

*PAN
MICHAŁ*



*HENRYK
SIENKIEWICZ*

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PAN MICHAEL

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL

BY

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH BY

DR. SAMUEL A. BINION

TRANSLATOR OF "QUO VADIS," ETC.

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By HENRY ALTEMUS

Pan Michael

HENRY MORSE STEI

PROLOGUE.

After the Hungarian War, when the marriage of Pan Andrey Kmitsa with Panna Alexandra Billevick took place, the equally famous warrior in the Commonwealth, Pan Jerzy Michael Volodiyovski, Colonel of the Lauda Cavalry, also was to have been married to Panna Anna Borzobohata Krashyenska.

But the affair was hindered and postponed by a remarkable series of obstacles. Panna Anna Borzobohata was the foster-daughter of Princess Grizelda Vishnyovyetski, without whose consent she would not wed. Pan Michael therefore was obliged to leave Panna Anna at Vodokta and set out for Zamos¹ in order to obtain her consent and blessing.

But his lucky star was not in the ascendant. He did not find the princess in Zamos¹ as she had left for the Imperial Court of Vienna to educate her son. The persevering Knight however followed her to Vienna, though the journey consumed much time. There, matters were successfully arranged and he returned to his own land with eager anticipation.

On reaching home he found fresh troubles: the army was forming a confederacy, the rebellion in the Ukraine still continued, and the flames on the eastern frontier had not yet been extinguished. Fresh troops were levied so that the frontiers at least might be protected. Before his arrival in Warsaw, he had received a commission signed by the Russian Voyevoda himself. Considering that patriotism should always take precedence of private affairs, he abandoned all thoughts of immediate marriage and departed for the Ukraine. There, he fought for years, scarcely finding time to send even an occasional letter to his anxious betrothed, and living in the midst of incessant battle, toil and hardship.

¹ Zamos'c.

He was next sent to the Crimea, and then followed the unhappy internecine strife in which Pan Michael took the side of the King and fought against that infamous character, the traitor, Lubomirski. Then, under Pan Sobieski, he left again for the Ukraine. From that time on, his reputation grew so greatly that he was generally regarded as the foremost soldier of the state; but for him the years were filled with anxieties, sighings, and longings, until at last dawned the year 1668 in which, at the request of the Castellan, the order was granted for him to rest. At the beginning of the year therefore, he hastened to his beloved at Vodokta, and with her, proceeded to Cracow. They went there because Princess Grizelda, who had returned from the Imperial dominions, had invited them to celebrate their marriage at that place, offering to become the mother of the bride. The Kmitsas remained at Vodokta, not having received early information of Pan Michael's movements, and entirely occupied with the expectation of another guest altogether. Hitherto, children had been denied to them, but at last Providence had brought about a change in accordance with their most earnest wishes.

That year was one of marvellous productiveness. Grain was so plentiful that the barns could not contain it. The country was covered with stacks through its whole length and breadth. In the tracts devastated by the war, pine saplings had grown up in that one Spring higher even than in two ordinary years. There was abundance of game, mushrooms carpeted the forests, and the waters teemed with fish, so that it seemed as though all the creatures of the earth had been endowed with an extraordinary fecundity. The friends of Pan Michael regarded this condition of things as a happy omen for his marriage, but Fate had determined otherwise.

PAN MICHAEL.

CHAPTER I.

On a beautiful day in Autumn, Pan Andrey Kmitsa¹ was sitting in a shady bower and drinking his after-dinner mead; from time to time he gazed at his wife through the trellis which was overgrown with wild hops. Pani Kmitsa was walking on a well-kept walk in front of the bower.

She was tall, and well-shaped, with shining hair and a serene and almost angelic face.

She walked with care and deliberation for the Lord had blessed her among women.

Pan Andrey Kmitsa gazed lovingly at her. When she moved, his eyes followed her with the devotion that a dog shows for his master. From time to time he smiled, for it made him happy to look at her, and he twisted up the ends of his moustache.

At such moments his face was full of mischievous fun. It was evident that the soldier was of a gay disposition and in his bachelor days had had many a frolic.

The silence of the garden was broken only by the fall to the ground of the over-ripe fruit and the hum of insects. It was early in September and the weather was beautiful. The extreme heat of the sun had abated, but the golden glow was still ample. In the sunlight rosy apples were glistening among the grey leaves in such numbers as to conceal the boughs. The branches of the plum-trees were bending under the weight of the fruit covered with greyish gum.

The least motion of the air was shown by the spider-webs hanging from the trees; they were swaying in a faint breeze that scarcely moved the leaves.

Perhaps it was the lovely weather that had made Pan

¹Polish Kmitsits.

Andrey so joyous, for his face grew more radiant every moment. At last he took a draught of mead and called to his wife:

"Olenka, come here! I want to say something to you."

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

"As God is dear to me, it is not. Listen to me."

Then he caught her by the waist, pressed his moustache to her shining hair and whispered:

"If a boy, let him be Michael."

She turned away with a faint flush on her face and murmured:

"But you promised not to object to Heraclius!"

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

"But should we not first remember my grandfather?"

"And my benefactor!—H'm! true,—but the next shall be Michael. It must be so."

At this, Olenka stood up and tried to free herself from Pan Andrey's arms; but he held her closer to his breast and began to kiss her on the eyes and mouth, saying:

"My precious one, my dearest love!"

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a boy at the end of the path who ran quickly towards the bower.

"What is the matter?" asked Pan Andrey, releasing his wife.

"Pan Kharlamp has arrived and is waiting in the parlor," answered the boy.

"And here he is himself!" cried Pan Andrey at the sight of a man approaching. "Good God! how grey his moustache is! Greetings, dear friend! greetings old comrade!"

Then he darted out and hastened with open arms to receive Pan Kharlamp. But the latter first bowed low to Olenka, whom he had seen of old at the court of Kieydan; then he pressed her hand to his enormous moustache and, casting himself into Andrey's arms, he sobbed on his shoulder.

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

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

Here he glanced at Olenka who, seeing that he did not wish to speak in her presence, said to her husband, "I will send mead to you gentlemen, and meanwhile I will leave you."

Pan Andrey led Kharlamp into the bower, and seating him on a bench asked:

"What is it? Are you in need of assistance? Rely upon me as upon Zavisha."¹

"There is nothing the matter with me," said the old soldier, "and while I can still move this hand and this sabre I need no assistance; but our friend, the worthiest knight in the Commonwealth, is in terrible suffering. I know not whether he is still breathing."

"By Christ's wounds! has anything happened to Volodiyovski?"

"Yes," said Kharlamp, again giving way to tears. "Know that Panna Anna Borzobohata has left this vale——"

"Dead!" cried Kmitsa, bowing his head in his hands.

"As a bird pierced by a dart."

A moment's silence followed,—there was no sound but that of an occasional heavy fall of an apple to the earth and of Pan Kharlamp's sobs as he tried to restrain his tears. But Andrey wrung his hands and shook his head and kept repeating:

"Dear God! dear God! dear God!"

"Your lordship will not wonder at my tears," at last Kharlamp said, "for if the mere tidings of what has happened oppresses your heart so grievously, what must it be for me who witnessed her pain and sufferings, that were excessive?"

At this point the servant appeared, bearing a tray with a pitcher and a second glass; he was followed by Andrey's wife, who could not restrain her curiosity. Seeing from her husband's face that he was in great suffering she immediately said:

"What tidings have you brought? Do not send me away. I will do my best to comfort you, or weep with you, or aid you with my counsel."

"Your head can find no help in this case," said Pan Andrey, and I fear that sorrow may have an evil effect on your health."

"I can stand a great deal. It is worse to live in uncertainty."

"Anusia is dead," said Kmitsa.

Olenka turned pale and sank heavily down on the bench. Kmitsa thought that she was going to faint; but she was af-

¹A famous Polish magnate of the 17th Century, who distinguished himself by his writings and statesmanship—*Translator*.

lected more by grief than by the shock of the sudden announcement, and burst into tears, in which she was joined by the two knights.

"Olenka," said Pan Andrey, at last trying to lead his wife's thoughts in another direction, do you not believe she is in Paradise?"

"I am not grieving for her, but for her loss and for the bereavement of Pan Michael. As for her eternal happiness, I wish I had such sure hope of my own salvation as I have of hers. A worthier maiden, or one of a better heart never existed. Oh, my Anulka!¹ my beloved Anulka!"

"I saw her die," said Kharlamp, "God grant that none of us may die with less piety!"

Then silence followed, as though some of the sharpness of sorrow had departed with their tears; at length Kmitsa said:

"Tell us how it happened, and take some mead to support yourself at the saddest points of your story."

"Thank you," answered Kharlamp, "I will drink now and then, if you will join me, for grief, like a wolf, seizes a man not only by the heart but also by the throat, and when it seizes him there is no help, it chokes him. I was on my way from Chenstohovo to settle down on a farm in my native place in my old age. I have had enough of war; I began as a stripling and now my moustache is grey. If I cannot stay at home altogether I will serve in one of the squadrons, but these military confederations are formed to the detriment of the fatherland and comfort of the enemy, and this eternal civil strife has thoroughly disgusted me with war. . . . Good God! the pelican nourishes its young with its own blood, but this country has no longer any blood left in its breast. Sviderski was a great warrior. . . . May God judge him there. . . ."

"My most beloved Anulu!" interrupted Olenka, weeping. "without thee what would have happened to me and all of us! Thou wast a refuge and a defence to me! Oh, my beloved Anulu!"

As he heard her, Kharlamp again began to sob, but Andrey broke in with the question:

"But where did you go to meet Pan Michael?"

To Chenstohovo, where they intended to rest, for ~~the~~

¹Anulka, Anula, and Anusia are endearing names of Anna.

on the road they would make offerings. He immediately told me how that he was going from this place to Cracow to visit Princess Grizelda, without whose permission and blessing Anusia would not marry. She was in good health then and Pan Michael was as joyous as a bird. O, he said, "See what a reward the Lord has given me for my labor." He bragged a good deal, too (God comfort him!) and joked with me not a little because, as you know, at one time I quarrelled with him about the lady and we were nearly fighting a duel. And now, poor woman! where is she?"

Here Kharlamp again burst into tears until Andrey checked him a second time, asking:

"You say she was well: then how did it happen so suddenly?"

"What is sudden is sudden. She was staying with Pani Martsinova Zamoyska, who was spending some days at Chens-tohovo with her husband. Pan Michael would sit by her side all day, he was rather impatient with the delay and said that at that rate they would be a whole year on the journey to Cracow because everyone on the way would want to detain them. And no wonder! Everybody would be happy to entertain such a soldier as Pan Michael and all who could get hold of him would keep him. He also took me to his lady and smilingly threatened to cut me to pieces if I attempted to make love to her; but she had no eyes for anybody else. I sometimes felt squeamishly because an old man like myself is like a nail in a wall. No matter! One night Pan Michael came running in to me in great distress: "For God's sake, can you find a doctor?" "What has happened?" "She is so ill that she does not recognize anyone." "When was she taken ill?" I asked. "Pani Zamoyska has brought me word," he replied. "It is now night. Where can I find a doctor in this place where there is nothing but a cloister and more ruins than people?" At last I found a barber surgeon, but even he was unwilling to come till I threatened violence with my axe. But a priest was more necessary than a doctor and indeed we found a worthy Paulist who restored her to consciousness with his prayers. She was able to receive the sacrament and take an affecting farewell of Pan Michael. By the next noon it was all over with her. The barber surgeon said that something must have been administered to her, but that is impossible, for philters are ineffective in Chenstohovo. But what happened to Pan Michael! What did he say?—I hope

that the Lord Jesus will not hold him to account for it, for a man does not heed his words when grief is tearing at his heart. (Pan Kharlamp here lowered his voice.) "You see," he said, "in his madness he blasphemed."

"For God's sake! did he blaspheme?" asked Pan Kmitsa in a whisper.

"From her corpse he rushed out into the ante-chamber, and from there into the yard and reeled about like a drunken man. He raised his clenched fists on high and cried in a terrible voice: 'Such is my reward for my wounds, for my labors, for my blood, for my attachment to my country! . . . I had one ewe-lamb and that one, O Lord, Thou hast taken from me. To strike down an armed man who walks the earth in his pride is a deed for God's hand, but a cat, a hawk, or a kite can kill a harmless dove, and——'"

"By God's wounds!" cried Olenka, "say no more, or you will bring misfortune upon this house."

Kharlamp crossed himself and continued. "The distracted soldier thought that after all his service this was his reward. Ah, God knows best what he is doing though it is not clear to human reason, nor can be gauged by human justice."

"Immediately after blaspheming he became rigid and fell to the earth and the Paulist read an exorcism over him so that evil spirits should not enter into him as they might, taking advantage of his blasphemy."

"Did he soon recover?"

"He lay like one dead for about an hour and then revived and retired to his chamber, refusing to see anyone. At the burial I said to him, "Let your heart turn to God." He replied not a word. I stayed three days longer at Chenstohovo, as I was unwilling to leave him; but he would not open his door to me. He did not want me. I gave much anxious thought to the question whether I should make further efforts to get in or go away and leave him. How could I leave such a man comfortless? But not being able to do anything I went to Pan Skshetuski. He is his best friend and Pan Zagloba is also a friend of his, perhaps they will manage to touch his heart, more especially Pan Zagloba, who is clever and knows how to prevail with people."

"Did you go to Skshetuski's?"

"I did, but even there I was unfortunate, for both he and Zagloba had gone to Kalish to see the captain of horse, Pan Stanislav. No one knew when they would return. Then

I reflected, 'As Jmudj is on my way, I will go to Pan Andrey and tell him what has occurred.'

"I always knew that you were a worthy knight," said Andrey.

"In this case it was not a question of myself but of Pan Michael, and I must confess I have great fears that his mind is unbalanced."

"God preserve him from that," said Olenka.

"If God preserves him he will certainly take the cowl, for I assure you that I have never seen such grief as his in all my life. It is a pity for such a soldier as he is—a great pity!"

"Why a pity? It would be to the greater glory of God," said Olenka.

Kharlamp's lips moved and he passed his hand across his brow.

"Well, gracious lady, either it will or will not. Think how many infidels and heretics he has slain in his life which surely has pleased Our Saviour and His Mother more than any priest could with sermons. H'm! it is a pleasant thing to think of. Let each man serve the glory of God in his own way as he best can. There are thousands wiser than he among the Jesuits, but there is not such another sabre in the Commonwealth."

"As God is dear to me, that is true," cried Andrey. "Do you know if he stayed on in Chenstohovo?"

"He was still there when I left; I know not what he has done since. This only I pray: God preserve him from losing his mind, God preserve him from sickness which often accompanies despair, he is alone,—alone without help, without a relative, without a friend, and without consolation."

"May Our Most Holy Lady of that place of miracles save thee, trusty friend, for no brother could have done more than thou hast done for me!"

Olenka became very thoughtful and there was a long silence; at length she raised her shining head and said, "Yendrek,¹ you remember all that we owe him?"

"If I forget I will borrow the eyes of a dog, for I shall never again dare to look an honest man in the face with my own."

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

"How can I help him?"

"Go to him."

"There speaks a woman's true heart; there is a noble

¹The same as Andrey.

woman," cried Kharlamp, seizing her hands and covering them with kisses.

But the advice did not please Pan Andrey; so he shook his head and said, "I would go to the world's end for him, but—you know how it is—if you were well—I might—but you know. God preserve you from any accident! The wife comes before the best friend. I am sorry for Pan Michael, but—you know."

"I will remain under the care of the Lauda Fathers. Everything is quiet here now and there is nothing for me to be afraid of. Without the will of God not a hair of my head will fall to the ground; and there Pan Michael needs rescue perchance."

"Indeed he does need it!" added Kharlamp.

"Yendrek, I am in good health. No harm will come to me; I know that you do not want to go."

"I would rather attack cannon with an oven-stick!" Andrey broke in.

"If you do not go do you not think it will be hard for you when you reflect 'I have abandoned my friend?' and moreover the Lord in his righteous indignation may well deprive us of his blessing."

"You have raised a knotty point for me. You say that he may take away his blessing? I dread that thought."

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

"I am devoted to Michael. It is a hard case! If there is a necessity for it, it is immediate, for in this matter every hour counts. I will go to the stables without delay. By the living God, is there no alternative. The Devil inspired those fellows to go to Kalish. With me it is not a question of myself but of you, beloved, I would rather lose all that I possess than do without you for one day. If anyone said that I left you except upon public service I would drive my sword into his mouth up to the cross-hilt. You say it is my duty! So be it. The man who hesitates is lost. If it were for anyone but Michael I would not do it."

Here he turned to Kharlamp, "Noble sir, I beg you to accompany me to the stables and we will choose our horses. And you, Olenka, see that my baggage is ready. Get some of the Lauda men to attend to the threshing. Pan Kharlamp you must stay with us for a fortnight at least; you will look after my wife in my absence. You can find some land to suit you in this neighborhood. Take Lubich! Come to the stables. I will start in an hour. If it must be—it must be!"

CHAPTER II.

Sometime before sunset the Knight took leave of his tearful wife who blessed his departure with a crucifix in which were portions of the True Cross set in gold, and as he had been accustomed to taking sudden journeys for many years, he started out as if after Tartars who were vanishing with spoil.

After passing Vilno he proceeded through Grodno to Bialystok and so to Syedlets.¹ In Lukov he learned that Pan Yan Skshetuski had returned the day before from Kalish with his family and Pan Zagloba. He therefore determined to seek them, for who could better advise as to the means of saving Pan Michael?

They were surprised and delighted to see him but when he told them the cause of his visit their joy was turned into sorrow.

Pan Zagloba did not recover his equanimity the whole day and shed so many tears that, as he afterwards said, the water in the mill-pond rose and they had to open the flood-gate. But when his eyes had run dry he fell into deep thought and at the council he delivered himself as follows:

“Yan cannot go for he is elected to the Chapter; there will be many matters to attend to, as the land is full of restless spirits after so much war. From what you say, Andrey, it is evident that the storks will remain at Vodokta the whole winter, since they are on the programme and must perform their functions. No wonder that under such domestic conditions you are not anxious to undertake the journey especially since we can't tell how long it may take. You have shown your noble heart by coming, but my candid advice is to return, for in this case Michael needs a close confidant, one who will not take a sharp answer to heart, nor be hurt at any unwillingness to receive him. What is wanted is patience and great experience and you have only friendship for Michael, which is not sufficient. But don't be angry, for you must

¹Siedlec.

acknowledge that Yan and I are older friends of his and have passed through more adventures with him than you have. Dear God, on how many occasions have he and I saved each other from disaster!"

"I will resign my duties as a deputy!" Pan Yan interrupted.

"Yan that is public duty!" protested Zagloba sternly.

"God knows," cried the troubled Pan Yan, "that I love my cousin with true fraternal affection; but Michael is closer to me than a brother even."

"He is closer to me than any blood relation, especially as I never had one. This is not the time to discuss our affection. You see, Yan, if this misfortune had just fallen upon Michael I might say to you 'Let the Diet go to the Devil' and go! But think how much time it has taken for Pan Kharlamp to go to Jmudj from Chenstohovo and for Andrey to reach here from Jmudj. Now, it is not only necessary to go to Michael, but to stay with him; not only to sorrow with him, but to reason with him; not only to point to the Crucified as an example, but to cheer him up with pleasant humour. So you see who ought to go,—I, and I will go, so help me God! If I find him at Chenstohovo I will bring him here; if not I will follow him even to Moldavia and will not cease to seek him while I have the strength left to take a pinch of snuff."

When they heard this the two cavaliers began to embrace Pan Zagloba and he became somewhat affected at the thought of Pan Michael's misfortune and his own approaching toils. So he began to weep and at last when they had embraced him to his content he said:

"Do not thank me for Michael: you are no nearer to him than I."

"We are not thanking you for Pan Michael," said Andrey, but a man must have a hard and inhuman heart indeed not to be moved at the sight of your readiness, which, at a friend's necessity, takes no account of fatigue and no thought of age. At your years other men are thinking of a comfortable nook by the fire; but you talk of a long journey as if you were no older than Pan Yan or myself."

Pan Zagloba made no secret of his years, it is true; but he did not like people to talk as if incapability accompanied old age. So that though his eyes were still red he glanced sharply and somewhat resentfully at Pan Andrey and replied:—

"My dear sir, at the beginning of my seventy-seventh year I felt a slight sinking at the heart because two axes were over

my neck, but when the eighth decade had passed I gained such spirit that a wife came tripping into my mind. And if I had married we might have seen which of us would first have had cause to boast, you or I."

"I do not boast," said Andrey, "but neither do I flatter you."

"And I should certainly have confounded you as I did Pototski, the Hetman, in the king's presence when he was jesting about my age. I challenged him to try who could make the greatest number of consecutive goat-springs. And what was the result? Revera made three; the haiduks had to lift him for he could not get up alone; and I went all over the place with thirty-five springs. Ask Pan Yan who was a witness to it all!"

Pan Yan, who was long accustomed to have Zagloba appeal to him as a witness to everything, did not move an eyelid but returned to the subject of Pan Michael. Zagloba was silent and seemed to be thinking deeply; at last he recovered his good humor and after the meal he said:—

"I will tell you something that would not occur to everyone. I trust to God that our Michael will get over this calamity more easily than we thought at first."

"God grant it! but what makes you think so?" asked Andrey.

"H'm! Besides being well acquainted with Michael, a natural quick wit and long experience are needed, and that is not possible at your years. Every man has his own special gifts. When misfortune strikes some men it is, figuratively speaking, like casting a stone into a river. On the surface the water flows on quietly, but the stone lies on the bottom and impedes the current and breaks it dreadfully and it will lie there and break it till all the waters cease flowing into the Styx. Yan, you may be classed among such men; but the world has more suffering for them, for the pain and the memory of what caused it never leave them. But others take misfortune like a punch on the shoulder. They lose their senses for a moment but soon revive and when the black-and-blue bruise is gone they forget it. Ah! that kind of nature is the best for this world which is full of vicissitudes."

The cavaliers attentively listened to Zagloba's words of wisdom; he was gratified at their respectful attention and proceeded:—

"I know Michael thoroughly; and God is my witness that

I have no desire to find fault with him now but I have an idea that his grief is more for the loss of the marriage than of the maiden. It is nothing that a terrible despair has taken hold of him, though that too lies hard upon him. You cannot conceive what a desire that man had to marry. In his nature there is no manner of greed, nor ambition, nor self-seeking; he has neglected what he possessed, he has as good as lost his own fortune, he forgot his salary; but in return for all his toils and services he only demanded from the Lord God and the Commonwealth a wife. And in his own soul he said that he was entitled to such bread, and he was about to put it in his mouth when at that very moment it was as if someone jeered at him and said, 'Now you have it! Eat it!' Is it any wonder that he gave way to despair? I do not say that he did not grieve over the maiden; but, as God is dear to me, he grieved more about the marriage, though of course he himself would swear to the contrary."

"God grant it!" repeated Pan Yan.

"Wait! Only let those wounds in his heart close and be covered with fresh skin and we shall see whether his old desire does not return. The only danger is that now, crushed with despair, he may take some step or make some decision that afterwards he would regret. But whatever was to happen has already happened, for in misfortunes decisions are quickly made. My servant is packing my clothes. I am not saying this to dissuade you from going but only to comfort you."

"Once again, father, you will be a healing balm to Michael," said Pan Yan.

"As I was to you, you recollect? If only I can find him soon, for I fear that he may be hiding in some ruins, or will disappear somewhere among the far steppes with which he has been familiar since childhood. Pan Kmitsits, your lordship dwells upon my years; but I tell you that if ever a Boyar¹ courier made such speed with his despatches as I shall, then when I return set me to untangle a skein, shell peas, or work at the distaff. Hardships shall not deter me, nor marvels of hospitality turn me aside; eating and drinking even shall not detain me. You have never yet seen such a journey! I can scarcely sit still now, it seems as if someone were pricking me with an awl under the chair. I have even given orders for my travelling-shirt to be rubbed with goat's grease so as to be proof against snakes." . . .

¹Bojar (Boyar), a Noble of the equestrian order.

CHAPTER III.

However, Pan Zagloba did not make such speed as he had promised his friends. The nearer he came to Warsaw the more slowly he travelled. It was at that point when John Casimir, king, statesman, and great leader, having extinguished the flames of foreign war and having, as it were, drawn the Commonwealth out of the depths of a deluge, had abdicated power. He had suffered everything, endured everything, and exposed his breast to every blow from the foreign foe, but when subsequently he had attempted internal reforms and had only met with opposition and ingratitude from the nation instead of aid, of his own free will he took from his anointed head the crown whose weight had become intolerable to him.

The local and general diets had already been held, and Prajmovski, the Primate, had summoned the Convocation for November the fifth.

The early efforts of various candidates and the rivalries of the several parties were very great; and though the election alone could decide, yet all felt the unusual importance of the Diet of Convocation. Therefore deputies from all directions were hastening to Warsaw in carriage and on horseback, with servants and followers; senators were proceeding to the capital each with a brilliant escort.

The roads were thronged; the inns were crowded; and the discovery of rooms for even one night was attended with great delay. However chambers were given up to Zagloba out of respect to his years, but on the other hand his great fame frequently exposed him to loss of time.

It happened thus: he would arrive at some inn where not another finger could be squeezed in, whereupon the personage, who occupied the house with his retinue, would come out through curiosity to see the new arrival, and, seeing a man with a beard and moustache as white as milk, and moved by his venerable appearance, would say:—

“I pray your beneficent lordship to come in with me for a little refreshment.”

Pan Zagloba was no churl and would not refuse, as he knew that every man would be pleased to make his acquaintance. As his host led him across the threshold and asked "Whom have I the honor of entertaining?" he would simply put his hands on his ribs and, sure of the effect, answer in the two words:

"*Zagloba sum!*"

Indeed after those two words a great opening of arms never failed to follow, with such exclamations as "I shall number this among my happiest days!" And the officers or nobles present would say, "Look at him! there is the pattern, the *gloria et decus* (glory and honor) of all the pillars of the Commonwealth." Then they thronged to gaze at Zagloba and the younger of them came and kissed the hem of his travelling-coat. Then they took kegs and vessels out of the wagons and a *gaudium* (drinking-bout) followed and sometimes lasted for several days.

Everybody thought that he was going as a deputy to the Diet and when he denied it there was general astonishment. But he explained that he had ceded his mandate to Pan Domashevski, so that younger men might devote themselves to public affairs. To a few he stated the real reason of his journey but to the inquiries of others he replied as follows:

"Accustomed to war from my childhood, in my old age I wanted to strike a last blow with Doroshenko."

At these words they marvelled still more and in no one's eyes did he lose importance for not being a deputy, for all knew that among the spectators were many who were more powerful than the deputies themselves. Moreover every senator, even the most eminent reflected that the election would take place in a couple of months and then the slightest word of a man of such reputation among the nobles would be inestimably valuable.

Therefore they carried Zagloba about in their arms and even the greatest lords stood before him with uncovered heads. Pan Podlaski drank with him for three days; the Patsovs, whom he met at Kalushyn,¹ bore him in their arms.

More than one man gave orders to fill the old hero's baskets with expensive presents, from vodka and wine to richly ornamented caskets, sabres, and pistols.

Zagloba's servants also greatly profited; and notwithstanding his promises and intentions, he travelled so slowly that he did not reach Minsk till the third week.

¹Katuszyn.

But there he did not halt for refreshments. As he was driving through the square he saw so striking and splendid a retinue that nothing he had yet met on the way could equal it: retainers in brilliant colors and at least half a regiment of infantry, for people did not go on horseback and armed to the Diet of Convocation,—but these troops were so well-ordered that the King of Sweden himself had no better guard; the square was filled with gilded carriages bearing tapestry and carpets for use in the inns along the way; wagons with boxes of provisions and food, attended by servants who were principally foreigners so that in the whole crowd very few could make themselves understood.

At last Zagloba saw an attendant in the Polish dress, so, giving orders to halt and feeling sure of good entertainment, he had already put one foot on the ground and asked:

“Whose is this retinue that is so gorgeous that the King can have no finer?”

The attendant answered, “Whose should it be but our lord, the Prince Marshal of Lithuania?”

“Whose,” repeated Zagloba.

“Are you deaf? Prince Boguslav Radzivill, who is going to the Convocation and who, God grant, after the election will find himself to be chosen.”

Zagloba withdrew his foot quickly into the carriage.

“Drive on!” he shouted. “There is nothing here for us.”

And he proceeded, trembling with rage.

“Great God!” he cried, “inscrutable are thy decrees and if thou dost not strike this traitor with thy lightnings it is because thou hast some design which human reason is not permitted to fathom, though humanly speaking, it would be well to chastise such a bull-driver. But it is evident that evil is at work in this most enlightened Commonwealth if such men without honor or conscience and venal betrayers of their country are not only unpunished, but ride in power and safety, nay, more, they also exercise civil functions. Surely we must end in ruin, for in what other state or country could such things happen? John Casimir was a good king, but he pardoned too freely and accustomed the most iniquitous to trust to impunity and safety. Still, that was not entirely his fault. It is evident that throughout the nation the public conscience and the sense of civic virtue have utterly perished. Phew! phew! he a deputy! The idea of placing in his hands the care and safety of the country! those very hands that are destroying it and fastening Swedish

bonds upon it! We shall be lost: it cannot be otherwise! And then to make a king of him, the—But there! it is evident that with such people everything is possible. He a deputy! Good God! But the law distinctly declares that a man who is filling an office in an alien country cannot be a deputy, and he is a governor-general under his scabby uncle the Prussian prince. Ah, ha! wait, I have thee! What are the verifications at the Diet for? If I do not go to the chamber and raise this question, though I am only an arbiter, may I this moment be turned into a fat sheep and my coachman into a butcher! I will find among the deputies some to support me. I know not, venal traitor, whether I can succeed in balking such a potentate and excluding thee, but be sure that what I do will not aid thy election. And Michael, poor fellow, must wait for me since this is a matter of public urgency.”

Thus meditated Zagloba, promising himself carefully to see to that matter of exclusion and privately win over deputies; for this reason he made greater haste to Warsaw from Minsk, dreading to arrive late at the opening of the Convocation.

But he arrived in time. The concourse of deputies and others was so great that it was utterly impossible to find accommodation in Warsaw itself, or in Praga, or even in the suburbs; it was also difficult to find a lodging in a private house, for three or four persons were sleeping in a single room. Zagloba spent the first night in a shop at Fukiera and with reasonable comfort; but in the morning when he entered his carriage he did not well know what to do.

“God! God!” he cried bitterly, looking back on the suburbs of Cracow as he passed, “here are the Bernardines and there the ruins of the Kazanovski Palace! Ungrateful city! I bled and toiled to wrest it from the foe, and now it refuses me a place to lay my grey head.”

But it was not that the city grudged a resting-place for the grey head; it simply hadn't one left. But a lucky star was shining for him, for scarcely had he reached the palace of Konyetypolski when a voice beside the carriage cried to his driver:

“Halt!”

The man pulled up and a stranger approached the carriage with radiant face and exclaimed:

“Pan Zagloba, does not your lordship know me?”

Pan Zagloba saw before him a man of rather more than thirty years, wearing a plumed leopard-skin cap—an unmistakable sign of military service,—a poppy-colored tunic, and a dark red kontush held by a gold embroidered belt. The stranger's face was unusually handsome: he had a delicate complexion though somewhat tanned by the wind of the steppes; his blue eyes were pensive and melancholy; his features were unusually beautiful and almost too delicate for a man. Notwithstanding his Polish dress he wore his hair long and his beard with a foreign cut. Halting beside the carriage he extended his arms, and though Zagloba could not at first remember him, he leaned over and embraced him.

They pressed each other cordially and held one another at arm's length to take a better look.

At last Zagloba said, "Pardon me, your lordship, but I cannot yet recollect."

"Hassling-Ketling!"

"Good Lord! The face seemed familiar to me but the dress has entirely altered you, for of old I only saw you in cavalry uniform. Now you wear the Polish dress?"

"Yes; for I have adopted this Commonwealth as my mother for she received me when I was a wanderer almost in childhood and I do not want a mother of my own. You are not aware that I was nationalized after the war."

"You give me good news! So you have been fortunate!"

"Both in this and otherwise, for in Courland on the Jmudj frontier I found a man of my own name who adopted me, gave me his coat of arms, and bestowed a fortune upon me. He lives at Svyenta in Courland; but he owns an estate on this side of the border which he has given to me."

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

"Only let the opportunity come and I shall be found in my place. With that anticipation I have leased my land and am waiting here for orders."

"That is the chivalrous spirit I love. In my youth I was like that and there is vigor yet in my bones. What are you doing now in Warsaw?"

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

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

The young knight smiled.

"In my soul, which is better."

"Are you married?"

"No," answered Ketling.

"That is all that is wanting. But I think—but stay! Have you got over the old feeling for Panna Billevich?"

"Since you know what I thought was my own secret be sure that no other has superseded it."

"Oh, don't think of her! She will soon present a young Kmitsits to the world. Never mind! What sense is there in sighing when another is living with her happily? Truly that is absurd."

Ketling raised his mournful eyes:

"I said only that no new feeling has come."

"It will come, never fear, we'll have you married yet. I know from my own experience too much constancy brings only suffering. In my day I was as faithful as Troilus and lost no end of pleasure and a great many chances; and how I suffered!"

"God grant everyone the preservation of such a jovial mood as your lordship's!"

"Because I never lived to excess and therefore there are no aches in my bones. Where are you staying? Have you found lodgings?"

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

"That is lucky; but I have been searching the whole city since yesterday."

"For God's sake, my benefactor, I hope you will not refuse to stay with me. There is plenty of room; besides the house there are offices and a commodious stable. There is room for your servants and horses."

"This has fallen from Heaven, as God is dear to me."

Ketling took his seat in the carriage and they drove on.

On the way Zagloba told him about Pan Michael's misfortune and he wrung his hands, for it was the first he had heard of it.

"The blow is all the harder for me," he said at last; "perhaps your lordship does not know what deep friendship has grown up between us recently. Together we went through all the last wars with Prussia, besieging the fortresses with Swedish garrisons. We went in company to the Ukraine, and against Pan Lubomirski, and again to the Ukraine after the death of the Voyevoda of Russia under the Crown Marshal Sobieski. The same saddle served as a pillow and we ate from the same dish; we were called Castor and Pollux.

And only when he came to Lithuania for Panna Borzobohata were we separated. Who would have thought that his fondest hopes were to disappear like an arrow in the air?"

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

"Except true friendship! . . . We must confer together and find out where he now is. We may learn something from the marshal of the kingdom who loves Michael as the apple of his eye. If he cannot tell us anything there are deputies here from every direction. It cannot be that no one has heard of such a knight. I will assist you to the utmost of my power more willingly even than if it was my own affair."

Thus conversing they at last arrived at Ketling's 'cottage' which proved to be a mansion. The interior arrangements were very extensive and it was full of costly furniture either purchased or obtained in campaigning. The collection of weapons was especially noteworthy. Zagloba was charmed with everything he saw and exclaimed:

"Why, you could find quarters here for a score of men. I was very fortunate to meet you. I might have shared rooms with Pan Anton Khrapovitski who is an old acquaintance. The Patsovs also invited me,—they are seeking partisans against the Radzivils,—but I much prefer being with you."

"I have heard from the Lithuanian deputies," said Ketling, "that now that it is Lithuania's turn they are extremely anxious to select Pan Khrapovitski as Marshal of the Diet."

"And justly. He is a true and worthy man, but somewhat easy-going. To his mind nothing is so precious as harmony: he is ever trying to reconcile some couple or other and that is futile. But tell me plainly, what is Boguslav Radzivil to you?"

"Since the time when Pan Andrey's Tartars took me prisoner at Warsaw he has been nothing. I cast off that service and never went back to it; for, though a great lord, he is a malicious and bad man. I saw enough of him in Taurogi when he was plotting against that being who is superior to this earth."

"How, superior? Man, what are you talking about? She is formed of clay and may be broken like any other vessel of clay. But that is of no consequence."

At this point Zagloba grew red with anger and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

"Just imagine it, that villian is a deputy!"

"Who?" asked Ketling in amazement, for his thoughts were still running on Olenka.

"Boguslav Radzivill! But the verifications, what are they for? Listen: you are a deputy I will shout to you in support from the gallery; fear not. The right is with us and if they attempt to trample upon it a tumult may be started among the spectators that will not be stayed without bloodshed."

"Do not do that your lordship, for the love of God! I will raise the question, for it is proper to do so; but God forbid that we should disturb the Diet!"

"I will go to Khrapovitski though he is as lukewarm water; but that cannot be helped, for much depends on him as the future Marshal. I will rouse the Patsovs. I will publicly proclaim all Boguslav's intrigues at least. Moreover on the road I heard that the scoundrel is thinking of seeking the crown for himself."

"A nation would be in its last decline and unworthy to exist if such a man could gain the crown," said Ketling. "But rest now and in a day or two we will go to the Crown Marshal and make inquiries about our friend."

CHAPTER IV.

Some days afterwards came the opening of the Diet to which, as Ketling had foreseen, Pan Khrapovitski was called, he was chamberlain of Smolensk and subsequently Voyevoda of Vitebsk. Since the only matters were to fix the date of the election and to appoint the supreme Chapter, and as such affairs afforded no scope for the intrigues of either party, the convocation worked quietly enough. Only the question of the verification of the members of the Diet disturbed it a little just at first. When the deputy Ketling called into question the election of the secretary of Belsk and of his colleague Prince Boguslav Radzivill, a deep voice in the audience called out "Traitor! foreign tool!" Other voices followed suit and some deputies joined in and unexpectedly the Diet was divided into two parties,—one attempting to exclude the deputies of Belsk and the other to confirm their election. Finally a committee was appointed to settle the question and their election was recognized. Nevertheless it was a painful blow to Prince Boguslav. The mere fact that the Diet was discussing the question whether the Prince was qualified to sit in the Diet and that all his treason and falseness at the time of the Swedish invasion were dragged into public, covered him with fresh shame in the eyes of the Commonwealth and undermined all his ambitious schemes from the foundation.

He had calculated that when the partisans of Conde, Neuburgh, and Lorraine without mentioning lesser candidates, had mutually injured each other the selection might easily fall on a man of the native country.

Conceit and his flatterers told him that if that should happen the native could only be a man of the greatest genius, power, and fame—himself.

Keeping his plans secret till the time was ripe, the prince had been spreading his nets over Lithuania first, and was now about to extend them to Warsaw, when suddenly they were torn at the very beginning and such a big hole was made in them that all the fish might easily escape. He ground his

teeth during the whole time the investigation was being made and since he could not visit his revenge on the head of Ketling, as the latter was a deputy, he offered his followers a reward if they would discover the spectator who had shouted "Traitor, foreign tool!" at the conclusion of Ketling's proposal.

Zagloba's name was too well known for him to remain long hidden; besides he did not make any attempt at concealment. The prince raised a great storm but was greatly discomfited at learning that he was opposed by so popular a man and one whom it would be dangerous to attack.

Zagloba also was aware of his own power, for when threats were in the air he once at a great meeting of the nobles said:

"I know not whether it would be dangerous for the man who should cause a hair of my head to fall. The election is not far off and where a hundred thousand brotherly sabres are gathered together there may easily be hewing and hacking."

These words reached the ears of the prince who only bit his lips and smiled sarcastically, but secretly he knew that the old man was right.

The next day he altered his behaviour towards the old knight for when someone was speaking of Zagloba at a feast given by the Prince Chamberlain, Boguslav remarked:

"I hear that that noble is bitterly opposed to me; but I have such a regard for noble natures that I shall always love him, even though he does not cease to injure me in the future."

And the prince repeated the same words a week later to Pan Zagloba in person, when they met at the house of the Grand Hetman Sobieski.

Though Zagloba preserved a tranquil and courageous countenance the sight of the prince made his heart beat a little faster, for Boguslav had a long reach and his violence made him an object of dread to everybody. However the prince called across the table:—

"Noble Zagloba, it is reported to me that although you are not a deputy you wished to drive me, an innocent man, out of the Diet; but like a Christian I forgive you, and should you ever want advancement I shall not hesitate to serve you."

"I only stood by the Constitution," replied Zagloba, "as it is the duty of a noble to do; as for aid at my age God's is the aid that I am most likely to need, for I am almost ninety."

"A beautiful age if it is as full of virtues as years and that I have not the slightest inclination to doubt."

"I served my king and country without going after strange gods."

The prince slightly frowned.

"You served against me also as I know. But let there be peace between us. All is forgotten and above all that you aided the private enmity of another against me. I have still an account to settle with that foe, but to your lordship I extend my hand and proffer my friendship."

"I am only a servant; the friendship is too exalted for me. I should have to stand on tiptoe, or jump up to reach it; and that is troublesome in old age. If your highness is speaking of an account between yourself and Pan Kmitsits, my friend, I would far rather have nothing to do with that arithmetic."

"Why so, I pray?" asked the prince.

"Because there are four fundamental rules in arithmetic. Although Pan Kmitsits has a considerable fortune it is a midge in comparison with your princely wealth; therefore Pan Kmitsits will not consent to divide with you. He is engaged in multiplication on his own account and will allow no man to subtract aught from him; I doubt if your highness would be anxious to accept what he would give you."

Although Boguslav was skillful at word-fencing, yet, whether confounded by the argument or the insolence of Zagloba, he seemed to forget that he had a tongue in his head. Those present shook their sides with laughter. Pan Sobieski laughed with all his heart and said:—

"He is an old war-horse of Zbaraj. He knows how to wield a sabre and is also no uncommon player with the tongue. Best leave him alone!"

Boguslav, seeing that he had come across an irreconcilable, made no further efforts to win Zagloba over; but, beginning to talk with another guest, he cast occasional malignant glances across the table in the direction of the old knight.

But Sobieski was delighted and proceeded:

"You are a master, my lord, a real master. Have you ever met with your equal in the Commonwealth?"

"At the sabre," answered the gratified Zagloba, "Michael is my match, and Andrey also gives fair evidence of my training."

He gazed at Boguslav; but the prince pretended not to hear him and went on talking diligently to his neighbour.

"True," said the Hetman, "I have seen Pan Michael at work on more than one occasion and would warrant him were

even the fate of the whole of Christendom at stake. What a pity it is that such a soldier has been struck as it were by a thunderbolt."

"What has happened to him?" asked Sarbyevski, the sword-bearer of Chekhanovyetski.

"The maiden he loved has died at Chenstohovo," Zagloba replied, "and the worst of it is that I cannot get any tidings of his whereabouts."

"By God! I saw him," cried Pan Varshytski, the Castellan of Cracow. "As I came to Warsaw I met him on the road coming hither also; and he told me that being disgusted with the world and its vanities he was going to Mons Regius to spend the rest of his burdensome life in prayer and meditation."

Zagloba clutched at his few remaining locks.

"He has become a Camaldoli monk as I love God!" he cried in the deepest despair.

Indeed the Castellan's words had greatly impressed everybody. Pan Sobieski, who loved soldiers, and well knew what great need the country had of them, was deeply concerned and said after a pause:—

"It is not good to withstand the will of men and the glory of God, but it is a misfortune to lose him and, gentlemen, it would be difficult for me to hide from you that I am grieved. A soldier of Prince Yeremy's school he was excellent against any enemy, but against the wild hordes he was unequalled. There are but few of his kind in the Steppes, such as Pan Pivo among the Cossacks, and Pan Ruschyts in the cavalry; but even these are inferior to Pan Michael."

"It is fortunate that the times are somewhat more tranquil," said the sword-bearer of Chekhanovyetski, "and that Paganism is faithfully observing the treaty of Podhaytsa extorted by my master's invincible sword."

Here the sword-bearer bowed to Sobieski who was gratified at such praise in public and replied:

"That was due first to the favor of God who enabled me to make a stand at the frontier of this Commonwealth and do some execution among the enemy; and secondly, to the valor of good soldiers who are ready to undertake anything. I know that the Khan personally would be glad to maintain the treaty, but even in the Crimea he has turbulent subjects and the Russe horde will not obey him at all. I have just received tidings that on the Moldavian border clouds are

gathering and raids are to be looked for: I have given orders for the tracks to be carefully watched, but I have not enough soldiers. When I send them to one point another is left unguarded. I need men who have had special training and are acquainted with the ways of the riders; and that is why I am so sorry about Pan Michael."

Zagloba raised his bowed head from his hands and cried "But he shall not remain a Camaldolian even if I have to take Mons Regius by assault to bring him away by force. For God's sake! I will go straight to him to-morrow and perhaps I may induce him to comply; if not I will go to the Primate, to the General of the Order I will go even to Rome if I must. I have no wish to take away aught from the glory of the Lord, but what sort of a monk would he be without a beard? There is as much hair on his face as on my fist! As I love God, he will never be able to sing Mass; or if he does the rats will scurry out of the cloisters thinking it the amorous cry of a tom-cat. Pardon me, gentlemen, for saying what sorrow dictates. I love that man better than I ever should a son of my own if I had one. God be with him! God be with him! Were he even a Bernardine!—but a Camaldolian! ! As I am a living man it shall not be! I will go direct to the Primate to-morrow for a letter to the General of the Order."

"He cannot have taken the vows yet," said the Marshal, "but let not your lordship be too insistent, lest he become stubborn; and there is another consideration, has not the will of God declared itself in his intention?"

"The will of God! The will of God does not come on a sudden; as the old proverb says, 'What is sudden is of the Devil'. If it were the will of God I should have remarked it in him long ago, and he was never a priest but a dragoon. If he had made such a resolve in full possession of his reason. calmly and thoughtfully, I should have nothing to say; but the will of God does not strike a desperate man as a falcon strikes a duck. I will put no pressure upon him. Before going I will consider my words so that I may not increase his disgust with life; but my hope is in God. This little soldier has always put more trust in my wit than in his own and I have no doubt that he will do so in this case also, unless he has greatly altered."

CHAPTER V.

The next day Zagloba, having concerted his plans with Hassling, and being armed with a letter from the Primate, rang the bell at the gate of the monastery on Mons Regius. His heart was beating violently at the thought, 'How will Michael receive me?' and though he had prepared in advance what to say he confessed to himself that much depended on his reception. With this conviction he pulled the bell a second time and when the key rattled in the lock and the door slightly opened he thrust himself into the aperture with some violence and said to the confused young monk:

"I know that special permission is required to gain admission here, but I have a letter from the Archbishop which you, dear frater, will kindly give to the reverend Prior."

"It shall be done according to your lordship's desire," said the porter, bowing at the sight of the Primate's seal.

Then he pulled a cord hanging from the tongue of a bell and clanged it twice to call another, for he had no right to leave the door. A second monk answered the summons and, taking the letter, departed in silence. Pan Zagloba placed on a bench a package he had brought with him, and sitting down beside it, began to puff violently.

"Frater," said he at last, how long have you been in the monastery?"

"Five years," the porter replied.

"Is it possible? so young, and five years already! Therefore it is too late to leave, even if you wished to do so. Sometimes you must pine for the world; for one man the world smells of war, for another of feasting, for a third of wómen."

"Avaunt!" cried the monk, crossing himself with devotion.

"How is that? Have you never been seized with the temptation to leave the cloister?" repeated Zagloba.

The monk looked distrustfully at the envoy of the Archbishop who was talking so strangely, and answered, "When this door once closes on any man he never goes out again."

"We'll see to that! How is Pan Volodiyovski? Is he alive? Is he well?"

"There is no one here of that name."

"Frater Michael?" said Zagloba at a venture. A former colonel of dragoons who lately came here."

"We call him Brother Yerzy; but he has not yet taken the vows, and cannot do so till the end of the term."

"And he certainly will not take them; for, brother, you would never believe what a man he is after women! You could not find a man more destructive to female virtue among the whole clerg—I mean cavalry."

"This is not proper for me to listen to," said the monk in growing confusion and surprise.

"Listen, frater! I know not where visitors are received, but if it is here I advise you to withdraw a little when Brother Yerzy arrives,—as far off as that grille for instance—for our conversation will deal with exceedingly worldly matters."

"I would rather go away at once," said the monk.

At this moment Pan Michael, or rather Brother Yerzy, appeared, but he was so greatly changed that Zagloba did not recognize Pan Michael in the approaching figure. In the first place he looked taller in his long white habit than in his dragoon jacket; then his moustache, usually curled up to his eyes, was now drooping, and he was growing a beard that now formed little yellow locks no longer than half a finger; and finally he had become very spare and thin and his eyes had lost all their old fire. He approached slowly, with his hands hidden in his breast beneath his habit, and his head was drooping.

Zagloba, not recognizing him, thought it might perhaps be the Prior himself approaching, and therefore rose from the bench and was beginning,—"*Laudetur*"—when suddenly looking more closely he opened his arms and cried, "Pan Michael! Pan Michael!"

Frater Yerzy allowed himself to be embraced and something that sounded like a sob heaved his breast, but his eyes remained dry. Zagloba held him in a long embrace and at last said:

"You have not been alone in bewailing your misfortune. I wept; Yan, Andrey, and their families also wept. It is God's will! Resign yourself to it Michael. May the Father of Mercy comfort and reward you! . . . You have done well to immure yourself here for a time. In times of trouble there is

nothing better than prayer and pious meditation. Come, let me again embrace you! I can scarcely see you through my tears."

And Zagloba shed genuine tears in his emotion at seeing Pan Michael in this condition.

At last he said, "Forgive me for breaking in on your meditation, but I could not do otherwise, as you will acknowledge when you hear my reasons. Ah! Michael, you and I have gone through a world of good and evil. Have you found solace behind these bars?"

"I have," replied Pan Michael—"in the words that I hear daily in this retreat, and which I repeat and desire to repeat till I die, *Memento mori*—'remember death.' In death there is solace for me."

"H'm! death is to be met with more readily on the battlefield than in the cloister where life passes as though one were slowly unwinding thread from a ball."

"There is no life here for there are no mundane affairs, and even before the soul leaves the body it lives, so to speak, in another world."

"If that be true I will not tell you that the Byalogrod tribes are gathering in great force against the Commonwealth, for that will be of no interest to you!"

Pan Michael's lips suddenly quivered and his right hand mechanically moved to his left side, but, finding no sword there, he put both hands again under his habit, bowed his head, and repeated:

"*Memento mori.*"

"Certainly, certainly!" replied Zagloba, blinking his sound eye with a certain amount of impatience. "Only yesterday Pan Sobieski, the Hetman, was saying: 'Only let Volodiyovski serve till this tempest is past and then he can go to whatever monastery he likes. Such action would not be displeasing to God; on the contrary, such a monk would be so much the more meritorious.' But it is not to be wondered at that you should consider your own peace of mind before the happiness of the country, for charity begins at home."

A long silence followed; only Pan Michael's moustache seemed to stand out somewhat more stiffly above his lips as they worked.

"You have not taken the vows yet?" asked Zagloba at length, "and you can leave at any moment?"

"I am not yet a monk, for I have been waiting for the

grace of God, and till my soul should be purged of all distracting earthly thoughts. His grace is with me now: peace of mind is coming back to me. I can depart, but have no desire to do so since the time is approaching when I can make my vows with a clear conscience and a heart free from all earthly longings."

"I have no wish to divert you from it; on the contrary I applaud your resolve, though I remember that when once Yan was thinking of taking the cowl he deferred doing so until the land was relieved of hostile attack. But do as you will. Indeed I will never be the one to deter you, for there was a time when I myself felt a vocation for a monastic life. Fifty years ago I entered on my novitiate; I am a liar if I did not. Well, God ordained otherwise. Only I tell you this, Michael, you must come away with me just for two days."

"Why must I go? Leave me in peace!"

Zagloba raised the skirt of his coat to his eyes and commenced to sob. "I do not crave succor for myself," he cried in broken accents, "though Prince Boguslav Radzivil is pursuing me with his vengeance; he sets his assassins in ambush for me and there is no one to defend or protect me, a poor old man. . . . I was thinking that you . . . But no matter . . . I will still love you till I die, even though you are unwilling to take any interest in me. . . . Only pray for my soul, for I shall not be able to escape Boguslav's hands. . . . Let come what will to me; but another of your friends who shared his last crust with you, is now on his death-bed and desires to see you without fail. He is not willing to die without seeing you; for he wants to make a confession on which the peace of his soul depends."

Pan Michael who had listened to Zagloba's account of his danger with great emotion, now sprang forward and, grasping his arm, asked, "Is it Pan Yan?"

"No, not Yan, but Ketling!"

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

"He was shot by one of Prince Boguslav's ruffians while defending me; I know not if he can live for twenty-four hours. It was on your account that we got into this trouble, for we only came to Warsaw to try to find some way of consoling you. Come, if only for two days, and soothe a dying man. You can then return . . . you can become a monk. I have brought the Primate's orders to raise no obstacle in your way. Only hasten, for every moment is precious."

"Good God!" exclaimed Pan Michael; "what do I hear? There are no obstacles, for so far I am here only for meditation. As God lives, the prayer of a dying man is sacred! I cannot refuse that."

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

"True! It is always that traitor Boguslav. But may I never return here if I do not avenge Ketling! I will find those villains and cleave their heads in two! Great God! sinful thoughts are already assailing me! *Memento mori!* Wait here only till I have put on my old clothes, for it is forbidden to go outside in the habit."

"Here are some clothes!" cried Zagloba, springing to the bundle lying on the bench beside them. "I foresaw and prepared everything! Here are boots, a rapier, and a good overcoat."

"Come to the cell," said the little knight hurriedly.

They went to the cell and when they came out by the side of Zagloba walked, not a white monk, but an officer with yellow boots up to the knees, a rapier at his side and a white scarf over his shoulder. Zagloba winked and smiled at the frater at the door, who was evidently scandalized as he opened the gate for the pair.

Lower down the hill not far from the monastery Zagloba's carriage was waiting in charge of two attendants. One was sitting on the seat holding the reins of four richly-harnessed horses over which Pan Michael rapidly cast an experienced eye. The other was standing beside the carriage with a crusted, corpulent bottle in one hand and two glasses in the other.

"It is quite a distance to Mokotov," said Zagloba, "and sharp grief awaits us at Ketling's bedside. . . Take a drink, Michael, to gain strength to stand it all, for you are greatly run down."

Zagloba took the bottle from the hands of the servant and filled both goblets with wine that was almost viscous with age.

"This is generous liquor," said Zagloba, setting the bottle on the ground and taking the goblets. "To the health of Ketling!"

"To his health!" Pan Michael responded. "Let us hasten!"

They drained the goblets at a draught.

"Let us hasten," repeated Zagloba. "Pour out man," he added turning to his attendant. "The health of Pan Yan! Let us make haste!"

They again emptied the goblets at a draught, for there was no time to lose.

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

"But won't you drink my health?" asked Zagloba querulously.

"If you will be quick!"

And they again drank in haste. Zagloba emptied his goblet with one gulp, though it held half a quart, and then said, without even wiping his moustache, "It would be ungrateful of me not to drink your health, too. Pour out, fellow!"

"Thanks!" answered Frater Yerzy.

The bottom of the bottle was reached and Zagloba took it by the neck and smashed it to pieces, for he could not bear the sight of empty vessels. Then they hastily took their seats and drove on.

The noble liquor soon put warmth into their veins and gladness into their hearts. Frater Yerzy's cheeks gained a bright color and his eyes brightened.

His hand rose involuntarily to his moustache and twisted it upwards in sharp spikes to his eyes. Meanwhile he gazed curiously about him as if taking notice for the first time. Suddenly Zagloba slapped his knees and cried without apparent reason:

"Ho! ho! I hope the sight of you will restore Ketling to health! Ho! ho!"

And putting his arms around Pan Michael's neck he began to embrace him with all his might. The latter returned the embrace with equal cordiality.

They drove on for some time silently but happily. Meantime small suburban houses began to dot both sides of the road. In front of these there was considerable movement and animation. In all directions people were walking, mingled with servants in various liveries, soldiers, and richly robed nobles.

"Crowds of the nobility have come to the Diet," said Zagloba; "for though not one in a hundred is a deputy, they all want to be present to hear and see. The houses and inns are so full that it is difficult to get a room, and what a lot of fine women there are in the streets! You couldn't number them on the hairs in your beard. The darlings are monstrous pretty, too, so that a man is inclined to flap his wings and crow like a cock. But look there! look at that brunette with the haiduk carrying the green shuba behind her; isn't she a beauty? Eh?"

Here Zagloba poked Pan Michael in the ribs with his fist and Pan Michael looked and twirled his moustache; his eyes sparkled, but in a moment his face fell, he bowed his head and after a moment's silence, he said, "*Memento mori!*" -

But Zagloba embraced him again and exclaimed, *Per amicitiam nostram*, "By our friendship, as you love and honor me, get married. There are so many worthy women, get married!"

Frater Yerzy gazed at his friend in amazement. Zagloba could not be drunk, however, because many a time he had taken three times as much wine without its affecting him, so that he could only be speaking from his affection. But all thoughts of marriage were far from Pan Michael at that moment, so that at first his surprise was greater than his indignation.

Then he gazed sternly at Zagloba and asked:

"Are you drunk?"

"From the bottom of my heart I repeat, get married!"

Pan Michael's eyes became still more stern and he repeated, "*Memento mori.*"

But Zagloba was not one to be easily abashed.

"Michael, if you love me humor me in this matter and kiss a dog's nose with your 'memento.' I repeat, you can please yourself, but this is the way I argue: Let every man serve God in his own vocation, and God created you for the sword: his will is plainly shown since He has enabled you to become such an expert in its use. If he had intended you to be a priest he would have endowed you with an entirely different mind and a stronger inclination to books and Latin. Remember also that in Heaven warrior-saints enjoy quite as much honor as friar-saints, and that they battle against the legions of Hell and receive their meed from God's own hand when they return with captured standards. . . . You cannot deny that this is true!"

"I do not deny it, and I know that you are a tough adversary in a war of argument; but neither can you deny that for sorrow the life of the cloister is better than that of the world."

"Better, bah! All the more reason then for avoiding the cloister. The man is a fool who feeds instead of starving his sorrow so that the brute may die of famine as soon as possible."

Pan Michael could find no ready reply and was therefore silent, but after a little he said sadly:

"Do not speak of marriage, for the word only gives me greater pain. Desire is dead in me, for tears have washed it away and love is not for one of my years. My hair is beginning to grow white. Forty-two years—twenty-five of warfare—are no joke, no joke."

"O God, do not punish him for blasphemy! Forty-two years! Pshaw! I have more than twice as many on my back and yet I sometimes have to discipline myself to beat the heat out of my blood like dust out of clothing. Respect the memory of that sweet dead one. Michael, you were good enough for her I suppose! Then how can you be too old or not good enough for any other?"

"Leave me in peace! leave me in peace!" cried Pan Michael in poignant accents.

And tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

"I won't say another word," said Zagloba; "only give me your knightly word that you will stay with us for a month, no matter what happens to Ketling. You must see Yan. . . Afterwards, if you still desire to return to the cloister, no one will try to prevent you."

"I give you my word," said Pan Michael.

And they began to talk of other matters. Zagloba told about the Diet and how he had raised the question of excluding Prince Boguslav, and of Ketling's misfortune. Nevertheless occasionally he suspended his tale and fell into deep thought; apparently his meditations were cheerful ones, for now and again he would slap his knees and ejaculate:

"Ho! ho!"

"But as they neared Mokotov his face gave signs of anxiety. Suddenly turning to Michael he said:

"Your word is passed, remember, that you will remain with us for a month no matter what happens to Ketling."

"I passed my word and I will remain," answered Pan Michael.

"Here is Ketling's lodging," cried Zagloba, "a respectable place."

Then he called to the driver, "Fire off your whip! There will be a feast in this house to-day."

Loud cracks of the whip were heard. But the carriage had scarcely entered the gate when a number of Pan Michael's brothers in arms rushed out of the ante-room; among them were also old comrades of the days of Khmyelnitski, and young comrades of later days. Among the latter were Pan

Vasilevski and Pan Novovyeytski, still in early manhood though they were already seasoned warriors, having run away from school when mere boys and fought for some years under Pan Michael. The latter had a very strong affection for them both.

Among the older ones was Pan Orlik of the house of Novin, with a skull plated with gold where a Swedish grenade had once taken a piece out of it; and Pan Rushchyts, a half-savage leader of the steppes, with few equals in border-warfare and second only in reputation to Pan Michael himself; besides several others. At the sight of the two in the carriage they all began to shout:

"There he is! there he is! Zagloba has won! There he is!"

And springing to the side of the carriage they seized Pan Michael in their arms and carried him to the hall, crying:

"Welcome! dearest comrade, live for us! We have you now and won't let you go again! Long live Volodyovski, the first knight and ornament of the whole army! To the steppes with us, Brother! To the wild plains! There the winds will blow your sorrow away."

They set him down only in the entrance-hall. He was much moved at his reception and greeted them all, but immediately asked:

"How is Ketling? Is he yet alive?"

"Alive! alive!" they replied in chorus, and the old soldiers began to smile queerly. "Go to him, for he cannot keep his bed much longer; he impatiently awaits you."

"I see he is not so near death as Zagloba said."

They passed into a large room, in the middle of which was a table spread for a feast; in one corner was a plank-bed covered with a white horse-robe on which Ketling was lying.

"My friend!" cried Pan Michael, hastening towards him.

"Michael!" cried Ketling, springing up in full health and vigor and clasping the little knight to his breast.

They embraced each other so vigorously that each lifted the other off his feet in turn.

"They ordered me to feign sickness," cried the Scotchman, "to pretend to be dead; but when I saw you I could not keep it up. I am as lively as an eel, and nothing has happened to me. But it was a matter of getting you out of the cloister. . . . Forgive us, Michael! It was for love of you that we contrived this trick."

"To the wild steppes!" cried the officers again; and they

raised a terrible din by striking their sabres with their horny hands.

But Pan Michael was absolutely bewildered. For some time he was silent and then he began to gaze at each in turn, and Zagloba in particular.

At last he exclaimed, "Oh, traitors! I thought that Ketling was mortally wounded."

"How is this, Michael?" cried Zagloba. Are you provoked because Ketling is well? Are you sorry for that and would you rather have him dead? Has your heart so completely turned to stone that you would be glad to see us all ghosts, including Ketling, and Pan Orlik, and Pan Rushchyts and these youngsters,—nay, even Pan Yan, even me, me that love you like a son?"

Here Zagloba shut his eyes and exclaimed in still more lamentable tones: "We have nothing to live for, gentlemen, there is no gratitude left in this world, callousness only remains."

"By Heaven! I do not wish you ill, but you have not respected my sorrow," cried Pan Michael.

"Have pity upon our lives!" repeated Zagloba.

"Leave me in peace!"

He says we show no respect to his sorrow; but what floods of tears we have shed for him, gentlemen! We have indeed, Michael. I call God to witness that we wish we might bear it for you as comrades should. But since you have promised to stay with us for a month love us at least for that month."

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

At this point the conversation was interrupted by a fresh arrival. The officers, engaged with Pan Michael, had not heard his approach and saw him only when he stood in the doorway. He was a man of great stature and noble form and bearing. He had the face of a Roman Cæsar; it expressed power mingled with true kingly kindness and courtesy. He contrasted strongly with the officers present: he seemed to gain in grandeur before them, as though the kingly eagle had appeared suddenly in a flock of hawks, falcons, and merlins.

"The Grand Hetman!" cried Ketling, springing up as the host to welcome him.

"Pan Sobieski!" others exclaimed.

Every head bowed with deep respect.

"All except Pan Michael were aware that the Hetman was

coming, for he had promised Ketling to do so; and yet his arrival had produced such an effect that no one dared to be the first to speak. This was also unusual homage. But Sobieski loved soldiers above all men, especially those with whom he had so often broken and swept away the Tartar chambuls; he regarded them as his own children and therefore he had determined to greet Pan Michael to condole with him and show him such favor and honor as to induce him to remain in the army.

After greeting Ketling, therefore he at once extended his hand to the little knight and, when the latter approached and embraced his knees, Sobieski laid his hand affectionately on Pan Michael's head.

"Old soldier," he said, "the hand of God has bowed thee to the earth, but I will raise and comfort thee. The Lord is with thee! Thou wilt stay with us now."

"I will stay," said Pan Michael in a voice broken with sobs.

"That is well; give me as many as possible of such men as thou. And now, old comrade, let us recall the days we spent in the Russian steppes when we feasted in tents. I am happy to be among you again. Our host, let us begin!"

And all cried, "Vivat Joannes dux."

The feast commenced and lasted long.

The following day the Hetman sent a very valuable cream-colored charger to Pan Michael.

CHAPTER VI.

Ketling and Pan Michael mutually vowed to ride stirrup to stirrup again should the opportunity occur, to sleep at the same fire and with their heads on the same saddle, but in the meantime something occurred to separate them. Not more than a week after their reunion a messenger arrived from Courland with tidings that the Hassling who had adopted the young Scot and given him his estates had suddenly fallen ill and greatly desired to see his adopted son. The young knight did not hesitate, but mounted his horse and rode away.

Before departing he begged Zagloba and Pan Michael to consider his house as their own and live there till they were tired of it.

"Pan Yan may come," he said. "He will surely come during the election and even if he brings all his children there is room enough for the whole family. I have no relatives; and even if I had any brothers they could not be any nearer to me than you are."

Zagloba in particular was gratified with the invitation, for he was very comfortable in Ketling's house; but Pan Michael was also glad of it.

Pan Yan did not come, but Pan Michael's sister announced her arrival. She was the wife of Pan Makovyetska, Stolnik¹ of Latychov. His messenger inquired at the Hetman's residence if any of his followers knew of the knight and Ketling's house was pointed out to him at once.

Pan Michael was greatly delighted for it was many years since he had seen his sister and when he heard that for lack of better accommodation she had stopped at Rybak at a mean hut, he immediately hastened to invite her to Ketling's house.

It was twilight when he rushed into her presence; but he knew her immediately, though two other ladies were present, for she was very short and round as a ball of thread. She recognized him also; they fell into each other's embrace and

¹Stolnik—pantler, a title of nobility in Poland.

for a long time they remained silent while he felt her warm tears on his face.

Pani Makoveytska was the first to recover her speech and began to say in rather thin and shrill accents:

"So many years! so many years! God help you dearest brother! The moment I received tidings of your misfortune I at once hastened to come hither and my husband did not detain me. There is also talk of the Byalogrod Tartars and the roads are becoming black with immense flocks of birds and that always happens before an invasion. God console you brother dear! Brother of gold! My husband had to come to the election himself so he said: "Take the girls and go on before me. You will comfort Michael in his sorrow and you must hide your head somewhere from the Tartars, for the country here will be in flames, so that one thing fits in with the other. Go to Warsaw while there is time to hire good quarters so that we may have some place to dwell. He is watching the roads with the inhabitants of those parts. There are very few troops in the country as is always the way. Michael beloved, come to the window and let me look at you; your lips have grown thin, but in sorrow it cannot be otherwise. In Russia it was easy for my husband to say 'Find lodgings!' but they are nowhere to be had. We are in this shanty. I have been scarcely able to get three bundles of straw to sleep on."

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

But his sister would not allow and kept on talking like the rattle of a mill.

"We stopped here, there was no other place. My host glares at one with the eyes of a wolf; most likely they are bad people in the house. It is true that we have four trustworthy attendants and we are not timid ourselves, for unless a woman had a bold heart in our parts she could not live there. I always carry a pistol with me and Basia has two; but Krysia does not like firearms. But this is a queer place, and we should like safer lodgings."

"Allow me, sister . . ." repeated Pan Michael.

"But where are you staying, Michael? You must aid me in finding lodgings, for you are acquainted with Warsaw."

"I have lodgings ready," interrupted Pan Michael, "and they are fine enough for a senator to occupy with his train. I am staying with my friend, Captain Ketling, and will take you with me at once."

"But recollect that there are three of us with two servants and four attendants. But Good Heavens! I have not yet introduced you to my two companinos."

Here she turned to them.

"Young ladies, you know who he is, but he does not know who you are; you must make each other's acquaintance even if it is dark. The stove has not yet been lighted. This is Panna Krystina Drohoyovska and that Panna Barbara Yezyorkovska. My husband is the guardian of them and their property; they are orphans and live with us. It is not proper for young ladies to live alone."

As his sister spoke Pan Michael made a military bow and the young ladies took hold of their skirts and courtesied and Panna Barbara tossed her head like a young colt.

"Let us take our seats in the carriage and go!" said Pan Michael. "Pan Zagloba is staying with us. I asked him to have supper ready."

"The famous Pan Zagloba?" quickly asked Panna Basia.¹

"Basia, be quiet!" said the lady. "I am afraid that we shall be giving trouble!"

"Oh, if Pan Zagloba has anything to do with the supper there will be enough even though twice as many should appear," interrupted the little knight. "And young ladies, will you order out the trunks? I also brought a wagon for the baggage and Ketling's carriage is so roomy that we four can easily sit in it. This is my idea, if you have sober attendants they can stay till the morning with the horses and larger things. We will now take only what is most needed."

"We need not leave anything," said the lady, "for our wagons have not yet been unpacked; just harness the horses and they can go at once. Basia go and fill the orders!"

Basia darted into the hall and a few Paters later, returned with the announcement that all was ready.

"Let us go," said Pan Michael.

They were soon in the carriage and on the way to Mokotov. Pan Michael's sister and Panna Krystina occupied the rear seat and the little knight sat beside Basia in front. It was already so dark that they could not distinguish one another's features.

"Are you acquainted with Warsaw, young ladies?" asked

¹Basia and Bashkaave, diminutives of Barbara; Krysia, diminutive of Krystina. The Slavonic languages are rich in diminutives and endearing names—sometimes expressing familiarity, love, pity, etc.

Pan Michael, leaning towards Panna Krysia and raising his voice above the clatter of the carriage.

"No," she answered in a low, but sweet and resonant voice. "We are regular country girls and till this moment have known neither famous cities nor famous men."

Then she slightly bowed as if intimating that she numbered Pan Michael among the latter; which reply he gratefully received. "A courteous maiden," he thought and began to rack his brains for an answering compliment.

"Even if the city were ten times as large as it is," said he at last, "still you, ladies, would be its greatest ornament."

"But how can you tell that in the dark?" quickly asked Panna Yezyorkovska.

"Aha, here is a goat for you!" thought Pan Michael.

But he said nothing and they drove along in silence for some time. Basia again turned to the little knight and asked:

"Do you know if there is sufficient room in the stables? We have ten horses and two carriages."

"Even if there were thirty they could be accommodated."

"Whew! whew!" answered the young lady.

"Bashka," said Pani Makovyetska, reprovingly.

"Ah, it is easy to say, 'Bashka, Bashka!' but who took care of the horses during the whole journey?"

Thus conversing they arrived at Ketling's house.

All the windows were brilliantly illuminated to receive the Pani Stolnikova. The servants hurried out, headed by Pan Zagloba; on reaching the carriage and seeing three ladies he immediately asked:

"Which of you ladies have I the honor to greet as my particular benefactress and the sister of my best friend, Michael?"

"I am she!" the lady answered.

Zagloba then took her hand and began fervently to kiss it, repeating "I am your slave! I am your slave!"

Then he aided her to alight and led her with great ceremony and clattering of feet to the ante-room.

"Allow me to offer again my most humble welcome at the threshold," he said on the way.

Meanwhile Pan Michael was helping the young ladies out of the carriage. As it was high and the steps were hard to find in the dark he seized Panna Krystina around the waist and lifted her to the ground and she for an instant submitted to the pressure of his breast against hers and said:

"Thank you."

Pan Michael then turned to Panna Barbara; but she had already jumped out on the other side of the carriage and so he offered his arm to Panna Krystina.

Inside the house they were introduced to Pan Zagloba. He was delighted to see the two young ladies and immediately invited them to sit down to supper. The dishes were already steaming on the table and, as Michael had foreseen, there was enough for twice as large a party.

They took their seats. Pan Michael's sister occupied the first place; on her right sat Zagloba, and then came Panna Basia. Pan Michael sat on the left next to Panna Kryisia.

And now for the first time the little knight was able to take a good look at the ladies.

Both were handsome; but each in a different style. Kryisia's hair was black as a raven's wing, with brows to match, her eyes were of a deep blue; though a brunette her complexion was so delicate that the blue veins on her temples were visible. A dark down scarcely discernible shaded her upper lip, revealing a sweet and alluring mouth that slightly pouted as if for a kiss. She was in mourning, for she had recently lost her father and the sombreness of her dress together with her delicate complexion and dusky hair gave her a certain severe and melancholy air. At the first glance she seemed older than her companion but on looking more closely Pan Michael could see that the blood of first youth was flowing beneath that transparent skin. The longer he gazed the more he admired her air of distinction, her swan-like neck, and her charming contours of maiden grace.

"She is a great lady with a noble soul," he thought, "but the other is a regular hoyden."

In truth the comparison was a just one.

Basia was much more petite than her companion, though by no means spare; she was light-haired and red as a bunch of roses. Her hair had been cut short, as if after illness, and she wore it in a golden net. But it would not stay still on her restless head and the ends peeped out through each mesh of the net and strayed over her brow in disorderly yellow locks like the shock of a Cossack which, in combination with her sharp restless eyes and saucy air, made that rosy face like that of a schoolboy who is only waiting for a chance to embroil others and himself escape punishment.

Still she was so fresh and shapely that it was difficult to

take ones eyes off her; her diminutive nose was slightly *retroussé* with mobile and dilating nostrils and dimples in her cheeks and chin, revealing a merry nature.

But now she was sitting in quiet dignity and eating heartily, only glancing from time to time at Zagloba and Michael in turn and gazing at them with a glance that was almost childlike in its curiosity, as though at some great marvel.

Pan Michael was silent, for though he felt it incumbent on him to entertain Panna Krysia, he did not know how to begin. Generally speaking the little knight was not adroit in conversing with ladies; but now he was more taciturn than usual, for these maidens vividly recalled the dear one who was dead.

Pan Zagloba entertained Pani Makovyetska with the relation of Pan Michael's exploits and his own. Half way through supper he began to tell how they had once escaped with Princess Kurtsevich and Jendzian through an entire chambul and how they two had hurled themselves against the chambul to hinder the pursuit and save the princess.

Basia stopped eating and, resting her chin on her hand, listened intently, occasionally shaking her locks, blinking her eyes, and snapping her fingers at the most interesting places and crying:

"Ah, ha! well, what next? what next?"

But when he came to the place where Kushel's dragoons galloped up unexpectedly to their aid, fell upon the Tartars, and rode on sabring them for half a mile, she could contain herself no longer, but clapped her hands with all her might and cried:

"Ah! I should have loved to be there, God knows I should!"

"Bashka!" cried the plump little Pani Makovyetska in a strong Russian accent, "you are now among polite people; avoid your 'God knows.' Great God! the only thing left is for you to ejaculate, 'May the bullets strike me!'"

The maiden burst out laughing again in silvery tones suddenly placing her hands on her knees and said:

"May the bullets strike me! Auntie."

"O my God, my ears will shrivel up! I beg the whole company's pardon," said the lady.

Then Bashka, anxious to obtain her aunt's pardon, sprang from her seat and in doing so dropped her knife and spoons under the table and then dived after them.

The plump little lady could no longer restrain her laughter and she had an extraordinary laugh, for she first began to shake and tremble and then to pipe in a thin voice. The merriment was general. Zagloba was in raptures.

"You see what trouble I have with her," said Pani Makovyetska convulsively.

"She is absolutely delightful, as God is dear to me," cried Zagloba.

Meanwhile Bashka had crawled from under the table; she had found her knife and spoons, but had lost her net and her hair was falling all about her eyes. She stood erect, and with quivering nostrils, said:

"Aha, ladies and gentlemen, you make merry at my confusion! Very well!"

"No one is laughing," said Zagloba in a tone that carried conviction with it, "no one is laughing,—no one is laughing! We are only rejoicing that the Lord God has delighted us with the presence of your ladyship."

After the meal they went into the salon. Seeing a lute on the wall Panna Krysia took it down and began to finger the notes. Pan Michael begged her to sing something to its accompaniment and she answered with kindness and candor:

"I am quite willing if it will relieve your soul of some of its sadness."

"Thank you," answered Pan Michael gratefully looking at her.

In a few moments she sang as follows:

"Knights, heed my tale,
Useless is mail,
Shields naught avail.
Strongest steel parts,
Cupid's keen darts
Pierce to all hearts."

"I cannot find words to thank you," said Zagloba as he sat apart with Pan Michael's sister and kissed her hands, "for coming yourself and bringing with you such lovely maidens that the very Graces might be their handmaids. That little haiduk in particular pleases me, for a creature of that kind banishes sorrow so that a weasel could not hunt mice more successfully. In truth, what is grief but mice that consume the grains of joy stored in our hearts. You, my benefactress, must know that our late king, John Casimir, was so fond

of my similes that he could not endure a day without them. I had to compose proverbs and wise maxims for him. He used to have them repeated to him at bedtime and his policy was guided by them. But that is another matter. I hope that our Michael will entirely forget his terrible misfortune in the company of these delightful girls. You are not aware that it is only a week since I dragged him out of the Camedoli cloister where he wanted to take the vows; but I gained the intervention of the nuncio himself who threatened the Prior with turning all the monks in the monastery into dragoons if he did not immediately let Michael go. That was no place for him. Praise be to God! . . . Praise be to God! I know him! if not to-day then to-morrow one of these two will strike such sparks out of him that his heart will burn like tinder.'

Meanwhile Krysia continued:—

“If shields cannot save
The strong and the brave
From darts and the grave,
How shall a fair maid
Love's raiders evade?
Whom turn to for aid?”

“The fair maid has as much fear of those darts as a dog has of meat,” whispered Zagloba to Pan Michael's sister. “But confess, my benefactress, you did not bring those little mice here without ulterior designs. They are maidens in a hundred!—that little haiduk in particular. I wish I were as fresh as she! Has not Michael a cunning little sister, eh?”

Pani Makovyetska assumed a very knowing look, which, however, did not at all become her honest simple countenance and said, “I had my own thoughts, as is natural, women are not lacking in shrewdness. My husband had to come here for the election and I brought the girls on first, for with us there is never anyone to see except Tartars. If any good fortune should happen to Michael in consequence I would make a pilgrimage to some miracle-working image.”

“It will happen! it will happen!” said Zagloba.

“Both come of great houses and have property; which also means something in these troublous times.”

“You need not tell me that. The war has eaten up Michael's fortune, though I know that he has some funds out at interest with great nobles. More than once, gracious lady, we captured great spoil; and though it was turned over

to the Hetman, still a part was shared 'according to sabres' in military parlance. More than once Michael's share was so great that if he had saved it all he would have had a nice fortune by now. But a soldier takes no thought of the morrow; he only enjoys himself to-day. And Michael would have squandered all he possessed, if it had not been that I always restrained him. You say then, gracious lady, that these maidens are of gentle blood?"

"Kryisia is of senatorial blood. It is true that our castellans of the border are not castellans of Cracow and few people in the Commonwealth have ever heard of some of them; but still he who has once occupied a senator's chair bequeaths his splendor and power to his posterity. As to connections Bashka almost surpasses Kryisia."

"Really! I myself am descended from a king of the Massagetas so that I like to hear genealogies."

"Bashka does not come from such an exalted nest as that, but if you care to listen,—for in our parts we can tell the degrees of kinship of every house on our fingers,—she is in fact related to the Pototskis and the Yazlovyetskis and the Lasches. You see, Sir, this is how it is."

Here Pani Stolnikova arranged the folds of her dress and assumed a more comfortable position so that nothing might interfere with her favorite story; she spread out the fingers of one hand and prepared to tell off the ancestors with the index finger of the other.

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

"I have taken note of that," said Zagloba.

"From that union was born Michael Smyotanko, likewise banneret of Podolia."

"H'm, a fine position," said Zagloba.

"He was first married to a Dorohosto—no! to a Rojynski—no! to a Voronich! The deuce, I forget!"

"May she rest in eternal peace, whoever she was," said Zagloba gravely.

"And as his second wife he married Panna Laschovna."

"I expected that! How did the marriage result?"

"Their sons died."

"Every joy of this world fades away."

"But of our daughters, the youngest, Anna, married Yezyorkovski, of the house of Ravich, a commissioner for settling

the boundaries of Podolia; if I am not mistaken he was afterwards Sword-Bearer of Podolia."

"I remember, he was," cried Zagloba, in a tone of conviction.

"From that marriage you see Bashka was born."

"I see and moreover I see that at this moment she is taking aim with Ketling's musket." In fact Krysia and the little knight were engaged in conversation and Bashka was amusing herself with aiming the musket at the window.

Pani Makovyetska began to tremble and call out at the sight.

"You cannot imagine what I suffer with that girl! She is a regular haydamak."

"If the haydamaks were all like her I would join them immediately."

"Her head runs on nothing but arms, horses, and war. Once she stole away from the house to hunt ducks with a gun. She crept in somewhere among the reeds and was looking about her when they suddenly parted and what do you think she saw? The head of a Tartar stealing through the reeds towards the village! Any other woman would have been terrified and woe to her if she did not fire quickly! The Tartar dropped into the water. Just think! she had dropped him like a flash and what with, do you think? Duck-shot."

Here the lady began again to shake and laugh at the Tartar's misfortune and then added:

"And, to tell the truth, she saved us all, for an entire chambul was advancing; but as she came and gave the alarm we had time to escape to the woods with the servants. That is what we always do!"

Zagloba's face was radiant and his eyes were blinking; he sprang up, hurried across to the maiden, and before she had noticed him, he had kissed her on the brow, saying:

"Take this from an old soldier for that Tartar among the reeds."

She gave her golden locks a vigorous shake.

"Didn't he get in the neck?" she cried in her fresh child-like voice that sounded so strangely at variance with her words.

"You dearest little haydamak!" cried Zagloba with emotion.

"But what is one Tartar? You gentlemen have cut them down by the thousand, besides Swedes, and Germans, and

Rakotsi's Hungarians. What am I compared with you gentlemen,—knights who have no peers in the Commonwealth! I know that well enough!

"I will teach you to wield the sabre since you are so courageous. I am rather heavy now, but Michael is also a master."

At this offer she sprang to her feet and kissed Zagloba on the shoulder and courtesied to the little knight, saying—

"Many thanks for the promise: I know a little about it already."

But Pan Michael was absorbed in conversation with Kryisia and therefore answered absently,—

"Whatever you command."

Zagloba with a beaming face again took his seat beside Pani Makovyetska.

"My gracious benefactress," he said, "I well know which are the best Turkish sweetmeats, as I spent many years at Stambul; but I also know that there is a whole universe of people just hungry for them. How is it that no one has hitherto coveted that maiden?"

"As God lives, they had no lack of wooers. But we jokingly call Bashka the widow of three husbands, for at one time three worthy cavaliers were all paying their addresses to her at once, all nobles of our district, and heirs, whose relationship I can explain to you in detail."

Pani Makovyetska spread out the fingers of her left hand and extended her right index finger when Zagloba hastily said:

"And what happened to them?"

"All three died in battle; so we call Basia a widow."

"H'm! but how did she support her loss?"

"With us you see it is a case of daily occurrence and it is a rare thing for any man after reaching maturity to die a natural death. Some of us even hold that it does not befit a noble to die otherwise than in the field. How did Bashka take it? Oh, she shed a few tears, poor girl, but principally in the stable, for when anything troubles her that's where she goes. Once I sent for her and asked 'Whom are you grieving over?' 'All three' she answered. I saw from the reply that she had not been pleased by any one in particular. I think that as her head is full of other things she has not yet met her fate; Kryisia has been somewhat touched, but Bashka perhaps not at all."

"She will meet it!" said Zagloba. "Gracious lady you and I understand that well enough. She will meet it!"

"It is predestined for all of us," said Pani Makovyetska.

"Exactly! You took the words out of my mouth."

Further conversation was interrupted by the approach of the young people.

The little knight had grown quite bold with Krysia and she in the manifest goodness of her heart, ministered to him and his sorrow like a physican to a patient. For this very reason perhaps she showed him more kindness than was warranted by their short acquaintance. But as Pan Michael was the brother of the Stolnikova to whose husband the young lady was related, no one was surprised. Bashka kept somewhat apart and only Zagloba gave her his undivided attention. But however that might be, apparently it was all the same to Bashka whether anyone paid her any attention or not. At first she gazed admiringly at both knights, but she examined Ketling's wonderful weapons displayed on the walls with equal admiration. Later on she began to yawn; then her eyes became heavier and heavier till at last she said:

"I am so sleepy that I shall not be fully awake till the morning."

At these words all immediately separated; for the ladies were greatly fatigued from the journey and only waited for their beds to be made ready. At last when Zagloba found himself alone with Pan Michael, he first began to wink significantly and then to pummel him lightly. "Michael! what, Michael, like turnips, eh? That bilberry Krysia is a sweet one. And that rosy little haiduk, eh? What have you to say about her, Michael?"

"What? Nothing!" answered the little knight.

"That little haiduk pleased me most. I tell you that when I sat beside her at supper I was as warm as a stove."

"She is still a kid; the other is ever so much statelier."

"Panna Drohoyovska is a Hungarian plum; but the other is a little nut! As God lives, if only I had teeth! I meant to say that if I had such a daughter I would give her up to no man but you. She is an almond, I say, an almond!"

Pan Michael suddenly became very sad, for he remembered the names Zagloba used to call Anusia. She rose in his memory and stood before him as in life,—her figure, her little face, her dark tresses, her joyousness, her words, and

looks. These were both younger, and yet she was a hundred times dearer than any who had the advantage of youth.

The little knight covered his face with his hands and was overcome with grief the more in that it was unexpected.

Zagloba was amazed and for some time kept silence and gazed uneasily at him, finally he asked:

“Michael, what is the matter? tell me, for God’s sake!”

Michael answered:

“So many are alive and walking through the world, but my lamb is no longer among them; I shall see her never again.”

Then his voice choked with anguish; he rested his brow on the side of the divan and murmured through his clenched teeth, “O God! O God! O God!”

CHAPTER VII.

Panna Basia insisted that Pan Michael should give her some fencing lessons; he did not refuse though he put it off for some days. He preferred Krysia; still, he liked Basia very much; in fact it was impossible not to like her.

One morning the first lesson began, principally because Basia boasted and asserted that that she was by no means a novice in the art and that no ordinary person could stand before her.

"An old soldier taught me," she said, "there are plenty of them among us and it is notorious that our swordsmen have no superiors. It is a question even whether you gentlemen would not find your match."

— "What are you talking about?" cried Zagloba. "We have no equals in the whole world."

"I wish it might prove that even I am your equal. I do not expect that, but I should like it."

"If it were pistol practice I also would take a hand," said Pani Makovyetska, laughing.

Good heavens! the Amazons themselves must live in Latychov," cried Zagloba.

Then he turned to Krysia:

"And what weapon does your ladyship handle best?"

"None," answered Krysia.

"Ah, ha! none!" cried Basia. And then, mimicing Krysia's voice, she began to sing:—

"Knights, heed my tale,
Useless is mail,
Shields naught avail.
Strongest steel parts,
Cupid's keen darts
Pierce to all hearts."

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

"Take your position, young lady!" said Pan Michael, trying to cover his confusion.

"Oh, as God lives! if it should turn out as I think!" exclaimed Basia, flushing with pleasurable anticipation.

And she at once took up position with a light Polish sabre in her right hand; she raised the left hand behind her, and with breast advanced, head up, and nostrils dilating, she looked so pretty and rosy that Zagloba whispered to Pan Michael's sister:

"No flask, even if filled with Hungarian a century old, would give such delight to gaze on it."

"Remember," said the knight to Basia, "I will only defend myself; I will not once lunge. You may attack as rapidly as you like."

"Very well. Say when you want me to stop."

"I could stop the attack without a word, if I chose."

"How could you do that?"

"I could easily disarm a fencer like you."

"We shall see."

"We shall not, for on account of politeness I won't do it."

"There is no need of politeness in this case. Do it if you can. I know I am not so skilful as you, but still I will not allow you to do that."

"Then you permit it?"

"I do."

"Oh, don't give permission, sweetest haiduk," said Zagloba. "He has disarmed the greatest masters."

"We shall see!" repeated Basia.

"Let us begin," said Pan Michael, rather nettled at her boasting.

They began.

Basia lunged terribly, skipping about like a colt in a field. Pan Michael stood on one spot moving his sword ever so slightly, as was his custom, and paying but little respect to the assault.

"You brush me off like an annoying fly," cried the exasperated Basia.

