which it is impossible to rise, with united forces and the help of God.”

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Pan Andrei not long after his marriage served in a new war which broke out on the eastern side of the Commonwealth; but the thundering victory of Charnyetski and Sapyeha over Hovanski and Dolgoruki, and the hetmans of the kingdom over Sheremetyeff, soon brought it to an end. Then Kmita returned, covered with fresh glory, and settled down permanently in Vodokty. After him his cousin Yakub became banneret of Orsha—Yakub, who afterward belonged to the unfortunate confederation of the army; but Pan Andrei, standing soul and heart with the king, rewarded with the starostaship of Upita, lived long in exemplary harmony and love with Lauda, surrounded by universal respect. His ill-wishers—for who has them not?—said, it is true, that he listened overmuch to his wife in everything. He was not ashamed of that, however, but acknowledged himself that in every important affair he sought her advice.

THE END

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**I'm Julie, the woman who runs [Global Grey](#) - the website where this ebook was published. These are my own formatted editions, and I hope you enjoyed reading this particular one.**

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