"I am not putting you to the test; I am giving you a lesson," answered the knight. "That is good! Not at all bad for a fair head! Steadier with the wrist!"

"For a fair head! Have at you for a fair head!—have at you—have at you—!"

But Pan Michael, although Basia used her best passes, had

an impregnable guard. He purposely kept up a conversation with Zagloba to show how little he cared for Basia's thrusts: "Stand away from the window, you are in the lady's light, and though a sabre is larger than a needle she has less experience with it."

Basia's nostrils dilated still more and her hair fell over her flashing eyes. "Do you despise me?" she asked panting rapidly.

"Not your person; God forbid!"

"Pan Michael, I hate you!"

"You have a graduate as your instructor in the art," answered the knight. Again he turned to Zagloba: "God grant that snow may soon fall."

"Here is snow! snow! snow!" cried Basia, giving thrust after thrust.

"Basia, that is enough! you are quite out of breath," said Pani Makovyetska.

"Now hold on to your sabre, for I am going to strike it from your hand."

"We shall see!"

"There it is!"

And the little sabre, flying like a bird out of Basia's hand, fell with a clatter near the stove.

"I dropped it myself unwittingly," she cried with tears in her voice; and, recovering it she thrust again like lightning. "Try it now—!"

"There!" said Pan Michael. And a second time the sabre lay beside the stove.

"That is enough for to-day," then said the knight.

Pani Makovyetska began to chatter more loudly than usual; but Basia stood in the middle of the room humiliated, panting, and biting her lips to keep back the tears that suffused her eyes notwithstanding her efforts. She knew that if she gave way to tears they would laugh at her all the more and therefore tried her utmost to repress them; but finding that it was beyond her power, she suddenly darted out of the room.

"For God's sake!" cried Pani Makovyetska, "she has certainly gone to the stable and in her heated condition will catch cold. Someone must go after her. Kyrzia, don't you go!"

With these words she went out and, taking a warm shawl from the hall hurried to the stable; Zagloba followed her, being anxious about his little haiduk. Kyrzia wanted to go too, but Pan Michael seized her by the hand.

"You were forbidden, you heard! I will not release this hand till they return."

And he kept hold of it. But that hand was as soft as silk. He felt as if a warm current was running through those slender fingers into his own frame and instilling delightful sensations; so he took a firmer grasp.

A fleeting blush tinged Krysia's face.

"I see that I am taken captive."

"Whoever captured such a prisoner would have no reason to envy even the Sultan, for the Sultan would gladly resign half his dominions for her."

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

"No more than I would sell my soul to the Devil!"

Here Pan Michael saw that momentary enthusiasm had gone too far so he moderated it with:

"No more than I would sell my sister."

"That is the right word," said Krystina gravely. "I am an affectionate sister to your sister and will be the same to you."

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

"I know, I know!" replied the maiden, "for I also have suffered a loss." Here a little tear fell from her eyelid and trickled down to the corner of her mouth.

Michael gazed at the tear on the faintly shaded lip and at length said:

"You are as kind as a real angel; I already feel consoled."

Krysia smiled sweetly:

"May God reward you."

Pan Michael felt that it would comfort him still more to kiss her hand again, but at that moment his sister appeared.

"Basia took the shawl," she said, "but she is so upset that she cannot be induced to come in. Pan Zagloba is chasing her all over the stable."

In fact Zagloba, with mingled jest and entreaty, not only chased Basia all over the stable but at last drove her into the yard hoping to induce her to return to the house. She ran away crying, "I will not go! Let me be frozen! I will not go! I will not go!" At last seeing a ladder leaning against the side of the house, she sprang up it like a squirrel and stopped at the eaves of the roof. From her seat there she turned to Pan Zagloba and called out half laughingly, "Well, I will go if you will come up here after me."

"What kind of a tom-cat do you think I am, little haiduk, to crawl along roofs after you? Is this the way you requite my love for you?"

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

"Grandfather wants to have his way and grandmother hers. Come down this moment!"

"I will not."

"It is quite laughable to see you take your defeat to heart so. You angry weasel, not only you but Pan Andrey who was considered a master of masters was treated by Pan Michael in the same way, and not in sport but in a duel. The most celebrated swordsmen, Italians, Germans, and Swedes, could not stand before him long enough for a *Pater* and here is a gadfly that takes it to heart! Fie! be ashamed of yourself and come down! Besides you are only a beginner."

"But I cannot endure Pan Michael!"

"God bless you! Is it because he is a past-master in what you yourself want to know? You ought to like him all the more."

Zagloba was not mistaken. Basia's admiration for Pan Michael had increased in spite of her defeat; but she replied: "Let Krysia love him."

"Come down! come down!"

"I won't."

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

"But I'm not," cried Basia, gathering in her skirts.

"I'm an old fellow,—I won't stare my eyes out; but I'll call the others in a moment and let them look at you."

"I'll come down!" cried Basia.

With that Zagloba turned away. "As God lives, there's somebody coming!" he cried.

And in fact, round the corner of the house came young Adam Novovyevski who had arrived on horseback and tied his horse at the side-gate and was coming round to enter by the main entrance. On seeing him Basia was on the ground in a couple of skips but it was too late. Unfortunately Pan Adam had caught sight of her coming down the ladder and stood still in confusion and surprise, blushing like a little girl. Basia stood before him also covered with blushes till at last she exclaimed:

"A second confusion!"

Pan Zagloba's sound eye twinkled with amusement; at length he said:

"Pan Novovyeyski, a friend and subordinate of our Michael, and this is Panna Drabinovska¹,—I meant to say Yezyorkovska."

Pan Adam quickly recovered himself and being a quick-witted soldier, though youthful, he bowed and lifting his eyes to this vision of loveliness, said "God! roses bloom amid the snow in Ketling's garden."

But as Basia bowed she muttered "For some other nose than yours." Then she said most charmingly:

"Come into the house, I beg you."

She led the way, and darting into the room where Pan Michael and the others were sitting, said, referring to the Pan Adam's red kontush:

"The red finch has come!" She then took a seat, crossed her hands, and pursed up her lips in the manner of a modest and carefully trained young lady.

Pan Michael introduced his young friend to his sister and Panna Krysia, and the former seeing another young lady equally beautiful, but in a different style, was again confused; however he covered his nervousness with a bow and to regain his courage raised his hand to his budding moustache.

Twisting his fingers above his upper lip he turned to Pan Michael and explained the object of his visit. The Grand Hetman was anxious to see the little knight. So far as Pan Adam could tell it was about some military matters, for the Hetman had recently received letters from Pan Vilchkovski, Pan Silnitski, Colonel Pivo and other commanders in the Ukraine and Podolia with unfavorable reports of happenings in the Crimea.

"The Khan himself and Sultan Galga who concluded a treaties with us at Podhayets," proceeded Pan Adam, "wish to observe the terms: but Budzyak is as restless as a beehive at swarming-time. The Byalogrod tribes were also in a ferment and are unwilling to obey either the Khan or Galga."

"Pan Sobieski has already told me of that and asked my advice," said Zagloba. "What do they now say about the Spring?"

"They say that the first grass will certainly see a movement of these vermin, and it will be necessary to stamp them out a second time," replied Pan Adam.

¹Drabina is Polish for ladder.

As he said this he assumed the expression of a terrible Mars and twisted his tiny moustache till his upper lip reddened.

Basia, who had very sharp eyes, observed this at once; therefore pushing back her chair a little so that Pan Adam might not see her, she pretended to twist her moustache in imitation of the youthful knight.

Pan Michael's sister gazed at her with threatening eyes, but at the same time she began to shake and with difficulty restrained her laughter. Pan Michael bit his lips and Krysia lowered her eyes till her long lashes cast a shadow on her cheeks.

"You are a young man," said Zagloba, "for an experienced soldier."

"I am twenty-two years old and I have served my country for seven years continuously; I ran away to the field from the lowest class at school in my fifteenth year," he replied.

"He knows the steppe, and how to find his way through the grass and fall on the raiders like a kite on a partridge," added Pan Michael, "he is no ordinary warrior. The Tartar cannot hide from his eyes in the steppes."

Pan Adam blushed with pleasure at receiving praise from such famous lips in the presence of ladies.

He was not merely a falcon of the steppes, but a handsome fellow in addition, dark, and tanned by the weather. His face was seamed by a scar reaching from his ear to his nose which was thinner on one side in consequence of the cut. He had sharp eyes, accustomed to be on the look-out, with very dark, meeting brows, that formed a kind of Tartar bow. His head, close-cropped at the sides, was surmounted by curly locks. Both his address and bearing pleased Basia and nevertheless she did not cease to mimic him.

"It is pleasant for an old man like me to see that a new generation worthy of us is growing up," said Zagloba.

"Not so worthy," protested Pan Adam.

"I like their modesty too. We shall soon see you in command."

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

Pan Adam began to twist his moustache so vigorously that he almost pulled it out. And Basia kept her eyes on him and also lifted her hand to her mouth and imitated every motion.

But the keen soldier quickly noticed that the eyes of the

whole company were directed beyond him where the young lady, whom he had seen on the ladder, was sitting, and he at once divined that it must be on account of something connected with himself.

He went on talking as if he had not noticed it and played with his moustache as before. At last he selected his chance and turned round so suddenly that Basia had no time either to turn her eyes away from him or to drop her hand. She blushed furiously and, scarcely knowing what to do, rose from her seat. A moment of general confusion followed.

"A third confusion!" suddenly cried Basia in her silvery tones.

"Gracious lady," said Adam vivaciously, "I saw at once that there was something going on behind me. I must confess that I am anxious to have a moustache, but if I don't get one it will be because I have fallen for my country, and in that case I hope I shall merit the tears rather than the laughter of your ladyship."

Basia stood still with downcast eyes and was quite abashed by the knight's ingenuous words.

"You must pardon her," said Zagloba. "She is wild, because she is young, but she has a heart of gold."

And Basia, as if in confirmation of Zagloba's words at once said in a low voice: "I beg your pardon . . . most earnestly."

Pan Adam immediately caught hold of her hands and began to kiss them. "For God's sake, don't take it to heart! I am not a savage. I ought to beg your pardon for having spoiled your amusement. We soldiers are very fond of joking ourselves. *Mea culpa!* I will kiss these little hands again and, if I have to kiss them till I obtain your forgiveness, for God's sake don't forgive me till the evening!"

"You see this is a courteous cavalier, Basia!" said Pani Makovyetska.

"I see he is," Basia answered.

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

As he said these words he stood upright and instinctively raised his hand to his moustache, but suddenly remembering himself, he burst into a hearty laugh. Basia joined him, and the rest followed. They were all merry. Zagloba immediately ordered up a couple of bottles from Ketlin's cellar, and all were at their ease. Pan Adam jingled his spurs against each other, passed his fingers through his hair and gazed more ardently at Basia every moment. He was immensely

taken with her. He became very eloquent; and as he had served under the Hetman, he had seen the world, and consequently had something to talk about.

He told them of the Diet of Convocation, of its close, and how in the senate the stove had fallen down beneath the inquisitive arbiters to the great amusement of everybody. At last after dinner he went away with his eyes and heart full of Basia.

CHAPTER VIII.

The same day the little knight presented himself at the Hetman's quarters; the latter gave orders to admit him at once, and said to him:

"I must send Rushchyts to the Crimea to see what is going on there, and induce the Khan to observe the treaties. Do you want to take service again and take Rushchyts' command? You, Vilchkovski, Silnitski, and Pivo will keep an eye on Dorosh, and the Tartars whom it is never possible to trust entirely.

Pan Michael became sad. He had devoted the flower of his life to military service. For whole decades he had known no rest; his life had been passed in fire, smoke, toil, sleeplessness, and hunger, without a roof to cover him, or a handful of straw to lie on. His sabre had shed rivers of blood. He had neither settled down, nor married. Men not one-hundredth part as worthy were enjoying the sweets of reward, and had risen to honors, position, and government. He was poorer now than when he first began to serve. And now they wanted to use him again like an old broom. His heart was sore because, just as he has found kind and tender hands to dress his wounds, he receives the order to tear himself away and betake himself to the wilderness, to the distant borders of the Commonwealth, without consideration for his heart-weariness. Had it not been for interruptions and delays and all kinds of service he might have had at least a couple of years of happiness with Anusia.

As he thought of all this his heart was filled with a great bitterness; but, as he did not think it befitting for a knight to extol his own services, he simply answered:

"I will go."

Upon this the Hetman said:

"You are out of service, you can refuse. You know best whether it is too soon for you."

To which Pan Michael replied:

"It is not too soon for me to die."

Pan Sobieski strode up and down the chamber several times and at last halted before the little knight and laid his hand confidentially on his shoulder.

"If your tears are not yet dried, the wind of the steppes will dry them for you. All your life, you have toiled, dear soldier, toil on still! And should you ever reflect that your services are not remembered nor rewarded, that you are not permitted to rest, for buttered toast you have received a crust, for a governorship wounds and for rest suffering, set your teeth and say to yourself, 'For thee, my country!' Other consolation have I none; but, though no priest, I can assure that by so doing you will go farther on a worn saddle than others in a coach and six, and that gates will be opened to you that are closed to them."

"For thee, my country!" said Pan Michael in his heart, while marvelling that the Hetman had so readily divined his thoughts.

Pan Sobieski took a seat before him and continued:

"I want to speak to you now not as a subordinate, but as a friend,—nay, as a father to his son. When we were under fire at Podhayets and earlier, in the Ukraine, when we were scarcely able to hold our own against the foe, here at home behind our backs wicked men were wrangling over their own selfish ends in safety. Even in those days, more than once I came to the conclusion that this Commonwealth must perish. Excess overbears order and the public good is too often sacrificed for self-interest. . . . This has never happened anywhere else to such an extent. . . . These thoughts consumed me by day in the field and by night in the tent, for I said to myself: 'No, it is true that we soldiers are in an evil case, but it is our duty and our portion. If only we were sure that salvation also accompanies the blood that flows from our wounds!' But we had not even that consolation. Ah! I passed many a heavy day in Podhayets, though I exhibited a cheerful countenance to you officers lest you should think that I despaired of victory in the field. I thought, 'There are no men that really love the country, none!' And it hurt me as though a knife had been plunged into my heart. One day, however, the last at Podhayets, when I sent you with two thousand against twenty-six thousand of the horde, and you all sprang to apparent death, to certain slaughter, with such shouting and gladness as though you were going to a wedding, suddenly the thought struck me, 'Ah, these warriors

are mine!" and in an instant God rolled away the stone from my heart and everything was clear to my eyes. I said to myself, "These are facing death out of pure love for their mother country; they will not join themselves to confederacies or traitors. Of these I will form a sacred brotherhood, a school in which the younger generation shall learn. Their example will have influence and by their means this ill-fated people shall be regenerated and shall put away selfishness and forget excess and be as a lion that feels a marvellous strength in his limbs and astonish the world!"

Here Sobieski's face flamed and he raised his head, which was like that of a Roman Cæsar, and extending his hands, he cried: "O Lord! write not 'Mene, Menè, Tekel, Peres!' on our wall and permit me to regenerate my country!"

A moment's silence followed.

Pan Michael sat with bowed head and felt his whole body quivering.

The Hetman strode rapidly up and down the room for some time, and at last halted before the little knight.

"We need examples," he cried, "examples every day to strike the attention. Michael! I have counted you in the first rank of the brotherhood. Do you desire to belong to it?"

The little knight arose and clasped the Hetman's knees.

"See," he cried in tones of emotion, "when I heard that I must march again I felt myself wronged and that I was entitled to some leisure for the indulgence of my sorrow; but now I see that I sinned, and, . . . and, . . . I repent of my thoughts and can find no words, for I am ashamed. . . ."

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

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

"No," the Hetman answered, "I will send Pan Rushchyts to the Crimea. He has relations there and even namesakes, cousins who were captured by the horde when young and have become Mussulmans and risen to office among the Infidels. They will give him aid of all kinds. Besides I need you in the field; there is not your equal in handling the Tartars."

"When shall I go?"

"In two weeks at farthest. I have yet to confer with the Vice-Chancellor and Sub-Treasurer of the kingdom and get the letters and instructions ready for Rushchyts. But be prepared, for I shall be urgent."

"To-morrow I shall be ready."

"God reward you for the willingness, but so soon is needless. Moreover you will not be away long, for if peace only lasts, I shall need you in Warsaw during the election. You have heard of the various candidates. What is said of them among the nobles?"

"I have not long been out of the cloister and there worldly matters are not discussed. I only know what I have heard from Pan Zagloba."

"True: I can get information from him; he has an extensive acquaintance among the nobles: but whom are you thinking of voting for?"

"I do not know myself; but I think that we need a warrior king."

"Yes, yes! I also have such a man in mind: one whose name alone would strike terror into our neighbors. We need a warrior-king such as Stefan Batory was. But farewell, little soldier! . . . We need a warrior-king. . . Repeat that to everybody. . . Farewell. God reward you for your readiness! . . ."

Pan Michael took his leave and departed.

He meditated along the road. He was glad that he had a week or two before him, for Krysia's friendship and consolation had become dear to him. He was also glad to think that he would return for the election and he went home contented on the whole. The steppes moreover had a certain charm for him; without being conscious of it he was yearning for them. He was so accustomed to those limitless stretches on which the horseman has more the feeling of a bird than a man.

"No, I will go to those limitless tracts, to those stanitsas and dunes to taste the old life once more, to campaign again with the soldiers, to stand sentinel over the border like a crane and sport among the grass in the Spring. . . No. . . I will go, I will go!"

And he urged his horse into a gallop, as he felt the want of rapid motion and the whistle of the wind in his ears. It was a clear and dry and frosty day. The ground was covered with frozen snow which crunched under the horse and was thrown off in balls by his flying hoofs. Pan Michael went so fast that his attendant on an inferior mount was left far behind.

It was sunset; the last light was in the sky casting violet reflections on the snowy expanse. Through the glow the first

twinkling stars were coming into view and the moon hung like a silver sickle. The road was deserted; now and then the knight passed an occasional carriage and galloped on without pause. Not till Ketling's house came into sight did he draw rein and allow his attendant to overtake him.

Suddenly he saw a slender form approaching.

It was Krysia.

On recognizing her Pan Michael at once dismounted, handed the rein to his attendant and hastened towards her in considerable surprise, but greater pleasure at seeing her.

"Soldiers say," he said, "that at twilight supernatural beings are to be met with who are sometimes of good omen and sometimes bad; but there can be no better omen for me than meeting you."

"Pan Adam has come," said Krysia, "and is with Bashka and Pani Makovyetska. I slipped out on purpose to meet you as I was anxious to hear what the Hetman had to say."

Pan Michael's heart was touched by the sincerity of the words. He gazed into her eyes and asked, "Are you really so concerned about me?"

"I am," Krysia answered in a low tone.

Pan Michael could not take his eyes off her; she had never looked so beautiful to him before. She had a satin hood on her head and white swan's-down surrounded her small delicate face on which the moonlight was falling, shining softly on her noble brows, downcast eyes, long lashes, and the dark, almost invisible down on her lip. There was an expression about it of calmness and extreme purity. Pan Michael felt how friendly and dear it was to him, and said:

"If it were not for the attendant behind, I should fall at your feet on the snow in gratitude."

And she answered:

"Sir, do not say such things, for I am unworthy of them, but reward me by saying that you will stay with us and that I may comfort you longer."

"I shall not stay," he replied.

Krysia suddenly halted.

"That cannot be."

"Military service, as usual! I go to Russia and the Steppes."

"Military service!" Krysia repeated.

And silently she hastened towards the house. Pan Michael, somewhat disturbed, marched quickly at her side. He had a dull and oppressed sensation in his mind. He wanted to say

something; he wanted to renew the conversation and did not know how to begin. He felt that there were a thousand things he wanted to say to Krysia and now was the time, while they were alone, and no one in the way.

"If I begin," he reflected, "I shall go farther," so he suddenly asked:

"Has Pan Adam been here long?"

"Not long."

And again the conversation ceased.

"That's not the way," thought Pan Michael, "I shall never say anything so long as I commence in that manner. It is evident that sorrow has consumed my few remaining wits."

And he marched on in silence, his lips working nervously. As they reached the door he stopped and said: "Think! if I deferred my happiness for so many years, it was to serve my country, so how can I now refuse to neglect my own comfort?"

Pan Michael thought that such a plain argument would at once convince Krysia, and indeed after a pause she answered sadly and sweetly:

"The better one knows Pan Michael the more one learns to respect and honor him."

She then entered the house. Bashka's cries of "Allah, Allah!" reached them in the hall, and when they entered the salon they saw Pan Adam in the middle of the room blindfolded and bending forward with outstretched arms trying to catch Bashka, who was hiding in the corners and revealing her whereabouts with her cries of "Allah!" Pani Makovyetska was near the window engaged in conversation with Zagloba.

The entrance of Krysia with the little knight interrupted the game. Pan Adam took off the handkerchief and ran to greet Pan Michael. Immediately after came Pani Stolnikova, Zagloba, and the breathless Bashka.

"What is it? What is it? What did the Hetman say?" they all asked in chorus.

"Sister," replied Pan Michael, "if you want to send a letter to your husband, you have an opportunity, as I am going to Russia."

"Is he sending you? By the living God, do not take service yet, do not go!" cried his sister in piteous tones. "Will they not allow you even a moment's rest?"

"Is your command already appointed?" asked Zagloba, gloomily. "The lady-stolnik is right in saying that they are threshing you as with flails!"

"Rushchyts is going to the Crimea and I take his squadron; for, as Pan Novovyeyski has already said, the roads will certainly be black with foes in the Spring."

"Are we to be the only ones to protect this Commonwealth from thieves, as a dog guards a house?" cried Zagloba. "Other men don't know which end of a musket to fire off, but there's no rest for us."

"No matter! I've nothing to say," replied Pan Michael. "Duty is duty! I have given my word to the Hetman that I will go, and a little sooner or later makes little difference." . . .

Here Pan Michael repeated the argument he had used with Krysia:

"You see, ladies, I have deferred my own happiness for so many years to serve the Commonwealth, that how can I consistently refuse to resign the pleasure I find in your company?"

Nobody made any answer to this, but Bashka approached him with her lips pouting like a fretful child and said:

"I am sorry for Pan Michael."

Volodiyovski laughed merrily.

"God grant you good fortune! Only yesterday you said that you could endure me no more than a wild Tartar."

"A Tartar! What! a Tartar? You will be fighting out there against the Tartars and here we shall be lonely without you."

"Oh, little haiduk, console yourself (forgive my calling you by that name, but it suits you wonderfully well). The Hetman said that my command would not last long. I shall depart in a week or so and must be back in Warsaw for the election. The Hetman himself desires it, and I shall be here even though Rushchyts does not return from the Crimea in May."

"Oh, that is delightful!"

"I will accompany the colonel, I most certainly will," cried Pan Novovyeyski, with a swift glance at Bashka; and she replied:

"There will be many like you. It must be a pleasure to serve under such a commander. Go, go! It will make it pleasanter for Pan Michael."

The young man only sighed and passed his hand across his brow; at last, stretching out his arms as if playing hoodman blind, he said:

"But I must first catch Panna Barbara! I certainly must catch her."

"Allah! Allah!" cried Bashka, retreating.

Meanwhile Krysia approached Pan Michael with a radiant and joyous face."

"But you are not kind to me, Pan Michael; you are kinder to Bashka than to me."

"I, not kind! I, kinder to Bashka!" asked the astonished knight.

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

"My golden——" cried Pan Michael.

But immediately he checked himself and said:

"My dear friend, I told you little because I had lost my head."

CHAPTER IX.

Pan Michael gradually began to make preparations for his departure; however he did not cease giving lessons to Basia whom he liked more and more, nor taking solitary walks with Krysia, seeking solace in her society. Moreover he seemed to find it, for he daily recovered good spirits and in the evenings he would even join Basia and Pan Adam in their games.

The latter became a welcome guest. He came in the morning or at noon and stayed till night; as everybody liked him they were glad to see him, and very soon began to regard him as one of the family. He accompanied the ladies to Warsaw, left their orders at the mercers', and in the evening played with them at hoodman-blind and patience, repeating that he must certainly catch the unattainable Basia before his departure.

But she laughed and always escaped him, though Zagloba said to her: "If he does not finally catch you, someone else will."

It became more and more evident that he himself had determined to catch her. This must have occurred even to the haiduk herself, for she sometimes fell into such deep thought that her locks fell into her eyes. Pan Zagloba however, had reasons of his own for thinking Pan Adam unsuitable. One night when they had all retired he knocked at the little knight's door.

"I am sorry that we must part," he began, "so I came to take a good look at you: God only knows when we shall see each other again."

"I shall certainly come to the election," said Pan Michael, embracing his old friend, "and I will tell you the reason. The Hetman wants to have present as many men as possible who are beloved of the Little Knights so that they may win over the nobles for his candidate; and because—God be thanked—my name has some weight in the brotherhood, he wants me to come without fail. He reckons on you also."

"Indeed! he is trying to catch me with a big net; but I am

not blind and though I am rather large I can crawl through any mesh in it. I will not vote for a Frenchman."

"Why not?"

"Because he would want absolute dominion."

"Condé would have to swear to the pact like anyone else; and he is a great leader, he is famous for warlike deeds."

"With God's help we shall not have to go to France in search of a leader. Pan Sobieski himself is surely not Condé's inferior. Think Michael! the French wear stockings like the Swedes and so of course like them they keep no oaths. Charles Gustavus was willing to take an oath every hour. To them taking an oath or cracking a nut is all one. What is the value of a pact when a man is not honest?"

"But the Commonwealth is in need of defence. Oh, if Prince Yeremy were only alive! We would elect him king unanimously."

"His son is alive, and the same blood."

"But not the same courage. It is pitiful to look at him, for he is more like a lackey than a prince of such noble blood. If only the times were different! But now our first consideration must be the good of the country. Pan Yan says the same thing. I will do as the Hetman does, for I believe in his devotion to the Commonwealth as I do in the Gospels."

"There is time to think about it. It is too bad that you have to go now."

"What will you do?"

"I shall go to Pan Yan. The young fellows worry me at times, but when I stay away for long I feel lonely without them."

"If war follows the election Pan Yan also will take the field. Who knows? you may do so yourself: we may yet campaign in company in Russia! What a lot of good and evil you and I have passed through in those regions!"

"True indeed! our best years were spent there. Sometimes the desire comes over me to visit again all the scenes of our triumphs."

"Then accompany me now. We shall be jolly together. In five months we will return to Ketling. He and Pan Yan will be here then."

"No Michael! this is not the time for me; but I promise that if you will marry some landed lady in Russia I will come and see you settle down."

Pan Michael looked somewhat confused, but immediately answered:

"How should I be thinking of marriage? The best proof to the contrary is that I am returning to active service!"

"That is what troubles me: I used to think that if not one it would be another woman. Michael, trust in God; stay here; where will you find a better chance than this one. Remember that the day will come when you will say: 'Everybody else has a wife and children, but I am alone, like Machek's pear-tree, standing in the field.' And grief and sad longings will take possession of you. If you had married that dear dead one, if she had left children, I should not worry you, I should have something on which to spend my affections and certain hope of solace, but as things are now the time must come when you will look around for a close companion in vain and ask yourself, 'Am I in a strange land?'"

Pan Michael was silently meditating; so Zagloba resumed his discourse while sharply scanning his features:

"In my own heart at first I chose yonder rosy haiduk for you: in the first place she is gold, and not a mere girl; and in the second there have never yet been such fierce fighters as you would give to the world."

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

"That's just it! To-day she would certainly give you the preference, for she is in love with your fame; but when you go and he stays,—I know he will stay, the rascal! because war has not broken out yet,—who can say what may happen?"

Basia is a whirlwind! Let Pan Adam take her. I wish him well, for he is a brave fellow."

"Michael!" cried Zagloba, bringing his hands together, "think what an offspring you would have!"

To this the knight simply replied:

"I knew two brothers Bal whose mother was also a Drohoyovski and they were splendid soldiers!"

"Ah! I was expecting that. Is that the way the wind blows?" cried Zagloba.

Pan Michael was greatly confused; at length he exclaimed, "What's that you say? There is no special direction; but when I was thinking of Basia's courage, which is really quite cavalier-like, the thought of Kryisia naturally arose; she is more womanly. When one is mentioned the other naturally occurs as they are together."

"Well, Well! God give you luck with Kryisia, though as he is dear to me, if I were young I should fall desperately in love with Basia. In war time you would have no need to leave her at home. You could take her to the field and keep her by your side. Such a woman would be good to have in the tent and even when it came to fighting she could use a musket with one hand. And she is good and upright. Oh, my haiduk, my darling little haiduk, they have not understood you here and have treated you ungratefully; but if I were some three score years younger I know what sort of Pani Zagloba I would have in my house."

"I have no fault to find with Basia."

"It is not a question of finding fault with her, but of finding her a husband. But you prefer Kryisia."

"Kryisia is my friend."

"Your friend, not your beloved? That must be because she has a moustache. I am your friend, so is Pan Yan, and so is Ketling. You have no need of a man for a friend, but a woman. Acknowledge it frankly to yourself and do not hoodwink yourself. Michael, guard against a friend of the fair sex, even though that friend has a moustache, for either you will betray her or you yourself will be betrayed. The Devil never sleeps and he is happy to sit between such friends; as witness Adam and Eve, who were friends till that friendship became a bone in Adam's throat."

"Don't do anything to offend Kryisia, I won't allow that!"

"God guard Kryisia! My little haiduk has no superior, but Kryisia is a good girl too. I have nothing at all to say against her, but I say this to you: When you sit beside her your cheeks are as red as though they had been pinched, you twirl your moustache, your hair crisps and you move your feet and stamp like a ring-dove; all of which are signs of desire. Talk to somebody else of friendship; I am too old a bird for that kind of talk."

"So old that you see things that don't exist."

"Would that I were mistaken! Would that it were a question of my haiduk! Good-night Michael! Take the haiduk; the haiduk is the handsomer. Take the haiduk; take the haiduk!"

Zagloba arose and departed.

Pan Michael tossed about the whole night; he could not sleep for disturbing thoughts kept running in his head. Kryisia's face was constantly before him with her long-lashed

eyes and downy lip. Now and then he would fall into a light slumber but the vision remained. When he woke Zagloba's words recurred to his mind and he reflected how rarely that man's judgment was at fault. Sometimes between sleeping and waking Basia's rosy face glowed before his eyes and the image tranquillized him; but Kryisia soon supplanted her. The poor knight now turns to the wall and sees her eyes; then stares into the darkness and still sees them and in them a look of languor and allurements. At such moments those eyes seem to be closing as if saying 'Thy will be done!' Pan Michael sat up in bed and crossed himself. Towards morning the dream entirely took flight and left oppression and a bitter taste behind. He was overcome with shame, and bitterly began to reproach himself because the image of the beloved dead was not before him; that his eyes, heart and soul were full not of her but of the living. He felt that that he had sinned against the memory of Anusia, therefore he shook himself a couple of times, and springing out of bed, though it was still dark, he began to say his morning Paternoster.

When he had finished he put his hand on his brow and said:

"I must go away as soon as possible and at once curtail this friendship, for it may be that Zagloba is right."

He then went down to breakfast with more calm and cheerfulness. After breakfast he fenced with Basia and noticed for the first time how undeniably attractive she was, her dilating nostrils and panting breast made her very alluring. He avoided Kryisia who noticed it and gazed at him in surprise, but he would not meet her glance. It cut him to the heart to do it but he persisted.

After dinner he went out with Basia to the storehouse where Ketling kept another collection of arms. He showed her the various weapons and explained their use. Then they shot at a target with Astrachan bows.

The sport delighted Basia who grew wilder than ever, till Pani Makovyetska had to reprove her. Thus passed the day. On the next Pan Michael accompanied Zagloba to the Danilovich Palace in Warsaw to learn the date of his departure. In the evening he informed the ladies that he would certainly leave in a week's time.

As he said it he tried to use a careless and joyous tone. He did not even glance at Kryisia.

The troubled girl asked various questions, to which he

made polite and friendly replies, but addressed most of his conversation to Basia.

Thinking that this was the result of his advice, Zagloba rubbed his hands with delight; but as nothing could escape his eye he observed Kryisia's sadness.

"She has changed," he thought, "she has visibly changed. Well, that's nothing,—the usual way with fair faces! But Michael has altered his course sooner than I had dared to hope. He is one in a hundred: he always was a tempest in love and a tempest he will remain!"

In reality Zagloba had a kind heart and was sorry for Kryisia.

"I will not say anything to her directly," he thought, "but I will think of some way of consoling her."

So taking advantage of the privilege of age and white hairs, he went to her after supper and began stroking her black, silky hair. She sat quite still, merely raising her gentle eyes to his face in surprise at his tenderness, but feeling grateful.

That night at Pan Michael's door Zagloba poked him in the ribs and said:

"Well! No one can beat the little haiduk?"

"A delightful kid," answered Pan Michael. She will make as much noise in the house as four drummers,—a regular drummer!"

"A drummer! God grant that she may accompany your drum as soon as possible!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night! Wonderful creatures, those fair faces. Have you noticed the change in Kryisia since you have paid a little attention to Basia."

"No . . . I have not!" said the little knight.

"As if she had had a fall."

"Good-night!" repeated the little knight and hastily entered his room.

Zagloba had somewhat overreached himself in his confidence in Pan Michael's fickleness and had generally been maladroit in commenting on the alteration in Kryisia, for the little knight suddenly felt as though somebody had seized him by the throat.

"And this is the way I requite her kindness for comforting me like a sister in my sorrow," he said to himself. "Well! what wrong have I done her?" he exclaimed after a moment's reflection. "What have I done? I have neglected her for

three days, which was rude, to say the least. I have slighted the sweet girl, the darling. Because she tried to heal my wounds I have repaid her with ingratitude . . . If I only knew," he continued, "how to keep this dangerous friendship within bounds and manage to avoid giving offence at the same time! but evidently my wits are too dull for such strategy."

Pan Michael was angry with himself and at the same time he was seized with a great pity, unconsciously he began to regard Kryisia in the light of a beloved and injured being. His anger with himself increased every moment.

"I am a barbarian, a regular barbarian!" he exclaimed.

And Kryisia entirely supplanted Basia in his heart. "Let him who will take that kid, that windmill, that rattletrap!" he exclaimed, "Pan Adam or the Devil, it's all the same to me!"

His anger also rose against Basia, who owed her nature to God; but he never reflected that he might be wronging her by his anger more than Kryisia by his studied indifference.

With a woman's instinct Kryisia at once detected a change in Pan Michael. It was sad and bitter for her when the little knight seemed to avoid her, but she saw at once that something must be settled between them and that their friendship could not continue on its present basis, but must become something far deeper or come entirely to an end.

She was therefore assailed by an alarm that increased at the thought of Pan Michael's approaching departure. So far she was not in love with him. She had no knowledge of love as yet, but her heart and blood were rife for it.

Perhaps also her head was slightly turned. The little knight was encircled with the glory of the first soldier of the Commonwealth. Every knight uttered his name with respect. His sister praised him to the skies; the charm of misfortune was about him; and moreover the maiden, dwelling under the same roof with him, had become accustomed to his graces.

It was the nature of Kryisia to crave for love, and so, when for the last few days Pan Michael had treated her with indifference, her self-love was deeply wounded; but as she had a good heart she determined not to make any sign of anger or annoyance, but to win him with kindness.

This was the more easy for her, as the next day Pan Michael's manner was penitent and not only did he not attempt to avoid her glance, but gazed into her eyes as though

desirous of saying, "Yesterday I sinned against you; to-day I beg your forgiveness." His eyes were so eloquent that under their influence her face flushed and she became more disturbed with a presentiment that something of importance was about to occur. In fact it did occur. In the afternoon Pani Makovyetska went with Basia to visit a relative of the latter, the wife of the vice-chamberlain of Lemburg who was staying in Warsaw; Krysia feigned a headache because she was curious to know what would happen between herself and Pan Michael if left alone.

It is true that Zagloba did not go to visit the vice-chamberlain's wife, but he was in the habit of sleeping for a couple of hours after dinner, as he said that it prevented corpulency and cleared his brain for the evening; so, after chatting for a time he got up to retire. Krysia's heart immediately began to beat with disquiet, but what was her surprise and disappointment to see Pan Michael get up and go out with Zagloba.

"He will soon return," thought Krysia. And taking a small drum, she commenced to embroider on it the crown of a gold cap for Pan Michael to take away with him. Every two or three moments, however, she raised her eyes to the Dantzic clock in the corner, which was ticking rhythmically.

But an hour passed, and another, and still Pan Michael had not returned. Krysia laid the drum on her lap and murmured, crossing her hands upon it, "Before he makes up his mind they may return and we shall not have had any conversation, or Pan Zagloba may wake."

At that moment she felt that they had really something of importance to discuss that might be deferred through Pan Michael's fault.

However at last she heard his step in the next room. "He is wandering about," she said, and again busied herself with her embroidery.

Pan Michael in fact was wandering about: he was walking up and down and did not dare to go in. Meanwhile the sun was reddening and nearing its setting.

"Pan Michael!" Krysia suddenly cried.

He came in and found her busy with her needle. "Did you call?"

"I wanted to know if some stranger was walking about the house. I have been here alone for two hours."

The little knight drew up a chair and sat on the edge.

Some time passed in silence; he moved his feet noisily

under the table and his lips worked nervously. Kryisia suspended her work and raised her eyes to his face; their glances met and both dropped their eyes quickly.

When the little knight again looked up the last rays of the sun were falling on Kryisia's face and glorifying it; her hair glittered like gold in the glow.

"You are going in a couple of days?" she asked in scarcely audible tones.

"It must be."

There was another moment's silence and then Kryisia said: "I have thought for the last day or two that you were angry with me."

"On my life," cries Pan Michael, "I should not merit your regard if I had been, but it was not so."

"What was the matter?" asked Kryisia raising her eyes to his.

"I want to speak frankly, for I think that frankness is always preferable to dissimulation; but I can never tell you how much comfort you have poured into my heart and how grateful I am."

"God grant that it may always be so!" said Kryisia, folding her hands over the drum.

To this Pan Michael answered very sadly:

"God grant it! God grant it! . . . But Pan Zagloba said to me—I am confessing to you as to a priest—Pan Zagloba said that friendship with fair faces is a dangerous thing for it may cover a warmer sentiment, as ashes conceal fire. I thought that perhaps Pan Zagloba might be right. Forgive a simple soldier, another would have solved the question more ably, but my heart bleeds for having grieved you these last few days and life is bitter to me."

As he said this Pan Michael's moustache began to work like a beetle's feelers. Kryisia bowed her head and presently two tears rolled down her cheeks.

"If it will make it easier for you I will hide my sisterly affection."

Two more tears appeared upon her cheeks and then two more.

At the sight of them Pan Michael's heart was completely rent; he sprang to Kryisia's side and seized her hands. The drum rolled from her lap to the middle of the room, but the knight paid no attention to it; he only pressed those warm, soft, velvety hands to his lips, crying:

“Do not weep. For God’s sake, do not weep!”

Pan Michael did not leave off kissing her hands even when Krysia covered her face with them, as people generally do when in trouble, but kissed them the more ardently till his senses became intoxicated with the warmth of her hair and brow as with wine and he lost control of himself.

Then suddenly, without knowing how it happened, his lips were on her brow, kissing it more eagerly still, and then descended to her weeping eyes and the whole world seemed to be going round. The next moment he felt the tender down on her lip and then their mouths pressed strongly together in a long kiss. The silence of the room was only broken by the loud ticking of the clock.

Basia’s step was suddenly heard in the hall with her child-like voice crying:

“Frost! frost! frost!”

The little knight sprang away from Krysia like a scared panther from his prey and at the same instant Basia rushed in like a whirlwind, still repeating her cry of “Frost! frost! frost!”

Suddenly she stumbled against the drum lying in the middle of the floor. She then stopped and looked from the drum at Krysia and the little knight in turn, saying:

“What is this? You both look as if pierced with a dart?”

“Where is Auntie?” Krysia asked striving to speak in quiet, natural tones from her heaving breast.

“Auntie is getting out of the sleigh by degrees,” answered Basia in an equally altered tone.

Her nostrils dilated several times. Once again she stared at Krysia and Pan Michael, who by this time had picked up the drum, and then she suddenly left the salon.

At that moment Pani Makovyetska waddled in; Pan Zagloba came down and they began talking about the wife of the vice-chamberlain of Lemburg.

“I did not know that she was Pan Adam’s godmother,” said Pani Makovyetska; “he must have confided in her, for she tormented Basia with him dreadfully.”

“But what did Basia say?” asked Zagloba.

“Basia said to the vice-chamberlain’s wife: ‘A halter for a dog! He has no moustache and I have no sense and no one can tell which will first get what is wanting.’”

“I knew that her tongue would not fail her, but who knows what she really thinks? Oh, female cunning!”

"Basia always speaks her heart. Besides I have already told you that she has not met with her fate yet. Kryisia has to some extent."

"Auntie!" Kryisia suddenly cried.

Further conversation was here interrupted by the servant who announced that supper was on the table. They all proceeded to the dining-room, but Basia was not there.

"Where is the young lady?" Pani Makovyetska asked the servant.

"The young lady is in the stable. I told her that supper was ready; she said 'All right!' and went to the stable."

"Has anything disagreeable happened to her? She was so gay!" said Pani Makovyetska, turning to Zagloba.

The little knight, whose conscience was uneasy, said:

"I will go and fetch her!"

And he hastened out.

He found her just inside the stable door, sitting on a bundle of hay. She was so deep in thought that she did not notice him as he entered.

"Panna Barbara!" said the little knight, bending over her.

She started as if suddenly roused from sleep and lifted her eyes in which, to his astonishment, Pan Michael saw two tear drops as big as pearls.

"For Heaven's sake! what is the matter? You are weeping."

"I haven't the least idea of doing so," cried Basia springing to her feet, "I haven't the least idea of it! It's from the frost."

She laughed gaily, but it sounded like forced merriment. Then, to distract attention from herself, she pointed to the stall containing the horse given to Pan Michael by the Hetman and cried with animation:

"You say it is impossible to ride that horse? We will see about that!"

And before Pan Michael could stop her she had darted into the stall. The vicious animal began to plunge and rear and set its ears back.

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

But Basia had already begun to stroke the horse on the shoulder, saying: "Let him kill . . . let him kill . . . let him kill . . ."

But the horse turned his steaming nostrils towards her and whinnied as if he delighted in her fondling.

CHAPTER X.

All the nights that Pan Michael had ever spent were as nothing compared with the one that followed that jar with Krysia. For behold, he had betrayed the memory of his dead betrothed and he loved that memory. He had deceived the confidence of the living, abused friendship, contracted certain obligations, and behaved like a man without a conscience. An ordinary soldier would have thought nothing of a kiss like that, or rather, would have twisted his moustache at the remembrance, but Pan Michael, particularly since Anusia's death was as scrupulous as are all men with sorrowful hearts and lacerated souls. What was he to do then? How should he act?

There were only a few days left now before his departure and that would put an end to everything. But was it right to go away without saying a word to Krysia and leave her as he would the first chambermaid from whom he might steal a kiss? Pan Michael's noble heart trembled at the thought. Even now in his mental struggle the thought of Krysia filled him with delight and the memory of that kiss thrilled him with ecstasy. He was enraged with himself, but yet he could not help that delicious feeling. And he blamed himself exclusively.

"I brought Krysia to that," he said bitterly; "I brought her to it and so it would not be right of me to depart without saying a word. And what then? Shall I propose and go away engaged to her?"

Here he saw the form of Anusia standing before him in white robes and white as wax, exactly as she had been laid in her coffin.

The form said: "It is at least my due that you mourn and bewail me. At first you wanted to become a monk, to sorrow for me your whole life long, but now you are taking another before my poor soul had time to reach the gates of Heaven on its flight. Ah! wait, first let me reach Heaven; let me cease looking backwards to the earth. . . ."

And the knight felt that he was forsworn before that radiant spirit whose memory he sought to honor and hold sacred. He was overwhelmed with grief and boundless shame and self-contempt and he longed for death.

"Anusia," he cried as he knelt, "I shall never cease mourning for thee till death; but what must I do now?"

The white form made no reply as it faded away like a white mist; and in its place his imagination conjured up Krysia's bright eyes and downy lip and with them returned the temptations which the poor soldier wanted to shake off like the darts of a Tartar.

Thus his heart was drawn in opposite directions by grief, anguish, and uncertainty. Sometimes he was prompted to go and tell Zagloba everything and take council with that man whose wisdom could smooth all difficulties. Moreover he had foreseen it all, and predicted the consequences of forming a "friendship" with a fair face.

But that very consideration hindered him. He remembered how sternly he had said to Pan Zagloba "I will not have Panna Krysia offended!" And now who had offended her? Who was the one to think "Is it not best to leave her like a chambermaid and go away?"

"Were it not for that dear one above I should not hesitate for a moment," he thought, "I should not be at all troubled: on the contrary my heart would rejoice that I had tasted such delight."

Presently he murmured:

"I would accept it a hundred times over."

Finding however that temptations were thronging in on him he sternly shook them off and began to reason as follows: "That's the end of it. Since I have behaved like a man who does not want friendship but the pleasure of Cupid, I must continue along that road and tell Krysia to-morrow that I wish to marry her."

Here he ceased for a few moments and then proceeded to argue thus: "By that declaration, what happened to-day will be entirely justified, and to-morrow I can allow myself"—But here he suddenly struck his mouth with his hand.

"Whew!" he cried, "It seems that a whole chambul of devils are sitting at my back!"

But still he did not resign his project of declaring himself, but merely thought "If I sin against my dead love I can make reparation with masses and prayers; and this will

also prove that she is always in my memory and that my devotion will never end. If people marvel and laugh at me because two weeks ago in my grief I wanted to take the cowl and now I have declared my love for another, the shame will be mine alone. If I do not declare myself the innocent Krysia will be made to share my shame and guilt."

"I will propose to her to-morrow; it must be so!" he said at last.

His mind then became much more tranquil and after a Pater and an earnest prayer for Anusia he fell asleep.

When he awoke in the morning he again said to himself: "I will propose to-day."

But it was not such a simple matter, for Pan Michael did not want the others to know, but to have a talk with Krysia first and then act accordingly.

In the meantime Pan Adam arrived early and monopolized the whole house.

Krysia moved about as if she had been poisoned; the whole morning she looked pale and troubled, from time to time she would lower her eyes, and her face and neck would crimson, and then again her lips would quiver as if she were ready to burst into tears and then she would have a dreamy expression, or look as if she were going to faint.

The knight found it difficult to approach her, and particularly to stay long by her side. It is true that he might have taken her out for a walk, as it was beautiful weather, and some days earlier he would not have hesitated to do so, but now he did not dare, for he imagined that everybody would immediately suspect his intention,—they would all think that he was about to propose.

Pan Adam came to the rescue. He took Panni Makovyetska aside and had a long talk with her on some subject and then both returned to the room where the little knight was sitting with Pan Zagloba and the two girls and she said:

"You young people might go for a drive two and two in sleighs, for the snow is crisp and bright."

At this Pan Michael quickly bent down his head to Krysia's ear and said: "I beg you to sit with me: I have many things to say to you."

"Very well," answered Krysia.

The two men hastened to the stables, followed by Bashka, and in the space of a couple of Paters the sleighs were driven up to the door. Pan Michael and Krysia took their seats

in one and Pan Adam and the little haiduk in the other, and they started without other drivers.

When they were out of sight Pani Makovyetska turned to Zagloba and said, "Pan Adam has proposed for Bashka."

"What is that?" cried Zagloba in alarm.

"His godmother, the wife of the vice-chamberlain of Lemberg, is coming here to-morrow to have a talk with me; Pan Adam has asked my permission to have a preliminary understanding with Bashka, for he quite understands that unless Bashka is favorable to his suit her visit will be labor in vain."

"That was why you sent them sleighing?"

"Precisely. My husband is very conscientious. More than once he has said to me, 'I will be the guardian of their property, but let them choose their own husbands, if they choose worthy men I will make no opposition even in the face of unequal fortune. Moreover they are of age and capable of forming their own opinions.'"

"But what answer are you thinking of giving to Pan Adam's godmother?"

"My husband will be here in May. I will turn the matter over to him; but this is what I think,—it will be as Bashka wishes."

"Pan Adam is only a boy!"

"But Michael himself says that he is a famous soldier already celebrated for his valorous deeds. He possesses a fair fortune and his godmother has enumerated to me all his connections. You see it is this way: his great-grandfather was the son of Princess Senyut; he was first married to. . . ."

"What do I care about his relations!" cried Zagloba giving vent to his ill-humor; "he is neither kith nor kin to me and I tell you that I have intended the little haiduk for Michael; for if among all the maidens who walk the world on two feet there is a better or more honest one than she, I will henceforth go on all fours like a bear."

"Michael is not thinking of anything of the kind as yet; and even if he were, he is more attracted by Kryisia. Well, God, whose decrees are inscrutable, will decide that."

"But if that smooth-faced boy is sent away with the water-melon, I shall be intoxicated with delight," added Zagloba.

In the meantime the fate of both knights hung in the balance. For some time Pan Michael could not find a word to say; at length he turned to Kryisia and said:

"Don't think me a light-minded man, or anything in the nature of a fop, for that would not agree with my years."

Kryisia made no reply.

"Forgive my conduct of yesterday: my heart was so full of grateful tenderness that I was quite unable to control my feelings. My sweet lady, my adored Kryisia, remember what I am; I am a simple soldier whose whole life has been spent in war. Another man would have begun with a ceremonious speech and then passed on to intimate confidences; but I commenced with familiarity. Remember also that if a fully trained horse will occasionally take the bit in his teeth and run away with a man, how much more will love, whose impetuosity is far greater! Love carried me away simply because you are so dear to me. My darling Kryisia, you are worthy of Castellans and Senators; but if you do not despise a soldier, who, though of humble rank, has served his country not ingloriously, I fall at your feet and kiss them, and ask, Will you accept me? Can you think of me without disdain?"

"Pan Michael! . . ." answered Kryisia, and her hand withdrew from her muff and slid into the knight's.

"Do you agree?" asked Pan Michael.

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

"God bless you! God bless you, Kryisia, darling!" cried the knight smothering her hand with kisses. "No greater happiness could befall me. Only say that you are not offended at yesterday's familiarity so that my mind may be at rest."

"I am not offended," she said.

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

They then kept silence for some moments; the runners hummed over the snow and lumps of it flew from the feet of the horses. At length Pan Michael said, "I wonder that you love me."

"It is more wonderful how you came to love me so quickly," Kryisia replied.

At that Pan Michael's face became very grave and he said: "It may appear strange to you, Kryisia, that I should fall in love with one before getting over my grief for another, I acknowledge to you, as my father confessor, that I have been wild in my day; but all that has changed now. I have not forgotten that dear one and I never shall; I love her

still, and if you knew how my heart grieves within me for her you would weep for me also. . . . ”

Here the little knight was so affected that his voice failed him and perhaps that was why he did not notice that Kryisia did not seem to be very deely impressed with his words.

Silence again fell and was this time broken by the lady.

“I will endeavor to comfort you to the utmost of my power.”

“I came to love you so soon,” said the little knight, “because you began to heal my wounds from the very first day. What was I to you? Nothing at all! But you began immediately because your heart had compassion on an unfortunate man. Ah, I am very grateful to you, very. Those who do not know this perhaps will reproach me for wanting to become a monk in November and then preparing for marriage in December. Pan Zagloba will be the first to make sport of me, as he is glad of any opportunity for that, and particularly as the blame is mine and not yours.”

Kryisia gazed thoughtfully at the sky and at last said:

“Is it absolutely necessary to tell people of our betrothal?”

“What do you mean?”

“It seems that you are going away in a day or two!”

“However much against my will, I must go.”

“I am in mourning for my father. Why should we expose ourselves to inquiring eyes? Let us keep it to ourselves and no one need know of it till Pan Michael returns from Russia. Do you agree?”

“Then I must not say anything to my sister?”

“I will tell her myself after Pan Michael has departed.

“And Pan Zagloba?”

“Pan Zagloba would whet his wit upon me. Better say nothing! Bashka would also tease me, and lately she is so capricious and her moods have never before been so changeable. Better be silent!”

Here Kryisia raised her dark-blue eyes to the sky:

“God above is our witness; let others remain in ignorance.”

“I see that your wisdom is equal to your beauty. I agree. Then God is our witness: so be it! Now lean against me; for modesty permits it now that our compact is made. Fear not! Even if I wanted to repeat yesterday’s behavior I could not as I have to pay attention to the horse.”

Kryisia did as the knight desired and he continued, “When we are alone call me by my name.”

"It sounds so strange," she said, smiling, "I shall never have the courage."

"But I have dared to use yours."

"Because Pan Michael is a knight. Pan Michael is bold. Pan Michael is a soldier!"

"Kryisia, thou art my beloved!"

"Mich—."

But she had not the courage to finish, and buried her face in her muff.

Presently they returned home; they did not talk much on the way, but at the gate the little knight again asked:

"But after yesterday's . . . you know . . . were you very sad?"

"Oh, I was ashamed and miserable, but . . . I had such a wonderful feeling," she added in lower tones.

They assumed an air of indifference so that nobody should guess what had passed between them.

But this precaution was unnecessary because no one paid any attention to them.

It is true that Zagloba and Michael's sister ran out to receive them, but they had eyes only for Bashka and Pan Adam.

Bashka was crimson, but it was impossible to decide whether from cold or emotion, and Pan Adam looked as if poisoned. Moreover he took his leave immediately afterwards. In vain did the lady of the house endeavor to detain him; in vain also did Pan Michael, who was in high spirits, try to induce him to stay to supper: he pleaded duty as an excuse and departed. Pan Michael's sister immediately kissed Basia on the brow without uttering a word; and the maiden fled to her own room and did not come down to supper.

The following day Zagloba advanced to the attack and asked:

"Well, little haiduk, it seems that Pan Adam was struck with a thunderbolt?"

"Well!" she nodded with twinkling eyes.

"Tell me what you said to him."

"The question was direct, for he is a bold man, and so was the answer, for I also am resolute. No!"

"You behaved beautifully! Let me embrace you! What did he say? Did he accept his defeat easily?"

"He wanted to know whether time would not do something for him, but no, no! nothing would be gained by it!"

Here Bashka's nostrils dilated and she began to shake her locks sadly as if meditating.

"Give me your reasons," said Zagloba.

"He also wanted to know them, but in vain; I would not tell them to him nor to any man."

"Perhaps," said Zagloba gazing keenly into her eyes, "you have some concealed love in your heart. Eh?"

"A fig! No love!" she cried. Springing to her feet as if in an attempt to conceal her confusion she began to repeat rapidly:

"I don't want Pan Adam! I don't want Pan Adam! I don't want anybody? Why do you all torment me?"

And suddenly she burst out weeping.

Zagloba did his best to comfort her, but she was touchy and low-spirited all day. "Michael!" said he at dinner, "you are going away and Ketling will soon arrive; he is a perfect Adonis. I don't know how these young ladies will be able to resist him, and I expect that when you return you will find them both hopelessly in love."

"All the better for us!" cried Pan Michael, "we'll throw Panna Bashka in his way."

Bashka looked at him like a wild-cat and said: "Why are you less solicitous about Krysia?"

The little knight was greatly confused at her question and said: "You don't know Ketling's power, but you will find it out."

"But why not Krysia? Besides I am not the one to sing:"

*"How shall a fair maid,
Love's raiders evade?—
Whom turn to for aid?"*

It was now Krysia's turn to be confused, but the little wasp proceeded: "In an extremity I can ask Pan Adam to lend me his shield; but when you are gone I don't know how Krysia will defend herself in the hour of danger."

Pan Michael had now recovered himself and replied somewhat harshly: "Perhaps she will succeed better than you."

"How so?"

"She is not such a madcap and is more sedate and dignified."

Pan Zagloba and the little knight's sister thought that this would rouse the sharp little haiduk to battle at once; but to their great surprise she bowed her head towards her plate and after a pause, said in low tones: "If I have offended you I beg your pardon, and Krysia's."

CHAPTER XI.

As Pan Michael had permission to start whenever he liked, he went to Chenstohovo, to Anusia's grave. After shedding there his last tears he continued his journey, and the more he thought about it the more convinced he was that his secret engagement to Krysia was somewhat precipitate. He felt that in grief and tears there is something sacred that should be left undisturbed and allowed to rise heavenwards like a vapor and fade into limitless space. It is true that other men had married within a month or two of losing their wives; but they had not commenced with the Camedolian monastery, nor had calamity met them on the threshold of bliss after many years of waiting. But even though men of common clay pay no regard to the sacredness of sorrow, is that any reason for following their example?

Pan Michael then took his way to Russia and self-reproach accompanied him. But he was just enough to shoulder all the blame and not to visit any of it upon Krysia; and to his other anxieties was added the question whether Krysia would not in the depths of her soul think ill of him on account of his precipitation.

"Surely she would not act so were she in my place," he said to himself, "being of an exalted nature herself, she doubtless expects the same from others."

The little knight was afraid lest he should look small in her eyes.

But his fears were groundless. Krysia had no real sympathy with Pan Michael's mourning, and when he dwelt on it too much, instead of feeling with him it only roused her jealousy. "Was she, the living woman, not of equal importance with the dead one? Or was she of no more value than to have the dead Anusia as a rival? If Zagloba had known their secret he would have consoled Pan Michael by saying that women are not too charitable to one another."

After Pan Michael had gone Panna Krysia was somewhat dismayed on thinking over what had happened and especially

that she was bolted in. When she came from the Ukraine to Warsaw, where she had never been before, she had imagined that things would be very different. The retinues of bishops and other dignitaries would be gathered at the Diet of Convocation; and a brilliant body of nobles would be assembled from every corner of the Commonwealth. What revels and reviews there would be! what life! and amid the whirl, in the noble throng, would appear some unknown lover, some knight such as exists only in maidens' dreams. This knight would burn with love and haunt her window with a cithera; he would organize gay cavalcades, love, and sigh interminably, wear his lady's colors on his armor, and suffer and overcome great obstacles before finally falling at her feet and gaining responsive love.

But nothing of all this had happened. The rainbow-hued haze of fancy faded away; a knight appeared, it is true, a knight out of the common run and celebrated as the first soldier in the Commonwealth, a famous warrior, but very little, in fact not at all resembling the knight of her dreams. Neither were there any cavalcades, nor serenades, nor jousts, nor parades, nor colors worn on the armor, nor stirring life, nor revels, nor anything of all that allures like a May dream, or a marvellous tale in the twilight that intoxicates the senses like the perfume of flowers, and attracts as a bait does a bird, making the face flush, the heart beat faster, and the body tremble. There was nothing but a modest mansion outside the city; in it Pan Michael; then came growing intimacy, and the last vestiges of the dream vanished like the moon when clouds obscure it. If only Pan Michael had appeared last instead of first he would have been the one looked for. Frequently when she dwelt on the thought of his fame, his worthiness, and his valor, which made him the glory of the Commonwealth and the terror of its foes, Krysia felt that after all she did love him dearly; only it seemed to her that she had missed something, that a certain injustice had been done to her and through his instrumentality, or rather through his precipitancy. . . .

This precipitancy had lodged in the heart of each like a grain of sand; and as greater and greater distance was placed between them this grain began to irritate.

It often happens that people's feelings are wounded with a matter as insignificant as a tiny thorn, which hurt, with the lapse of time, is either healed or aggravated, bringing pain

and bitterness to the deepest love. But in this instance it was still a long way to pain and bitterness. To Pan Michael the thought of Kryisia brought pleasure and solace, and the memory of her followed him as closely as his shadow. He also felt that the farther he went the dearer she would grow to his heart and the more he would sigh and long for her presence. For her the time passed more heavily; for after the little knight's departure, there were no visitors at Ketling's, and day succeeded day in dullness and monotony.

Pani Stolnikova counted the days till the election, awaiting her husband's arrival; she talked only of him; Basia was scheming. Zagloba reproached her, saying that she had first rejected Pan Adam and was now wishing him back. She would in fact have been glad to see even him; but he told himself "There is nothing there for me," . . . and he soon followed Pan Michael. Pan Zagloba also was making preparations to return to Pan Yan's, saying that he was yearning to see his boys again. Still, being lazy, he deferred his departure from day to day, explaining to Bashka that she was the cause of his lingering, that he was in love with her and intended to seek her hand.

Meanwhile he kept Kryisia company when Basia and Pan Michael's sister went to visit the wife of the vice-chamberlain of Lemburg. Kryisia never accompanied them on those visits, for in spite of that lady's estimable qualities she could not endure Kryisia. Frequently also Zagloba himself went to Warsaw, passed his time in pleasant company, and more than once returned intoxicated on the following day; at such times Kryisia was entirely alone and spent the lagging minutes in thoughts partly of Pan Michael, and partly of what might have happened if the latch had not fallen once for all, and frequently speculating as to what that unknown rival of Pan Michael's, the fairy Prince, would have been like.

One day Kryisia was sitting by the window and thoughtfully gazing at the door of the room, which was illumined by a bright ray of the setting sun, when suddenly a sleigh-bell was heard outside. Kryisia thought that Pani Makovyetska and Basia must have returned and did not interrupt her musings, nor even turn her eyes from the door. In a moment it opened, and beyond its frame in the shadow her eyes fell upon a stranger.

For the first few moments it seemed to Kryisia that she was gazing at a picture, or that she had fallen asleep and was dreaming, so wonderful was the vision before her. . . .

The stranger was youthful, dressed in some black foreign costume with a white lace collar falling over his shoulders. Once in her childhood Kryisia had seen Pan Artsishevski, general of the royal artillery, dressed in a similar costume; he had remained in her memory on account of the costume as well as his unusual beauty. Now the youth before her was similarly costumed; but in beauty he far surpassed Pan Artsishevski and every other man who walked the earth. His hair, cut straight across his forehead, fell in wonderful shining curls on each side of his face. His brows were dark and strongly marked on a forehead as white as marble; he had mild and melancholy eyes; a tawny moustache and a pointed beard of the same hue. . It was a matchless head, in which nobility and manliness were united, the head of an angel and a knight at the same time. Kryisia suddenly held her breath as she looked, for she could scarcely believe her own eyes, nor could she make up her mind whether she was gazing on an illusion or a real man. For a moment he stood motionless in astonishment, or politely pretending to be astonished at the sight of Kryisia's loveliness; at length he entered the door and began to sweep the floor with the plumes of his hat. Kryisia arose with trembling limbs, and flushing and paling alternately, she closed her eyes.

Meanwhile his soft and velvety tones were heard:

"I am Ketling of Elgin, the friend and companion-in-arms of Pan Volodiyovski. The servant has already informed me that I have the unspeakable happiness and honor to receive under my roof as guests the sister and relatives of my Pallas; but, noble lady, pardon my confusion, for he told me nothing of what my eyes behold and they cannot endure the brightness of your presence."

Such was the compliment with which the knightly Ketling greeted Kryisia; but she did not repay him in kind, for she could not find a word to say. She only thought when he had ended that he was making another bow because through the silence she heard his plumes again sweeping the floor. She also realized that it was exceedingly necessary for her to make some reply and give back compliment for compliment or she might be put down for a rustic; but her breath failed her, her temples throbbed, and her bosom rose and fell as though she were in great distress. She opened her eyes and saw him standing before her with head slightly bowed and his wonderful face full of admiration and respect. With trembling

hands Krysia took hold of her robe to make a courtesy before the cavalier, when at that moment luckily, shouts of "Ketling! Ketling!" were heard in the hall and the panting Zagloba rushed into the room with outstretched arms.

The two then embraced and meanwhile the young lady tried to recover her self-possession and take a glance or two at the knight. He embraced Zagloba warmly, but with that rare grace in every movement which he had either inherited from his ancestors, or acquired in the brilliant courts of kings and rulers.

"How are you?" cried Zagloba. "I am as delighted to see you in your house as in my own. Let me have a look at you! Why, how thin you have grown! Is it from some love-affair? By God! you have grown thin. Do you know Michael has joined his squadron? Oh, you have done well to come! Michael has no longer any thought of a cloister. His sister is staying here with two young ladies,—maidens like peaches! One is Panna Yezyorkovska and the other Panna Drohovyovska. Oh, for Heaven's sake, Panna Krysia is here! I beg pardon, but may the man lose his eyes who would deny that either of you is beautiful; this cavalier has already seen it for himself in your case."

Ketling bowed a third time and said smiling:

"I left the house a barracks and I find it an Olympus, for I meet a goddess on the threshold."

"Ketling! how are you?" again cried Zagloba, for whom one greeting did not suffice, and he again embraced him.

"No matter, you haven't seen the little haiduk yet. One is a beauty, but the other is indeed honey! How are you Ketling? God give you good health! I must talk to you. It is you! That delights this old fellow. You are glad of your guests. . . Pani Makovyetska came here because it was so hard to find lodgings while the diet was being held; but now it is easier and of course she will go, for it is not well for maidens to lodge under a bachelor's roof lest people look askance and begin to chatter." . . .

"For God's sake! I will never allow that! To Pan Michael, I am a brother rather than a friend; and I may surely receive Pani Makovyetska as a sister under my roof. To you, young lady, I shall turn for assistance, and if necessary will implore it here on my knees."

Thereupon Ketling fell upon his knees before Krysia and, seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips and gazed into her eyes

with a beseeching, joyous, and at the same time, mournful expression. She began to blush again, especially as Zagloba immediately cried:

"He has hardly arrived before he is on his knees to her. By God! I'll tell Pani Makovyetska that I found you so. Sly Ketling! . . . Krysia, note court customs!"

"I am ignorant of court customs," the lady murmured in confusion.

"May I count on your aid?" asked Ketling.

"Rise, sir."

"May I count on your aid? I am Pan Michael's brother. To abandon this house will be doing an injury to him."

"My wishes do not count here," replied Krysia more composedly, "but I cannot help being grateful for yours."

"I thank you!" cried Ketling, pressing her hand to his lips.

"Ah! there is frost outside and Cupid is naked, but if he stayed here he would not freeze," cried Zagloba, "and I see there will be a thaw from sighs alone,—from sighs alone!"

"Give us peace!" cried Krysia.

"Thank God you have not lost your jovial spirits," said Ketling, "for jollity is a sure sign of health."

"And a clear conscience," added Zagloba, "and a clear conscience! 'The sinner showeth a sad countenance,' says the Man of God. I have nothing to trouble me, and so I am joyous. Oh, a hundred Turks! What do I behold! I saw you last in a Polish costume and sabre and leopard-skin cap, and now you have become some kind of an Englishman and are going about on slender legs like a stork."

"Because I have been for some time in Courland where Polish costume is not worn and have just spent two days with the English Minister at Warsaw."

"Then you have just come from Courland?"

"Yes! The relative who adopted me is dead and has left me another estate there."

"Eternal rest to his soul! He was a good Catholic of course?"

"Yes!"

"You have that consolation at least. But you will not cast us off for this estate in Courland?"

"I shall live and die here," Ketling replied with a glance at Krysia which made her immediately lower her long lashes.

"It was quite dark when Pan Makovyetska arrived, and Ketling went out to the gate to receive her. He conducted

the lady into the house with so much ceremony that she might have been a sovereign princess. She wanted to seek other quarters the next day within the city; but she was overruled. The young knight begged, and insisted on his brotherly affection for Pan Michael, and knelt to her until she consented to stay on. She merely stipulated that Pan Zagloba should also remain for some time so that his dignity and years might be a protection to the ladies against scandalmongers. He willingly consented, for he had become fondly attached to the little haiduk and moreover he had begun to form certain plans, for the success of which his presence was absolutely necessary. The young ladies were both glad, and Basia openly took Ketling's part.

"We can't move out to-day anyhow," she said to Pan Michael's sister; "and if not, whether we stay one day or twenty makes no difference."

She, as well as Krysia, was pleased with Ketling, for he pleased all women, and besides, Basia had never seen a foreign cavalier except officers of foreign infantry, men of low rank and common enough. Therefore she hovered about him, shaking her locks, dilating her nostrils and gazing at him with childlike curiosity; so noticeable was it that at last Pani Makovyetska reproved her. But notwithstanding that she did not cease scrutinizing him as if trying to assess his military worth, and at last she asked Pan Zagloba in a whisper:

"Is he a great soldier?"

"Yes! It would be impossible to be more famous. You see, he has had great experience, for, holding fast to the true faith, he served against the English rebels from his fourteenth year. He is also of noble birth as you can easily see from his manners."

"Have you ever seen him under fire?"

"A thousand times! In the thick of the fight he would halt for you without a tremor, pat his horse on the shoulder, and be ready to talk of love."

"Is it customary to talk of love at such a time? Eh?"

"It is usual to do everything by which a contempt for bullets may be shown."

"But is he equally great hand to hand in a duel?"

"Yes, yes! a regular wasp; there's no denying it."

"But could he withstand Pan Michael?"

"Not Pan Michael!"

"Ah!" Basia cried proudly and joyously, "I knew he

couldn't. I thought at once he couldn't." And she began to clap her hands.

"So then, you take Pan Michael's part?" asked Zagloba.

Basia tossed her head and was silent; after a moment a little sigh heaved her breast:

"Well! what of that? I am glad because he is one of us."

"But remember this and lay it carefully to heart, little haiduck," continued Zagloba, "if it is hard to find a better man on the field of battle than Ketling, he is still more dangerous where women are concerned, who fall madly in love with his graces. He is a past-master in love-making, too!"

"Tell that to Kryisia, for my head does not run on love," Basia replied, and turning towards her, she began to call "Kryisia, Kryisia! Come here for only one word."

"I am here," said Panna Drohoyovska.

"Pan Zagloba says that no lady ever looks on Ketling without immediately falling in love with him. I have examined him from every side and somehow nothing has happened; are you touched?"

"Bashka, Bashka!" cried Kryisia imploringly.

"Has he pleased you, eh?"

"Spare us! be a good child. Basia, dear, don't talk nonsense, for Ketling is coming."

In fact Kryisia had scarcely sat down when Ketling approached them and asked:

"Is it permitted to join the company?"

"We beg you most earnestly to do so," Kryisia answered.

"Then may I venture to ask what you were talking about?"

"Love!" cried Basia without hesitation.

"Ketling took a seat beside Kryisia. There was a few moments' silence, for Kryisia, who was generally so self-possessed, had become strangely timid in the presence of the cavalier; therefore he was the first to ask:

"Is it true that the subject of conversation was such a pleasant one?"

"It is," replied Kryisia in a low tone.

"I shall be most delighted to hear your ideas."

"Excuse me, I have neither the courage nor the wit, so I would rather get some new light from you."

"Kryisia is right," exclaimed Zagloba, "let us listen."

"Ask me a question," said Ketling.

And, gazing upwards, he meditated for a little while and then, although no one had questioned him, said, as if to himself:

"To love is a terrible misfortune; for through love, a free man becomes a captive. Just as a bird, pierced by an arrow, falls at the sportsman's feet, so the man transpierced by love has no power to escape from the feet of his adored.

"To love is an affliction; for a man is blinded by it and can see nothing beyond his love. To love is to mourn; for do not the tears flow and deep sighs fill the breast? When a man is in love he thinks neither of dress nor of sport; he prefers to sit with his hands on his knees, sighing mournfully as if he had lost a beloved friend. Love is a disease; for in love the face likewise grows pale, the eyes are sunken, the hands tremble, the fingers become transparent, and the mind dwells on death or goes about like one distracted, with unkempt hair, talks to the moon and takes delight in writing his beloved's name on the sand, and if the wind blows it away, he cries 'misery' . . . and begins to sob."

Here Ketling became silent; he seemed lost in thought. Krysia listened to his words with her whole soul, as if to a song. Her lips were parted, and her glance never left the knight's pale face. Basia's hair fell over her eyes and veiled them so that her thoughts could not be read; but she also sat silent.

Then Zagloba yawned aloud, drew a long breath, stretched out his legs, and said: "Have boots made for dogs out of such love."

"But yet," continued the knight, "if it is sad to love, it is sadder still not to love; for who would take delight in pleasure, glory, riches, perfumes, or jewels without love? . . . Who would not say to the beloved one, 'I choose thee above a kingdom, a sceptre, health, or long life? . . . And since everybody would willingly give life in exchange for love, love is of more value than life.'"

Ketling ended.

The young ladies nestled closely to each other, wondering at his tender speech and these conceptions of love uncommon in Polish cavaliers, till Zagloba, who was napping, woke, and began to blink, glancing first at one and then at another, until having recovered full consciousness, he asked loudly:

"What did you say?"

"We bid you good-night," said Basia.

"Ah, now I know, we were talking about love. What conclusion did we come to?"

"That the lining was better than the cloak."

"There is no use in denying that I was sleepy; but this

loving, weeping, sighing—Ah, I have still another rhyme for it—napping—and at present the most appropriate, for the hour is late. Good-night to everybody, and stop talking about your love. O, my God, my God, while the cat is mewng she will not eat cheese; but her mouth waters until she gets it. In my time I resembled Ketling as one cup resembles another; and I was so madly in love that a ram might have butted my back for an hour before I should have noticed it. But in old age I prefer to rest well, especially when a kind host not only conducts me to bed, but gives me a night-cap to drink.”

“I am at your lordship’s service,” said Ketling.

“Let us retire; let us retire! See how high the moon is already. To-morrow will be fine; it is as bright and clear as daylight. Ketling would talk with you all night about love; but remember, kids, that he is worn with travel.”

“Not travel-worn, for I rested two days in the city. I am only afraid that the ladies are not accustomed to staying up at night.”

“The night would pass quickly if we listened to you,” said Krysia.

“There is no night where the sun shines,” Ketling replied.

Then they separated, for it was very late. The young ladies slept in the same room and usually talked long before going to sleep; but this evening Basia could not understand Krysia, for the one was just as anxious to be silent as the other was to talk, and would only reply in monosyllables. Frequently, too, when Basia, while speaking of Ketling, mimicked and laughed at him a little, Krysia embraced her very affectionately and begged her to stop her jesting.

“He is our host, Basia,” she said, “we are living under his roof; and I noticed that he fell in love with you at first sight.”

“How do you know that?” asked Basia.

“Who does not love you? Everybody loves you, and I—very much.” . . .

She then put her beautiful face against Basia’s, nestled close to her, and kissed her on the eyes.

At length they sought their beds, but Krysia could not sleep for a long time. She was very much disturbed. At times her heart beat so violently that she put both her hands against her soft breast to suppress the throbbing. At times, too, especially when she closed her eyes, she fancied that a face beautiful as a dream, bent over her’s and a low voice whispered to her:

“I would rather possess thee than a kingdom, or a sceptre, or health, or long years, or life itself.”

CHAPTER XII.

A few days later Zagloba wrote a letter to Pan Yan which ended thus:

"If I do not return before the election, do not be surprised. It will not be because of any lack of interest in you; but as the Devil never sleeps, I might be left with something useless in my hand instead of a bird which I do not wish. It would be disastrous if when Michael returns, I should not be able to say to him, 'She is engaged, and the haiduk is free.' Everything is in God's hand; but I think it will not be necessary to persuade Michael, nor to make extensive preparations, and you will come when the engagement is made. In the meantime, bearing Ulysses in mind, it will be necessary for me to be diplomatic and give color to it more than once, which is not easy for me, since all my life I have preferred truth to everything else and been glad to feed upon it. However, for the sake of Michael and the little haiduk I will take this upon myself, for they are pure gold. I embrace you and the boys, pressing you to my heart and commending you to the Most High God."

Having finished writing, Zagloba sprinkled sand upon the paper; struck it with his hand, read it through again, holding it at arm's length; then, he folded it, took the signet from his finger, moistened it, and just as he was beginning to seal his letter, Ketling entered.

"Good-morning to your lordship!"

"Good-morning, good-morning!" said Zagloba. "Thanks to God, it is beautiful weather, and I am just about to send a messenger to Pan Yan."

"Send a greeting from me."

"I have already done so. I said to myself, 'I ought to send a greeting from Ketling. They will both be delighted to receive good news.' It is certain that I have sent a message from you since I have written a whole letter about you and the young ladies."

"How is that?" asked Ketling.

Zagloba placed his hands on his knees, and tapped them with his fingers; then he lowered his head, and gazing from under his brows at Ketling, said: "Ketling it is not necessary to be a prophet to know that flint and steel always produce sparks sooner or later. You are a brilliant spark, and even you could not find fault with the young ladies."

Ketling was decidedly confused.

"I should have to be blind or a barbarian," he said, "if I did not recognize their beauty, and bow down before it."

"But," continued Zagloba, smiling at the sight of Ketling's blushes, "as long as you are not a barbarian, you ought not to have both of them in your mind; only Turks act in that way."

"Do you suppose—?"

"I suppose nothing. I only say this to myself. Ah, traitor! you have talked so much to them about love that Krysia's lips are as pale this third day as if she had taken drugs. It is not astonishing; you are young. When I was young myself, I used to stand out in the cold under the window of a certain black-browed beauty; she was like Krysia, and I remember how I used to sing.—

"The day's work is ended, fair lady, you sleep
As playing the pipes here my vigil I keep,
Fa, la!"

If you wish, I will loan you this song, or compose a new one for you, for I have genius to spare. Have you noticed that Panna Krysia reminds one slightly of Panna Bellevich, except that Panna Bellevich has hair like hemp and no down upon her lip? But there are some men who find superiority in that and think it a rarity. She looks at you with delight. I have just said so to Pan Yan. Don't you think she is like Panna Bellevich before her marriage?"

"At the first moment I did not notice the resemblance, but it may be so. In figure and height she suggests her."

"Now hear what I say. I am telling you family secrets; but, as you are a friend, you ought to know them. Be on your guard not to be ungrateful to Pan Michael, for Pani Makovyetska and I have destined one of those maidens for him."

Here Zagloba glanced quickly and searchingly into Ketling's eyes, while the latter turned pale and asked:

"Which one?"

"Panna Krysia," replied Zagloba, deliberately, and, protruding his lower lip, he began to blink with his sound eye from under his frowning brow. Ketling was silent for such a long while that finally Zagloba asked "What do you say to that?"

Then Ketling answered in altered tones, but emphatically — "You may be sure that I will not indulge my feeling to Michael's detriment."

"Are you sure?"

"I have suffered greatly in my life; I give my knightly word that I will not indulge any sentiment to Michael's hurt."

At this Zagloba held out his arms: "Ketling, indulge any sentiment you like, indulge it, poor fellow, to your heart's content, for I only wanted to try you. It is not Panna Krysia but the little haiduk whom we intend for Michael."

Ketling's face grew radiant with great and deep joy, and, clasping Zagloba in his arms, he held him in a long embrace, and at length asked:

"Is it already certain that they love one another?"

"Who would not love my little haiduk, who indeed?" cried Zagloba.

"Then they are already betrothed?"

"There has been no betrothal, for Michael has hardly got over his mourning yet; but there will be, on my head be it! The maiden, though she is as hard to catch as a weasel, is very fond of him, for with her the sabre is the foundation of everything."

"I have remarked it!" interrupted the beaming Ketling.

"Ah! you have remarked it! Michael is still mourning for the other; but if anyone can please him it is certainly the little haiduk, for she most resembles his dead love, though she is not so striking on account of her youth. Everything is going well. I will go bail that these two weddings will take place at the time of the election."

Ketling again embraced Zagloba without saying a word and laid his handsome face against his red cheeks till the old man gasped and cried:

"Has Panna Krysia already wormed herself into your heart like that?"

"I know not, I know not!" Ketling replied, "but this I know: scarcely had her heavenly sight enchanted my eyes when I told myself that here was the one woman whom my

lacerated heart might yet love; and that same night I banished sleep with my sighs and gave myself up to delicious longings. Thenceforth she absorbed my entire being as a queen dominates a loyal and obedient land. I know not whether this be love or something else."

"But you do know that it is not a cap, nor three yards of cloth for a pair of trunk-hose, nor a saddle-girth, nor leggings, nor an omelette, nor a pitcher of gorzalka. If you are sure of this then ask Kryisia about the rest; or, if you like, I will ask her myself."

"Don't do that," said Ketling with a smile. "If I am to drown, at least let me think I am swimming, if only for a couple of days more."

"I see that in war the Scots are fine fellows, but they are of no use in love. Boldness and impetuosity are needed with women as with foes. '*Veni, vidi, vici*' was my motto."

"If my ardent desires are to be fulfilled the time may come when I may request your friendly offices: although I am naturalized and have noble blood in my veins, yet my name is unknown here and I am not confident that Pani Makovyetska—"

"Pani Makovyetska?" interrupted Zagloba. "Have no fear there. Pani Makovyetska is a regular musical snuff-box; as it is wound up so it plays. I will get at her at once; I must prepare her you know, so that she may not frown on your advances to the lady. As your Scotch method is different to ours I will not of course make an immediate proposal in your name; I will merely say that you are attracted by the lady and it would be well if that flour should be converted into dough. On my word, I will go at once; have no fear, for in any case I have a right to say what I please."

And although Ketling tried to detain him, Zagloba got up and went out.

On the way he met Basia flying along as usual, and said:

"Are you aware that Kryisia has entirely captivated Ketling?"

"He's not the first."

"Aren't you displeased about it?"

"Ketling is a doll! a gay companion, but still a doll! I have knocked my knee against the shaft of the carriage and that's what troubles me."

And Basia bent down and began to rub her knee, still keeping her eyes on Zagloba, who said:

"For Heaven's sake be careful! Where are you off to now?"

"To Krysia."

"What is she doing?"

"She? For some time now she has kept kissing me and rubbing against me like a cat."

"Don't tell that she has made a conquest of Ketling."

"Ah, but how can I help it?"

Zagloba was perfectly well aware that Basia would not be able to help it and forbade her for that reason.

He therefore continued his way in high glee at his own cunning, and Basia burst into Krysia's room like a bomb.

"I have hurt my knee; and Ketling is hopelessly in love with you!" she cried before she had fairly entered. I did not see the shaft sticking out of the coach-house and got such a knock. It made me see stars, but never mind that! Pan Zagloba told me not to say anything to you about Ketling. Did I not tell you at once that it would turn out so? And you talked of giving him to me! Never fear; I know you—My knee is still rather painful. I have not ceded Pan Michael to you but Ketling, oh! Now he is wandering all over the place mooning. Well done, Krysia, well done! Scot, Scot, scat, cat!"

Here Basia began to point her finger at her companion.

"Basia!" cried Krysia.

"Scot, Scot, cot, cot! (puss, puss!)"

"How miserable I am!" suddenly exclaimed Krysia bursting into tears.

Then Basia tried to comfort her, but in vain, for she sobbed as she never had before in all her life.

In fact not one in the house knew how unhappy she really was. She had been feverish for some days now; her cheeks had lost their color, her eyes had become sunken, and her breast heaved with short sighs. Some wonderful change had come over her; she seemed to have failed altogether, and that not by degrees but quite suddenly. It had fallen upon her like a cyclone and carried her away; it had fired her blood like a flame and flashed through her imagination like lightning. She was utterly powerless to resist this feeling that had mastered her so suddenly. Tranquility had deserted her. Her will was like a bird with a broken wing.

Krysia herself did not know whether she loved or hated Ketling, and the question filled her with infinite dread. But

she felt that her heart beat more quickly only through him; on his account she was lost in thought; she was completely absorbed by him,—and did not attempt to steel herself against the influence. It would have been easier for her not to love him than not to think of him; for her eyes were gladdened by his sight, his voice made her deaf to all else, her whole soul was engrossed by him. Even sleep could not banish his haunting presence, for whenever she closed her eyes, his head bent over hers and she heard the whisper—“I would rather possess thee than a kingdom, a sceptre, fame, or wealth.” And the head seemed to come so near to her that, although it was dark, her face was suffused with deep blushes. She was a hot-blooded Russian; strong fires flamed in her breast, such as she had never dreamed of before and which filled her with fear and shame, and a weakness approaching faintness, at once painful and agreeable. Night brought her no peace. A constantly increasing weariness took possession of her, as if produced by incessant toil.

“Kryisia! Kryisia! what is the matter with you?” she said to herself.

But she seemed to be dazed and in constant agitation.

Nothing had happened yet, nothing at all. Up to this time she had not exchanged two words with Ketling alone; but the thought of him had taken entire possession of her; and an instinctive warning voice seemed to be incessantly whispering: “Take care of yourself! Avoid him” . . . And she avoided him. . . .

Kryisia had not given any thought to her engagement with Pan Michael, which was fortunate; she had not paid attention to it because as yet nothing had taken place, and because she took no thought of herself or anyone else except Ketling.

This also she concealed deep in her heart; and the belief that no one suspected what she was experiencing, that no one thought of her in connection with Ketling, brought her no slight comfort. Suddenly Basia’s words revealed to her that it was not so,—that people were observing them, associating them and guessing the state of affairs. And this was the cause of her disquietude, her shame and distress which broke down her will, and made her weep like a little child.

But Basia’s words were only the prelude to further insinuations, significant glances, winks, and nods, to say noth-

ing of those phrases of double-meaning, which she had to bear. These began at dinner.

Pan Michael's sister looked from Krysia to Ketling and from Ketling to Krysia, a thing she had never done before. Pan Zagloba coughed significantly. Sometimes there was a pause in the conversation—nobody knew why, and a deep silence followed, and in one of these lulls Basia, whose hair was in wild disorder, cried out in the hearing of everyone—
"I know something that I won't tell!"

Krysia blushed furiously and then suddenly turned pale, as if in great alarm; Ketling was also embarrassed. Each felt that this remark had reference to them, and, although they studiously avoided talking to each other so as to escape scrutiny, they knew that a sentiment was springing up between them and that an undefined sympathy was gradually being formed. This consciousness at once united and kept them apart, for it destroyed their free intercourse and they could be no longer ordinary friends to each other. Happily no one took any notice of Basia's words. All were interested in Pan Zagloba's preparations to go to the city and return with a large company of knights.

Ketling's cottage was brightly lighted that evening; about a dozen officers were present, and the hospitable host provided music for the especial entertainment of the ladies. Of course, there was no dancing, for it was Lent, and, besides, Ketling was in mourning; but they all heard the music and enjoyed conversation. The ladies were beautifully dressed. Michael's sister appeared in Oriental silk. The little haiduk was attired in various colors, and charmed the eyes of the officers with her rosy cheeks and shiving hair which would occasionally fall across her eyes; her blunt words aroused laughter and her manners, a combination of Cossack daring and artlessness, created astonishment.

Krysia, who was now out of mourning for her father, wore a white robe trimmed with silver. Some of the knights compared her to Juno, others to Diana; but no one twisted his moustache, jingled his spurs, or ogled her; no one looked upon her with sparkling eyes or talked to her about love. Soon, however, she began to notice that those who looked at her with admiration and reverence immediately glanced at Ketling; while others on approaching him seized his hand as if to congratulate him and give him their good wishes; **and that he shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands**

as if in deprecation. Kryisia, who was naturally observant and penetrating, felt sure that they were speaking to him about her, and that they looked upon her as his betrothed; and, as she did not know that Pan Zagloba had whispered something into every man's ear, she was at a loss to understand whence these suppositions arose.

“Is there anything written on my brow?” she asked herself anxiously. She was distressed and ashamed.

And just then words came floating to her on the air as if meant for her but still audible: “Lucky Ketling! . . . He was born with a caul. . . . No wonder, for he is a handsome fellow! . . .” and similar words.

Other courteous cavaliers in an attempt to please her and say something acceptable, talked about Ketling, praising him to the skies, extolling his courage, his kindness, his refined manners, and ancient lineage. And Kryisia had to listen whether she would or not, and her eyes involuntarily wandered to that man of whom people were telling her, and sometimes their eyes met. Then she fell more powerfully under the spell and took an unconscious delight in gazing at him; for what a contrast Ketling was to all these rough soldiers! “A king's son amid his retinue,” thought Kryisia as she looked at that noble, aristocratic head, and those ambitious eyes clouded with a certain inherent sadness, and that brow shaded with exuberant golden curls. She felt her heart sink and yearn as if that was the dearest head on earth to her. Ketling noticed it, and, anxious not to add to her confusion, did not approach while another was at her side. He could not have paid her greater homage or attention if she had been a queen. When he addressed her he bowed his head and drew back one foot as if about to kneel before her; he spoke to her with dignity and never in jest, as he did to Basia for example. In his dealings with Kryisia there was always a tinge of tender melancholy as well as the utmost respect. The consequence was that no other man indulged in too free speech, or jesting too bold, as if they were all satisfied that her birth and dignity were far above that of ordinary women and that she was a lady who could never be treated with too much deference.

Kryisia felt excessively grateful for that. On the whole the evening was a pleasant though anxious one for her. When it was nearly midnight the music ceased, the ladies took leave of the guests and cups began to circulate among the

knights and a more riotous scene ensued in which Pan Zagloba occupied the place of Hetman. Basia went upstairs happy as a bird, for she had greatly enjoyed herself. Before saying her prayers she jested and mimicked various guests: at last she clapped her hands and said:

“How delightful it is that your Ketling came! There will be no lack of soldiers now. Only let us get through Lent and I’ll have dancing enough. What fun we’ll have! And if I don’t turn the house upside down at your betrothal and wedding may the Tartars catch me! What if they really were to! In the first place there would be. . . . Ah, the good Ketling! He will get the musicians for you but I shall get the benefit of them with you. He will bring you marvel after marvel till at last he does this. . . .”

Here Basia suddenly fell on her knees before Kryisia and putting her arm round her waist began to speak, imitating Ketling’s low tones:

“My lady! I love you so that I cannot breathe. . . . I love you on foot and on horseback. I love you fasting and after meals. I love you for eternity, and as the Scotch love. . . . Will you be mine?”

“Basia, I shall be angry!” cried Kryisia.

But instead of getting angry she caught Basia in her arms and kissed her on the eyes as she made a feeble attempt to raise her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Pan Zagloba was perfectly well aware that Pan Michael preferred Krysia to Basia, and for that very reason he determined to get Krysia out of the way. Knowing Pan Michael thoroughly as he did, he was satisfied that, if there was no choice left, he would undoubtedly turn to Basia, with whom the old noble was himself so infatuated that he could not conceive how anyone could prefer anybody else. He also thought that it was impossible to render Pan Michael a greater service than to gain his little haiduk for him, and the thought of that union delighted his heart. He was provoked with Pan Michael and Krysia: certainly he would rather have Pan Michael marry Krysia than no one, but he resolved to do all in his power to induce him to marry the little haiduk.

It was just on account of his knowledge of the little knight's affection for Panna Drohoyovska that he was bent on making her Pani Ketling as soon as possible.

Nevertheless the answer he received from Pan Yan some days later somewhat weakened his resolution. Pan Yan counselled him not to meddle at all in the matter, for he feared that if he did it might easily result in trouble between the old friends. Zagloba was far from desiring that, and so he had certain secret misgivings which he quieted by the following reasoning:

"If Michael and Krysia had been betrothed and I had thrust Ketling in between them like a wedge it would be another matter. Solomon says: 'Don't poke your nose into other people's business,' and he is quite right. But every man has the right to wish. Besides, after all, what have I done? I should like any one to tell me that!"

Here Zagloba rested his hands on his hips, pouted his lips, and glared defiantly round his room as if expecting the walls to answer his challenge; but as they kept silence he continued: "I told Ketling that I intended the little haiduk for Michael. Isn't that permissible? Isn't that quite true? If I want Michael to have any other woman may the gout afflict me!"

The walls by their silence acknowledged the justice of Zagloba's words, so he proceeded: "I told the little haiduk that Ketling had fallen a victim to Kryisia; perhaps that is not true either! Has he not confessed it: has he not sat beside the hearth and sighed till the ashes smothered the room? And I only told others what I saw. Pan Yan is a sharp fellow, but my wit is not something to be thrown to the dogs either! I can decide for myself what may be said and what had better be left unsaid. . . H'm! he writes that I had better not interfere in anything. Well, I can do that too. Hereafter I won't interfere in anything. When I am the third party in company with Kryisia and Ketling I will go out and leave them alone together. Let them manage without me! Bah! I think they can do it. They need no assistance whatever, for now they are so drawn to each other that they have eyes for nothing else and besides Spring is coming when not only the sun, but desire grows warmer. Well! I will let them alone, and we will see what will be the result."

And in fact it was not long before the result was to be seen. For Holy Week all the guests at Ketling's went to Warsaw and lodged at the hotel on Długa street, so as to be near the churches to perform their devotions at their ease, and at the same time to feast their eyes on the holiday life and stir of the city.

There Ketling did the honors as host, for, though a foreigner by birth, he knew the capital thoroughly and had many acquaintances everywhere who helped him to make everything pleasant. He outdid himself in politeness and seemed to anticipate every thought of his fair charges, Kryisia especially. Besides they had all come to be very fond of him. Pani Makovyetska, as Zagloba had prophesied, regarded him and Kryisia with more favor from day to day, and if, so far, she had said nothing about the matter to Kryisia, it was only because he had not yet spoken. The worthy aunt considered it quite natural and right that the cavalier should win the lady, particularly as he was so distinguished and received such proofs of esteem and friendship, not only from ordinary people, but from those of high rank; and won over everybody with his marvellous grace, deportment, dignity, and gentleness in times of peace, as well as valor in war.

"What God wills and my husband decides will happen," said Pan Michael's sister to herself; "but I will not cross this couple."

Thanks to this determination Ketling found himself in Krysia's company more frequently and longer than in his own house. Moreover the whole party always went out together.

Zagloba usually gave his arm to Pan Michael's sister, Ketling took Krysia, and Basia, as the youngest, walked alone, sometimes hastening on far in advance and then again halting in front of shops to gape at merchandise and treasures from beyond the sea that she now saw for the first time. Krysia gradually grew more accustomed to being with Ketling, and now, as she leaned on his arm and listened to his conversation, or gazed at his noble face, her heart no longer beat with alarm, she did not lose her presence of mind, nor was her heart filled with confusion, but with a deep and intoxicated delight. They were constantly alone; they knelt beside each other in church and their voices joined in prayer and praise.

Ketling was fully aware of the state of his own heart. Krysia, either from uncertainty or because she wanted to deceive herself, did not confess even to herself, "I love him;" but they were deeply in love with one another. But in addition to love they had a great friendship for each other. They had not spoken of love as yet; the time passed like a dream and brightness was above them.

Gloomy clouds of self-reproach were soon to darken the horizon for Krysia, but for the present all was peace. By her intimacy with Ketling and growing accustomed to him, and by the love and friendship that had sprung up between them, Krysia's compunctions had been silenced, she no longer indulged disturbing thoughts and the struggle between her blood and will had ceased. They were beside each other; they were happy in each other's society; and Krysia entirely abandoned herself to the blissful present and was reluctant to think that it could ever end or that the illusion was likely to be broken by the one word "Love" from Ketling.

That word was soon spoken. One day when Pan Michael's sister and Basia were visiting a sick relative, Ketling persuaded Krysia and Pan Zagloba to go and see the king's castle, which she had not yet seen, and which was widely famed for its marvels. So they all three went together. All doors had been opened by Ketling's liberality, and Krysia was greeted by the keepers with as profound respect as though she were a queen entering her own residence. Ketling was perfectly familiar with the castle, and himself conducted her through the magnificent halls and chambers. They examined

the theatre and royal baths; they stopped before pictures of the battles and victories gained by Sigismund and Vladislav over the barbarism of the East; they went on the terraces whence an extensive view was to be had. Krysia was amazed with all she saw; he explained everything to her, but now and then he would become silent, and gazing into her dark-blue eyes his glance seemed to say, "What are all these marvels in comparison with thee? What are all these treasures beside thee?"

She comprehended that silent eloquence. He led her to one of the royal apartments and halted before a door concealed in the wall.

"The cathedral may be reached by this door," he said. "There is a long corridor ending in a little gallery near the high altar. From that gallery the king and queen generally hear Mass."

"I know that way very well," exclaimed Zagloba, "for I was intimate with John Casimir. Maria Ludovika was very fond of me, so that they both often invited me to Mass to have the pleasure of my company added to the edification of piety."

"Would you like to go in?" asked Ketling, calling the porter.

"Let us go," Krysia answered.

"Go alone," said Zagloba, "you are young and have good legs; I have already had enough trotting about. Go on; go on; I will stay here with the porter. And even if you say a couple of *Paters* I shan't mind the loss of time, as meanwhile I shall be resting."

They went in.

Ketling took her by the hand and led her through a long corridor. He did not press her hand to his heart, but walked calmly and composedly. At intervals the side windows illumined their figures and then they were again plunged in darkness. His heart beat quicker, for this was the first time they had ever been alone, but his tranquility quieted her too. At last they emerged in the little gallery on the right side of the church near the high altar. They knelt down and began to pray. The church was silent and empty. Two candles were burning before the high altar, but all the lower part of the nave was shrouded in impressive dusk. Only from the rainbow-colored glass of the windows rays fell upon the two beautiful faces absorbed in prayer, and as calm as the faces of cherubim.

Ketling was the first to rise, and not daring to raise his voice above a whisper in the church, he said:

"Look at this velvet-covered rail; it retains the marks where the royal pair rested their heads. The queen sat on that side nearest the altar. Rest where she did!"

"Is it true that her whole life was unhappy?" whispered Krysia as she took the seat.

"I heard her story when still a child, for they tell it in every baronial castle. Perhaps she was unhappy because she could not marry him to whom her heart was given."

Krysia rested her head in the hollow made by that of Maria Ludovika and closed her eyes. A strange feeling of pain took possession of her breast and a kind of chill suddenly struck her from the deserted nave and disturbed the calm in which her spirit had been steeped but a moment ago. Ketling gazed silently at Krysia and a stillness that was actually of the temple succeeded.

Then he slowly bowed at her feet and in quiet tones that were yet full of emotion, said:

"It is no sin to kneel to you in this sacred place; for where should true love seek a benison if not in a church? I love you more than my life; more than any earthly good; I love you with my whole soul and heart, and I confess it to you here before this altar."

Krysia's face became as white as a sheet. Leaning her head against the velvet back of the seat, the unhappy girl did not stir as he continued:

"I kiss your feet and await your reply. Am I to leave this place in a state of heavenly bliss, or unendurable grief that I shall not be able to survive?"

He waited some moments for an answer, but as none came he bowed his head till it almost touched Krysia's feet, and his emotion increased and manifested itself in his trembling and breathless voice:

"In your hands I place my life and happiness. I crave your mercy, for my burden is great."

"Let us pray for the mercy of God!" cried Krysia, suddenly falling upon her knees.

Ketling did not understand her, but did not venture to make any opposition, and therefore knelt beside her in mingled hope and fear. They again began to pray.

At intervals their voices were audible in the empty church, and were echoed back strangely and mournfully.

"God be merciful!" cried Krysia.

"God be merciful!" Ketling repeated.

"Have mercy upon us!"

"Have mercy upon us!"

She continued her prayer in silence; but Ketling saw that her whole body was shaken with weeping. It was long before she could calm herself, and at last, quieting down, she continued kneeling motionlessly. At length she got up and said: "Let us go!"

They again entered the long corridor. Ketling hoped that he would receive some answer on the way, and tried to meet her glance, but in vain. She walked in haste as though anxious to get back as soon as possible to the hall where Zagloba was awaiting them.

But when they were near the door the knight took hold of her skirt.

"Panna Krystina," he cried, "by all that is sacred——"

Then Krysia turned, and seizing his hand so quickly that he had no time to make any resistance, she raised it in an instant to her lips.

"I love you with my whole soul; but I can never be yours!" and before the astonished Ketling could utter a word she added:

"Forget everything that has happened."

In another moment they were both in the hall. The porter was dozing in one armchair and Zagloba in another. Their entrance aroused them. Zagloba opened his one eye and began to blink in half consciousness, but gradually he recovered memory of the time and people.

"Ah, there you are!" he said, pulling himself together. "I was dreaming that the new king was elected and that he was a Pole. Did you go to the little gallery?"

"We did."

"Did the spirit of Maria Ludovika appear to you by any chance?"

"It did!" Krysia replied sombrely.

CHAPTER XIV.

When they left the castle, Ketling felt the need of collecting his thoughts and recovering from his amazement at Krysia's conduct. He bade her and Zagloba farewell at the gate, and they returned to their lodgings. Basia and Pani Stolnikova had already come back from the invalid lady; and Pani Stolnikova greeted Zagloba as follows:

"I have just received a letter from my husband, who is still with Michael at the stanitsa. They are both well and expect to come here very soon. There is a letter for you from Michael, but only a postscript from him to me in my husband's letter. My husband also tells me that the quarrel about one of Basia's estates with the Jubris has ended happily. It is nearly time for the provincial diets to meet. They say that in that part of the country Pan Sobieski's name carries weight, and that the local diet will yield to his wishes. Every single man is getting ready for the election; but our people will all be with the Crown-Marshal. It is now quite warm there and the rains have begun. Our out-buildings in Verkhutka have been burned. One of the servants dropped a light, and as there was a wind—"

"What have you done with Michael's letter to me?" asked Zagloba, interrupting the volume of news which the estimable lady was pouring forth in a single breath.

"Here it is," she answered, handing him the letter. "There was such a wind, and everybody had gone to the fair—"

"How did the letters get here?" asked Zagloba.

"They were taken to Ketling's and brought on by a servant. I said there was such a wind—"

"Would you like to hear this, Madam?"

"Of course, I entreat you."

Breaking the seal, Zagloba began to read to himself in an undertone and presently aloud:

"You shall have this first letter; but God grant that there be none to follow it, for posts are unreliable in this part of the world, and besides I hope to be with you soon. It is pleasant

enough here in the field, but I long to come to you and thoughts and memories are always haunting me, in consequence of which I prefer solitude to company. Our duty is fulfilled, for the hordes are now quiet, with the exception of a few small bands rioting in the fields; but we fell upon them twice with such effect that not one was left to tell of their calamity."

"Oh, they made it hot for them," exclaimed Basia, joyfully. "No calling is better than a soldier's."

Zagloba read on: "Doroshenko's rabble would like to have a smack at us, but they are powerless without the horde. The prisoners admit that a larger chambul will not move from any place, and I believe this because it would have started already, for the grass has now been green a week, which would give pasture for their horses. Patches of snow are still lying in the ravines; but the open steppes are green and there are balmy breezes which make the horses shed their hair, and this is the surest of all signs of spring. I have asked for leave of absence, which may arrive at any moment, and I will start the instant it comes. Pan Adam will take my place in keeping guard, and there is so little to do that Makovyetska and I have been fox-hunting for days at a time,—simply for our own amusement, for the fur is only good up to Spring . . . There are a good many bustards here, and my servant shot a pelican among the reeds. I embrace you with all my heart; I kiss the hands of my sister and Panna Krysia, to whose good graces I commend myself, beseeching God that I may find her unchanged and her consolation as before. Greet Panna Basia for me. Pan Adam has vented the anger excited by his rejection at Mokotov upon the backs of ruffians, but it is very certain that some of it still remains. He has not quite recovered yet. I commit you to God and to His holy favor.

P. S.—I have just bought some fine ermine from some travelling Armenians, which I intend to bring as a present to Panna Krysia, and I have some Turkish sweets for our little haiduk."

"Pan Michael may eat them himself; I'm not a child," said Basia, whose face flamed red, as if with a sudden unpleasantness.

"Then you won't be glad to see him? Are you angry with him?" Zagloba asked.

Basia mumbled a reply in a low voice, for she was really

angry, and began to think how lightly Pan Michael regarded her and also about the bustard and the pelican, which particularly aroused her curiosity.

It was fortunate that Krysia sat with her back to the light and with closed eyes, while the letter was being read, because no one could see her face, which revealed the fact that something unusual had occurred. The scene in the church and Pan Volodiyovski's letter were two terrible shocks for her. Her marvellous dream had vanished; and now she was compelled to face a stern reality as overwhelming as misfortune. She had no command over her thoughts, and undefined, vague feelings were at war in her heart. Pan Michael, together with his letter, his promise of soon coming, and his package of ermine seemed so tiresome that he was almost repellant. Ketling, on the other hand, had never seemed so dear to her. Dear was his face, dear his words, dear his melancholy, dear the very thought of him,—and now she must leave this love and devotion, leave him for whom her heart is longing and her arms outstretched, for the endless pain and sorrow of giving her soul and body to another, who only because he is another has almost become odious to her.

“I cannot do it, I cannot do it!” cried Krysia in her heart.

She began to feel as if she were being bound in irons; yet she had placed the fetters on her own wrists, for she had had the chance of telling Pan Michael that she would be a sister to him and nothing more.

The memory of the kiss haunted her—the kiss received and returned,—and a wave of shame and scorn for herself swept over her. Was she in love with Pan Michael that day? No! There was really no love in her heart then, nothing but a little sympathy, curiosity, and idle fancy, hidden under the mask of sisterly affection. She now knows for the first time the difference between the kiss of love and the kiss of warm impulse which are as far removed as an angel is from a devil. Along with contempt Krysia's anger was rising; finally her pride asserted itself and attacked Pan Michael. He was also in the wrong; why should she have to bear all the punishment, contrition, and disappointment? Why should he not also taste the bitter cup? Has she not the right to say to him when he returns:

“I was mistaken—I mistook pity for love. You were also deceived; now give it up as I do!”

Suddenly her blood runs cold with fear,—fear of that ter-

rible man's vengeance; she is not afraid for herself, but for her beloved upon whom revenge will inevitably fall. In her imagination she sees Ketling arrayed against that king of swordsmen, and then swept down as a flower is cut by a scythe; she sees his blood, his white face, his eyes closed forever, and her mental suffering becomes unendurable. She rises quickly and goes to her room to escape the eyes of everyone and to avoid the conversation regarding Pan Michael and his approaching visit. More and more animosity rises in her heart towards the little knight.

But Remorse and Regret assailed her and would not even leave her during her prayers; they hovered around her bed, when she lay down spent with weariness, and seemed to speak to her.

"Where is he?" asked Regret. "He has not come in yet; he is wandering about in the dark in great despair. Thou wouldst bow down the heavens for him, thou wouldst give him thy life's blood; but thou hast given him a poisoned cup, thou hast stabbed him to the heart."

"Had it not been for thy frivolity," said Remorse, "had it not been for thy desire to bring every man to thy feet, everything might be different; but now despair is all that remains for thee. It is thy sin,—thy great sin. No help can come to thee; nothing will rescue thee now,—nothing remains but shame, and sorrow, and tears."

"How he knelt before thee in the church!" said Regret again. "It is a wonder that thy heart did not break when he looked in thine eyes and begged for pity. How just it was in thee to have mercy upon a stranger, but for the beloved one, the adored one,—what? God comfort him! God bless him!"

"Were it not for thy frivolity that adored one might depart joyous," said Remorse, "thou mightest journey through life arm-in-arm with him, his chosen one, his wife—"

"And remain with him forever," added Regret.

"It is thy fault," said Remorse.

"O Krysia, weep," said Regret.

"That sin cannot be redeemed," said Remorse.

"Act as thou wilt, but try to console him," said Regret.

"Volodiyovski will kill him," immediately said Remorse.

Krysia broke out in a cold perspiration, and sat up in bed. The room, flooded with the white rays of moonlight, looked weird, and terrified her.

"What is that?" thought Krysia. "Oh, it is Basia sleeping.

I see her now, for the moon is shining on her face; but I don't know when she came in, or when she undressed and went to bed. And yet I have not slept a single minute—it is certain my poor brain is wandering.”

So meditating, she again lay down; but Regret and Remorse remained at her bedside, like two goddesses, who in turn became visible and invisible in the silvery moonbeams.

“I shall not sleep at all to-night,” said Krysia.

Then she began to think of Ketling and to suffer more and more.

All at once Basia's pathetic voice broke the stillness of the night.

“Krysia!”

“Aren't you asleep?”

“No, I have just had a dream that a Turk shot Pan Michael with an arrow. O Christ! a false dream! But I am shaking with fear. Let us say the Litany, so that God may turn away evil fortune.”

“God grant that some one may shoot him!” was the wish that flashed through Krysia's brain like lightning. Then she was instantly appalled by her own wickedness, and though she had to exert almost superhuman strength just at that moment to pray for Volodiyovski's return, yet she answered:

“Certainly, Basia.”

They both got out of bed, and, kneeling on their bare knees on the moonlit floor, began to repeat the Litany. Their voices rose and fell in response and one would have thought this room the cell of a cloister, in which two little white nuns were repeating their nocturnal prayers.

CHAPTER XV.

The next morning Kryisia was more tranquil; for in a tangled maze, though very difficult, the path she had selected was the right one. Following this at least she could see whither it led. But first she intended to have an interview with Ketling and talk with him for the last time, so that there should be no misunderstanding. This was a difficult matter, for Ketling did not put in an appearance for some days and stayed away at night.

Kryisia therefore began to rise before dawn and go to the neighboring church of the Dominicans hoping to meet him some morning and have an interview without witnesses.

A few days later in fact she met him at the very door. On seeing her he took off his cap and bowed his head in silence. He stood motionless; his face was drawn with suffering and loss of sleep and his eyes were sunken; his temples were tinged with yellow and his complexion was waxen; he looked like a beautiful fading flower. Kryisia's heart was torn at his appearance; and though it always cost her a great deal to take any decided step, being timid by nature, she was the first to extend her hand and say:

"May God console and grant you forgetfulness!"

Ketling took her hand and carried it to his brow, and then to his lips, pressing it long and fervently; then in accents of the utmost sadness and resignation, he said:

"Thou hast neither consolation nor forgetfulness for me
"

For a moment it required all Kryisia's self-control to prevent her from casting her arms about his neck and crying, "I love thee more than anything on earth, take me!" She felt that if she once began to weep she must do so, and so for some moments she stood before him without saying a word and struggling with her tears. At length she conquered them and began to speak calmly though rapidly, her breath coming quickly:

"Perhaps it may be some relief for you to hear that I shall

never belong to anyone. . . . I am going behind the grille. . . . Never judge harshly of me, for I am wretched enough as it is. Promise me, Sir, that you will never speak of your love for me to anybody . . . that you will never acknowledge it . . . that neither to friend nor relative you will ever reveal what has occurred. This is my last prayer. The day will come when you will know why I ask this and then you will understand. I will say no more now, for my grief is so great that it is impossible . . . promise me,—it will comfort me; if you refuse, it may kill me.”

“I promise, I give you my word,” Ketling replied.

“God reward you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart! Moreover, exhibit a tranquil countenance in the presence of others, so that nobody may have any suspicions. It is time for me to go. I cannot find words to express my sense of your kindness. Henceforward we shall not see each other alone, but only before people. Say also that you are not angry with me, for it is bad enough to suffer without that in addition. You resign me to God and to no one else; remember that.”

Ketling wanted to make some reply; but his grief was so extreme that only inarticulate sounds were heard; then he laid his hand on Krysia’s brow and held it there for a moment in sign of pardon and blessing.

Then they separated; she entered the church and he went down the street so as to avoid any acquaintance at the inn.

Krysia did not return till afternoon and on her arrival she found a distinguished guest, Prince-bishop Olshovski, the Vice-Chancellor. He was paying an unexpected visit to Pan Zagloba, being desirous, as he explained, of making the acquaintance of such a famous noble, “whose military greatness was an example and whose wisdom was the guide of the knights of the entire Commonwealth.”

Zagloba was in reality greatly surprised, but none the less gratified, at having such a great honor done him in the presence of the ladies; he assumed an air of great importance and puffed and perspired, at the same time trying to show Pani Makovyetska that he was quite accustomed to similar visits from the highest dignitaries of the land and held them very cheap. Krysia was presented to the prelate and after respectfully kissing his hand took a seat beside Basia, relieved to find that nobody noticed the marks of recent emotion on her face. . . .

Meanwhile the Vice-Chancellor loaded Zagloba with such facile and bountiful eulogies that he seemed to be constantly drawing fresh supplies of them from his sleeves of violet embroidered with lace.

“Do not think, your lordship,” he said, “that it was mere curiosity that brought me here to make the acquaintance of the first man among the knights; for though admiration is the just due of heroes, yet their own profit also leads men to make pilgrimages to the spot where wisdom and experience dwell together with might.”

“Experience,” Zagloba modestly replied, “in the art of war above all, can only come with years; and it was perhaps on that account that my advice was frequently sought by the late Pan Konyespolski, father of the banneret, and subsequently also Pan Nikolai Pototski, Prince Yeremy Vishnyovyetski, Pan Sapyeha, and Pan Charnyetski; but I have always protested against the title ‘Ulysses’ for modesty’s sake.”

“It is however so inseparably connected with your lordship that men seldom speak your real name but say ‘Our Ulysses’ and everybody immediately knows to whom the speaker refers. Therefore in these fateful and eventful days, when more than one man is bewildered in his mind and knows not whither to turn or whom to support, I said to myself, ‘I will go and listen to solid convictions and have my doubts resolved and my mind illumined with sound advice.’ Your lordship will understand that I desire to speak of the approaching election, in anticipation of which every criticism of the various candidates may be of some benefit, and how much more when it proceeds from the lips of your lordship! I have heard it repeated with acclamation among the knighthood that you are opposed to those foreigners who are attempting to force themselves on our exalted throne. In the veins of the Vasas—as you rightly sated—Yagellon blood flowed,—so that they could not be regarded as foreigners; but,—as you insisted—neither are they familiar with our ancient Polish customs, nor will they respect our liberties, and therefore absolute rule might easily result. I confess to your lordship that these are weighty words; but pardon my inquiring if your lordship really uttered them, or is it merely public rumor, which, in this instance as ever, attributed every important speech to your lordship first of all?”

"These ladies are witnesses," answered Zagloba; "and though this matter is too high for their judgment, let them speak for me, since the inscrutable decrees of Providence have endowed them with the power of speech equally with ourselves."

The Vice-Chancellor turned to Panna Makovyetska and the two young ladies in turn who were nestling together.

A moment's silence followed.

Suddenly Basia's silvery tones were heard:

"I heard nothing at all."

Then she became greatly confused and blushed up to her ears, more especially as Zagloba immediately said:

"Pardon her, Your Highness. She is young and consequently giddy. But with regard to the candidates, I have more than once declared that our Polish liberties will have cause to weep on account of these foreigners."

"I also fear it," said the Vice-Chancellor; "but even if we desired some Pole, blood of our blood and bone of our bone, in what direction could our hearts turn? Your lordship's idea of a Pole is great and is running through the land like a flame; for I hear that in every diet which is not in the bonds of corruption the sole cry to be heard is 'A Pole, a Pole!'"

"Quite right, quite right!" exclaimed Zagloba.

"Still," proceeded the Vice-Chancellor, "it is easier to shout for a Pole than to find a suitable person; and therefore let not your lordship be surprised at my asking who was in your lordship's mind."

"Who was in my mind?" repeated Zagloba somewhat puzzled.

And, pursing his lips, he frowned. It was hard for him to answer on the spur of the moment, for so far not only had he no one in particular in his mind, but the Vice-Chancellor was crediting him with opinions to which he had not the least claim. Moreover he was quite aware of this and saw that the Vice-Chancellor was endeavoring to incline him to some particular side, for which he was quite willing, as it greatly flattered his pride.

"It was only in principle that I insisted that we ought to have a Pole," he answered at last. "But the fact is I have not mentioned any name till now."

"I have heard of the ambitious plans of Prince Boguslav Radzivill" murmured the Vice-Chancellor as if to himself.

"While there is any breath left in my nostrils, or the last drop of blood in my body," cried Zagloba with fierce conviction, "nothing can come of that! I should hate to live with a people so vile as to give to a traitor, a Judas, dominion as his recompense."

"There speaks not only reason, but civic virtue also," again murmured the Vice-Chancellor.

"Aha!" mused Zagloba, "if you are trying to draw me I will draw you."

The Vice-Chancellor then resumed: "O dismantled ship of my country, when wilt thou reach a haven? What tempests, what rocks await thee? Evil indeed will it be if a foreigner takes the tiller, but that is certain to happen unless a better be found among thine own sons."

Here he extended his white hands loaded with sparkling rings, bowed his head, and said resignedly:

"Therefore Condé, or Lorraine, or the Prince of Neuberg! . . . There is no other issue!"

"Impossible! A Pole!" answered Zagloba.

"But who?" asked the other.

Silence followed. Then the Vice-Chancellor again began to speak: "If only there were one on whom all could agree! Where can we find one who would immediately arouse the enthusiasm of the knighthood so that there would be none to oppose his election! There was such a man, the greatest of all, of the most illustrious services, your own glorious friend, O knight, who walked in glory as in sunlight. . . . There was such. . . ."

"Prince Yeremy Vishnyovyetski!" interrupted Zagloba.

"Exactly. But he is in the grave. . . ."

"His son lives," answered Zagloba.

The Vice-Chancellor half closed his eyes and for some moments sat silent; suddenly he raised his head and, gazing at Zagloba, began to say slowly: "I thank the Lord for having inspired me with the idea of seeking your lordship. That is it! the son of the illustrious Yeremy lives,—a prince young and full of promise, to whom the Commonwealth has a debt to pay. Of his immense fortune nothing is left but glory,—that is his only patrimony. Therefore in these days of corruption when the eyes of every man are turned only to gold, who will speak his name, who will be brave enough to propose him as a candidate? You? True! But will many follow your lead? It is not surprising that he who has spent

his life in heroic fight on every field will bravely honor merit with his vote on the election field . . . but will others follow his example?"

Here the Vice-Chancellor sank into momentary meditation and then raised his eyes and continued:

"God is more powerful than all. Who can tell his decrees, who? When I remember how all the knighthood believe and trust in you, my heart is filled with a marvellous hope. Tell me frankly, have you ever regarded anything as impossible?"

"Never!" cried Zagloba with confidence.

"However, it would not be well to put forward that candidature too prominently at first. Let the name be in people's ears, but not so as to sound too dangerous to opponents; let them rather mock and jeer at it, so that they may not place too great obstacles in the path. . . . Perhaps also, God may grant success when the exertions of the various factions have resulted in their mutual destruction. Let your lordship gradually smooth the way for it and continue in your efforts, for this is your candidate, worthy of such wisdom and experience as yours. God prosper your designs."

"Am I to conclude" inquired Zagloba, "that Your Highness has also been thinking of Prince Michael?"

The Vice-Chancellor took from his pocket, a little book with the title "Censura Candidatorum" in large black letters, and said,

"Read, your lordship, let this letter be my answer."

The Vice-Chancellor then began to depart, but Zagloba detained him, saying, "Allow me, Your Highness, to say something more. In the first place, I thank God that the minor seal is in hands that can knead men like wax."

"How so?" asked the Vice-Chancellor in surprise.

"In the second place I will acknowledge in advance to Your Highness that the candidacy of Prince Michael is greatly to my liking, for I knew his father well, and loved and fought under him with my friends; who also will be greatly pleased with the thought of showing the son, the love they bore to the father. Therefore, I heartily embrace this candidature and this very day will speak with the Vice-Chamberlain, Pan Kshytski, a man of high rank and a friend of mine, who has great weight with the nobles, for it is difficult not to love him. We will both do all that we can; and God grant that we shall be able to effect something."

"May the angels watch over you," said the Vice-Chancellor; "If you manage that, we can expect nothing more."

“With Your Highness’s permission, I will say one thing more, namely, that Your Highness should not think thus: ‘I have put my own desires into his mind; I have succeeded in making him imagine that the candidature of Prince Michael was his own initiative. In a word, I have moulded the blockhead like wax.’ Your Highness I will forward the cause of Prince Michael, because I desire it. What then? Because I see it is also Your Highness’s desire. I will forward it for the sake of the Dowager Princess, his mother, for the sake of my own friend. I will forward it on account of my confidence in the head (here Zagloba bowed) from which this Minerva sprang forth, but not because I allowed myself to be persuaded like a child that the initiative is my own; and lastly not because I am an idiot, but because when a wise man says a wise thing to me, I say, precisely.”

Here the old noble bowed again. At first the Vice-Chancellor was considerably discomposed, but seeing the good humor of the old noble and recognizing that the affair was taking the turn he wanted, he laughed heartily, and putting his hands up to his head he cried:

“Ulysses, as I love God, a regular Ulysses! Brother the man who wants to do a good thing must deal differently with different men, but I see that with you it is necessary to go straight to the point. I am delighted with you.”

“As I am with Prince Michael.”

“God give you good health! Aha! I am vanquished, but I am glad of it. You must have eaten many a starling in your youth. . . . And this signet ring—if it will serve as a memento of our conversation—”

“Let that remain where it is,” said Zagloba.

“You will do this for me?”

“By no means. . . . Another time perhaps . . . later . . . After the election. . . .”

The Vice-Chancellor comprehended, and insisted no further; he departed however with a radiant countenance.

Zagloba accompanied him to the gate and muttered as he re-entered:

“Aha! I taught him a lesson. One rogue met another. But it no great honor. Important people will fall over each other in their haste to enter these doors. I am anxious to know what the ladies think of this.”

The ladies were in fact enchanted, and Zagloba rose enormously, particularly in the eyes of Pan Michael’s sister, so that he had scarcely appeared when she rapturously cried:

"You have surpassed Solomon himself in wisdom."

Zagloba was highly gratified.

"Whom have I surpassed, did you say? Wait until you see Hetmen, bishops, and senators here, I shall have to keep out of their way, or hide behind the curtain."

Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Ketling.

"Ketling, are you anxious for advancement?" cried Zagloba, still enchanted with his own importance.

"No," replied the knight sadly, "for I must again leave you, and for a long time."

Zagloba gazed at him with a scrutinizing glance.

"How is it that you are so pulled down?"

"Simply because I have to go away."

"Where to?"

"I have received despatches from Scotland, from old friends of my father and myself. I am absolutely needed there on business affairs, perhaps for a long time. . . . It grieves me to part with you all, but I must go!"

Zagloba advanced to the middle of the room, gazing first at Pan Michael's sister and then at the others and asked:

"Did you hear? In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen."

CHAPTER XVI.

While Zagloba was astonished to learn of Ketling's intended departure, his suspicions were not aroused; it would be natural enough for Charles II to remember the service which the Ketling family had given to the throne in troublous times, and to wish to show some gratitude to their only descendant. Indeed it would be strange if he were indifferent. Moreover, Zagloba had been thoroughly convinced of this by some letters from over the sea, which Ketling had shown him.

In some respects the old noble's plans were jeopardized by this journey, and he was very much alarmed about the future. From what he said in his letter Pan Michael might return at any moment.

"The winds of the steppes have blown away the last remains of his grief," Zagloba said to himself. "He will return more resolved than when he left, and because the deuce is attracting him more forcibly than ever to Krysia, he will be sure to propose to her at once. And then!—then Krysia will consent, for how could she refuse such a cavalier, and who is, moreover, Pani Makovyetska's brother? And now my dearest little haiduk will be left out in the cold."

With the obstinacy usual to old people, Zagloba had determined to unite Basia to the little knight at all costs.

Neither the persuasions of Pan Yan, nor those which he occasionally tried upon himself were of any avail. Sometimes he would vow never to interfere again; but, involuntarily, his thoughts would return with more insistence than ever to the union of this couple. For whole days he pondered upon means of accomplishing it; he schemed; he invented stratagems. And he became so absorbed in the idea, that when he fancied he saw the means, he would suddenly exclaim as though everything were settled:

"May God bless you!"

But now Zagloba thought his hopes were shattered. There was nothing to do but give up his purpose and leave the future to God; for the glimmer of hope, that, before going, Ketling

might take some decided measure with regard to Krysia, soon faded away. Therefore, it was only in sadness and curiosity that he decided to ask the young knight when he intended to take his departure from the Commonwealth, and what he was going to do before leaving.

Having opened the conversation with Ketling, Zagloba said, with a grieved expression:

"An awkward position! Each man knows his own business best, and I will not beg you to stay here; but, at least, I may ask something about your return?" . . .

"How do I know what awaits me in the country to which I am going?" answered Ketling,—“what transactions, and what adventures. . . . I will return some day, if I can. I will remain there permanently, if I must.”

"You will discover that your heart will bring you back to us."

"God grant that my grave will be in no other land but this one, which had given me all that there is to give."

"Ah, you understand! In all other countries a foreigner is only a step-son, but our mother-country opens her arms to you and cherishes you as if you were her own."

"True, perfectly true! Ah! if I only could . . . In the old country everything else may come to me, but happiness, never."

"Ah! I told you, 'Get married; settle down.' You would not listen to me. Now if you were married, even if you did go away, you would be obliged to return, unless you took your wife with you through the raging waves; and I do not suppose you would do that. I gave you my advice, but you wouldn't take it."

Here Zagloba looked searchingly into Ketling's face, as if to draw forth some explanation, but Ketling was silent; he only lowered his head and looked down with a fixed glance.

"What do you say to that?" asked Zagloba, presently.

"I had no opportunity to follow it," replied the young knight, deliberately.

Zagloba walked up and down the room, and stopping in front of Ketling, clasped his hands behind his back, and said:

"But I say you had. If you had not, may I never again gird myself with this belt! Krysia is attached to you!"

"God grant she remains so! though the sea rolls between us."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!"

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Give me peace. I am even now terribly sad because I am obliged to go."

"Ketling, would you like me to question her while there is still time?"

Ketling began to think that if Kryisia was so anxious to keep their love secret, she might possibly be glad to have an opportunity of disavowing it openly, and he therefore replied:

"I assure you that it would be useless; and I am quite positive that I have got over my own feeling; but if you would like a miracle, then ask her."

"Oh, if you have driven her out of your mind," said Zagloba, somewhat bitterly, "in that case there is nothing more to be said. Only, allow me to tell you that I looked on you as a man of the greatest constancy."

Ketling rose and extended his arms excitedly, saying, with a vehemence quite foreign to him:

"What would it avail for me to wish for one of those stars? I cannot fly up and get it and it cannot drop down to me. Alas, for those who sigh for the silver moon!"

Zagloba grew so angry that he began to snort. For a moment he could not speak, and it was only after he had swallowed a little of his anger that he exclaimed in a broken voice:

"My dear Ketling, don't consider me a fool; if you have your reasons, tell them to me, not as to a madman, but as to a man who lives on bread and meat. Suppose I invent a story and tell you that this cap of mine is the moon, and that as I cannot reach it with my hand, I must go about the city with my bald head bare, letting the frost nip my ears like a dog. I will not contend with such reasoning. But this I do know: the maiden lives three rooms away from here; she eats and she drinks; when she walks, she moves on, her nose turns red in the cold, and she becomes warm in the heat; if a mosquito bites her, she feels it; and, with regard to the moon, she may resemble it in the fact that neither has a beard. But, according to your peculiar reasoning, a turnip is an astrologer. As for Kryisia, if you have not tried to get her, if you have not spoken to her, it is your own fault; but, if you have ceased to love the girl and are going away calling her the 'moon,' then I hope your honesty and wit may cherish any weed you happen to find,—and that is all I have to say."

Ketling's reply to this was:

"The food you are giving me is very bitter, and not at all sweet. I go because I must; I do not speak to her, because I have nothing to say to her. You misjudge me cruelly . . . God knows how unjustly!"

"Of course, Ketling, I know that you are an honorable man; but I cannot understand your ways. When I was young, a man would go to a maiden, and, gazing into her eyes, would repeat this rhyme:

'If you love me, together we will live;
If not, for you, no stiver will I give.'

Each one knew what was required of him; and whoever was diffident and not bold of address sent a man of more assurance to speak for him. I offered you my services and I still offer them. I will go to her for you; I will speak for you; I will bring you her answer, and your going, or staying, will depend upon what she says."

"I must go! It must and will be so!"

"But you will return."

"No! Please have the kindness to say nothing more about this. . . . If you want to question her for your own satisfaction, all well and good, but not in my name."

"For God's sake! Have you already spoken to her?"

"Let us talk no more of this. Do me the favor."

"Very well, then let us discuss the weather. . . . May a thunderbolt strike you and your ways! So then, you must go and I must swear."

"I bid you farewell."

"Stay, stay! My anger will leave me in a moment. Wait, Ketling, I have something to say to you. When are you going?"

"Just as soon as I can arrange my affairs. I should like to stay in Courland until the quarter's rent; and if any one will buy it, I will willingly sell the house in which we have all been living."

"Let Makovyetska or Michael buy it. In God's name, I hope you are not going away without seeing Michael."

"I should be glad to bid him adieu, from the bottom of my heart."

"He may come at any moment. He may influence you toward Krysia."

Zagloba paused suddenly, for a certain fear came into his mind.

"I have been serving Michael with good intentions," he said to himself, "but horribly against his will, if trouble is to come between him and Ketling, I had better let Ketling go." Here Zagloba rubbed his hand over his bald head; then he continued aloud:

"All that I have said was in pure good will. I am so much in love with you that I would like to keep you here at all hazards,—and that is the reason I have tempted you with Krysia, as if she were a bit of bacon. But that was only out of good will. . . . What does it matter to an old man like me? . . . Indeed, it was only out of good will . . . nothing more. I am not a match-maker; if I were, I should have made a match for myself. Kiss me, Ketling, and don't get angry."

Ketling embraced Zagloba, who had become very affectionate. The latter ordered a flask of wine, saying:

"We will drink every day to your journey."

Then they drank. After a time, Ketling bade him good-bye, and took his leave. The wine had stimulated Zagloba's fancy; he began to think about Basia, Krysia, Pan Michael, and Ketling; in fancy he married them and blessed them; and finally he wanted to be with the young ladies so much that he exclaimed:

"Well, I will go and see those kids." . . .

The young ladies were sitting in the room across the hall, sewing. After greeting them, Zagloba walked up and down the room dragging one foot after the other somewhat heavily, for wine always made him a little unsteady. Every now and then he glanced at the girls' who were sitting so close to each other that Basia's bright head almost touched Krysia's dark one. Basia's eyes followed him, but Krysia was sewing so industriously that it was almost impossible to follow her flashing needle.

"H'm!" ejaculated Zagloba.

"H'm!" Basia echoed.

"Don't mock me; for I am very angry."

"Oh dear, he'll certainly cut off my head," cried Basia, pretending to be frightened.

"Knock! Knock! I'll cut off your tongue,—that's what I'll do!"

So saying, Zagloba approached the young ladies, and, placing his hands upon his hips, demanded suddenly:

"Do you want Ketling for your husband?"

"Yes, five like him," replied Basia, quickly.

"Be quiet, midge, I'm not speaking to you. I am talking to you, Krysia. Do you want Ketling for your husband?"

Krysia had become somewhat pale, though at first she thought that Zagloba was not addressing her, but Basia; then she raised her beautiful dark blue eyes to the old Noble's face.

"No," she calmly answered.

"Well, no! pray no! short, at least, pray! pray! And why does not your ladyship want him?"

"I don't want anybody."

"Krysia, dear, tell some one else that," cried Basia.

"What has brought the married state into such disfavor with you?" Zagloba questioned further.

"Not disfavor; I have a vocation for the religious life," Krysia replied.

Her voice was so full of sadness and seriousness, that Basia and Zagloba did not for a moment imagine that she was jesting; but they were both so amazed that they gazed at each other, and Krysia.

"Eh?" Zagloba was the first to exclaim.

"I want to take the veil," repeated Krysia gently.

Basia looked at her once and again, then she only threw her arms around her neck, pressed her rosy lips to her cheeks, and exclaimed, "Krysia! I shall weep. Tell me quickly that your words are only empty air; I shall weep, as there is a God in Heaven, I shall."

CHAPTER XVII.

After leaving Zagloba, Ketling went to Pan Michael's sister and informed her that he must stay in the city on account of important business, and perhaps also before finally departing, he would go to Courland for some weeks, and therefore he would be unable to play the host in person any longer in his suburban home. But he begged her to regard that home as her own still and to occupy it with her husband and Pan Michael during the approaching election.

Pani Makovyetska accepted, for otherwise the house would be empty and of no use to any one.

After this conversation, Ketling disappeared, and was not to be seen any more either at the inn or anywhere about Mokotov, when Pani Makovyetska and the young ladies returned to the suburbs. Krysia alone felt his absence, Zagloba was absorbed with the approaching election, while Basia and Pan Michael's sister had taken Krysia's sudden resolve so much to heart, that they could think of nothing else.

Nevertheless, Pani Makovyetska did not even attempt to dissuade Krysia from the step and doubted whether her husband would oppose it, for at that period, people regarded opposition to such a determination in the light of an injury and offence against the Almighty. Only Zagloba, notwithstanding his piety, would have ventured to protest had it been his affair, but as it was not, he sat quietly by, and was secretly satisfied that matters had so arranged themselves to remove Krysia from the path of Pan Michael, and the little haiduk. Zagloba was now assured of the eventful fulfillment of his secret wishes, and was free to devote himself entirely to the affairs of the election; he visited the Nobles who had arrived at the capital, or held long conversations with the Vice-Chancellor, whom he came to like very much, and became his confidant.

After every additional conversation, he returned home more zealously devoted to the Pole, and more hostile than ever to foreigners. In accordance with the advice of the Vice-Chan-

cellor, he had so far concealed this aversion, that not a day passed without his winning over another supporter for the secret candidate, and what often happens in such cases, happened here also. He became so interested that this candidature became the greatest object of his life after the union of Basia and Pan Michael.

Meanwhile the election was rapidly approaching.

Spring had already freed the rivers from ice; the breezes had begun to blow soft and warm; under their breath the trees were covered with buds, and flocks of swallows were forming a chain with their wings to dart at any moment, according to Folklore, from the cold depths of the ocean into the sunny world. People were beginning to arrive for the election, in company with the swallows and other birds of passage.

First came the merchants, who had prospects of a rich harvest of gain in a spot where more than half a million people were about to congregate, including dignitaries with their retinues, nobles, servants, and military. English, Dutch, Germans, Russians, in addition to Tartars, Turks, Armenians, and even Persians, also came, bringing cloth, linen, damask, brocades, furs, jewels, perfumes and sweet meats. Tents arose in the streets and beyond the city, containing every kind of merchandise. Some bazaars were even erected in the suburbs; for it was well known that the inns of the capital could not accommodate one-tenth of the attendants at the election, and that an enormous overplus would encamp beyond the walls, as always happened during the election.

Lastly so many nobles began to arrive that if they had proceeded in such numbers to the border of the Commonwealth no enemy would ever have been able to put his foot across it.

It was rumored that the election would be a stormy one, for the whole country was split up between three principal candidates—Condé, and the Princes of Neuberg, and Lorraine. It was said that each faction would use every endeavor to elect its own candidate even by force if necessary.

Everybody became alarmed; factional bitterness inflamed every heart; civil war was prophesied by some, and these forebodings met with credence, on account of the tremendous following with which the great men had surrounded themselves. These arrived early, so as to allow themselves time for all kinds of machinations. At the times when the Commonwealth was in danger, when the foe was holding a knife to

its throat, neither king nor Hetman could bring more than a miserly handful of men against him; but now, notwithstanding the laws and decrees, the Radzivils alone came with a following of more than twenty thousand troops. The Patsovs had almost as many; the powerful Pototskis were coming with an equal force; other princelings of Poland, Lithuania, and Russia were coming with scarcely inferior forces.

"When wilt thou find a haven, O dismantled ship of my country?" frequently exclaimed the Vice-Chancellor, Olshovski; but his heart also harbored selfish aims. The aristocracy, corrupt to the marrow of their bones, with very few exceptions, had only thought for themselves and for the power of their own houses, and were willing to rouse the whirlwind of civil war at any moment.

The crowd of nobles daily increased; and it was manifest that when the Diet should be over and the election commence, they would outnumber even the greatest force of the dignitaries. But their numbers were unable to bring the ship of the commonwealth successfully into quiet waters, for their minds were steeped in darkness and ignorance and, for the most part, their hearts were corrupt.

The election therefore, gave every sign of being exciting, and no one imagined that it would end tamely, for with the exception of Zagloba, even those who were working for the Pole, had no idea to what a tremendous extent they would be aided by the stupidity of the nobles, and the intrigues of the dignitaries; very few had any hope of electing such a candidate as Prince Michael. But Zagloba was as much at home in that sea as a fish in the water. From the opening of the Diet, he made his home in the city, and was only at Ketling's house when he longed for his little haiduk; but as Basia's joyousness had been dashed by Kryisia's resolution, Zagloba occasionally took her with him to the city, so that she might amuse herself and get some pleasure out of looking at the shops.

Usually, they started in the morning, and it would be frequently late in the evening when Zagloba brought her back. Along the road, and in the city itself, her heart was rejoiced at the sight of the merchandise, the unaccustomed people, the variegated crowds, and the gorgeous soldiery. At such times, her eyes would glow like live coals, and her head turned as if on a swivel; she could not get enough of gazing at it all, and deluged the old man with questions. He was

glad enough to satisfy her, for by that means, he exhibited his knowledge and experience. More than once a gallant company of soldiers surrounded the little carriage in which they were driving; the cavaliers greatly admired Basia's ready wit and determination, and Zagloba never failed to tell them the story of the Tartar she had killed with duck shot, greatly to their surprise and entertainment.

One day they were coming home very late, for they had spent the whole day at the review of the troops of Pan Felix Pototski. It was a bright and warm night and the fields were shrouded in white mist. Zagloba, though always watchful, since in such a gathering of servants and soldiers, highwaymen had to be guarded against, had fallen sound asleep, and the driver was half asleep also; Basia alone was wide awake, for many things were revolving in her brain.

Suddenly she heard the tramp of horses. Plucking Zagloba's sleeve, she said:

"Some mounted men are overtaking us."

"What, how, who?" cried the sleepy Zagloba.

"Some mounted men are coming."

"Oh, they will soon catch us up."

"I can hear the tramp of horses; perhaps it is some one going in the same direction as we are."

"I am sure they are robbers."

The reason Basia was sure, was that she was longing for an adventure of some kind,—outlaws, and the chance to show her courage—so that when Zagloba, muttering to himself, began to reach for his pistols from the seat, which he always carried with him for an emergency, she asked for one too.

"If a robber approaches, I won't miss him. Auntie is a splendid shot with a musket, but she can't see at night time. I could swear that these are robbers, oh, if they would only attack us! Be quick and give me a pistol."

"Very well!" replied Zagloba, "but you must promise not to fire before I do, or till I tell you. If I give you a pistol, you will be likely to shoot the first noble you see without first asking "Who goes there?" and then you will get into trouble with the law."

"I will first ask who is there."

"But if some half-drunken fellows should be passing, and make rude remarks on hearing a woman's voice?"

"I will let fly with my pistol. Isn't that right?"

"Think of taking such a fireeater to the city! I tell you, you are not to shoot without orders."

"I will ask 'who goes there?' in such a rough voice that they won't recognize a woman."

"All right then. Ha, I hear them already approaching. You may make up your mind that they are honest people, otherwise, they would attack us stealthily from the ditch."

However, since the roads really were infested with outlaws and unpleasant experiences were not rare, Zagloba ordered the driver to keep away from the dark trees at the turn of the road, and halt in a place where it was light.

In the meantime, four horsemen had come quite close. Then Basia cried menacingly in a deep voice, that she thought would have done honor to a dragon:

"Who goes there?"

"Why have you come to a standstill?" asked one of the horsemen, who evidently thought that some accident must have happened to the carriage or harness.

On hearing the voice, Basia dropped her pistol and said hurriedly to Zagloba, "For Heaven's sake! that must be uncle."

"What uncle?"

"Makovyetska!"

"Hallo there!" cried Zagloba. "Isn't that Pan Makhovyetska and Pan Volodiyovski?"

"Pan Zagloba!" cried the little knight.

"Michael!"

Here Zagloba hurriedly began to alight, but before he could put one foot to the ground, Pan Michael had jumped from his horse and reached the side of the carriage. Recognizing Basia in the moonlight, he grasped her by both hands and cried:

"I greet you with all my heart. And where is Panna Krysia, and sister. Are they all well?"

"Quite well, thank God." So you have arrived at last, said Basia, with her heart beating violently. "Is uncle there too? Our uncle?"

Then she threw her arms around the neck of Pan Makovyetska, who had reached the carriage, and Zagloba embraced Pan Michael. After many words of greeting, Pan Makovyetska was introduced to Zagloba, and the two travellers handed the reins to their attendants and took their seats in the carriage. Makovyetska and Zagloba occupied the seat of honor and Basia and Pan Michael sat facing them.

Then followed short questions and answers, as is usually

the case when people meet after having been long apart. Pan Makovyetska asked after his wife.

Pan Michael repeated his inquiries about Panna Krysia's health; next he expressed his surprise at Ketling's approaching departure, but he was not allowed to dwell on it long, for he was deluged at once with questions as to his doings in the border Stanitsa; his attacks on the raiders from the Horde, his home-sickness and his pleasure in returning to the old life.

"It seemed as if the Lubni times had come again," said the little knight, "and that we were still with Pan Yan and Kushel and Vyershul; it was only when they brought me a pail of water to wash with and I saw my gray head reflected in it, that I remembered that times had changed, though I said to myself, that as long as the spirit was the same, the man had not changed."

"You have hit on the sensible way of looking at it," cried Zagloba. "It is evident that your wits have recuperated on fresh grass, for lately you have not been so quick. The will is the great thing and there is no better remedy for melancholy."

"Quite true, quite true," added Pan Makovyetska. "There is a legion of well-sweeps in Michael's Stanitsa, for there is a dearth of spring water there. I tell you, sir, that when the soldiers at dawn begin to work them, they make such a noise that your lordship would wake up, and immediately give thanks to God for the mere fact of being alive."

"Oh if I could only be there for one day," cried Basia.

"There is one way to get there," cried Zagloba, "marry the captain of the company."

"Sooner or later Pan Adam will be a captain of horse," suggested the little knight.

"Indeed," cried Basia angrily, "I did not ask you to bring me Pan Adam for a present."

"I brought you something else, some fine sweetmeats, they will be sweet for Panna Basia, while out there, it is bitter for that poor fellow."

"Then you ought to have given the sweets to him. Let him eat them while his moustache is growing."

"Just imagine," said Zagloba to Pan Makovyetska, "that's the way those two always are. Happily, the proverb says, 'Those that quarrel, end with loving.'"

Basia made no reply, but Pan Michael, as if awaiting an answer, gazed upon her little face that was illumined by the

bright moonlight. It looked to him so bewitching, that in spite of himself he thought:

"That little rogue is pretty enough to blind a man."

But some other thought must immediately have occurred to him, for he turned to the driver and cried:

"Whip up the horses, and drive faster?"

They progressed more quickly in consequence, and sat in silence for some time, and only when they were driving more quietly over the sand, was Pan Michael's voice again heard.

"How astonished I am at Ketling's departure! And to think that it should happen before I returned, and before the election!"

"The English care as much about our election as they do about your return," replied Zagloba. "Ketling himself is quite knocked over, because he has to go and leave us."

"Especially Krysia," was on the tip of Basia's tongue, but something prompted her to say nothing about the matter, nor about Krysia's recent determination. With a woman's instinct she understood that both questions would be painful to Pan Michael; she felt a sudden pang, so, notwithstanding her usual impulsiveness, she held her tongue. He will know of Krysia's resolution in any case, she thought, but it would be better not to say a word about it now, since Pan Zagloba has not alluded to the subject.

The little knight again turned to the driver.

"Drive faster."

"We left our horses and baggage at Praga," said Makovyetska to Zagloba, "and hastened on with two attendants, although it was evening, for Michael and I were in a hurry to get here."

"I can believe it," answered Zagloba. "Do you see what crowds have arrived at the capital? Beyond the gates the camps and booths are so thick that it is difficult to get through. There are all sorts of marvelous rumors about the approaching election, which I will tell you at home at the proper time."

Then they began to talk politics. Zagloba was maneuvering to get an idea of Makovyetska's opinions: finally he turned to Pan Michael and bluntly asked:

"Whom are you going to vote for, Michael?"

But instead of answering, Pan Michael started as if suddenly awakened, and said:

"I wonder if they are asleep, and whether we shall see them to-night?"

"They are certainly asleep," answered Basia, in tones that sounded gentle and sleepy, "but they will certainly wake and come down to welcome you and uncle."

"Do you think so?" asked the little knight joyfully.

He looked at Basia again, and again the thought involuntarily arose:

"That little rogue looks bewitching in the moonlight."

They were now close to Ketling's, and soon arrived.

Pani Makovyetska and Krysia were asleep. A few of the servants were still up with supper ready for Basia and Pan Zagloba. The house was immediately in great commotion; Zagloba gave orders to wake up more servants, to have a hot meal prepared for the guests.

Pan Makovyetska wanted to go direct to his wife, but she had heard the unusual noise and, guessing who had arrived, hurried down in a few moments with something thrown over her, with joyful tears in her eyes, and her face full of smiles; then followed greetings, embraces, and broken talk.

Pan Michael kept his eyes on the door through which Basia had disappeared, and at which at any moment he was hoping to see Krysia, his beloved, beaming with joy, and radiant, with sparkling eyes and hair hurriedly coiled up; however, the Dantzig clock in the dining-room ticked on and on, and an hour passed; supper came in, without the appearance of her who was so dear to Pan Michael.

Finally Basia entered alone, looking somewhat serious and troubled; she went to the table, took a light, and turned to Pan Makovyetska:

"Krysia is not very well, and won't come down; but she begs uncle to come to her door, so that she may call out her welcome to him."

Pan Makovyetska immediately arose and went out, followed by Basia.

The little knight was greatly crestfallen and said:

"I surely thought I should have seen Panna Krysia tonight. Is she really ill?"

"Oh, she's well enough," his sister replied, "but she doesn't take any interest in people now."

"What do you say?"

"Then Pan Zagloba did not remember to tell you her resolution?"

"What resolution? Good Heavens!"

"She is going to take the veil."

Pan Michael's eyes began to blink in a dazed manner and a great change came over his face; he sprang to his feet and then sat down again. Great drops of sweat broke out on his face and he wiped them away with his hand. A deep silence fell on the room.

"Michael!" cried his sister. But he gazed in a dazed manner at her and Zagloba in turn, and at last cried out in a dreadful voice:

"Is some curse hanging over me?"

"Put your trust in God," said Zagloba.

CHAPTER XVIII.

That exclamation revealed the little knight's secret to Zagloba and Pani Makovyetska, and when he suddenly jumped up and went out of the room, they gazed at each other with a troubled and vacant air till at length the lady cried:

"For Heaven's sake! go after him, reason with him, and comfort him or perhaps I had better go myself."

"Don't do that, madam," said Zagloba. "He has no need of any of us, but Kryisia, and if he cannot see her, it is better to leave him alone, for unless comfort is timely, it only leads to greater despair."

It is as plain as day to me now, that he was in love with Kryisia. I knew that he was very fond of her, and sought her society, but it never came into my head that he was so far gone."

"He must have come back with the intention of proposing, his happiness depending upon it, when he was struck, as it were, by a thunderbolt."

"Why didn't he say a word about it to anyone, either me, or you, or even Kryisia herself. It might be that then she would not have taken her resolution."

"It's very strange," said Zagloba, "besides, he usually confides in me and relies on my judgment more than his own; and here he has not only not confessed this attachment to me, but once he even assured me that it was nothing but friendship."

"He always was secretive."

"Then you don't know him, even if you are his sister. His heart is on the surface, like the eyes of a flounder. I never knew a franker man, but in this case, I admit that he has acted differently. Are you sure that he hasn't said anything to Kryisia?"

"Almighty God! Kryisia is her own mistress, for my husband in the capacity of guardian has often said to her, "So long as the man is worthy and of good birth, you need not care about what he possesses." If Michael had spoken to her

before he went away, she would have given him an answer one way or the other, and he would have known how he stood."

"That's true, for this has come upon him unexpectedly. Now put your woman's wits to work in the matter."

"What will wits avail here. Council is needed here."

"Let him take Basia."

"But if he prefers the other, as he evidently does,—Oh, if I had only had an inkling of it!"

"It's a pity that you didn't."

"How could I, when it didn't even occur to such a Solomon as yourself."

"How do you know that?"

"You advised Ketling."

"I, God is my witness that I advised no one. I said that he was attracted to her, and that was true; I said that Ketling was a worthy knight, and that was true; but I leave matchmaking for the fair sex. Madame, at the present time, half the Commonwealth is resting on my shoulders. Have I the time to think of anything else but public affairs? Frequently I haven't even time to take a mouthful."

"For God's sake advise us now. On every hand, I hear nothing but that there is no head like yours, sir."

"People are everlastingly talking about this head of mine, they might leave it alone for a time. As for advice there are two alternatives. Either let Michael take Basia, or let Kryisia alter her resolve; a resolve is not a marriage." At this point, Pan Makovyetska entered and his wife immediately told him everything. He was greatly troubled, for he was very fond of Pan Michael and greatly valued him. But he couldn't think of any help for the time being.

"If Kryisia is obstinate," he said, thoughtfully stroking his brow, "what good will arguments do in the matter?"

"Kryisia will be obstinate," said Pani Makovyetska. "She always has been."

"What was Pan Michael thinking about, not to make certain before going away?" asked Pan Makovyetska. "Something even worse might have happened by leaving matters in that condition. Her heart might have been won by another in his absence."

"In that case, she would not immediately have made up her mind to take the veil," answered Pani Makovyetska. "She is free, however."

"True," her husband replied.

But light was already breaking in on Zagloba. If he had known of the secret between Krysia and Pan Michael, everything would have been clear at once, but not knowing it, everything was confused. Still, his sharp wits began to penetrate the clouds and comprehend Krysia's real reasons and intentions, and Pan Michael's despair.

He soon came to feel certain that Ketling was concerned in the affair. His suspicions only lacked certainty, and he therefore determined to approach Michael and question him more closely.

As he was going, he was greatly troubled, for he reflected:

"I am responsible for much of this business. I wanted to drink mead at the wedding of Basia and Michael, but I am by no means certain that I haven't supplied sour beer instead of mead, for now, Michael will go back to his former intention and take the cowl in imitation of Krysia."

Here Zagloba's blood ran cold, so he hurried on and in another moment was in Pan Michael's room.

The little knight was walking up and down like a wild beast in a cage. There were great wrinkles in his forehead and his eyes were glaring; he was in terrible suffering. When he saw Zagloba he suddenly stopped in front of him and placed his hands on his breast crying:

"Tell me, what does it mean?"

"Michael," cried Zagloba; "think how many maidens go into a convent every year; it's quite a common thing. Some do it against their parents' wishes, hoping that the Lord Jesus will approve of them but in this case what matter of surprise is there, when her will is entirely free."

"I won't keep it secret any longer," cried Pan Michael. "She is not free, because she promised me her love and her hand, before I went away."

"I did not know that."

"It is so."

"Perhaps she will listen to reason."

"She does not care for me any longer, she would not see me," cried Pan Michael with great grief. "I traveled day and night to get here, and she won't even see me. What have I done? What sins are weighing me down for God's anger to pursue me, for the wind to blow me about like a withered leaf. One is dead and another is going into a convent. God himself has deprived me of both; it is evident I am under a curse. There is mercy and love for every man, except me."

Pan Zagloba's heart quaked for fear that the little knight in his desperate grief might again blaspheme as he had before, after the death of Anusia, so to turn his thoughts in another direction he cried:

"Michael, don't doubt that there is mercy for you as well, and besides how do you know what the future has in store for you? Perhaps this very same Kryisia will remember your desolation and alter her mind and keep her promise to you. And then, listen to me Michael, is there no consolation in the thought that God, our Merciful Father, Himself, is the one to deprive you of these doves instead of a man who walks the earth, don't you think yourself that that is better."

For answer, the little knight's lips began to quiver and the grinding of his teeth could be heard, as he cried, in a choked and broken voice:

"If it were a living man, ah, if I could find him, I would—there would still be vengeance."

"But as it is, you still have prayer," said Zagloba. "Listen to me, old friend, no one will ever give you better advice. Perhaps God will yet order everything for the best. . . . For myself, as you know, I desired another for you, but at the sight of your pain, I also suffer, and will join you in praying God to console you and soften the hard heart of this lady towards you again."

Then Zagloba began to wipe away his tears which were flowing in true grief and friendship. Could he possibly have done so at that moment, he would have undone all he had already done to get Kryisia out of the way, and he would have been the first to give her to Volodiyovski.

"Listen," he said after a pause, "have another conversation with Kryisia, lay before her your complaint and overwhelming grief, and may God prosper you. She must have a heart of stone if she does not take pity on you, but I have hopes that she will. The veil is worthy of all praise, but not when woven out of injustice to others, say that to her. You will see—ah, Michael, to-day you are in tears and perhaps to-morrow we shall all be drinking at the betrothal. I am certain that is what it will be. The maiden got lonely, and that is how she came to think of the veil. She will go to a cloister sure enough, but one where you will be ringing the bell for a christening. . . It may be also that she is feigning sickness, and is only talking about the veil for a blind. In any case you have not heard of it by her own word of mouth, and please

God, you won't, Ha, ha! I have it! You agreed to keep it secret, and as she did not want to reveal it, she is doing it for a blind. As I live, it is nothing but womanly cunning."

Pan Zagloba's words soothed Pan Michael's lacerated heart like a healing balm. Hope returned to him. His eyes filled with tears. For a long while he was speechless, but when he had overcome his tears, he cast himself into his friend's arms and said:

"Would to God, such friends were not so scarce."

"I would bow down the heavens for you. It will be as I say. Did you ever know me make a false prophecy? Have you no confidence in my experience and wit?"

"You cannot even conceive how dearly I love her. Not that I have forgotten the beloved dead, for I pray for her every day, but my heart has grown as close to this one as a fungus to a tree; she is my love. How my thoughts have been with her, far away there among the grasses, morning, noon, and night! At last, as I had no one to confide in, I began to talk to myself. As I love God, even when pursuing the Horde among the reeds, when galloping at full speed, my thoughts were still with her."

"I believe it. In my young days I wept one of my own eyes out over a certain maiden, and what was left of it became covered with a cataract."

"Do not be surprised! I arrived here quite out of breath and the first word I hear, is 'the cloister,' but I still have faith in persuading her, and in her heart, and her word. What was that you said? 'The veil is a good thing' . . . but made of what?"

"But not when woven out of man's injustice."

"Finely said! Why am I never able to make those maxims? Out there in the Stanitsa it would have been a good diversion. I am in a terrible state of dread, but you have comforted me. I certainly agreed with her to keep the matter secret and therefore it is possible that she talked about the veil only for the sake of keeping up appearances. You advanced another very fine argument, but I can't remember it; you have comforted me greatly."

"Then come with me, or order a flask to be brought here, it will do you good after the journey."

They went and sat drinking until late in the night.

The next day Pan Volodiyovski clothed his body in fine raiment and his countenance in gravity, equipped himself

with all the arguments that occurred to his own mind as well as those which he had got from Pan Zagloba and went into the dining-room where they all had their meals. Krysia was the only one absent, but she was not long in appearing; the little knight had scarcely swallowed two spoonfuls of soup when the rustle of a dress was heard through the open doorway and she entered.

She came so quickly that she almost rushed in. Her cheeks were flaming, her eye-lids lowered, and her face expressed anxiety and alarm. She approached Pan Michael and held out both hands, without raising her eyes, and when he began eagerly to kiss them she became very pale, and did not utter a single word of welcome.

But his heart was filled with love and fear and delight at the sight of her face, which was as delicate and noble as a miraculous image, and at the sight of her graceful and beautiful figure, warmed and refreshed by recent sleep; he was even touched by the alarm and confusion depicted in her countenance.

"Most precious floweret," he thought to himself, "why are you afraid? I would give my very life and blood for you."

But he did not say it aloud, he only pressed his pointed little moustache so long to her hands, that he left red marks.

Basia, who was observing it all, purposely shook her golden locks over her brow, so that her emotion should not be noticed, but no one was paying any attention to her then, they were all watching the other pair, and an embarrassing silence followed.

Pan Michael was the first to break it.

"The night was sorrowful and restless for me," he said, "because I saw everybody but you yesterday, and they told me such dreadful things about you, that tears were closer to me than sleep."

Krysia became still paler at such plain speech and, for a moment, Pan Michael thought she was going to faint, and quickly added:

"We must have a talk over the matter, but I won't say any more just now, in order that you may recover your composure. I am not a savage nor a wolf, and God knows how I wish you well."

"I thank you!" whispered Krysia.

Pan Zagloba, Pan Makovyetski and his wife began to glance at each other as a signal to commence talking as usual,

but it was sometime before anyone succeeded in finding a word to say; finally Zagloba began:

"It is necessary," he said, turning to those present, "to go to the city to-day. The coming election is making it like boiling water, for every man is working for his own candidate. Along the way I will tell you who ought to receive our votes, according to my opinion."

No one made any reply and so Zagloba looked around him like an owl and at last turned to Basia and said:

"And you, little midge, will you go with us?"

"I will go even to Russia," cried Basia sharply.

And silence again followed. The whole meal was occupied with similar futile efforts to start a conversation; at last they all rose. Pan Michael immediately approached Kryisia and said:

"I must speak with you in private."

He gave her his arm and led her into the next room; the same room that had witnessed their first kiss. Seating Kryisia on the divan, he took his place beside her and began to stroke her hair as he would have done with a little child.

"Kryisia," at last he said gently, "have you recovered from your confusion? Can you now answer me with tranquility and composure?"

She had got over her confusion and was moreover touched with his kindness, so she raised her eyes to his for a moment, for the first time since he had returned.

"I can," she replied in a low voice.

"Is it true, that you have vowed to take the veil?"

Kryisia clasped her hands and said in a beseeching voice:

"Do not take it ill of me, do not curse me, it is true."

"Kryisia," said the knight, "is it right for you to trample on the happiness of others, as you are doing; where is your promise? Where is our engagement? I cannot fight against God, but in the first place, I will repeat what Zagloba said to me yesterday, 'that the veil should not be made out of injustice to others.' You will not further God's glory by my loss. God rules over the whole world; all nations are his. His are the sea and the rivers, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, the sun and the stars. Everything is His, whatever enters the mind of man, and more also, but I only have you, precious and dear, you are my happiness, my all. And can you say that the Lord God has need of that treasure. He with such possessions to deprive a poor soldier of his only

treasure! Can you imagine that he will be pleased and not angered. . . Look what you are giving him—yourself. But you belong to me, for you promised yourself to me and are therefore giving Him what belongs to another and what is not your own; you are giving him my tears, my suffering, perhaps my death. Have you any right to do this. Ponder this in your heart and mind, and ask your own conscience. If I had sinned against you; if I had done amiss in love, if I had forgotten you, if I had been guilty of any crime or sin—oh, I will say no more, I will say no more. But I went against the horde to keep watch to fight against raiders, to serve my country with my blood, my health, and my days, and I loved you, day and night I thought about you, and as a hart pants for the water-brooks, as a bird for the air, as a child for its mother, as a parent for its infant, I was pining for you. . . . And for all this, what is my reception, what is my reward I find prepared for me? Kryisia, dearest, my friend, my own love, tell me the reason of all this. Explain it as frankly and truthfully as I have laid before you my reasons and my rights. Keep faith with me, leave me not alone with misery. You yourself gave me the rights, do not banish me.”

The miserable Pan Michael did not understand that there is a right greater and more lasting than any other human right, in accordance with which the heart must and does obey love alone; that the heart which ceases to love, breaks faith, though often as innocently as the lamp goes out of itself when the flame is exhausted. Not comprehending this, Pan Michael put his arms about Kryisia's knees and begged and besought, but her only answer was a flood of tears, because her heart could not respond to his.

“Kryisia,” at last said the knight, rising to his feet, “my happiness may drown in your tears. That is not what I ask, but help.”

“Do not ask for reasons,” cried Kryisia between her sobs. “Do not demand the cause, for it must be so, it cannot be otherwise. I am not worthy of such a man as you, and I never have been. I know that I am doing you an injury, and it grieves me so dreadfully that I do not know what to do. I know it is an injury, oh, Great God, my heart is rent, forgive me and do not leave me in anger. Give me your pardon and not your curses.” Kryisia cast herself on her knees before Pan Michael. “I know that I am wronging you, but I beseech you to pity and forgive me.

Here Krysia's dark head bowed to the floor. Pan Michael quickly raised the poor weeping girl and again placed her on the divan while he began to stride up and down the room in great agitation. Now and then he would stop and press his hands to his temples, and then again resume his walking. At last he came to a standstill before Krysia.

"Give yourself time, and me hope," he said, "remember that I also am not made of stone. Why pitilessly sear me with hot irons. Though I know my fortitude, yet when the skin hisses, I feel the pain. . . Words cannot express how I suffer. . . . God knows they can't. . . . I am a plain man, you know my years have been spent in warfare. . . . Great God, oh dear Jesus, our love began when in this very house. Kshykna! Kshykna! I thought you would be mine forever, and now there is nothing, nothing! What has happened to you, who has changed your heart, Krysu? I have not changed. . . . And are you not aware that this is a harder blow for me than it would be for another, for I have already lost one love? Oh, Jesus, what can I say to her, to touch the heart! . . . A man only suffers, but leave me some hope at least, do not take away everything at once."

Krysia made no reply, but sobs shook her more and more violently; the little knight stood before her, at first repressing his regret and fierce anger. And when he had overcome it, he cried:

"At least, leave me some hope, do you hear me?"

"I cannot, I cannot," Krysia replied.

And Pan Michael went to the window and pressed his head against the cold pane. For a long time, he stood motionless; at last he turned and made a couple of steps towards Krysia, saying in very low tones:

"Farewell, there is nothing for me here. May you get as much happiness from it, as I grief. Let me say this: I forgive you with my lips, and as God will help me, I will also forgive you with my heart. But take some pity upon the suffering of others, and do not make a second promise. No one can say that I carry away happiness with me from this place. Farewell."

Then his lips quivered; he bowed, and went out. In the next room, were Makovyetska with his wife and Zagloba; they immediately arose inquiringly, but he waved them away.

"Nothing is of any use," he cried. "Leave me in peace."

A narrow corridor led out from there to his own room. In

it, by the staircase, leading up to the ladies' apartments, Basia stood in the little knight's way. "May God comfort you and alter Krysia's heart," she exclaimed in a voice choked with tears.

He passed her without even a glance, or a word. Suddenly fierce anger took possession of him, and bitterness seized his heart; he therefore turned and faced the unoffending Basia with a countenance full of savage mockery: "Promise your hand to Ketling," he cried in hoarse tones, "and then cease to love him, trample on his heart, rend it, and then take the veil."

"Pan Michael," cried Basia in amazement.

"Take your pleasure and your fill of kisses, and then turn to repentance. Would to God you were both dead."

This was more than Basia could bear. God alone knew what this wish that she had offered Pan Michael had cost her—the wish that God might alter Krysia's heart; and her reward had been mockery and insult at the very moment when she would have given her heart's blood to comfort the ungrateful man. Consequently her spirit flamed up tempestuously; her cheeks burned, her nostrils dilated, and without a moment's reflection, as she shook her golden locks, she cried:

"Understand, sir, that it is not *I* who am going to take the veil for Ketling."

Then she sprang up the stairs and disappeared.

The knight stood still as if petrified: presently, he began to rub his eyes like a man just waking.

Then he thirsted for blood; he grasped his sabre and cried, with a dreadful voice, "Woe to the traitor."

A few minutes later, Pan Michael was galloping towards Warsaw so rapidly that the wind screamed in his ears, and clods of earth were flying in showers from the hoof of his horse.

CHAPTER XIX.

Pan Makovyetska, with his wife and Zagloba saw Michael ride away, and every heart was anxious; their eyes asked each other, "What has happened? where is he going?"

"Great God," cried Pani Makovyetska, "he will go to the steppes, and I shall never again see him alive."

"Or else to the cloister, like that mad woman," cried Zagloba in despair.

"We must take council here," said Makovyetska. At that moment the door opened and Basia broke into the room like a whirlwind, pale and agitated, with her hands up to both her eyes, and stamping on the floor like a child, she cried:

"Help, help! He has gone to kill Ketling. Let him who believes in God, hasten to stop him, help, help!"

"What is the matter child," cried Zagloba, seizing her hands.

"Help, he will kill Ketling. Blood will be shed by my instrumentality, and Kryisia will die, all through me."

"Speak," cried Zagloba shaking her, "How do you know? why, through you?"

"Because, in my anger, I told him that they are in love with each other, that Kryisia is taking the veil for Ketling's sake. Let whoever believes in God stop them, hasten all of you. Let us all go."

Zagloba was not accustomed to waste time on such occasions, he therefore hastened to the yard and ordered out a carriage immediately.

Pani Makovyetska wanted to question Basia about the exciting intelligence, for, till that moment, she had no suspicion of the love of Kryisia and Ketling; but Basia hurried after Zagloba to see to the horses being harnessed, she helped to lead them out and harness them up, and finally, although she had nothing on her head she mounted to the drivers' box before the entrance where the two men were already waiting ready for the road.

"Come down," cried Zagloba.

"I will not come down."

"Step down, I tell you."

"Take your seats, take your seats, if you don't I will go alone," then she seized the reins, and they, seeing that they might be considerably delayed by her obstinacy, stopped telling her to come down.

Meanwhile the driver came up with a whip, and Pani Makovyetska managed to bring out a hat and shawl to Basia, for it was a cold day. Then they started. Basia stayed on the driver's box. Zagloba wanted to talk to her, and asked her to sit on the front seat, but she was even unwilling to do this, perhaps for fear of a scolding. Zagloba therefore had to address her from a distance and she answered him without turning her head.

"How do you know what you told Michael about those two," he asked.

"I know everything."

"Did Krysia tell you?"

"Krysia did not tell me anything."

"Then perhaps the Scot did."

"No, but I know, and that's the reason he is going to England. He fooled everybody but me."

"It's very strange," said Zagloba.

"It is your doing," said Basia. "You should not have thrown them in each other's way."

"Keep quiet there, and don't meddle in what is not your business," answered Zagloba, who was cut to the quick because he received this reproach in the presence of Makovyetska.

"Therefore," he presently added, "I throw people together! I give advice! Listen to that. I like that idea!"

"Well, do you mean to say you did not?" she retorted.

They proceeded in silence. Nevertheless Zagloba could not get away from the thought that Basia was right, and that to a great extent he was responsible for all that had occurred. This thought greatly disturbed him, and as the carriage jolted horribly, the old gentleman got into an evil mood and gave way to self-reproach.

"It would serve me right," he thought, "for Michael and Ketling to join in cutting off my ears. To induce a man to marry against his will is as bad as making him ride with his face to the horse's tail. That midge is right. If there is a

duel between those two, Ketling's blood will be on my head. A fine business for me to get mixed up in in my old age! To the devil with it, besides, they almost deceived me, for I had scarcely an inkling why Ketling was going across the sea and Krysia to a nunnery, while the little haiduk had discovered everything long ago it seems . . ."

Then Zagloba meditated in silence for a time, and presently muttered:

"A rogue and not a mere maiden. Michael must have borrowed eyes from a crawfish, to choose a doll instead of such a one."

Meanwhile they arrived in the city, and there their troubles really commenced. Not one of them knew where Ketling was staying, nor where Pan Michael was likely to go, to hunt for either was like hunting for one grain in a bushel of poppy seed. They first went to the Grand Hetman's mansion. There they learned that Ketling was to start that morning on a journey across the sea. Pan Michael had been there and made inquiries about the Scot, but where he had afterwards gone, nobody knew. Some imagined that he might have gone to the squadron, encamped in the field outside the city.

Zagloba gave orders to proceed to the camp, but they could not get any information there. They visited every inn on Długa street, they went to Praga, but it was all in vain.

Meanwhile night came on, and since an inn was not to be thought of, they were obliged to turn home. They went back greatly troubled. Basia wept a little, and the pious Makovyetska said a prayer. Zagloba was very anxious. However, he did his best to keep up his own spirits and those of the others.

"Ah," he said, "we are fretting and most likely Michael is already at home."

"Or slain," cried Basia.

And wailingly she repeated, "God cut my tongue out, it was all my fault, my fault, oh God, I shall go mad."

"Silence, there, child, it is not your fault," cried Zagloba, "and be sure of this, if any man is slain, it is not Michael."

"But I am so sorry for Ketling. We have given him a fine repayment for his hospitality, I must say, Oh God! oh God!"

"That is true," added Pan Makovyetska.

"Leave that alone, for God's sake. Ketling is certainly

nearer Prussia than Warsaw, by now. You heard them say he was going away. I also put my hopes in God, that if he and Pan Michael met, they will remember their ancient friendship and the service they have gone through together. They rode stirrup to stirrup; they slept on the same saddle, they scouted in company, the same blood stained the hands of both. Throughout the army their friendship was so notorious that on account of Ketling's beauty he was known as Pan Michael's wife. It is impossible that they should not remember all this, when they meet."

"Still it sometimes happens," said the prudent Makovyetska, "that it is precisely the warmest friendship that turns to the fiercest hatred. It was so in our neighborhood, when Pan Deyma killed Pan Ubysh, with whom he had lived for twenty years on terms of the greatest harmony. I can give you the details of that unhappy affair."

"If my mind were less disturbed, I would listen to you as gladly as I do to her ladyship, your lordship's wife, who is also in the habit of entering into details, in addition to genealogies, but what you have just said about friendship and hatred has impressed my mind; God forbid that it should be so in this case!"

"One was Pan Deyma and the other Pan Ubysh, both worthy men and mess-fellows.

"Oh, oh, oh," cried Zagloba sadly, "we will trust in the mercy of God that it will not be so in this case, but if it should, Ketling will be the one to die."

"A great calamity," exclaimed Makovyetska after a pause "Yes, yes, Deyma and Ubysh, I remember it as well as if it happened to-day, and there was a woman in the case too."

"Everlastingly those women! The first daw that comes will brew such beer that no one who drinks it will be able to digest it," muttered Zagloba.

"Don't say anything against Krysia, sir," cried Basia sharply.

"Oh, if Pan Michael had only fallen in love with you none of this would have happened," said Zagloba.

In this kind of talk they reached the house. The sight of lights in the windows made their hearts beat faster, for they thought Pan Michael perhaps had returned.

But Pani Makovyetska was the only one to receive them, and she was deeply distressed and alarmed. When she heard that their search had not been of any effect, she wept bitterly and began to lament that she would never see her brother

again. Basia immediately joined her in her grief. Zagloba also was unable to repress his sorrow.

"I will go again to-morrow before dawn by myself," he said. "I may succeed in getting some news."

"We can make a better search together," suggested Makovyetska.

"No, let your lordship stay with the ladies. If Ketling is alive, I will bring you word."

"For Heaven's sake! we are living in that man's house," cried Makovyetska. "To-morrow we must find an inn by some means of other, or even pitch tents in the open. Anything rather than live longer here."

"Wait for word from me, or we shall miss each other. If Ketling is slain . . ."

"Don't speak so loud, for Heaven's sake," said Pani Makovyetska, "or the servants will hear, and tell Krysia, and she is almost dead as it is."

"I will go to her," said Basia.

And she darted up stairs. Those who were left below were anxious and alarmed. Not a soul in the whole house slept. The thought that Ketling might already be a corpse filled them with horror. Moreover, the night became dark and stifling; thunder began to mutter in the sky, and presently the darkness began to be pierced by the lightning every instant. About midnight, the first spring tempest burst. It woke even the servants.

Krysia and Basia left their chambers and went to the dining-room. There they all sat in silent prayer, or repeated in chorus at each clap of thunder, "And the Word was made Flesh," according to custom.

Amid the roar of the tempest was sometimes heard a sound, like the tramp of a horse, and on such occasions, the hair would stand upright in fright on the heads of Basia and Pani Makovyetska and the two old men, for at any moment they expected the door to open and Pan Michael come in, bathed with Ketling's blood.

For the first time in his life, the usually agreeable Michael lay as heavy as a stone on people's hearts and filled them with terror at the very thought of him.

Nevertheless, the night passed without bringing any news of the little knight. At dawn, when the tempest had somewhat lessened Zagloba again took his departure for the city.

The day passed and brought constantly increasing fear. Basia sat all day till the evening in the window facing the gate watching the road along which Zagloba would return.

In the meanwhile, the servants at the orders of Pan Makovyetska, were slowly packing the trunks for moving. Kryisia was engaged in looking after this, as in that way she could keep apart from the Makovyetskias and Pan Zagloba.

For, although Pani Makovyetska did not say a single word in her presence, or mention his name, yet, that very silence assured Kryisia that Pan Michael's love for her, their secret engagement, and her late retraction had been found out, and therefore, it was difficult to admit that these, who were closest to Pan Michael, were not angry and hurt. Poor Kryisia felt that it must be so, that it certainly was so, that these hearts, hitherto so affectionate, had turned away from her, and so she wanted to suffer alone.

Towards evening the trunks were all packed, so that it would be possible to move that day, but Pani Makovyetska was still awaiting news from Zagloba. Supper was brought in, but no one wanted any, and the evening crawled on, heavily and unendurably, and as silently as if they were all engaged in listening to the ticking of the clock.

"Let us go into the salon," at last said Pani Makovyetska, "it's impossible to stay here any longer."

They went in and sat down, but before anyone had time to speak a word the dogs were heard under the window.

"Some one is coming," cried Basia.

"The dogs are barking as if the people belong to the house," observed Pani Makovyetska.

"Silence," cried her husband; "there is a rumble of wheels."

"Silence," repeated Basia, "yes, it is coming nearer every moment. It is Pan Zagloba."

Basia and Pani Makovyetska jumped up and ran out. Pani Makovyetska's heart began to beat loudly, but she stayed with Kryisia, so that her haste might not indicate that Pan Zagloba was bringing exceedingly important news.

In the meantime wheels were heard immediately under the window, and then they suddenly stopped. Voices were heard in the hall, and in a few moments, Basia rushed into the room like a whirlwind, with a face as white as if she had seen a ghost.

"Basia, what is it? who is it?" cried Pani Makovyetska in amazement.

But before Basia could get her breath to reply, the door opened and gave entrance first to Pan Makovyetska, and then Pan Michael, and lastly, Ketling.

CHAPTER XX.

Ketling was so altered that he was scarcely able to make a low bow to the ladies. He then stood motionless, holding his hat to his breast with his eyes closed like a miracle-working image. Pan Michael first embraced his sister and then approached Krysia.

Her face was as white as a sheet, which made the faint down on her lip look darker than usual; her breast rose and fell quickly. But Pan Michael gently took her hand and pressed it to his lips, then his lips worked as if he were meditating, and at last he spoke with great sadness, but tranquility:

"My gracious lady, or rather, my dearest Krysia, do not be afraid to listen to me, because I am not a Scythian, or a Tartar, or a wild man, but a friend, who, though himself not very happy, is yet desirous of your happiness. I have discovered that you and Ketling are in love with each other; Panna Basia in righteous anger, cast it in my teeth. I do not deny that I flew out of this house in anger, and went to take vengeance on Ketling. . . . He who loses his all, is easily carried away by revenge, and I, as God is dear to me, loved you to desperation, and not merely as an unmarried man loves a maiden. . . . For, if I had been married, and the Almighty had given me an only son or daughter, and had afterwards taken them away, I think I should not then have mourned so much over their loss as I have mourned over you."

At this point Pan Michael's voice failed for a moment, but he quickly recovered himself, and after his lips had quivered for a moment, he proceeded:

"Grief is grief, but it can't be helped. It is no wonder that Ketling should have fallen in love with you. Who would not. And it is my lot that you should have fallen in love with him. That is no wonder either, for how can I compare with Ketling. On the field of battle, he himself will acknowledge that I am not his inferior, that is quite different. The Almighty has beautified one and deprived the other of come-

liness, but has made it up to him with reasonableness. So that when along the road the winds were blowing round my ears, and the first heat of my anger had passed, conscience immediately cried out, "Why punish them, why shed the blood of a friend? It was by God's will that they fell in love." Old people say that the command of a Hetman avails nothing where the heart is in question. It was the will of God by which they fell in love, but that they were not traitors in the result of their own honest natures. If Ketling had been aware of your promise to me, I should most likely have called out to him for satisfaction, but he did not know it. What was his fault? Nothing. And your fault? Nothing. He wanted to go away, you wanted to take refuge in God. My fate is to be blamed, and mine alone, for the hand of God is visible in all this, as I am left alone. But I have vanquished myself; I have overcome."

Pan Michael again stopped and began to breathe rapidly as a man does when he emerges into the air after a long dive; then he took Kryisia's hand.

"To love so as to desire everything for oneself," he said, "does not require much exertion. I thought to myself, the hearts of all three of us are breaking. It would be better if one could suffer and relieve the other two. Kryisia, God grant you happiness with Ketling. Amen. God grant you happiness with Ketling, Kryisia." . . .

"It hurts a little, but that does not matter—God grant you—God grant—It's nothing—I have conquered myself."

The soldier said, "It's nothing!" but he clenched his teeth and his breath came hissing through them. Basia's sobs were heard at the other end of the room.

"Ketling, my brother, come here!" cried Pan Michael.

Ketling approached, knelt down, extended his arms and silently, with the utmost respect and affection, embraced Kryisia's knees.

But Pan Michael proceeded in broken tones.

"Lay your hand on his head. Poor fellow, he has suffered too. . . God bless you both. You will not go to the convent. . . I would rather you should bless me, than have cause to curse me. The Almighty is above me, though now it is hard for me . . ."

Basia was not able to bear any longer, and darted out of the room, whereupon Pan Michael turned to Makovyetska and his sister and said, "Come to the other room, and leave

them together; I also will go somewhere, and fall on my knees and commend myself to the Lord Jesus." And he departed.

Half way down the passage, he met Basia by the stairs, on the very spot where, in her anger, she had betrayed the secret of Kryisia and Ketling's love. But this time Basia was leaning against the wall convulsively sobbing.

On seeing her, Pan Michael was affected at the thought of his own lot; till that moment he had restrained himself to the best of his ability, but now, the bonds of grief broke, and a torrent of tears sprang from his eyes.

"Why are you weeping?" he cried.

Basia raised her head, rubbing her eyes with her knuckles in turn like a child, and choking and grasping with her mouth open and replied between her sobs:

"I am so sorry, oh for God's sake! . . . oh Jesus! . . . Pan Michael is so good and noble. Oh for God's sake! . . ."

Pan Michael grasped her hands and began to kiss them in gratitude and emotion. "God reward you, God reward you for your tender heart," he said, "be quiet and cease weeping."

Nevertheless Basia kept on sobbing almost to suffocation. Her every vein was throbbing with grief and she gasped for breath, till at last, stamping her foot in her agitation she cried out so loudly that her voice echoed through the hall:

"Kryisia is an idiot, I would rather have one Pan Michael than ten Ketlings." I love Pan Michael with all my heart, better than aunt, or uncle, or Kryisia either."

"For Heaven's sake, Basia," cried the little knight, and wanting to calm her sorrow he siezed her in his arms and she nestled closely against his breast till he felt her heart throbbing like a tired bird, then he held her more closely to him and kept her there.

There was silence.

"Basia, do you want me?" asked the little knight.

"I do, I do, I do," answered Basia.

At this reply, he was transported in his turn; he pressed his lips to her rosy lips in a long kiss.

In the meantime, a carriage rumbled up to the house and Zagloba came running into the hall, and thence to the dining-room, where Pan Makovyetska was sitting with his wife. "I can find no trace of Michael," he cried in a breath, "and I have hunted everywhere. Pan Krytski told me that he saw him and Ketling together; most certainly they have fought."

"Michael is here," answered Pani Makovyetska, "he brought Ketling with him, and resigned Kryisia to him."

The pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was changed must certainly have had a less astonished face than Zagloba's at that moment. For some moments there was silence, and then the old noble rubbed his eyes and inquired, "Eh?"

"Kryisia and Ketling are sitting together in the next room and Michael has gone away to pray," said Makovyetska.

Without a moment's delay, Zagloba entered the next room, and though he was acquainted with everything, he was again amazed to see Ketling and Kryisia sitting with their heads together. They sprang to their feet in great confusion, and remained speechless, more especially as the Makovyetskias followed Zagloba.

"A whole lifetime would not be enough for giving Michael thanks," at last said Ketling. "To him, we owe our happiness."

"God grant you happiness," said Makovyetska. "We will not oppose Michael."

Kryisia cast herself into the arms of Pani Makovyetska and they mingled their tears. Zagloba was like one stunned. Ketling prostrated himself before Makovyetska like a son before a father, and either from the confusion of his ideas or because his thoughts were running on another subject, Makovyetska said:

"But Pan Deyma killed Pan Ubysh. Give thanks to Michael and not to me!"

After a little while he asked:

"Wife, what was the lady's name?"

But she had no time to answer, for at that moment Basia came running in, out of breath even more than usual and rosier than usual, and with her hair in more than usual disorder; she darted toward Ketling and Kryisia, and pointing her finger at both in turn she cried: "Aha, sigh, love, marry! You think that Pan Michael will be alone in the world? Far from it; I shall battle for him, for I love him and have told him so. I told him first and he asked if I wanted to have him, and I told him that I would rather have him than any other ten, for I love him and I'll make him the best wife in the world and will never leave his side. I have loved him for a long while, though I never told him, for he is the best, noblest, and dearest . . . And now you can go and marry yourselves, and I will take Pan Michael . . . to-morrow, if necessary, . . . for . . ."

Here Basia's breath failed her.

Everybody stared at her, wondering whether she had gone mad, or was telling the truth, then they looked at each other and just at that moment Pan Michael appeared behind Basia in the doorway.

"Michael," asked the Stolnik when he had recovered his wits, "is this true that we hear?"

"God has wrought a miracle," replied the little knight gravely, "and this is my solace, my love, and my most precious treasure."

At these words Basia sprang to his side like a deer.

At the same time Zagloba's face lost its look of amazement and his lips began to quiver; he opened his arms wide and exclaimed, "By God! I must weep . . . Little haiduk, Michael, come here!"

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

They loved each other dearly. They were very happy with each other, but they had no children, though they had now lived together four years. They managed their estates with great care. With his own and Basia's money Volodiyovski bought several villages near Kamenets, not paying much for them because people were fearful of invasion by the Turks and therefore glad to sell land in that district. He introduced order and military discipline into his possessions; he set about quieting the restless inhabitants, rebuilt the houses that had been burned, set up 'fortalices' or little forts, fortified manor-houses which he temporarily garrisoned and, just as of old he had successfully defended the country, so now he managed his land with profit, though never laying down the sword.

His property's best protection was the fame of his own name. He poured water on his blade and concluded brotherhood with some of the Murzas and he crushed others. Raiding bodies of Cossacks, scattered bands of the horde, marauders of the steppes, bandits from the plains of Bessarabia, all trembled at the name of the "Little Falcon" and so his herds of horses and flocks of sheep and his buffaloes and camels were safe on the steppes. Even his neighbors were respected. His possessions multiplied by the help of his able wife. The respect and affection of others surrounded him. His own country had honored him with office and he was loved by the Hetman; the Pasha of Khotsim smacked his lips in wonder at him; far away in the Crimea, in Bakhche Serai his name was uttered with respect.

The three important things in his life were husbandry, war, and love.

The sultry summer of 1671 found Pan Volodiyovski in Sokola, a village of Basia's patrimony. That village, Sokola, formed the pearl of their possessions. Here they hospitably and sumptuously entertained Pan Zagloba who disregarded the hardships of a journey unfit for one of his years and

came to visit them in fulfilment of a solemn promise made at the wedding of Volodiyovski. But the revels and delight of his hosts at having this beloved guest was soon disturbed by an order from the Hetman calling Pan Michael to the command of Khreptyov, so that he might keep his eyes on the Moldavian boundary, listen for voices from the desert, defend the spot, rout the chambuls, and clear the neighborhood from outlaws.

Like a soldier ever loyal to the Commonwealth's service, the little knight immediately ordered his servants to drive the herds out of the pasture, to break in the camels, and to arm themselves.

But his heart was torn by the thought of leaving his wife, for he loved her like husband and father in one and could hardly breathe without her; yet he had no desire to have her go with him to the savage and solitary deserts of Ushytsa, exposed to many perils.

But she insisted on accompanying him—

"Think," she said, "it will be less dangerous if I am with you and protected by the troops, than if I stay here? Your tent is all the roof I want, for I took you to share your fatigue, toil, and danger. If I remain here, I shall die with anxiety; but there with such a soldier as you, I shall feel safer than the queen at Warsaw. Even if I have to go into the field with you, I will go gladly. Without you I shall not be able to sleep; I shall not be able to eat a mouthful; indeed, I shall not be able to stand it, but I will fly to Khreptyov; and, if you wont admit me, I will stay at the gate all night, and weep and plead until you take compassion on me."

At this display of affection Volodiyovski fondly folded his wife in his arms and showered kisses upon her rosy cheeks, and she returned kiss for kiss.

"I should not hesitate," he finally said, "if it were merely a matter of being stationed on guard and attacking relays of the horde. There would be sufficient men because I shall have one of the squadrons from the General of Podolia, and one from the Under Chamberlain; and in addition to them, Montovidlo will be there with his Semenov Cossacks and Linkhaus' Dragoons. Altogether there will be six hundred soldiers, making a thousand with the camp followers. But I dread something,—which the boasters of the Diet in Warsaw won't credit, but which we on the borders look for at any hour,—and that is a terrible war with the whole Turkish

force. Pan Myslishevski has affirmed it, and the Pasha of Khotsim talks of it every day; the Hetman is of the opinion that the Sultan will aid Doroshenko and will declare war upon the Commonwealth; and, in that case, what could I do with you, my most beloved little flower, my gift from God?"

"Your lot shall be mine. I want no other fate than yours."

Pan Zagloba now broke the silence saying to Basia:

"No matter whether you wish it or not, your fate will be quite different from Michael's, if the Turks capture you. Ha! After the Cossacks, the Swedes, the Northerners, and the Brandenburg dog-kennel, comes the Turk! I said to the priest Olshovski, 'Never drive Doroshenko to despair, for he only favors the Turk from necessity.' What then? Nobody listened to me. They sent Hanenko against Dorosh, and now Dorosh,¹ whether he wants to or not, must walk down the Turk's throat, and, moreover, lead him against us. Michael, you remember that I warned the priest Olshovski in your presence."

"You must have warned him on some occasion when I was not present for I remember nothing of it," replied the little knight. "Yet what you say about Doroshenko is holy truth, for the Hetman is of the same opinion; it is even said that he has letters from Doroshenko to that effect. But things are as they are; it is too late to negotiate now. You have a keen understanding, however, and I should like to know what you think. Shall I take Bashka to Khreptyov, or had I better let her stay here? I ought to tell you that the place is a fearful desert. It always was a miserable hamlet, but so many Cossacks and chambuls have passed through it during the last twenty years that I am not sure if I shall find as much as two beams fastened together. There are numerous ravines there overgrown with woods, hiding-places, deep caverns, and all kinds of dens, where the murderers hide by the hundred, to say nothing of the Wallachians."

"Murderers in the presence of so many troops are a trifle," said Zagloba. "Chambuls, too, are a trifle; for if strong ones attack you, you will have warning; and if they are weak you will wipe them out of existence."

"What then!" cried Basia, "isn't everything a trifle? Outlaws are a trifle; chambuls are a trifle. With so many troops Michael can protect me against the entire Crimea."

¹ Dorosh, same as Doroshenko.

"Don't disturb me while I am deliberating," said Zagloba, "if you do, I'll pronounce against you."

Basia quickly covered her mouth with both hands and leaned her little head towards her shoulder, pretending to be dreadfully afraid of Zagloba, who, although aware that the little woman was only playing, took pleasure in her behavior; he placed his old hand upon her shining head, and said:

"Well! Fear not! I will make you happy about this."

Basia forthwith kissed his hand, for indeed much depended upon his infallible judgment, which never led people astray; he thrust his hands under his belt, and rapidly glancing with his sound eye from one to the other, said abruptly:

"You have no children; none; So!"

And then he protruded his lower lip.

"God's will, that's all," said Volodiyovski, lowering his eyes.

"God's will, that's all," said Basia, lowering her eyes.

"And do you wish to have?" asked Zagloba.

The little knight replied:

"I will tell you honestly I don't know what I wouldn't give for children; but sometimes I think it a vain desire. The Lord Jesus has granted me happiness in giving me this kitten,—or this little haiduk, as you call her,—and has, moreover, blessed me with fame and wealth. I don't dare to worry him for more blessings. You see I have come to the conclusion, more than once, that if everybody got all he desired there would be no difference between this earthly Commonwealth and the heavenly one, where perfect happiness is alone to be found. Therefore, I think if I do not have one or two sons here, they will not fail to come to me above, and they will do service and become famous under that heavenly Hetman, the holy Archangel Michael, battling with the vileness of Hell and attaining high rank."

Moved by his own thoughts and words, the devout Christian knight lifted his eyes to Heaven; but Zagloba heard him with indifference and kept blinking his eye severely. Finally he said:

"Take care that you don't blaspheme. The boast you make, that you know the intention of God so well, may prove to be a sin for which you will hop about like peas on a hot griddle. The Lord God has wider sleeves than the Bishop

of Cracow, and He is not fond of having small people peep to see what he has planned for them, and He does what he pleases; but you attend to your own affairs, and if you wish for heirs you must keep together and not separate."

On hearing this, Basia jumped for joy into the middle of the room, clapped her hands, and said:

"Well then, we'll keep together. I felt sure that your lordship would take my part; I felt sure of it! We'll both go to Khreptyov, Michael, dear, and you'll take me once—just once—my dear, my golden one, against the Tartars!"

"There you are! Now she's longing to go into the field!" exclaimed the little knight.

"With you I should not be afraid of the whole horde."

"*Silentium!*" said Zagloba, gazing with benignant eyes, or rather his benignant eye upon Basia, to whom he was perfectly devoted. "By the way, Khreptyov is not far from here. I hope it is not the last post before you reach the wild fields."

"No, there will be other posts in Mohillov and Yampol, and, finally, in Rashkov," answered the little knight.

"In Rashkov? I know Rashkov. We brought Pan Yan's wife, Halshka¹ from there—you remember that ravine in Valadyinka, Michael. You recollect how I cut down that devil or monster, named Cheremis, who guarded her? But as long as the last garrison is to be in Rashkov they will get the news quickly if the Crimea should rise, or all the Turkish strength, and will give us warning in Khreptyov; there will be no great danger, for you see we cannot be suddenly taken at Khreptyov. I say this advisedly; for you know well enough that I would rather lay down my old head than expose her to any danger. Take her. It will be better for the health of both of you. But Basia must promise that in case a great war breaks out she will let herself be taken to Warsaw, for there would be some terrible marches and hot fighting, sieges, and, perhaps, some starving, as we had at Zbaraj; at such times it is hard for a man to save his head, but what would happen to a woman?"

"I should not mind falling at Michael's side," said Basia; "but still I am reasonable, and know that when a thing is impossible, it is impossible. After all, it is Michael's will; not mine. This year he went on Pan Sobieski's expedition.

¹ Diminutive of Helena.

Did I insist on going, too? No. Well then, if you let me go to Khreptyov with Michael, you can send me anywhere you please if war breaks out.'

"His grace, Pan Zagloba, will escort you to Podlasia to the Skshetuskis," said the little knight, "the Turks will never get there."

"Pan Zagloba! Pan Zagloba!" mocked the old nobleman. "Am I a soldier? Don't trust your wives to Pan Zagloba, imagining that he is senile, he may be something quite different. I repeat, do you think if war with the Turk breaks out, I will go into the kitchen at Podlasia and keep the roast meat from burning? I'm not yet a menial. Perhaps I shall be good for something better than that. I admit that I mount from the horse block, but when once in the saddle I will charge the enemy as fast as any youth. Glory to God! neither sand nor saw-dust is falling from me yet. I won't spy in the wilderness, as I'm not a scout, and I won't take part in a raid against the Tartars; but if you stay near me in a general action, you will see some great doings."

"Do you want to go into the field again?"

"Don't you think that after so many years of service I want to seal my fame with a glorious death, and what better could happen? Were you acquainted with Pan Dzyevyonkyevich? It is true he did not look more than a hundred and forty but he was really a hundred and forty-two, and still serving."

"He wasn't as old as that."

"Indeed he was! May I never move from this seat if he wasn't! I am going to take part in this great war, and then quit. I am in love with Basia, and I'm going with you to Khreptyov."

The radiant Basia jumped up and hugged Zagloba, who raised his head, saying:

"Closer, closer!"

For quite a little while Pan Michael thought over matters, and finally he said:

"As the place is a perfect desert, it is impossible for us all to go at once, for we should not be able to find even a piece of a roof. I will go first, select a spot, and construct a square with quarters for the soldiers and sheds for the officers' fine horses so that they will not be exposed and suffer from the change of climate; I will have some wells dug, the roads opened, and the ravines cleared of murdering outlaws. When all this is accomplished, I will send

you a good escort, and you may come to me. You may have to stay here for about three weeks."

Basia was going to protest, but Zagloba, who recognized Michael's wisdom, said:

"Wisdom is wisdom! We'll stay here Basia, and keep house together, and we shall not be so badly off. We shall have to make some preparations, too, and lay in supplies, for you don't know it, but nowhere do mead and wine keep so well as in caves."

CHAPTER II.

Pan Michael kept his word; the buildings were finished in three weeks and he sent a goodly escort,—a hundred Lipkov Tartars from Pan Lantskoronski's squadron, and a hundred of Linkhauz's dragoons, led by Pan Snitko of the Hidden Moon coat of arms. Setnik Azya Mellekhovich, a young man a little over twenty and a Lithuanian Tartar himself, led the Lipkovs. He carried the following letter from the little knight to his wife:

“Bashka; my heart's beloved. You may come to me now, for without you I am as though without bread; and, if I do not waste away before you arrive, I will kiss your rosy little mouth away. I have not stinted you with regard to your escort of men and experienced officers; but give precedence in everything to Pan Snitko, and count him as one of us, for he is well-born, has estates, and is an officer. Mellekhovich is a good soldier, but God only knows what is his origin. He could not have become an officer in any but the Lipkov militia, for all the others would have taunted him with his obscure origin. I embrace you with all my strength. I kiss your little hands and nose. I have built a fortalice with a hundred loop-holes. It has enormous chimneys. You and I will have some rooms in a separate building. The odor of resin is over everything, and we have so many crickets that in the evening when they begin to chirp they wake up the dogs. If we had some pea-straw we could easily get rid of them. Perhaps you will remember to have a little packed in the wagons. We could get no glass here and so we had to stuff the windows up with moss, but Pan Byaloglovski has a glazier among his dragoons. You can buy glass from the Armenians at Kamenets; but, for Heaven's sake! see that it is handled with care so that it is not broken. I have furnished your room with rugs, and it looks fairly well. I have had nineteen of the outlaws, that we captured in the ravines,

hanged, and the number will have reached thirty before you arrive. Pan Snitko will tell you how we live here. I give you into the care of God and the Most Holy Virgin, my own beloved soul."

After reading this letter Basia handed it to Zagloba, who began to pay more attention to Pan Snitko, as soon as he had read it—not so marked, however, as to allow the latter to forget he was talking to a renowned soldier and an important individual who was familiar with him only by favor. Pan Snitko had spent his entire life in the army, and was extremely good-natured, jovial, and, moreover, a very efficient soldier. He had a high respect for Pan Michael, and before Zagloba's fame he felt quite insignificant, and had no idea of asserting himself.

Mellekhovich did not wait for the letter to be read, but after delivering it he immediately left the room, as if to superintend his soldiers, but his real motive was to escape being ordered to the servants' quarters.

However, Zagloba had had time to scrutinize him, and with Pan Michael's words still fresh in his mind, he remarked to Snitko:

"We are delighted to welcome you."

"I pray . . . Pan Snitko . . . the shield Hidden Moon is a gem, I know it very well. . . But what is the name of this Tartar?"

"Mellekhovich."

"Well, but this Mellekhovich reminds me somewhat of a wolf. Michael writes he is of mysterious origin, which seems strange, for, although they are Mohammedans, all of our Tartars are noblemen. I have seen entire villages of them in Lithuania. They are called there Lipkovs, but those here are called Cheremis. They have served the Commonwealth faithfully for a long time in return for their living; but during the peasant incursion a good many of them joined Khmyelnitski, and I understand that they are beginning to hold relations with the horde. . . . That Mellekhovich certainly looks like a wolf. . . . How long has Pan Voldiyovski known him?"

"Since the last campaign," replied Pan Snitko, stretching his legs under the table, "when we were out against Doroshenko and the horde with Pan Sobieski; they went together through the Ukraine."

"Since the last campaign! I was not able to share that,

for Sobieski gave me other duties, but after a time he missed me. . . . Your gem is the Hidden Moon. . . . Where does this Mellekhovich come from?"

"He calls himself a Lithuanian Tartar; but I don't understand why it is that none of the Lithuanian Tartars in his own squadron know anything of his antecedents. This explains the stories of his mysterious origin, which even his high and mighty manner has not succeeded in stopping. Although he is badly spoen of, he is a good soldier. He did such good service at Bkatslav and Kalnik that notwithstanding he was the youngest man in the squadron, the Hetman made him captain. He is much beloved by the Lipkovs, but he gets no affection from us, and what is the reason? Because he is so dogged and, just as you say, reminds one of a wolf."

"I think if he is a famous soldier and has shed blood," said Basia, "we ought to receive him among us, which my husband did not forbid in his letter."

Turning to Pan Snitko, Basia said:

"Does your lordship allow it?"

"I am the servant of my beneficent lady-colonel," replied Snitko.

Basia left the room and Zagloba drew a long breath and asked Pan Snitko:

"Well, how do you like the colonel's wife?"

Instead of replying, the veteran soldier gave a military salute, and, leaning over, repeated:

"Ai! ai! ai!"

Then he stared and laid his large hand upon his mouth, and said nothing, as if ashamed of his enthusiasm.

"Isn't she March-pane?" said Zagloba.

At this moment the "March-pane" returned, bringing Mel-lekhovich, who seemed as frightened as a captured wild bird; and said to him as they entered:

"We have heard of your brave exploits from my husband's letter and from Pan Snitko, and we are pleased to make your acquaintance. We invite you to join us, for dinner will soon be served."

"Come nearer, I beg of you," said Zagloba.

The young Tartar's dogged, yet handsome, face did not light up with pleasure, but he was evidently grateful for his welcome and his escape from the servants' quarters.

With a woman's instinct Basia had readily divined that he was proud and sensitive, and that he often suffered acutely

from his treatment on account of his mysterious origin, and she had determined to show him kindness. Not making any distinction between him and Pan Snitko, except that which the latter's age demanded, she began to question the young captain about the services for which he had been promoted at Kalnik. Pan Zagloba guessed Basia's wishes, and talked to him sufficiently; but Mellekhovich was very reserved in his manner at first, although he replied to everything properly and surprised them with his elegance of manner.

"His bearing shows that he cannot come of peasant blood," said Zagloba to himself. Therefore he asked aloud:

"Where does your father live?"

"In Lithuania," answered Mellekhovich, turning red.

"Lithuania is a large place; you might as well have said in the Commonwealth."

"It does not belong to the Commonwealth any longer; it has seceded. My father has an estate near Smolensk."

"I also used to have considerable lands there, which I inherited from childless relatives; but I abandoned them for the sake of the Commonwealth."

"I have done the same thing," answered Mellekhovich.

"That's very honorable," Basia interrupted.

But Snitko, who was listening attentively, shrugged his shoulders as if to say: "God only knows who you are and where you came from."

Pan Zagloba noticed this, and, turning to Mellekhovich, asked:

"Do you confess Christ, or do you live—I mean no offence—in wickedness?"

"I profess Christianity, and in consequence of this I was obliged to leave my father."

"If that is the true reason, the Lord God will not forsake you; the first thing he grants you is the privilege of drinking wine, which you could not have if you had remained in sin."

Snitko smiled at this; but Mellekhovich instantly became again reserved, for he shrank from all personal questions. Pan Zagloba took little notice of him, principally because he was not attracted by the young Tartar, who somehow reminded him in his movements and glance, although not in his features, of Bohun, the famous Cossack chief.

Presently dinner was served.

Preparations for the road took up all the rest of the day. They started at dawn, or rather, while it was still dark, so as to make the journey to Khreptyov in one day.

Basia intended to take plenty of supplies to Khreptyov, and so they had about a dozen wagons; camels and horses staggering under their heavy loads of dried meat and meal followed them; and several dozen oxen of the steppe, and chambuls (flocks) of sheep brought up the rear of the caravan. Mellekhovich and his Lipkovs rode at the head; and Basia and Zagloba sat in a covered wagon guarded by dragoons, who rode beside it. Basia wanted to ride her own horse; but the old nobleman dissuaded her from it during the first and last part of the journey.

"If you would sit your horse quietly," he said, "I should make no objections, but you would immediately want to show off your horsemanship and make your horse prance, which would not be becoming in the wife of a commander."

Basia was as gay and happy as a bird. Ever since her marriage she had been possessed of two ambitions: the first to give a son to the little knight; the second, to pass, if only a year, with her husband at a stanitsa near the Wild Fields, to live a soldier's life on the borders of the wilderness, taking part in battles and adventures, seeing the steppes, and experiencing the perils of which she had heard from infancy. This had been one of her girlish dreams; and now it was to be realized, with the additional delight of being with the man she loved, the most celebrated warrior in the Commonwealth, from whom, it was said, no enemy could escape.

The young commandress felt as though she had wings on her shoulders and was so full of joy that she often wanted to shout and jump; but the thought of dignity refrained her from doing so, for she promised to be sedate so as to gain the intense affection of the soldiers. She spoke of this intention to Zagloba, who smilingly commended her, remarking:

"You will be the light of his eyes, and a great curiosity. Women in a stanitsa are rare."

"If necessary I will be an example to the soldiers."

"In what?"

"Bravery. I am only afraid of one thing, and that is there will be other stations in Mohilov and Rashkov and Yavorlik, so far away from Khreptyov that we shall never get a dose of the Tartars."

"And I am only afraid of this, not for myself, naturally, but for you, that we shall have too much of the Tartars. Do you imagine that the Chambuls always have to pass through Rashkov and Mohilov? They can come into the Common-

wealth any way they like, from the East, from the Steppes, from the Moldavian borders of the Dniester, even by the hills of Khreptyov, unless they know I have come to Khreptyov; in that case they'll stay away, for they'll remember me well enough."

"Don't they know Michael? Will they not avoid him too?"

"They will avoid him unless they have overpowering numbers, which might be the case at any time. But he will go for them."

"Oh, I'm sure of it. Is Khreptyov a real desert? It is not so far away."

"Nothing could be more of a desert. Even in my youth it was never thickly settled around Khreptyov. I used to go everywhere from farm to farm, village to village, town to town, knew everything, was everywhere, and recollect the time when the place called Ushytza was a fortified town. I was made chief there by Pan Konyetspolski, but it went to rack and ruin after the mob attacked it. It was a perfect desert when we went for Halshka Skshetuska, but since then Cham-buls have twenty times travelled through it. . . . Now Pan Sobieski has snatched it from the Cossacks and Tartars like a bone from a dog's mouth. . . . Only a few inhabitants are there now, for the ravines are full of outlaws." . . .

Zagloba looked around him at the landscape, and, as memories flocked to his mind, he nodded his head.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "when we went for Halshka¹ I thought that my belt encompassed old age; that happened nearly twenty-four years ago, and now it seems to me as if I was young in those days. Michael was only a beardless youngster, he had as many hairs on his lip as I have on my palm. I remember this neighborhood just as if I had seen it yesterday. The only change is in these growths and pine forests, which have grown up in the places where agriculture thrived. . . ."

After passing Kitaygrod they entered the dense pine forests of that region. Occasionally they passed through fields, which became more frequent especially near Studzyennitsa; and, after that the border of the Dniester burst upon their vision and the open country lay before them for a great distance, from the river to the hills, with Moldavia on the horizon line.

¹ Princess Helena the betrothed of Sksheluski. (See "Fire and Sword," v. iii, by the same author.)

The road was broken by deep gullies, the haunts of wild beasts and men; some of these were narrow chasms, and some of them were larger, the sides slightly sloping, and covered with dense brushwood. Mellekhovich's Tartars picked their way cautiously, and when the rear of the escort was still along the high brink of the ravines, the caravan had already descended, as it were underground. Basia and Zagloba frequently had to get out of their wagon; for, although Pan Michael had had the road put in a certain order, some of the passes were unsafe. In the valleys below there were many springs and murmuring stony brooks, which were fed in the spring by the melting snows of the steppes. Although the sun was warm upon the pine-woods and steppes, severe cold still lurked in these rocky gorges, and the travellers were seized unexpectedly. Pine-forests covered the rocky sides of the ravines, the trees were especially tall and thick at the edge of the precipices, as if they wanted to prevent the cold valley from sharing the sun's golden rays; but in some of the gorges, the trees had been felled and thrown upon each other in wild disordered piles, with broken or twisted branches, and covered with red leaves and pine needles.

"What became of the forest?" Basia asked Zagloba.

"Some of these trees may have been felled by the old inhabitants, for protection against the horde, or they may have been made by the outlaws against our men; the terrible Moldavian whirlwinds may be responsible for some places; there is an old saying that vampires and even devils fight battles in these whirlwinds."

"Have you ever seen devils fighting, sir?"

"No, I have never seen them, but I have heard them cry 'U-kha! U-kha!' to each other in play. Ask Michael about it, he has heard them, too."

With all her courage, Basia was afraid of evil spirits, and she made the sign of the cross.

"A horrible place!" she said.

Truly, it was horrible in some of these dark and awe-inspiring gorges. There was no wind to make the branches and leaves rustle; the silence was broken only by the tramping and snorting of the horses, the creaking wagons, and the cries of the drivers when they came to dangerous places. Sometimes the Tartars and Dragoons would begin to sing; but the wilderness itself was not cheered by the voice of man or beast.

While these gorges had been so gloomy, the highland, notwithstanding its pine-forests, brought delight to everybody. It was a beautiful, tranquil, autumnal day. From the cloudless expanse of heaven, the sun lavishly poured his beams on forest, field, and rock. The pine-trees were reddish gold, and the spider-webs on the branches of the trees, the reeds, and grasses seemed woven out of the sunlight. As it was the middle of October, many birds were beginning to migrate to the Black Sea, and, therefore, storks, geese, and teal-ducks were flying across the sky.

Far above in the blue sky, eagles, so dreaded by all fowls of the air sailed with wide-spread wings, and hawks were slowly circling on the watch for prey. Nor were there wanting among the tall grasses of the meadows many game-birds. Every now and then a covey of partridges would rise in front of the Tartar's horses; and Basia often saw bustards standing like sentinels in the distance, the sight of which made her cheeks flush and eyes sparkle.

Clapping her hands, she exclaimed: "I will go coursing with Michael!"

"If your husband were a stay-at-home, you would soon turn his beard gray," Zagloba remarked. "But I knew the man to whom I married you. Some women would be grateful to me, Eh?"

Basia kissed Zagloba first on one cheek and then on the other, which greatly touched him:

"Loving hearts are as dear to an old man as a chimney corner."

Then he fell into a reverie, and added:

"It is strange that I have always been so fond of women; I'm sure I couldn't tell why if I were forced to explain it, for they are often wicked, false, and silly. . . . But because they are helpless as children a man's heart goes out to them when they are ill-treated. Will you embrace me again, or what?"

Basia gratified the old man's desire, for she was happy enough to embrace the entire world, and they continued their journey in good spirits. The progress was slow, for the oxen in the rear could not walk very fast and it was unsafe to go ahead and leave them with a small guard of men in this forest.

The land became more broken, the desert lonelier and the gorges deeper as they approached Ushlytsa. There were several delays on the road on account of balking horses or break-

downs. Sometimes, too, they lost the way, because, instead of taking the road which once led to Mohilov, but which had been closed for twenty years with forest growths, they had to follow the recent trails made by the soldiers. This also entailed an accident.

As Mellekhovich, who was in front of the Lipkovs, entered one of the deep gorges, his horse stumbled on the slope and fell on the rocky bottom, injuring the rider, whose head was so badly cut that he was unconscious for quite a while. Basia ordered the Tartars to lay him in the wagon and to drive carefully; she and Zagloba mounted horses which were led by the guards. Whenever they came to a spring she made them halt while she herself bound his head with cloths dipped in the cold spring water. For a long time he lay still with his eyes shut, but, finally, he opened them; and when Basia leaned over him to inquire if he were feeling any better, he made no reply, but took hold of her hand and pressed it to his white lips.

After a minute he recovered consciousness and said in Little Russian:

“Oh, well! I have not been so well for a long time.”

The march occupied the entire day. At last the sun grew large and red, and began to set behind the Moldavian border; the Dnieper shone like a ribbon of fire, and from the wilderness on the east darkness crept stealthily.

They were now not very far from Khreptyov, but they halted for some time to give the horses a rest.

One by one the Dragoons began to intone their prayer; and the Lipkov Tartars, having dismounted, spread their sheep-skins on the ground, knelt upon them, turned their faces to the east, and began to pray also. “Allah! Allah!” was heard in all the ranks; then there was silence; and raising their hands towards their faces with palms turned outwards they continued their devout prayer in which the phrase “Lohichmen ah lohichmen” was heard every now and then like a sigh. The red glow of the sunset illuminated them; a breeze sprang up from the west; and the trees began to rustle as if they, too, wished to murmur a prayer to God who showers his glittering stars in thousands upon the dark firmament. Basia witnessed the Tartars at prayer with great interest; but her heart was sad at the thought that these men who seemed to live good and useful lives must go to the flames of Hell, and although they came in daily contact with Christians, chose to harden their hearts to the true faith.

But Pan Zagloba, who was accustomed to this, shrugged his shoulders at Basia's concern, and said:

"The reason that these billy goats can't enter Heaven is that they might not introduce vermin there."

Zagloba's servant helped him to put on a coat lined with worsted, which is a good protection against the chill of the evening, and the order to move on was given, but the march had barely started when five horsemen appeared in the distance.

The Lipkovs immediately made way.

"Michael!" screamed Basia, as the first horseman galloped up.

Sure enough it was Volodiyovski who had come to meet his wife with a small escort.

They dashed forward towards each other with joyous greetings, after which they began to relate their adventures.

Basia described her journey and especially the accident by which Pan Mellekhovich injured his head on the rocks. The little knight described his work at Khreptyov, where he said he had employed five hundred men for three weeks to prepare dwellings in readiness for her.

Every few minutes as they talked Pan Michael leaned over from his saddle to put his arm around his young wife; she did not seem to be in the least annoyed at this, for she rode so near him that the horses flanks almost touched.

They had nearly come to the end of the journey; and in the meantime the beautiful night had fallen, and a large golden moon rose from the steppes. As it ascended the sky, however, it became paler and, after a while was nearly obscure, on account of flames which were blazing up in the distance ahead of the caravan.

"What is that?" said Basia.

"You will find out," said Pan Volodiyovski, twisting his moustache, "just as soon as we shall have passed through the grove which separates us from Khreptyov."

"Have we got to Kreptyov already?"

"If it were not for the trees you would see it as plainly as on your palm."

They had not gone half way through the grove before a swarm of lights were seen at the further borders, like a swarm of glow-worms or shining stars. But the lights came nearer and nearer very rapidly; and in a few moments the forest rang with shouts:

"Vivat our lady! Vivat her highness! Vivat our lady-commander! Vivat, vivat!"

Hundreds of soldiers had come to welcome Basia. In a few moments they joined the Lipkovs. Each held a long pole with a candle in the cleft end. Some had iron torch-holders on pikes, from which the resin fell in blazing drops.

In a short time Basia was surrounded by a crowd of moustached faces, which, although wild and strange, seemed aglow with delight. Basia was unknown to most of them, and, as they had expected to see a rather mature lady, they were overjoyed at the sight of the young girl on her white palfrey; with her beautiful high color and her joyous smiles, bowing her thanks on all sides for this unexpected reception.

"Gentlemen, I thank you," she began, "I know that this is not in my honor, . . ."

But her silvery tones were drowned by the soldiers' *vivats*, and again the forest trembled with shouts.

The officers of the General of Podolia, and of the under-chamberlain of Pshemysl, the Cossacks of Motovidlo, the Lipkov, and Cheremi Tartars pressed forward in a mass. Everybody wanted to have a good look at the lady-colonel, and to get near her; some of the most enthusiastic among them kissed the hem of her skirt, or her foot in the stirrup. The sight of a lady so novel to these half wild raiders, inured to bloodshed, carnage, and man-trapping that their hard hearts were touched and a new and strange feeling was kindled in their breasts. Out of affection to Volodiyovski they had come to give her welcome, hoping to please and flatter him; but all of a sudden their hearts were melted. Her sweet, smiling, innocent face, aglow with excitement, and her shining eyes, they loved at first sight. "She is our dear child!" cried the old Cossacks, those true wolves of the steppes. "Pan Colonel, she is a cherub!" "She is the dawn!" "She is a lovely little flower!" the officers shouted. "We will all die for her!" . . . The Cheremis smacked their lips, placed their hands on their broad breasts and called "Allah! Allah!"

Volodiyovski was both deeply moved and delighted; he looked happy and proud of his Basia.

The shouting never ceased. Finally the caravan issued from the forest and the new-comers saw on the high ground before them a circle of substantial wooden buildings. The stanitsa of Khreptyov was seen just as well as if it had been daylight, for enormous bon-fires of great logs were burning

within the stockade. Others, too small to set fire to the buildings, were dotted about the square.

The soldiers extinguished their torches; and then they all drew forth a musket, gun, or pistol, and fired a salute in honor of the lady.

The musicians now approached: the band with its crooked horns, the Cossacks with their trumpets, drums, and many stringed-instruments, and finally the Lipkovs with their customary Tartar instruments. The lowing of the frightened cattle and the barking of the dogs added still more to the noise.

The convoy had now retired to the rear while Basia rode in front, with her husband on one side and Zagloba on the other. Above the gate, which was gracefully decorated with boughs of fir, bladders were hung, lighted from within and bearing the inscription in black letters:

“May Cupid lavish on you many happy moments!

Dear guests, *crescite, multiplicamini!*”

“Vivant floreant!”

The soldiers shouted as the little knight and Basia stopped to read these words of greeting.

“For God’s sake!” Zagloba cried, “I’m also a guest, but if you refer to me in that wish for multiplication, may the crows peck me if I know what to reply.”

But there was a separate lantern for Pan Zagloba himself and he read it with no small amount of pleasure:

“Long live our great and famous Onufry Zagloba,

The greatest ornament of the Polish knighthood.”

Pan Michael was radiantly happy; he invited the officers and companions to take supper with him, and gave orders that many kegs of liquor should be given to the soldiers. Several bullocks fell, which were immediately roasted at the bon-fires. Everybody was lavishly provided for; and far into the night the stanitsa resounded with shouts and gun-shots, which greatly alarmed the outlaws who lay hiding in the gorges of Ushytsa.

CHAPTER III.

Volodiyovski wasted no time in his stanitsa and kept his men constantly at work. A hundred, or sometimes fewer, were kept to garrison Khreptyov and the rest were continually employed on expeditions. The larger bodies were sent to clear the ravines of Ushysta, and their days were spent in almost perpetual warfare, for bands of robbers, often very numerous, offered a stubborn resistance, and on more than one occasion it was necessary to fight a pitched battle with them. These expeditions lasted for days and sometimes for weeks. Pan Michael sent scouting-parties as far as Bratslav for intelligence of the horde and Doroshenko. Their duty was to return with men who could give information, and these they had to capture on the steppes. Some descended the Dniester to Mohilov and Yampol, to keep in touch with the commander of those places; some kept watch on the Moldavian border, and others built bridges and repaired the old road.

The country, in which such active measures were taken, was not long in becoming pacified. The more peaceful and less predatory portion of the inhabitants gradually returned to their deserted dwellings, at first in stealth, and then more boldly. A few Jewish traders came to Khreptyov; sometimes a richer Armenian merchant arrived, and shop-keepers began to pay more frequent visits. Pan Michael therefore had well-founded hopes that, if God and the Hetman would allow him to stay longer in his command, the country which had become desolate would soon assume another garb. The work had scarcely begun yet; there was still a great deal to be done; the roads were not yet safe; the demoralized inhabitants fraternized more willingly with robbers than with the soldiers, and at the least provocation, hid themselves in the rocky ravines; the fords of the Dniester were often stealthily crossed by bands composed of Wallachians, Cossacks, Hungarians, Tartars, and God knows who. These bands raided the

country, attacking towns and villages in the Tartar way, seizing everything they could lay their hands on; for some time yet it would not be possible to lay aside the sword in that district, or to hang up the musket; but a beginning had been made and the future looked very promising.

It was necessary to keep sharp watch towards the East. For from Doroshenko's following and his allied chambuls, larger or smaller bodies were detached from time to time, and attacking the Polish forces they laid waste the surrounding districts with fire and sword. But since these were independent marauders, or at least appeared so, the little knight broke them up without fear of bringing down a greater tempest on the land; and without ceasing his attempts to make head against them, he hunted them in the steppes with such effect, that before long he made the most audacious unwilling to attack him.

In the meantime, Basia was the manager at Khreptyov.

She was greatly pleased with this military life, which never before had she seen so closely—the stir, the marches and counter-marches, the expeditions, and the sight of prisoners. She told Pan Michael that she must share in at least one expedition, but for the present, she had to satisfy herself with occasionally mounting her horse and visiting the neighborhood of Khreptyov in company with her husband and Pan Zagloba. On these occasions she hunted foxes and bustards; occasionally a fox would spring out of the grass and dart along the valley. Then they would hunt him, Basia doing her best to keep ahead, immediately behind the hounds, so as to be the first to spring on the jaded animal and discharge her pistol between his fiery eyes.

Pan Zagloba much preferred to hunt with falcons, several very good ones of which were possessed by the officers.

Basia also accompanied him, but Pan Michael, unknown to her, had her followed by a few dozen men to render aid in case of need. For though in Khreptyov they were always well posted as to the movements in the wilderness for twenty miles around, still Pan Michael preferred to be cautious. The soldiers daily became fonder of Basia, for she was attentive in the matter of their rations and nursed the sick and wounded. Even the sullen Mellekhovich, who suffered from continuous headache and whose heart was more savage and rugged than the others, brightened up at her sight. Old soldiers went into raptures over her knightly daring and familiarity with military matters.

"If the Little Falcon were away," they exclaimed, "She might assume command and it would not be hard to fall under such a leader."

Sometimes, moreover, it happened when some disturbances arose among the men during the absence of Volodiyovski, Basia would grumble at them, and obtained immediate submission; veterans cared more for a reproof from her lips than for any punishment which the strict Pan Michael relentlessly imposed for any breach of duty.

Strict discipline always reigned, for Pan Michael, trained in the school of Prince Yeremy, knew how to rule soldiers with an iron hand; and besides this, Basia's presence somewhat softened their wild ways. They all tried to please her and cared for her peace and comfort, avoiding everything that might worry her.

In the light cavalry of Pan Mikolay Pototski, there were many courtly and experienced officers who, although they had become rough through constant warfare and expeditions, were still a pleasant set of fellows. In company with officers of other squadrons they often spent a pleasant evening with the Colonel, relating their past exploits and battles in which they had taken part. First among these was Pan Zagloba. He was older than any; he had seen more and shown more; but when after one or two goblets he dozed comfortably in a padded chair, purposely brought for him, others would begin. They also had experiences to relate, for some among them had visited Sweden and Moscow; some had spent their early years at the Sich, in the time of Khmyelnitski; some had herded sheep in the Crimea in captivity; others as slaves, had dug wells in Bakhche Serai; or had visited Asia Minor, or rowed Turkish galleys through the Archipelago, or had prostrated themselves before Christ's sepulchre, undergoing every adventure and hardship, and yet again appearing beneath the flag to defend these borders soaked with blood to their last day and with their last breath.

In November, as the evenings lengthened and peace reigned on the edge of the wide steppes, for the grass had now withered, they would assemble every day at the Colonel's quarters. Hither came Pan Motovidlo, the leader of the Semenov Cossacks, a Russian by birth, with a figure as thin as a pair of tongs and as tall as a lance. His youth was behind him, for he had kept the field for more than twenty years. Hither too came Pan Deyma, the brother of him who

had slain Pan Ubysh; and Pan Mushalski, who had once been wealthy, but being captured in youth, had pulled an oar in a Turkish galley, and escaping from captivity had turned his property over to others, and sword in hand, was avenging his injuries on the followers of Mohammed. He was a matchless archer, and at will, could transfix a heron with an arrow on its lofty flight. Thither also came the two Chiefs Pan Vilga and Pan Nyenashinyets, mighty warriors, and Pan Hromyka and Pan Bavdynovich, and many others. When they began to tell tales, and warm up in their talk, the whole of the East was pictured in their narratives—Bakhche Serai and Stambul, the minarets and mosques of the false Prophet, the blue waters of the Bosphorus, the fountains and the Sultan's palace, the throngs of people in the City of Stone, the soldiers, the janissaries, the dervishes and the whole of that terrible swarm of locusts, many-hued as a rain-bow, against which the Commonwealth with bleeding breast was defending the Russian Cross, and consequently all the crosses and churches of Europe.

The old warriors sat around the large room in a circle, like a flock of storks who, wearied with flight, had alighted on some bank in the steppes and were making a noisy clucking.

Pine logs were burning on the hearth, casting bright reflections throughout the room. By Basia's orders, attendants warmed Moldavian wine at the fire and ladled it out to the knights. The cries of the sentries were heard outside; the crickets, of which Pan Michael had complained, were chirping in the room, and in the cracks that were stuffed with moss the November wind from the North blew more and more coldly. When it was so cold, it was delightful to sit in a comfortable, well-lighted room, and hear the experiences of the knights.

One evening, Pan Mushalski began as follows:—

“May the Most High have the whole sacred Commonwealth in his keeping, and all of us, and more especially the lady here present, the gracious wife of our commander, on whose loveliness our blind eyes are unworthy to rest. I have no desire to rival Pan Zagloba, whose adventures would have been marvelous, even in the eyes of Dido herself and her charming maidens, but if you gentlemen can spare the time to hear my adventures, I will not be long-winded, for fear of boring this honorable company.”

“In my young days, I inherited a considerable estate near

Tarashch, in the Ukraine. My mother left me two villages in a quiet district near Yaslo, but I preferred to live on my father's estate, as it was nearer the Horde and more exposed to adventure. I was attracted towards the Sich by the cavalier spirit, but there was nothing for us there then; in company with other restless spirits, therefore, I went to the Steppes and enjoyed myself immensely. It was pleasant enough on my own estates; there was only one thing that greatly troubled me, a disagreeable neighbor. He was a common peasant and came from Byalotserkov, having been at the Sich in his early years, where he rose to the rank of Kurzen Ataman, and acted as an envoy from the Cossacks to Warsaw, where he was ennobled. Didyuk was his name. You must know, gentlemen, that we derived our origin from a certain chief of the Samnites, called Musca, which in our language means a fly. This Musca after various futile attempts against the Romans came to the court of Zyemyovit, the son of Piast, who, for the sake of greater convenience, called him Muscalski, which his descendants afterwards changed to Mushalski. Knowing that I came of such noble blood, I regarded that Didyuk with great abomination. If the low fellow had known how to respect his honor and to recognize the exalted rank of a noble, I should have had nothing to say. But he who held lands as a noble, made a mock of the dignity, and often said, 'Is my shadow any greater than it used to be? A Cossack I was and a Cossack I will remain; but, as for nobility and all you Poles . . . that's the way I regard you.' Gentlemen, I cannot describe to you here with what a vile gesture he accompanied his words, since the presence of her ladyship forbids it; but it enraged me and I began to antagonize him. It did not frighten him, for he was a daring character and paid me smart-money. I would have attacked him with a sword, but did not like to, on account of his low blood. I hated him like a pestilence, and he venomously hunted me. Once in the market-place of Tarashch, he fired and only missed me by a hair, and in return I split his head open with a hatchet. Twice I attacked his place with my followers, and twice he assaulted mine with his bandits. Neither of us could get the better of the other. I wanted to set the law in motion against him, but bah! what law is there in the Ukraine, when the smoking ruins of towns are still to be seen. He who can gather together a band of villains in the Ukraine may scorn the whole Commonwealth. That's

what he did, and blasphemed the name of our common mother, not considering for a moment, that by ennobling him, she had taken him to her breast and endowed him with privileges, by virtue of which he owned estates, and with that perfect liberty which he could not have enjoyed under any other dominion. If we could have met as neighbors, I could have argued with him, but we only saw each other with a gun in one hand and a fire-brand in the other. My hatred for him increased daily till my face became yellow. One sole thought possessed me, that was, to get possession of him. However, I realized that hatred was a sin and, to requite all his insults to our nobility, my only desire was to lacerate his skin with rods, and then, forgiving all his sins, as became a true Christian, merely to order him to be shot”

“But the Almighty ordained otherwise.”

“Outside the village I owned a fine bee-farm, and one day I went to look at it. Evening was coming on. I remained there for the space of almost ten ‘paters,’ when I heard a noise. I looked around; smoke hung above the village like a cloud. In another minute people came running towards me, crying, ‘The Horde, the Horde!’ And right behind the people a multitude was advancing. Arrows were falling as thick as rain-drops, and in every direction sheepskin coats and the devilish snouts of the Horde were to be seen. I, to my horse. But before I could get my foot in the stirrup, five or six lassos were about me. I struggled, for I was powerful at that time Nec Hercules! . . . Three months later, in company with other captives, I found myself in a Tartar village called Suhaydzig beyond Bakhche-Serai.”

“My master’s name was Salma Bey. He was a wealthy Tartar, but a savage man and cruel to captives. With whips we were driven to work in the fields and to dig wells. I wanted to ransom myself, for I was able to do so. By the medium of a certain Armenian, I sent letters to the holders of my estate, near Yaslo. Whether the letters were delivered, or the ransom intercepted, I know not, it is sufficient that it did not arrive. . . . They carried me to Tsarograd and sold me to the galleys.

“There is much to say about that city, for I doubt if in all the world there is one finer or larger. There, people are as numerous as grass on the steppes or stones in the Dniester. . . . The walls are grim and embattled, tower on tower. Dogs wander about the city mingling with the people in the parks;

they are not interfered with by the Turks, and it is therefore obvious that they feel themselves related to them, being dog-brothers themselves. Among them there are no ranks but nobles and slaves, and nothing more dreadful can be imagined than captivity among the Infidels. Heaven only knows whether it is true, but in the galleys I heard that those waters including the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn which flows to the heart of the City, have been produced by the tears of captives. Not a few of my own fell there.

“Awful is the Turkish Dominion, and no potentate has so many subject kings as the Sultan. The Turks themselves say if it had not been for Lekhistan (the name they give our mother-country) they would long since have been masters of the whole world. ‘Behind the Polish shoulders,’ they say, ‘the rest of the world dwells under injustice;’ for the Pole lies in front of the cross like a dog and bites our hands.’ And they are right, for so it was and so it is. . . Here in Khreptyov and the more distant posts of Mohilov, Yampol, and Rashkov, what else are we doing? There is an enormous amount of wickedness in our Commonwealth, but some day I think that God will take into account these, our deeds, and perhaps men will also.

“But to return to what occurred to me. The captives who are kept on shore in towns and villages groan under less suffering than those at the oars in galleys. For when once the galley-slaves have been riveted to the bench beside the oars they are never released neither night nor day, nor on feast-days; there they must live in chains till they die; and if the galley sinks in a battle, they too must sink with it. They are all naked, they are frozen with cold and soaked with rain, they are pinched with hunger, and for all this there is no remedy, but tears and dreadful labor, for the oars are so large and heavy that it takes two men to work one of them. . . .

“They took me there at night and riveted my chains in front of some companion in misfortune, whom I could not recognize in the darkness. When I heard the blows of the hammer, and the sound of the shackles,—Great God! it sounded to me as if they were driving nails into my coffin, and even that, I should rather have preferred. I prayed, but in my heart hope was as though it had been blown away by the wind. Akavadji silenced my moans with blows and I sat all night, till dawn. . . Then I glanced at the man who had to help me work the oar. Dear Jesus Christ! Guess who was in front of me? It was Didyuk!

"I recognized him immediately, although he was naked and emaciated and his beard reached to his belt, for it was long since he had been sold to the galleys. . . We gazed at each other, and he recognized me. . . We did not address a word to each other. . . Think what had happened to us. . . And yet, so great was our mutual rancour that not only did we not greet each other, but hatred flamed up anew in our hearts, and each gloated over the thought that his foe had to suffer the same as himself. . . The galley started on its voyage that same day. It was strange to pull the same oar with your greatest foe; to eat from the same dish with him food which even the dogs would not touch at home, to bear the same tyranny, to breathe the same air, to suffer and weep side by side. . . We rowed through the Hellespont and then the Archipelago. . . There are islands upon islands, and all under Turkish dominion. . . Both shores likewise, . . . the whole world. It was very hard. By day the heat was indescribable. The sun burned with such power that the water seemed to be aflame with it, and when that fire begun to tremble and leap on the waves, you would have said that a fiery rain was coming down. We were drowned in perspiration and our tongues clove to the roofs of our mouths. . . . At night the cold bit us like a dog. . . There was no relief anywhere—nothing, but suffering, grief for lost happiness, pangs, and torments. Words cannot express it. . . In one place in the land of Greece, from the vessel, we caught sight of the celebrated ruins of a temple erected by the Greeks in ancient days. Column stands beside column looking like gold, the marble is so yellow with age. It stood out sharply, as it was on a steep height, and there the sky is as blue as turquoise. . . After that we sailed around the Peloponesus. Day after day and week after week passed on without Didyuk and myself exchanging a single word, for our hearts were still full of pride and hostility. . . But under the hand of God we slowly began to break down. With excessive labor and changes of temperature the sinful flesh begun to fall from our bones; the wounds caused by the lash festered in the sun. All night we prayed for death. When I fell into a light doze, I could hear Didyuk cry, 'Christ, have mercy! Most pure and holy, have mercy! let me die!' He also could hear and see me stretch forth my hands to the Mother of God and her Child. . . And this is how it came to pass that the sea wind seemed to have blown the hatred out of our hearts. . . It

constantly grew less and less. . . At last, after weeping over myself, I came to weep over him. We then came to regard each other with changed eyes. Bah! we began to assist each other. When I would be overcome with sweat and mortal weariness, he would row alone. When he fell into the same condition I did the same for him. . . When they brought us a mess, each one wanted the other to have it; but, gentlemen, see how strange is man's nature! Speaking plainly we already loved one another and yet neither wanted to be the first to say the word. . . The rascal, the old Ukraine spirit. The change only came when matters were becoming dreadfully hard for us, and they said, 'to-morrow we shall come across the Venetian fleet.' Moreover, provisions were scarce and we were deprived of almost everything except the lash. Night came, we were faintly moaning, and in our different ways were praying more earnestly than ever. By the light of the moon I could see the tears running down his beard in streams. My heart smote me. I said: 'Didyuk, we come from the same locality; let us forgive each other!' When he heard this, great God! How he did sob and strain at his chains till they clanked! We fell into one another's arms across the oar and kissed and wept over each other. I can't tell you how long we were clasped in each other's arms, for we had forgotten ourselves, and shook with sobs."

At this point, Pan Mushalski stopped and passed his hand across his eyes. A moment's silence ensued and the cold north wind was heard whistling between the cracks of the beams, while the fire crackled and the crickets chirped in the room. Then Pan Mushalski gasped, drew a long breath and proceeded:

"As you will see, the Lord God blessed us and showed his favor to us in the end, but we paid dearly for our brotherly affection at the time. As we were embracing, we tangled up the chains, so that we could not disentangle them. The overseers came, first they separated us, then the lash was laid across our backs for more than an hour. They struck us without caring where, the blood flowed both from me and Didyuk and mingled in one stream as it trickled to the sea. But that is nothing, it's all over now, Glory be to God! . . .

"From that moment it never again came into my head that I was a descendant of the Samnites and he a recently-ennobled peasant from Byalotserkov. I could not have loved my own brother more than I loved him. I should not have cared

even if he had not been ennobled, though of course, I would rather that he should be one; and to the same degree that he had formerly requited my hatred he now returned me love and with interest. That was his nature. . . .

"The next day there was a battle. The Venetians dispersed our fleet to the four winds. Our galley was terribly injured by a culverin, and sought refuge at a little desert island, which was nothing more than a rock protruding from the sea. We had to make repairs; and, because all the soldiers had perished and we were short of hands, the officers had to unchain us and give us axes. Immediately upon landing I looked at Didyuk, but the same thought had occurred to him. 'Immediately?' he asked me. 'Immediately,' I said, and without any further thought I struck the chubach across the head and Didyuk served the captain in the same way. Then the others rose with us like a flame. In an hour we had made an end of the Turks. Then we made some kind of repairs to the galley, took our seats in it, unshackled, and the God of Mercy commanded the breezes to waft us to Venice.

"We gained the Commonwealth by begging our way. I shared my estate at Yaslo with Didyuk, and together we again sought the field to make reprisals for our tears and our blood. In the days of Podhayets, Didyuk traversed the Sich to join Sirka and accompanied him to the Crimea. Their deeds and exploits there are well known to you gentlemen!

"On his way back, Didyuk, glutted with vengeance, was slain by an arrow. Then I only was left, and every time I bend a bow, I do it for him, and among the present worthy company there are witnesses who can testify that on more than one occasion I have gladdened his spirit in that manner."

Here Pan Mushalski ended. Again all was silence, but for the howling of the north wind and the crackling of the flames. The old warrior fixed his eyes on the blazing logs and after a protracted silence concluded as follows:

"We have had Nalevayko and Loboda; we have had Khmyelnitski and now we have Dorosh; the earth has not drunk up all the blood. We are in the midst of strife and struggle and yet God has sown some seeds of love in our hearts and they lie in barren ground, so to speak, till under the tyranny and lash of the pagan, or under Tartar captivity, they unexpectedly bring forth fruit."

"Stuff and nonsense," suddenly cried Zagloba, as he awoke.

CHAPTER IV.

Mellekhovich was slowly recovering but, as he did not join in any expeditions, and was confined to his own room, no one paid any attention to him. But suddenly something occurred that attracted everybody's attention to him.

Pan Motovidlo's Cossacks captured a Tartar who was hanging about the Stanitsa in a suspicious manner, and brought him to Khreptyov. After a searching examination of the captive, he turned out to be a Lipkov Tartar, but one of those who had broken their fealty and deserted the Commonwealth to reside in the Sultan's dominions. He came from the other side of the Dniester and had a letter for Mellekhovich from Krychinski.

This greatly troubled Pan Volodiyovski, who immediately called a council of his chiefs.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you are all aware of how many Lipkov Tartars, even of those who have lived for time out of mind in Lithuania and here in Russia, have now joined the Horde, requiting the kindness of the Commonwealth with treason. We therefore ought not to put too much trust in any one of them, and should keep a watchful eye upon all their doings. There is also a small squadron of Lipkov Tartars, numbering one hundred and fifty good cavalry, led by Mellekhovich. I have not long been acquainted with Mellekhovich; I only know that the Hetman made him a captain for his great services, and sent him here with his men. It was, moreover, surprising to me, that not one of you had known or heard of him before he took service. . . . The fact that he is greatly loved and blindly obeyed by our Tartars I have accounted for by his courage and great exploits; but even they do not know who he is or whence he came. Trusting in the Hetman's recommendations, I have not hitherto been suspicious of him, nor have I watched him, though he surrounds himself with a certain amount of mystery. Some people have strange fancies, and as for me, it is not my business so long as every man performs his duty.

But you see, Pan Motovidlo's men have captured the Tartar who is the bearer of the letter to Mellekovich from Krychinski, and gentlemen, I am not aware whether you know who Krychinski is."

Pan Nyenashinyets exclaimed, "I am personally acquainted with Krychinski, and of course his evil notoriety has made his name familiar to us all."

"We went to school together . . ." Pan Zagloba was beginning; but recollecting that, in that case, Krychinski must be ninety years of age, and that men did not usually fight at that age, he stopped short.

"In a word," the little knight continued, "Krychinski is a Polish Tartar. He was colonel in one of our Tartar regiments, but he betrayed his country, and went over to the Dobrudja Horde, where I hear he has gained great influence, for there they are evidently in hopes that he will be able to induce the rest of the Lipkovs to join the Pagans. It is with this kind of man that Mellekhovich has entered into communication, the best proof of which is this letter, the substance of which is as follows:"

The little knight opened the letter, struck it with his hand, and commenced reading:

"Dearly Beloved Brother of my soul:—Your messenger came to us and delivered a letter. . . ."

"He writes in Polish," interrupted Zagloba.

"Like the rest of our Tartars, Krychinski is only acquainted with Russian and Polish," said the little knight, "and Mellekhovich also will certainly not gnaw in Tartar. Listen, gentlemen, and don't interrupt:"

"God grant that all may be well, and that you may succeed in all your desires. We often consult here with Moravski, Alexandrovich, Tarasovski and Grokholksi and communicate with other brethren to obtain their advice also as to the means by which all that thou, beloved, desirest may be brought about with least delay. We received news of how you have suffered in health, and so I send a man to see for himself how you are, and bring us good news. Be careful to keep the matter secret, for God forbid that it should prematurely come to light! May God multiply your descendants like the stars in the sky!"

Krychinski."

Pan Michael concluded, and gazed at those present, and, as they kept silent, evidently meditating on the contents of the letter, he said:

"Tarasovski, Moravski, Grokholski, and Aleksandrovich, were all formerly Tartar captains and traitors."

"So are Poturzynski, Tvorovski and Adurovich," added Pan Snitko.

"What have you to say to this letter?"

"Manifest treason, there's no doubt about that," said Pan Mushalski. "He is merely plotting with Mellekhovich to bring over our Lipkov Tartars to their side."

"By God, what danger this command is in!" cried several voices. "The Lipkovs would give their very souls for Mellekhovich, and, if he bids it, they will attack us at night."

"The blackest treason under the sun!" cried Pan Deyma.

"And it was the Hetman himself who made a captain of this Mellekhovich!" cried Pan Mushalski.

"Pan Snitko," said Zagloba, "what did I say when I first saw Mellekhovich? Did not I say that he had the eyes of a renegade and a traitor? Oh, a single glance was enough for me. Anyone else he might deceive, but not me. Pan Snitko, repeat what I said, but do not alter my words. Did not I proclaim him a traitor?"

Pan Snitko drew his legs under the bench and thrust out his head:

"In truth your lordship's farsightedness is to be marvelled at; truth is truth. I do not recollect your lordship calling him a traitor. Your lordship only said that he glared with the eyes of a wolf."

"Ha, ha! then, you hold that a dog is a traitor, and a wolf is not; that a wolf is not in the habit of biting the hand that caresses and feeds him! Then a dog is a traitor! Perhaps you will still stand up for Mellekhovich and make out that all the rest of us are traitors!"

Thus confounded, Pan Snitko opened his eyes and mouth wide and was too surprised to say another word for many minutes.

Meantime, Pan Mushalski, who was quick at coming to a decision, said, "We should first thank the Almighty for revealing such damnable plots and then send for six dragoons to put a bullet through Mellekhovich's head."

"And appoint another setnik," added Nyenashinyets.

"The treason of that is so manifest that one can not be silent about it."

"First," continued Pan Michael, "we must examine Mellekhovich and then advise the Hetman of these plots, for,

as Pan Bogush from Zienbits informed me, the Lipkovs are great favorites with the Crown Marshal."

"But, sir!" said Pan Motovidlo, turning to the little knight, "a general court-martial will be more than Mellekhovich is entitled to, as he has never been an officer before."

"I know what my powers are," said Pan Michael, "and do not need to be reminded of them."

Then the others began to exclaim:

"Let the son . . . be brought before us, the traitor!"

The loud cries aroused Zagloba, who had been taking a little doze, as he was always doing now. He was not long in recalling the subject of conversation, and said:

"No, Pan Snitko, the moon is obscured in your gem, but your wit is obscured still more, for no one could discover it with a candle. The idea of saying that a dog, a faithful dog, is a traitor, and a wolf not one! Allow me to say you are speaking out of your boots."

Pan Snitko lifted his eyes to the heavens to show how he suffered innocently, but he did not want to offend the old gentleman by contradicting him, moreover, Pan Michael ordered him to fetch Mellekhovich, and so he hastily departed, glad of the excuse to escape.

He soon returned with the young Tartar, who as yet was evidently ignorant of the capture of the Lipka. His swarthy and handsome countenance had become very pale, but he had recovered his health, and not even a handkerchief bound his head; it was simply covered with a velvet Crimean cap.

Everybody's eyes were fixed on him as intently as on a rainbow. He made a rather low bow to the little knight and then a rather haughty one to the rest of the company.

"Mellekhovich," said Pan Michael, sharply, glancing at the Tartar, "are you acquainted with Colonel Krychinski?"

A sudden and menacing glance flitted across the countenance of Mellekhovich.

"I know him."

"Read that," said the little knight, handing him the letter found on the Lipka.

Mellekhovich began to read it, but before he had come to the end, his face had recovered its tranquility.

"I await your commands," he said as he returned the letter.

"How long have you been hatching treason, and who are your confederates in Khreptyov?"

"Then am I accused of treason?"

"Answer! Ask no questions!" cried the little knight, threateningly.

"Then this is my answer. I have not been hatching treason, nor have I any confederates, or if I have, they are not within your jurisdiction."

As they heard this the officers ground their teeth and immediately threatening voices were heard:

"More humbly, you son of a dog, more humbly! Remember you are in the presence of your superiors."

At that, Mellekhovich cast upon them a cold glance of hatred.

"I know what is due to my commander as my superior," he replied bowing repeatedly to Pan Michael. "I know that you gentlemen regard me as your inferior, and your society I do not want. Your grace," he continued (turning again to the little knight), "asked me of confederates. I have two in this business, one is Pan Bogush, Pod-Stollik¹ of Novgorod, and the other is the Grand Hetman of the Commonwealth."

On hearing these words they were greatly amazed, and silence fell on them all for a time; finally Pan Michael asked:

"How is that?"

"In this way," Mellekhovich replied, "Krychinski, Moravski, Tvorovski, Aleksandrovich and the others joined the Horde and greatly injured the fatherland, but they did not find much fortune in the new service they had taken. Perhaps too, their conscience pricked them, anyhow, the name traitor is bitter to them. The Hetman knows this well and has entrusted Pan Bogush and Pan Myslishevski with the task of bringing them back beneath the banner of the Commonwealth. Pan Bogush has employed me on this mission and ordered me to come to an understanding with Krychinski. In my quarters there are letters from Pan Bogush which will convince your grace more than any words of mine."

"Accompany Pan Snitko to fetch those letters here at once."

Mellekhovich departed.

"Gentlemen," hastily cried the little knight, "we have greatly offended this soldier by our precipitate judgment;

¹ Pod Stollik under carver—an honorary title of former Polish nobility.

for if those letters are in his possession, and I begin to think that they are, he is telling the truth. Moreover, not only is he a cavalier, celebrated for his military exploits, but one who is anxious for the welfare of the country, and on that account he should meet with recompense and not unjust judgment. For God's sake, this must be remedied quickly."

The others all held their peace, not knowing what to say, and Pan Zagloba shut his eyes and pretended to be asleep.

In the meantime, Mellekhovich returned and handed Bogush's letter to the little knight.

The little knight read as follows:

"On every side I hear that no man is more fitted for such a service than you, on account of the marvellous affection in which you are held by these men. The Hetman is ready to forgive them and promises the pardon of the Commonwealth. Communicate with Krychinski as often as possible by means of trustworthy agents and promise to reward him. Keep it strictly secret or otherwise, as God lives, you will ruin them all. You may disclose the matter to Pan Volodiyovski, for your commander may be of great service to you. Spare no labors or efforts in view of the end crowning the work, and be sure that our Mother will requite your good-will with equal love."

"And this is my reward!" darkly muttered the young Tartar.

"By the Great God! why did you not tell us of this?" cried Pan Michael.

"I wanted to tell your lordship everything, but I had no opportunity, as I was ill after the accident. Before these gentlemen (here Mellekhovich turned to the officers) I had a secret that I was forbidden to tell. Your lordship will surely enjoin that secrecy on them now, so as not to ruin those other men!"

"The proofs of your honesty are so clear that a blind man could not deny them," replied the little knight. "Carry on the business with Krychinski. In this you will have no hindrance, but help, in proof of which, I give you my hand as an honorable knight. Come and join me at supper this evening."

Mellekhovich clasped the hand held out to him and bowed the third time. From every corner of the room the other officers advanced towards him, saying:

"We did not know you, but every lover of virtue will not withhold his hand from you to-day."

But the young Tartar suddenly straightened himself and held back his head, like a bird of prey about to peck, and exclaimed:

"I am standing in the presence of my superiors."

He then left the room.

After he had gone, the clamor broke out. The officers said to each other, "It is no wonder that his heart is still indignant at the injustice, but that will disappear in time. We must treat him differently. He is of the true knightly metal. The Hetman knew what he was about. Miracles are taking place; well, well!"

Pan Snitko was triumphing in silence till he could contain himself no longer, but, approaching Pan Zagloba, he bent over, and said:

"Allow me, sir, but that wolf was no traitor. . . ."

"No traitor!" retorted Zagloba, "he was a traitor, though a virtuous one, since he betrayed not us, but the Horde. . . . Fear not, Pan Snitko; to-day I will offer up prayers for your wit and perchance the Holy Ghost may take compassion on you."

Basia was greatly relieved when Zagloba told her all about the business, for she had a great liking and pity for Mellekhovich.

"It is necessary," she said, "that Michael and I should intentionally accompany him on his first expedition of danger, for by that means we shall best be able to show our confidence in him."

But the little knight stroked Basia's rosy cheeks and replied:

"Oh distressed fly, I know you, you don't care so much about Mellekhovich; what you want is to buzz off into the steppes and take part in a battle. But that can never be."

Then he began to kiss her mouth again and again.

"Mulier insidiosa est" (woman is wily), said Zagloba, sententiously.

Meanwhile Mellekhovich was sitting in his own room whispering to the Lipka. The pair were sitting so close together that their heads almost touched. A lamp of sheep's tallow was burning on the table, casting a yellow glow on the face of Mellekhovich which, notwithstanding its beauty, was simply terrible: and in it was depicted rancor, cruelty, and wild joy.

"Halim, listen!" Mellekhovich whispered.

"Effendi!" responded the messenger.

"Tell Krychinski that he was wise, for there was nothing to hurt me in the letter; tell him that he was wise. Let him never write more openly. . . . Now they will trust me even more fully. . . . Every one of them! The very Hetman, Bogush, Myslishevski and this whole post, all! Do you hear? May the pestilence choke them."

"I hear, Effendi!"

"But I must first go to Rashkov, and then I will return here."

"Effendi, young Novovyeyski will recognize you."

"No he won't. He saw me at Kalnik and Bratslav and did not know me. He will look at me and pucker his brow, but he will not recognize me. He was fifteen years of age when I ran away. Since then, the winter has whitened the steppes eight times. I have altered. The old man would know me, but not the young one. . . . I will let you know from Rashkov. Let Krychinski hold himself in readiness in the vicinity. You must keep in touch with the Perkulabs. Moreover our regiment is in Yampol. I will induce Bogush to get an order for me from the Hetman saying that I can more easily deal with Krychinski from there. But I must return here. . . . I must. . . . I don't know what will happen, or how I shall manage. . . . I am consumed with a raging fire. Sleep is banished from my eyes. . . . If not for her, I might as well be dead."

"Her hands be blessed."

Mellekhovich's lips began to quiver, and again leaning towards the messenger, he whispered feverishly:

"Halim! blessings on her hands, blessings on her head, blessings on the earth she treads on. Do you hear, Halim? Tell them that because of her, I am well."

CHAPTER V.

In his youth Father Kaminski had been a soldier and a cavalier of a lively disposition; at present he was stationed at Ushytza attempting to restore a parish. But as the church was in ruins and in want of parishioners, this flockless pastor went to Khreptyov and remained there for several weeks, bestowing his pious instruction to edify the knights.

A few evenings after Pan Mushalski's story, to which he listened attentively, he said to the assembly:

"I always enjoy hearing stories in which misfortunes end happily, for they teach us that God's guiding hand can bring rescue from the enemy and can lead from the Crimea to the peaceful roof.

"Therefore, once for all, let each one of you remember this: With the Lord nothing is impossible, therefore let none of you, even in the utmost extremity, fail to put your trust in His mercy."

"This is the fact!"

"It was commendable in Pan Mushalski to love a common man with fraternal affection. The example has been set by the Saviour Himself, when he, though of royal blood, loved common people, chose his apostles from them, and gave them his divine patronage, elevating them so highly that now they have seats in the heavenly senate."

"Yet personal love is different from universal love—that of one nation to another. Our Lord and Redeemer observed both with equal faithfulness. Where do we find this love? If you look through the world you find such universal hatred in all hearts that it seems as though mankind followed the commandments of the Devil and not those of the Lord."

"It will be difficult, your grace," remarked Pan Zagloba, "to convince us that we have to love Turks, Tartars, and other barbarians whom even the Lord God must Himself despise."

"I am not begging you to do that, but I do insist upon this; that children of the same mother should love each other;

but how is it? Since the time of Khmyelnitski, or for thirty years, these regions have been drenched with blood."

"Whose fault is that?"

"Whoso will first confess his fault, him God will pardon."

"Your grace is in priest's vestments to-day; but in your youth, as we have heard, you slew rebels with no better conscience than the others."

"I slew them, for, as a soldier, it was my duty. In that there was no sin, but my sin consisted in hating them like the plague. I had private reasons for this, which I will not speak of, for the time has long since passed and the wound is now dried up. I am sorry that I overstepped my duty. I had a hundred men from the squadron of Pan Nyevodovski under my command; and, acting independently with my force, I often burned, massacred, and hanged. . . . Gentlemen, you know what times those were. Called in by Khmyelnitski, the Tartars burned and slaughtered; and we did the same. We burned and slaughtered; the Cossacks, committing worse atrocities than ours or the Tartar's, left nothing in their trail save land and water. Nothing is more terrible than civil war. . . . Such times they were, no one can gainsay it; enough that we and they fought more like mad dogs than human beings. . . . Once news came to our quarters that the rabble had laid siege to Pan Rusyetski in his fortalice. I was despatched with my command to the rescue. I arrived too late; the fortalice was razed to the ground. I instantly fell upon the drunken peasants and mowed them down; only a few escaped by hiding in the wheat. I commanded that these be taken alive and hanged as an example. But where? This was easier said than done; there was not a single tree left standing in the village; even the pear trees that bordered the fields were destroyed. There was not time to erect gibbets; and as this land was among the steppes there was not a single forest. What was to be done? I marched on with my prisoners. Perhaps, sooner or later I shall come across a forked young oak, I thought. I went one mile, two miles,—steppe after steppe; you could have rolled a ball over them. Presently, towards evening, we found traces of a village. I looked about me, here and there were piles of cinders and grey ashes, and that was all! On the side of a small hill there stood a great oaken cross, which seemed to be new, for the wood had not turned dark, and it therefore shone in the twilight like a fire. Upon it there was a tin Christ, cut

and painted in such a life-like manner that you would have thought it a real statue until you viewed it from the side and saw the sheet of tin; the face was as if still alive, and pale with agony; on the head was a crown of thorns; the eyes were raised upwards with a wonderful expression of terrible sorrow and sadness. When I saw that cross, the thought flashed through my mind: "There is your tree; you will find none other;" but instantly I became frightened. In the name of the Father, and of the Son! I will not hang them on the cross. But, thinking to bring comfort to the eyes of Christ if I gave command in His presence to kill those who had spilled so much guiltless blood, I said: "O dear Lord, let it seem to Thee that these murderers are the Jews who nailed Thee to the cross, for these are no better than those. I then ordered my men to drag the captives, one by one, to the mound beneath the cross and cut them down. There were among them old gray-haired peasants and youths. The first one who was brought said: 'By the Passion of our Lord, by that Christ, have mercy upon me, sir!' and my answer was: 'Off with his head!' A dragoon cut and slashed. . . . Another was brought; the same thing occurred: 'By that merciful Christ have pity upon me!' And my answer was again: 'Off with his head!' The same thing happened with the third, the fourth, and the fifth; there were fourteen altogether, and every one of them implored me, by Christ. . . . Twilight had faded when we ended. I ordered them to be placed in a circle around the foot of the cross. . . . Fool that I was in thinking to please the only Son with this spectacle! They moved for some time,—one with his hands, another with his feet, while at times another threw himself up like a fish just pulled out of water; but this did not last long; their bodies soon lost all power and silently they lay surrounding the cross like a chaplet. . . ."

As the darkness had now fallen, I decided to remain in this spot all night, notwithstanding the fact that there were no materials for a fire. God granted us a warm day, and my soldiers lay down on their horse-blankets; but I went to the cross to repeat the usual 'Pater' at the feet of Christ and commit myself to His mercy. I thought my prayer would be more graciously accepted because I had spent the day in labor and such deeds, which I counted to myself as a service.

"Sometimes a weary soldier will fall asleep at his evening prayers. This happened to me. The dragoons, who saw me

kneeling with my head resting on the cross, believed that I was deep in pious meditation, and would not disturb me; my eyes closed instantly; and that cross inspired a marvellous dream. I will not say that I had a vision for I was not, and am not, worthy of that; but, although I was fast asleep, I saw the whole Passion of our Lord as plainly as if I had been awake. . . While witnessing the sufferings of the innocent Lamb, my heart broke, tears fell from my eyes, and I was filled with boundless pity. 'O Lord,' I said, 'I have a handful of good men. Wilt Thou see what our cavalry can do? Only nod thy head and in one moment my sabres shall despatch such sons, Thy executioners!' Just as I said this, everything vanished; there remained only the cross and Christ on it weeping tears of blood. . . Then, sobbing, I embraced the foot of the holy cross. How long I wept I know not; but, after I had become calmer, I again exclaimed: 'O Lord, O Lord! why didst thou give Thy holy teaching to hardened Jews? Hadst Thou come from Palestine to our Commonwealth, surely we would not have nailed Thee to the cross, but have received Thee royally, given Thee precious gifts, and ennobled Thee for the aggrandisement Thy divine glory. Why didst Thou not do this, O Lord?' "

"Then I lifted my eyes,—(you remember, gentlemen, this was all a dream,)—and what do I behold? Our Lord looks sternly upon me; He frowns, and then says suddenly and loudly: 'Your nobility is cheap; any mean fellow may buy it during war, but no more of this! You and the rabble are worthy of each other; and each of you is worse than the Jews, for you nail me here on the cross every day. . . Have I not commanded love, even for enemies, and forgiveness of sins? But you tear out each other's entrails like wild beasts. I, witnessing this, suffer unendurable agony. And you, who would release me from it and bring me to the Commonwealth, what have you done? See, you have bespattered the foot of my cross with blood and placed corpses around it; and among these some are innocent youths, or blinded men who have no discernment whatever, followed the others like silly sheep. Did you show mercy to them; did you judge them before slaughter? No! You ordered them to be slain for my sake, and thought you would bring comfort to me. In truth, it is one thing to reprove and punish, as a father punishes his son, or as an elder brother a younger brother, and another thing to show vengeance and cruelty without judgment or measure.

It has come to that, that this land is so terrible that wolves are more merciful than men; the grass sweats bloody dew; the storms howl, and do not blow; the rivers flow with tears; and people imploringly hold out their hands to death, crying, 'Our refuge!' . . ."

"'O Lord,' I cried, 'are these men better than we? Which of us has committed the greatest cruelty? Who brought the Pagan here?'

"'Love them while you chastise them,' said the Lord, 'and then the cataract will fall from their eyes, hardness will leave their hearts, and my mercy will be upon you. If you act otherwise, the Tartars will come and bind you and them, and compel you to serve the enemy in suffering, in tears, and in contempt, until the time comes when you do love each other. But if you persist in boundless hatred, neither of you will receive mercy, and for ages upon ages will the Pagan possess this land.'

"On hearing such commandments, I became terrified, and for a long time I was unable to speak, finally, falling on my face, I asked:

"'O Lord, what must I do to wash away my sins?'

"The Lord answered:

"'Go, repeat my commandment; proclaim love.'

"After this reply, my dream ended.

"As the summer night is short, I woke up at dawn all wet with the dew. I looked around me; the heads were lying as a garland around the cross, but they had already become blue; a miracle had happened, yesterday I had gloated over that sight, and to-day I was seized with horror, especially at the aspect of one youth about seventeen years of age, of exceeding beauty. I ordered the soldiers to give the bodies decent burial under that cross, and from that day forth, I was a different man.

"At first I said to myself, that the dream was an illusion; but still it haunted my mind and seemed to take possession of my whole being. I did not dare to imagine that the Lord himself had spoken to me, for, as I have already said, I did not feel myself worthy of that; but perhaps conscience, silent in times of war, lurking like a Tartar in the grass, suddenly spoke forth and proclaimed the will of God. I went to confession and the priest confirmed this idea. He said, 'It is the manifest will and premonition of the Lord, listen to it, or it will not be well with thee.'

"Thenceforth, I began to preach love.

"But the companions and officers laughed in my face. 'What?' they cried, 'is this a priest come to teach us? Is it a small outrage that these dog brothers have wrought against God, are the churches they have burned few, are the crosses that they have desecrated insignificant in number? Are we to love them for all this?' In a word nobody would listen to me."

"After Berestechka, I assumed this religious garb so as to proclaim the word and will of God with greater dignity. I have done this without ceasing for more than twenty years. Already my hair has grown white. . . God is merciful; He will not punish me because, so far, my voice is merely a voice crying in the wilderness."

"Gentlemen, love your enemies, punish them like a father and reprove them like an elder brother, otherwise, woe to them and woe to you, and woe to the whole Commonwealth."

"Look about you; what is the result of this war and hatred of brother for brother? This country has become a desert: in Ushytsa I have graves instead of parishioners; churches, towns, and villages are all in ruins; the power of the infidel is rising and overwhelming us like a sea which is about to swallow up even thee, Rock of Kamenets."

Pan Nyenashinyets listened to the words of the priest with great emotion, till his forehead was beaded with sweat, then amid universal silence, he spoke as follows:

"That the Cossacks have worthy men among them is proved by the presence among us of Pan Motovidlo, whom we all love and respect. But as for that universal love, of which priest Kaminski has spoken so eloquently, I confess that so far I have lived in great sin, for that love has not been in me, nor have I striven to gain it. Now, however, his Reverence has somewhat opened my eyes. Without God's special grace, such love will never dwell in my heart, for there I harbor the memory of a cruel wrong of which I will tell you in a few words."

"Let us have something warm to drink," cried Zagloba.

"Put more fire to the yoke-elm," said Basia to the servants.

And in a few moments the large room again glowed with the blaze, and a flagon of heated beer was placed before each knight by an attendant. They all gladly moistened their moustaches in it, and when they had taken a couple of

draughts, Pan Nyenashinyets again began in tones that sounded like the rumbling of a wagon:

“On her dying bed, my mother committed my sister to my care; her name was Halshka.¹ I had neither wife nor child, and so I loved her as the apple of my eye. She was twenty years younger than I, and I carried her about in my arms. I regarded her exactly as if she were my own child. Some years afterwards, I took the field and the horde captured her. When I returned, I beat my head against the wall. All my possessions had disappeared during the incursion; but I sold all I had left, strapped my last saddle on a horse, and went away with some Armenians to ransom my sister. I discovered her in Bakhche-Serai. She was attached to the harem, but not in it, for as yet she was only twelve years old. I shall never forget the hour when I found thee, O Halshka! How she did cling about my neck; how she did kiss me on the eyes. But what then! The money that I had brought with me proved to be insufficient. She was a beautiful girl. Yehu Aga, who had carried her off, wanted three times as much for her. I offered to throw myself in, but it would not do. She was bought in the open market before my very eyes by Tukhay Bey, that notorious foe of ours, who wanted to keep her in his harem three years, and then marry her. I returned home tearing my hair. On the way I discovered that, in a Tartar village by the sea, one of Tukhay Bey’s wives was living with his favorite son, Azya. Tukhay Bey had wives in every town and in many villages, so that wherever he went, he would have a roof of his own, under which he might rest. Hearing of this son, I thought that God had provided me with a last means of saving Halshka. I immediately determined to carry off that son and exchange him for my sister, but I could not do this without help. It was necessary to gather together a company in the Ukraine, or in the Wild Fields, which was far from easy; in the first place because Tukhay Bey’s name was dreaded throughout Russia, and in the second place, because he was in alliance with the Cossacks against us. But more than one brave Cossack was wandering about the steppes, men who were out for their own profit and were willing to go anywhere for booty. I gathered a famous band of these together. No words can express what we endured before our boats arrived at the coast, for we had to hide from the Cos-

¹ Helena.

sack leaders. - But God helped us. I captured Azya and a magnificent booty with him. We got back safely to the Wild Fields. From there, I wanted to go to Kamenets and enter into negotiations with merchants of that place.

"I shared out the whole plunder among the Cossacks, only reserving Tukhay Bey's pup for myself; and, because I had been so liberal with them, shared so many dangers, endured hunger, and risked my life with them, I thought that every one of them would go through the fire for me, and that I had won their hearts for all time."

"I had reason to repent bitterly of my confidence, and that soon.

"It had never entered my head that they would turn and tear to pieces their own Ataman and then share his booty among themselves. I forgot that among those men there is neither faith, nor virtue, nor gratitude, nor conscience. . . Not far from Kamenets the hope of a great ransom for Azya tempted my followers. They fell on me in the night like wolves, strangled me with a rope, stabbed me with knives, and finally, thinking me dead, cast me aside in the wilderness and fled with the boy.

"God sent me rescue and restored me to health; but my Halshka was lost forever. Perhaps she is still living there somewhere; perhaps on Tukhay Bey's death, she was taken by another Infidel; perhaps she has accepted the faith of Mohammed; perhaps she has forgotten her brother; perhaps even some day her son may shed my blood. . . That is my tale."

Here Pan Nyenashinyets ceased and gazed gloomily on the ground.

"What rivers of our blood and tears have flowed for this land!" cried Mushalski.

"Thou shalt love thine enemies," ejaculated Father Kaminski.

"And when you were restored to health, didn't you hunt for that pup?" asked Zagloba.

"I afterwards learned that another band fell on those who robbed me," answered Pan Nyenashinyets, "and cut them to pieces, and the child must have been captured with the other spoil. I hunted everywhere, but he had disappeared like a stone cast into the water."

"Perhaps you met him afterwards and could not recognize him!" Basia suggested.

"I don't know if the child was even three years of age. I

knew nothing except that his name was Azya. But I could have identified him, because on each side of his breast he had a fish tattooed in blue."

Suddenly Mellekhovich, who had hitherto been sitting in silence, cried in peculiar accents from his corner of the room:

"You could not have told him by the fish, because many Tartars have the same sign, particularly those who dwell near the water."

"That's not true," cried the rugged Pan Hromyka, for after Berestechka I examined the corpse of Tukhay Bey, for it was left on the field, and I know that he had a fish on his breast, and the other dead Tartars all had different marks."

"But I tell you, sir, that many bear fish."

"True, but they are all of the Tukhay Bey breed."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Pan Lelchyts, whom Pan Michael had sent out on a scouting expedition that morning, and who had just returned.

"Colonel," he said, as he entered, "there is some kind of a detachment advancing in this direction from Sirotski Brod on the Moldavian side."

"What sort of people are they?" asked Pan Michael.

"Bandits. A few of them are Wallachians, and a few Hungarians, most of them are stragglers from the Horde, and there are about two hundred in all."

"They must be the same of whom I have heard making a raid on the Moldavian side," said Pan Michael. The Perkulab must have made it warm for them there, so they are escaping in this direction; but there are about two hundred of the Horde alone. They will cross at night, and we will intercept them at dawn. Motovidlo and Mellekhovich will be ready at midnight. Drive a small herd of cattle to attract them and now to your quarters."

The soldiers then separated, but they had not all left the room before Basia ran up to her husband, threw her arms about his neck and began to whisper in his ear. He laughed and shook his head repeatedly, but evidently she was insisting, as she encircled his neck more coaxingly. When Zagloba saw this, he cried:

"Let her have this pleasure for once; if you will. I, the old man, will jog along with you."

CHAPTER VI.

Detached bands who occupied themselves with robbery on both sides of the Dniester included men of all nationalities from the border countries. Fugitive Tartars from the Dobrudja and Byalogrod Hordes, still more savage and courageous than their brethren of the Crimea, always formed the majority; neither were there wanting Wallachians, Cossacks, Hungarians, and Polish servants, who had escaped from military posts near the banks of the Dniester. They alternately ravaged the Polish and the Wallachian side, constantly crossing the boundary river, according to whether they were hunted by the forces of the Perkulav or by the Commonwealth commanders. They had almost inaccessible lurking places in the ravines, forests, and caves. The spoil they chiefly sought was the herds of horses and cattle, belonging to the military posts; these herds remained on the steppes even through the winter, finding their sustenance under the snow. But in addition the robbers attacked villages, farms, hamlets, and small military detachments, Polish and even Turkish merchants and agents who were going to the Crimea with ransom. These bands had their own leaders and organization, and seldom combined their forces.

Indeed it frequently happened that the larger bands destroyed the smaller ones. They had greatly multiplied all through the Russian dominions, especially since the Cossack wars, when all kinds of order and safety disappeared. The bands on the Dniester joined by stragglers from the Horde, were particularly formidable. Some of them even numbered as many as five hundred. Their chiefs assumed the title of Bey. They ravaged the country in the characteristic manner of the Tartar, and more than once the commanders themselves could not tell whether they were dealing with bandits or with advanced chambuls of the entire Horde. These bodies could not make a stand in the open field against mounted troops, especially the cavalry of the Commonwealth, but, when they were caught in a trap, they fought with des-

peration, being perfectly well aware that if they were captured, the gibbet and cord was their lot. They were variously armed. They were short of bows and muskets, but these were of little use in their night assaults. The majority were armed with daggers and Turkish yataghans, loaded sticks, Tartar swords, and horse-jaws fastened to oak limbs with thongs. The latter weapon, in a skilful hand, did terrible execution, for it could shatter any sword. Some had long pitchforks with sharp iron points, and some had spears, which on emergency they employed against the cavalry.

The band at Sirotski Brod must have been in extremes on the Moldavian side, since it had dared to approach the Khreptyov post, notwithstanding the terror inspired by the very name of Pan Michael among the bandits on both sides of the border. In fact, another scout brought the news that it comprised more than four hundred men, led by Azba Bey, a celebrated raider, who, for many years had terrorized the Polish and Moldavian sides of the river.

Pan Michael was delighted when he heard with whom he had to deal, and at once issued the necessary orders. In addition to Mellekhovich and Pan Motovidlo, the squadron of the General of Podolia was employed, as well as that of the sub-governor of Pshemysl. They started in the night, taking different routes, for, like fishers who cast their nets in winter over a considerable expanse, so as to come together afterwards at one outlet in the ice, so these detachments, taking a wide circuit, were to meet at Sirotski Brod about daybreak.

With a beating heart, Basia assisted at the departure of the troops, as this was her first experience of war, and her spirits rose at the sight of these old wolves of the steppes. They set out so noiselessly, that, in the fortalice itself, they could scarcely be heard. The bits did not jingle, nor did stirrup strike against stirrup, nor sabre against sabre, nor did a horse neigh. It was a calm and unusually luminous night. The full moon brightly illuminated the hills of the post and the steppes, which were rolling ground; and yet, scarcely had a company passed the stockade, the sabres glinting silverly in the moonlight, when it disappeared like a covey of partridges among waving grass. There was something mysterious in this march. To Basia they looked like sportsmen going out to the same hunt, which was to begin at dawn, and for that reason were moving with care and quiet,

so as not to start the game too soon. She was therefore exceedingly anxious to share in the sport.

Pan Michael made no opposition, because Zagloba had induced him to give his consent. Moreover, he knew he would have to gratify Basia's desire some day or other, and so he preferred to do it at once, particularly as these raiders were not accustomed to bows and guns.

However, they did not start for three hours after the first squadron had gone, because Pan Michael had made the following arrangements. Pan Mushalski, with twenty of Linkhauz's dragoons and a sargeant, all Mazovians and picked men, accompanied them, and behind these swords the colonel's charming wife was as safe as in her own room at home.

As she had to stride a man's saddle she was dressed accordingly; she wore a pair of pearl velvet trousers, very baggy and looking like a petticoat, stuffed into little yellow saffian boots; a little gray overcoat lined with white Crimean sheep-skin, and ornamented with embroidery down the seams; she carried a beautifully-worked silver ammunition pouch and a light Turkish sabre in a silken belt, with pistols in her holsters. On her head was a cap covered with Venetian velvet, ornamented with a heron's plume and bordered with lynx-skin; under the cap peeped out a bright, rosy, almost infantile face, and two inquisitive eyes that glowed like coals.

Thus armed, and bestriding a chestnut pony, gentle and swift as a deer, she looked like a Hetman's child, who under the care of seasoned warriors, was about to take a first lesson. Moreover, the figure she cut surprised them all. Pan Zagloba and Pan Mushalski nudged each other with their elbows and kept on kissing their hands as a mark of extreme homage to Basia; they both joined Pan Michael in allaying her anxiety about their late departure.

"You have no knowledge of war," said the little knight, "and you reproach us with wanting to let you arrive on the field only when the battle is over. Some of the troops go straight there, others have to make a *détour*, so as to surround them, and then they will silently join the others, catching the enemy in a trap. We shall get there in plenty of time and nothing will happen until we arrive, for the time has been carefully calculated."

"Suppose the foe takes alarm and escapes between the various squadrons?"

"He is wary and watchful, but his kind of warfare is nothing new to us."

"Trust to Michael," exclaimed Zagloba, "no one has had more experience than he. Their evil destiny sent those bullock-drivers in our direction."

"I was quite young at Lubni," said Pan Michael, "and even then they entrusted me with this kind of work. On this occasion, to let you see the affair, I have been unusually careful in my dispositions. The various bodies will unite at the same moment in the presence of the foe. They will raise a shout in unison, and together they will charge the bandits, as if at the crack of the same whip."

"Oh, oh!" piped Basia delightedly; and, standing up in her stirrups, she threw her arm around the little knight's neck. "And may I charge too? Eh, Michael, dear, eh?" she cried, her eyes sparkling.

"I will not allow you to go into the *mêlee*, for an accident might easily happen in the press, not to speak of the fact that your horse might stumble; but I have given orders to loosen the reins immediately they have scattered the band that is driven against us, and then you may cut down a man or two, only you must always attack on the left, because then it will not be easy for the fugitive to strike at you across his horse, while you will have him in your power."

"Ho, ho!" cried Basia, "never fear, you, yourself, said that I can use the sabre far better than Uncle Makovyetski; don't try to teach me!"

"Remember to keep a firm hold on the bridle," said Zagloba. "They have tricks of their own, and when you are pursuing, perhaps the fugitive may suddenly wheel his horse and halt, and strike you as you pass by. An experienced soldier never lets out his horse too much, but always keeps him under control."

"And never raise your sabre too high, for fear of exposing yourself to a thrust," said Pan Mushalski.

"I shall be near to guard against any accident," said the little knight. "You see, in a battle, the whole trouble is that you have everything to remember at once; the horse, the foe, the rein, the sabre, the stroke, and the thrust, all at once. To the veteran, it comes naturally, but at first the very best fencers often make a mess of it, and any ordinary soldier, simply by being used to it, can unhorse a beginner who has much more skill than himself. . . . So I will stay beside you."

"But do not help me, and order all the men not to help me, except at need."

"Well, well! we will see what your courage is when put to the test," laughed the little knight.

"And whether you won't seize one of us by the coat-tails," concluded Zagloba.

"We shall see," cried Basia indignantly.

In this kind of conversation they arrived at a place covered with thickets. It was now near dawn, but it had grown darker, as the moon had set. A light mist had begun to rise from the earth, obscuring distant objects. In the mist and darkness the distant indistinct clumps assumed the shape of living beings and excited Basia's imagination. More than once she thought that she clearly distinguished men and horses.

"What is that, Michael?" she whispered, as she pointed with her finger.

"Nothing! growths!"

"I thought it was horsemen. Shall we soon be there now?"

"The business will begin in about an hour and a half."

"Ah!"

"Are you afraid?"

"No, but my heart beats with anticipation, I, afraid? Not a bit of it. . . . Look what a heavy hoar-frost! It is visible although it's dark."

In truth, they were riding across a stretch of country where the long steppe-grasses were heavy with rime. Pan Michael looked and exclaimed:

"Motovidlo came this way. He must be hiding only two miles away. The day is already breaking."

Indeed it was dawn. It was getting lighter. The heavens and the earth were growing gray and the atmosphere was paling; the tops of the trees and bushes looked as if turning to silver. Distant clumps gradually became visible as if intervening curtains were being lifted one by one. Suddenly a horseman issued from a neighboring coppice.

"From Pan Motovidlo?" asked Pan Michael, as the Cossack halted immediately in front of them.

"Yes, your lordship."

"What is the news?"

"They crossed Sirotski Brod, then turned to where the cattle were lowing, and then went towards Kalusik. They took the cattle and are now at Yurgove Polye."

"And where is Pan Motovidlo?"

"He has halted near the hill, and Pan Mellekhovich near Kalusik. I don't know where the other squadrons are."

"Good," exclaimed Pan Michael, "I know. Hasten to Pan Motovidlo and order him to close in and station men singly half-way towards Pan Mellekhovich. Be quick!"

The Cossack bowed on his saddle and darted forward, so that his horse's flanks immediately began to heave, and he was quickly out of sight. They rode on, still more quietly and cautiously. Meanwhile it had become broad daylight. The mist, which at dawn had risen from the ground, was now dissipated, and in the eastern heavens, a long streak of rosy light appeared, which cast its colored reflection upon the higher points of ground, the edges of the ravines, and the heights.

Then, a confused sound of croaking fell on their ears, from the direction of the Dniester, and, high above them in the air, appeared a great flock of ravens, flying towards the east. At every moment a single bird would leave the others, and instead of flying straight on, would describe a circle as kites and falcons do, when on the watch for prey.

Pan Zagloba raised his sabre, and pointing it at the ravens, said to Basia:

"Admire the instinct of those birds, just as soon as there is a battle anywhere, they will come from every direction, as if some one had shaken them out of a bag. But only let an army march alone or advance to meet allies, and not one of them appears, therefore, these creatures are able to divine man's intentions, without any assistance. Their sense of smell cannot assist them in such a case, and, therefore, you have cause for marvel."

In the meantime, the birds had come very close, croaking louder and louder; Pan Mushalski, therefore, turned to the little knight and said, as he slapped his bow:

"Colonel, is it forbidden to bring down one, to please the lady. It won't make any noise."

"Bring down two, if you like," Pan Michael replied, seeing that the old soldier was anxious to show off his unerring archery.

On this, the matchless archer reached back and took a feathered arrow out of his quiver, fitted it on the string, raised the bow, and waited.

The flock was coming nearer and nearer. They all reined

in their horses and looked curiously into the sky. Suddenly the plaintive twang of the string was heard, like the twitter of a sparrow, and the arrow darted away and disappeared among the flock.

For a few moments it seemed as if Mushalski had missed, but suddenly a bird reeled over and came swooping towards the earth, above their heads, and, falling over and over, finally came down with extended wings exactly like a leaf floating on the air.

It dropped a few steps in front of Basia's pony. The arrow had pierced the raven, so that the head was shining above the bird's back.

"A fortunate omen," said Mushalki, bowing to Basia. "I will keep an eye from a distance upon the lady-Colonel, and, if there is any sudden emergency, God grant that again I may despatch a lucky arrow. Though it may whizz close to you, I promise it shall not hurt you."

"I shouldn't like to be the Tartar that is your mark," Basia answered.

Here Pan Michael interrupted them, as he pointed to a high mound, some furlongs off, and said:

"There we will halt."

Then they went forward at a trot. Half-way up, the little knight ordered them to slacken their speed, and, at last, near the top, he reined up.

"We will not go to the summit," he said, "because on such a clear morning, we might catch the eye from a long distance, but we will dismount and cautiously approach the summit, so that a few of us may peep over."

Then he sprang from his horse, and was followed by Basia, Pan Mushalski, and several others. The dragoons staid below the ridge in charge of the horses, but the others advanced to the point where the ground fell almost perpendicularly like a wall, into a valley below.

At the foot of this wall, which was some tens of yards high, there was a narrow, dense belt of brush-wood, and then came a low level plain; from the eminence where they were posted, they could see a great distance along the plain.

This plain, which was intersected by a little stream flowing towards Kalusik, was dotted with thickets similar to the ground by the cliff. Among these clumps thin wreaths of smoke were rising into the air.

"You see," Pan Michael cried to Basia, "that's where the foe is in hiding."

"I can see smoke, but no men nor horses," she answered, her heart beating quickly.

"They are hidden in the thickets, but they are visible to a trained eye. Look there, two, three, four, a whole troop of horses are visible. One mottled, and another all white, and it looks blue from this distance."

"Shall we soon advance against them?"

"They will be driven towards us, but there is plenty of time, for they are a mile and a quarter away."

"Where are ours?"

"Do you see the skirt of the wood, yonder. The Under-Chamberlain's company must have reached that point by now. Mellekhovich will penetrate on the other edge in a minute. His squadron will attack the bandits from that cliff. When they see them, the bandits will come in our direction, because on this side it is possible to reach the river under the bluff, but on the other side, there is a precipitous ravine which is impassable."

"Then they are caught in a trap?"

"As you see."

"For Heaven's sake! I can scarcely keep still!" cried Basia.

But presently she asked:

"Michael, what would they do, if they were wise?"

"They would spring as if through smoke at the men of the Under-Chamberlain's squadron, and pass over their bodies. Then they would be safe. But they won't do that, for, in the first place, they do not like to face regular horse; and in the second, they will be afraid that other troops are in reserve in the forest, and so they will flee towards us."

"Oh, but we cannot resist them, there are only twenty of us."

"What about Motovidlo?"

"That's true? Where is he?"

For answer, Pan Michael suddenly imitated the cry of a hawk or falcon.

Immediately he was answered from the foot of the cliff by many similar calls. These were Motovidlo's Cossacks, who were so well concealed among the bushes that Basia, although stationed immediately above them, had not caught a glimpse of them.

She looked in amazement from the little knight to the bushes below, and suddenly her eyes gleamed and she threw her arms around her husband's neck.

"Michael, dear, you are the best leader in the world."

"I have had a little experience, that is all" he smiled. "But restrain your ecstasies here, and remember that a good soldier must be calm."

The warning was useless, however. Basia was in a fever of excitement. She wanted to mount her horse immediately, and descend from the height to join Motovidlo's party. But Pan Michael restrained her, for he wanted her to get a clear view of the start.

In the meantime, the morning sun had risen above the plain and bathed it in a cold, pale, golden light. The nearer thickets were glowing, while those more distant and hazy became more sharply outlined; the rime, lying in patches on the low grounds, was momentarily vanishing; the atmosphere had become quite clear, and the eye could see for an immense distance.

"The Under-Chamberlain's squadron is issuing from the wood," said Pan Michael. "I see horses and men."

In fact, horses and men began to issue from the shadow of the trees and formed a long black line across the plain, which along the edge of the wood was thickly covered with hoar-frost. Gradually the white strip between them and the trees began to broaden. It was plain that they were not making too much haste, but were giving plenty of time to the other squadrons. Pan Michael then turned towards the left.

"Mellekovich has also arrived," he said.

And presently he added:

"And the followers of the sub-governor of Pshemyl are coming. Not one of them is two Paters late." His lips worked with excitement. "We must not go on foot. Now let us mount."

They quickly returned to the dragoons, and, vaulting into the saddles, rode down the side of the eminence to the wood below, where were Motovidlo's Semenovs.

Then they moved in a body to the skirt of the trees, where they stopped, and looked ahead.

It was plain that the enemy had discovered the Under-Chamberlain's squadron, for at that very moment, a crowd of horsemen sprang out of the clump of trees in the middle of the plain, like a hunted herd of deer. More appeared at each instant. Forming a line, they first rode across the plain, skirting the thicket; the riders were crouching along

the backs of the horses, in order that, from a distance, they might look like a herd of riderless horses advancing. It was evident that, so far, they were uncertain whether the troop was advancing against them, or even whether they were observed, or whether it was simply a scouting party. If it was the later, they might hope to escape observation by means of the trees.

From the spot where Pan Michael was stationed at the head of Motovidlo's followers, the vacillating and doubtful movements of the chambul could be clearly observed, and they looked exactly like the actions of wild animals when they scent danger. When they had got half-way along the clump, they broke into a moderate gallop. When the first of them reached the open plain, they suddenly reined up, and those behind imitated them.

On that side, they had seen Mellekhovich's detachment coming up.

They then made a half-circle in the opposite direction, and came in view of the whole Pshemysl squadron, advancing at a trot.

It was now made clear to the bandits that all the various troops were aware of their presence and were advancing to the attack. They broke into wild cries and fell into disorder. The cavalry, also shouting, came on at a gallop, till the plain thundered under the tramp of the horses. When they saw this, the outlaw chambul swiftly extended into a long line and urged their horses to their utmost speed in the direction of the bluff, at the foot of which, the little knight was stationed with Motovidlo and his men.

The space dividing the parties was being lessened with marvellous rapidity.

At first, Basia grew rather pale with excitement, and her heart beat violently; but, remembering that the eyes of others were upon her, and seeing that the others were not in the least disturbed, she quickly recovered herself. Moreover, the band that was coming on like a whirlwind, engrossed her attention. She tightened her rein, took a firmer hold on her little sabre, and the blood again rushed violently from her heart into her face.

"Well? good!" said the little knight.

She fixed her eyes on him, her nostrils dilated, and she whispered:

"Shall we soon charge?"

"There's plenty of time yet."

But the others were fleeing, fleeing like a gray wolf from the hounds. They were within half a furlong of the bushes; the extended heads of the horses could be seen, with their ears laid back, and Tartar faces above them, as if part of the mane. . . . They came nearer and nearer. Basia heard the snorting of the horses, as their drawn lips and protruding eyes showed that they were going at breathless speed. . . . Pan Michael made a sign, and the hedge of Semenov guns were leveled at the galloping outlaws.

"Fire!"

There was a roar and a cloud of smoke: It was like chaff struck by a whirlwind. In a second, the band, howling and yelling was scattered in every direction. The little knight immediately issued from the bushes, and, at the same instant the Lipkovs and the Under-Chamberlain's men completed the circle and drove back the scattered foe into one group. In vain the horde tried to escape separately, in vain they circled about, darting to the right, left, front, and rear; they were completely surrounded, and, therefore, in spite of themselves, they were huddled together. In the meantime, the various squadrons galloped up and a terrible slaughter commenced.

The raiders saw that the only one who could escape with his life would have to cut his way through, and so, they began to defend themselves with rage and desperation, though without any combined order; each for himself. So furious was the onset that at the very first shot, the field was strewn with the slain. The military, bracing and spurring on their horses in spite of the crowd, cut and slashed with that pitiless and terrible skill which belongs only to the professional soldier. The sound of the blows was audible above the ring of men, like the strokes of flails, when wielded rapidly by a band of men on a threshing-floor. The horde was pierced and sabred through head, shoulder, and neck; and through the hands with which they tried to shield their heads; on all sides the swords fell like hail without quarter or mercy. They also struck with what weapons they had, daggers, sabres, loaded sticks or horse-skulls. Their horses, driven back, reared up, or fell backward entirely. Others screamed and bit and kicked at the press and caused a dreadful confusion. After a short, silent, struggle, the bandits gave vent to a terrible cry. They were being borne down with

superior numbers, better weapons, and greater skill. They realized that there was no help for them, that no man could escape with his spoil, nor even with his life. The soldiers gradually warmed to the work and pressed them more strongly. Some of the bandits dismounted and made an attempt to glide away between the legs of the horses. These were trampled to death by the horses' hoofs, and sometimes the soldiers would desist from fighting to stab them from above; some lay on the ground in the hope that, as the soldiers pressed to the centre, they would be left outside the circle, and so find safety in flight.

In fact, the band was momentarily decreasing in numbers, as horse and man fell. When Azba Bey saw this, to the best of his ability he formed his horses and men in a wedge, and cast himself with all his force against Motovidlo's Semenovs in an attempt to break the ring, cost what it might.

But he was repulsed, and then a dreadful slaughter began. At the same moment Mellekhovich, raging like a fire, pierced the band midway, and, leaving one-half to the other squadrons, fell on the rear of those who were attacking the Cossacks.

It is true that some of the bandits escaped through the circle over the plain by this movement, and scattered like a cloud of leaves; but those soldiers in the rear who could not get the enemy, because of the closeness of the fight, immediately pursued them in twos, or threes, or singly. Those who did not succeed in breaking through notwithstanding their stubborn resistance, fell side by side beneath the sabre, like grain reaped by two lines of harvesters.

Basia advanced with the Cossacks, piping with a shrill voice, to keep up her courage, for, at first, a cloud came across her eyes, caused by the rapidity of the motion and intense excitement. As she charged up to the enemy, she was only conscious at first of a dark, struggling, surging mass. She had an almost irresistible impulse to shut her eyes entirely. It is true that she overcame it, but, nevertheless, her sabre struck somewhat blindly. Soon her courage got the upper hand, and she immediately saw clearly. Before her she saw horses' heads, with flushed and savage faces behind them; one of them was glaring immediately in front of her; Basia slashed at it, and it vanished like a phantom.

At that moment she heard her husband's tranquil voice,
"Good!"

She was delighted to hear it, shouted again, and began to deal destruction with perfect coolness and self-possession. Again she saw a horrible face with a flat nose and prominent cheek-bones gnashing its teeth in front of her. Another hand raised a sling-shot. Basia struck at that. She saw a shoulder in a sheep-skin coat and slashed at that. Then she struck right, left, and in front of her, and, whenever she made a pass, a man crashed to the earth, wrenching the bridle from his horse. Basia was surprised that it was all so easy, but the reason was that the little knight was riding at one side, stirrup beside stirrup, and Pan Montovidlo at the other. The former carefully watched over his beloved—and that extinguished a man like a candle; then, with his sharp sword, he lopped off an arm together with its weapon; again, he thrust his sword between Basia and the foe, and the hostile sabre flew up as suddenly as if it were a winged bird.

Pan Montovidlo, a seasoned warrior, guarded the courageous lady on the other side; and, as a busy gardener prunes the dry boughs from the trees, so time and again, he felled foes to the blood-soaked earth, and fought with as much sangfroid, as if he were thinking of something else. They both knew when to allow Basia to advance alone, and when to be beforehand and restrain her. A third man was watching over her from the distance; the matchless archer, who, purposely keeping apart, every now and then fitted an arrow to the string and sent an unerring messenger of death into the thick of the press.

But the melee became so fierce that Pan Michael ordered Basia to retire from the fight, with a few attendants, particularly since the half wild horses of the horde were beginning to bite and kick. Basia immediately obeyed, for, although she was being carried away by excitement and her bold heart prompted her to continue the fight, her feminine nature was overcoming her martial spirit, and amid that bloodshed and slaughter, amid the howls, groans, and agonies of the dying, amid an atmosphere heavy with the odor of sweat and raw flesh, she began to flinch.

Slowly reining back her horse, she was soon outside the ring of combatants, so that Pan Michael and Montovidlo, relieved from the task of watching over her, were, at last, able to give free rein to their fighting spirit.

Pan Mushalski, who had hitherto kept at a distance, now approached Basia, and said:

"Your ladyship fought like a true knight. Any man, not knowing that it was you, would have imagined that Michael the Archangel had descended to the aid of our Semenovs, and was smiting those dog brothers. It is an honor for them to fall by such a little hand, which, on this occasion, I pray not to be barred from kissing."

Then he seized her hands and pressed them to his moustaches.

"Did you see it, Sir? Did I really do well?" asked Basia inhaling long breaths of the pure air.

"A cat could do no better against rats. As I love God, it made my heart beat faster to see you. But you were quite right to withdraw from the fight, for there is more risk of an accident towards the end."

"My husband ordered it, and when I left home I promised implicit obedience."

"Can I leave my bow? It is no longer of any use, and I want to advance with the sabre. I see three men coming, who, of course, are sent by the Colonel to guard your ladyship's person. Otherwise I would send for a guard; but now I will go down to the foot of the cliff, for it will soon be all over, and I must make haste."

In fact, three dragoons were coming up to guard Basia, and seeing this, Pan Mushalski put spurs to his horse and galloped off. For a moment, Basia was in doubt, whether to remain where she was, or ride around the bluff, and go to the spot whence they had looked down the ravine before the battle commenced. But she determined to stay where she was, as she felt very tired.

Her woman's nature was asserting itself more and more strongly. About two hundred yards away, they were mercilessly cutting down the last of the marauders, and a black mass of combatants was struggling more and more fiercely on the blood-stained battlefield. Cries of despair rent the air, and Basia, who, a few moments before had been so full of ardor, for some reason or other, now felt faint and weak. She was seized with a great fear and nearly fainted, only maintaining her seat in the saddle out of shame in the presence of the dragoons; she turned her face away from them to hide its pallor. The fresh air gradually restored her strength and courage, but not to the extent of making her anxious to renew the fight. "If she had gone, it would have been to beg for mercy for those of the horde who were left.

But, knowing that would be futile, she anxiously awaited the termination of the struggle.

But there they were still cutting and slashing. There was not a moment's cessation of the sounds of the cries and blows. About half an hour had now passed and the troops were pressing in more closely. Suddenly about twenty of the raiders broke through the deadly ring and swept like a tempest towards the bluff.

By fleeing along the cliff, they might, indeed, reach a spot where it gradually descended into the plain, and find their escape on the higher ground; but Basia and the dragoons were immediately in their path. The presence of danger brought fresh courage to Basia's heart at that moment and restored her self-control. She saw at once that it was certain death to stay where she was, for the mere shock of the bandits would overthrow and trample her and her guards under foot, without taking account of the certainty of being sabred. The old sergeant of dragoons was evidently of this opinion, for he grasped the bridle of Basia's pony, turned it round, and cried almost in tones of despair:

"Gallop! gracious lady!"

Basia, alone, darted away like a whirlwind, but the three faithful soldiers stood on the spot, like a rock, to hinder the foe, if only for a moment, and give their beloved mistress time to get away.

Meantime, other soldiers were closely pursuing the party, but the ring, that had hitherto closely enclosed the raiders, was broken by the movement, and the latter began to escape, first by twos and threes, and then in greater numbers. . . . By far the majority of them were lying on the earth, but a few dozens, including Azba Bey, managed to flee. In a confused mass they all made for the bluff as fast as their horses could gallop.

Three dragoons were not enough to stop all the fugitives, in fact, after a brief contest, they fell from their saddles, and the throng, following Basia, mounted the slope of the bluff and reached the higher ground. The front rank of the Polish squadrons and the Lithuanian Tartars, who were nearest, were galloping at full speed some dozen paces behind them.

On the upland, which was numerously intersected by treacherous holes and ravines, the whole cavalcade formed a gigantic serpent, the head of which was Basia; the neck, the raiders; and the rest of the body, Mellekhovich and the

Lipkov Tartars and dragoons, headed by Pan Michael, who was burying his spurs in the flanks of his horse, while his heart was overwhelmed with terror.

At the moment when the little band of marauders had broken through the circle, Pan Michael had been on the other side, and so Mellekhovich was before him in the pursuit. His hair stood up on the head of the little knight, at the thought that Basia might be captured by the fugitives, or lose her presence of mind and make straight for the Dniester, or that any of the robbers might reach her with a sabre, dagger, or loaded stick, and his heart sank within him in fear for her life. Bending down almost to his horse's neck, his face was white, his teeth set, and a tempest of horrible thoughts surged in his brain; he dug his sharp spurs into his horse, beat him with the flat of his sword, and flew along like a bustard before soaring.

In front of him fled the Tartars.

"God grant that Mellekhovich may catch them! He is on a good horse. God grant it," he repeated in his despair.

But his fears were exaggerated and the danger was not so serious as it appeared to the devoted little knight. The outlaws were thinking too much of the safety of their own skins, and they felt the Tartars too close behind them to trouble about pursuing a single rider, even if she were the most beautiful houri in the Mohammedan paradise, fleeing in a robe covered with jewels. Basia had only to turn towards Khreptyov to avoid pursuit, for most certainly the fugitives would not have turned back into the lion's jaws after her, when before them was a river, with reeds among which they could hide. The Lipkovs had better horses also, and Basia was mounted on a steed that was vastly swifter than the usual shaggy brutes of the horde, which had great stamina in flight, but were slower than high-bred horses. Moreover, not only did she preserve her presence of mind, but her daring nature asserted itself with full force, and the cavalier spirit again burned in her veins.

The pony was extended like a deer, and the wind was whistling in Basia's ears, but her feeling was one of exultation rather than terror.

"They might chase me for a whole year and never catch me," she thought. "I will gallop on for a time and then turn aside, and either let them go by, or, if they are still following me, I will put them to the sabre."

It occurred to her that in case the raiders behind her were much scattered over the plain, she might meet one of them in single combat if she were to turn back.

"Well, what of that!" she said valiantly to herself. "Michael has taught me, so that I may boldly risk it; if I don't they will think that I am running away in fear, and will never take me on another expedition, and besides Pan Zagloba will make fun of me. . . ."

She therefore looked backwards at the raiders, but they were all escaping in a bunch. There was no chance of a single combat, but Basia wanted to prove, in the sight of all, that she was not running away in terror and at haphazard.

To this end, she recollected that in her holster she had two excellent pistols, which Michael himself had carefully loaded before they started, she reined in her charger, or rather, turned its head in the direction of Khreptyov.

But, to her amazement, on seeing this, the whole band of raiders slightly altered their own course, turning more to the left towards the edge of the bluff. Basia allowed them to approach within a dozen paces and fired a couple of shots at the horses that were nearest; then turning she again broke into a gallop in the direction of Khreptyov.

But the charger had only gone a few yards as fleet as a swallow when suddenly, in front of them, yawned a dark hollow in the steppe. Basia thoughtlessly spurred her steed, and the noble animal did not refuse but sprang forward; however, only his forefeet landed on the opposite bank. For a moment he made violent efforts to get a holding with his hind feet on the steep bank; but the earth was not yet frozen hard enough, and slipped from under his feet, and the horse fell into the chasm with Basia.

Luckily it did not fall upon her; she managed to free her feet from the stirrups and throwing her whole weight to one side she fell on a thick bed of moss which covered the bottom of the hollow like a lining; but she swooned from the force of the concussion.

Pan Michael did not see her fall, for the Lipkov Tartars concealed it from his sight; but Mellekhovich cried in a terrible voice, to his men to continue the pursuit of the raiders, and hastening to the chasm, went headlong into it.

In an instant he had dismounted and seized Basia in his arms. His falcon eyes scrutinized her all over in an instant to see if there was any sign of blood; then he saw the moss,

and understood at once that it had preserved her and her pony from death.

A stifled cry of joy escaped the lips of the young Tartar.

Basia was lying in his arms and he pressed her to his breast with all his might, and then, with his pale lips, he kissed her eyes again and again as though he wished to absorb them. The whole world seemed to turn round him in a mad whirl, and he was carried away like a tempest by the passion which he had hitherto concealed deep in his heart, like a Dragon in a cave.

At that moment, however, the tramp of many horses echoed on the steppe above, and sounded every moment nearer. Many voices were crying: "Here! this is the chasm, here!" Mellekhovich laid Basia down upon the moss, and called out to those who were approaching:

"This way, here, this way!"

In another minute Pan Michael was at the bottom of the chasm, and was followed by Pan Zagloba, Mushalski, and several other officers.

"There is nothing the matter with her," cried the Tartar, "the moss saved her."

Pan Michael grasped the hands of his fainting wife, while others ran for water which was some distance away. Zagloba laying his hand on her head, began to cry,

"Bashka! dearest Bashka! Bashka!"

"She's all right," said Mellekhovich, as white as a corpse.

Meanwhile Zagloba put his hand to his side, took out a flask, poured some gorzalka into his hand, and began to rub her temples. Then he put the flask to her lips; this evidently was effectual, for, before the men came back with the water, she opened her eyes, and began to gasp and cough, for the gorzalka had burned the roof of her mouth and throat. In a few minutes she had entirely recovered.

Pan Michael, without thinking about the presence of the officers and soldiers, pressed her to his heart and smothered her hands with kisses, crying:

"Oh my love, I was nearly losing my senses. Are you not hurt? Have you no pain?"

"There's nothing the matter," said Basia. "Ah, I remember now, it suddenly grew dark, for the horse slipped.

. . . But is the battle over?"

"Already Azba Bey is slain. We will go home immediately, for I am afraid you will be overcome by the fatigue."

"I am not in the least tired," said Basia.

Then sharply glancing at those present her nostrils dilated as she exclaimed:

“Gentlemen, don’t think that I ran away out of fear. O! I did not even dream of it. As I love Michael, I only galloped ahead of them in sport, and then I fired my pistols.”

“One horse was shot, and we captured the robber alive,” said Mellekhovich.

“Besides,” continued Basia, “an accident of that kind might happen to anyone when galloping, mightn’t it? No experience can guard against that, and a horse will sometimes slip. Ah! it’s lucky that you kept your eye on me, gentlemen, for I might have lain here for a long time.”

“Pan Mellekhovich was the first to see you and save you, for he was ahead of us,” said Pan Michael.

When Basia heard this, she turned to the young Tartar, and held out her hand.

“I thank you for your kind assistance.”

He did not answer, but merely pressed her hand to his lips, and then submissively embraced her feet, like a peasant.

Meanwhile others of the squadron collected at the edge of the chasm; Pan Michael merely ordered Mellekhovich to surround the few robbers who had hidden from pursuit, and then started for Khreptyov. On the way, Basia again saw the field of battle from the bluff.

Many bodies of men and horses lay about, some in heaps, and some by themselves; through the blue sky flocks of crows were coming in greater and greater numbers, cawing loudly and settling some distance off, awaiting the moment when the soldiers, who were still moving about the plain, should have departed.

“Those are the soldiers’ grave-diggers,” said Zagloba, pointing his sabre at the birds, “just as soon as we are gone, the wolves also will come with their band, and, with their teeth, will toll the bell over these corpses. This is a great victory, though gained over such an infamous enemy, for that Azba has ravaged this district for many years. Commanders have hunted him like a wolf, but always in vain, till finally, he met Michael, and his black hour came.”

“Is Azba Bey slain?”

“Mellekhovich was the first to overtake him, and, if he didn’t give him a cut, above the ear! He was cloven to the teeth.”

"Mellekhovich is a good soldier," cried Basia.

Then she turned to Zagloba:

"Did you do much?"

"I didn't chirp like a cricket, nor jump like a flea, because I leave such games for insects. But if I didn't, people didn't have to hunt for me among the moss, like mushrooms; no one pulled my nose, nor poured anything into my mouth."

"I don't love you," cried Basia, pouting, as she put her hand instinctively up to her little red nose.

And he looked at her and smiled and muttered, still jesting:

"You fought valiantly, you ran away valiantly, you fell valiantly head-over-heels, and now, because of the aches in your bones, you will stow away grits so valiantly, that we shall have to take care so that the sparrows don't peck you and your valor up for they are very fond of grits.

"You are trying to stop Michael from taking me on another expedition. I know you well!"

"That's so, that is so! I will beg him always to take you nutting because you are very clever and do not break the branches. My God, My God, what gratitude! Who induced Michael to let you go? I! Now I am reproaching myself for it, especially as this is the way I get paid for my kindness. Wait, at Khreptyov, you shall cut stalks now with a wooden sword. There's an expedition for you! Any other woman would hug the old man. But this scolding devil first frightens me to death and then goes for me."

Basia immediately threw her arms around Zagloba's neck. He was enraptured, and cried, "Well, well! I must confess that you helped to gain the victory to-day, because the soldiers fought with double fury, for each one wanted to show his valor."

"On my life," cried Pan Mushalski, "a man does not mind dying with such eyes watching him."

"Long live our lady," cried Pan Nyenashinyets.

"Long life to her!" cried a hundred voices.

"God grant her health!"

Here Zagloba leaned towards her and murmured:

"After delicate health!"

And they rode forward in great joy, shouting aloud in anticipation of a great feast that evening. It was beautiful weather. The music of the drums and trumpets struck up among the troops and they all entered Khreptyov in tumultuous confusion.

CHAPTER VII.

To their great surprise the Volodiyovskis found guests at Khreptyov. Pan Bogush had arrived with the intention of taking up his abode there for some months in order to enter into communications through Mellekhovich with the Tartar leaders Aleksandrovich, Moravski, Tvorovski, Krychinski, and others of the Lipkov and Cheremi Tartars who had taken service under the Sultan. Pan Bogush was also accompanied by old Pan Novovyeyski and his daughter Eva, and Pani Boska, a sedate lady, with her daughter Panna Zosia, who was in her early youth very beautiful. The delight of the soldiers was almost as great as their astonishment at the sight of the ladies in the wild region of Khreptyov. The guests too were considerably astonished when they first saw the colonel and his wife, for from his face they had imagined him to be some kind of a giant whose very look was terrifying, and his wife a giantess with frowning brow and a harsh voice. Instead of which they beheld a little soldier with a kind and gentle face and a diminutive woman, a rosy little bird, who looked more like a little boy than an adult, with her wide trousers and sabre. The hosts welcomed their guests with open arms. Basia immediately kissed the three women before being introduced to them and when she heard who they were and whence they had come, she said:

“It would give me pleasure if I could bow down the heavens for you, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to see you! It is fortunate that that you have met with no disagreeable experiences on the road, for in this wilderness it is not an unusual thing; but we have cut the marauders to pieces this very day.”

Noticing Pani Boska's look of amazement, she slapped her sabre, and said very boastfully:

“I also was present at the battle! Of course I was! That is usual with us! For Heaven's sake! I must ask you ladies kindly to excuse me while I retire and resume the garb of my own sex and wash a little of the blood off my hands; for I

have been in a terrible fight. Oh, if we hadn't slain Azba to-day, perhaps you might not have reached Khreptyov without accident. I will return in an instant, and meanwhile, Michael will entertain you."

She disappeared and the little knight, who had already welcomed Pan Novovyeyski advanced to Pani Boska, and said:

"God has given me such a treasure of a wife that not only is she a loving domestic companion but a brave comrade in the field. At her behest I submit myself to your ladyship's commands."

Pani Boska replied:

"May God bless her in everything as He has in beauty; I have not come to ask for hospitality from your lordship, but on my knees to implore your assistance in my misfortune. Zosia, accompany me also on your knees before the knight, for if he cannot help us no one can."

Pani Boska then knelt down and the lovely Zosia followed her example, both weeping bitterly and crying:

"Save us knights! Have compassion on orphans!"

A throng of officers, whose curiosity was aroused by the sight of the kneeling women, and especially by the lovely Zosia, approached; the little knight was greatly troubled and raised Pani Boska, and led her to a seat.

"For God's sake, what are you doing?" he cried. "It is rather for me to kneel before a noble woman. Tell me, lady, how I can help you and, as God is in Heaven, I will not hesitate."

"He will do it; for my part I offer my own services. I am Zagloba, and that's enough!" cried the old warrior touched by the distress of the two women.

Pani Boska then signed to Zosia who hastily took a letter from her bosom and handed it to the little knight.

He looked at it and said:

"From the Hetman!"

He then broke the seal and began to read:

"Most dear and beloved Volodiyovski!—By the hand of Pan Bogush I send you my true affection and recommendations which he will confide to you in person. I have scarcely had time to rest from my fatigues at Yavorov when another matter immediately arises. It is very near my heart because of my affection for all soldiers, whom if I forget may the Lord forget me! Pan Boska, a very worthy knight and a

dear companion was captured by the horde some years ago near Kamenets. I have afforded shelter to his wife and daughter in Yavorov; but their hearts grieve for a husband and a father respectively. I wrote, by means of Pyotrovich, to Pan Zlotnitski, our resident in the Crimea, to search everywhere for Pan Boska. It seems that he was found, but afterwards he was hidden by the Tartars; so that he could not be released with the rest of the prisoners and he is now doubtless rowing in a galley. The women are hopeless and in despair and have ceased to trouble me with their entreaties, but when I returned lately and saw that their sorrow was as sharp as ever I could not help making some attempt to aid them. You are in the district and I know have formed brotherhood with several Tartar chiefs. I therefore send the ladies to you and pray you to help them. Pyotrovich will soon be going to the Crimea. Supply him with letters to all your brotherhood. I cannot write either to the vizir or Khan, as we are not friendly, and moreover I am afraid that if I did they would think that Boska was a very important personage, and raise the ransom beyond all reason in consequence. Impress upon Pyotrovich the importance of the matter and order him not to return without Boska. Communicate also with your brothers, as, although they are Infidels, they always keep their sworn faith and must hold you in great respect. Lastly, do what you think best; go to Rashkov and offer to exchange three of the most important Tartars for Boska if sent back alive. Nobody knows their ways better than you do, for I understand that you have already managed the ransom of relatives. God bless you, and I will love you more than ever, for my heart will cease to bleed over this business. I have heard that all is quiet in your command in Khreptyov. I anticipated that. Only keep a sharp eye on Azba. Pan Bogush will give you all the news about public affairs. For God's sake, keep an attentive ear towards Moldavia, for a great invasion is certainly coming. Committing Pani Boska to your kindness and best efforts, I subscribe myself, etc."

During the reading of this letter Pani Boska's tears never ceased to flow and she was joined by Zosia who lifted her blue eyes to Heaven.

Before Pan Michael had ended Basia came running in in female attire and at the sight of the tears of the ladies began to ask anxiously what was the matter. So Pan Michael read the letter again to her, and after listening to it attentively

she immediately and eagerly added her prayers to those of the Hetman and Pani Boska.

"The Hetman has a heart of gold," Basia cried as she embraced her husband, "and we must not be behindhand with him, dear Michael. Pani Boska shall stay with us until her husband's return.

And in three months you will bring him back from the Crimea; in three or even two; eh?"

"Or to-morrow, or in an hour," said Pan Michael jestingly.

Then he turned to Pani Boska:

"Resolutions are sudden with my wife, you see!"

"God bless her for it," said Pani Boska. "Zosia, kiss the hand of the lady-commander."

But the lady-commander had no intention of giving her hands to be kissed; she again embraced Zosia, for they had taken a liking to each other from the very first.

"Help us, noble gentlemen," she cried, "help, help! and quickly too."

"Quickly, for her head is on fire," Zagloba muttered.

But Basia, shaking her golden locks, cried:

"It is not my head, but the hearts of these ladies, are burning with grief."

"No one will oppose you in your kind intentions," said Pan Michael, "but we must first hear all the circumstances of Pani Boska's story."

"Zosia, relate everything as it happened, for my tears prevent me," said the matron.

Zosia lowered her eyes to the ground, till the lids entirely hid them, then she flushed as red as a cherry, not knowing how to commence, and was very confused at having to talk in the presence of so many people.

But Basia came to her aid.

"Zoska, when was Pan Boska captured?"

"Five years ago, in '67," Zosia replied in a faint voice, without lifting her long lashes.

And, without stopping to take breath, she began to tell the story.

"At that time, forays were not heard of, and dear papa's squadron was near Panyovtsi. Papa with Pan Bulayovski was looking after men who were guarding cattle in the fields when the Tartars came along the Wallachian road and captured papa with Pan Bulayovski; but Pan Bulayovski returned two years ago and papa is not yet with us."

Here two tiny tears began to trickle down Zosia's red cheeks, at the sight of which Zagloba was greatly moved and exclaimed:

"Poor little bird! . . . Never fear child, papa will yet return and dance at your wedding."

"But, did the Hetman write to Pan Zlotnitski, by Pyotrovich?" asked Pan Michael.

"The Hetman wrote about papa to the Sword-Bearer of Posen by Pan Pyotrovich," continued Zosia and the Sword-Bearer and Pan Pyotrovich discovered papa with Aga Murza Bey."

"For Heaven's sake! I know that Murza Bey. I was in 'brotherhood' with his brother," said Pan Michael. "Wouldn't he release Pan Boska?"

"The Khan issued orders for papa's release, but Murza Bey is harsh and cruel; he concealed papa and told Pan Pyotrovich that he had sold him into Asia long before. But other captives told Pan Pyotrovich that it wasn't true, and that the Murza Bey said that for an excuse, so that he might ill-treat papa all the longer, for of all the Tartars, there is none so cruel to captives as he. It may be that at that time papa was not in the Crimea, because the Murza has galleys of his own, and needs rowers. But papa certainly had not been sold, for all the captives said that the Murza would rather kill a prisoner than sell him."

"God's truth," cried Pan Mushalski, "that Murza Aga Bey is notorious throughout the Crimea. He is a very wealthy Tartar, but extremely bitter against our people, because four of his brothers fell in battle against us."

"But has he never been of our brotherhood?" Pan Michael inquired.

"It is doubtful," cried one officer after another.

"Explain once for all to me, what that brotherhood is," said Basia.

"You must know," said Zagloba, "that when treaties are made on the conclusion of a war, members of both armies pay each other visits and become friends. It then happens that an officer will become attached to a Murza, and a Murza to an officer; then they vow a life friendship to each other, which they term Brotherhood. The more famous a man is, such as Michael, or I, or Pan Rushechyts, who is now in command in Rashkov, the more eagerly his brotherhood is sought: It is evident that such a man will not form brotherhood with

a common man, but will only seek for it among the most celebrated Murzas. The ceremony is as follows: They pour water over their sabres and swear mutual friendship. Do you comprehend?"

"And what if war ensues?"

"They can fight in a general war, but if they meet face to face, or come across each other in skirmishing, they greet one another and part amicably. Moreover, if one of them becomes a captive, the other is forced to do all he can to alleviate his lot, and if it comes to the worst, to ransom him; indeed there have been some cases in which these brothers have shared their property with each other. When it is a matter of friends or acquaintances, or of discovering someone, one brother goes to another; and in justice we must confess that no race keeps its oaths more exactly than the Tartars. Their word is everything, and you can surely count on such a friend."

"But has Michael many of these?"

"I have three powerful Murzas," replied Pan Michael; "one of them dates from Lubni days. I begged him from Prince Yeremy on one occasion. His name is Aga Bey and even now, if it were necessary, he would lay down his life for my sake. The other two are equally trustworthy."

"Ah!" Basia cried, "I should like to form brotherhood with the Khan in person and free the whole of the prisoners."

"He would not mind that," said Zakloba, "but who can tell what he would demand in return."

"Allow me, gentlemen," said Pan Michael, "let us consider what is to be done. Listen now, we have intelligence from Kamenets that in two weeks at the latest Pyotrovich, will arrive with a large following. He will go to the Crimea to ransom several Armenian merchants from Kamenets, who were plundered and captured when another Khan came into power. Seferovich, the brother of Pretor, was one of the sufferers. They are all very rich and money is no object, so that Pyotrovich will go well provided. He is not in any danger, for in the first place, winter is approaching and this is not the season for chambuls, and in the second, he will be accompanied by Naviragh, the envoy of the Patriarch of Uzmiadzin, and the two Anadrats of Kaffa, who are supplied with safe-conducts by the young Khan. I will give letters to Pyotrovich for the natives of the Commonwealth and for my 'brothers.' Besides, gentlemen, you are aware that

Pan Rushchyts, the commander at Rashkov, has relations among the Horde, who were captured in early youth, and have become thoroughly Tartar, and have risen to office. These will all move heaven and earth, and will attempt to negotiate; in case the Murza proves stubborn they will stir up against him the Khan himself, or perhaps they will find some means of privately wringing his neck; consequently, I hope that if, by God's grace, Pan Boska is still alive, I shall get possession of him in a month or two, in accordance with the commands of the Hetman and my immediate superior, here present." (Here Pan Michael bowed to his wife).

His commander sprang to embrace the little knight again. Pani and Panna Boska clasped their hands and returned thanks to God for having permitted them to meet with such kind people. They both become very cheerful.

"If only the old Khan were alive," said Pan Nyenashinyets, "it would be much easier, for he was greatly attached to us, and they tell the contrary about the young one. In fact, those very Armenian merchants who are the objects of Pan Zakhar Pyrotrovich's journey, were taken prisoners in Bakhche-Serai under the young Khan, and most likely by his orders."

"The young Khan will alter as the old one did, who was the most inveterate foe of the Poles before he came to be convinced of our honesty," said Zagloba, "I know this better than any one, for I was his captive for seven years."

Then he took a seat beside Pani Boska.

"Let the sight of me comfort your ladyship. Seven years is no joke, and yet, I came back and destroyed so many of those dog-brothers, that I despatched at least two of them to hell for every single day of my captivity, and who can say that there are not three or four for each Sunday and holiday, eh?"

"Seven years!" repeated Pani Boska with a sigh.

"May I die, if I exaggerated it by a day. Seven years in the very palace of the Khan," asserted Zagloba, winking mysteriously. "And you must know that the young Kahn is my . . ."

Here he whispered something into Pani Boska's ear and burst into a loud "Ha! ha! ha!" and began to rub his knees. At last he slapped Pani Boska on the knees, and cried:

"Those were good days, weren't they? In youth, every man you met was a foe, and every day saw a fresh frolic, eh?"

The sedate lady was greatly confused and drew back somewhat from the jovial knight; the younger ladies lowered their eyes, readily imagining that the frolics to which Pan Zagloba was referring were subversive of their natural modesty, more especially since the soldiers burst out laughing.

"It will be necessary to send Pan Rushchyts immediately," said Basia, "so that Pan Pyrotrovich may find the letters ready for him in Rashkov."

"Make haste with the whole business, gentlemen," added Pan Bogush, "while it is still winter, for in the first place, there are no chambuls about, and the roads are safe; and in the second, God only knows what may happen in the Spring."

"Has the Hetman any news from Tsarograd?" asked Pan Michael.

"He has. But we must talk of that in private. Haste is needed in bringing to an end the business regarding those chiefs. When will Mellekhovich return? because a great deal depends on him."

"All he has to do is to kill the remainder of the marauders and then bury the dead. He ought to be back to-night or to-morrow morning. I ordered him to bury only our men, not Azba's, for winter is close at hand and there is no danger of infection; besides the wolves will get rid of them."

"It is the Hetman's desire," said Pan Bogush, "that no obstacles should be placed in the way of Mellekhovich's work. He is to go to Rashkov as often as he desires. The Hetman also requests that he should be trusted completely, for his devotion is sure. He is a great warrior, and may be very useful to us."

"Let him go to Rashkov and wherever he likes," the little knight replied. "Now that we have destroyed Azba, I have no great need of him. 'Till the first grass springs no large body will appear now."

"Is Azba destroyed, then?" asked Pan Novovyeyski.

"So terribly cut up, that I doubt if twenty-five men escaped, and even they will be captured one by one, even if Mellekhovich has not already caught them."

"I am delighted to hear that," said Novovyeyski, "for it will now be possible to travel to Rashkov in safety."

Then he turned to Basia:

"We shall be able to take the letters, which her ladyship here has spoken of, to Pan Rushchyts."

"Thank you," Basia replied, "here there are frequent opportunities, for we send couriers express."

"Communication must be kept up between all the commands," explained Pan Michael. "But are you really going to Rashkov with this lovely maiden?"

"Oh, she is no beauty, but only a common puss, noble-benefactor," said Novovyeytski, "and I am going to Rashkov because my rascal of a son is serving there under the banner of Pan Rushchyts. It is nearly ten years since he ran away from home, and he knocks at my paternal forgiveness with letters only."

Pan Michael almost clapped his hands.

"I guessed immediately that you were the father of Pan Adam, and I was going to ask you, but we were so absorbed with grief for Pani Boska. I guessed it immediately because your features resemble one another. So he is your son?"

"So his departed mother stated, and as she was a virtuous woman, I have no reason to doubt it."

"I am doubly glad to have you for my guest. But for Heaven's sake don't call your son a rascal, because he is a famous soldier, and a worthy cavalier, who reflects the highest honor on your lordship. Don't you know that he is the best fighter in the company, next to Pan Rushchyts. Don't you know that the Hetman regards him as the eye of his head. He is entrusted with independent commands and has carried them all out with the greatest credit."

Pan Novovyeytski blushed with pleasure.

"Noble Colonel," he said, "many a time a father only finds fault with his child for the sake of hearing somebody contradict him, and I think that a parent's heart cannot be more greatly pleased than by such contradiction. I have already heard reports of Adam's good service, but this is the first time on which I am really satisfied, hearing as I do, the confirmation of these reports from such celebrated lips. They say that not only is he a valiant warrior, but a steady character, which is a great surprise to me, as he was always a tempest. The little rascal always had a taste for war from his earliest years, and the proof is that he was only a boy when he ran away from home. If I could have caught him then, I would not have let him off. But I must now, otherwise he would hide from me for another ten years, and I am an old man, and lonely without him."

"And hasn't he been home for so many years?"

"I forbade him. But I have had enough of that, and now, since he is in service and cannot come to me, I am going to

him. I had intended to ask both of your graces to afford a shelter to this maiden while I proceeded by myself to Rashkov, but since you say that everything is safe, I will take her with me; she is curious to see the world, the magpie. And so she shall."

"And let people look at her," Zagloba interrupted.

"Ah, there wouldn't be anything to look at," said the maiden, whose dark eyes and lips pouting as if to be kissed seemed to assert the contrary.

"An ugly puss, nothing but a puss," cried Pan Novovyeyski. "But if she were to see a handsome officer, something might occur, and so I rather chose to bring her along than to leave her behind, particularly as it is dangerous for a girl to be alone at home. But if I go alone to Rashkov I advise her ladyship to order her to be tied up with a cord, or else she will get skittish."

"I was just the same," said Basia.

"They gave her a distaff to spin with," said Zagloba, "she took it for a partner to dance with, as she hadn't anyone better. But you're a jovial fellow, Pan Novovyeyski. Basia, I should like to have a passage or two with Pan Novovyeyski, for sometimes I am also fond of a jest. . . ."

In the meanwhile, before they had served supper, the door opened and Mellekhovich came in. At first Pan Novovyeyski did not notice him, as he was talking to Zagloba, but Eva saw him and suddenly her cheeks flamed and then she grew pale.

"Commandant," said Mellekhovich to Michael, "those men were captured according to your orders."

"Well, where are they?"

"I had them hanged according to orders."

"Well done, and have your men returned?"

"Some of them stayed to bury the bodies, the others are with me."

At this moment, Pan Novovyeyski lifted his head and his face betrayed intense surprise.

"For God's sake, what do I see?" he cried.

Then he arose and advanced towards Mellekhovich and cried:

"Azya, what are you doing here, you villain?"

He raised his hand to seize the Tartar by the throat. But suddenly a change came over Mellekhovich just as if a handfull of powder were cast into the flames; he grew as pallid as a corpse, and seizing Novovyeyski's hands in a grasp of iron, he exclaimed:

"I don't know you; who are you?"

And he pushed him so violently that Novovyeynski staggered into the middle of the room.

For some moments his rage prevented him from uttering a word; but, recovering his breath, he cried:

"Noble Colonel, this is my man, and moreover, a runaway. He was in my house from his infancy. The villain denies it! He is my man. Eva, who is he? Speak!"

"Azya!" cried Panna Eva, trembling all over.

Mellekhovich did not even glance at her; with his eyes fastened on Novovyeynski, and with quivering nostrils, he glared at the old noble with unspeakable hate, grasping the handle of his knife.

At the same time his moustaches began to quiver and beneath them gleamed white teeth like those of an enraged wild beast.

The officers stood round in a circle: Basia darted in between Mellekhovich and Novovyeynski.

"What does this mean?" she asked with frowning brow.

Her presence somewhat quieted the disturbance.

"Commandant, this is my man," said Novovyeynski, "by name, Azya, and a runaway. In my youth I was serving in the Ukraine, I found him half dead in the steppe and took him. He is a low Tartar. Twenty years he lived in my house and was educated with my son. When my son ran away this man helped me in managing my land, till he wanted to make love to Eva, when I had him flogged and he ran away. What name does he bear here?"

"Mellekhovich."

"That's an assumed name; he is called Azya, and nothing else. He says he does not know me; but I know him, and so does Evukha."¹

"For God's sake! your lordship's son has often seen him," said Basia, "why didn't he recognize him?"

"Perhaps my son might not, for they were both fifteen years of age when he ran away from home, and this man stayed six years longer with me, during which he altered considerably, growing up and getting a moustache. But Evukha knew him immediately. Noble sirs, you will more readily believe a citizen than this waif from the Crimea!"

"Pan Mellekhovich is one of the Hetman's officers," said Basia. "We can't interfere with him."

¹ *Evka, Evukha*; diminutives of *Eva*.

"Allow me, let me question him. Let us also hear the other side," said the little knight."

But Pan Novovyeytski was burning with rage.

"Pan Mellekhovich! what sort of a *Pan* is he? My servant boy, who has concealed himself under a strange name. Tomorrow, I'll make my dog the keeper of that *Pan*, and the day after, I'll give orders for that *Pan* to be beaten with clubs. And the Hetman himself cannot prevent me, for I am a Noble, and know my rights."

To this, Pan Michael replied, sharply, as his lips quivered:

"I am not only a noble, but a Colonel, and I also know my rights. You can make the demand for your man by legal process, and appeal to the Hetman's jurisdiction, but I command here and no one else."

Pan Novovyeytski immediately moderated his tone, remembering that he was talking not only to a military commander, but his own son's superior officer, and moreover, to the most celebrated knight in the Commonwealth.

"Pan Colonel," he said more mildly, "I will not seize him against your will, but I assert my rights, and I ask you to believe me."

"Mellekhovich, what have you to say to this?" asked Pan Michael.

The Tartar fixed his eyes on the floor, and was silent.

"We all know that your name is *Azya*," continued Pan Michael,

"There are other proofs to be looked for," said Novovyeytski "if he is my man, there are two fish tattooed in blue on his breast."

When he heard this, Pan Nyenashinyets opened his eyes and mouth to their full extent; and then he clutched at his hair and cried:

"*Azya*, son of Tukhay Bey!"

All eyes were turned upon him; he trembled all over, as if all his wounds had re-opened, and he repeated:

"That is my captive; that is the son of Tukhay Bey. As God lives, it is he."

But the young Tartar proudly raised his head and cast a glance like that of a wild-cat on those present and, suddenly tearing apart the dress that covered his broad breast, he cried:

"Here are the blue tattooed fish. I am the son of Tukhay Bey."

CHAPTER VIII.

Everybody was silent, so great was the impression made by the name of that terrible warrior. Tukhay Bey was that man, who, together with the dreaded Khmyelnitski, had shaken the Commonwealth to its foundations; he had shed a whole ocean of Polish blood; he had trampled under the hoofs of his horses the Ukraine, Volhynia, Podolia, and the lands of Galicia; he had destroyed towns and fortresses, he had wasted villages with fire, and taken captive tens of thousands of people. The son of that man was now standing in the presence of the garrison of Khreptyov, saying to their faces, "On my breast are blue fish; I am Azya, bone of the bone of Tukhay Bey!" But at that time people held great blood in such high respect, that notwithstanding the terror which must have been roused in each soldier's heart by the name of the celebrated Murza, Mellekhovich now grew before their eyes as if he had assumed the whole of his father's greatness.

They all looked at him in amazement, particularly the women, who are always greatly charmed by a sense of mystery; moreover, as though his confession had raised him in his own eyes, he became more haughty and did not lower his head in the least, but finally said:

"That noble," pointing at Novovyeytski, says that I am his man, that is true, but I reply, 'My father set on horseback better men than he is.' He also says truly that I was with him, for it was so, and beneath his rods my back streamed with blood, which, as God lives, I shall not forget. To escape his pursuit I assumed the name of Mellekhovich. But now, although I might have gone to the Crimea, I am serving this country with my blood and health, and no one is over me but the Hetman. My father was related to the Khan, and luxury and riches awaited me in the Crimea, but I despised them and stayed here, for I love this country, and the Hetman, and all who have never treated me with contempt."

As he ended he bowed to Pan Michael and then bowed so low to Basia, that his head almost touched his knees, and

then without another glance at any one he put his sabre under his arm and left.

For some moments the silence was unbroken. Zagloba was the first to speak.

"Aha! where is Pan Snitko? Didn't I say that a wolf looked out of the eyes of that Azya, and isn't he the son of a wolf?"

"The son of a lion," said Pan Michael, "and who knows that he doesn't take after his father?"

"By the living God, gentlemen, did you see how his teeth gleamed, just like old Tukhay's used to when he was in a rage," said Pan Mushalski. "That alone would have made me recognize him, for I often saw old Tukhay."

"Not so often as I did," answered Zagloba.

"I understand now," said Bogush, "why the Lipkovs and Cheremis are so devoted to him. They regard the name of Tukhay as sacred. By the living God! If that man wanted to do so, he could carry over every Tartar to the service of the Sultan, and give us much trouble."

"He won't do that," replied Pan Michael, "for it is true, as he has said, that he loves the country and the Hetman; or he would not be serving with us when he is able to go to the Crimea and swim in luxury there. This he has not enjoyed with us."

"He wont do it," answered Pan Bogush, "for, if he had wanted to, he could have done so already, there was nothing to hinder him."

"On the contrary," added Nyenashinyets, "it is my opinion that he will lure back to the Commonwealth the traitorous captains who deserted it.

"Pan Novovyeyski," suddenly cried Zagloba, "if you had known that he was the son of Tukhay Bey, perhaps then—perhaps—eh . . ."

"Instead of three hundred I should have ordered him to receive a thousand and three hundred blows. May the lightning strike me if I wouldn't do it. Gentlemen, it's a wonder to me that, as he was Tukhay Bey's cub, he didn't run away to the Crimea. It must be that he did not discover it long before, for he knew nothing about it while he was with me. It's a great surprise to me, I assure you, but for Heaven's sake, don't trust him. Gentlemen, I have known him longer than you have, and I will only say this; the devil is not so

cunning, a mad dog is not so dangerous, nor a wolf so savage and cruel as that man. He will make fools of you all yet."¹

"You don't know what you are talking about, said Mushalski, "we have all seen him under fire at Kalnik, Uman, Bratslav, and on a hundred other occasions."

"He will not forget his own people, he will have revenge,"

"But he slew Azba's marauders to-day. How do you account for that?"

Meanwhile Basia was all aflame, for the history of Mellekhovich strongly interested her, but she wanted such a beginning to have an appropriate conclusion and so, nudging Evka Novovyeytski, she whispered in her ear:

"But you were in love with him, Evka, confess now, don't deny it, you were in love with him! You are still, aren't you? I'm sure you are; be frank with me, whom can you confide in, if not me, a woman, too? His blood is almost royal. The Hetman will procure for him not one, but ten nobilities. Pan Novovyeytski will not make any opposition. Of course Azya is still in love with you! I am sure of it; I know, I know! Fear not! he has confidence in me. I will question him immediately, he will confess to me without being put to the torture. You were desperately in love with him, and you still love him, don't you?"

Evka was half dazed. When Azya had first made love to her she was almost a child, and afterwards she had not seen him for several years, and had ceased to think of him. She only remembered him as a passionate youth who was half-companion to her brother and half-servant. But now, she saw him again; he now appeared handsome, and wild as a falcon, a great warrior and, moreover, the son of a princely though foreign line, consequently young Azya looked altogether different; and she was stunned, though at the same time charmed and dazzled at his appearance. Memories of him came back to her as in a dream. She could not fall in love with him at a moment's notice, but in an instant she felt her heart quite ready to love him.

Basia being unable to question her closely in company, took her and Zosia Boska into an alcove and again began to insist:

"Evka, quick, tell me instantly, do you love him?"

The blood flamed in Evka's face. She was a hot-blooded

¹ Literally, He will pour tallow under your skin.

brunette with dark hair and eyes, and at the least mention of love, the blood would flush her cheeks.

"Evka!" reiterated Basia for the tenth time, "do you love him?"

"I don't know," Panna Novovyeyski answered, after pausing a moment.

"But you don't deny it; ah! I know! Don't hesitate, I was the first to tell Michael that I loved him; there was no harm in it, and it was a good thing. You must have been desperately in love with each other long ago. Ah! I comprehend it all now. It is pining for you that has always made him so gloomy, he has gone about like a wolf. The poor soldier has almost wasted away; what happened between you? Tell me!"

"He told me in the storehouse that he loved me," whispered Evka.

"In the storehouse! . . . And what then?"

"Then he caught me in his arms and began to kiss me," she continued in a still lower tone.

"Haven't I found him out, that Mellekhovich! and what did you do?"

"I was afraid to scream."

"Afraid to scream! Zoska! Do you hear that? . . . When were your amours discovered?"

"Father came in and he immediately struck at him with an axe; then he whipped me and ordered him such a beating that he wasn't able to get out of his bed for a fortnight."

Here Panna Novovyeyski began to cry, partly with grief and partly with shame. On seeing it, the tender-hearted Zosia Boska's dark blue eyes filled with tears and Basia immediately tried to console Evka.

"It will all come right, I'll stake my head on it. And I'll make Michael and Pan Zagloba help us in the matter. I'll persuade them, don't fear. Pan Zagloba's wits can overcome everything, you don't know him, don't cry, Evka dear, supper is ready." . . .

Mellekhovich did not appear at supper. He was sitting before the fire in his own room, warming gorzalka and mead, pouring it into a smaller cup and drinking it while he munched some dry biscuits. Later, during the evening, Pan Bogush came to talk over the news.

The Tartar immediately gave him a chair lined with sheep-skin and asked, as he placed before him a hot pitcher of liquor:

“Does Pan Novovyeyski still want to make me his slave?”

“There is no longer any talk of that,” replied the Lieutenant-Governor of Novgorod. “Pan Nyenashinyets has the first claim to you, but he doesn’t care anything about it, because either his sister must be dead by this time, or else has no desire to change her lot. Pan Novovyeyski had no idea who you were when he had you punished for making love to his daughter. Now he seems half-stunned, for although your father wrought infinite evil on this land, still he was a famous warrior, and blood is blood. As God is in heaven, no one will raise a finger against you as long as you serve the country faithfully, particularly as you have friends in all directions.”

“Why shouldn’t I serve it faithfully?” replied Azya. “My father fought against you, but he was an Infidel, while I am a professed Christian.”

“That’s just it, just it! You can’t return to the Crimea without giving up your faith, which entails giving up your salvation, and so, no earthly riches, dignities, nor rank could compensate you. The truth is that you ought to be grateful both to Pan Nyenashinyets and Pan Novovyeyski: the former for bringing you away from the Infidels, and the latter for bringing you up in the true faith.”

“I know,” said Azya, “that I ought to be grateful to them, and I will do my best to repay them. You have truly remarked that here I have found a great many benefactors.”

“You say that as if you had a bitter taste in your mouth, but reckon up your friends to yourself.”

“First of all come his Highness the Hetman, and yourself, I will repeat that until I die. I know not what others there may be.” . . .

“How about the commander of this post? Do you think that he would give you up to anyone, even if you were not the son of Tukhay Bey? And then, Pani Volodiyovski, I heard what she said about you at supper. . . . Even before that she took your part when Novovyeyski recognized you. Pan Michael would do anything in the world for her, why he can’t see anything beside her, and no sister could feel more affectionately towards a brother than she does towards you. Nothing but your name was on her lips all through supper.” . . .

The young Tartar suddenly lowered his head and began to blow into his cup of hot liquor, and as he protruded his bluish lips to blow, his face became so characteristically Tartar, that Pan Bogush cried:

"By Heavens! you have no idea how exactly you resembled the old Tukhay Bey a moment ago. It surpasses imagination. I knew him very well. I saw him in the Khan's palace, and in the field, and was in his camp twenty times at the very least."

"May God bless the just and may the pestilence rot the unjust!" cried Azya. "The Hetman's health!"

Pan Bogush drank the toast and said:

"Health and long life! It is true that we who are with him are only a handful, but we are true soldiers. God grant that we shall not be mastered by those scoundrels whose only ability is to intrigue at the primary diets and accuse the Hetman of treason to the King. The villains! Night and day we stand with our faces to the foe and they gather around the kneading-tubs that are filled with chopped meat and cabbage and millet and beat on them with their spoons. That's all they do. The Hetman sends messenger after messenger praying for reinforcements for Kamenets. Like Cassandra, he foretells the destruction of Ilium and Priam's subjects; but they pay no attention to it and only try to discover offences against the King."

"What is your lordship speaking about?"

"Nothing. I was comparing Kamenets with Troy, but of course you haven't heard of Troy. Wait a little, the Hetman, I vouch, will gain you your nobility. Public affairs are such that the opportunity will not be wanting if you really want to cover yourself with glory."

"I shall either cover myself with glory or the earth will cover me. As there is a God in Heaven, you will hear of me!"

"But those men? What is Krychinski doing? Will they return to us or not? What are they doing now?"

"They are camping, some at the Urzyisk steppes, and others further away. It is difficult to come to an agreement just now, as they are far away. They have orders to move to Adrianople, and take all the provisions they can carry with them."

"For God's sake! that's important news, for if there is to be a great gathering of men at Adrianople, war with us is certain to follow. The Hetman must be told of this immediately. He is also of the opinion that war is approaching, but this would leave no doubt.

"Halim told me that it is rumored there that the Sultan himself would be at Adrianople."

"Blessed be the name of the Lord! And here we have scarcely a handful of men. Our only hope is in the rock of Kamenets. Does Krychinski make any new stipulations?"

"He writes complaints rather than stipulations. A general amnesty, restoration of the rights and privileges of nobles which they formerly possessed, and commands for the chiefs, that's what they want, but they are hesitating, as the Sultan has offered them still more."

"What's that you say? How can the Sultan offer them more than the Commonwealth. The rule is absolute in Turkey and all rights and privileges are entirely dependent on the mere whim of the Sultan. Even if the present ruler were to observe all his undertakings, his successor might break or trample upon them at will; while among us privileges are inviolable, and whoever becomes a noble cannot be deprived of anything even by the King."

"They say that they were nobles, but that they were treated just as if they had been dragoons; that the Governors more than once ordered them to perform various duties from which not merely a noble but even his follower is exempt."

"But if the Hetman promises?" . . .

"No one doubts the noble nature of the Hetman and they are all fond of him in their own hearts, but this is how they argue: the throng of nobles will cry down the Hetman for a traitor, he is hated at court, and a cabal threatens to impeach him. What can he do?"

"Pan Bogush began to scratch his head.

"Well, what?"

"They themselves are uncertain what to do."

"And will they stay with the Sultan?"

"No."

"Bah, who will order them to come back to the Commonwealth?"

"I!"

"How so?"

"I am the son of Tukhay Bey."

"My Azya," said Pan Bogush after a pause, "I don't deny that they may be devoted to your race, and to Tukhay Bey's glory, though they are our Tartars and Tukhay Bey was our foe. I can understand that, for even among us, some nobles take pride in saying that Khmelnitski was a noble and not a descendant from the Cossacks, but from our people—the Mazovians. . . Well, though there is no greater scoundrel

in hell than he, they are glad to recognize him because he was a famous warrior. Such is man's nature! But I see no sufficient reason why your descent from Tukhay should give you the right to command over all the Tartars."

For a while Azya did not speak, then he put his hands on his hips and said:

"Then I will tell you Sir, Undercarver, I am obeyed by Krychinski and others, for, in addition to the fact that they are common Tartars, and I a Prince, I have other strength and resources. . . . Which neither you nor the Hetman have any knowledge of."

"What resources? What strength?"

"I can scarcely tell you," Azya replied in the Russian tongue. "But how is it that I am ready to undertake what another would not dare? Why have I thought of what others would not have thought?"

"What's that you say? Of what have you thought?"

"I thought of this: that if Pan Hetman would be willing and give me permission to do so, I would bring back not only the captain, but I would also bring half the Horde into the service of the Hetman. Is unoccupied land so scarce in the Ukraine and in the wilderness? Let the Hetman only proclaim that the Tartar who comes over to the Commonwealth will be ennobled, will not suffer religious persecution, and will serve in a company of his own people, that they all will have their own Hetman, as the Cossacks have, and I will stake my head that the entire Ukraine will quickly be swarming with men. The Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars will come; they will come from Dobrudja and Byalogrod; they will come from the Crimea, driving their flocks, and with their wives and children in wagons. Your lordship, don't shake your head, come they will as long since came those who for generations were faithful servants of the Commonwealth. In the Crimea and everywhere else the people are oppressed by the Khan and the Murzas, but here they will be ennobled, they would have their own sabres and take the field under their own Hetman. I will take my oath Sir, that they will come, for where they are, they often suffer hunger. Now if it is proclaimed through the villages that by the Hetman's authority I call them—that Tukhay Bey's son calls, they will come by the thousand."

Pan Bogush put his head in his hands.

"By God's wounds! Azya, where did you get such thoughts? What would be the result?"

“In the Ukraine there would be a Tartar nation as there now is a Cossack. You have granted privileges and a Hetman to the Cossacks. Why not to us. You ask what will be the result. Not what there is now,—another Khmyelnitski,—for we should have immediately put our foot on the neck of the Cossack; there would be no uprising of the peasants with carnage and destruction, there would be no Doroshenko, for once let him rise and I should be the first to drag him to the Hetman’s feet with a halter. And if the Turkish Power took it into its head to attack us, we could beat the Sultan; if the Khan threatened us with raids, we should beat the Khan. Is it so long since that the Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars did the very same thing, though still holding the Mohammedan faith? Why should it be different with us? We belong to the Commonwealth and we are noble! . . . Now think of it. The Ukraine pacified, the Cossacks kept in shape, protection from Turkey, thousands and thousands of additional troops, that’s my idea, that’s what I had in mind, that’s why Krychinski, Adurovich, Moravski and Tvorkovski obey me. That’s why one-half of the Crimea will throng to the Steppes at my call.”

Pan Bogush was as much astonished and overwhelmed by Azya’s words as if the walls of the room in which they were sitting had suddenly opened and revealed new and strange vistas to his eyes. For some time he did not utter a word, and simply stared at the young Tartar, but Azya began to take long strides up and down the room, and at length he said:

“Without me nothing can be done, for I am the son of Tukhay Bey, and there is no greater name among the Tartars from the Dnieper to the Danube.”

Presently, he added:

“What do I care about Krychinski, Tvorkovski, and the rest. It is not only a question of them, or of a few thousands of Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars, but of the whole Commonwealth. It is said that there will be a great war in the Spring against the power of the Sultan, but only give me the authority and I will make it so hot among the Tartars that even the Sultan will burn his fingers.”

“In God’s name who are you, Azya?” Pan Bogush cried.

He raised his head.

“The future Hetman of the Tartars.”

At that moment a gleam of the fire illuminated Azya’s face which was both cruel and beautiful. And Pan Bogush

felt that he was in the presence of a new man, so great and proud was the bearing of the young Tartar. Pan Bogush also felt that Azya was speaking the truth. If the Hetman were to issue such a proclamation, the whole of the Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars would inevitably return, and their example would be followed by a great number of the wilder Tartars. The old Noble was quite familiar with the Crimea, where he had been twice in captivity and, after being ransomed by the Hetman, he had acted there as an envoy. He knew the court of Bakhche-Serai; he knew all the Hordes from the Don to the Dobrudja; he knew that many villages were wiped out by hunger in the winter; that the oppression and exactions of the Khan's Baskaks was bitter to the Murzas; that often there was rebellion in the Crimea itself; and therefore he immediately recognized that fertile lands and privileges would not fail to tempt all whose lot was hard or perilous in their old abode.

If the son of Tukhay Bey sent out the call they would most certainly be attracted. Only he could do it, no one else. By means of his father's fame, he might stir up the villagers and set one-half of the Crimea against the other; he could bring over the wild Horde of Byalogrod and undermine the whole power of the Khan, yea, and even of the Sultan.

If the Hetman cared to make use of such an opportunity, he might regard the son of Tukhay Bey as a man expressly sent by Providence.

Consequently Pan Bogush began to regard Azya in a different light and to marvel more and more how such thoughts came to be hatched in his brain. The perspiration broke out on his brow in big drops in amazement at those ideas. However, his mind was not yet entirely free from doubt, so after a pause, he said:

"And do you know that such a business would involve war with Turkey?"

"There will be war in any case. Why did the Horde receive orders to march to Adrianople? Unless dissensions break out in the Sultan's own domains there must be war, and when it comes to the point half the Horde will be found on our side."

"The rascal has a ready reply for every point!" reflected Pan Bogush. "It makes my head swim."

"You see, Azya, it's not an easy matter any way you look at it. What would the King say, and the Chancellors, and

the estates of the realm, and all the nobles, the majority of whom are hostile to the Hetman?"

"All I need is the Hetman's written permission, and when we once get there, let them drive us out if they can! Who will do that and how? You would be glad enough to get the Zaparozhians out of the Sich, but you can't succeed for the life of you."

"Pan Hetman would fear to take the responsibility."

"With the Hetman there would be fifty thousand sabres of the Horde in addition to the troops he has already."

"And the Cossacks! Do you forget the Cossacks? They will immediately rise in rebellion!"

"We are required here expressly to keep a sword hanging above the Cossack neck. Where does Dorosh get his support. From the Tartars! Let me take charge of the Tartars and Dorosh must bow his head to the earth before the Hetman."

At this point Azya extended his hand and stretched out his fingers like an eagle's claw and then grasped the hilt of his sabre.

"So, this is how he will teach law to the Cossacks. We will make serfs of them and hold the Ukraine. Hear, Pan Bogush. You think that I am a little man, but I am not so insignificant as I appear in the eyes of Novovyeytski, the commander of this post, and yourself. Look at me, I have pondered over this night and day till I have grown thin and my face is falling away. Look at it, Sir, it has greatly darkened. But what I have thought out I have thought out thoroughly, and so I tell you that I possess strength and counsel. You yourself see that these are weighty matters. Go to the Hetman and don't delay. Lay the affair before him and get him to give me a letter concerning it, and I don't care about the other authorities. The Hetman has a mighty mind and he will know what strength and counsel there is in this. Tell the Hetman that I am the son of Tukhay Bey, and that I only can accomplish it. Lay it before him and gain his consent, but for God's sake let it be done quickly while the snow is still on the Steppes, before Spring comes, for in the Spring there will be war; go at once and return immediately, so that I may quickly know what to do."

Pan Bogush did not notice that Azya spoke in commanding tones like the Hetman issuing his orders to his officers.

"I will rest to-morrow, and start the day after," he said. "God grant that I may find the Hetman in Yavorov. He is quick in deciding and you will soon have an answer."

"What does your lordship think about it? Will the Hetman consent?"

"Perhaps he will order you to come to see him, so do not go to Rashkov at present. You can reach Yavorov more quickly from here. I cannot tell whether he will consent, but he will promptly take the affair under full consideration, for your reasons are very weighty. By the living God, I did not expect this of you, but I now see that you are no common man and that the Almighty has predestined you to greatness. Well, Azya, Azya! only a lieutenant in a Tartar company, and yet he has such things in his mind as to terrify a man! Now I shall not be surprised to see even a heron feather in your cap and a horse's tail above you. . . I believe even in that what you say, that these thoughts have fired your heart during the night hours. . . I will take a little rest and start the day after to-morrow. Now I will leave you, as it is late and my head is buzzing like a mill. God be with you Azya. . . My head aches as if I had been drunk. . . God be with you Azya, son of Tukhay Bey!"

Then Pan Bogush grasped the lean hand of the Tartar and turned to go, but, at the door, he again halted and cried:

"What is that? . . . Fresh armies for the Commonwealth. . . A sword suspended above the head of the Cossack. . . Dorosh subdued . . . rebellion in the Crimea, . . . the Turkish power weakened . . . and an end to the raids into Russia, . . . for Heaven's sake!"

Then he left, and Azya looked after him for a few moments and then murmured:

"But for me, a horse's tail, a baton, and . . . with or without her consent, herself. If not woe to you all!"

Then he finished his gorzalka and cast himself upon the couch covered with skins. The fire had died down on the hearth, but through the window fell the bright rays of the moon which had mounted high in the cold wintry sky. For some time Azya lay quietly, but could not sleep. Finally he arose, approached the window and gazed at the moon that was sailing through the infinite seas of the heavens like a ship.

The young Tartar watched it for a long time, and at last he laid his hands on his breast with his thumbs pointing upward, and from the lips of him who scarcely an hour ago had professed himself a Christian came out a cry in a melancholy half chant, half drone:

"La Allah illa Allah! U Mahomet Rassul Allah!" (There is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his messenger.)

CHAPTER IX

Since the early morning Basia had been taking counsel with her husband and Pan Zagloba on the question of how to unite two loving hearts. The two men laughed at her earnestness, and continued to tease her; however, as they always allowed her to have her own way, like a spoiled child, they finally promised to help her.

"We had best persuade old Novovyeynski not to take the girl with him to Rashkov," said Zagloba; "tell him that the frosts have come and the roads are not quite safe. The two young people will be constantly thrown together here, and must fall desperately in love."

"That's a capital thought," cried Basia.

"Capital or not," replied Zagloba, "don't let them get out of your sight. You are a grandmother, and, consequently, I am sure that you will bind them at last, for a woman always has her own way; but take care that the Devil doesn't have his way in the meantime. That would bring disgrace upon you, for you are responsible for this affair."

Basia spat like a kitten, at Pan Zagloba, and then said:

"You are always boasting that in your youth you were a Turk, and you seem to think that everybody is a Turk! . . . Azya is not such a one."

"Not a Turk, but a Tartar! Pretty one! So you would—vouch for Tartar love?"

"They are both thinking more about their tears caused by terrible sorrow. . . Besides, Evka is a very honest girl."

"Yet she has such a tell-tale face that the words 'Here are lips for you!' might just as well be written on her brow. Ho! She is a jackdaw! I discovered yesterday, that whenever she sits opposite an attractive fellow, she sighs so deeply for him that she blows her plate so far away from her that she has to draw it back again. A real jackdaw, I say."

"Do you want me to leave the room?" asked Basia.

"You won't go when we are talking of match-making. You won't go—I know you! But anyhow it's too soon for you to

try your hand at matchmaking: that belongs to professional women. You have no dignity; it was only yesterday that Pani Boska told me that when she saw you coming back from the battle in your trousers, she thought it was Pani Volodiyovski's little son, who had gone on an expedition to the woods. Dignity doesn't love you, either, which is seen at once in your slender figure. As I love God, you look just like a student! Another style of women are in fashion now. In my day, when a woman sat in a chair, it would squeak just as if you had stepped on the tail of a dog; but, as for you, you could ride on a tom-cat's back without least fatiguing the beast at all. They say that match-making women never have any children."

"Do they really say that?" asked the little knight, in alarm.

But Pan Zagloba began to laugh; and Basia laying her rosy cheek against her husband's, whispered:

"Ah, Michael, some time we will make a pilgrimage to Chenstohovo; then, perhaps, the Most Holy Lady will grant our prayer."

"Indeed, that is the wisest thing to do," said Zagloba.

Then they embraced each other, and Basia said:

"Now let us talk about Azya and poor Evka; and how we can best help them. We are happy; let us make them happy."

"It will be easier for them after Novovyeyski has gone," said the little knight, "for in his presence they cannot see each other, because Azya hates the old man. But if the old man were to give him Evka, perhaps they might forget the past and love each other as son-in-law and father-in-law. I think it is not a question of throwing the young people together, for they are already in love, but of winning over the old man."

"He is a boor!" exclaimed Basia.

"Basia," said Zagloba, "imagine that you had a daughter, and that you were asked to give her to some Tartar."

"Azya is a prince," answered Basia.

"I do not deny that Tukhay Bey is of blue blood. Hasling was a nobleman; but Krysia Drohoyovska would never have married him if he had not been naturalized."

"Then try to get Azya naturalized."

"Do you think that an easy matter? Even if some one would grant him an escutcheon, he would have to be confirmed by the Diet; and that takes time and protection."

"That time is needed, I do not like, but protection can be

found. Certainly the Hetman will not refuse this to Azya, for he loves soldiers. Michael, write at once to the Hetman. Do you need paper, ink, or pen? Write instantly! I'll get you everything, and a candle, and the seal; sit down, do not delay, and write at once."

Pan Michael began to laugh:

"O Almighty God!" he cried, "I asked for a sedate and gentle wife, and Thou hast given me a whirlwind."

"Say that, say, and I shall die!"

"Ah, you are impatient!" cried the little knight, excitedly, "you are impatient. Tfu! tfu! a charm for a dog!"

Turning to Zagloba, he said: "Do you know the words of any charm?"

"I know some, and I've just repeated them," replied Zagloba.

"Write!" commanded Basia, "or I will jump out of my skin."

"I would write twenty letters to please you, though I don't know if they could do any good, for in this case the Hetman himself can do nothing; even if he should have protection Azya can only appear at the proper time. My dear Basia, Panna Novovyeyski has told you her secret,—very well. But you have not said a word to Azya, and you don't know now whether he is burning up with love for Evka or not."

"Not burning with love for her? Why not, when he kissed her in the storehouse. Aha!"

"Golden Soul!" said Zagloba, smiling. "You talk like an infant, only you have a fluent tongue. My love, if Michael and I had to marry all the women we happen to kiss, we should have to become Mohammedans at once, and I should be Padishah of Turkey and he Khan of Crimea. How's that, Michael, eh?"

"I suspected Michael before we were married," said Basia.

And, holding up her finger at him, she began to tease him:

"Twist your moustache; twist it. Don't deny it. I know, I know, and you know, too . . . at Ketling's!" . . .

The little knight really began to twist his moustache to give himself an air, and also to cover his confusion; and wishing to change the conversation, he said:

"And so you don't know whether Azya is in love with Panna Novovyeyski?"

"Wait; I will talk to him alone, and ask him. If he is in love; he must be in love! If he isn't, I don't want to know him!"

"In God's name! She will talk him into it," exclaimed Zagloba.

"And I will persuade him, even if I have to see him every day."

"Ask him first," said the little knight. "Perhaps he will not admit it at once, because he is different; but that's nothing. You will gain his confidence by degrees; you'll get to know him better; you will know what to do when you understand him."

The little knight turned to Pan Zagloba:

"She seems dull, but she is sharp."

"Goats are sharp," replied Zagloba seriously.

The conversation was interrupted by Pan Bogush, who burst in like a bomb-shell, and after kissing Basia's hands, exclaimed:

"May bullets hit that Azya! I never closed my eyes all night. May the woods cover him!"

"How has Pan Azya offended your grace?" asked Basia.

"Do you know what we were doing yesterday?"

And Pan Bogush stared at each of them.

"What?"

"Making history! As I love God, I am not lying, history!"

"What history?"

"The history of the Commonwealth. He is really a great man. Pan Sobieski himself will be astonished when I submit Azya's ideas to him. I repeat, he is a great man; and I am sorry I can't tell you more, for I am sure you would all be as much amazed as I am. I can only tell you that if he succeeds in accomplishing his purpose, God only knows what he will become."

"For instance, do you think he will become Hetman?" asked Zagloba.

Pan Bogush placed his hands on his hips: "That's it—he will be Hetman. I'm sorry I can't tell you more. . . He will be Hetman,—and that's enough."

"Perhaps a Hetman of dogs, or he will have to join the bullocks. Herders have Hetmen also. Tfu! what has your grace been saying, Pan Undercarver? It is true that he is the son of Tukhay Bey; but, if he is to be Hetman, what shall I, and Pan Michael, and your grace become? Are we to wait for the abduction of Casper, Melchior, and Baltazar, and become the three kings at the birth of Christ? The noblemen created me, at least, commander; and I resigned the post out

of friendship for Pavel,¹ but, as God is above, I don't understand your prediction."

"But I say Azya is a great man."

"I said so," said Basia, looking towards the door, for some other guests at the stanitsa were now coming in.

First, Pani Boska entered with the blue-eyed Zosia, and Pan Novovyeyski with Evka, who, notwithstanding a bad night, looked more charming than ever. Strange dreams had disturbed her sleep; dreams of Azya, who appeared handsomer and more commanding than ever. She blushed deeply as she thought of these dreams, for she fancied that everybody would read her thoughts.

She was unnoticed, however, for everybody began to say "good-morning" to the Lady Commandress. Then Pan Bogush again told his story of Azya's greatness and future; and Basia was delighted that Evka and Pan Novovyeyski had to hear it. Since his first meeting with the Tartar, the old man's anger had cooled considerably, and he was now much calmer. He no longer called him his man. Indeed, he was impressed beyond measure by the discovery that he was a Tartar prince and a son of Tukhay Bey. He listened with amazement to the story of Azya's wonderful bravery and the Hetman's important charge to him of bringing back all the Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars to the Commonwealth. So important had Azya become in his opinion that at times it seemed even to Pan Novovyeyski that they were talking not of Azya, but of another person.

Every other moment Pan Bogush repeated very mysteriously:

"This is nothing in comparison with what is awaiting him; but I am not at liberty to speak of it."

And when the others shook their heads dubiously, he exclaimed:

"There are two great men in the Commonwealth—Pan Sobieski and the son of the Tukhay Bey."

"For the love of God," said Pan Novovyeyski, roused at last, "prince or no prince, what can he have in the Commonwealth unless he is a nobleman. He is not even naturalized."

"The Hetman will naturalize him ten times!" exclaimed Basia.

Panna Evka heard all this praise with closed eyes and a

¹ Referring to Pavel Sapyeha, Voevode of Vilna, and Hetman of Lithuania.

beating heart. It is hard to say if it would have beaten so quickly for Azya, poor and obscure, as for Azya, the knight with a great future. This glitter dazzled her; and the memory of past kisses and new dreams seized now with a tremor of delight the young lady's body.

"So great and so famous," thought Evka. "No wonder that he is as quick as fire!"

CHAPTER X.

That very day Basia, following her husband's advice, made the Tartar pass "an examination;" and as she was afraid of Azya's shyness, she decided not to insist too much.

Nevertheless, however, he had hardly come into her presence before she said, speaking directly to the point:

"Pan Bogush says you are a great man; but I believe that no great man avoids love."

Azya closed his eyes and bent his head, saying:

"Your grace is right."

"I see you have a heart."

After this remark, Basia shook her golden locks and winked, as if to say she understood the affairs of the heart very well, and hoped she was speaking to a man of similar experience. Raising his head, Azya let his glance wander over her. Never had she seemed so lovely as now, when her lovely eyes were bright with curiosity and their own fire and her child-like face, wreathed in smiles and blushes, looked upon his. But her very innocence charmed Azya more and more; desire rose in his soul; love seized him powerfully and intoxicated him like wine, driving out all other ambitions but this—to steal her from her husband, to carry her off, to clasp her forever to his breast, to press his lips to hers, and to feel her arms around his neck: to love her continually, even forgetting all else, or perish with or without her.

Everything whirled about him with this thought; from the depths of his soul fresh desires came creeping like serpents from the hidden places of a cliff. Yet he was a man of great self-control, and holding his wild heart in check as he held a furious horse while throwing the lariat, he said to himself, "It is impossible yet!"

In apparent coldness he stood before her, though he was on fire, and his eyes with their dilated pupils revealed all that his compressed lips concealed.

But Basia, whose soul was as pure as the waters of a spring and whose mind was occupied with other things, did

not understand his meaning: for the moment she was thinking what more to say to the Tartar; at length she raised her hand and said:

"Many a man has a secret love in his heart and does not dare to mention it to anyone, but if he were frankly to confess it, perhaps he might receive some comfort."

Azya's face darkened for a moment as a wild hope flashed through his brain like lightning, but he immediately recovered himself and asked:

"What is your ladyship's meaning?"

"Any other woman," replied Basia, "would lose patience with you; for deliberation is not a woman's nature, but I am not like that. As for assistance, I would willingly help you, but I do not ask you to confide in me all in a moment. I only say, 'Do not shut yourself up alone, come to me every day.' I have already discussed the affair with my husband, and in time you will realize my good will, and know that mine is not merely thoughtless inquisitiveness, but sympathy and, moreover, if I give you my aid, I must first be sure that you are in love; moreover, it is only proper that you should acknowledge it first; when you have done that, I too may be able to tell you something."

Azya immediately realized what a vain hope he had harbored a moment since; he saw at once that it concerned Evka Novovyeyski; and all the maledictions of the entire family which had gathered with the lapse of time in his revengeful heart rose to his lips. Hatred flamed up in his soul and all the more fiercely in consequence of what he had felt a moment ago. But he recovered himself. He was not only self-controlled, but he possessed all the Oriental cunning. He saw immediately that if he were to indulge his venom against the Novovyeyskis he would forfeit Basia's favor and the chance of seeing her daily; but nevertheless, he felt that he could not overcome his feelings, at least for the moment, to the extent of lying to the woman he desired as to the state of his own heart or professing to love another.

Therefore, he suddenly cast himself at Basia's feet in real distress and genuine suffering and, kissing her feet, he cried: "I resign my heart into your ladyship's hands and to your ladyship's hands I confide my faith, I will do nothing but what you order. I desire to submit to no will but your own. Do what you will with me. My life is pain and anguish, I am very miserable. Pity me or I shall be lost!"

And he began to moan in his intense suffering and the repressed longings that were burning him like a fire. But Basia thought that his words were merely the outpouring of his love for Evka, hidden so long and with such suffering, and so she felt an immense compassion for the young man and two little tears sparkled in her eyes.

"Rise, Azya," she said to the kneeling Tartar, "I have ever wished you well and have a sincere desire to serve you. You are of noble blood, and the authorities will certainly requite your services with a nobility. Pan Novovyeyski will submit to be pacified since he now regards you with different eyes, and Evka . . ."

At this point Basia rose and, lifting her rosy smiling face, put her hand to her mouth and whispered in Azya's ear:

"Evka loves you."

His face became drawn as if with terrible anger, he put his hands on his hips and, without regarding the effect of his words, he hoarsely cried, several times:

"Allah, Allah, Allah!"

He then darted from the room.

Basia looked after him for a moment or two. She was not much surprised at the exclamation, because it was often used by the Polish soldiers, but, at the sight of the young Tartar's excitement, she said to herself:

"Real fire! he is mad after her."

Then she dashed out like a tempest to carry the news to her husband, Pan Zagloba and Evka. She found Pan Michael in the office, deep in the accounts of the dragoons stationed at Khreptyov. He was sitting writing, and she sprang to his side and cried:

"Do you know I spoke to him; he fell at my feet and is mad after her."

The little knight laid down his pen and looked up at his wife. She was so pretty in her excitement that his eyes sparkled and he smiled and held out his arms to her. She kept him away and repeated:

"Azya is mad after Evka."

"As I am after you!" cried the little knight as he embraced her.

The same day Zagloba and Evka had a detailed report of her talk with Azya. The maiden's heart now entirely surrendered itself to the sweet sentiment, and beat like a hammer at the anticipation of their first interview, and still more at

the thought of what would happen when they were alone. She already saw Azya's face at her knees and felt his kisses on her hands and her own languor at that moment when the head of a maiden leans towards the arms of a lover, and her lips whisper "I love you." In the meantime, she ardently kissed Basia's hands in her emotion, and every moment kept looking at the door in the hope of seeing the dark but graceful figure of young Azya appear.

But Azya did not appear, because Halim had arrived; Halim, his father's old servant and now quite an important Murza in the Dobrudja. He had come without any concealment, because at Khreptyov every body knew that he was the intermediary between Azya and the leaders who had gone over to the Sultan's service. They immediately closeted themselves in Azya's quarters where, after paying due obedience to the son of Tukhay Bey, Halim crossed his hands on his breast and with bowed head waited to be questioned.

"Have you any letters?"

"None, Effendi, they ordered me to convey it all by word of mouth."

"Speak then."

"War is certain. We must all go to Adrianople in the Spring. The Bulgarians have orders to take hay and barley there."

"And where will the Khan be?"

"He will go direct by the Steppes through the Ukraine to Doroshenko."

"What is the news from the Cossack encampments?"

"They are happy at the thought of war and are longing for the Spring; there is much suffering among them, though it is only the beginning of Winter."

"Is the suffering very great?"

"A great number of horses have died. Men have sold themselves into slavery in Byalogrod just to live till the Spring. Great numbers of horses have died, Effendi, because there was so little grass on the Steppes in the Autumn. . . . It had all been burnt up by the sun."

"But have they heard of the son of Tukhay Bey?"

"I told as much as you would allow. The rumor was spread by the Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars, but no one knows the exact truth. There is also considerable talk of the report that the Commonwealth wants to give them lands and freedom, and call them to serve under the son of Tukhay Bey. At the

very hint of it all the poorer villages were in a ferment. They are quite willing, Effendi, quite willing, but others tell them that it is not true, and the Commonwealth will attack them, and that a son of Tukhay Bey does not exist at all. There were some of our merchants in the Crimea and they say that reports were also there that "A son of Tukhay Bey exists," and the people were excited, but others said, "He does not exist," and they quieted down again. But if the word should once go forth that your grace summons them to freedom, lands, and war, they would come in swarms. . . . Only give me authority to speak. . . ."

Azya's face became radiant with pleasure, and he began to take long strides up and down the room, finally he said:

"Make yourself comfortable under my roof, Halim; sit down and eat."

"I am your slave and dog, Effendi," cried the old Tartar.

Azya clapped his hands and a Tartar servant came in and, at his orders, quickly returned with refreshments, gorzalka, dried meat, bread, sweetmeats, and some handfuls of dried watermelon-seeds which, as well as the seeds of the sunflower, are held a great delicacy among the Tartars.

"You're not a servant, but a friend," said Azya, when the servant had departed. "Be welcome! for you are a bringer of good news; sit down and eat."

Halim began to eat and nothing was said till he had finished. He had soon refreshed himself, and then sat looking at Azya, waiting for him to speak.

"Here they know who I am now," at last Azya said.

"What then, Effendi?"

"Nothing. Their respect for me is the greater. When it came to business, I should have had to tell them anyway. But I put it off till I had received news from the Horde, and I wanted to tell the Hetman first; but Novovyeyski arrived and recognized me."

"The young one!" cried Halim in alarm.

"No, the old one, Allah, has delivered them all into my hands here, for the girl is with them. The devil must have possessed them. Only let me become Hetman and I will have a game with them. They are giving the girl to me; all right! we always need slaves in the Harem."

"Is the old man the matchmaker?"

"No . . . She! . . . She believes that I love the other, and not her."

"Effendi!" said Halim with deep reverence, "I am the slave of your house and have no right to speak in your presence; but I recognized you among the Lipkov Tartars; I informed you who you were at Bratslav, and from that moment I have faithfully served you. I tell others that they are to regard you as their master, but although they love you, no one can love you as I do; am I allowed to speak?"

"Speak on."

"Guard against the little knight. He is celebrated throughout the Crimea and the Dobrudja."

"And Halim, have you heard of Khmyelnitski?"

"I have heard, and I served under Tukhay Bey who fought with Khmyelnitski against the Poles, and destroyed castles and captured spoil."

"And are you aware that Khmyelnitski deprived Chaplinski of his wife, and married her himself, and had children by her? What followed. War. And all the armies of the Hetmans and the King and the Commonwealth together could not take her from Khmyelnitski. He defeated the Hetmans and the King and the Commonwealth and became the Hetman of the Cossacks. And what shall I be? Hetman of the Tartars. They will have to give me lots of land and some town for my capital; in the neighborhood of the town villages will arise on fertile land and the villages will contain good fighting men with plenty of bows and sabres. And when I carry her off to my town, and make her my wife, the beauty, whose will be the power. Mine. Who will think of her? The little knight! . . . If he will yet be alive! . . . Even if he should be, and should howl like a wolf and beat his head on the earth before the king in complaint, do you think that they will go to war with me for one tress of golden hair? They have already had one such war, and half the Commonwealth was in flames. Who will take her away from me? Will the Hetman? In that case, I will go over to the Cossacks, form brotherhood with Doroshenko, and deliver over the country to the Sultan. I am another Khmyelnitski; I am better than Khmyelnitski, for a lion dwells in me. Let them allow me to take her and I will serve him and defeat the Cossacks, the Khan, and the Sultan. If not, I will trample all Poland under my horse's feet, capture the Hetmans, scatter armies, burn towns, and slay the inhabitants. I am the son of Tukhay Bey: I am a lion!"

Here a red light blazed in Azya's eyes and his white teeth

gleamed like old Tukhay's; he raised his hand and shook his fist threateningly towards the North and he looked mighty, and dreadful, and splendid, so that Halim bowed again and again before him and said in low tones:

"Allah Kerim, Allah Kerim! (God is merciful.)"

A protracted silence followed. Azya gradually grew more calm and at last said:

"Bogush was here, I showed him my power and resources, namely, to set up in the Ukraine beside the Cossack nation a Tartar one with a Tartar Hetman in addition to the Cossack Hetman. . . ."

"Did he approve of it?"

"He put his head in his hands and almost beat it on the earth, and the next day went off with the great news to the Hetman at full gallop."

"Effendi," cried Halim, respectfully, "suppose the Great Lion should not approve of it?"

"Sobieski?"

"Yes."

Azya's eyes again began to glare with a red light, but it lasted only for a second. His face immediately grew calm again, and he sat down on the bench, supported his head in his hands, and began to think deeply.

At last he said: "I have carefully weighed the Grand Hetman's reply to Bogush's great news. The Hetman is wise and will agree. He knows that there must be war with the Sultan in the Spring, for this the Commonwealth possesses neither the money nor men, and when Doroshenko and the Cossacks side with the Sultan, Poland will be finally destroyed. The more so, because neither the king nor the estates of the realm believe that war will come, and are making no haste for preparation. I am carefully listening to everything here. I am aware of all that goes on and Bogush makes no secret of what is said at the headquarters of the Hetman. Pan Sobieski is a great man; he will agree, for he knows that if the Tartars seek lands and freedom here, it may result in civil war in the Crimea and on the Steppes of the Dobrudja, and that the Horde will be weakened, and the Sultan himself must take measures to still those storms. . . . In the meantime, the Hetman will gain time to be better prepared, and the Cossacks and Doroshenko will swerve from their fealty to the Sultan. This is the only hope for the Commonwealth, which is so weak that it will gain strength by the return even of a

few thousand Lipkov Tartars. The Hetman is perfectly well aware of this; he is a wise man and will agree." . . .

"I bow low before your wisdom," replied Halim, "but what will happen if Allah deprives the Great Lion of his light, or if Satan blinds him with his pride, so that he rejects your designs."

Azya put his savage face close to Halim's ear and whispered:

"You must stay here until the Hetman's answer arrives, and I will not go to Rashkov till then. If they will not fall in with my plans, I will send you to Krychinski and the others. You will order them to advance along this side of the river, almost as far as Khreptyov, and be prepared, while I with my Lipkovs will fall upon this post on the first favorable night, and treat them like this: ———"

Here Azya drew his finger across his throat and presently added:

"Kensim! kensim! kensim!" . . .

Halim crouched down and on his face, which resembled a wild animal, there was a significant smile.

"Allah! And the Little Falcon, too?" . . .

"Yes! Him first of all."

"And then—into the Sultan's domains?"

"Precisely! . . . with her!" . . .

CHAPTER XI.

A severe winter had covered the forests with a heavy mantle of snow and icicles, and filled the ravines to their brink with snow-drifts till the whole land looked like one white level plain. Tremendous storms came suddenly, burying men and cattle under the pall of snow. Roads became dangerous and misleading; but Pan Bogush made the greatest haste to Yavorov to inform the Hetman of Azya's mighty designs as early as possible. A border noble, brought up in constant danger from Cossack and Tartar, and engrossed with the thought of the dangers by which the country was menaced by rebellion and forays and the whole power of the Turks, he regarded these plans as almost constituting the country's sole salvation; in his heart he religiously believed that the Hetman, who was revered by himself in common with all the men on the border, would not hesitate for an instant when the might of the Commonwealth was concerned: he therefore rode on with a joyful heart, notwithstanding heavy drifts, obliterated roads, and storms.

At last, one Sunday, he arrived covered with snow at Yavorov and had the good fortune to find Pan Sobieski at home, and immediately had his arrival announced, although the attendants told him that the Hetman was engaged night and day on expeditions and sending off despatches, and had scarcely time even for his meals. But to their surprise, the Hetman at once ordered him to be admitted. So, after a very short wait, the old soldier bowed at the knees of the commander.

He found Pan Sobieski greatly changed, and his face lined with care, for these were almost the most unhappy years of his life. His name had not yet resounded in every corner of Christendom, although already in the Commonwealth, he was surrounded with the fame of a mighty leader and terrible destroyer of the Mussulmans. On that account, the grand baton and the defence of the eastern border was confided to him in time, but the dignity of Hetman was ac-

accompanied by neither men nor money. Nevertheless, hitherto, victory had followed his steps, as surely as a man's shadow follows him. With a very small force he had gained a victory at Podhaytse; with a very small force he had passed through the length and breadth of the Ukraine like a devouring flame, grinding chumbuls of many thousands into dust, capturing rebellious cities and spreading terror with the name of the Pole. But now the Commonwealth was threatened with a war against the most terrible of all the powers of that day, for it was a struggle with the whole Mussulman world. It was no secret to Sobieski now that Doroshenko had delivered over the Ukraine and the Cossacks to the Sultan; the latter had promised to make Turkey, Asia Minor, Arabia, and Egypt down to the heart of Africa, proclaim a sacred war and go personally to the Commonwealth to demand a new Pashalik. Desolation like a bird of prey was hovering over the whole of Southern Russia and in the meantime, in the Commonwealth itself there was disorder; the nobles were riotously supporting their weak king, and taking up arms so as to be ready for a possible civil war. The country was exhausted with recent struggles and military confederations and was impoverished. Bitter envy was rife, and mutual distrust was poisoning men's minds. Nobody wanted to believe that there was any immediate danger of war with the Mussulmans, and they condemned the great leader for announcing it with the intention of distracting attention from internal affairs. They also brought against him the more serious accusation that he himself was quite ready to call in the aid of the Turks for the sake of assuring victory to his own followers. They made him out to be a common traitor and if it had not been for the army they would most certainly have brought him before the court.

To carry on the approaching war, to which thousands of savage hordes would flock from the East, he had not what could be called an army, but merely a handful, so small that the Sultan's court had more servants; he had no money, no means to repair the ruined fortresses, nor any hope of victory, nor power of defence, nor even the assurance that his death, like that of Jolkyevski of old, would awake the country from its torpor, and give birth to an avenger. This was why his brow was lined with care, and the noble face, like that of a Roman conqueror with laurels on his brow, showed traces of secret suffering and sleepless nights.

But at the sight of Bogush, a pleasant smile lighted up the Hetman's face; he laid his hand on the shoulder of the man who was bowing before him, and said:

"I greet you, soldier, I greet you; I had not hoped to see you so soon, but you are all the more welcome to me here in Yavorov. Where have you come from? From Kamenets?"

"No, most serene and Mighty Lord Hetman, I have not even called at Kamenets, I have come direct from Khreptyov."

"What is my little soldier doing there, is he well, has he at all succeeded in clearing the wilderness of Ushytsa?"

"It is so quiet there that a child might go through it safely. The robbers have been hanged, and within the last few days, Azba Bey and his whole following have been cut to pieces so that there was not even a man left to tell the tale. . . . I arrived there on the very day of the slaughter."

"I recognize Pan Michael's work there; the only man to be compared with him is Rushchyts in Rashkov. What is the news in the steppes? Is there anything fresh from the Danube?"

"Only evil news. At the end of the winter there is to be a mighty gathering of troops at Adrianople."

"I have heard of that. There's never any news now but ill news, whether from the Commonwealth, the Crimea, or Stambul."

"Not exclusively, for I myself bring such good news that if I were a Turk or a Tartar, I should hint at a gift."

"In that case, you have fallen from Heaven. Now, speak quickly and remove my anxiety."

"But I am so frozen Your Highness, that my understanding has congealed in my head."

The Hetman clapped his hands and ordered the servant to bring some mead. Presently they brought in a dusty flask and lights, for although it was still early, thick snow clouds had so obscured the atmosphere, that it was as dark as twilight outside as well as in.

The Hetman poured out and drank to his guest, who bowed low and drained his goblet and said:

"The first piece of news is that that Azya, who was commissioned to bring back into our service the chiefs of the Iipkov and Cheremis Tartars, is not properly named Mellekhovich, but the son of Tukhay Bey."

"Of Tukhay Bey," cried the astonished Pan Sobieski.

"It is this way, Your Highness, it appears that Pan Nyenashinyets carried him off from the Crimea in his infancy, but lost him on his way back, and Azya, who fell into the possession of the Novovyeyskis, was brought up with them without any knowledge of his parentage."

"I wondered how that he who was so young was so highly esteemed by the Tartars. But I understand now, for the Cossacks also, even those who have remained faithful to Our Mother, regard Khymyelnitski as a sort of saint and reverence him."

"That's it exactly! exactly! I told Azya the very same thing," cried Pan Bogush."

"Wonderful are the decrees of the Almighty!" exclaimed the Hetman, after a pause, "old Tukhay shed oceans of blood in our land and his son is now serving it, at least he has served it faithfully till now, but now it is doubtful whether he won't want to enjoy power in the Crimea."

"Now? Now he is more faithful than ever, and this is the beginning of the second part of my news, in which perhaps may be found the help and salvation for the distressed Commonwealth. As God lives the news made me forget weariness and peril in my eagerness to impart it as quickly as possible to relieve your afflicted heart."

"I am all attention!" cried Pan Sobieski.

Bogush began to unfold Azva's plans and presented them so enthusiastically as to become quite eloquent; now and then his hand, trembling with excitement, would pour out a glass of mead, spilling the generous liquor over the edge as he proceeded. Vivid pictures of the future passed in procession before the amazed eyes of the Grand Hetman; thousands and myriads arrived for lands and liberty, accompanied by their wives, children, and herds: The Cossacks, in amazement at the new power of the Commonwealth, bowed down before it in obedience and did obeisance to the King and his Hetman. Rebellion ceased in the Ukraine, no longer did raids, as wasting as fire or flood, come along the old roads against Russia; but, side by side with the Polish and Cossack troops, moved across the illimitable steppes, with blare of trumpets and beat of drums, the chambuls of Ukraine noble Tartars.

And, year after year, wagon after wagon arrived notwithstanding the orders of Khan and Sultan, bringing mighty

throng who preferred bread and the black soil of the Ukraine to the old famished settlements. . . . And all this force, hitherto hostile, was coming into the service of the Commonwealth. The Crimea was drained of its inhabitants, the Khan and the Sultan lost their ancient power and the fear of them died out, for, from the steppes and the Ukraine, the new Hetman of the new Tartar nobility faced them threateningly! A guardian and a faithful defender of the Commonwealth, the famous son of a terrible father, young Tukhay Bey.

A deep flush spread over Bogush's face; it seemed as if he was carried away by his own eloquence, for at last, he lifted both hands and cried:

"This is what I bring! This is what that Dragon's cub has hatched out in the wild forests of Khreptyov. Nothing more is needed now than to give him a letter and Your Highness's authorization to spread the news in the Crimea and on the Danube. Your Highness, if the son of Tukhay Bey were to do nothing more than stir up trouble, in the Crimea and on the Danube, to cause dissensions, and excite the hydra of internecine strife among the Tartars, to set camp against camp, and this on the eve of the struggle, I repeat, he would be rendering an enormous and deathless service to the Commonwealth."

But Pan Sobieski strode back and forth through the room in silence. His noble face was dark and almost terrible; he strode on and it could be seen that his heart was taking secret counsel, whether with himself or with God, who could say?"

Finally thou didst tear some leaf out of thy soul, Grand Hetman, for the answer thou gavest to the orator was as follows:

"Bogush, had I even the right to give such a letter and such authorization, I would not give them while I had life."

These words fell on the ears of Bogush as heavily as if they had been drops of molten lead or iron, so that for a season he was speechless and hung his head, and only after a long pause did he groan:

"But why, Your Highness, why?"

"In the first place, I will tell you as a statesman, that the name of the son of Tukhay Bey might bring over a certain number of Tartars, it is true, if lands, freedom, and the privileges of nobles were offered them, but there would be fewer than you and he have supposed. Moreover, it would

be the act of a madman to summon Tartars to the Ukraine and settle new tribes there when we cannot even manage the Cossacks alone. You assert that the immediate result would be mutual strife and dissensions and that a sword would be suspended above the Cossack neck; but what assurance is there that that sword would not also be stained with Polish blood. Hitherto, I have not been acquainted with this Azya, but now I see that the dragon of pride and ambition dwells in his heart, and so I again demand who will be surety against his turning out a second Khmyelnitski. He will overcome the Cossacks, but if the Commonwealth fails to satisfy some demand or other, or threatens to execute justice and punishment, for any act of violence, he will join hands with the Cossacks, call fresh hordes from the East, as Tukhay Bey was called by Khymelnitski, sell himself to the Sultan like Doroshenko, and instead of an increase in power, we shall suffer additional carnage and defeat."

"Your Mightiness, when the Tartars have become nobles, they will cling faithfully to the Commonwealth."

"Were the renegade Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars so few? They were nobles for a long time, and yet deserted to the Sultan."

"The Lipkovs were deprived of their privileges!"

"But what will be the result, if, at the outset, as is certain to happen, the nobles of Poland oppose such an extension of their privileges to aliens? With what show of right, with what conscience, will you give to savage marauders, who have been incessantly desolating our fatherland, the power and privilege of determining the fate of that land, electing Kings and sending members to the diets? Why bestow such a reward upon them? What madness has entered the brain of this Lipkov, and what evil spirit has possessed you, my old warrior, to allow yourself to be persuaded and fooled in such fashion as to give credit to such infamy and such impossibility?"

Bogush lowered his eyes and replied in a faltering voice:

"Your Mightiness, I knew in advance that there would be opposition from the Estates of the Realm, but Azya asserted that if the Tartars established themselves with the authority of Your Mightiness they would not allow themselves to be ejected."

"Man, why it was a menace! he shook his sword over the Commonwealth and you did not see it!"

"Your Mightiness!" cried Bogush in desperation, "it might be managed so that all the Tartars should not be ennobled, but only the most important of them, and the rest be proclaimed free. Even in that case they would answer the call of the son of Tukhay Bey."

"But why isn't it preferable to proclaim freedom for all the Cossacks. Peace! old soldier, I tell you that an evil spirit has taken possession of you."

"Your Mightiness. . . ."

"And further," (here Pan Sobieski's lion-like brow became wrinkled and his eyes flashed) "even if it were to happen as you say, even if by this means our power were increased; even if war with Turkey were avoided; even if the nobles themselves were to shout for it, yet, while this hand of mine can wield the sabre and make the sign of the Cross, I will never, never, consent to such a thing. So help me God!"

"Why, Your Mightiness?" reiterated Pan Bogush wringing his hands.

"Because not only am I a Polish, but a Christian Hetman, for I stand to guard the Cross. And even if these Cossacks lacerate the entrails of the Commonwealth more brutally than ever, I will not use the swords of the Infidels to sever the necks of a blind, but still Christian community; for by such action, I should be saying 'Raca' to our fathers and grandfathers, to my own ancestors and their ashes, and to the tears and blood of the entire Commonwealth in the past. As God is true! if destruction is to be our lot, if our name must be that of a dead, instead of a living nation, at least let our glory remain and some memory of that duty which was pointed out to us by God. Let people who come after us say as they look at those crosses and tombs: 'Here was true Christianity, here they defended the Cross against the vile-ness of Mohammedanism so long as they had breath in their bodies and blood in their veins; and they died for other nations.' That is our duty, Bogush. Look, we are the stronghold on which Christ has set his crucifix and you tell me, a soldier of the Lord, nay, the commander of the fortress, to be the first to throw open the gates and admit the Infidels like wolves to a sheepfold and deliver over the sheep, the flock of Jesus to the slaughter. Rather let us suffer from chambuls; rather let us bear rebellion; rather let us meet this dreadful war; rather let us too fall, and the whole Commonwealth perish than disgrace our name, lose our renown, and betray this guardianship and service of the Lord."

As he concluded Pan Sobieski towered in his full grandeur, and his face shone like the dawn as must have shone that of Godfrey de Bouillon when, on the walls of Jerusalem, he cried: "God wills it!" Before those words Pan Bogush seemed a dust in his own eyes and Azya seemed to him as dust beside Pan Sobieski; and the young Tartar's brilliant schemes suddenly grew dark and became in Bogush's eyes altogether vile and infamous. For what reply could he make to the Hetman's words "that it was better to die than to betray the service of the Lord." What argument could he advance? and so the poor knight did not know whether to fall at the Hetman's feet or to beat his own breast and cry, "Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa." ("My sin, my great sin.") But at that moment the sound of bells was heard from the neighboring Dominican monastery.

As he heard it Pan Sobieski cried:

"They are ringing to vespers, Bogush, let us go and submit ourselves to God!"

CHAPTER XII.

To the same degree that Pan Bogush hurried on his way from Khreptyov to the Hetman, so he loitered on his way back. In each town of any size he halted for a week or two, spending the feast in Lemburg, and remaining there till the New Year. It is true that he was taking the Hetman's instructions to Tukhay Bey's son, but these merely amounted to orders to bring the business of the Lipkov leaders to a prompt conclusion, and a sharp and even menacing order to relinquish his great designs. Pan Bogush had therefore no reason for haste, since Azya could take no steps with the Tartars without a letter from the Hetman.

He therefore lingered and visited churches along the way, performing penance because he had fallen in with Azya's schemes. Meanwhile, directly after the new year, many guests had arrived at Khreptyov. From Kamenets came Naviragh, an envoy from the Patriarch of Uzmiadzin, accompanied by two Anardrats, learned divines from Kaffa, with many attendants. The soldiers were greatly interested in the strange garb of these people, at the violet and crimson Crimean caps, with long shawls of velvet and silk above their dark faces and their intense gravity, as they walked like cranes and bustards about the Khreptyov post. Pan Zaharyash Pyotrovich, famous for his constant travels to the Crimea and even to Tsarograd itself, and yet more for his diligence in seeking and ransoming captives in the slave markets of the East, came with Naviragh and the Anardrats as interpreter. Pan Michael at once handed him the sum that was necessary for the ransom of Pan Boski, and, as the wife of the latter had not enough money, he made it up from his own pocket; Basia contributed her pearl ear-rings to help the distressed lady and her charming daughter. Pan Seferovich, Pretor of Kamenets, was also there—a wealthy Armenian, whose brother was groaning in captivity among the Tartars—and two women who were still young and far from plain, though rather swarthy, named Pani Neresevich and Pani Kyernovich. Both had husbands in captivity.

The majority of the guests were in great distress, but there was no lack of happy ones also. Father Kaminski had sent his niece, Panna Kaminska, to be present at Shrovetide in Khreptyov and under Basia's care, and one day the younger Pan Novovyeyeski—Pan Adam—broke in upon them like a thunderbolt. Having heard of his father's arrival from Khreptyov, he at once obtained furlough from Pan Rushchyts, and hastened to receive him.

Young Pan Adam had greatly altered during the last year or two; in the first place, his upper lip was thickly shaded by a dark short moustache which did not conceal his teeth, that were white as those of a wolf, but was curled and shapely. In the second place, the youth, who was always well built, had now grown to be almost a giant. It seemed that only that great head could carry such thick and bushy hair, and only such a mighty neck could support that head. His face, which was always dark, had become tanned with the winds; his eyes glowed like coals and his features expressed defiance. A large apple could be concealed so easily in his mighty grasp that he could play "Which one will you have?" with it, and he could grind a handful of nuts on his knee to snuff. His whole body made for strength, otherwise he was lean and slim in the waist, but his chest above was as big as a chapel.

He could snap horse-shoes with the greatest ease and tie iron rods in a bow around the soldiers necks, he looked even bigger than he really was; the boards creaked under him as he walked, and when he stumbled against a bench, it was splintered.

In a word, he was one man in a hundred, in whom life, power, and boldness seethed like water in a pan; it seemed as if his powers could not find room even in his mighty body, and that there was a flame in his breast and head and one half-expected to see his hair smoking. Sometimes indeed vapor did arise from it, for he was famous at the cups. He went into battle with laughter like the neighing of a steed, and he used his sword in such a way that when the fight was over the soldiers would go to examine his victims and marvel at his astonishing strokes. Moreover, as he had been used to the Steppes and battle and vigils from early life, he was cautious and farsighted, notwithstanding his boisterousness; he was acquainted with every Tartar trick, and next to Pan Michael and Rushchyts he was considered the best border leader. Notwithstanding his assurances and threats, old

Novovyeyski did not give his son a very harsh reception, fearing that if he offended him he would go away again and not come back for another eleven years. But in reality, the mean old noble was secretly pierced with this son who had not taken any money away with him, and who had taken good care of himself in the world and gained glory among his own companions, besides the good will of the Hetman and the rank of an officer, which very few could have managed to do without interest. The father thought that the youth who had run wild in the Steppes, was not likely to bow to his father's authority, and therefore, it would be better not to put it to the test. So the son fell at his feet as was right, but he looked him straight in the eyes and, at the first reproach, he unceremoniously replied:

"Father, your lips speak complaint, but in your heart, you are glad, as you should be. I got into no disgrace. I ran away to the army because I am a noble."

"But you may be a Mussulman," answered the father, "as you haven't appeared at home for eleven years."

"I did not show my face, for fear of being punished, which would be an outrage to my rank and dignity as an officer. I waited for a letter of forgiveness; the letter didn't come, nor did you get tidings of me."

"But aren't you afraid now?"

The young man smiled and showed his white teeth.

"This post is under military government and that is above even a father's authority. My benefactor, why don't you embrace me, as you are longing to do."

With these words, he extended his arms and Pan Novovyeyski scarcely knew what to do. It was certain that he could not quarrel with his son who had left his home when a boy and now came back a grown man and a celebrated military officer. Moreover, Pan Novovyeyski's paternal pride was greatly fed by one thing and another, and so he would gladly have pressed him to his breast but, . . . what about his own dignity?

But the son clasped him in his embrace and made the bones of the old noble crack, which completely vanquished him.

"What can I do?" he gasped. "The rascal feels that he is mounted on his own horse, and has no fear. On my word if I were in my own home, I shouldn't be so gentle, but what can I do here. Well then, embrace me again!"

And after the second embrace, the youth hastened to inquire after his sister.

"I ordered her to be kept out of the way till I called her," answered his father; "the girl will be ready to jump out of her skin."

"For Heaven's sake! where is she?" cried his son, and he opened the door and began to shout till the whole place echoed: "Evka, Evka!"

Evka was waiting in the next room, and rushed in, but had scarcely time to cry "Adam!" when she was clasped in mighty arms and lifted from the floor. Her brother had always been very fond of her; in the old days, to shield her from their father's tyranny, he would very often take the credit of her faults on himself, and more than once received the floggings which should have been hers. Pan Novovyeyski was an old tyrant at home and very harsh, and consequently she now welcomed that strong brother, not simply as a brother, but as a future shelter and protection. He kissed her on the brow and eyes and hands, now and then holding her away from him, gazing at her and crying delightedly:

"A lovely girl, as I love God!" and again:

"Just look how she has grown, a regular stove, not merely a maiden!"

She smiled at him with her eyes. Then they began to talk very quickly of their long separation, and of home, and the wars. Old Pan Novovyeyski hovered round them muttering. He was greatly impressed with his son, but now and then he seemed to be considerably disturbed about his future authority. That period was one of great parental rule which afterwards increased beyond all limits; but this son was that warrior, from the wild border posts who was riding his own horse. Pan Novovyeyski was very jealous of his parental authority. Still, he was sure that his son would always pay him respect and give him his due, but the question was, would he always yield like wax? Would he put up with everything as he had when a boy? "Bah!" reflected the old noble, "if I want to do it, I'll treat him like a boy. He is a spunky sub-lieutenant and impresses me, as God is dear to me!" The end of it was that Pan Novovyeyski felt his parental love increasing every moment, and that he would end by developing a great weakness for this gigantic son.

In the meantime Evka was twittering like a bird and deluging her brother with questions. When was he coming

home, and wouldn't he settle down and marry? She is not quite clear about it, and can't be sure, but, as she loves her father, she has heard it said that soldiers are prone to fall in love. "Bah!" she remembers now, it was Pani Volodiyovski who told her so. How kind and lovely that Pani Volodiyovski is. You couldn't, with a candle, find a lovelier or better woman in all Poland. Perhaps the only one who can be mentioned in the same breath with her, is Zosia Boska."

"And who is Zosia Boska?" asks Pan Adam?

"A young lady who is staying here with her sister, and whose father was captured by the Horde. When you see her, you will fall in love with her."

"Let's have Zosia Boska!" cried the young officer.

His father and Evka laughed at his readiness.

"Love is like death," said the son; "it passes no one by. I hadn't a hair on my face, and Pani Volodiyovski was quite a girl, when I fell desperately in love with her. Ah, good God! how I did love that Bashka! And what then? Sometime I will tell her, I thought. I did tell her, and the answer came like a blow in the face. Shoo! cat, leave the milk alone! It seemed that she was already in love with Pan Michael, and what's the use of talking?—she was right."

"Why?" asked old Pan Novovyeyski.

"Why? for this reason! because without boasting I can say that I could hold my own with the sabre against any one else, but he wouldn't need to play with me while you could repeat two Paters. Moreover, he is a matchless fighter, to whom even Rushchyts would take off his cap. Pan Rushchyts, even! Even the Tartars love him. There is no greater soldier in the Commonwealth."

"And how he and his wife do love each other! why, it's enough to make your eyes ache to look at them," cried Evka.

"Ah, ha! so your mouth is watering; your mouth is watering, for your time has come too!" exclaimed Pan Adam. And, putting his hands on his hips, he began to nod his head at his sister like a horse, and smile, but she answered in confusion:

"I haven't a thought of it."

"Well, there's no scarcity of officers and pleasant fellows here."

"But I don't know whether father has told you that Azya is here," said Evka.

"Azya Mellekhovich the Lipkov! I know him, he's a fine soldier."

"But you are not aware that he is not Mellekhovich, but that same Azya who grew up beside you," said old Pan Novovyeyski.

"For Heaven's sake! what's that you say? Only think of it! that idea sometimes occurred to me too, but they told me that his name was Mellekhovich and so I thought he could not be the same man. Azya is a common name among them. It was so many years since I had seen him that I couldn't be sure. Ours was rather short and ugly, but this one is very handsome."

"He is ours," cried old Novovyeyski, "or rather not ours, for do you know whose son he turns out to be?"

"How should I?"

"He is the son of the great Tukhay Bey."

The young man struck his strong hands on his knees till the sound echoed through the house.

"I can't believe my ears! the great Tukhay Bey. If that's true, he is a prince, and related to the Khan. There's no better blood in the Crimea than that of Tukhay Bey."

"It is the blood of a foe."

"It was so in the father, but the son serves us. I have myself seen him under fire twenty times. Ah, I now understand where he gets that devilish daring. Pan Sobieski honored him in the presence of the whole army, and made him a setnik. I am glad to meet him from the bottom of my soul;—a tough soldier! I will welcome him with my whole heart."

"But don't be too familiar with him!"

"Why not? Is he a servant of mine or yours? I am a soldier and so is he; I am an officer and so is he. Bah! if he were some infantry fellow who directs his men with a reed, I shouldn't have a word to say, but if he is a son of Tukhay Bey, then he has no common blood in his veins. He is a prince, and there is nothing more to be said. The Hetman himself will have him ennobled. How should I turn up my nose at him, when I am in brotherhood with Kulak Murza, Bakhchyaga, and Sukyman? not one of these would think himself demeaned by herding sheep for Tukhay Bey."

Evka was suddenly tempted to kiss her brother again, and then she sat down close to him and began to stroke his shaggy hair with her beautiful hand.

These caresses were interrupted by the entrance of Pan Michael.

Pan Adam sprang up to welcome his superior officer, and

immediately began to explain that he had not paid his respects to the commander in the first place, because he had not come on duty, but only in his private capacity. Pan Michael cordially embraced him and answered:

"And who would find fault with you, dear comrade, if you should first go and fall at your father's feet after so many years of separation. If it had been a matter of duty, it would have been otherwise, but have you no messages from Pan Rushchyts?"

"Only respectful greetings. Pan Rushchyts went to Yahorlik, because he was informed that there were a great many horse-tracks in the snow. My colonel received your letter and sent it on to the Horde to his parents and relations with instructions to search and make inquiries there, but he did not write himself. He said: "My hand is too heavy, and I have no experience in that art!"

"I know he does not like to write," said Pan Michael. "With him the sabre is everything."

Here the little knight twisted his moustache and added, with a touch of boasting:

"And yet you vainly hunted Azya Bey for two months!"

"But your lordship has swallowed him down as a pike does a blackfish!" enthusiastically cried Pan Adam. "Well, God must have confused his mind so that when he evaded Pan Rushchyts, he ran into your arms. He got it."

These words greatly pleased the little knight and, to pay courtesy with courtesy, he turned to Pan Novovyeyski and said:

"So far, the Lord Jesus has denied me a son, but if he ever gives me one, I should like him to be just such another one as this."

"There is nothing in him," the little noble replied, "nothing at all, and that 's the end of it."

But notwithstanding his words, his breast heaved with gratification.

"This is another delicacy for me. . . !"

In the meantime the little knight stroked Evka's face, and said to her:

"You see that I am no child, but my Bashka is almost the same age as you, and so I sometimes think that she ought to have some pleasure more appropriate for her years. . . It is true that everybody here loves her dearly, and I hope you see some justification for it."

"Dear God!" cried Evka, "in all the world, there is not such another woman. I said so only a moment ago."

The little knight was perfectly delighted, and his face grew radiant as he asked:

"Ah, so! did you indeed?"

"As I live, she did," cried father and son, in chorus.

"Very well! put on your smartest clothes, for, unknown to Bashka, I have fetched a band from Kamenets to-day. I told them to cover the instruments with straw and I explained to her that they were Gypsies coming to shoe the horses. To-night we'll have great dancing; she loves it, although she likes to play the dignified matron."

Then Pan Michael began to rub his hands and was highly delighted with himself.

CHAPTER XIII.

The snow fell so heavily that it filled the moat of the military post to the brink, and drifted against the stockade like a bank. It was a stormy night outside, but the great hall of Khreptyov was blazing with light. There were two violins, a bass viol, a flageolet, a French horn, and two bugles. The fiddlers worked away with all their might. The cheeks of the players of the flageolets and bugles were distended till their eyes became bloodshot. The old officers sat on benches round the walls near each other,—like gray doves sitting on the roof in front of their cotes—and watched the dances as they drank their wine and mead. Basia and Pan Mushalski were the first pair, the latter, notwithstanding his years, being as famous a dancer as an archer. Basia wore a silver brocade dress edged with ermine, and looked like a half-blown rose in new-fallen snow. Everybody marvelled at her beauty and from the breasts of many of them arose the involuntary exclamation, "Save us!" for although Panna Evka and Panna Zosia were not quite so old and more than usually beautiful, yet Basia surpassed them all. Pleasure and happiness were dancing in her eyes. As she flew past the little knight, she thanked him with a smile for the entertainment. Between her parted rosy lips gleamed her white teeth and she flashed in her silver robe shining like the rays of the sun or stars and bewitched heart and eye with the combined beauty of a child, a woman, and a flower.

The slashed sleeves of her robe fluttered behind her like the wings of a giant butterfly, and, when she lifted her skirts and made a courtesy to her partner, one would have thought that she was floating on the earth like a vision, or like one of those fairies which skim along the brinks of the ravines on bright summer nights. Outside the hall the soldiers pressed their wild hairy faces against the lighted panes and looked into the room as they flattened their noses against the glass. They were greatly delighted to see how their beloved lady excelled everybody in beauty, for they were

fierce partisans of hers, and so they were not sparing in jests and remarks on Panna Evka or Panna Zosia and every time Basia came near the window, they cheered her loudly. Volodiyovski swelled like dough under the influence of yeast and kept time with Basia's movements by nodding his head; Pan Zagloba stood near holding a goblet in his hand, and kept time with his foot, and spilt his liquor on the floor, and now and then he and the little knight would turn and gaze at each other in an ecstasy of delight.

Basia gleamed and sparkled all over the room, more joyous and bewitching every moment. Such was the life of the wilderness for her! First a battle, then a hunt, then entertainment, dancing and music and a crowd of soldiers, the greatest of them all being her husband and he, both tender and beloved; she knew that she was loved and admired and received the homage of everybody and that this made the little knight happy; consequently, she herself was as happy as the birds at the advent of Spring when they sing and rejoice in the sweet May weather.

The second couple consisted of Azya and Noveska, who wore a crimson jacket. The young Tartar, who was completely intoxicated with the white vision gleaming in front of him, did not address a word to Evka; but she, under the impression that he was silent with emotion, tried to encourage him by pressing his hand, first lightly, and then more strongly. Azya also pressed her hand so strongly that she could scarcely restrain a cry of pain, but he did so involuntarily, for he was thinking only of Basia and, in his heart, he was swearing a terrible oath that she should be his, even if he had to waste half Russia with fire. Sometimes, when he recollected himself, a desire seized him to clutch Evka by the throat and throttle her, and gloat over her, because she was pressing his hand and stood between him and Basia. Sometimes his cruel falcon glance transfixed the poor girl, and her heart began to beat more strongly with the thought that it was love that made him gaze at her so fiercely.

Pan Adam Novovyeyski and Zosia Boska formed the third couple. She looked like a forget-me-not, and danced along beside him with lowered eyes, while he looked like a wild horse and pranced like one. Splinters were flying from under his iron heels and his hair was standing upright; his face was as red as a beet; his nostrils dilated like a Turkish war-horse and he swept Zosia around and carried her through

the air like a leaf in a whirlwind. His spirits rose every moment, because he often lived on the edge of the steppes for months without even the sight of a woman. The very first glance at Zosia had so delighted him that he was desperately in love with her in another instant. Now and then he would look at her downcast eyes and flushed cheeks, and it almost made him snort with pleasure, and then his heels would strike fire more vigorously, and he would hold her, as they turned in the dance, more strongly to his broad breast and burst into a loud fit of happy laughter; his love and joyousness seethed up higher in him each instant, but Zosia's poor little heart was fearful; but it was not altogether a disagreeable fear, because she was pleased with this tempest of a man, who whirled her along and took her with him,—a regular dragon! She had seen many different knights in Yavorov, but, till now, she had never come across such a fiery one, not one that danced as he did, nor one that carried her along in that way. A regular dragon indeed! What could she do with him as it was beyond her power to resist.

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The next couple consisted of Panna Kaminska dancing with a courteous knight, and she was followed by Pani Kyceremovich and Pani Neresevich, who, although the wives of merchants, were invited to the party, because they were both of courtly breeding and very rich. The dignified Naviragh and the two Anardrats watched the Polish dancers with growing astonishment; the old men were becoming more noisy over their cups of mead, sounding like grasshoppers among the stubble. But all the voices were drowned by the music and in the middle of the hall general delight was increasing.

Presently, Basia left her partner and ran panting to her husband and clasped her hands to him.

“Michael,” she prayed, “outside it is so cold for the soldiers, order a barrel of gorzalka to be given to them.”

He was more than usually happy and so he kissed her hands and exclaimed:

“If it would please you, you would have my very blood.”

Then he hastened out himself to inform the soldiers to whom they owed the barrel, because he wanted them to thank Basia and love her all the more.

For answer they raised such a shout as to shake the snow from the roof, whereupon the little knight cried:

"Fire off your muskets as a salute to the mistress."

On his return he found Basia dancing with Azya. When the Tartar encircled that lovely form with his arm, and felt the warmth of her contact and her breath on his cheek, his eyes turned upwards and the whole world seemed to be swimming before him; in his heart he relinquished Paradise and eternity, for of all the Houris, this was the sole one he desired. Then Basia, as she saw the passing gleam of Evka's crimson jacket, and was anxious to know if Asya had yet proposed, asked:

"Have you told her?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"The time has not yet come," he said, with a strange expression.

"But are you not deeply in love?"

"To the death, to the death!" replied Tukhayovich, in low and hoarse tones, like the croak of a raven.

And they danced on directly behind Pan Adam, who had gone to the front. The others had changed partners, but Pan Adam would not release Zosia, only now and then he would find a seat for her on a bench to rest and recover her breath, and then he would start afresh.

At last, he stopped in front of the musicians and cried to them, as he held Zosia with one arm:

"Play the Krakoviak, go on."

And obediently to his orders, they immediately started.

Pan Adam beat time with his foot and sang with a mighty voice,

"Bright torrents run
In the Dniester river
Afterwards they are lost;
So is lost in thee, oh, maiden,
Lost in thee, my heart,
U-ha."

And he roared out that U-ha in such a Cossack way, that Zosienka nearly died with fright. The dignified Naviragh, who was standing near, was scared and so were the two learned Anardrats, but Pan Adam led the dance on again. Twice he circled the room and halting in front of the band, again sang of his heart:

"Lost, but not perished,
In spite of the Dneister
In the depths it will fish out
A little golden ring.
U-ha."

"Very pretty verses," cried Pan Zagloba, "I am very clever at that kind of thing, and have made many of them. Bark, bark away, knight, bark away, and when you find the ring, I'll continue like this:

"Every maiden is flint
Every swain is steel
There will be no end of sparks
If you strike strongly,
U-ha."

"Vivat, vivat, Pan Zagloba," shouted all the officers in mighty tones till the dignified Naviragh and the two learned Anardrats were greatly alarmed and gazed at each other in great astonishment.

Pan Adam made the circuit twice again and at last seated his partner on the bench, panting and amazed at the daring of her cavalier. She was very much taken with him, he was so honest, and brave, though a regular thunderstorm, but she was greatly confused, because she had never met a man like this before, and so she cast down her eyes more than ever and sat silent as a shy child.

"Why are you so silent, is anything grieving you," asked Pan Adam.

"Because my father is in captivity," Zosia replied, in faint tones.

"Don't think of that," said the young man, "the proper thing is to dance. Look at this room, here are some dozens of officers, and in all probability not one will die a natural death, but from the arows of the Infidels or in captivity. One to-day and another to-morrow."

"Every man on the border has lost some one, and we take our pleasure so that God may not think that we murmur at our duty. That's the way. Dancing is the proper thing. Smile, little maiden, raise your eyes, for I think that you care for me."

Zosia did not lift her eyes to be sure, but she raised the corners of her mouth and two dimples appeared in her rosy cheeks.

"Do you love me a little?" he asked.

And Zosia, in still lower tones answered, "And . . . yes. . . ."

On hearing this Pan Adam sprang to his feet and caught Zosia's hands and began to smother them with kisses, saying!

"Lost! there's no use talking, I love you to death, I don't

want anyone but you, my beautiful darling. God save me, how dearly I love you. In the morning, I will fall at your mothers' feet. What's that? In the morning! I'll do it to-night, so as to make sure of you."

A deafening roar of musketry outside the window drowned Zosia's reply. The delighted soldiers were firing a vivat for Basia; the window panes rattled and the walls shook. The dignified Naviragh and the two learned Anardrats were scared for the third time, but Zagloba, who stood by, tried to quiet them saying,

"*Apud Polonos nunquam sine clamore et strepitu gaudia fiunt.*"

As it turned out, they had only been waiting for that salvo of musketry to revel to the utmost. The usual ceremonious manner of the nobles now began to give place to the wildness of the steppes. Music again blared out and dancing broke out again like a tempest. Eyes flashed and glittered and steam rose from the hair. Even the oldest joined in the dance, and every moment loud shouts were heard, and they drank and sported and drank toasts out of Basia's shoe and fired with pistols at Evka's boot heels. Khreptyov roared and reveled and sang till the dawn, till the beasts in the neighboring wilderness concealed themselves in the thickest woods from fear.

As this was happening almost on the brink of a dreadful war with the power of the Turk, and terror and ruin were hovering above all these people, the dignified Naviragh was amazed beyond measure at these Polish soldiers, and the two learned Anardrats were no less astonished.

CHAPTER XIV.

Everybody slept late the next morning, except the guard and the little knight, who never let pleasure interfere with duty. Pan Adam was up early, for Panna Zosia Boska always seemed to him, even more charming in the morning. Donning his gayest clothes, he went into the hall, where they had danced the night before, to ascertain if he could hear any movement in the adjoining rooms which were occupied by the ladies.

He heard a noise in the room occupied by Zosia Boska but the youth was so impatient to get sight of Zosia that he drew his dagger and began to pick out the moss and clay from between the boards, so that, please God, with one eye he might have a glimpse of Zosia through the hole.

Zagloba, who at that moment, was passing with his beads in his hands, found him thus employed, and seeing at once, what he was up to, he stole up to him on the tips of his toes, and began to beat him across the shoulders with his sandal-wood beads.

Pan Adam jumped aside and seemed to shake with laughter, but in reality, he was greatly disconcerted, and the old man followed him, and kept on striking at him.

"Oh you Turk, oh you Tartar, there you have it, there I exorcise you, where are your morals, you want to get a look at a woman, there you have it, there."

"Sir," exclaimed Pan Adam, "'tis not right to use holy beads as a whip. Let me go, I didn't mean anything wrong."

"You say it's not right to beat a man with a rosary. That's not true. The Palm is sacred on Palm Sunday, and yet, people use it for striking, besides, once these were infidel beads and belonged to Suban Kazi, but I snatched them from him at Zbaraj, and, subsequently, they were blest by the Apostolic Nuncio. Look! they're genuine sandal-wood."

"If they are true sandal-wood, they are scented."

"Beads are scented to me, and a maiden to you, I must give

your shoulders a good dressing yet, for there's nothing like a rosary for driving out the devil."

"I didn't mean anything wrong. . . On my life, I didn't."

"Were you only trying to bore a hole through piety?"

"Not piety, but love, which is so extraordinary, that I'm not certain that it won't make me burst like a grenade. What's the use of deception when it's true. Gadflies don't worry a horse in the autumn as much as this disease worries me."

"Take care that this is not sinful desire, for when I came in you couldn't stand still, but were striking your heels together, as if you were standing on a burning log."

"As true as I love God, I didn't see anything, for I had only just begun to pick at the crack."

"Ah, youth, . . . blood isn't water, even I sometimes have to restrain myself still, for in me, there is a lion seeking whom he may devour. If your intentions are pure, you are thinking of marriage."

"Pure thoughts of marriage, Almighty God, what should I be thinking of. I am not only thinking of it, but I feel as if someone were pricking me with an awl. Does not your lordship know that I proposed to Panna Boska last night, and have received my father's consent?"

"The boy is made of sulphur and powder. The hangman take thee! If that is so, it's quite another matter, but tell me how it happened."

"Last night, Pani Boska went to her room to fetch her handkerchief for Zosia and I followed her. She turned round, crying:

"Who's there, and I fell at her feet, crying, 'Mother, beat me if you will, but give me Zosia, my bliss, my love.' But Pani Boska recovering herself, said, 'Everybody praises you and regards you as a noble knight, but I will not give you an answer to-day, nor to-morrow, but later, and you must get your father's permission.' Then she went out thinking that I was overcome by wine. The fact is, I had a little in my head."

"That's nothing. It was in everybody's head. Didn't you see the pointed caps askew on the heads of Naviragh and the Anardrats towards the last?"

"I didn't notice, for I was trying to think of the easiest way to get my father's consent."

"Well, was it a difficult matter?"

“Towards morning, we both retired to our room, and as it’s well to strike the iron while it is hot, I said to myself, it was necessary to get at least an inkling of the view my father would take of the business. ‘Father,’ I said, ‘listen to me, I want Zosia dreadfully, and I want your consent, and if you won’t give it, as God lives, I’ll go and take service under the Venetians, and that’s the last you’ll hear of me. Wasn’t he in a rage with me then! He cried, ‘Oh, what a son I’ve got, you can shift without the permission. Go to the Venetians, or take the girl, but all I have to say is that you won’t get a cent either of my own or your mother’s money, for it all belongs to me.’”

Zagloba protruded his lower lip.

“Ah, that’s bad.”

“Wait a moment, when I heard that, I said: But am I asking that, or do I need it? I want nothing but your blessing, for the possessions of the Infidels that have fallen to my sabre are enough to rent a good estate or even to purchase a village. That what belonged to mother be Evka’s dowry; I will add two handfulls of turquoise and some silk and brocade, and if a bad year comes, I can help my father with cash.”

“That greatly excited my father’s curiosity, and he asked: ‘Are you so rich, for God’s sake, whence did it come? Was it plunder, for when you left us, you were as poor as a dervish?’”

“Fear God, father, I replied, it is eleven years since I began to wield a sabre, and, as they say, it’s not the worst in the world, and shouldn’t I gather something together, I was present at the pillage of rebel towns in which marauders and Tartars had collected the richest booty; I fought against Murza’s and robbers, and spoil kept on coming. I took only what belonged to me, without injustice to anybody, but it kept increasing, and if a fellow didn’t have some sport sometimes, my property would now be twice as much as what your father left you.”

“What did the old man say to that?” asked Zagloba, joyfully.

“My father was astonished, for he hadn’t expected that and immediately began to complain of my spendthrift habits. He said there would be an increase if it were not that this thrower to the birds, this strutting fellow, who only cares to plume himself and play the great lord, squanders everything and saves nothing. Then his curiosity got the better of him, and

he began to try and find out in detail what I own, and, seeing that I could make best progress by swearing with that tar, I not only concealed nothing, but overstated it, though generally, I don't exaggerate, for I say to myself, 'Truth is oats, and lies chaff.' My father rested his head on his hands and fell to thinking and planning: 'This or that estate might have been purchased,' he said, 'this or that lordship might have been maintained. We might have lived on both sides of the border and in your absence, I might have looked after everything,' and my worthy father began to shed tears. . . . 'Adam,' he said, 'I am very pleased with that girl for she is under the Hetman's protection, then there may be some profit in that, too?' 'Adam,' he said, 'mind you respect this, my second daughter, and don't squander her property, or I should never forgive you to my dying day, and I, my gracious benefactor, cried out indignantly at the mere suspicion of any injustice to Zosia. So father and I fell into each others arms and mingled our tears until the first cock crowed."

"The old rascal!" murmured Zagloba, and then he added aloud:

"So there may be a wedding soon, and fresh merry-makings at Khreptyov, particularly as it is Shrovetide."

"If he depended on me, there would be one to-morrow," hastily cried Pan Adam, "but what of it sir; my leave will soon be up, and duty is duty, so that I must return to Rashkov. I can't tell when Pan Rushchyts will grant me another leave of absence. But I'm not so sure that the ladies will not raise obstacles. For when I refer to the old mother, she says, 'My husband is in captivity.' What's that to do with me, I'm not keeping the father in prison, am I? I'm very much afraid of such hindrances, if it weren't for that, I would grasp father Kaminski's soutane and wouldn't release him till he had joined Zoska and me. But when women once get a thing into their heads, you can't get it out with pinchers. I'd give my last cent I have for papa, myself, but there's no way to do so. Moreover, nobody knows where he is, perhaps he is dead, and then there's a fine business. If they want me to wait for him, I might have to wait till the last judgment day."

"Pyotrovich, Naviragh, and the Anardrats will set off to-morrow, and we shall soon have news."

"Jesus save us! Have I got to wait for news? There can't be anything before Spring. In the meantime, I shall waste away, as God is dear to me, my kind benefactor, every-

one has confidence in your wisdom and experience; won't you beat this waiting out of the heads of these women. Kind sir, there'll be war in the Spring. God knows what may happen, besides, I want to marry Zoska and not papa. Why must I go and sigh to him?"

"Induce the women to go and dwell at Rashkov. It will be easier to get news there, and if Pyotrovich discovers Boska, he won't be far from you. I repeat, I will do what I can, but you ask Pani Basia to help you. I won't fail to do so, I won't fail, for the devil. . . ."

Then the door creaked and Pani Boska came in. But before Zagloba could turn round, young Novovyeyski had already dropped down at full length at her feet, and, taking up an immense extent of the floor with his gigantic body, began to cry:

"I possess my father's consent, give me Zoska, mother. Give me Zoska, give me Zoska, mother."

"Give him Zosia, mother," added Zagloba in his deep bass voice. The noise attracted people in the adjacent rooms. Basia entered, and then, Pan Michael from his office, and presently, Zosia herself. The girl never thought what was the matter, but her face immediately grew crimson, and, clasping her hands, she dropped them in front of her, pressed her lips, and stood by the wall with downcast eyes. Pan Michael ran for old Novovyeyski. When he arrived, he was greatly incensed that his son had not entrusted the affair to him, and left it to his eloquence, but nevertheless, he supported the request.

Pani Boska, who indeed was without support of any kind, at last burst into tears and acceded to Pan Adam's request, as well as to proceed to Rashkov and there await her husband. Then still weeping, she turned to her daughter.

"Zosia," she asked, "are you willing to fall in with Pan Adam's plans?"

All eyes were turned upon Zosia. She stood against the wall with downcast eyes, as usual, and only after some moments' silence, did she answer in scarcely audible tones:

"I will go to Rashkov."

"My darling," shouted Pan Adam, as he sprang to her side, and threw his arms round her.

Then he shouted till the walls shook:

"Zosia, is mine, mine, mine."

CHAPTER XV.

Young Pan Novovyeyski set out for Rashkov immediately after his betrothal to procure and furnish lodgings for Pani and Panna Boska, and two weeks afterwards a whole convoy of guests left Khreptyov. It included Naviragh, the new Anardrats, the Armenians, Kyeremovich, and Neresevich, Seferovich, the Boska ladies, the two Pyotroviches, and Old Pan Novovyeyski, and numerous attendants, as well as armed followers for the protection of wagons, draft-horses and beasts of burden. The Pyotroviches and the delegates of the Patriarch of Uzmiadzin were merely to rest at Rashkov to receive tidings about their route, and then proceed to the Crimea. The rest of the party intended to settle at Rashkov for a time and wait at any rate till the first thaws for the return of the prisoners—namely, Boska, the younger Seferovich, and the two merchants who had long been waiting in grief.

The way was very hard as it lay through dreary stretches of wilderness and precipitous ravines, luckily, there was plenty of crisped snow to furnish excellent sleighing, and the presence of the commands in Mohilov, Yampol, and Rashkov assured their safety. Azba Bey was slain, and the robbers either scattered or hanged, and in the winter, the Tartars did not go out on customary trails for want of grass.

Moreover, Pan Adam had promised to meet them with a few dozen cavalry, if Pan Rushchyts would grant permission. They therefore set out in high spirits; Zosia was ready to go to the world's end for the sake of Pan Adam. Pani Boska and the two Armenian ladies had hopes of speedily recovering their husbands. Rashkov, it is true, was situated on the confines of Christendom in a terrible wilderness, but they were not going there for a lifetime, however, nor to stay very long. War would break out in the Spring, there was talk of war everywhere along the border. It was necessary that their loved ones when found, should return with the first warm breeze if they wished to save their heads.

Evka stayed behind at Khreptyov with Basia. Pan Novovyeyeski did not insist on taking his daughter along with him, particularly as he was leaving her in a house of such worthy people.

"I will send her in the utmost safety," said Basia, "or rather, I will take her myself, because, for once in my life, I should like to see the whole of that terrible border, of which I have heard so much since my childhood. In the Spring, when the trails were black with chambuls my husband would not allow me to go, but now, if Evka stays with me, I shall have a good excuse. I shall begin to insist in two weeks, and by the third, I shall certainly obtain permission."

"I hope your husband will not let you go in the winter, unless well attended."

"If he can, he will go with me, if not, Azya will accompany us with a couple hundred or more of cavalry, for I hear that in any case he is to go to Rashkov."

Here the discussion ended, and Eva remained at Khreptyov. Basia, however, had other schemes besides the reasons she had given Pan Novovyeyeski. She wanted to facilitate Asya's advances to Eva, because she was beginning to get uneasy about the young Tartar. It is true that whenever he was questioned by Basia, he said, that he loved Evka and that his old feeling had not died out, but whenever he was with Eva, he did not say a word. In the meantime, the girl had fallen wildly in love with him in the wilderness of Khreptyov. His savage but magnificent beauty, his infancy spent under the strong hand of Novovyeyeski, his wild but princely birth, the mystery with which he had been surrounded, and, lastly, his military renown had completely dazzled her. She was only waiting for the moment to reveal to him her heart, burning like a flame, and to cry, "Azya, I have loved thee from childhood, and to cast herself into his arms and vow to love him till death." In the meantime he clenched his teeth and kept silence.

At first Evka thought that the presence of her brother and father acted as a restraint upon Azya, and kept him from confessing. Later on, she also began to be disturbed, for while such unavoidable obstacles as her father and brother stood in the way, especially, before Azya had been ennobled, he might open his heart to her; and the more obstacles that were coming between them, the more quickly and frankly should he do so.

But he kept silence.

At last doubt crept into the heart of the maiden, and she began to bewail her misfortune to Basia, who comforted her by saying:

"I can't deny that he is a strange fellow, and extremely reticent, but I am sure that he is in love with you, because he has often told me so, and moreover he does not look at you as he looks at others."

To this, Evka gloomily replied, as she shook her head, "Differently, it is certain; but whether that gaze is full of love or hatred, I cannot decide."

"Eva, dear, don't talk so foolishly, what reason has he to hate you?"

"But what reason has he to love me?"

Here Basia would stroke Eva's face, "But why does Michael love me, and why did your brother fall in love with Zosia, almost before he had seen her?"

"Adam was always precipitate."

"Azya is proud, and dreads a refusal, especially from your father; as your brother has been in love himself, he would more quickly comprehend the agony of that feeling. That's how it is. Don't be foolish Evka, and have no fear. I will prompt Azya, and you will see with what resolution he will come forward." In fact, Basia had a talk with Azya that very day and immediately afterwards she hurried in to Eva.

"It's all settled," she cried, as she entered.

"What is?" cried Eva, blushing.

"I said to him, what are you thinking of, to treat me so ungratefully. I have kept Eva here on purpose that you might take advantage of the opportunity, but if you don't, you must know that in two weeks, or in three at the furthest, I shall send her Rashkov. I may go with her myself, and then you will be out of it. His face altered, when he heard of the journey to Rashkov, and he began to bow his head to the ground before me. I then asked him what he intended to do, and he answered 'I will confess what is in my heart on the way. Along the way,' he said, 'will be the best opportunity, along the way what is to happen, will happen, and what is foreordained. I will confess everything, I will reveal everything, for I cannot live any longer in this torment.' His lips began to quiver in his anguish because he has received some troublesome letters from Kamenets. He told me that, in any case he must go to Rashkov, that my,

husband has already had instructions from the Hetman regarding that affair; but the order did not mention any date, as it depends on some negotiations in which he is engaged with the leaders. 'But now,' he said, 'the time approaches, and I must go to them on the other side of Rashkov, and therefore I can escort your ladyship and Panna Eva at the same time.' In reply, I told him that it was uncertain whether I should go or not, as it depended on Michael's consent. He was greatly disturbed when he heard that. Oh, you are a fool, Evka, you say that he doesn't love you, but he fell at my feet and when he besought me to go also, I assure you, he absolutely wailed, so that I almost shed tears over him. Do you know why that was? He told me once 'I will confess what is in my heart, but unless I have the prayers of your ladyship, I shall not be able to do anything with the Novovyeyskis. I shall only excite rage and enmity in them and in myself. My lot, my suffering, and my salvation are in your ladyship's hands, for if your ladyship will not go, then it were better for me that the earth would swallow me or burning flames consume me.' That's how he loves you. It's awful to think about. And if you only could have seen how he looked at that moment, you would have been terrified."

"No, I do not fear him," Evka replied, as she kissed Basia's hands.

"Go along with us, go along with us," she repeated, with emotion, "do go, only you can save us, only you, will not be afraid to tell my father, only you can do anything, go with us, I will fall at Pan Michael's feet and obtain permission for you. Without you, my father and Azya will spring at each other with their knives. Go with us, do go.'"

Then she fell down again before Basia and began to embrace her knees, watering them with her tears.

"God grant that I may go," Basia answered. "I will lay everything before Michael, and will not cease to tease him. It's quite safe now to go alone even. How much more with such a large escort. Perhaps Michael will go himself, and if not, he is not heartless, and will give me permission; he will object at first, but only let me become miserable, and he will immediately begin to hover about me, and look into my eyes, and give in. I would rather have him go, moreover, because I should be dreadfully lonely without him. But what is to be done. I will go with you, anyhow, and give

you some comfort. In this case, there is no question of my own wishes, but of the fate of both of you. Michael loves you and Azya. . . he will agree."

After that talk with Basia, Azya flew to his own room, as full of pleasure and exultation as if he had recovered sudden health after a dangerous illness.

A moment before his soul had been torn with wild despair; at that moment he received a short and dry letter from Pan Bogush, which ran as follows:

"My dear Azya: I have stopped at Kamenets and will not go to Khreptyov now; in the first place, because I am wearied out, and in the second, because there is no reason why I should. I have been to Yavorov. The Hetman not only refuses to give you the written authority to throw his dignity over your wild plans, but he strictly ordered you on pain of forfeiting his favor to desist immediately. I also have reflected on what you said to me, and find it worthless. It would be a sin for an educated Christian people to enter into such schemes with Infidels, and we should be dishonored in the face of the whole world if we granted the privileges of nobility to criminals, marauders, and shedders of innocent blood. Curb yourself in this affair, and do not think of the rank of hetman as it is not for you, even though you are the son of Tughay Bey. But if you want to quickly recover the Hetman's good will, be satisfied with your present position, and, more particularly, hasten the matter with Krychinski, Tarasovski, Adurovich, and the others, for in this way, you will be rendering the greatest service.

"I enclose the Hetman's instructions for your future movements and an official order for Pan Volodiyovski, so that there may be no obstacles to your going out and coming in with your men. Of course, you wouldn't have to go suddenly; you will hold a meeting with those leaders; only be quick and send me a full report to Kamenets of what you have learned on the opposite bank. Commending you to God's favor, I remain, ever with good wishes,

MARTISAN BOGUSH, of Zyemblyts,
Podstolik of Novgorod."

On receipt of this letter, the young Tartar broke out into awful rage. First he tore it up into little pieces, and then stabbed the table with his knife again and again; then he threatened to take his own life and that of the devoted

Halim, who fell on his knees and prayed him to take no serious step until his fury and despair had somewhat abated. This letter was a cruel blow to him. The castles raised by his pride and ambition were all blown up as if by powder, and his plans were destroyed. He might have become the third Hetman of the Commonwealth, and held its destinies in the hollow of his hand; but now, he learns that he is to remain an insignificant officer, the height of whose ambition is a patent of nobility. In his glowing visions, he had seen crowds bowing down before him daily, and now he will have to bow down before others. There is no advantage for him either in being the son of Tukhay Bey, or having the blood of warrior rulers running in his veins, or having great thoughts in his mind—it is nothing, all for nothing. He will live without recognition and die forgotten in some petty distant military post. His wing is broken by one word. One “no” has determined that henceforth he shall not be free to soar to the skies like an eagle, but that he must crawl on the earth like a worm.

But all this even is as nothing compared with the happiness which he has lost. She, for whose possession he would gladly have resigned life and eternity; she, for whom his heart was burning like flame, she, whom he loved with eyes, heart, soul, and blood, will never be his. This letter has deprived him of her, in addition to a Hetman’s baton. Kmyelnitski might carry off the wife of Chaplinski; Azya as a Hetman, might carry off the wife of another man, and defend himself against the whole Commonwealth even, but how could Azya take her, when he was only a lieutenant of Lipkov Tartars, serving under her husband’s command.

As he thought of all this, the world grew dark before his eyes, and empty, and full of gloom, and the son of Tukhay Bey thought that it would be better for him to die than to live on without any object in life, without happiness, or hope of having the woman he loved. This bore the more heavily upon him, because he had not expected such a blow, indeed, considering the Commonwealth’s extremity, he had satisfied himself, more surely day by day that the Hetman would authorize his intentions. Now he saw his hopes blown away like mist before the wind. What was left for him? To give up all thought of glory and greatness and happiness; but he was not the man to do that. In the first few moments, he was swept away by the madness of rage and despair. He

was consumed with fire and burning with anguish, and he howled and gnashed his teeth and fierce and revengeful thoughts engrossed his mind. He panted for revenge on the Commonwealth, the Hetman, Pan Michael, and, even, Basia. He wanted to call together his Lipkov Tartars and slaughter the garrison, and the officers, and Khreptyov entire, slay Pan Michael, and abduct Bashka, carrying her across the Moldavian border, down to the Dobrudja, and to Tsarograd itself, and even to the Asian deserts.

But the faithful Halim attended him, and when he had got over his first rage and despair, he himself recognized the futility of all those designs. In this also Azya was like Khmyelnitski, for, as in the latter, in him also the lion and the serpent had their abode side by side. What would be the result; if he were to attack Khreptyov with his faithful Lipkovs? Would Pan Michael, who was as vigilant as a crane, allow himself to be taken by surprise; and even if so, would that celebrated warrior allow himself to be slain, more especially as the soldiers who were with him were more numerous and better fighters? Finally, even if Azya were to put an end to Pan Michael, what could he do then? If he were to go along the river towards Yahorlik, he would have to wipe out the posts at Mohilov, Yampol and Rashkov; if he were to cross to the Moldavian bank, there were the perkulabs, Pan Michael's friends, and Habareskul of Khotsim himself, his sworn brother. If he were to go to Doroshenko, there were Polish posts at Bratslav; and even in the winter, the steppes were full of scouting parties. Considering all this, Tukhay Bey's son felt his powerlessness, and his malignant heart first spurted forth flames and then hid itself in the deepest despair, just as a wounded wild animal creeps into a dark open cave and keeps still.

And as excessive pain is its own destruction and at last sinks into torpor, so at length, torpor finally took possession of him.

It was just at that moment that they told him that the Colonel's wife wanted to speak to him.

When Azya returned from the interview, Halim scarcely recognized him. The Tartar's face had lost its expression of callous despair; his eyes glittered like a wild cat, his face was radiant and his white teeth gleamed under his moustache; in his savage beauty he resembled the terrible Tukhay Bey.

"Master," asked Halim, "what comfort has God granted thy spirit?"

Azya answered:

"Halim, God creates the bright day after the dark night and commands the sun to rise out of the sea" (here he grasped the old Tartar by the shoulders). "In a month she will be mine forever."

And such light spread over his dark face as made it absolutely beautiful, and Halim bowed before him.

"Oh, son of Tukhay Bey, thou art great and mighty, and the hatred of the unbelievers cannot harm thee."

"Listen," cried Azya.

"I am listening, son of Tukhay Bey."

"I will go beyond the blue sea, where the snows only lie on the tops of the mountains, and, if I return to this land, it will be at head of chambuls in number like the sands of the sea and the leaves in these wildernesses, and I will bring fire and sword with me. But thou, Halim, the son of Kurbuk, will set out to-day and find Krychinski, and tell him to come quickly with his men to the bank opposite to Rashkov. And tell Adurovich, Moravski, Aleksandrovich, Grokholski, Tvorkovski with every living man of the Lipkov and Cheremis Tartars to warn the troops. Let them give orders to the chambuls in winter quarters with Doroshenko to create disturbances on the Uman side, in order that the Polish forces may be lured deep into the steppes from Mohilov, Yampol, and Rashkov. Let no forces be left along the way by which I pass so that when at last I leave Rashkov behind me, there will be nothing but ashes and smoking ruins."

"God help thee, my master," replied Halim.

And he bowed again and again, and the son of Tukhay Bey leaned over him and repeated many times.

"Hasten the messengers, hasten the messengers, for there is only a month left."

Then he dismissed Halim, and when he was alone, he began to pray, for his heart was full of happiness and gratitude to God.

And as he was praying, he glanced involuntarily through the window at his Lipkovs who were just leading their horses to the wells for water and the square was black with the throng. The Lipkovs, singing their monotonous songs in low tones, began to draw up the buckets and fill the troughs with

water. Two columns of steam were issuing from the nostrils of each horse and obscuring its head. Suddenly Pan Michael issued from the main building in sheepskin coat and cow hide boots, and approaching his men, began to speak to them. They listened to him, holding themselves erect and removing their caps which was against the custom of Orientals. When he saw him, Azya suspended his prayer and muttered,

“You are a falcon, but you won’t fly where I shall, you will remain behind at Khreptyov in sorrow and pain.”

After speaking to the soldiers, Pan Michael re-entered the building, and the songs of the Lipkovs, the snorting of the horses, and the shrill plaintive creaking of the wells were heard again in the square.

CHAPTER XVI.

As Basia had foreseen, the little knight immediately opposed her plans when he became acquainted with them, and said he would never consent because he could not go himself and would not let her go without him; but from every quarter he was then besieged with persistent entreaties, which soon bent his will.

Basia did not insist as much as he expected, because she was very anxious to be with her husband, and the journey lost half its charm without him; but Evka knelt down before the little knight, and kissed his hands and besought him, by the love he bore for Basia, to allow her to go.

"No one else would dare to approach my father on such a matter, nor I, nor Azya, nor even my brother. Only Basia can do that, for he cannot refuse her anything."

Pan Michael replied:

"Basia does not occupy herself with matchmaking, and besides, you have to come back here, so let her do it on your return."

"God only knows what may happen, before we return," Evka replied with tears, "the only thing certain is, that I shall die of grief, though for an orphan like me whom no one pities, death is the best thing."

The little knight had an excessively tender heart, and so he began to strand up and down the room. Above everything, he did not want to part with his Basia, even for a day, much less for two weeks. However, it was evident that he was greatly moved at these prayers, for a night or two afterwards, he said:

"If I could only accompany you! But that is impossible, for duty prevents."

Basia sprang to his side, and putting her rosy mouth against his cheek, began to beg:

"Go Michael, dear, do go, do go."

"It is absolutely impossible," Pan Michael answered decisively.

Two more days went by. In the interval, the little knight asked Zagloba's advice as to what he ought to do, but Zagloba refused to counsel him.

"If the only obstacles are your own feelings," he said, "I have nothing to say. Decide for yourself. The place will be lonely here without the little haiduk. . . If it weren't for my years and the trying road, I would go myself, for there is no living without her."

"But you see there really are no obstacles, it is rather frosty weather, but that is all; as for the rest, everything is quiet and all along the road there are military posts."

"In that case, decide for yourself."

After this conversation, Pan Michael began to waver and ponder over two things. He was sorry for Evka. He also hesitated whether it was wise to send the girl alone with Azya on such a long journey, and also whether it was right to refuse to help people who are devoted to you when it is so easy to do so. After all, what was the real objection. Only Basia's being away for two or three weeks. Even if it were only for the sake of pleasing Basia by letting her see Mohilov, Yampol, and Rashkov, why shouldn't she be indulged? In any case, Azya would have to go with his company to Rashkov, and this would provide an escort more than sufficient considering the late destruction of the marauders and the quietness of the Horde during the winter.

The little knight grew more and more yielding, and when they saw it, the ladies renewed their importunities, one declaring that it was a matter of kindness and duty, and the other, uttering cries and lamentations. At last Azya came and bowed before the crowd. He said that he was quite aware of his unworthiness of such a favor, but that he had exhibited so much affection and devotion to the Volodiyovskis, that he ventured to make this petition. He owed a debt of gratitude to both, because they had not allowed him to be insulted, even before he was known to be the son of Tukhay Bey.

He could never forget that the colonel's wife had dressed his wounds and had not only behaved to him like a gracious mistress, but like a mother. He had lately proved his gratitude in the fight with Azba Bey, and, if God willed, in the future, he would lay down his life, and shed his last drop of blood for the life of a lady if it were necessary.

He then began to speak of his ancient and ill-starred love for Evka. He could not live without her, he had continued to

love her through long years of absence, though he was without hope, and it would never cease. But there was an old animosity between him and Pan Novovyeyski, and their former relations as master and servant formed, as it were, a wide chasm between them. Only the lady could reconcile them, and if she did not succeed in that, at least, she could protect the dear girl from the tyranny, and confinement, and blows of her father.

Volodiyovski, who would, doubtless, have rather had Basia not interfere in the matter, but, as he himself was fond of doing kindnesses for people, he was not surprised at his wife's good heart. However, he did not yet give Azya an affirmative reply, and even steeled himself against Evka's incessant tears. But he shut himself up in his office and began to meditate.

Finally one evening, he came in to supper with a pleasant face, and when it was ended, he suddenly said to Azya:

"Azya, when must you start?"

"In a week, your lordship," replied the Tartar, with secret anxiety. "By that time, Halim will surely have brought the negotiations with Krychinski to a conclusion."

"Order the big sleigh to be repaired, because we will have to take two ladies to Rashkov."

On hearing this, Basia clapped her hands and darted to her husband's side. Evka quickly followed her, and then Azya bowed himself at the little knight's knees in such rapture that the little knight had to disengage himself.

"Let me alone," he said, "but what's the matter? When it's possible, to help anybody, it's difficult not to do so unless the man is entirely hardened. And I am not a tyrant. But Basia, my beloved, you must come back soon, and Azya, you must guard her faithfully, for, in that manner, you will best show your gratitude. Come, come, leave me alone."

Here his lips began to quiver, and then he said more jovially, to keep up his spirits:

"Women's tears are the worst things to endure. I am quite overcome at the sight of them. But Azya, you have not only me and my wife, but this lady who has followed you about like a shadow, constantly keeping her grief before my eyes. You must repay her for such devotion."

"I will repay her, I will repay her," cried Azya in peculiar tones, and, grasping Evka's hands, he kissed them so wildly, that it looked rather as if he wanted to bite them.

"Michael," suddenly cried Zagloba, pointing to Basia, "what shall we do here without this kitten?"

"It will be dreadful," said the little knight, "by God it will indeed be dreadful."

Then he added with more composure:

"But the Lord God may bless this good action later. . . . Do you understand?"

In the meantime, the little kitten poked her little inquisitive shining head in between them.

"What are you saying?"

"Nothing," replied Zagloba, "we were only saying that the storks would certainly come in the Spring."

Basia began to rub her face against her husband, as if she were a cat indeed.

"Michael, dear, I shall not stay away long," she said in a low tone.

After this talk they held counsel about the journey for several days. Pan Michael saw to everything himself, and ordered the sleigh to be got ready in his presence and lined with skins of foxes killed in the autumn. Zagloba brought his own fur robe to cover her feet on the way. There were to be sleighs with a bed and provisions, and Basia's pony was to go along, too, so that she might leave the sleigh at dangerous spots, because Pan Michael was particularly nervous about the approach of Mohilov, which was indeed a precipitous descent. Though there was not the least danger of an attack, the little knight ordered Azya to take every precaution, to have men always a quarter of a mile in advance, and never spend a night on the road, except at places where soldiers were posted, and to start at dawn and not linger on the way."

The little knight thought of everything to the smallest detail, so that with his own hand, he loaded Basia's pistols for the holsters in her saddle.

At last came the moment of departure. It was not yet light, when two hundred of the Lipkov Tartar cavalry was standing ready in the square. There was bustle in the chief room of the commander's house. Bright flames were leaping from the pine logs on the hearths. The little knight, Pan Zagloba, Mushalski, Nyenashinyets, Khromyka, and Motovidlo, accompanied by the officers of the Light Companies, had come to take leave. Basia and Evka, still warm and flushed with sleep, were sipping hot wine before starting. Pan Michael was sitting by his wife, with his arms around her

waist, while Zagloba was pouring out for her, crying every time he did so, "Have some more, for its frosty weather." Bashka and Evka were wearing male garments, for that was the way women travel on the frontier. Basia had a sabre, a shuba of wild-catskin edged with weasel, and an ermine cap with earlaps, very wide trousers which looked like a skirt, and soft lined boots as high as her knees. In addition to this, they had warm cloaks and shubas with hoods to cover their faces. Basia's face was not covered as yet, and its beauty astonished the soldiers as always. Some of them, nevertheless, looked with approval at Evka, whose mouth seemed made for kisses, and others scarcely knew which to choose, so charming did they both appear to the soldiers, who whispered to each other:

"It's hard for a man to live in such a desert. Happy Colonel! happy Azya! ah!"

The flames crackled joyously on the hearths and the cocks began to crow. Day was gradually dawning, clear and frosty. The roofs of the shed and the soldiers' quarters, thickly coated with snow, assumed a bright rose tint.

Outside in the square could be heard the snorting of the horses and the crunching footsteps of the soldiers and dragoons who had gathered together from their various quarters to say good bye to Basia and the Tartars.

At last Pan Michael said, "It is time."

As she heard it, Basia sprang up and cast herself into the arms of her husband. He pressed his lips to hers and held her to his heart with all his might, kissing her eyes and brow and lips again. It was a long minute, for they dearly loved each other.

After the little knight it was Zagloba's turn, and then, the other officers came to kiss her hand, and she cried in her childish silver ringing tones:

"Good health to you all, gentlemen, good health to you all."

Then she and Eva put on their mantles with slits for sleeves, and then their hooded shubas till they both entirely disappeared under the robes. The wide door was thrown open, and a frosty vapor blew in, and immediately the whole company found itself in the square. Outside, everything was momentarily becoming more distinct from the increasing light on the snow. The horses' manes and the men's sheep-skin coats were covered with hoar-frost; it looked as if the entire squadron were dressed in white and mounted on white horses.

Bashka and Evka took their seats in the fur lined sleigh. The dragoons and postilions of the companies shouted good wishes for a pleasant journey for the travellers.

At the noise a great flock of crows and ravens which had been driven to the vicinity of human habitation by the severe winter flew up from the roofs and began to croak as they circled in the rosy dawn.

The little knight leaned over the sleigh and hid his face in the hood that covered his wife's face.

That moment seemed eternal. Finally he tore himself away from Basia, and exclaimed, as he made the sign of the cross:

"In the name of God."

Azya then rose in his stirrups with his wild face shining with exultation and the light of dawn. He waved his staff till his burka rose like the wings of a bird of prey, and cried in shrill tones:

"Forward!"

The hoofs crunched in the snow and clouds of steam issued from the horses' nostrils. The first rank of the Lipkows slowly advanced; and then came the second, third, and fourth; and, next, the sleigh; then the ranks of a whole company began to move across the sloping square to the gate.

The little knight blessed them with the Holy Cross, and, at last, when the sleigh had passed through the gate, he raised his hands to his lips and shouted, "Farewell, Basia!"

But his only answer came from the firing of the muskets, and the loud cawing of blackbirds.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

About a dozen Cheremis marched some miles in advance to examine the road and inform commanders of the approach of Pani Volodiyovski so as to have quarters ready for her everywhere. Then came the main body of the Lipkovs with Basia and Evka in one sleigh and their maids in the other, and a smaller body brought up the rear. Snowdrifts made the road heavy. Pine forests which retain their needles even in winter do not allow much snow to fall on the ground, but that trackless forest along the banks of the Dniester, which was composed principally of oaks and other deciduous trees, now stripped of their natural covering, was heaped half-way up the trunks with snow. The hollows were also filled with snow; in some places it had been heaped into waves of the sea whose curling crests looked as if about to fall and break on the white plain. On crossing difficult ravines and slopes the Lipkovs steadied the sleighs with ropes and only on the high plains where the wind had levelled the crust of the snow did they drive fast in the track of the caravan which had started earlier from Khreptyov with Naviragh and the two learned Anardrats.

It was hard travelling, though not so hard as it is sometimes in those trackless wilds, full of chasms, rivers, streams, and ravines. They were consequently glad that before night-fall they would be able to reach the precipitous valley at the bottom of which Mohilov was situated and moreover that there was a prospect of fine weather. After a rosy dawn the sun rose and the plains, ravines, and wilderness were suddenly illumined brightly; sparks seemed to cover the branches of the trees and the snow sparkled till its dazzle made the eyes ache. Through openings on high places views could be gained as through windows in the wilds and the eye could see as far as Moldavia till it was lost on the white and blue horizon flooded with light.

The air was dry and keen. In that atmosphere men feel health and strength as well as animals; in the ranks the

horses were constantly snorting and columns of steam issued from their nostrils; and the Lipkovs were singing jovial songs, although the frost was nipping their legs so that they kept drawing them up under the skirts of their coats.

At last the sun reached its meridian and gave a little warmth to the world. It became too hot for Basia and Evka among the furs in the sleigh. They untied their head-coverings, threw back their hoods, exposed their rosy faces to the light, and began to look about them,—Basia at her surroundings, and Evka seeking Azya who was not near the sleigh but riding in front with the Cheremis who were reconnoitering the way and clearing away the snow when it was needed. Evka's face clouded at this, but Basia who was thoroughly posted on military matters said, to comfort her:

"They are all like that: duty is duty. My little Michael will not even look at me when he has any military matters to attend to; and it would be ill if it were not so because if you must love a soldier let him be a good one."

"But will he be with us at the baiting-place?" asked Evka.

"Take care that you don't get too much of him! Didn't you see how happy he was when we started? His face seemed to be flaming."

"I saw that he was very glad."

"But what will he be when he obtains your father's consent?"

"Ah! what is in store for me? God's will be done! But my heart dies in me when I think of father. If he should rage, or become obstinate and refuse his consent, my life will be a troubled one when I get home."

"Evka, do you know what I think?"

"What?"

"Azya is not to be played with. Your brother might oppose with force, but your father has no power. I think that if your father opposes Azya will take you anyhow."

"How?"

"Why, by running away with you. They say he is not to be trifled with. . . Tukhay Bey's blood! Elsewhere banns, certificates and licenses would be requisite, but this is a wild region and matters are carried on somewhat after the Tartar fashion."

Evka's face lighted up.

"That is what I fear. Azya is capable of anything; that is what I fear!"

But Basia turned her head and gave her a swift glance and suddenly burst into her girlish ringing laugh.

"You fear it just as a mouse fears bacon. Oh, I know you!"

Evka, already rosy with the sharp air now flushed a deeper red, and answered:

"I should dread my father's curse, and I know that Azya is capable of disregarding everything."

"Keep up your courage, you will have your brother as well as me to help you. True love always comes by its own. Pan Zagloba said that to me before Michael even thought of me."

Having once begun to chatter they now vied with each other in talking, one about Azya and the other about Michael. A couple of hours passed in this way till the caravan halted for the first bait at Yaryshov. Of this little town, which had always been miserable, the peasant incursion had left only one inn, which had been restored immediately that the passing of the military gave assurance of profit. Here Basia and Evka found a passing Armenian merchant, a native of Mohilov who was taking saffian to Kamenets.

Azya wanted to throw him out into the yard with the Wallachians and Tartars who accompanied him, but the ladies allowed him to stay and his guard only had to go. When the merchant discovered that the traveller was Pani Volodiyovski he began to bow his head to the earth and praise her husband to the skies, and she listened to him with great pleasure.

Presently he went to his bales and on his return offered her a package of choice sweetmeats and a little box filled with sweet-scented Turkish herbs, good for various complaints.

"I bring this in gratitude," he said. "Hitherto we have not dared to show our faces outside Mohilov because of Azba Bey's terrible raids and because so many robbers infested the ravines on this side and the fields on the other side; but now the roads are safe again and so is trade. Now we can again travel. May God multiply the days of the commander at Khreptyov and make every day long enough for a journey from Mohilov to Kamenets and may every hour be lengthened to seem like a day! Our commander, the Field-Secretary, prefers to dwell in Warsaw; but the commander kept watch and swept out the robbers so that now they would rather face death than the Dniester.

"Then isn't Pan Jeruski in Mohilov?" asked Basia.

"He merely brought the soldiers and I doubt if he stayed three days. Allow me, your ladyship, there are raisins in

this package and in this corner of it such fruit as is not to be found in Turkey,—it comes from far Asia and grows there on palms. . . The Secretary is not in the town and now there is no cavalry at all, for yesterday they went suddenly in the direction of Bratslav. . . But here are dates; may they do your ladyship good! . . . Only Pan Gorzenski is left with the infantry and the cavalry are all gone. . . ”

“I am surprised to hear that all the cavalry are gone!” said Basia with an inquiring glance at Azya.

“They went to keep the horses in condition,” the son of Tukhay Bey answered calmly.

“In the town it is reported that Dorosh unexpectedly advanced,” said the merchant.

Azya laughed.

“But how will he feed his horses,—with snow?” he asked Basia.

“Pan Gorzenski can best tell your ladyship about it,” added the merchant.

“I don’t believe there’s anything in it,” said Basia after a moment’s thought, “for in that case my husband would be the first to know.”

“Doubtless the news would reach Khreptyov first,” said Azya, “let not your ladyship be afraid.”

Basia lifted her bright face to the Tartar and her nostrils dilated.

“I, afraid! That’s an excellent idea of yours! Do you hear that Evka? I, afraid!”

Evka could not reply, for being very fond of dainties and having an inordinate love of sweets, her mouth was full of dates, but that did not prevent her from gazing expressively at Azya and when she had swallowed the fruit she said:

“Even I am not afraid, with such an officer!”

Then she gazed meaningly into the eyes of the young Tuhay Bey; but from the moment when she had become a stumbling-block in his path he had felt for her nothing but hidden aversion and rage. He therefore stood motionless without raising his eyes:

“In Rashkov it will appear whether I am worthy of confidence or no.”

And there was something in his tones that was almost terrible but, as the two girls were accustomed to the young Lippek’s words and ways being different to those of all other men, it did not attract their attention. Azya then insisted that

they should proceed immediately, because the mountains around Mohilov were difficult to cross and the passage ought to be made during daylight.

They started at once.

They travelled quickly till they reached the mountains. Basia wanted to mount her horse, but at the persuasion of the son of Tukhay Bey she remained in the sleigh with Evka while it was steadied with ropes and carefully lowered from the heights. Azya walked beside the sleigh the whole time but scarcely spoke a word either to Basia or Evka, but occupied himself with their safety and with giving orders. However the sun set before they had succeeded in crossing the mountains, but the advanced party of Cheremis made fires of dry branches. Then they descended among the glowing fires and the wild figures standing about them. Beyond these figures were visible in the gloom of the evening and the half-light produced by the flames, the frowning rocks in vague, terrible outlines. All this was new and strange and it all seemed like some perilous and mysterious expedition and therefore Basia's spirits were in the seventh heaven and her heart was full of gratitude to her husband for permitting her to take this journey to unknown parts, and to Azya for managing the journey with such ability. Now for the first time Basia understood the meaning of those military marches and hardships of which she had so often heard the soldiers speak, and what steep and winding roads really were. She was seized with a mad joyousness. She would certainly have mounted her pony had it not been that by sitting beside Evka she could talk to and frighten her. So while going along a narrow, sharp turn the advanced guard went out of sight and began to shout with wild voices whose muffled echoes resounded among the beetling crags, Basia turned to Evka and cried as she grasped her hands:

"Oh! Robbers from the plains or the horde!"

But Evka was not at all alarmed when she remembered Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey.

"The robbers and the horde honor and fear him," she answered.

And then she said as she leaned to Basia's ear:

"Even to Byalogrod, even to the Crimea, if only with him!"

The moon had risen high in the sky when they issued from the mountains. Then far below them as if at the foot of a precipice they saw a clump of lights.

"Mohilov is at our feet!" said a voice behind Basia and Evka.

They looked around; it was Azya standing behind the sleigh.

But does the town lie like that at the bottom of the valley?" Basia asked.

"It does. The mountains entirely protect it from winter winds," Azya answered, putting his head between theirs.

"Observe, your ladyship, that the climate is quite different here; it is more still and warm. Spring arrives here ten days earlier than on the other side of the mountains and the woods put out their leaves sooner. That grey on the slope is a vineyard; but the ground is still covered with snow."

Snow was lying everywhere but the air was really warmer and calmer. As they slowly descended to the valley lights appeared one by one and every moment became more numerous.

"A respectable place, and quite large!" exclaimed Evka.

"That's on account of its not having been burned at the peasant incursion. The Cossack troops had their winter quarters here, and Lakhs have hardly ever visited the place."

"Who dwell here?"

"Tartars, who have their own wooden minaret; for in the Commonwealth everyone is at liberty to profess his own faith. Wallachians dwell here, and Armenians, and Greeks, also."

"I saw some Greeks once at Kamenets," rejoined Basia, "for though they live so far away they go everywhere for trade."

"This town is different from all others," said Azya, "many people of various nations come here to traffic. That settlement over there to one side is called Serby."

"We are already entering it," said Basia.

In fact they had arrived. They immediately noticed a strange sour odor of skins. This was the odor of saffian in the manufacture of which all the inhabitants were more or less engaged, but the Armenians in particular. As Azya had said it was quite different from ordinary places. The houses were built in the Asiatic style and had windows covered with thick wooden lattice; many of the houses had no windows to the street and the glow of fires was visible only in the yards. The streets were unpaved though there was plenty of stone in the neighborhood. Here and there were buildings of strange form with open walls of lattice-work; these were drying-

houses in which fresh grapes were transformed into raisins. The odor of saffian pervaded the entire town.

Pan Gorzenski who commanded the infantry, was notified by the Cheremis of the approach of the wife of the commander of Khreptyov and rode out on horseback to meet her. He was not young and he stammered; he also lisped because his cheeks had been pierced by a bullet from a janissary gun; and so when he began to speak (stammering each instant), of the star "that had risen in the skies of Mohilov," Basia nearly burst out laughing. But he received her as hospitably as he knew how. In the citadel a supper was awaiting her, and an exceedingly comfortable bed of fresh and clean down, which he had requisitioned from the richest Armenians. Although Pan Gorzenski stammered, yet at supper in the evening, he told of strange matters that were worth attention.

According to him a disturbing breeze suddenly and unexpectedly had begun to blow from the steppes.

Intelligence arrived that a strong chambul of the Crimean horde in camp with Dórosh had suddenly advanced towards Haysyn and the district above and the chambul was accompanied by several thousand Cossacks. Moreover many other disturbing rumors had come from various sources. To these, however, Pan Gorzenski did not give much credence.

"For it is winter," he said, "and since the Lord created this round world the Tartars only move in the Spring; then they form no camp and carry no baggage, nor any food for their horses. We all know that war with the power of the Turk is held in check by the frost alone, and that visitors will appear with the first grass; but I shall never believe that there is anything just now."

Basia waited long and patiently for Pan Gorzenski to finish. In the meantime he stammered on and his lips worked as if he were eating.

"What is your own opinion of the movement of the horde towards Haysyn?" she asked at last.

"I think that their horses have scraped all the grass out from under the snow and that they are just moving camp. Moreover it may be that the horde living by Dorosh's followers are at odds with them; that has always happened. Although they are allies and are fighting side by side, just as soon as they have adjoining encampments they immediately fall out with one another in the pastures and bazaars."

"That is perfectly true," said Azya.

“And there is another thing,” proceeded Pan Gorzenski, “the reports did not come directly from our own men but were brought by peasants; the Tartars here were the first to begin to talk about it. Three days ago Pan Yakubovich brought in from the steppes the first tongues that confirmed the rumors and all the cavalry immediately marched out.”

“Then you have now only infantry with you?” Azya asked.

“God have pity upon us! forty men! There is scarcely anyone left to defend the citadel and if the Tartars who dwell here in Mohilov were to rise I don’t know how I should defend myself.”

“But why don’t they rise against you?” asked Basia.

“They don’t because they can’t. Many of them have their permanent abode in the Commonwealth with their wives and children and are on our side. As for the rest they are here for trade and not war; they are quiet people.”

“I will leave your lordship fifty of my Lipkov horse,” said Azya.

“God reward you! You will be doing me a great service for then I shall have some cavalry scouts. But can you leave them?”

“I can. In Rashkov we shall have the forces of those leaders who formerly went over to the Sultan and now want to return to the service of the Commonwealth, Krychinski will certainly come with three hundred horse and perhaps Adurovich also will come; others will arrive later. I am to assume the supreme command by the Hetman’s orders, and before the Spring there will be a whole division.”

Pan Gorzenski bowed before Azya. He had known him for a considerable time but had somewhat looked down upon him as a man of dubious origin. But knowing now that he was the son of Tukhay Bey, as this news had been brought by the first caravan in which Naviragh was travelling, Gorzenski honored in the young Lipkov Tartar, the blood of a great though hostile warrior, and moreover he also paid him honor as an officer who was entrusted with such important functions by the Hetman.

Azya departed to issue orders and calling the setnik, David, he said:

“David, son of Skander, thou wilt remain in Mohilov with fifty horse. Thou wilt see with thine eyes and hear with thine ears what is happening around thee. If the Little Falcon at Khreptyov sends letters to me thou wilt stop his mes-

senger, take the letters from him, and send them by thine own man. Thou wilt stay here until I send an order to return. If my messenger says, 'It is night,' thou wilt go out in peace; but if he says, 'Day is near,' thou wilt burn the place, pass over to the Moldavian side and go whither I command thee." . . .

"Master, thou hast spoken," David replied; "I will see with my eyes and hear with my ears, I will stop messengers from the Little Falcon and when I have taken their letters I will send them to thee by our own man. I will stay here till orders arrive; and if thy messenger says to me 'It is night,' I will go out in peace; if he says 'Day is near,' I will burn the place and pass over to the Moldavian side and go whither the order directs."

Early next morning the caravan diminished by fifty horse continued the journey. Pan Gorzenski escorted Basia beyond the valley of Mohilov. Thence, after stammering forth a farewell oration, he returned to Mohilov, and they hastened on towards Yampol. Azya was in unusually high spirits and Basia was surprised at the way in which he urged on his men.

"Why are you so pressing?" she asked.

"Everyone hastens to happiness, and mine will commence at Rashkov."

Eva taking this speech to herself, plucked up heart and answered:

"But my father?"

"Pan Novovyeyski will not oppose me in anything," replied the Tartar.

And sinister lightning flashed across his face.

They found hardly any troops at Yampol. There had never been any infantry there and almost all the cavalry had gone; barely a dozen were left in the little fort, or rather in its ruins. . . . Lodgings were prepared for Basia but she slept badly for she had begun to get uneasy about these rumors. She particularly dwelt on the thought of how disturbed the little knight would be if it should prove that one of Doroshenko's chambuls had really advanced; but she fortified herself with the thought that it might not be true. She wondered whether it would not be better to return taking a body of Azya's soldiers for protection but various objections immediately occurred. In the first place Azya could only spare a small guard as he had to increase the garrison of Rash-

kov and in case of real peril that guard might not be sufficient; and in the second they had already passed two-thirds of the journey; in Rashkov there was an officer she knew, and a strong garrison which, increased by the detachment of the son of Tukhay Bey's son and by the following of the revolted leaders would make quite a formidable force. Taking everything into consideration Basia concluded to go on.

But she could not sleep. For the first time during the journey she was seized with alarm as if some unknown danger was hanging above her head. Perhaps this fear was partly caused by lodging in Yampol for it was a terrible and sanguinary spot; Basia knew that from the tales of her husband and Pan Zagloba. In Khmyelnitski's time the main body of the Podolian cut-throats under Burlay had been stationed here; and captives had been brought and sold into the markets of the East, or had suffered a cruel death; and here finally, in the Spring of 1651 during a crowded fair, Pan Stanislaw Lantskoronski, Voevoda of Bratslav, had burst in and done frightful slaughter the memory of which was still fresh all along the Dniester.

Therefore bloody memories hung everywhere over the entire place and here and there were blackened ruins and from the walls of the half-ruined little fort the pallid faces of slaughtered Poles and Cossacks seemed to gaze.

Basia was bold but she was afraid of ghosts; it was said that in Yampol itself, at the mouth of the Shumilovka and in the adjacent rapids of the Dniester mighty groans and wails were heard at midnight and that the water became red in the moonlight as if tinged with blood. This thought filled Basia's soul with painful dread. In spite of herself in the quiet night she listened for groans and wailing amid the noises of the rapids. She only heard the prolonged call "Czuwa-ay" of the sentinels. Then she thought of the quiet room at Khreptyov, her husband, Pan Zagloba, the friendly faces of Pan Nyenashinyets, Mushalski, Motovidlo, Snitko, and the others and for the first time she felt that she was seized with such homesickness for Khreptyov that she felt inclined to weep.

She did not fall asleep till near morning and then she had strange dreams. Burlay, the cut-throats, the Tartars, and sanguinary scenes of massacre passed through her head in procession and Azya's face was always present in these scenes,—not the Azya she knew, but a Cossack, a wild Tartar, or Tukhay Bey himself in turn.

She rose early, relieved that the night and the disagreeable visions were at an end. She had determined to make the rest of the journey on horseback, in the first place to enjoy the exercise and in the second to afford an opportunity for Azya and Evka to converse freely as the proximity of Rashkov of course made it necessary for them to arrange some plan of informing old Pan Novovyeyiski of the state of affairs and receiving his consent. Azya held her stirrup with his own hand but he did not take his seat in the sleigh with Evka, but immediately went to the head of his followers and kept near Basia.

She immediately noticed that again the cavalry's numbers were reduced from what they had been when they arrived at Yampol, so she turned to the young Tartar and said:

"I see that you have left some men behind at Yampol?"

"Fifty horse, just as at Mohilov," Azya replied.

"What was that for?"

He laughed strangely; his lips parted like those of a vicious dog when he shows his teeth, and he paused before answering:

"I wanted to have those places in my power and to make the homeward road for your ladyship safe."

"There will be enough troops there when they come back from the steppes."

"They will not return so soon."

"How do you know that?"

"They cannot, because they must first learn with certainty what Dorosh is about, and that will take three or four weeks."

"In that case you did well to leave the men."

They rode on for a time in silence. Azya from time to time glanced at Basia's rosy face half hidden by the raised collar of her mantle and cap and after each glance he closed his eyes as though trying to fix the charming picture more firmly in his mind.

"You ought to go and have a talk with Evka," she continued, "you talk to her entirely too little and she doesn't know what to think. You will soon be in Pan Novovyeyiski's presence. . . Even I am fearful. . . You and she ought to consult and arrange how to begin."

"I should first like to have a talk with your ladyship," said Azya in strange tones.

"Then why not immediately?"

"I am awaiting a messenger from Rashkov. . . I expected to find him at Yampol. I look for him every moment."

"But what has a messenger to do with our conversation?"

"I think he is coming now!" said the young Tartar avoiding a direct reply.

And he galloped forward but presently returned and said:
"No! it is not he."

There was something so restless in his actions, and speech and voice and whole appearance that his restlessness communicated itself to Basia and still she had not yet the least suspicion of anything wrong. Azya's agitation could be satisfactorily accounted for by the proximity of Rashkov and Evka's terrible father; and yet Basia had a feeling of oppression as if her own lot were at stake.

She approached the sleigh and for some hours rode by its side near Evka talking to her about Rashkov and the old and young Novovyeyski and Zosia Boski, and lastly of the country they were passing through which was becoming wilder and more terrible. Indeed in the immediate vicinity of Khreptyov it was a wilderness but at least there an occasional column of smoke rose on the horizon some huts or some human dwelling. Here there was no indication of man and if Basia had not known that she was going to Rashkov where people dwelt and there was a Polish garrison she might have imagined that she was being taken away into some unknown desert or into strange lands at the edge of the world.

Gazing about her at the country she involuntarily checked her horse and was soon left in the rear of the sleighs and soldiers. Presently Azya joined her and as he was well acquainted with the district he began to point out the various places by name.

This did not last long however as the earth began to be obscured as with smoke; evidently the winter was not so severe in this southern district as in the woody Khreptyov. It is true that some snow was lying in the hollows, on the cliffs and the ledges of the rocks, as well as on the northern sides of the hills; but for the most part the earth was not covered and looked dark with woods or glistened with the long withered grass. From this grass rose a light grey fog which, spreading along the ground, filled the valleys and extended across the plains; next it rose higher and higher till at length it blotted out the sunshine and turned a bright day into a dark and foggy one.

"It will rain to-morrow," said Azya.

"If not to-day. How far is it to Rashkov?"

The son of Tukhay Bey looked at the nearest landmark that was scarcely visible through the fog and said:

"From that point it is nearer to Rashkov than back to Yampol."

And he drew a long breath as if his breast was just relieved of a great weight.

At that moment the tramp of a horse was heard in front of them and a rider became indistinctly visible through the fog.

"Halim! I recognize him," exclaimed Azya.

In fact it was Halim who when he had galloped up to Azya and Basia, sprang from his horse and began to bow his head at the stirrup of the young Tartar:

"From Rashkov?" inquired Azya.

"From Rashkov, my lord!"

"What is the news?"

The old man raised his ugly face, emaciated with ceaseless toils towards Basia as though asking if he was to speak before her but Tukhay Bey's son at once cried:

"Speak out! Have the troops left?"

"Yes! Only a handful are left."

"Who led them?"

"Pan Novovyeyski."

"Have the Pyetroviches gone to the Crimea?"

"Long since. Two women alone remained with old Pan Novovyeyski."

"Where is Krychinski?"

"Waiting on the other side of the river."

"Who is with him?"

"Adurovich with his company; both bow their heads at thy stirrup, O son of Tukhay Bey and give themselves into thy hand,—they and all those who have not yet arrived."

"Good!" cried Azya with flashing eyes. Fly at once to Krychinski and order him to occupy Rashkov."

Halim sprang into the saddle in an instant and vanished like a phantom in the fog. . . Azya's face assumed a terrible ominous expression. The decisive moment had arrived,—the moment awaited, the moment of his greatest happiness; but his heart was beating fast and his breath came short. . . For some time he rode beside Basia in silence and not till he felt that his voice would not fail him did he gaze at her with inscrutable but flashing eyes and say:

"Now I will speak to your ladyship frankly."

"I am listening," answered Basia looking at him searchingly as if trying to read his altered countenance.

CHAPTER II.

Azya urged his horse close to Basia's pony till their stirrups almost touched. He rode on a few paces in silence while he made a final effort to control himself, and wondered why it was such an effort to gain calmness since Basia was in his hands and no human power could deprive him of her. But he did not know that contrary to all likelihood, and every evidence, a faint spark of hope was glimmering in his soul that the woman he desired might reciprocate his own feelings. If this hope was faint the desire was at the same time so strong that he trembled with it as with a fever. The woman would not at once open her arms, nor cast herself into his arms, not utter those words over which he had dreamed for whole nights: "Azya, I am thine," nor would she hang with her lips on his,—that he knew. . . . But how would she receive his words? Would she lose all feeling like a dove in the talons of a bird of prey and let him snatch her as the hapless dove yields itself up to the hawk? Would she beg for mercy with tears, or would the wilderness resound with her cries of terror? Would all this be something more or less than the reality? Such were the questions that were whirling in the brain of the young Tartar. But in any case the moment had arrived to cast away all pretence and deceit and to show truthful and terrible looks. . . . This was the cause of his restlessness and fearfulness. This; yet a moment, and some decided step should be taken.

At last that fear in the soul of the Tartar became what fear most often becomes in a wild beast,—rage; and with that rage he began to lash himself. "Whatever is the result," he thought, "she is mine, she is mine entirely, she will be mine this very day, and then she will not return to her husband, but will follow me." . . .

At this he was seized by a wild delight, and suddenly, in tones that sounded strange even to himself, he said:

"Your ladyship has never known me till now!"

"Your voice has so altered in this fog," Basia replied in

some alarm, "indeed it seems to me as if some one else were speaking."

"There are no troops in Mohilov, nor in Yampol, nor in Rashkov. I alone am lord here. . . Krychinski, Adurovich, and the rest are my slaves; for I am a prince, I am the son of a ruler. I am their vizir, I am their greatest Murza; I am their chief as was Tukhay Bey; I am their Khan; I alone am in authority, everything here is in my power." . .

"Why do you say this to me?"

"Hitherto your ladyship has not known me. Rashkov is not far off. I wanted to become the Hetman of the Tartars and serve the Commonwealth; but Sobieski would not allow it. I am not going to be a Lipkov Tartar any longer; I am not going to serve under the command of any man; I myself am going to lead great chambuls against Dorosh, or against the Commonwealth as your ladyship wishes, as your ladyship orders."

"How, as I order? Azya, what is the matter with you?"

"This, that all here are my slaves, and I am thine. What is the Hetman to me? I care not whether he has given permission or not. Your ladyship, speak the word and I will lay Akkerman at your ladyship's feet; and the Dobrudja and the hordes that have villages there and those that wander in the wilderness and all those in every winter quarters shall be thy slaves, as I am thy slave. . . Command . . . and I will not obey the Khan of the Crimea, I will not obey the Sultan; I will draw the sword against them and help the Commonwealth. I will gather new hordes in these regions and be Khan over them as thou wilt be over me; to thee alone will I bow down and sue for thy favor and love."

Then he bent in his saddle and, seizing the woman, who was half stunned and terrified by his words, around the waist, continued to speak in hoarse rapid accents:

"Hast thou not seen that I love thee alone? . . . Ah! I have had my share of suffering! I will take thee now! . . . Thou art mine and mine thou shalt be! Nobody will tear thee from my grasp here,—thou art mine! mine! mine!"

"Jesu Maria!" cried Basia.

But he squeezed her in his arms as if trying to stifle her. . . His breath came in short gasps and his eyes grew dim; at last he dragged her out of the stirrups and off her saddle, set her before him, pressed her to his breast, and his bluish lips, gaping like the mouth of a fish, sought her own.

She did not utter a cry, but began to resist with almost superhuman power and a silent struggle commenced but for their loud panting. His violent actions and the closeness of his face brought back her presence of mind. In an instant Basia gained that clear vision that comes to drowning men; everything stood out with the greatest vividness. Thus she first felt that the earth was being snatched away from under her feet and leaving an abyss into which he was dragging her; she saw his passion, his treason, her own horrible fate, her weakness and dire extremity; she felt terrified and was conscious of a terrible pain and grief, and at the same time she flamed up with intense exasperation, frenzy, and revenge. Such was the valiant spirit of this daughter of a knight, this chosen wife of the brevet-knight of the Commonwealth, that in that terrible moment her first thought was to revenge herself, and then to save herself. All the faculties of her mind were at a tension as the hair stands upright on the head with terror and the clear vision of drowning men became almost miraculous in her. As she fought her hands began to grope for weapons and at last found the ivory butt of an Oriental pistol; but at the same time she had the presence of mind to reflect that even if it were loaded and she managed to cock it, before she could level it at his head he would certainly seize her hand and deprive her of her last means of salvation. So she determined to strike in another way.

All this only took an instant. He indeed saw her intention and thrust his hand forward as quick as lightning, but did not succeed in timing her movement. The hands crossed and Basia with all the strength of despair in her young and vigorous fist struck him like lightning between the eyes with the ivory butt of the pistol.

It was such a terrible blow that Azya was not even able to utter a cry, but fell backwards, dragging her with him in his fall.

Basia rose in an instant and, springing upon her horse she started like a whirlwind away from the Dnieper towards the wide steppes.

The curtain of fog closed behind her. The horse laid his ears back and dashed on wildly among the rocks, clefts, gullies, and trunks. He was likely to run into some cleft or other at any moment, or crush himself and his rider against some jutting rock; but Basia took no thought of anything, the most dreadful peril to her was the Lipkovs and Azya. . . .

It was most strange that now when she had delivered herself from the hands of the robber and he was lying to all appearances dead among the rocks, she was overcome with dread. Lying along the horse's back with her face on his mane, dashing on through the fog, like a deer hunted by the wolves, she now began to be more afraid of Azya than she had been in his arms and she felt that terror and helplessness that a weak child feels which, when wandering aimlessly astray, is left to God's protection. Wailing voices began to make themselves heard in her heart and to cry out for protection with dread, complaint, and piteousness:

"Save, Michael! . . . Save, Michael! . . ."

The horse kept rushing on, guided by a marvellous instinct he cleared hollows and swerved quickly to avoid rocky corners, till at last his hoofs ceased to clatter on rocky ground, and he had evidently reached one of the open fields that were scattered among the ravines.

The horse was covered with foam and the breath was rattling in his nostrils, but still he galloped on.

"Where shall I go?" thought Basia.

And immediately the answer came:

"To Khreptyov!"

But her heart was seized with fresh terror at the thought of the long distance to traverse in that terrible wilderness. The memory also came like a flash that Azya had left detachments of his Lipkovs at Mohilov and Yampol. Undoubtedly the Lipkovs were all in the plot; they were all devoted to Azya and would certainly seize her and carry her to Rashkov, and so she ought to ride far out into the steppes and then turn towards the north and thus avoid the posts on the Dniester.

There was all the more reason for this course because if she was pursued the men would certainly keep close to the river and in the meantime it might be possible to come across some of the Polish troops in the wide steppes on their return to the forts.

Gradually her horse's speed began to decrease. Basia was an experienced rider and at once understood that she must give him time to recover his wind or he would fall; she also recognized that if she should be left without a horse in those wild regions she would be lost.

She therefore checked him, and for some time proceeded at a walk. The fog was growing thinner, but a cloud of hot steam was rising from the poor animal.

Basia began to pray.

Suddenly she heard a horse neighing in the fog a few hundred yards behind her.

The hair stood upright on her head.

"My horse will fall dead, but that one will too!" she cried as she again galloped forward.

For some time her horse sped on with the speed of a dove pursued by a falcon, and he ran on almost to the limit of forces; but the neighing was constantly audible behind them. That neigh that reached them through the fog had a sound at once pining and threatening, and when she had got over her first terror it occurred to Basia that if that horse had a rider he would not neigh, as the rider would stop it so as not to reveal his presence.

"Can it be that it is only Azya's horse following me?" thought Basia.

For precaution she took both pistols out of her holsters, but it was unnecessary. In a few moments a dark object appeared through the lightening fog and Azya's horse galloped up with flowing mane and wide nostrils. On seeing the pony he approached him with short, sharp neighs, to which the other immediately responded.

"Horsey, horsey!" cried Basia.

The animal, used to human handling, approached and allowed himself to be seized by the bridle. Basia raised her eyes to Heaven and ejaculated:

"The protection of God!"

In truth this seizure of Azya's horse was an extremely fortunate circumstance for her. In the first place she now possessed the two best horses in the whole party; in the second she could change horses; and thirdly and lastly, the presence of the animal assured her that there would be no immediate pursuit. If it had joined the rest of the party the Lipkovs would have taken the alarm and would immediately have turned back to seek their leader without fail; now it will not occur to them that anything has happened to him and they will not go back to search for him till his prolonged absence has made them anxious.

"I shall be far away by that time!" was the conclusion of Basia's reflections.

Then again she remembered that Azya's detachments were posted at Yampol and Mohilov.

"I must make a detour through the wide steppes and not

approach the Dniester till in the neighborhood of Khreptyov. That terrible man has made a cunning disposition of his forces, but God will save me from them."

Then she summoned up her spirits and prepared to continue her flight. At the pommel of Azya's saddle she found a musket, a powder-horn, a bullet-pouch, a box of hemp-seed, which the Tartar was in the habit of chewing continually. Basia shortened Azya's stirrups to her own feet and thought to herself that all along the way she would live on those seeds like a bird, and she kept them carefully by her.

She made up her mind to avoid all people and farms; for in those wild regions more evil than good was to be expected from every man. Her heart was seized with dread as she thought: "How shall I feed the horses?" They could scrape out grass from under the snow and crop moss from the crevices of the rocks; but were they not likely to succumb from bad fodder and prolonged travelling? She could not do without them, however. . . .

She had another dread: "Would she go astray in the wilderness?" That might be readily avoided by following the course of the Dniester, but she could not take that way. What might happen if she entered the great, dark, and pathless forests? How would she know whether she was steering northwards or in any other direction, if she were to have foggy days,—sunless days and starless nights? The wilderness was swarming with wild beasts; but she did not care so much about that as she was stout-hearted and armed. Wolves hunting in packs might be dangerous, it is true, but on the whole she dreaded men more than beasts, and most of all she dreaded to go astray.

"Ah, God will guide me, and let me get back to Michael," she said aloud.

Then she crossed herself, wiped away with her sleeve the moisture that chilled her pale cheeks, reconnoitered the country with sharp eyes, and urged her horse into a gallop.

CHAPTER III.

Nobody thought of looking for the son of Tukhay Bey, and so he lay on the ground until he recovered consciousness.

When he did so he sat up, and began to look about him, wanting to know what had happened.

But everything looked dark to him and then he discovered that he could only see out of one eye, and that badly. The other was either destroyed or filled with blood.

Azya raised his hands to his face. His fingers found icicles of coagulated blood of his moustache; his mouth was also full of blood that was choking him so that he had to keep coughing and spitting it out; this spitting caused excruciating pain to his face; he raised his hand above his moustache but immediately dropped it with a moan of agony.

Basia's blow had smashed the bridge of his nose and damaged his cheek-bone. For some time he sat motionless, and then commenced to gaze about him with the eye that still preserved some sight, and seeing a patch of snow in a crevice he crawled up to it, grasped a handful and applied it to his crushed face.

This immediately afforded great relief, and while the melting snow was flowing down over his moustache in red streaks, he gathered another handful and again applied it. He also began to swallow the snow greedily and this gave him relief. Presently the great weight that seemed to be pressing on his brain seemed to be lightened so that he was able to recall all that had occurred. At first however he felt no fury, anger, nor despair; all other feelings were deadened by physical pain and only one desire remained,—to save himself quickly.

After eating several more handfuls of snow Azya began to look for his horse; it wasn't there; then he saw that unless he wanted to wait till his Lipkovs came to search for him he must go on foot.

Supporting himself with his hands he tried to rise from the earth, but howled with pain and sat down again.

He sat there for about an hour and then made another

effort. This time he so far succeeded that he got up and leaning his back against a cliff, managed to keep his feet; but when he remembered that he had to leave this support and take one step after another in the open space he was so overcome with a feeling of dread and weariness that he sat down again.

However he mastered his weakness; he drew his sabre and tried to advance leaning upon it; he succeeded. After a few paces he felt that his body and feet were strong and under control, but his head did not seem to belong to him and like a tremendous weight swayed now to the right, now to the left, now to the rear, now to the front. He also had a feeling as though he were carrying that shaking and over-heavy head with extreme caution and was extremely afraid of dropping it on the stones and breaking it. It sometimes also turned him around as if trying to make him go in a circle. Sometimes darkness came over his sole eye, and then he leaned on his sabre with both hands.

The dizziness in his head gradually passed away; but the pain constantly increased and seemed to be boring into his brow, and eyes, and entire head, till groans forced themselves from Azya's breast.

His groans were echoed back from the rocks and he advanced through that wilderness bleeding and horrible, resembling a vampire more than a man.

It was already growing dark when he heard the tramp of a horse before him.

It was the Lipkov corporal coming for orders.

That evening Azya had sufficient strength to give orders for the pursuit, but immediately afterwards he lay down on some skins and could see no one for three days but the Greek barber-surgeons who dressed his wounds, and Halim who assisted him. Not till the fourth day did he recover his speech and with it the remembrance of what had happened.

His fevered thoughts immediately flew to Basia. He saw her fleeing among rocks and through desolate places; she seemed like a bird ever flying from him; he saw her approaching Khreptyov and then in the arms of her husband, and at that vision he was seized with anguish more poignant even than his wound, and with it was mingled sorrow and shame for the calamity which had overtaken him.

"She has fled, she has fled!" he repeated again and again;

and at times his rage so overwhelmed him that he was again in danger of losing his senses. "Woe!" he cried to Halim's efforts to calm him, assuring him that Basia could not escape the pursuit; and he kicked off the skins with which the old Tartar had covered him and threatened both him and the Greek with his knife. He howled like a wild beast and attempted to spring to his feet to fly himself and come up with her and capture her, and then in his fury and wild passion throttle her with his own hands.

At moments he would wander in delirium and call to Halim to bring the little knight's head as quickly as possible and imprison his wife there bound in the room. Sometimes he talked to her, imploring and threatening and then extending his arms to draw her to his side. Finally he fell into a deep sleep which lasted for twenty-four hours; when he woke the fever had entirely left him and he was able to see Krychinski, and Adurovich.

They were anxious, not knowing what to begin. It was true that the forces that had departed under young Novovyeyski would not return for two weeks; but some unexpected event might hasten their coming and in that case it was necessary to know what measures to take. It is true that Krychinski and Adurovich were only pretending to return to the service of the Commonwealth; but Azya was arranging everything; only he could direct them what to do in case of need; only he could point out what course promised the greatest profit: to return at once to the Sultan's dominions, or to keep up the sham, and how long, that they were serving the Commonwealth; but they expected him to order them to wait for the war before disclosing their treason so as to render it more effective.

They would regard his suggestions as commands, for he had imposed his will upon them as leader and the head of the whole business, the most cunning and influential as well as being celebrated with all the hordes as the son of Tukhay-Bey.

Therefore they hastened to his bedside and bowed down before him. He greeted them. He was still feeble with his bandaged face and only one eye, but was convalescent.

"I am ill," he said at once. "The woman whom I desired to take unto myself tore herself out of my hands after wounding me with the butt of a pistol. She was the wife of Volodiyovski, the commandant; may pestilence seize him and all his race!"

"May it be as thou hast spoken!" answered the two chiefs.

"May God grant you, faithful men, fortune and success!"

"And to thee also, oh Master!"

Then they began to talk as to what should be done.

Azya said: "It is imposible to delay or put off serving the Sultan till the war is begun: after what has occurred with this woman they will not trust us, but will attack us with sabres. But before that happens, we will fall upon this place and burn it to the glory of God. We will capture the handful of soldiers that are left, and also the townspeople who are the subjects of the Commonwealth, we will share the property of the Wallachians, Armenians, and Greeks, and pass over the Dniester to the land of the Sultan.

Krychinski and Adurovich had long lived as nomads among the wild hordes and savages and ravaged with them and become altogether savage; so their eyes sparkled.

"Thanks to you," cried Krychinski, "we are admitted to this place which God now gives into our hands. . . ."

"Did not Novovyeyski make any objection?" asked Azya.

"Novovyeyski knew that we were coming over to the Commonwealth and that you were coming to meet us; he considers us his men just as he does you."

"We stayed on the Moldavian bank," added Adurovich, "but Krychinski and I visited him as guests. He received us as nobles, saying, 'By your present conduct you blot out former offenses; and since the Hetman pardons you on Azya's security it would not be right for me to regard you with suspicion. He even wanted me to enter the town, but we said: 'We will not do so till Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey comes with the Hetman's permission. . . . But when he was leaving he gave us another feast and begged us to watch over the town.'"

"At that feast," added Krychinski, "we saw his father and the old woman who is seeking her captive husband and the young lady whom Novovyeyski wants to marry."

"Ah!" said Azya, "I did not think that they were all here, and I have brought Panna Novovyeyski."

He clapped his hands; Halim immediately appeared and Azya said to him: "When my Lipkovs see the place in flames, let them fall on the soldiers in the fort and cut their throats, and bind the women, and the old noble, and keep them under guard till they receive further orders from me."

Then he turned to Krychinski and Adurovich:

"I will not take part in it myself because I am weak; but I will mount my horse and look on. But, dear comrades, begin, begin!"

Krychinski and Adurovich immediately rushed out. Azya followed and ordered a horse to be brought; then he rode to the stockade to watch from the gate of the high fort what should happen in the town.

Many of his men had begun to climb the wall to gaze through the piles and gloat over the slaughter. Those of Novovyeyksi's men who had not gone to the steppes seeing the Lipkovs gathered together and supposing that there was something to be seen in the town, mingled with them without the least fear or suspicion. Moreover, there were scarcely twenty of these; the rest were scattered in the drinking places.

In the meantime the forces of Krychinski and Adurovich did not take an instant to scatter through the town. They were composed almost exclusively of Lipkovs and Cheremis, and were therefore former dwellers in the Commonwealth and the majority of them nobles; but as they had long since left its dominions they had grown much like wild Tartars during they years of wandering. Their original clothes had fallen to pieces and they now wore sheepskin coats with the wool outside. They wore them next to their skin which was tanned with the winds of the steppes and the smoke of fires; but they had better weapons than the wild Tartars;—they all had sabres and bows seasoned with fire, and many had muskets. Their faces were as cruel and blood-thirsty as those of their brethern of the Dobrudja, Byalograd, or the Crimea.

They now scattered through the town and began to run about in every direction uttering shrill cries, as if to encourage and excite each other to murder and pillage. But although many of them had put their knives between their teeth in the Tartar fashion, the townspeople who, as in Yampol, consisted of Wallachians, Armenians, Greeks, and some Tartar merchants, did not regard them with any suspicion. The shops were open; the merchants, sitting in front of them in Turkish fashion on benches, were passing the beads of their rosaries through their fingers. The cries of the Lipkovs only attracted the curiosity of people who thought they were playing some game.

But suddenly smoke arose from the corners of the market-square and from the lips of all the Tartars rose such terrible

howlings that terror seized the Wallachians, Armenians, and Greeks, and their wives and children. A shower of arrows immediately rained on the harmless inhabitants. Their cries and the noise of door and windows hurriedly shutting mingled with the tramp of horses and the howls of the pillagers.

The market was full of smoke. Cries were raised of "Fire! fire!" At the same instant the Tartars began to break open shops and windows and drag out the terrified women by the hair, and cast into the street furniture, saffian, merchandise, and beds giving forth clouds of feathers. Then were heard the groans of slaughtered men, lamentations, the howling of dogs, the bellowing of cattle caught by fire in rear buildings; and red tongues of flame visible even in daylight amid the black wreaths of smoke, shot higher and higher to the heavens.

At the very beginning of the tumult Azya's troopers hurled themselves on the infantry in the fort; the majority of them were unarmed.

There was not the slightest struggle; many knives were buried in each Polish breast without a word of warning and then the heads of the unfortunates were cut off and taken and laid at the feet of Azya's horse.

The son of Tukhay Bey allowed most of his men to join their brethren in the work of blood while he stood and looked on.

The work of Krychinski and Adurovich was concealed by smoke; the odor of burned flesh ascended to the fort. The town was burning like a great pyre and smoke hid everything from view; only amid the smoke the occasional report of a musket was heard, like thunder in a cloud, or a fugitive was visible, or a throng of pursuing Lipkovs.

Azya stood motionless and looked on with ferocious joy in his heart; his lips parted in a savage smile and revealed his white gleaming teeth: that smile was so much the more savage from being mingled with the pain of his healing wounds. The heart of the Lipkov was full of pride as well as joy.

He had cast away the burden of pretence and for the first time he now gave rein to his hatred, hidden for so many years; he now felt that he was himself, the real Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey.

But at the same time his heart was filled with fierce regret that Basia did not witness that conflagration and carnage

"Traitor!" he cried, "you shall answer before a judge for your deeds. . . . Serpent! . . . I have yet a son!"

"You also have a daughter on whose account you ordered me to be flogged to death; and that daughter I will now present to the meanest of the horde for his service and pleasure."

"Master, give her to me!" suddenly cried Adurovich.

Eva cast herself at his feet and cried, "Azya! Azya! I have always—"

But he spurned her with his foot and Adurovich seized her by the arms and began to drag her along the floor. Pan Novovyeyiski's face turned from purple to blue; the cords cracked on his writhing arms and unintelligible words escaped his lips. Azya rose from the skins and approached him, slowly at first, and then more quickly, like a wild animal preparing to spring upon its prey. He reached him and clenched his fingers in old Novovyeyiski's moustache and with the other hand began to beat him mercilessly about the head and face.

He bellowed hoarsely as the old noble fell to the floor. Azya then knelt on Novovyeyiski's breast and then the bright flash of a knife was seen.

"Mercy! help!" screamed Eva. But Adurovich struck her on the head and put his broad hand over her mouth; meanwhile Azya was slaying Pan Novovyeyiski.

It was such a ghastly sight that even the blood of the Tartar officers ran cold, for Azya with deliberate ferocity slowly drew his knife across the neck of the ill-fated noble whose gaspings and chokings were frightful. From his severed veins the blood spurted more and more violently and streamed across the floor. Then the rattling and gurgling gradually ceased till the last gasps were audible in the severed throat and the dying man's feet convulsively dug the floor.

Azya rose.

His eyes fell on the pale and sweet face of Zosia Boska who appeared to be dead as she hung senseless on the arm of a Tartar who held her, and said:

"I will keep this girl for myself, till I give her away or sell her."

Then he turned to the Tartars: "We will now only await the return of the pursuit and then go to the lands of the Sultan."

The pursuit returned two days later with empty hands. Therefore the son of Tukhay Bey set out for the land of the Sultan with a heart full of rage and despair, leaving behind him a heap of grey and bluish ruins.

CHAPTER IV.

From ten to twelve Ukraine miles separated the towns through which Basia had travelled from Khreptyov to Rashkov, or the whole route along the Dniester amounted to thirty. It is true that they had started each morning while it was still dark and not halted till late at night; but still they made the whole journey, including refreshments, and in spite of difficult passages and crossings, in three days. At that day people did not make such quick journeys as a rule; but whoever had the will or the need could do so. Taking this into consideration. Basia calculated that the journey back to Khreptyov ought not to take so long, especially as she was making it on horseback, and this was a flight in which her safety depended on celerity.

However, she discovered her mistake on the first day, for, unable to escape by the road along the Dniester, she made a detour through the steppes and this considerably lengthened the road. Moreover she might lose herself and she was likely to do so; she might come across thawed rivers; or dense impassable forests; or marshes that were not frozen over even in Winter; she might suffer injury from men or wild beasts; therefore, though she decided to keep on without stopping, yet she told herself that even if all went well God knew when she would reach Khreptyov.

She had succeeded in tearing herself out of Azya's arms; but what would happen farther on? Undoubtedly anything was preferable to those vile arms; and yet her blood ran cold at the thought of what might be in store for her.

It immediately occurred to her that if she spared the horses she might be overtaken by the Lipkovs, who were thoroughly familiar with that wilderness; and to hide from discovery and pursuit was almost impossible. They hunted Tartars even in the Spring and Summer when there was no snow or soft earth to retain the tracks of horses; they could read the steppe like an open book; they scrutinized those plains like eagles; they could follow a scent in them like hounds; their

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His eyes fell on the pale and sweet face of Zosia Boska who appeared to be dead as she hung senseless on the arm of a Tartar who held her, and said:

"I will keep this girl for myself, till I give her away or sell her."

Then he turned to the Tartars: "We will now only await the return of the pursuit and then go to the lands of the Sultan."

The pursuit returned two days later with empty hands. Therefore the son of Tukhay Bey set out for the land of the Sultan with a heart full of rage and despair, leaving behind him a heap of grey and bluish ruins.

CHAPTER IV.

From ten to twelve Ukraine miles separated the towns through which Basia had travelled from Khreptyov to Rashkov, or the whole route along the Dniester amounted to thirty. It is true that they had started each morning while it was still dark and not halted till late at night; but still they made the whole journey, including refreshments, and in spite of difficult passages and crossings, in three days. At that day people did not make such quick journeys as a rule; but whoever had the will or the need could do so. Taking this into consideration. Basia calculated that the journey back to Khreptyov ought not to take so long, especially as she was making it on horseback, and this was a flight in which her safety depended on celerity.

However, she discovered her mistake on the first day, for, unable to escape by the road along the Dniester, she made a detour through the steppes and this considerably lengthened the road. Moreover she might lose herself and she was likely to do so; she might come across thawed rivers; or dense impassable forests; or marshes that were not frozen over even in Winter; she might suffer injury from men or wild beasts; therefore, though she decided to keep on without stopping, yet she told herself that even if all went well God knew when she would reach Khreptyov.

She had succeeded in tearing herself out of Azya's arms; but what would happen farther on? Undoubtedly anything was preferable to those vile arms; and yet her blood ran cold at the thought of what might be in store for her.

It immediately occurred to her that if she spared the horses she might be overtaken by the Lipkovs, who were thoroughly familiar with that wilderness; and to hide from discovery and pursuit was almost impossible. They hunted Tartars even in the Spring and Summer when there was no snow or soft earth to retain the tracks of horses; they could read the steppe like an open book; they scrutinized those plains like eagles; they could follow a scent in them like hounds; their

whole life was spent in hunting. Vainly, again and again, had Tartars marched in the streams so as to leave no trail; Cossacks, Lipkovs, and Cheremis, as well as the Polish warriors of the steppes knew how to find them and to meet their tricks with counter-tricks and deliver an attack as suddenly as if they had sprung up from the earth. How was she to escape from such men except by leaving them so far behind that the very distance made capture impossible? But in that case her horses would give out.

"They will inevitably fall dead if they keep on as they have gone hitherto," thought Basia, looking in terror at their wet steaming flanks and the foam falling to the earth in flakes.

So from time to time she slowed up and listened; but she heard pursuing voices in every breath of the wind, the rustling of the leaves on the edges of the ravines, in the noise made by the dry reeds of the steppe as they rubbed against one another, in the flapping of the wings of a passing bird, and even in the silence of the wilderness which seemed to hum in her ears.

In terror she again urged her horses into a wild gallop till warned by their snorting that the speed could not be maintained.

The weight of her loneliness and helplessness became more and more crushing. Ah! what an orphan she felt! What bitterness, as great as unjust, filled her heart towards everybody, the nearest and dearest, who had thus forsaken her!

Then she reflected that certainly God must be punishing her for her passion for adventure and her eagerness for all kinds of hunts and expeditions, often against her husband's wish; and for her frivolity and want of sedateness. As she thought of all this she wept bitterly, and raising her little head she sobbed:

"Chastise, but do not forsake me! Do not punish Michael! Michael is innocent."

In the meantime night was coming on, accompanied by cold, darkness, uncertainty of the road, and disquiet. Objects were becoming obscure, dim, and losing their forms, besides seeming to acquire a mysterious life and to be crouching. The peaks of lofty rocks resembled heads in pointed and round caps,—heads that were peering from behind some kind of gigantic wall, watching to see who was passing below with a silent and malignant glance. Branches of trees, moved by the wind, seemed to be gesticulating like people: some of them

beckoned to Basia as if trying to call her and tell her some awful secret; and others seemed to utter the warning: "Don't come near!"

The trunks of overturned trees looked like monstrous beings crouching to spring at her. Basia was very bold and daring, but, like all the people of that time, she was superstitious. When darkness fell entirely, her hair stood upright on her head as she shivered all over, and thought of the unclean powers that might inhabit those regions. She especially dreaded vampires; the belief in these beings was rife all along the Dniester, especially on account of the vicinity of Moldavia, and especially the places immediately about Yampol and Rashkov had an evil reputation in that matter. What numbers of people there daily met with a sudden death, without either confession or absolution! All the stories told by the cavaliers at Khreptyov in the evenings by the fireside came into Basia's mind; tales of deep chasms in which, when the wind blew, moans of "Jesus! Jesus!" were suddenly heard, and pale lights, accompanied by pantings; of rocky cliffs that were heard to laugh; of pallid children, sucklings, with green eyes and monstrous heads, infants who entreated to be taken up on horseback and when there they began to suck blood; lastly, bodiless heads walking on soldier-legs; and most horrible of all, those ghastly abominations, full-sized vampires, or Brukolaki, as they were called in Wallachia, who immediately sprang upon people.

Then she began to cross herself and did not stop till her hand was tired, and even then, she repeated the Litany, as these were the only effective workings against unclean powers.

She got some comfort out of the horses who did not exhibit any fear, but snorted lustily. Now and then she would pat her pony on the neck, as if trying by that means to assure herself that she was in a world of reality.

The night which at first was extremely dark, gradually became clearer, and at length the stars began to shimmer through the light mist. This was a very lucky thing for Basia, because in the first place it calmed her fears and, in the second, by keeping her eye on the Great Wain, she could direct herself northwards, towards Khreptyov. Looking about her, she calculated that she had progressed a distance from the Dniester, for the rocks were more scarce, the country more open, there were more hills covered with oak woods, and wide plains often appeared.

Nevertheless, again and again she was obliged to cross ravines, and she descended into them with a heart quaking with fear, for down in those depths, it was always pitch dark, with sharp, biting cold. Some of them were so precipitous that she had to make a detour, and consequently, she lost much time and made the journey longer.

However, it was still worse with streams and rivers, a whole system of which flowed into the Dniester from the east. They were all thawed, and the horses snorted with terror as in the night they plunged into waters of unknown depths. Basia only attempted to cross in those places where the shelving bank presupposed that the river, which was wide there, was also shallow. This indeed was generally the case, although, at some of the fords, the water reached nearly up to the horses' bellies; in such cases, Basia followed the example of soldiers and knelt on the saddle, holding on to the pommel, trying not to wet her feet. However, she was not always successful in this, and soon her legs up to the knees were numb with cold.

"God send the day! and then I will ride faster," she cried from time to time.

At length, she came to a broad plain with a straggling forest, and seeing that the horses could scarcely drag one foot after the other, she halted to rest. They both stretched out their necks to the ground in unison, and stretching out one fore-foot, eagerly began to crop the moss and withered grass. The deep silence of the forest was only broken by the short breath of the horses and the munching of the grass by their strong jaws.

When they had satisfied, or rather deceived their first hunger, both horses evidently wanted to roll, but Basia could not allow them to do that. She did not care to loosen the girths and dismount, as she wanted to be ready at any moment to resume her flight.

However, she mounted Azya's horse, because her own had carried her from the last halting-place, and although he was strong, and had noble blood in his veins, yet, he was the more delicate of the two.

After this arrangement, she felt hungry after the thirst which she had frequently quenched as she crossed the rivers, so she began to eat the seeds she had found in the bag at Azya's saddle-bow. She found them very good, though rather bitter, and eat and thanked God for the unexpected refreshment.

She eat sparingly, however, so that they might last her to Khreptyov. Sleep soon began to weigh down her eyelids with irresistible force, and when she ceased to gain warmth from the motions of the horse, she was pierced with bitter cold. Her feet became perfectly stiff, and throughout her body she experienced extreme lassitude, particularly in her arms and loins, which were strained in the struggle with Azya. She was attacked by an overwhelming weakness and her eyes closed.

However, in a few moments, she made a great effort and opened them again.

"No!" she thought, "I will sleep during the day in the hours of travel, for if I sleep now, I shall be frozen." . . .

But her ideas became more confused and disordered and produced a fantastic mixture, in which half dream-like, half clear, were jumbled the forest, flight and pursuit, Azya, the little knight, Evka, and all late occurrences. All these images seemed to be going like head waves impelled by the wind, and Basia seemed to be keeping pace with them, without either fear or pleasure, as if she were travelling for hire. It seemed as if Azya were pursuing her and speaking to her at the same time, and in anxiety about his horse; Pan Zagloba was scolding because supper was getting cold, Michael was showing the way, and Evka was coming on with them in a sleigh, eating dates.

Then all these people became more and more illusory as though a curtain of mist or gloom had been let down in front of them, and gradually they faded away, and there only remained a peculiar kind of darkness, which although impenetrable to the eye, was felt to be entirely void and of illimitable extent. . . This darkness pervaded everything, even Basia's mind, and in it blotted out all visions and ideas, as a blast of wind extinguishes a torch in the open air at night.

Basia had fallen asleep, but luckily for her, before the cold was able to congeal the blood in her veins, she was roused by a strange noise. Suddenly the horse started, and it was evident that there was some unusual occurrence in the forest.

Basia recovered consciousness in an instant, she seized Azya's musket and leaning down along the horse with strained attention, and dilated nostrils, she listened intently. Her nature was such that danger made her vigilant in a second, and bold and alert for defence.

But this time after listening long enough she at once be-

came calm. She had been aroused by the grunt of wild pigs. Whether the young pigs were being stalked by beasts of prey, or old boars were preparing to fight, she did not know, but in a moment the whole wilderness was in an uproar. It was plain that the tumult was some distance away, but in the stillness of the night and the universal drowsiness, it sounded so near, that Basia not only heard squeals and grunts, but violent breathing through the snouts. Suddenly, there was trampling and crashing and the snapping of broken boughs, and the whole herd rushed close past Basia, though she could not see, and was lost in the depths of the thickets.

But the irrepressible Basia, in spite of her dreadful situation, immediately felt the hunter-spirit spring up in her heart, and she was sorry at not having seen the herd rush past.

"One ought to have seen it," she reflected, "but never mind. Riding through the forest like this, I shall be sure to see something yet." . . .

And not till then did she hurry forward again, recollecting that it was better not to be able to see anything, but to flee at her utmost speed.

It was impossible to make any longer halt, because the cold was attacking her more sharply, and moreover, the horse's movement kept her comparatively warm, while it was not very fatiguing. But the horses, who had only had time to nibble a little moss and frozen grass, flagged a good deal, and their heads dropped. When they had halted, they had become covered with hoar-frost, and they seemed scarcely able to drag their legs. Moreover, they had kept going ever since the afternoon rest with scarcely a moment to breathe. After crossing the plain, keeping her eyes on the Great Wain in the sky, Basia plunged into the forest, which was not very thick, but hilly and crossed by winding gullies. Here too, it was darker, but only on account of the shade of the over-arching trees, and because the mist was rising from the ground and hiding the stars. She was obliged to take her chance. She only knew that she was going in the right direction by the course of the gullies, for she knew that they all ran westwards towards the Dniester, and by continually crossing fresh ones, she must be going northwards. But notwithstanding this help, she thought: "I am constantly in danger of getting too close to the Dniester, or too far away from it. It is dangerous to do either. In the first place, I should be

taking a tremendous journey, and in the second, I might find myself at Yampol and fall into the hands of my enemy.

She had not the slightest idea whether she had yet arrived opposite Yampol, or was on the high ground above it, or had already passed it.

"It will be easy to tell when I pass Mohilov," she murmured, "because it lies in a deep hollow which is very extensive, and so I am likely to recognize it."

Then she gazed at the Heavens, and thought:

"God only grant that I may reach the other side of Mohilov, for that is the beginning of Michael's authority, and I shall not be afraid of anything there." . . .

The night now grew darker. Luckily the forest was carpeted with snow, and she could distinguish the dark trunks of the trees against the white ground, and see the lower branches and avoid them. But Basia was forced to ride more slowly and consequently her heart was again seized with the dread of the unclean powers: which, early in the night, had seemed to turn her blood into ice.

"If I see fiery eyes near the ground," she said to her terrified soul, "that isn't anything; it will be a wolf, but if it is at the height of a man,——"

At that moment she cried out:

"In the name of the Father, Son——"

Could it have been a wild-cat sitting on a branch? It is enough that Basia plainly distinguished a pair of flashing eyes at the height of a man's head.

A cloud came over her eyes in her terror, but as she looked again, she could neither see nor hear anything but the rustle among the boughs, though her heart beat so loudly that it seemed about to break out of her breast.

And she rode on hour after hour sighing for the dawn, but the night seemed interminable. Presently her path was again barred by a river. Basia was already considerably beyond Yampol, on the bank of the Rosava; but not knowing where she was, she merely thought that if she continued, advancing northwards, she would soon come across a fresh river. She also thought that the night must be nearly passed, because it was sensibly getting colder, and the fog began to be dissipated, and the stars to appear, although shining with an uncertain light.

Finally the gloom began gradually to lighten. The tree-trunks, branches and twigs were becoming visible. The forest was wrapped in profound silence, and dawn had arrived.

Presently Basia was able to distinguish the color of the horses. At last, through the branches of the trees in the east a bright streak appeared. Day had broken; a bright day.

Basia's weariness knew no bounds. Her mouth constantly gaped with yawning, and very soon her eyes closed; she did not sleep for long, because her head came in contact with a branch and this awoke her. Fortunately, the horses were moving very slowly, cropping the moss as they went, and so it was such a slight blow that it did not hurt her. The sun had now risen, and its pale, beautiful rays were shining through the bare branches. When she saw this, Basia's heart felt comforted. Between her and pursuit she had placed so many steppes, mountains, and ravines; and an entire night. "If I am not captured by men from Yampol, or Mohil'ov," she murmured, "the others will not come up with me." Moreover, there was another circumstance on which she counted, and that was that when she had first taken flight she had gone over rocky ground where hoofs leave no tracks. But again doubts began to assail her. The Lipkovs can find tracks even on stone, and will doggedly keep up the pursuit till their horses fall dead.

This last seemed a most likely supposition. It was enough for Basia to look at her own animals; their flanks had fallen in, their heads were drooping, and their eyes were glazed. As they moved on, they stretched their necks to the ground again and again, to crop the moss as they passed, to snatch at the red leaves which hung withered here and there on the low oak shrubs. Fever also must be attacking Basia, because at every ford, she drank thirstily.

Nevertheless, when she emerged into an open plain between two forests she urged the tired horses into a gallop and kept it up till they reached the next forest.

After passing through that she came to another plain still more extensive and hilly; beyond some hills a mile or so away smoke was rising towards the sky as straight as a pine-tree. This was the first inhabited place that Basia had come across as yet, for that region, with the exception of the bank of the river was a desert, or rather it had been turned into a desert not only by Tartar incursions, but by the perpetual Polish-Cossack wars. Since the last campaign of Pan Charnyetski, before whom Busha fell, the small towns had become shabby settlements and the villages were overgrown with young forests. And since Charnyetski, there had been in-

numerable expeditions, battles, and massacres, down to the last in which the great Sobieski had wrested that region from the foe. Signs of habitation were beginning to multiply, only the district through which Basia was fleeing was particularly deserted and only robbers had taken refuge there, though even these had been almost exterminated by the commands stationed at Rashkov, Yampol, and Khreptyov.

On seeing the smoke, Basia's first impulse was to ride towards it to find a house, or a hut even, or at least, a hearth to warm herself by, and revive. But she quickly reflected that in those parts it was safer to encounter a pack of wolves than man: man there was more savage and pitiless than the wild beasts. Nay, rather was it necessary for her to hasten her horses and pass that forest abode of man as quickly as possible, for there only death could await her.

On the very edge of the forest opposite, Basia saw a small stack of hay; so at all costs she halted at it to bait her horses. They ate ravenously, thrusting their heads into the hay up to the ears and dragging out big bunches of it. Unfortunately they were greatly hindered by their bits; but Basia did not want to unbridle them, properly reasoning as follows:

"Where there is smoke there must be a shanty, as there is a stack there must be horses on which they could follow me,—so I must be prepared."

However, she stayed about an hour at the stack so that the horses had a considerable feed, and she ate some seeds herself. Then she moved on and after a few furlongs she suddenly saw in front of her two persons with faggots on their backs.

One was a middle-aged man with a face pitted with small-pox and cross-eyes, hideous and repellent, with a cruel, bestial face; the other was an idiot youth as was instantly apparent from his silly smile and foolish glance.

At the sight of an armed cavalier they both cast down their faggots and seemed to be greatly alarmed. But the encounter was so sudden and close that they could not run away.

"Praise God!" said Basia.

"For ever and ever."

"What is the name of this farm?"

"What should it be? There's the hut."

"Is it far to Mohilov?"

"We do not know."

Here the man began closely to scrutinize Basia's features. On account of her male costume he took her for a youth, and

his face instantly assumed an expression of insolence and cruelty in place of his late alarm.

"How is it that you are so young, Pan Cavalier?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"And are you travelling alone?" the peasant inquired, advancing a step.

"Troops accompany me."

He paused and looked over the extensive plain and replied:

"Untrue. There's nobody."

Then he took two steps forward; his cross eyes glittered with a sinister light and he pursed his lips and began to imitate the cry of a quail, evidently as a summons to somebody.

All this looked very hostile to Basia and she unhesitatingly levelled a pistol at his heart:

"Silence! or thou shalt perish."

The man ceased and moreover cast himself on the ground. The idiot followed his example and began to howl like a wolf with terror; perhaps he had originally lost his reason from a similar feeling for his howls spoke most awful terror.

Basia pulled up her horses and sprang forward like an arrow. Luckily there was no underwood in that forest and the trees were wide apart. They soon came to another plain that was narrow but very long. The horses had gained new strength from their meal at the stack and rushed on like the tempest.

"They will run home, mount, and chase me!" thought Basia.

Her only comfort was that the horses were going well and that the spot where she had met the man was a good way from the house.

"Before they can reach it and get the horses out at this rate I shall be several miles ahead."

This was the case, but after some hours, when she was satisfied that she was not being followed, Basia slackened her pace, her heart was assailed with great fear and depression and she could not restrain her tears.

The encounter taught her what the people of those parts were and what was to be expected from them. It is true that this was no surprise. From her own experience and the tales she had heard at Khreptyov she knew that the former peaceful dwellers had left these wilds, or had been swallowed up in the war; those who were left lived in perpetual dread amidst

civil strife and Tartar assault, under conditions where one man to another is like a wolf; they were living without churches or religion, without any principle but fire and slaughter, without recognizing any right but that of the fist; they had lost all feelings of humanity and grown wild like the beasts of the field. Basia was well aware of this; and yet a human being, lost in the wilderness, famished with hunger and cold involuntarily turns for assistance to kindred beings first of all. Basia did so at the sight of the smoke that revealed a human habitation; following the first natural impulse of her heart she wanted to hasten to it, greet the tenants in the name of God, and rest her wearied head beneath their roof. But grim reality quickly bared its teeth at her like a savage dog. So her heart was full of bitterness and her eyes of sorrow and disappointment.

"No help but from God," she thought. "I pray that no person meet me again."

Then she began to wonder why the peasant had imitated a quail. "There must certainly be others there and he wanted to call them." She remembered that robbers dwelt in that district, having been driven out of the fastnesses near the river and taking to the wilds deeper in the country where the neighborhood of the wide steppes insured greater safety and easier escape at need.

"But what will happen?" Basia asked herself, if I encounter a number of men, or more than a dozen? The musket,—that's one; two pistols,—two; a sabre,—say two more; but if there are more than that I shall die a horrible death."

And as during the terrors of the previous night she had longed for day to come as quickly as possible, so now she longed for darkness to hide her more effectually from evil eyes.

Twice again as she rode on ceaselessly she seemed to be in the vicinity of people. Once she caught sight of a number of huts on the edge of the plateau. Perhaps professional robbers did not dwell there, but she preferred to pass by at a gallop, knowing that even peasants are not much better than robbers; on another occasion she heard the sound of axes cutting wood.

The longed-for night at last shrouded the earth. Basia was so worn out that when she came to a bare steppe free from woods she said to herself:

"I shan't be crushed against a tree here. I will get some sleep at once, even if I freeze."

As she closed her eyes she fancied that in the distance on the white snow she saw a number of black dots moving about in various directions. For a little longer she mastered her drowsiness. "Surely those must be wolves!" she murmured.

Before she had gone many paces the dots disappeared and then she fell asleep so soundly that she did not awake till Azya's horse, on which she was mounted, neighed under her.

She gazed around; she was on the edge of a forest; if she had not woken in time she might have been crushed against a tree.

Suddenly she noticed that the other horse was not by her side.

"What has happened?" she cried in great alarm.

What had happened was very simple. It is true that Basia had tied the reins of her pony to the pommel of the saddle on which she was sitting; but her numbed hands had not served her well and she had not been able to tie them firmly; they had slipped off and the tired horse had stopped to seek food beneath the snow, or to lie down.

Fortunately Basia's pistol was in her girdle instead of her holster, she had also with her the powder-horn and the bag with the rest of the seeds. And lastly the calamity was not overwhelming because though Azya's horse was not so speedy as her own, yet he was undoubtedly superior in the matter of enduring cold and labor. But Basia was grieved about her favorite horse and her first impulse was to search for him.

When she looked around the steppe, however, and could see nothing of him, though the night was unusually bright, she was greatly surprised.

"He has surely stayed behind," she thought, "and not gone ahead; but he must have lain down in some hollow and that is the reason that I cannot see him."

Her horse neighed again, shaking himself, and laying his ears back; but no answer came from the silent steppe.

"I will go and find him," said Basia.

But as she turned she was seized with sudden alarm, and it sounded as if a human voice exclaimed:

"Basia, do not return!"

At that instant the silence was broken by other and ill-omened voices close by and seeming to come from beneath the earth, howling, snorting, whining and groaning, and at last a horrible squeal, short and interrupted. . . . It was all the more terrifying because nothing was visible on the steppe.

Basia broke out into cold sweat from head to foot, and from her pale lips escaped the cry:

“What is that? What has happened?”

Of course she guessed at once that wolves had killed her horse, but she could not understand why she did not see him since, to judge by the sounds, he was only five hundred yards behind.

There was no time to spring to his rescue, for the horse must be already torn to pieces, and besides she had to think of her own safety. Basia fired her pistol to scare the wolves and went on.

As she went she meditated on what had happened, and presently the thought struck her that perhaps it was not the wolves who had taken her horse, because those voices seemed to come from beneath the earth. At this thought a cold shiver ran down her back, but weighing the affair more carefully she remembered that while asleep she had seemed to be descending and then rising again.

“That must be it,” she exclaimed, “in my sleep I must have crossed some not very precipitous ravine. My horse stayed there and there the wolves fell upon him.”

The rest of the night passed without further adventure. Having had the hay to eat in the morning the horse kept on with wonderful endurance till Basia herself was amazed at his power. He was a Tartar horse,—a wolf-hunter of noble blood and quite unlimited endurance. During the brief halts that Basia allowed him he nibbled everything, moss and leaves without distinction, and even gnawed the bark of trees and then went on and on. Basia pressed him into a gallop on the plains. After a time he began to groan occasionally and his labored breathing could be plainly heard when he was reined in; he panted and trembled and hung his head low with weariness, but he did not fall. Even if her own horse had not died under the teeth of the wolves he could not have stood such a journey.

After saying her prayers the next morning Basia began to count the time.

“I broke away from Azya on Tuesday afternoon,” she reflected. “I galloped till night; then the night was spent on the road and then a whole day, then another whole night, and this is the commencement of the third day. Even if there was a pursuit it must already have turned back and Khreptyov should be near, for I have not spared the horses.”

Presently she added:

"It is time; it is time! God have mercy upon me!"

Now and then she felt a desire to approach the Dniester, for on the bank it would be easier to tell where she was, but when she remembered that fifty of Azya's Lipkovs had remained at Mohilov with Pan Gorzenski, she feared to do so. She thought that as she had made such a detour perhaps she had not yet passed Mohilov. On the way so long as sleep had not weighed down her eyelids it is true that she had tried carefully to notice if she came across a very broad valley like the one in which Mohilov was situated, but she had not seen such a place. However, the valley might grow narrower and quite different to what it was at Mohilov and might come to an end farther in, or considerably narrowed at some furlongs beyond the town; in short, Basia had not the slightest idea where she was.

Only she ceaselessly prayed to God that Khreptyov might not be far away, for she felt that she could not much longer endure toil, hunger, cold, and loss of sleep. For three days she had lived on seeds alone, and though she had husbanded them most carefully, yet she had eaten the last grain that morning and there was nothing left in the bag.

Now she could only feed and warm herself with the hope that Khreptyov was near. Besides hope, fever was keeping her warm. Basia was sure that she had a fever because, although the air was becoming colder and was even freezing, her feet and hands were now as hot as she had been cold at the commencement of her flight; she was also greatly tormented with thirst.

"Only let me not lose my presence of mind," she said to herself; "let me reach Khreptyov even with my last breath and see Michael, and then God's will be done." . . .

She was again forced to cross several streams and rivers, but they were either shallow or frozen; on some waters was flowing above the surface of firm and strong ice. These she dreaded more than any because, though the horse was brave, he evidently feared them. When he went into the water or upon the ice he would snort and prick his ears forward and sometimes balk, and when urged he moved warily, slowly putting one foot before the other and snorting with wide nostrils.

It was late in the afternoon when Basia issued from a dense pine wood and halted before a river considerably larger and wider than usual. According to her reckoning this must be

the Lodova or the Kalusik. Her heart beat joyfully at the sight of it. In either case Khreptyov must be near; once having passed it she might consider herself safe, because that district was more populated and the people less to be dreaded. The banks of the river were precipitous as far as the eye could see; it shelved only in one place where the water, damned up by the ice, had flooded the bank, looking like water in a broad, shallow vessel. The margin was quite frozen, but a wide stream of water was flowing in the centre, though Basia hoped to find the usual ice beneath it.

The horse entered with some unwillingness as at other crossings, with lowered head and snuffing at the snow in front of him. When she reached the running water Basia knelt on the saddle as usual, and held on to the pommel with both hands.

The water splashed under his hoofs. The ice was quite firm and like stone under him. But evidently the shoes had lost their sharpness on the long road parts of which had been rocky, as the horse began to slip and his feet to spread as if flying from under him. Suddenly he stumbled and his nostrils entered the water; then he rose and fell on his haunches; he rose again, but was now frightened and began to kick and plunge. Basia pulled at the reins and at the same moment a dull crack was heard and the horse's hind legs sank through the ice up to his haunches.

"Jesus, Jesus!" cried Basia.

The animal with his fore legs still on firm ice was making desperate efforts, but evidently the fragment on which he was resting began to move from under his feet, for he sank deeper and began to emit hoarse sounds.

Basia still had the time and presence of mind to grasp his mane and gain the solid ice in front of him. She fell, and was soaked by the water, but gained and felt it firm under her feet and knew that she was saved. She wanted to save the horse, so leaned forward and caught the reins and pulled with all her power towards the bank.

But the horse sank deeper and could not even free his fore feet to reach the stationary ice. The more she dragged at the reins the deeper he sank. He began to utter sounds that were almost human while baring his teeth; he gazed at Basia with indescribable sadness in his eyes as if trying to say to her: "There is no rescue for me; drop the reins before I drag thee in too!" . . .

In truth there was no rescue for him, and at last Basia had to let go the reins.

At last he was so deep in the water that only his neck and mouth remained above the ice.

When the horse had disappeared beneath the ice she went to the bank and sat down under a leafless bush and sobbed like a child.

For the moment her spirit was entirely broken. Moreover the pain and bitterness she had experienced after meeting with people now filled her heart with still greater intensity. Everything was against her;—unknown roads, darkness, the elements, men, and beasts. The hand of God alone had seemed to protect her. In that loving paternal care she had put all her childlike trust; but now even that had failed her. Basia had not expressed this feeling in such plain words, but nevertheless in her heart she felt it strongly.

“What was left for her?” Tears and complaint! And yet she had exhibited all the valor, and courage, and fortitude that it was possible for such a poor weak creature to show. Now behold, her horse, her last hope of salvation, her last chance of rescue, the sole living creature with her, was drowned! Deprived of that horse she felt helpless in face of the unknown distance between her and Khreptyov; and in face of the pine woods, ravines, and steppes; not merely without defence against the pursuit of man, but more lonely and deserted than ever.

She wept till her tears were exhausted. Then followed exhaustion, weariness, and such an utter sense of helplessness that it was almost akin to rest.

She sighed deeply once and again and cried:

“I am powerless against the will of God. I will die where I am!”

And she closed those eyes that were once so bright and joyous, but now so hollow and sunken.

Although she was growing more physically helpless every moment, yet thought throbbed in her brain like a frightened bird, and her heart also. If nobody in the world loved her she could die with less regret, but everybody loved her so much.

And she pictured to herself what would happen when Azya's treachery and treason were known; how they would search for her and at last find her, blue, frozen, and sleeping her eternal sleep under a bush by the river. Suddenly she cried out:

"Ah, what will be poor Michael's despair! Ah! ah!"

Then she prayed to him, saying that it was not her fault.

"Michael, dear," she said, as she put her arms around his neck in fancy, "I did everything in my power, but it was hard, dear. It was not the will of the Lord God."

And at that moment she felt such an overwhelming rush of love for Michael and such a desire even to die near her beloved that she summoned the last of her forces and rose from the bank and struggled onwards.

It was extremely difficult at first. During the long ride her feet had become unused to walking and she felt as if she were walking on stilts. Fortunately she was not cold; indeed she was quite warm enough, as the fever had never left for a moment.

Plunging into the forest she kept on resolutely remembering to keep the sun on her left. In fact it had now gone round to the Moldavian side, for it was afternoon,—perhaps four o'clock. Basia now did not so much mind approaching the Dniester, for she was satisfied that she was beyond Mohilov.

"If I were only certain of it; if I knew it!" she exclaimed, raising her blue and inflamed face towards the sky. "If only some animal or tree would speak and say, 'It is a mile to Khreptyov, or two miles,' I might perhaps reach there."

But the trees were silent; indeed they seemed hostile and to be obstructing the road with their roots. Basia frequently stumbled against these gnarled, knotted and snow-covered roots. Presently she felt unendurably burdened, so she cast the warm mantle from her shoulders and was left with her single jacket. Thus relieved she walked on and on with increasing haste, sometimes stumbling and falling in the deep snow. Her fur-lined, saffian boots, excellent for the sleigh or horseback, were very little protection to her feet against the stones or stumps, and having been repeatedly soaked in fording and kept damp by the feverish heat of her feet, they easily got torn in the forest.

"I will go barefoot to Khreptyov, or to death!" Basia thought.

And a sad smile illumined her tiny face, for it was some solace to her to keep on with such endurance so that if she should be frozen on the way Michael would have nothing to reproach her memory with. So now she kept continually talking to her husband and once she said:

"Ah, Michael, dear! another would not have done so much: Evka, for example." . . .

More than once she had thought of Eva during her flight, and more than once she had prayed for her. It was clear to her now, knowing that Azya did not love the maiden, her fate, in common with all the other prisoners in Rashkov, would be a dreadful one.

"It is worse for them than for me," she kept telling herself, and the thought gave her fresh courage.

But when three hours had passed her strength began to fail more with every step. The sun gradually sank behind the Dniester and disappeared in a rosy glow, leaving violet reflections on the snow. Then the twilight abyss of gold and purple began to darken and contract momentarily; from a sea that covered half the heavens it narrowed to a lake, from a lake to a river, from a river to a brook, and at last gleaming like a thread of light across the west it gave place to darkness.

Night fell.

Another hour passed. The pine wood became black and mysterious; but, not stirred by the least breath, it seemed to be pondering what it should do with that poor, strayed creature. There was nothing good in that stillness and torpor, but rather heartlessness and insensibility.

Basia kept on without ceasing, panting through her parched lips more rapidly as she went; she also fell more often now that darkness had come, and she was weaker.

She kept her face turned upwards, but not to look for the Great Wain, for she had lost all idea of her position. She gazed where she wanted to go;—because bright and sweet visions of death were beginning to hover about her.

For example, the four sides of the wood seemed to approach one another quickly and form a room,—the room at Khreptovov. Basia is there and sees everything clearly. A great fire is burning on the hearth and officers are sitting on the benches as usual: Pan Zagloba is jesting with Pan Snitko; Pan Motovidlo is silently gazing into the flames, and when anything hisses in the fire he exclaims in his drawling tones, "Oh, soul in purgatory, what wilt thou?" Pan Mushalski and Pan Khromyka are casting dice with Michael. Basia approaches them and says: "Michael dear, I will sit on the bench and nestle up beside you a little, for I am not myself." Michael passes his arm around her. "What is the matter, kitten? Is it? . . ." And he bends his head down to her ear and

whispers something. But she answers, "Ah, how unlike myself I feel!" What a bright and peaceful room that is and how dear that Michael is! But somehow Basia is not herself at all and fear takes hold of her.

Basia is so far from being herself that the fever has suddenly left her, for the weakness that comes before death has vanquished it. The visions vanish; presence of mind returns and memory with it.

"I am fleeing from Azya," said Basia to herself; "I am in the forest at night. I cannot reach Khreptyov. I am dying."

After the fever has departed cold quickly seizes upon her and pierces her body to the bone. Her legs bend under her, and at last she kneels in the snow before a tree.

Her mind is not obscured by the least cloud now. She is bitterly grieved at losing her life, but she is perfectly well aware that she is dying, and, to commend her soul to God, she is beginning to say in broken tones:

"In the name of the Father, and the Son,"

Further prayer is suddenly interrupted by certain strange, sharp, shrill, squeaking sounds; they are grating and piercing in the silence of the night.

Basia opens her mouth. The question, "What is that?" dies on her lips. For an instant she covers her face with her trembling hands as if unwilling to believe her ears, and a sudden shriek escapes her lips:

"O Jesus, O Jesus! Those are the well-sweeps; that is Khreptyov! O Jesus!

Then this creature who was dying a moment ago now springs up panting and trembling, with eyes full of tears and with heaving bosom runs through the forest, falling, and rising again as she repeats:

"They are watering the horses there! That is Khreptyov! Those are our well-sweeps! To the gate, to the gate! O Jesus! Khreptyov. . . Khreptyov!" . . .

But here the trees grow wider apart, the fields of snow open to the view and the slope with them, from which many gleaming eyes are gazing at the running Basia.

But these were not the eyes of wolves; they were the windows of Khreptyov shining with sweet, bright, saving light! There on the mound is the fort where its eastern side faces the forest.

There was some distance to go, but Basia was unconscious of accomplishing it. The soldiers at the gate on the side of

the village did not recognize her in the darkness, but admitted her, thinking her some boy sent on an errand and returning to the commander. She dashed in the midst with her last remaining breath, ran across the square past the wells, where the dragoons who had just before returned from a reconnaissance had watered their horses, and stopped at the door of the main building.

Just then the little knight and Zagloba were sitting on a bench before the fire and drinking krupnik. They were talking about Basia, thinking her over there in Rashkov arranging matters. They were both sad, for it was dreadfully dreary without her and every day they talked about when she would be back.

"God prevent sudden rains, thaws, and freshets. If any of them come He alone knows when she will be back," said Zagloba gloomily.

"The winter will last some time yet," said the little knight; "and in eight or ten days I shall be looking every hour in the direction of Mohilov for her."

"I wish she hadn't gone. There is nothing for me here in Khreptyov without her."

"But why did you advise it?"

"Don't fabricate, Michael! It occurred with your consent." . . .

"If she only returns in good health."

Here the little knight sighed and added:

"In good health and very soon!"

At that the door creaked and a tiny, pitiful, tattered creature, covered with snow, began to cry plaintively on the threshold:

"Michael dear! Michael dear!"

The little knight sprang to his feet, but for a moment was so amazed that he stood still as though turned to stone; he stretched out his arms and blinked and stood still.

"Michael! Azya was treacherous, he wanted to carry me off; but I fled, and—help!"

As she ended she tottered and fell on the floor as if dead; Pan Michael sprang forward and lifted her in his arms as if she had been a feather, and cried in a shrill voice:

"Merciful Christ!"

But her poor little head hung lifeless on his shoulder. Thinking that it was only a corpse that he held in his arms he began to cry in a horrible voice:

"Basia is dead!—dead! Help!"

CHAPTER V.

The news of Basia's arrival flashed through Kreptyov like lightning, but no one saw her that evening, or for several evenings, except the little knight, Pan Zagloba, and the female attendants. After fainting on the threshold, she recovered her senses, to tell him in a few words what had happened, and how; but a fresh fainting-fit quickly followed, and though they used every means to revive her, warming her, giving her wine, and trying to give her nourishment, by an hour later she did not even recognize her husband, and there was no doubt that she was in for a long and dangerous illness.

Meanwhile there was great excitement in Khreptyov. When the soldiers heard that the mistress had come back half-dead, they rushed out into the square like a swarm of bees. All the officers gathered together in the lighted hall and with low whispering impatiently awaited news from Basia's room. However, it was impossible to learn anything for a long time. It is true that occasionally a maid would hurry past to the kitchen for hot water, or to the dispensary for plasters, ointments, and herbs, but they would not let anyone stop them. Anxiety weighed over every heart like lead. Crowds even from the village collected in increasing numbers upon the square and questions passed from lip to lip. Azya's treason was discussed and it was said that the mistress had saved herself by flight, which had lasted a whole week without either food or sleep. The assembled soldiers were last seized with terrible fury, but they suppressed their indignation, fearing lest the health of the patient might suffer.

At length, after a long wait, Pan Zagloba went out to the officers with his eyes red, and his few remaining hairs standing upright on his head; they thronged around him and at once besieged him with urgent questions in low tones.

"Is she alive? Is she alive?"

"She is alive," said the old man, "but God knows whether for an hour longer."

Here his voice was choked and his lips quivered. Putting his head in his hands, he sank heavily on the bench and his breast heaved with suppressed sobs.

When he saw this, Pan Mushalski caught Pan Nyenashinyets in his embrace, though usually he did not care much for him, and began to utter low moans, in which he was immediately joined by Pan Nyenashinyets. Pan Motovidlo looked as if he was trying to swallow something and could not; Pan Snitko began to unbutton his coat with trembling fingers; Pan Khromyka began to walk up and down the room wringing his hands.

The soldiers seeing these signs of despair through the windows and supposing that the lady was already dead, were greatly agitated and began to utter lamentations. When he heard this, Zagloba became furious and darted out into the square like a stone from a sling.

"Silence, you rogues, may the thunderbolt strike you," he cried in suppressed tones.

They were silent immediately, comprehending that it was not yet time to lament, but they stayed in the square. Zagloba returned to the room and somewhat quieted down and again took a seat on the bench.

At that moment one of the maids again appeared at the door of the room.

Zagloba sprang toward her.

"How is it in there?"

"She is asleep."

"Is she asleep? God be praised."

"Perhaps the Lord will grant. . . ."

"What is the Pan Commandant doing?"

"He is at her bedside."

"That is well. Now go after what you were sent for."

Zagloba turned to the officers and repeated what she had said, crying:

"May the Most High God have mercy! she is asleep; I am begining to be hopeful. . . . Phew!"

And they also all drew a long breath. Then they collected about Zagloba in a ring and began to ask:

"For God's sake how did it happen? What happened? How did she escape on foot?"

"She did not escape on foot, at first," whispered Zagloba, "but with two horses, for she threw that dog—may the plague slay him!—from his saddle."

"I can't believe my ears! . . ."

"She struck him between the eyes with the butt of a pistol, and as they were some distance behind the others, there was no one to see and pursue. One horse was eaten by wolves, and the other was drowned under the ice. Merciful Christ! the poor thing went through the forests alone, without food or drink."

Here Pan Zagloba again burst into tears and interrupted his tale. The officers also sat down on the benches in wonder and horror and pity for the woman they all loved.

"When she arrived in the neighborhood of Khreptyov," Zagloba presently continued, "she did not recognize the place and was making ready to die when she heard the creaking of the well-sweeps, and knew that she was close to us and dragged herself home with her last breath."

"God guarded her in her extremity," said Motovidlo, as he wiped his wet moustache. "He will still guard her."

"It will be so, you have hit the mark," whispered many voices.

At that moment, a louder noise reached them from the square. Zagloba again sprang up in fury and rushed out of the door.

In the square, the soldiers all had their heads together, but when they saw Zagloba and two other officers, they fell back into a semi-circle.

"Be quiet, you souls of dogs, began Zagloba, or I'll order—"

But from the semi-circle advanced Zydor Lusnia, a sargeant of dragoons, a real Mazovian, one of Pan Michael's favorite troopers. He took a couple of steps forward, straightened himself, and said in determined tones:

"I beg of your lordship, since such a son has injured our lady, that we may seek him and take vengeance; it cannot be otherwise. What I say, all ask, and if the Colonel cannot go, we will go under other leadership, even to the Crimea itself, to capture him, we will not spare him, because of the wrong done to our lady."

The cold, determined menace of a peasant sounded in the sargeant's voice; other dragoons and servants of the accompanying squadrons began to grind their teeth, rattle their sabres, and mutter. That deep muttering, like the growling of a bear at night, had something terrible in it.

The officer stood erect, awaiting an answer, and whole

ranks of dragoons and fellow-officers with him, and they exhibited such evidences of fury and determination as entirely to suspend ordinary discipline for the time being.

For a time there was silence, suddenly a voice in one of the rear ranks was heard.

"That man's blood is the best medicine for the mistress."

Zagloba's anger evaporated, for he was touched by the soldiers' affection for Basia, and, at the mention of medicine, another idea struck him, namely, to send for a doctor for Basia. In the first few moments no one had thought of a doctor in that wild Khreptyov, although there were several in Kamenets, among others, a certain Greek, a celebrated man, who was rich, and owned several stone houses, and was so learned that everybody regarded him as being skillful in the black art. But there was some doubt whether he, being so rich, would be willing to come to such a desert at any price, being a man whom even high dignitaries honored.

Zagloba reflected for a few moments and then said:

"Fitting vengeance shall not fail that arch-dog, that I promise you, and it would be better for him for the king to vow vengeance on him than Zagloba. But we do not yet know whether he is still alive, for when the lady wrenched herself out of his hands, she struck him right in the brain with the butt of her pistol. But this is no time to think of him, we must first save the lady."

"We would be glad to do that, even with our own lives," Lusnia replied.

And a muttering again arose from the crowd in support of his words.

"Listen to me, Lusnia," said Zagloba. "In Kamenets lives a doctor, named Rodopol. You shall go to him and tell him that the starosta of Podolia has sprained his leg here and is waiting for aid. If he is outside the walls, seize him, put him upon a horse, or into a sack, and bring him to Khreptyov without stopping. I will order horses to be stationed at short distances apart, and you will go at a gallop. Only be careful to bring him alive, for we have no use for the dead."

A murmur of satisfaction was heard on all sides. Lusnia's grim moustache moved, as he said:

"I will surely bring him and will not let him go till we get to Khreptyov."

"Forward."

"I beg your lordship—"

"What more?"

"But if he should die?"

"Let him drop, but he must get here alive. Take six men and set out."

Lusnia started off. The others were glad to do anything for the lady and ran to saddle the horses, and in a few Paters, six men were galloping to Kamenets. After them some of the others took spare horses, to station along the road.

Zagloba returned to the house with great self-satisfaction.

Presently, Volodiyovski came out of the bed-room, greatly altered, scarcely conscious and heedless of words of sympathy and consolation. After telling Zagloba that Basia was still sleeping, he sank down on the bench and gazed vacantly at the door beyond which she was lying. To the officers he looked as if he was listening, so they all held their breath and a dead silence fell on the room.

Presently, Zagloba approached the little knight on tip-toe.

"Michael, I have sent to Kamenets for a doctor, but perhaps it would be well to send for someone else."

Pan Michael seemed to be trying to collect his thoughts and apparently did not understand.

"For a priest!" said Zagloba, "Father Kaminski might get here by the morning."

The little knight closed his eyes and turned his face, which was as white as a sheet, towards the fire, and said, in hurried accents:

"Jesus, Jesus!"

Zagloba said no more, but went out and gave orders. When he returned, Pan Michael was gone. The officers told Zagloba that the sick woman had called her husband, whether in consciousness or delirium, they could not tell.

The old noble, by personal inspection, soon satisfied himself that it was in delirium.

Basia's cheeks were scarlet, her eyes, though glittering, were sightless, as if the pupils had run into the white. Her pale hands seemed to be trying to find something in front of her on the coverlet with vague movements. Pan Michael, only half-alive, was lying at her feet.

From time to time the sick woman muttered in low tones, or uttered disjointed phrases more loudly, among which Khreptyov was most frequently heard; it was evident that she thought she was still on the road. The ceaseless movements of her hands on the coverlet was the most disturbing

thing to Zagloba, for in its unconscious repetition he recognized the signs of approaching death. He had had great experience and many people had died in his presence, but his heart had never been torn with such grief as at the sight of this little blossom withering so early.

Realizing that only God could save the ebbing life, he knelt beside the bed, and began to pray fervently.

Meanwhile, Basia's breathing grew more labored and gradually changed to a rattle. Pan Michael sprang up from her feet and Zagloba rose from his knees. Neither uttered a word to the other, but simply gazed into each other's eyes, and there was terror in that gaze. They thought that it was her death agony, but only for a few moments, her breathing soon became easier and more measured.

From that moment they lived between fear and hope. The night slowly dragged along. The officers did not go to rest either but sat in the hall, alternately gazing at the bedroom door, whispering among themselves, and dozing. From time to time a boy came in to put wood on the hearth and at every movement of the latch they sprang from the bench, thinking that Michael or Zagloba was coming in, and that they would hear the dreadful words:

"She no longer lives."

At last the cocks began to crow, and she was still wrestling with the fever. Towards morning, a fierce rain-storm broke, roaring among the rafters and howling round the roof. Sometimes it beat on to the hearth, driving the flames with smoke and sparks into the room. About dawn, Pan Motovidlo went out, for he had to make a reconaissance. At last day broke, pale and cloudy, and illumined worn faces.

On the place-of-arms, the usual movement commenced. In the whistling of the storm were heard the stir of horses on the stable planks, the creaking of the well-sweeps and the voices of the soldiers, but soon a bell was heard: Father Kaminski had arrived.

As he entered in his white surplice the officers fell on their knees. It seemed to them all that the solemn moment had arrived which would surely be followed by death. The sick woman had not regained consciousness, so that the priest could not hear her confession. He only administered Extreme Unction, and then began to reason with and comfort the little knight, urging him to yield to the will of God. But his consolations had no effect, for no words could assuage his suffering.

Death hovered over Basia for a whole day. Like a spider, secreted in some dark corner of the ceiling, which sometimes creeps into the light, and lowers itself on an invisible thread, so at times, death seemed to come almost down to Basia's head and more than once the watchers thought that his shadow was falling on her brow, and that that bright spirit was just spreading its wings to fly away out of Khreptyov, somewhere into the limitless expanse on the other side of life. Then, like a spider, death again hid away under the ceiling and hope filled their hearts.

But this was merely an insufficient and passing hope, for no one ventured to believe that Basia could survive the sickness. Volodiyovski, himself, had lost all hope of her recovery and his suffering became so great that Pan Zagloba, though in extreme anguish himself, became alarmed and gave him to the care of the officers.

"For God's sake watch him!" said the old man, "he may plunge a knife into his body."

This idea did not occur to Pan Michael, although in his extreme grief and suffering he incessantly asked himself:

"How am I to remain when she goes? How can I let my beloved go alone? what will she say when she looks round and does not find me near her?"

At these reflections, he longed with his whole soul to die with her, for as he could not imagine life on earth for himself without her, so also he could not imagine that she could be happy without him in the other life, and not long for him.

In the afternoon, the evil-boding spider again hid in the ceiling. The flush on Basia's cheeks died out, and the fever decreased so greatly that the patient recovered consciousness somewhat.

For some time she lay still with closed eyes, and then opened them, and gazed into the little knight's face and asked:

"Michael, am I at Khreptyov?"

"Yes, my darling," he answered, clenching his teeth.

"And are you really standing beside me?"

"Yes! how are you feeling?"

"Oh,—well."

"It was evident that she was not certain herself that the fever was not producing illusory visions, but from that moment she regained consciousness more and more.

In the evening, Lusnia and his men returned and shook

out of a sack in front of the fort, the doctor of Kamenets, together with his medicines; he was scarcely alive. But when he learned that he was not in the hands of robbers, as he had imagined, but was brought in that fashion to a patient, after a passing faintness he immediately went to the rescue, especially as Zagloba held in front of him a purse full of coin in one hand, and a loaded pistol in the other, and cried:

“This is your fee for life, and that for death.”

That same night, about dawn, the evil-boding spider concealed itself somewhere finally, whereupon the doctor's assurance: “She will be ill for a long time, but she will recover,” joyfully echoed through Khreptyov. When Pan Michael first heard it, he fell to the floor and burst out sobbing so violently that it seemed as if his breast would burst. Zagloba became quite faint with joy, and his face broke out into a perspiration, and he was scarcely able to cry, “A drink.” The officers also embraced one another.

On the square the dragoons again gathered with the escort and Pan Motovidlo's Cossacks; they could scarcely be restrained from shouting. They were anxious to manifest their delight in some way and began to beg for some of the robbers that were imprisoned in the cellars of Khreptyov, so that they might hang them for the lady's benefit.

But the little knight refused.

CHAPTER VI.

Basia was so violently ill for another week that but for the doctor's assurance, both the little knight and Zagloba would have admitted that the flame of her life might be extinguished at any moment. Not till after that lapse of time did she show any manifest improvement; she fully recovered consciousness and, although the doctor predicted that she would have to keep her bed for a month or six weeks, still she was sure of recovering her former perfect health and strength.

During her illness the little knight scarcely stirred from her pillow; if possible he loved her more ardently after the perils she had passed through, and could see nothing in the world beyond her. Sometimes when he sat at her side and gazed on that little loving face, still thin and pinched, though joyous, and those eyes that regained more of their old fire with each day, he felt inclined to laugh, cry, and shout with joy.

"My only Bashka is getting better; she is getting better!"

And he threw himself on her hands and sometimes kissed those poor little feet that had so bravely waded through the deep snow to Khreptyov; in a word, he loved and honored her to excess. He felt deeply all that he owed to Providence and on one occasion he said in the presence of Zagloba and the officers:

"I am a poor fellow, but even if I had to work my arms off to the elbows, I would get money for a little church, though only wooden. And as often as the bells are rung in it, I will remember God's mercy, and my soul will melt within me with gratitude."

"May God grant first that we successfully go through this Turkish war," said Zagloba.

Then the little knight twisted his moustache and answered: "God best knows what is most pleasing to him, if he wants a church, he will preserve me, and if he prefers my blood, I will not spare it, as I love God."

With returning health Basia recovered her spirits. Two

weeks later, one evening, she ordered her chamber door to be opened a little, and when the officers had gathered in the large hall, she called out in her silvery tones:

"Good evening, gentlemen, I'm not going to die this time, eh?"

"Thanks to the Most High God!" the soldiers replied in chorus.

"Glory be to God, beloved child," cried Pan Motovidlo, who especially watched over Basia with paternal affection, and who always spoke in Russian in moments of emotion.

Basia continued, "Gentlemen, see what has happened, who could have hoped for this? It was fortunate to end thus."

"God kept watch over innocence," came the chorus through the door again.

"But Pan Zagloba more than once has laughed at me, for having more love for the sabre than the distaff. Well a distaff or a needle would have been a fine help for me, but didn't I behave like a cavalier, didn't I?"

"An angel could not have done better."

Zagloba interrupted the conversation by shutting the chamber door, as he feared too much excitement for Basia. But she was as angry as a cat with the old man, as she wanted to talk longer, and especially to receive more praises for her courage and valor. When the danger had passed and become merely a memory she was very proud of her behavior with Azya, and was very greedy of praise. More than once she turned to the little knight and pressing his breast with her finger, cried like a spoiled child:

"Praise my courage."

And he obediently praised and caressed her, kissing her eyes and hands, till Zagloba, although really greatly moved himself, feigned to be shocked and muttered:

"Ah, everything will be as indulgent as a grandfather's whip."

The general rejoicing at Khreptyov over Basia's recovery was only marred by the memory of the injury done to the Commonwealth by Azya's treason, and the terrible fate of the elder Pan Novovyevski and the Boskas and Evka. It greatly troubled Basia as well as everybody else, for what had happened in Rashkov was known in detail, not only at Khreptyov, but at Kamenets and still further. A few days before, Pan Myslishevski had called at Khreptyov, he had not lost all hope of winning the other captains over to the Polish side, in

spite of the treachery of Azya, Krychinski, and Adurovich. Pan Bogush followed Pan Myslishevski and later on, direct news came from Mohilov, Yampol and Rashkov itself.

At Mohilov, Pan Gorzenski, who was evidently abler as a soldier than an orator, had not allowed himself to be tricked. He had intercepted the instructions from Azya to the Tartars left behind, and fallen upon them with a handful of Mazovian infantry and slaughtered or taken them all prisoners. Moreover, he had sent warning to Yampol, by which means that place was saved. Soon afterwards the cavalry returned. Rashkov, therefore, was the sole sufferer. Pan Michael received a letter from Pan Byaloglovski himself, giving a report of what had happened there and other matters regarding the whole Commonwealth.

"Tis well that I returned," wrote Pan Byaloglovski, among other things, "for Novovyeyski, my subordinate, is now in no condition for duty. He is more like a skeleton than a man, and we are sure to lose a great cavalier, for he is weighed down by suffering beyond his powers of endurance. His father is slain, his sister in the extremity of shame, handed over to Adurovich by Azya, who took Panna Boska for himself. Nothing can be done for them, even if they should be successfully rescued from captivity. We know this from a Lipkov who sprained his shoulder while crossing the river, and, being captured by our men, he was put on the coals and confessed everything. Azya, son of Tukhay Bey, Krychinski, and Adurovich, have gone to Adrianople. Novovyeyski is making every effort to follow them, declaring that even from the heart of the Sultan's camp he must take Azya and have vengeance. He always was stubborn and resolute, and now it cannot be wondered at, since it concerns Panna Boska, whose sad fate we all mourn, for she was a sweet girl and I don't know whose heart she did not win. But I restrain Novovyeyski, telling him that Azya himself will come to him, for war is certain, and moreover, the Hordes will form the vanguard. We have news from Moldavia, from the Perkulabs, as well as from Turkish merchants, that forces are already gathering near Adrianople—large numbers of the Horde. The Turkish cavalry, which they call Spahis, are also mustering, and the Sultan is himself coming with the Janissaries. Sir, there will be countless swarms of them, for the whole of the East is in motion, and we have only a handful of troops. Our whole hope is in the rock of Kamenets,

which, God grant, is properly provisioned. It is Spring at Adrianople, and almost Spring with us, for heavy rains are falling and the grass is sprouting. I am going to Yampol, for Rashkov is a mere heap of ashes, and there is no place to rest one's head, nor anything to put into one's mouth. Besides, I think that we shall be withdrawn from all the commands."

The little knight had intelligence equally positive, and even more so, since it came from Khotsim. Shortly before he had forwarded it to the Hetman. Nevertheless, Byaloglovski's letter, coming from the extreme border, profoundly impressed him, because it confirmed that intelligence. But the little knight had no fears about the war; only for Basia.

The Hetman's order to withdraw the garrisons may arrive any day," he said to Zagloba, "and duty is duty. It will be necessary to move without delay, but Bashka is still in bed, and it's a bad time."

"If ten orders arrived," said Zagloba, "Bashka is the basis of everything; we will stay here till she has quite recovered. Besides, the war will not commence till the thaws are over, much less before winter is passed, more especially as they will bring heavy artillery against Kamenets."

"The old volunteer always dwells in you," the little knight impatiently answered; "you think an order may be delayed by private matters."

"Well, if an order is dearer to you than Basia, pack her into a wagon and march. I know, I know; at an order, you are ready to pitch-fork her into a wagon if she's unable to get in with her own strength. The deuce take you and such discipline! In the old days a man did what he could; and what he couldn't, he left. Kindness is on your lips, but only let them cry, 'Haida, on the Turk!' and you spit out your kindness like a kernel, and take that unfortunate woman on horseback with a rope."

"I, no pity for Bashka! fear the wounds of the Crucified!" cried the little knight.

For some time Pan Zagloba puffed with anger, and then, looking at Pan Michael's troubled face, he said:

"Michael, dear, you know that what I say is out of my true fatherly love for Bashka, otherwise, should I be sitting here under the Turkish axe instead of enjoying my ease in a safe place, which no man could take ill of me at my years. But who got Bashka for you? If it was I, then make me drink a tun of water without anything to flavor it."

"I could not repay you for Bashka in a whole lifetime," replied the little knight.

Then they embraced each other and perfect harmony again reigned between them.

The little knight said, "I have planned that you shall take Bashka to Skshetuski's, to Lukov, when war breaks out. Chambuls do not go so far as that."

"I will do that for you, though I should be delighted to go against the Turk, for nothing so disgusts me as that swinish people that does not drink wine."

"I only dread one thing, Bashka will want to be at Kame-nets so as to be near me. My flesh creeps at the thought of it, but as God is God, she will try."

"Do not allow her. Is it a little evil that has already resulted from your indulging her in everything, and letting her take that expedition to Rashkov, though I was the first to cry out against it?"

"That's not true, you said you wouldn't give any advice."

"When I say I won't advise a thing it's worse than if I had opposed it."

"Bashka ought to have got a lesson now, but she hasn't. When she sees the sword hanging above my head she will resist."

"Don't let her resist, I repeat; for God's sake! what kind of a straw husband are you?"

"I acknowledge that when she puts her knuckles to her eyes, and pretends to cry, my heart is like butter in a frying-pan. She must have administered something to me. As for sending her away, I will do so, because her safety is dearer to me than my own life, but when I think that I must pain her, my breath catches with pity."

"Dear Michael, have God in your heart! don't be led by the nose."

"Bah! don't be led! If it wasn't you that said I had no pity for her, who was it?"

"Eh?" exclaimed Zagloba.

"You are not wanting in ingenuity, but now you're scratching your ear yourself."

"Because I am trying to think what better persuasions to use."

"But if she immediately puts her little knuckles to her eyes?"

"She will, as I love God!" exclaimed Zagloba in evident alarm.

And they were both perplexed, for to tell the truth, Basia had taken the exact measure of both. During her illness they had terribly spoilt her, and they loved her so much that the necessity of opposing her wishes filled them with dread. That Basia would not make any opposition, but submissively yield to the decree, they both knew, but without mentioning Pan Michael, Zagloba would far rather have made the third of a trio in charging a whole regiment of Janissaries, than to see her putting her little knuckles up to her eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

That very day they received what they considered sure assistance in the guise of beloved and unexpected guests. Towards evening the Ketlings arrived, without any warning. There was indescribable delight and surprise at Khreptyov on their arrival, and they were equally relieved after their first inquiries to learn of Basia's convalescence. Kryisia immediately rushed to the bed-chamber, where Basia's cries and exclamations immediately assured the little knight of her happiness.

Ketling and Volodiyovski exchanged many embraces; now holding each other at arm's length and then hugging again.

"For God's sake!" cried the little knight. "I am more pleased to see you than if I had received a baton; but what are you doing in this region?"

"The Hetman has appointed me to the command of the artillery at Kamenets," Ketling replied: "and so I went there with my wife. Hearing of your troubles I set out for Khreptyov without delay. God be praised, my dear Michael, that everything has ended well! We travelled in great anxiety and uncertainty, for we did not know whether we were coming here to rejoice or to grieve."

"To rejoice, to rejoice!" cried Zagloba.

"How did it happen?" asked Ketling.

The little knight and Zagloba vied with each other in telling about it; and Ketling listened, lifting up his eyes and hands to Heaven, as he marvelled at dear Basia's courage.

After they had talked to their heart's content the little knight began to ask Ketling about himself, and he replied in detail. After their marriage they had lived on the border of Courland, and were so happy in each other that Heaven could be no better. When Ketling took Kryisia he was sure that she was a 'more than earthly' being and he had not altered his opinion as yet.

Pan Zagloba and Pan Michael, by this expression recognizing the old Ketling, who always expressed himself in such

a refined and courtly manner, again began to embrace him, and when all three had sufficiently indulged their affection the old noble asked:

"Has there come to that 'more than earthly' being any earthly trifle that kicks with its feet and tries to find the teeth in its mouth with its finger?"

"God gave us a son," said Ketling; "and now again—"

"I noticed," Zagloba interrupted. "But everything here is unchanged."

He then fixed his sound eye on the little knight whose lips quivered repeatedly.

Further conversation was interrupted by Krysia's arrival; she pointed to the door and said:

"Bashka invites you."

They all went in together and fresh greetings commenced. Ketling kissed Basia's hand and Pan Michael again kissed Krysia's and then they all looked at one another with curiosity, as people do after a long separation.

Ketling had scarcely changed at all, except that his hair was cropped close, which made him appear younger; but Krysia had greatly altered. She was not so slim as of old and her face was paler, which made the down on her lip look darker; but she still had the beautiful eyes of old with their unusually long lashes, and the old tranquil expression. But her features had lost their former marvellous delicacy. It was true that the deterioration might only be temporary, but as Pan Michael looked at her and compared her with his Bashka he could not help thinking:

"For Heaven's sake! How could I fall in love with her when the two were together? Where were my eyes?"

On the other hand Basia looked beautiful to Ketling; for she really was beautiful with her golden locks straying over her brow and her complexion, which had lost some of its glow during her illness, and had become like the leaf of a white rose. But now her little face was lit up with pleasure and her delicate nostrils were very mobile. She looked so youthful that she scarcely seemed to have reached maturity yet; and at the first glance she might have been taken for some ten years younger than Ketling's wife.

But the only effect of her beauty on the sensitive Ketling was to make him think more tenderly of his wife, for he felt some self-reproach on her account.

Both women told each other all that could be crowded

into a few moments and the whole party sat around Basia's bed and began to recall old times. But somehow the conversation halted, for in those old times there were delicate subjects,—confidential passages between Pan Michael and Kryisia; and the indifference of the little knight for the now beloved Bashka; and certain promises and desperations. The old life at Ketling's house had a charm for all, and had left pleasant memories behind; but it was inconvenient to talk about it.

Ketling soon began to speak of other matters.

"I have not yet told you that on the way we stopped with Pan Yan, who would not let us go for two weeks and gave us such entertainment that it could not be better in Heaven."

"By the love of God! How are the Skshetuskis?" cried Zagloba. "Then you found them at home!"

"We did; for he had returned from the Hetman's for a time with his three elder sons who are in the cavalry."

"I have not seen Pan Yan nor his family since your marriage," said the little knight. "He was here in the Wilderness with his three sons; but I did not chance to meet him."

"They are all very anxious to see you," said Ketling, turning to Zagloba.

"Bah! And I to see them," replied the old noble. "But it's like this: when I am here I am sad without them and if I go there I shall be sad without this weasel. . . . Such is human life; when the wind doesn't blow into one ear it does into the other. . . . But it is worst for the orphaned man, for if I had something I should not be loving a stranger."

"You would not love your own children more than us," said Basia.

Zagloba was greatly pleased to hear that and cast aside his sad thoughts and resumed his jovial mood; presently he said:

"Ah, I was an idiot there at Ketling's: I matched Kryshka and Bashka with you two, and did not think of myself. Then there was still time. . . ."

"Confess, both of you, that you would have fallen in love with me, and that either of you would have preferred me to Michael or Ketling."

"Of course we should," cried Basia.

"Halshka Skshetuska, also in her day would have preferred me. Ah! it might have been. Then I should have had a sedate woman, none of your vixens, knocking Tartar's teeth out. But is she well, there?"

"She is well, but rather worried, for their two middle boys ran away from school at Lukov to the army," answered Ketling. "Pan Yan himself is glad that the boys have such mettle; but a mother is a mother almost always."

"Have they many children?" asked Basia with a sigh.

"Twelve boys, and now the fair sex has begun," answered Ketling.

Thereupon Zagloba cried, "Ha! God's special blessing is upon that house. I have reared them all at my own breast like a pelican. . . . I must pull those middle boys' ears, for if they must run away why didn't they come to Michael? But wait, it must have been Michael and Yashek that ran away. There was such a flock of them that their own father got their names mixed up; and there was not a crow to be seen for three miles round about; the rascals had killed them all with their muskets. Bah! bah! you would have to hunt all the world over for another such woman. 'Halshka!' I used to say to her, 'the lads are getting too big for me, I must have another to sport with.' Then she would pretend to frown at me; but the time came as if it had been written down. Just think! it got to such a pitch that when the desires of any woman in the neighborhood were not blessed she borrowed a dress from Halshka and it helped her; it did, as God is dear to me. . . ."

They all greatly marvelled, and a moment's silence ensued; then suddenly the little knight's voice was heard:

"Bashka, do you hear that?"

"Michael, will you be quiet?" she replied.

But Michael would not be quiet, for cunning schemes came into his head. It occurred to him that the accomplishment of an equally important matter might be combined with that one; and so he began to talk as if to himself, carelessly, and as if it were of no special importance:

"By Heavens! It would be a good thing to pay a visit to Skshetuski and his wife; but now he won't be at home, as he is going to the Hetman; but she is sensible and is not in the habit of tempting the Lord God, and so she will remain at home. . . ."

Here he turned to Krysia.

"Spring is approaching and it will be fine weather. It is too early for Bashka now, but I might not mind a little later, as it is an obligation of friendship. Pan Zagloba would take you both there, and when all was quiet in the Autumn I would follow you. . . ."

"That is a magnificent idea," exclaimed Zagloba; "I must go anyway, for I have been ungrateful to them. Indeed, I have forgotten their existence, till I am ashamed."

"What do you say to it?" asked Pan Michael looking searchingly into Krysia's eyes.

But to his amazement she answered with her habitual calmness:

"I should be glad but I cannot, because I am going to stay with my husband at Kamenets and will not leave him under any consideration."

"For God's sake! what do I hear?" cried Pan Michael. "You will stay in the fortress, which will certainly be invested and by a foe that knows no respect? I should say not a word if the war were against some civilized foe, but this affair is with barbarians. Do you know what a captured city means, or what Turkish or Tartar captivity is? I can't believe my ears!"

"Still, it must be so," replied Krysia.

"Ketling," cried the little knight in desperation, "is this the way you allow yourself to be mastered? O man, have God in your heart!"

"We deliberated long," answered Ketling, "and this was the end of it."

"And our son is in Kamenets under the care of a lady relative of mine. Is it certain that Kamenets must be captured?"

Here Krysia raised her tranquil eyes:

"God is mightier than the Turk,—He will not betray our trust, and, since I have sworn not to leave my husband till death, my place is by his side."

The little knight was terribly confused, for he had expected something quite different from Krysia.

Basia, who had seen what Michael was driving at from the very first, now laughed knowingly. She fixed her sharp little eyes on him and said:

"Michael, do you hear?"

"Bashka, be quiet!" exclaimed the little knight in the greatest confusion.

Then he began to look despairingly at Zagloba as if expecting him to come to the rescue; but that traitor suddenly rose and said:

"We must think of refreshment since man cannot live by words alone."

And he left the room.

Pan Michael quickly followed and stopped him.

"Well, what now?" asked Zagloba.

"Well, what?"

"May the bullets strike that Ketling woman! For Heaven's sake, how can this Commonwealth help perishing when it is being run by women?"

"Can't you think out anything?"

"What can I think out for you, since you are afraid of your wife? Go to the blacksmith's and get shod;—that's what."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ketlings stayed for about three weeks. At the expiration of that period Basia tried to get up, but she was not yet able to stand upon her feet. She had recovered her health sooner than her strength, and the doctor ordered her to keep her bed till her full vigor had returned. Meanwhile Spring began. First a strong warm wind coming from the Wild Lands and the Black Sea tore apart and dissipated the veil of clouds like a garment tattered with age, and then began to collect and drive them through the sky as a shepherd-dog collects and drives a flock of sheep. The clouds, fleeing before it, frequently drenched the earth with heavy rain that fell in drops as big as berries. The thawing remains of ice and snow formed lakes on the level steppes; ribbons of water were falling from the cliffs; streams rose in the bottoms of the ravines; and all these waters were running with noise, and riot, and uproar to the Dniester as children run joyfully to their mother.

Every now and then the sun shone through the breaks in the clouds, gleaming and rejuvenated as though wet with bathing in that universal abyss.

Then vivid green blades of grass began to rise through the softened ground; the slender twigs of the trees burst into abundant buds, and the sun grew hotter. Flocks of birds appeared in the sky,—strings of cranes, wild geese, and storks; then the wind began to bring clouds of swallows; the frogs croaked in a mighty chorus in the warmed water; the little birds were in riotous song, and throughout pine-woods, forests, steppes, and ravines sounded one great cry, as if all Nature were shouting with exultation and happiness:

“Spring! U-ha! Spring!”

But for that unfortunate region Spring brought mourning instead of rejoicing; death instead of life. A few days after the Ketlings had left the little knight received the following communication from Pan Myslishevski:

“On the plain of Kauchunkaury the hordes gather daily in

increasing numbers. The Sultan has sent considerable sums to the Crimea. The Khan with a horde of fifty thousand is going to aid Doroshenko. As soon as the floods have dried up the multitude will advance by the Black Trail and the Kuchman Trail. God have mercy on the Commonwealth!"

Pan Michael sent Pyentka, his attendant, at once to the Hetman with the news.

But he himself did not hurry away from Khreptyov. In the first place, as a soldier he could not leave his post without the orders of the Hetman; and in the second, he had been engaged with the Tartars for too many years not to know that chambuls would not move so soon. The waters had not yet fallen; the grass was not long enough, and the Cossacks were still in winter-quarters. The little knight did not expect the Turks before summer; for, though they were already gathering at Adrianople, yet such immense numbers of troops and camp-followers, baggage, horses, camels, and buffaloes could only advance very slowly. The Tartars might be expected earlier,—at the end of April, or beginning of May. . . It was true that in advance of the main body, which numbered tens of thousands of warriors, detached chambuls of varying force always fell on the land, as single drops of rain precede the great torrent; but these the little knight did not fear. Not even a picked Tartar komunik could stand against the cavalry of the Commonwealth in the open field; and what could be done by bands which scattered like dust before the whirlwind at the mere report that troops were approaching?

There was time enough in every event; and even if there had not been, Pan Michael would not have greatly objected to a brush with a few chambuls in a way that would have been equally painful and memorable to them.

He was a soldier, blood and bone; a soldier by profession, and so the approach of a war roused his thirst for the blood of the foe at the same time that it calmed him.

Pan Zagloba, although in the course of a long life inured to great peril more than most men, was not so calm. . . His courage rose in sudden emergencies, and moreover he had developed it by long practice which was often involuntary, and in his day he had gained famous victories; and yet the first tidings of approaching war always excited him greatly. But now when the little knight stated his own views Zagloba was somewhat comforted and even began to challenge and threaten the whole of the East.

“When Christian nations fight with each other,” he said, “the Lord Jesus himself is grieved and all the Saints scratch their heads, as it often happens that when the master is anxious so is the entire household; but he who beats the Turk cannot give Heaven sorrow. I have it from a certain spiritual personage that the Saints simply grow sick at the sight of those dogs; and therefore they get no good from their spiritual food and drink, and even their eternal happiness is ruined.”

“That really must be so,” replied the little knight. “But the power of the Turk is tremendous, and our troops might be contained in the palm of your hand.”

“But they will not conquer the entire Commonwealth. Was the power of Carolus Gustavus small? In those days we were at war with the Northerners, and the Cossacks, and Rakotsi, and the Elector; but where are they to-day? Besides, we carried fire and sword to their own hearths.”

“That is true. Personally I should have no fear of this war, because, as I have said, I must perform something noteworthy to repay the Lord Jesus and the Most Holy Virgin for their mercy to Baska; God only grant me the opportunity! . . . But the question for me is this country, which may easily fall into Infidel hands if only for a time. Imagine what a desecration of God’s churches there would be and what oppression of Christian folk!”

“Don’t talk to me of the Cossacks! The villains! They raised their hands against the Mother and now let them get what they wanted. The most important thing is that Kamenets should make a successful resistance. What do you think, Michael, will it do so?”

“I think that the General of Podolia has not properly provisioned it, and also that the inhabitants, secure in their position, have not done all they ought. Ketling said that the regiments of Bishop Trebitski came in very small numbers. But, by God, we held out at Zbraj behind a mere miserable trench against as great a force, and so we ought to hold out this time, for that Kamenets is an eagle’s nest. . . .”

“An eagle’s nest in truth; but we don’t know whether an eagle like Prince Vishnyovetski is in it or merely a crow. Do you know the General of Podolia?”

“He is an able man and a good soldier, but somewhat careless.”

“I know, I am acquainted with him! More than once I have reproached him with it; at one time the Pototskis wanted

me to accompany him abroad for his education, so that he might learn good manners from me. But I replied: 'I won't go because of his carelessness, for he never has two tags to his boot; he was presented at Court in my boots, and saffian is dear.' Afterwards, in the days of Maria Ludovika, he wore the French costume; but his stockings were always down showing his bare calves. He will never reach the height of Prince Yeremy's belt."

"Then again, the shopkeepers greatly dread a siege, for then trade is suspended. They would even prefer to belong to the Turks if only they could keep their shops open."

"The villians!" cried Zagloba.

And he and the little knight were greatly troubled about the approaching fate of Kamenets; it was a matter that personally affected Basia, who, in case of capitulation, would have to share the fate of the rest of the inhabitants.

Presently Zagloba struck his forehead:

"For God's sake, why are we fretting? Why should we go to that mangy Kamenets and shut ourselves up there? Isn't it better for you to remain by the Hetman's side and serve against the enemy in the field? And in that case Basia would not accompany you to the squadron and would have to go to some other place than Kamenets,—somewhere a long way off, to Skshetuski's house, for example. Michael, God looks into my heart and sees how I long to go against the Infidels; but I will do this for you and Basia,—I will take her away."

"I thank you. This is how the case stands: If I were not forced to be in Kamenets, Basia would not insist; but what is to be done when the Hetman's orders arrive?"

"What is to be done when the orders arrive? May the devil tear up all orders! What is to be done? Wait! I have a sudden idea. Here it is: we must anticipate the orders."

"How is that?"

"Write at once to Pan Sobieski as if sending intelligence, and end by saying that at the prospect of the approaching war you want to be beside him and fight in the open on account of the love you bear him. By God's wounds, that's a splendid idea! For, in the first place, they cannot possibly shut up such a warrior as you behind a wall instead of making use of you; and in the second, the Hetman will love you the more for the letter and will want to have you near him. He will need trusty soldiers also. . . Only listen: if Kamenets holds out the General of Podolia will get the glory; but what you

accomplish in the field will redound to the fame of the Hetman. Never fear! the Hetman will not give you up to the General. He would rather let him have some one else; but he will not give up either you or me. Write the letter and recall yourself to his memory. Aha! my wits are still worth something: too good yet to let hens peck them on the dust-heap! Michael, let's have something to drink on it,—or rather, write the letter first."

Pan Michael was indeed overjoyed; he embraced Zagloba, and, after a few moments' reflection said:

"And by this I shall not deceive the Hetman, nor the Lord God, nor the country; for I shall certainly accomplish a great deal in the field. I thank you with all my heart! I also think that the Hetman will want to have me at hand, especially after the letter. But do you know what I will do so as not to desert Kamenets? I'll fit out a few infantry at my own charge and send them to Kamenets; I'll write to the Hetman about it at once."

"Better still! But, Michael, where will you find the men?"

"I have about forty marauders and prisoners in the cellars and I'll take them. Whenever I ordered any of them to be hanged Basia importuned me to let them off; and more than once she has advised me to make soldiers of these marauders. I was not willing because an example was needed, but now war is on our necks, and everything is admissible. They are terrible fellows, as they have smelt powder. I will also issue a proclamation that whoever will join the regiment from the woods and ravines shall receive pardon for former robberies. There will be about a hundred men. . . Basia also will be pleased. You have lifted a great weight from my heart."

The same day the little knight despatched a fresh messenger to the Hetman and issued a proclamation of life and pardon to whatever robbers should join the infantry. They gladly joined and promised to bring in others. Basia was highly delighted. Tailors were brought from Ushytsa and Kamenets and wherever they could be procured to make uniforms. Pan Michael was happy at the thought of serving against the foe in the field and not exposing his wife to the perils of a siege, in addition to rendering considerable service to Kamenets and the country.

This work had been proceeding for some weeks when one evening the messenger returned with a letter from Pan Hetman Sobieski.

The Hetman wrote as follows:

“Greatly beloved Volodiyovski: I am grateful to you and the fatherland owes you thanks for sending tidings so diligently. War is certain. I have news also from another quarter that there is an immense force in Kauchunkaury; there will be three hundred thousand including the Horde. The Horde may march at any moment. The Sultan sets more store on Kamenets than anything else. The Lipkovs will show the Turks every road and give them all information regarding Kamenets. I hope that God will give that serpent, the son of Tukhay Bey, into your hands, or into those of Novovyeyiski, for whose wrongs I sincerely grieve. As to your being by my side, God knows how glad I should be, but it is impossible. The General has shown me many kindnesses since the election and I therefore wish to send him the best soldiers, for the rock of Kamenets is to me as the pupil of my eye. Many will be there who have seen war once or twice in their lives and are therefore like men who have once or twice eaten of some strange dish and remember it all their lives afterwards; but there will be lacking a man who has had it for his daily bread and whose experienced advice will be useful, or if there is such a man he will not have sufficient weight. I will therefore send you. Although Ketling is a good soldier he is not so well known; the inhabitants will have their eyes fixed on you, and though another will have the command I think that men will readily obey you. This duty at Kamenets may prove dangerous, but we are accustomed to be drenched with the rain from which others hide. Glory and grateful remembrance is a sufficient reward for us, but the principal consideration is the country, to the rescue of which I need not excite you.”

This letter, read to the assembled officers, made a great impression; for they all wanted to serve in the field rather than in a fortress. Pan Michael bowed his head.

“What do you think now, Michael?” asked Zagloba.

He raised his face that was composed already, and answered in accents as calm as if his hopes had not met with any disappointment:

“I will go to Kamenets. What should I think?”

And it might have been supposed that he had never had an idea of doing anything else.

Presently his lips quivered and he said:

“Ah, dear comrades, we will go to Kamenets, but we will die before we give it up.”

"We will fall there first," repeated the officers. "Death comes only once to a man."

For some time Zagloba was silent; then glancing around on the company and seeing that everybody was waiting for him to say something, he suddenly drew a long breath and cried:

"I will go with you. The Devil take it!"

CHAPTER IX.

When the earth had dried and the grass was growing, the Khan in person with fifty thousand of the Crimean and As-trachan hordes advanced to the aid of Dorosh and the rebel Cossacks. The Khan himself, the petty sultans, his relatives, and all the more considerable murzas and beys wore kaftans presented to them by the Padishah and went to fight the Commonwealth, not as they usually did for spoil and captives, but for a holy war ordered by fate for the destruction of Poland and Christianity.

A second and still greater tempest was gathering at Adri-anople, and against this deluge the rock of Kamenets only held its head erect, for the remainder of the Commonwealth lay like an open steppe, or a sick man powerless to help him-self or even stand up on his feet. The previous Swedish, Prussian, Muscovan, Cossack, and Hungarian wars, though in the end victorious, had exhausted the Commonwealth. The military confederations and the rebellion of Lubomirski of infamous memory, had exhausted it, and now it was utterly weakened by Court quarrels, the king's incapacity, the feuds of the rich, the blindness of a worthless nobility, and the peril of civil strife. In vain were the great Sobieski's warn-ings of approaching ruin, nobody would believe in war. They neglected all measures of defence; the treasury was empty and the Hetman had no troops. He could barely oppose a few thousand troops to a power against which an alliance of all the nations of Christendom could scarcely stand.

Meanwhile it was entirely different in the Orient. There everything was done according to the will of the Padishah and various nations were like a sword in the hand of one man. From the moment when the great banner of the Prophet was unfurled and the horse-tail standard set up on the gate of the seraglio and tower of the seraskierat, and the ulemas began to preach a holy war, half of Asia and the whole of Northern Africa was in a ferment. In the Spring the Padishah himself had taken his station on the plain of

Kauchunkaury and was collecting greater forces than had been seen on earth for a long time. A hundred thousand spahis and janissaries, the flower of the Turkish army were near his sacred person, and then forces began to gather from all his most distant lands and possessions. The first to arrive were those who dwelt in Europe. The legions of the mounted Beys of Bosnia came hued like the dawn and furious as lightning; the wild infantry of Albania came with their daggers; there came also Serbs who had turned Turk, and people who dwelt on the banks of the Danube, and lower beyond the Balkans, and farther still among the mountains of Greece. Each pasha led a whole army which was alone sufficient to overrun the defenceless Commonwealth. There were Moldavians, and Wallachians, and Tartars in force from the Dobrudja and Byalogrod, and some thousands of Lipkova and Cheremis, led by the terrible Azya, son of Tukhay Bey, and these were to act as guides through the unfortunate country with which they were well acquainted.

Next the general levies from Asia began to arrive. The pashas of Sivas, Broussa, Aleppo, Damascus, and Bagdad, in addition to their regular troops, led armed mobs beginning with the wild men from the cedar-covered mountains of Asia Minor and ending with the swarthy dwellers on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris. At the call of the Caliph, Arabians also rose; their burnouses covered the plains of Kauchunkaury like snow; among them also were nomads from the sandy deserts and people of the cities from Medina to Mecca. The tributary power of Egypt did not remain at home. Those who lived in populous Cairo, or in the evening gazed on the pyramids in the blaze of the sunset, or wandered among the ruins of Thebes, or dwelt in the gloomy region where the sacred Nile has its source, men, burned to the hue of soot by the sun,—all these planted their arms in the soil of Adrianople praying every evening for victory to Islam and destruction to that land which single-handed for ages had protected the rest of the world from the followers of the Prophet.

There were multitudes of armed men, hundreds of thousands of horses were neighing on the plain; hundreds of thousands of buffaloes, sheep and camels were feeding beside the herds of horses. It might have been imagined that by God's command an angel had turned mankind out of Asia as he had once turned Adam out of Paradise and ordered them to

seek lands where the sun was not so bright and in winter the steppes were covered with snow. They went therefore with their herds,—a countless swarm of white, swarthy, and black warriors. What numbers of tongues were heard there, what a number of various costumes glittered in the Spring sun! Nation marvelled at nation; to some the customs of others were entirely foreign, their weapons unknown, their ways of warfare different, and a common faith was the sole bond between these nomads; only when the muezzins called to prayer did these many-tongued hosts turn their faces towards the East and call upon Allah with one voice.

The Sultan's court had more servants than the Commonwealth had troops. Behind the army and armed bodies of volunteers came crowds of traders selling all kinds of merchandise; their wagons, together with those of the host, flowed along like a mighty river.

Two pashas of three tails commanding two armies had to supply these swarms of people with food as their sole task; and there was plenty of everything. The sandjak Sangrytan looked after the entire supply of powder. Two hundred cannon accompanied the army, and ten of these were siege-guns of such size that no Christian king possessed the like. The Beglerbeys of Asia occupied the right wing and the Europeans the left. The tents took up so much ground that Adrianople seemed a small city in comparison. The Sultan's tents, brilliant with purple, silken cords, satin, and gold embroidery formed a kind of city by itself. In their midst thronged armed guards; black Abyssinian eunuchs in yellow and blue kaftans; gigantic porters from the tribes of Kurdistan to carry burdens; Uzbek youths, with faces of exceeding beauty shaded by silken fringes; and many other servants with colors as mottled and variegated as the flowers on the steppes. Some acted as equerries, some served at table, some carried lamps, and others occupied the most important offices at court.

On the great square around the Sultan's court, which in its luxury and splendor reminded the faithful of the promised Paradise, were other courts, not so sumptuous but still equal to those of kings,—the courts of the vizier, the ulemas, the pasha of Anatolia, and of the young kaimakan Black Mustafa, upon whom the eyes of the Sultan and all were turned as the coming "Sun of War."

In front of the pavillions of the Padishah were to be seen

the sacred infantry guard with such high turbans that they made their wearers look like giants. They were armed with javelins attached to long staffs, and with short crooked swords. Their linen tents adjoined the abode of the Sultan. Further away were the camps of the formidable janissaries, armed with muskets and lances, and forming the kernel of the Turkish army. Neither the Emperor of Germany nor the King of France could boast of infantry of such numbers and military dexterity. In wars against the Commonwealth the Sultan's people were generally weaker and could not measure their strength with an equal force of cavalry and only crushed and conquered with their immense superiority of numbers. But the janissaries even dared to stand against regular squadrons. They excited terror throughout Christendom,—even in Tsarograd itself. Often the Sultan himself trembled before such pretorians, and the chief aga of these 'lambs' was one of the most important dignitaries in the Divan.

Next to the janissaries came the spahis, and then the regular troops of the pashas, and lastly the common crowd. For some months this whole camp had lain near Constantinople waiting till its force should be completed by legions from the remotest parts of the Turkish dominions and till the Spring sun should facilitate the march to Poland by sucking up the moisture from the earth.

The sun had shone brightly as though subject to the Sultan's will. From the beginning of April until May scarcely even a few warm showers had moistened the fields of Kaucunkaury; for the rest, God's blue pavilion hung cloudless above the Sultan's tent. The brightness of day shone on the white linen and turbans and many-colored caps and on the points of the helmets and standards and javelins, on the camp and tents and people and herds, flooding all.

In a clear sky in the evening the moon shone unclouded by mist and quietly watching over the thousands who were marching to conquer more and new lands under its emblem; then it rose higher in the sky and paled before the light of the fires. But when the fires blazed throughout the great plain, and the Arab infantry from Damascus and Aleppo, called 'massala djilari,' lit the green, red, yellow, and blue lamps at the tents of the Sultan and Vizir, it looked as though a portion of the sky had fallen to the earth and that they were stars sparkling and twinkling on the plain.

The most perfect order and discipline reigned among those hosts. The pashas bowed to the will of the Sultan like a reed to the storm, and the army bowed before them. There was no lack of food for man and beast. Everything was served in the utmost plenty at the proper season. In the most perfect order also were spent the hours of military practice, pastime, and devotion. When the muezzins summoned to prayer from the hastily-built wooden structures, the whole army turned their faces to the East. every man spread a skin or mat before him, and the entire host fell upon its knees like one man. At the sight of that order and restraint their hearts rose in triumph and their souls were filled with the sure hope of triumph.

The Sultan arrived at the camp at the end of April, but did not begin the march immediately. He waited more than a month to allow the waters to dry up and employed the interval in training the host to camp life, in organization and exercises and receiving ambassadors and dispensing justice under a purple baldaquin. His principal wife, the kasseka, accompanied him on this expedition, and with her also went a court as marvellous as a dream of Paradise.

The lady was borne in a gilded chariot with a canopy of purple taffeta and it was followed by other cars and white Syrian camels carrying packs and also covered with purple. Houris and bayaderas sang songs along the way. When she was weary from travel and closed her silken lashes, immediately the sweet strains of soft music arose and lulled her to sleep. During the heat of the day fans of peacock and ostrich feathers waved above her, and before her tent priceless perfumes of the East were burned in Indian bowls. She was surrounded by all the treasures, luxuries, and riches that could be supplied by the Orient and the Sultan's power; —houris, bayaderes, black eunuchs, pages beautiful as angels, Syrian camels, horses from the Arabian desert; in short her whole train glittered with brocade and sumptuous stuffs and gleamed like a rainbow with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires. Nations fell upon their faces before it, not daring to gaze upon that countenance which the Padishah alone had the right to see; and that train seemed to be either a supernatural vision or else a reality transferred from the realm of visions and illusive dreams by Allah himself.

But the sun warmed the earth more and more till at length the hot days arrived. Therefore one evening the banner

was raised on a tall pole in front of the Sultan's tent and a cannon-shot announced the march to Poland to the army and people. The great sacred benben sounded and then all the others were beaten; the shrill tones of the pipes were heard, the pious, half-nude dervishes began to howl, and the stream of people moved forward in the night to escape the sun's heat during the day. But the army itself was not to start till some hours after the first notice. First of all went the vanguard, and then the pashas who supplied the troops with food, and then whole legions of laborers to pitch tents; then came herds of pack-animals, and then the herds to be slaughtered. The march was to be one of six hours on that and all following nights, and was to keep such order that when the soldiers halted they should always be assured of food and a resting-place made ready.

At last, when the moment arrived for the soldiers to advance, the Sultan rode out to an eminence to view his whole force and delight in the sight. With him were his vizir, the ulemas, the young kaimakan, Black Mustafa, the Rising Sun of War, and a guard of his infantry. It was a tranquil and bright night, clear with bright moonlight, so that the Sultan might have seen all his legions had it not been that no single human vision could have grasped them all at once, for when they were marching, though closely arrayed, they extended several miles.

Yet his heart rejoiced and, running his sandal-wood scented beads through his fingers, he raised his eyes to Heaven and gave thanks to Allah who had made him lord over so many armies and so many lands. Suddenly when the head of the vanguard had almost disappeared he suspended his prayer and turned to the young kaimakan, Black Mustafa, saying:

"I have forgotten, who form the vanguard?"

"Light of Paradise!" replied Black Mustafa, "in the vanguard are the Lipkovs and the Cheremis; and the dog Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, is leading them."

CHAPTER X.

Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, was indeed marching with his men at the head of the whole Turkish force towards the border of the Commonwealth after the long wait on the plain of Kauchunkaury.

After the terrible blow that he had received in his plans and person from Basia's dexterous hand, a happy star now seemed to shine on him afresh. In the first place he had recovered his health. His comeliness it is true was for ever destroyed; one eye had entirely flowed away, his nose was mashed and his face, which was once like that of a falcon, had become monstrous and horrible. But that very terror with which it inspired people gained greater consideration for him among the Dobrudja Tartars. His presence made a great stir in the whole camp; his deeds grew in the tales people told of him and assumed gigantic proportions. It was said that he had brought all the Lipkov and Cheremi Tartars into the service of the Sultan; that he had got the best of the Poles as nobody else had ever done; that he had burned all the towns along the Dniester and slaughtered their garrisons and taken important booty. Those who were now marching to Poland for the first time, those who had come from far regions of the East and had not yet tried the Polish arms, those whose hearts quaked at the thought of soon standing face to face with the terrible cavalry of the unbelievers, saw in the young Azya a warrior who had already shown his brow to the Poles and was not afraid of them and above all had made a fortunate beginning of war. The sight of the 'bagadir' immediately filled their souls with comfort; moreover Azya was the son of that terrible Tukhay Bey whose name had reverberated through the whole of the East; and so all eyes turned on him the more.

"The Poles brought him up," they said, "but he is the son of a lion; he bit them, and returned to the service of the Padishah."

The vizir himself wanted to see him, and the "Rising Sun

of War," the young kaimakan, Black Mustafa, who delighted in military glory and wild warriors, loved him. Both of them made close inquiry regarding the Commonwealth, the Hetman, the armies, and Kamenets, and were happy at his answers, for they saw that the war would be easy: victory to the Sultan, defeat to the Poles and the title of Ghazi (conqueror) to both. Therefore Azya would have frequently opportunities to fall on his face before the vizir and to sit at the entrance of the kaimakan's tent and receive from both many gifts of camels, horses, and weapons.

The grand vizir presented him with a kaftan of silver brocade, the possession of which elevated him in the eyes of the Lipkov and Cheremi Tartars. Krychinski, Adurovich, Moravski, Grokholski, Tarasovski, Aleksandrovich,—in short all the leaders who had once lived in the Commonwealth and served it, but had now gone over to the Sultan,—unquestioningly placed themselves under the command of the son of Tukhay Bey, honoring him both as a prince by birth and a warrior who had received a kaftan. He therefore became a powerful murza and more than two thousand warriors, who were far superior to the average Tartars, obeyed his nod. The coming war, in which it would be easier for the young murza than anyone else to distinguish himself, might carry him high: in it he might find high dignity, glory, and power.

But yet there was poison in Azya's soul. In the first place, his pride was hurt that the Tartars in the presence of the Turks, and especially of the janissaries and spahis, were of little more importance than dogs in comparison with hunters. He himself was of importance, but the Tartars generally were regarded as worthless horsemen. The Turk made use of them and sometimes he feared them; but in the camp he despised them. When Azya saw this he kept his men apart from the general mass of Tartars as if they were a distinct and better kind of army, but by so doing he immediately excited the resentment of the Dobrudja and Byalogrod murzas, and did not succeed in convincing the Turkish officers that the Lipkovs were in reality any better than the chambuls of the Horde. On the other hand, as he had been brought up in a Christian land among nobles and knights, he could not readily accustom himself to Oriental customs. In the Commonwealth he had only been an ordinary officer in the lowest arm of the service; but yet, when he had come in contact with his superiors, and even the Hetman, he had not been forced

to humble himself as here where he was a *murza* and the leader of all the bodies of Lipkov Tartars. Here he had to prostrate himself before the vizir; he had to bow his forehead to the earth in the friendly tent of the *kaimakan*; he had to bow down before the pashas, the ulemas, the chief Aga of the janissaries. *Azya* was not accustomed to this. He remembered that he was the son of a hero; he had a wild and haughty spirit, aiming high as eagles aim, and therefore he suffered grievously.

But the memory of *Basia* burned him with the fiercest fire. He did not care that one feeble hand should have dashed from his horse him, who, at *Bratslav*, at *Kalnik*, and a hundred other places, had challenged to the combat and extended in death the most terrible raiders of the *Zaporoj*; and he cared less for the shame and humiliation. But he loved that woman beyond all bounds; he wanted her in his tent, to gaze upon her, to beat her and to kiss her. If he had the choice between being the *Padishah* and ruling half the world, or taking her in his arms and feeling the heat of her blood on his heart, her breath on his face, and her lips on his, he would rather have her than *Tsarogrod*, the *Bosphorus*, or the title of *Khalif*. He wanted her because he both loved and hated her. The farther removed she was from him, the more he wanted her; the more pure, faithful, and unspotted she was, the more he wanted her. On more than one occasion in his tent when he remembered how that once in his life he had kissed those eyes in the gulley after the fight with *Azba Bey*, and that he had felt her breast against his at *Rashkov*, he was carried away by the madness of desire. He knew not what had become of her, nor if she had perished on the road. Sometimes he was comforted by the thought that she had died and sometimes deep grief took hold of him. There were moments when he thought: "It would have been better not to have carried her off, burned *Rashkov*, and come here; but to have stayed at *Khreptyov* with the *Lipkovs*, if only to look at her."

But the unfortunate *Zosia Boska* was in his tent. Her days were passed in slavery, in shame, and in constant terror; for there was not a grain of pity for her in *Azya's* heart. He tortured her simply because she was not *Basia*. Nevertheless she possessed the charm and sweetness of a wild-flower; she possessed youth and beauty and therefore he sated himself with that beauty, but he kicked her on the slightest provocation and flogged her white body with rods. She could not

live in a worse hell, for she lived without hope. Life had begun to blossom for her in Rashkov,—to blossom like Spring, with the flower of love for Novovyeyski. She loved him with her whole soul; with every faculty she loved that knightly, noble and honest nature; and now she was the plaything and captive of this one-eyed monster. She had to crawl to his feet and cower like a beaten dog, gaze into his face, and watch his hands to see if they were about to seize a rod or whip: she had to repress her sighs and tears.

She well knew that there was and could be no mercy for her; for even if a miracle were to wrest her from those terrible hands, she was no longer the old Zosia, white as the first snows, and able to give love for love with an unsullied heart. All that had gone never to return. But because the horrible degradation of her present life was not the consequence of the slightest fault of her own;—far from it;—she had hitherto been a maiden stainless as a lamb, innocent as a dove, and trusting as a child, simple and loving,—therefore she could not understand why such awful injustice should be visited upon her, an injustice for which no recompence could be made; or why God's inexorable wrath lay so heavy upon her; and this distraction of her soul increased her agony and despair.

Thus passed days, weeks, and months. It was winter when Azya came to the plain of Kauchunkaury, and the march to the borders of the Commonwealth did not begin till June. The whole of this time for Zosia was one of shame, toil, and anguish. For notwithstanding all her beauty and sweetness, and although he kept her in his tent, Azya not only did not love her, but on the contrary he hated her because she was not Basia. He regarded her as a common captive and made her work like one. She watered his horses and camels at the river, carried water for his ablutions and wood for the fire; she spread the skins for his bed and cooked his food. In other divisions of the Turkish army women did not leave the tents for fear of the janissaries and from custom; but the camp of the Lipkov Tartars stood apart by itself and the custom of keeping their women in concealment was not common with them, as they had become used to other ways while living in the Commonwealth. What captives belonged to the common soldiers did not even cover their faces with yashmaks. It is true that the women were not allowed to go outside the Lipkov square, for beyond the bounds they would have cer-

tainly been carried off; but they could go everywhere in the square itself about their domestic occupations in safety.

Notwithstanding the heavy labor, Zosia found a certain relief in going for wood, or down to the river to water the horses and camels; for she was afraid to weep in the tent, and she could give free course to her tears with impunity along the way. On one occasion while carrying an armful of wood she met her mother, whom Azya had given to Halim. They fell into each other's arms and it was necessary to tear them apart; and though Azya afterwards flogged Zosia with rods, not even sparing her head, still the meeting was sweet to her. On another occasion, while washing linen for Azya at the ford, Zosia saw Evka in the distance carrying pails of water. Evka was groaning under their weight; her figure had greatly altered and become heavier, but her features, although shaded by the yaskmak, reminded Zosia of Adam, and her heart was seized with such anguish that she felt a passing faintness. However, they were afraid to speak to each other.

This fear gradually numbed and overcame every other feeling in Zosia, till at last it supplanted all her desires, hopes, and memories. Not to be beaten had become her chief aim. In her place Basia would have slain Azya with his own knife on the first day without any thought of the consequences; but the timid Zosia who was still half a child and did not possess Basia's courage. At last she even came to regard it as tenderness if the terrible Azya under the impulse of momentary desire approached her lips with his deformed face. Sitting in the tent she kept her eyes fixed on her master in the effort to divine whether or not he was angry, following his movements, and trying to anticipate his wishes.

When she foresaw trouble and when his teeth began to gleam beneath his moustache like the old Tukhay Bey, she crawled to his feet half dead with terror and pressed her pale lips to his boots, and embraced his knees convulsively, crying like a child in distress:

"Don't beat me, Azya! don't beat me!"

He scarcely ever spared her; he gloated over her, not only because she was not Basia, but also because she had been Novovyey'ski's betrothed. Azya had a fearless spirit, but so awful were the accounts to be settled between him and Pan Adam that at the thought of that giant with hellish vengeance hardened in his heart, the young Lipkov was seized with a certain uneasiness. There was to be war; they might meet;

indeed, it was probable that they would. Azya could not help thinking of this, and because the sight of Zosia prompted the thoughts, he revenged himself upon her as if trying to banish his own dread with the strokes of rods.

At length came the time when the Sultan gave the order to march. Azya's Lipkovs were to form the vanguard followed by the whole swarm of Dobrudja and Novogorod Tartars. That had been arranged between the Sultan, the vizir, and the kaimakan. But at first all went to the Balkans together. The march was pleasant, for, on account of the increasing heat, they marched only at night, with six hours between the halts. Tar-barrels were lighted along the way and the massaldjirals illuminated the road for the Sultan with colored lights. The swarms of people flowed on like waves over limitless plains, filled the hollows of the valleys like locusts, and covered the mountains. The armed men were followed by the camp-followers with the harems and then came innumerable herds.

But in the marshes at the foot of the Balkans the gilded and purple car of the kasseka was so deeply bogged that twenty buffaloes were unable to extricate it from the mud. "That is an evil omen for thee and the whole army, Lord," said the chief mufti to the Sultan. "An evil omen!" repeated the half-crazed dervishes in the camp. The Sultan was alarmed and decided to send away all the women with the wondrous kasseka.

The order was announced to the hosts. Those soldiers who had nowhere to send their slaves, and loved them too well to sell them to strangers, preferred to kill them. Thousands of others were bought by the merchants of the caravanserai to be afterwards sold in the markets of Stambul and all the towns of Hither Asia. A sort of great fair lasted for three successive days. Azya unhesitatingly offered Zosia for sale: a wealthy old merchant of Stambul bought her for a great price for his son.

He was a good-natured man, for at Zosia's tears and entreaties he purchased her mother from Halim; it is true that he got her dirt-cheap. The following day they both set out for Stambul in line with the other women. In Stambul Zosia's lot was improved, though her degradation still endured. Her new owner loved her and in a few months raised her to the dignity of a wife. Thenceforth her mother was not separated from her.

Many people among whom were many women returned to their native land after a long captivity. Moreover somebody, by every possible means, by the medium of Armenian and Greek merchants and the servants of the ambassadors of the Commonwealth, had search made for Zosia, but without result. Then this search suddenly ceased and Zosia never again saw her country, nor the faces of her dear ones.

She lived till her death in a harem.

CHAPTER XI.

Even before the Turks had moved from Adrianople there was a beginning of great commotion in all the stanitsas¹ along the Dniester. Especially to Khreptyov, the nearest stanitsa to Kamenets, the Hetman's couriers were continually hurrying with various orders; if they concerned him, the little knight executed them himself, and if not he forwarded them by trusty agents. The result of these orders was considerably to weaken the garrison of Khreptyov. Pan Motovidlo with his Semenovs went to Uman to aid Hanenko who, with a handful of Cossacks faithful to the Commonwealth, was doing his best against Doroshenko and the Crimean horde which had joined him. Pan Mushalski the matchless archer, Pan Snitko of the Hidden Moon escutcheon, Pan Nyenashinyets, and Pan Hromyka led a squadron, together Linkhaus's dragoons, to Batoch of unhappy memory, where Pan Lujetski was posted to watch Doroshenko's movements with the assistance of Hanenko; Pan Bogush was commanded to stay at Mohilov till chambuls were visible with the naked eye. The Hetman's instructions were eagerly seeking the famous Pan Rushchyts, who as a warrior was alone surpassed by Volodiyovski; but Pan Rushchyts had gone to the steppes at the head of a few dozen men and disappeared as a drop fallen in water. They did not hear of him till later, when strange rumors spread that around Doroshenko's camp and about the detachments of the horde a sort of evil spirit was hovering, daily cutting off single warriors and small bodies. It was suspected that this must be Pan Rushchyts who ventured so near the enemy, for no other would strike in that way except the little knight. In fact it was Pan Rushchyts.

As already decided, Volodiyovski had to go to Kamenets; the Hetman needed him there, for he knew him to be a soldier the sight of whom would pour comfort into all hearts, while it would give an impetus to the inhabitants and the garrison. The Hetman was convinced that Kamenets could not hold

¹ Stanitsa means military post.

out; his only object was that it should do so as long as possible, so as to enable the Commonwealth to collect forces for its defence. With this conviction he sent his beloved soldiers and the most famous cavalier of the Commonwealth to what seemed certain death.

He sent the most famous warrior to death without compunction. The Hetman always thought what he said later in Vienna that Pani Woynina might give birth to people, but that Woyna only killed them.¹ He himself was ready to die. He believed that to die in battle was the chief duty of a soldier and that, when a soldier could render great service by dying, death was a great favor and reward to him. The Hetman also knew that the little knight agreed with him.

Moreover he had no time to think of sparing single soldiers when destruction was approaching churches, towns, the country, and the entire Commonwealth; when in unheard of multitudes the Orient was rising against Europe to conquer the whole of Christendom, which, shielded by the breast of the Commonwealth, had no thought of rendering assistance to it. The Hetman's sole object was that Kamenets should protect the Commonwealth, and then the Commonwealth the rest of Christendom.

This might have been if the Commonwealth had been strong and not destroyed by disorder. But the Hetman had not even sufficient forces for reconnaissances, much less for war. If he hurried some dozens of soldiers to one spot it left another without any, where an invading wave might pour through without hindrance. The night-sentries posted by the Sultan in his camp were more numerous than all the Hetman's squadrons. The invasion was advancing in two directions,—from the Dnieper and Danube. The chief squadrons had gone against Doroshenko because he was the nearer with the whole Crimean horde and had already overrun the country with fire and sword; in the other direction even simple scouts were lacking.

In such dire extremity the Hetman wrote the few following words to Pan Michael:

“I have already considered whether or no to send you to face the foe at Rashkov, but I feared lest the horde should cross by seven fords from the Moldavian bank and occupy the country and you would not be able to reach Kamenets, where

¹ A pun on the word ‘Woyna,’ war. Woynina is the feminine of woyna; thus what lady Woynina produces Woyna destroys.

you are absolutely needed. Only yesterday I remembered Novovyeyski, who is an experienced and daring soldier, and I think he will render me effective service, because a despairing man will undertake anything. Send him whatever light cavalry you can spare; let him advance as far as possible and show himself everywhere and spread reports of our great army when he comes in presence of the enemy; let him suddenly appear in various places and avoid being captured. We know how they will come; but if he observes anything fresh he is to send you word at once and you will despatch a messenger without delay to me and to Kamenets. Let Novovyeyski move quickly and you yourself be ready to go to Kamenets, but stay where you are until you receive tidings from Novovyeyski in Moldavia."

As Pan Adam was then at Mohilov, and as it was said that he was coming to Khreptyov in any case, the little knight merely sent word to him to hasten because a commission from the Hetman was awaiting him in Khreptyov.

Pan Adam arrived three days later. His acquaintances scarcely recognized him and they thought that Pan Byalglovski had good reason to call him a skeleton. He was no longer that fine fellow, joyous and high-spirited, who of old used to dash at the foe with bursts of laughter like the neighing of a horse, striking with the sweep of the sails of a windmill. He had grown thin, yellow and black, but his thinness made him look still more of a giant. When he looked at people he blinked as if he did not recognize his most intimate acquaintances; moreover, the same thing had to be repeated twice or thrice to him, as at first he did not understand. It seemed as if grief was flowing in his veins instead of blood; he was evidently trying not to think of certain matters, preferring to forget them in order not to lose his reason.

It is true that in those parts there was not a man, nor a family, nor a single army-officer who was not grieving for some acquaintance, or friend, or near and dear one, or who had not suffered some injury from Infidel hands; but simply a whole cloud of calamity had burst upon Novovyeyski. In one day he had lost father, sister, as well as his betrothed, whom he loved with all the might of his exuberant soul. He would far rather that his sister and that beloved sweet girl had both died, or that they had perished by the knife or flames. But such was their fate that the greatest torments were nothing in comparison when Novovyeyski thought of

them. He tried not to dwell upon their fate, as he felt that the thought of it bordered on madness; but without success.

His calmness was only assumed. In his soul there was not the slightest resignation, and at the first glance everybody could tell that beneath his torpor was something ominous and dreadful, and if it broke out this giant would do some awful deed, like a destroying element. This seemed to be plainly written on his brow, so that even his friends approached with some timidity, and when they talked with him they did not refer to past happenings.

The sight of Basia at Khreptyov reopened his closed wounds, for as he kissed her hands in greeting he began to groan like an aurochs when mortally wounded, his eyes grew bloodshot, and the veins in his neck swelled like cords. When the tearful Basia pressed his head with her little hands with the affection of a mother he fell at her feet and was not able to rise for some time. But when he learned what sort of duty the Hetman had given him he livened up greatly; a gleam of ominous joy illumined his face and he said:

"I will do that; I will do more!"

"And if you meet that mad dog, flay him," cried Zagloba.

Novovyeyski made no immediate reply, but only looked at Zagloba; his eyes flashed with sudden madness, he rose and sprang towards the old noble as if he wanted to fall upon him.

"Do you believe," he cried, "that I have never done ill to that man, and that I have always been kind to him?"

"I believe it, I believe it!" said Zagloba as he hastily got behind the little knight. "I would accompany you myself, but the gout gnaws my feet."

"Novovyeyski," asked the little knight, "when do you want to start?"

"To-night."

"I will give you a hundred dragoons. I will remain here with another hundred and the infantry. Go to the square!"

They went out to issue orders. Zydor Lusnia was waiting on the threshold as straight as a string. The news of the expedition had already spread through the square and the sergeant in the name of himself and his company had come to beg the little colonel to let him accompany Pan Adam.

"How is this? Do you want to leave me?" asked the astonished Pan Michael.

"Pan Commandant, we have made a vow against that son of a burned father, and perhaps he may fall into our hands."

"True! Pan Zagloba told me about it," answered the little knight.

Lusnia turned to Novovyeyski:

"Pan Commandant!"

"What do you want?"

"If we catch him may I take care of him?"

"Such ferocious animal venom was painted on the features of the Mazure that Novovyeyski immediately bent down to Pan Michael and entreated:

"Your lordship, let me have this man!"

Volodiyovski did not think of refusing, and the same evening about dusk a hundred horsemen set out on the journey with Novovyeyski at their head.

They took the usual road through Mohilov and Yampol. In Yampol they met the former garrison of Rashkov, two hundred men of which joined Novovyeyski by the Hetman's orders; the remainder, under the command of Pan Byaloglovski, were to proceed to Mohilov where Pan Bogush was stationed.

Pan Adam moved down towards Rashkov.

The neighborhood of Rashkov was a complete waste: the town itself had been reduced to a heap of ashes, which the winds had been able to blow to the four points of the compass; its few remaining inhabitants had fled before the expected storm. It was already the beginning of May and the Dobrudja horde might appear at any moment, so that it was dangerous to stay in that region. In fact the hordes were with the Turks on the plain of Kauchunkaury, but at Rashkov they did not know that, and so every one of the inhabitants who had escaped the late massacre carried his head away in good season whithersoever it appeared best to him.

Along the way Lusnia was forming plans and strategems that he thought Novovyeyski ought to adopt if he really wanted to succeed in outwitting the foe. He graciously unfolded these ideas to the ranks.

"You horse-skulls don't know anything about the matter," he said to them, "you are not acquainted with it, but I am old myself, and I know. We shall go to Rashkov and hide there and wait. The horde will come to the ford and small bodies will cross first as their custom is, because the chambul halts and waits till they report whether it is safe or not; then we shall steal out and drive them before us to Kamenets."

"But we may not catch that dog-brother that way," remarked one of the troopers.

"Shut your mouth!" cried Lusnia. "Who will march in the vanguard if not the Lipkov Tartars?"

In fact the foresight of the sergeant seemed to be justified. When Novovyeyski reached Rashkov he let his men rest. They all felt sure that they would go next to the caves, many of which were in the vicinity, and hide there till the first bodies of the raiders appeared.

But on the second day the commander roused his squadron and led it beyond Rashkov.

"Are we going to Yahorlik, or what?" the sergeant asked himself.

Meanwhile they neared the river just beyond Rashkov, and a few Paters later they halted at the so-called Bloody Ford. Without uttering a word Pan Adam spurred his horse into the water and began to cross to the opposite bank. The soldiers began to gaze at one another in astonishment.

"How is this, are we going to the Turks?" But there were not 'fine gentlemen' of the general militia, ready to call a meeting and protest; they were simply soldiers used to the iron discipline of the military posts, and so the men in the first rank urged their horses into the water after their leader and those of the second and third followed them. There was not the slightest hesitation. They were astonished that with three hundred horses they were marching against the power of the Turk which the whole world could not conquer; but they went. The water was soon splashing about the horses' flanks, and then the men ceased wondering and only exercised their minds to keep the sacks of food for themselves and the horses from getting wet.

They only began to look at each other again on the opposite bank.

"For God's sake! We are in Moldavia already!" they whispered.

And some of them looked behind them across the Dniester, which gleamed in the setting sun like a ribbon of red and gold. The bright glow also flooded the cliffs of the river that were full of caves. They rose like a wall at that moment separating that handful of men from their own land. It was in fact the final parting for many of them.

The thought flashed through Lusnia's head that perhaps the Commandant had gone mad; but it was for the officer to command and him to obey.

Meanwhile the horses, issuing from the water, began to

snort loudly in the ranks. "Zdrow! Zdrow!" (Good health) was heard from the soldiers. They regarded the snorting as a good omen and their hearts were somewhat comforted.

"Move on!" ordered Novovyeyski.

The ranks advanced towards the setting sun and towards those thousands, those swarms of men, and those nations encamped at Kauchunkaury.

CHAPTER XIII

Pan Novovyeyski's passage of the Dniester, and his march with three hundred sabres against the power of the Sultan numbering myriads of warriors, were actions that might be regarded as sheer madness by anybody unacquainted with war; but they were only bold warlike procedures that had certain chances of success.

In the first place, the raiders of that time often went against chambuls a hundred times more numerous; they came within sight of the enemy and then disappeared and made a bloody slaughter of their scattered pursuers. Just as a wolf sometimes lures the dogs after him so as to turn at the right moment and kill the one that is pressing him hardest; so did they. In the twinkle of an eye the quarry became the hunter; he started off, hid and feinted, and, though pursued, he himself hunted, made an unexpected attack and bit to death. This was called 'the Tartar trick,' by which each party tried to outdo the other in stratagems, tricks, and ambushes. The most celebrated man at this business was Pan Michael, and next came Pan Rushchyts, and then Pan Pivo, and then Pan Motovidlo; but Novovyeyski, who had warred in the steppes from childhood, belonged to the number of those who were mentioned among the most famous, and therefore it was very probable that when he came in the presence of the horde he would not let himself be captured.

The expedition also had chances of success because there were wild regions beyond the Dniester in which it was easy to hide. Settlements only appeared here and there along the rivers and the country was little inhabited for the most part; it was rocky and hilly by the Dniester, but farther inland were steppes, or the land was covered with forests in which strayed numerous herds of animals, from wild buffaloes, to hinds, harts, and wild-boars. Before the expedition, the Sultan wanted to estimate his strength and count his forces, the hordes dwelling on the Nij Dniester, and Byal-

grod, and the Dobrudja still farther away, had marched to the south of the Balkans at the Sultan's command, and the forces of Moldavia had followed them, so that the country had become more deserted than ever and it was possible to travel for a week without being seen by anybody.

Pan Novovyeyski was too familiar with Tartar ways not to know that when the chambuls had once passed the border of the Commonwealth they would advance with greater caution, keeping strict watch on every side; but that in their own country they would move in wide columns without special care. And indeed they did so; the Tartars would have considered themselves more likely to meet Death himself than to meet in the depths of Bessarabia, in the very haunts of the Tartars, the forces of that Commonwealth which had not sufficient troops to protect its own border.

Pan Novovyeyski was confident that, in the first place his expedition would surprise the enemy, and would therefore do more good even than the Hetman had hoped, and in the second, that it might be fatal to Azya and his Lipkovs. It was easy for the young lieutenant to guess that the Lipkovs and Cheremis would form the vanguard, as they were well acquainted with the country, and he placed his chief hope on that certainty. All that Novovyeyski's tortured spirit desired was to fall unexpectedly on Azya and capture him, and perhaps rescue his sister and Zosia, snatch them from slavery, wreak his vengeance, and then fall in battle.

Buoyed up by these thoughts and hopes, Novovyeyski shook off his torpor and revived. His march along unknown ways, his severe toil, the wide-blowing wind of the steppes, and the peril of the daring undertaking improved his health and restored his former strength. The man of misfortune in him began to yield to the warrior. Until now there had been no room in his heart for anything but memories and anguish; but now for whole days he had to think how an enemy should act and rend.

After passing the Dniester they struck a diagonal and went down towards the Pruth. During the day they often hid in reeds and forests, and made secret and forced marches at night. The country was not much inhabited so far, and was principally occupied by nomads and the greater part of it was desolate. Very rarely they came across fields of maize with houses near by.

Making secret marches they endeavored to avoid the larger

settlements, but they frequently halted at smaller ones of one, two, three, or even a number of huts; they boldly entered these, as they knew that none of the inhabitants would think of fleeing before them to Budziak and warning the Tartars there. However Lusnia took good care that this should not happen, though he soon omitted the precaution, as he was satisfied that these few settlements, although partly subject to the Sultan, were anticipating his troops with dread; and moreover that they had no idea what sort of people had arrived, and took the detachment for a Karalash body who were following the others at the Sultan's command.

Without opposition, the inhabitants supplied them corn, cakes, and dried buffalo-meat. Every one had his flock of sheep, his buffaloes, and horses in hiding near the rivers. Sometimes also numerous herds of half-wild buffaloes appeared attended by herdsmen. These herdsmen lived on the steppes in tents and only stayed in one place as long as grass was plentiful. They were often old Tartars. Novovyevski surrounded these as carefully as though they had been a chambul and did not spare them, for fear they might send tidings of his coming to Budziak. After inquiring of the Tartars concerning the roads, or rather the trackless country, he mercilessly slew them so that not a foot should escape. From the herds he then took as many heads as he needed and went on.

The detachment went southwards and now more often met with herds that were almost exclusively guarded by Tartars in considerable bodies. In two weeks' marching Novovyevski surrounded and slew three parties of shepherds of some dozens of men. The dragoons always took the sheep-skin coats, cleaned them over the fire, and put them on, so as to look like wild herdsmen and shepherds. In another week they were all dressed like Tartars and looked exactly like a chambul. They only retained the weapons of regular cavalry; but they kept their jackets strapped to their saddles, so as to resume them when they returned. Close at hand they might be recognized by their yellow moustaches and blue eyes; but from a distance the most experienced might be deceived by their appearance, and the more so as they drove before them the cattle needed for food.

They approached the Pruth and marched along its left bank. Since the Kuchman trail was in too desolate a region, it was plain that the Sultan's forces and the horde in the

vanguard would march through Falezi, Hush, Kotimore, and then only by the Wallachian border, either turning towards the Dniester, or going as straight as the swathe of a sickle through all Bessarabia to issue on the Commonwealth frontier near Ushytsa. Pan Novoyetski was so sure of this that he went more and more slowly and warily; so as not to come across chambuls too suddenly. At last he arrived at the confluence of the Sarat and Tekich and stopped there for a long halt, first to rest his men and horses, and second, to await the coming of the horde in a favorable lurking-place.

The spot was well sheltered and carefully selected; because both banks of the two rivers were covered with the cornelian brush and dogwood. This bush extended as far as the eye could reach covering the ground in places with thick brush, and in others forming clumps of bushes among which were open spaces convenient for a camp. At that season the trees and bushes had shed their blossoms, but in early Spring there must have been a sea of yellow and white flowers. The spot was deserted by mankind, but it swarmed with game, such as deer, antelopes, and rabbits; and with birds. Here and there also, on the margin of a spring, the soldiers found the tracks of bears. When the party arrived one man killed a couple of sheep. Lusnia, in consequence, wanted to have a sheep-hunt, but Novovyeyski would not allow muskets to be used, as he wanted to lie in concealment; so the soldiers hunted with boar-spears and axes.

They found, later, traces of fires near the water, but they were probably old ones of last year. It was evident that occasionally nomads visited the place with their herds, or perhaps Tartars came there to cut wood for handles. But the strictest search did not reveal a human being.

Novovyeyski decided to go no further, but to await the coming of the Turkish army there.

They laid out a square, built huts, and waited. Sentries were posted at the edge of the wood, some watched day and night towards Budziak; others towards Falezi and the Pruth. Pan Adam knew that certain signs would announce the approach of the Sultan's forces; he also sent out small scouting-parties and usually led them himself. The weather was very favorable for a halt in that dry region. The days were warm but it was easy to escape the heat in the shade of the wood; the nights were clear, tranquil, and moonlight, and the woods were tremulous with the nightingale's songs. On such

nights Pan Novovyey'ski's sufferings were greatest as he could not sleep; his thoughts reverted to his former happiness and dwelt on the present days of anguish.

He only lived in the thought that when he had glutted his heart with vengeance his mind would regain peace and happiness. Meanwhile the time was approaching when he would fulfill his vengeance or die.

Week after week went by in foraging in wild places and keeping watch. During this time they examined all the trails, ravines, clearings, rivers and streams, again collected a number of herds and slew some small parties of nomads; and kept constant vigil in the grove like a wild beast awaiting its prey. At length the expected moment came.

One morning they saw flocks of birds darkening the earth and sky. Bustards, partridges, and blue-legged quails were hurrying through the grass towards the thicket; through the heavens were flying ravens, crows, and even aquatic birds, that had evidently been scared on the banks of the Danube, or in the swamps of the Dobrudja. When they saw this the dragoons gazed at one another and the words, "They are coming, they are coming!" flew from lip to lip. Faces immediately lighted up, mouths began to twitch, and eyes to flash; but there was not the least alarm in this excitement. These were all men whose lives had been spent in irregular warfare, and so they experienced only what a hound feels when he scents game. Fires were extinguished in a moment, so that the presence of those in the thicket might not be revealed by the smoke; the horses were saddled and the whole troop stood ready for action.

It was necessary so to arrange the time as to fall upon the enemy during a halt. Pan Novovyey'ski quite understood that the Sultan's forces would not march in close order, particularly in their own country, where danger was entirely improbable. He also knew that the vanguards usually marched from five to ten miles in advance of the main army. He had good reason to hope too that the Lipkovs would lead the vanguard.

For some time he was uncertain whether to advance to them by hidden ways, with which he had acquainted himself, or await their approach in the woods. He took the latter course because it was easier to make an unexpected attack from the woods. Another day and night passed during which not only swarms of birds but beasts of the earth came to the woods in droves. The next morning the enemy appeared.

To the south of the wood a wide rolling meadow extended till it was lost on the far horizon. The enemy appeared on this meadow and rapidly approached the Tekich. From the trees the dragoons watched that dark mass that sometimes disappeared behind the hills and then appeared again in full array.

Lusnia, who had remarkably keen sight gazed intently for some time at the approaching mass; then he advanced to Novovyeyeski and said:

"Pan Commandant, there are not many men; they are only driving the herds out to pasture."

Novovyeyeski soon satisfied himself that Lusnia was correct and his face gleamed with satisfaction.

"That means that their halting place is five or six miles from this wood," he said.

"It does," Lusnia replied. "They evidently march at night to escape the heat, and sleep during the day; they are now sending the horses out to pasture till the evening."

"Are the horses strongly guarded?"

Lusnia again went to the edge of the wood and stayed there for a longer time. At last he appeared and said:

"There are about fifteen hundred horses and twenty-five men with them. They are in their own country and have nothing to fear, and so do not keep a strong guard."

"Could you recognize the men?"

"They are still distant, but they are Lipkovs. They are ours already!"

"They are," said Novovyeyeski.

Indeed he was satisfied that not a living soul of them would escape. It was a very easy matter for such a leader as himself with such soldiers as he led.

In the meantime the herdsmen were driving the horses nearer and nearer to the wood. Lusnia went to the edge again and returned with a face illuminated with gladness and ferocity.

"Lipkovs, Sir!" he whispered, "sure!"

When he heard that Novovyeyeski made a noise like a falcon and immediately a body of dragoons advanced into the thick woods. There they separated into two parties, one of which disappeared down a defile to issue in the rear of the herd and the Tartars; the other formed a semi-circle and waited.

All this passed so quietly that the most trained ear could

not have caught a sound; not a sabre nor spur rattled; not a horse neighed, and the thick sward deadened the tramp of hoofs; moreover the very horses seemed to comprehend that the success of the attack depended on silence, for it was not the first time they had been engaged in such service. From the gulley and the bushes nothing was audible but the cry of the falcon gradually growing fainter and less frequent.

The herd of Lipkov horses stopped in front of the wood and scattered over the meadow in groups of various size. Pan Adam himself was then near the margin following the movements of the herdsmen. It was a clear day in the forenoon, but the sun was already high and casting its hot rays upon the earth. The horses began to roll and presently they approached the wood. The keepers rode to the edge of the wood, dismounted, and tethered their horses with long ropes; then in search of shade and cool spots they entered the grove and lay down to rest under the largest bushes.

Soon some dry sticks burst into a flame, when they had turned to embers and were covered with ashes the herdsmen put half a colt on them and sat down at some distance to escape the heat.

Some extended themselves on the grass, while others talked, sitting in groups in the Turkish fashion; one began to play on the pipe. Complete silence prevailed in the thicket, and only the falcon was occasionally heard.

The odor of burned flesh at last announced that the roast was ready. Two men withdrew it from the ashes and dragged it to a shady tree where they sat in a circle cutting the meat with their knives and devouring it like animals. Blood flowed from the half-raw strips, bathing their fingers and trickling down their beards.

After they had ended eating and had drunk sour mare's milk out of cups they began to rub their stomachs in repletion. Then they talked for a time until their heads and limbs grew heavy. The afternoon came. The heat beat down more and more strongly from Heaven. The ground of the forest was streaked with quivering light as it pierced the dense foliage. Everything was still and even the falcons had ceased to call.

Several Tartars got up and went to look at the horses; others stretched themselves out like corpses on a battlefield and were soon overcome by sleep. But their sleep after

much meat and drink was somewhat heavy and disturbed, for now and then one would groan heavily and another would open his eyes for a moment and cry, "Allah, Bismillah!"

Suddenly on the edge of the wood a faint and dreadful sound was heard like the short gasp of a choked man who had no time to call out. Whether the hearing of the herdsmen was so keen, or some animal instinct had warned them of danger, or whether, lastly, Death had blown upon them with cold breath, it is sufficient that they sprang from their sleep in an instant.

"What is that? Where are the men with the horses?" they began to ask each other. A voice from the thicket then said in Polish:

"They won't come back!"

That moment a hundred and fifty men surrounded the herdsmen, who were so terrified that the cry died on their lips. One here and there scarcely managed to grasp his dagger. The circle of assailants covered and completely concealed them. The brush trembled with the swaying of human bodies which were struggling in a confused mass. The whizz of blades and sometimes panting, groaning, or wheezing was audible; but this lasted only for a moment and then all was still.

"How many are alive?" asked a voice among the assailants.

"Five, Pan Commandant."

"Examine the bodies; give every man a knife in the throat lest any escape, and bring the prisoners to the fire."

The order was carried out in an instant. The corpses were pinned to the sward with their own knives; after having their feet bound to sticks the prisoners were brought up to the fire which Lusnia had raked so that the embers under the ashes were brought to the top.

The captives gazed at Lusnia and at these preparations with starting eyes. There were three Lipkovs of Khreptyov among them who were perfectly well acquainted with the sergeant. He also knew them and said:

"Well, comrades, now you must sing, or you will go to the other world with roasted soles. I will not stint the fire for the sake of old acquaintance."

Then he threw some dry sticks on the fire which immediately leaped up in tall flames.

Then Pan Adam approached and commenced the examination. From the confessions of the captives it appeared that

what the young lieutenant had already divined was the truth. The Lipkovs and Cheremis were marching in the vanguard in front of the horde and all the troops of the Sultan. They were led by Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, who had received the command over all the detachments. In common with the whole army they marched at night on account of the heat and pastured their herds during the day. They sent out no scouts, because nobody imagined that they would be attacked even near the Dniester, much less at the Pruth in the very haunts of the horde; therefore they marched easily with their herds and the camels carrying the tents of the officers. Murza Azya's tent was easily recognized by the bunchuk above it and the banners of the various companies were set up near it at the halt. The camp was four or five miles away and it contained about two thousand men, but some of them had remained with the Byalogrod horde which followed about five miles behind.

Pan Novovyeyski made further inquiries concerning the best way to reach the camp and how the tents were arranged and lastly of what most deeply concerned him.

"Are any women in the tent?"

The Lipkovs trembled for their skins. Those among them who had served at Khreptyov knew perfectly well that Pan Novovyeyski was the brother of one of those women and the betrothed of the other; they therefore understood what would be his fury when he learned the whole truth.

That fury might first fall upon them; therefore they hesitated, but Lusnia immediately cried:

"Pan Commandant, we'll warm their soles for the dogbrood; then they will speak."

"Thrust their feet into fire," cried Pan Novovyeyski.

"Have mercy!" cried Elyashevich, an old Lipek from Khreptyov. "I will tell all that my eyes have seen."

Lusnia glanced towards the commander to see if he was to carry out the threat notwithstanding this answer; but Pan Novovyeyski shook his head, and said to Elyashevich:

"Tell what you have seen."

"We are innocent, master, we were under orders. The murza gave your gracious sister to Pan Adurovich, who kept her in his tent. I saw her at Kauchunkaury as she was going with pails for water and I helped her to carry them, for her condition was such that they were heavy. . . ."

"Woe!" groaned Novovyeyski.

"But our murza himself had the other lady in his tent. We did not see her often, but we heard her screams more than once, for though the murza kept her for his pleasure he beat her with rods and kicked her. . . ."

Pan Novovyeyski's lips began to quiver and Elyashevich scarcely heard the question:

"Where are they now?"

"Sold in Stambul."

"To whom?"

"The murza himself does not know. The Padishah gave orders that no women were to be kept in camp. They all sold their women in the bazaar; the murza sold his."

The explanation was ended and silence fell around the fire; but for some time a sultry afternoon wind had been moving the branches that sounded more and more heavily. The air was growing stifling and on the horizon black clouds were rising, murky in the centre and with a coppery gleam along the edges.

Pan Adam strode away from the fire like a madman taking no heed of where he went. At length he fell with his face to the earth and began to tear it up with his nails, and then to gnaw at his fingers and gasp like a dying man. His gigantic body writhed convulsively and he lay so for hours. The dragoons watched him from a distance, but not even Lusnia dared to approach him.

Being satisfied that he would not incur the wrath of his commander by not sparing the Lipkofs, the terrible sergeant, prompted by sheer innate cruelty, stuffed their mouths with grass to prevent a noise and slaughtered them like bullocks. He only spared Elyashevich, thinking he might be needed as a guide. After finishing this work he dragged the still quivering bodies away from the fire and laid them out in a row; then he went to look at the commander.

"We must catch that man yonder, even if he has gone mad," Lusnia muttered.

Midday and afternoon had passed and evening was now coming on. But the clouds which were small at first now covered half the sky and were constantly growing denser and darker, without losing the coppery gleam along the edges. The gigantic masses rolled heavily like millstones upon their own axes; then they seemed to fall upon and crowd and push one another from above and roll in dense masses down nearer and nearer to the earth. . . . Now and then

the wind swooped with its wings like a bird of prey and bent the cornelian and dogwood trees to the ground and tore off clouds of leaves and carried them furiously away; sometimes there was a dead lull as if it had fallen to the earth. During these lulls there was heard among the rending clouds an ominous growling and shrieking and rattling, as if a legion of thunders were gathering in them and preparing for battle, growling in deep tones to excite the rage and fury in their own breasts before bursting forth and wildly striking the terrified world.

"A tempest! a tempest is coming!" the dragoons muttered to each other.

The tempest was coming. The atmosphere was becoming momentarily darker.

Then in the east towards the Dniester the thunder arose and rolled across the sky with a dreadful roar till it died away beyond the Pruth; there it ceased for a moment but again breaking forth, it rolled towards the steppes of Budziak and along the whole horizon.

Big drops of rain began to fall on the dried grass. At that moment Pan Novovyeynski stood before the dragoons.

"To horse!" he cried in mighty tones.

And in the space of one hurried Pater he was riding at the head of a hundred and fifty troopers. After issuing from the wood near the herd of horses he joined the other half of his men who had been keeping guard at the side of the meadow to prevent the escape of any of the herdsmen from the camp. The dragoons darted around the herd in the twinkling of an eye, uttering shrill cries peculiar to the Tartars, and advanced driving the panic-stricken horses before them.

The sergeant held Elyashevich with a lasso and shouted in his ear trying to out roar the thunder:

"Lead the way dog-blood, and straight, or a knife in your throat!"

The clouds were now rolling so low as almost to touch the earth. Suddenly they burst like the explosion of a furnace and a furious tempest was let loose; then a blinding flash rent the darkness, followed by a clap of thunder and then a second and a third; the smell of sulphur pervaded the atmosphere and again there was gloom. The herd of horses was seized with terror. Driven on by the wild cries of the dragoons they galloped with wide nostrils and flying manes scarcely touching the earth in their flight; the thunder

roared continually and the horses rushed madly on in the wind and darkness amid explosions in which the earth seemed to be breaking. Driven forward by the storm and by vengeance, they seemed to be a terrible band of vampires or evil spirits in that wild steppe. Space vanished in front of them. There was no need of a guide, for the herd ran direct to the Lipkov camp which was closer and closer. But before they had galloped so far the tempest was unchained as if earth and sky had gone mad. The entire heavens blazed with living fire, by the flash of which the tents were visible standing on the steppe; the earth was trembling with the crash of thunder and it seemed as if at any moment the clouds might burst and fall upon the earth. It seemed that their sluices were opened and torrents of rain began to deluge the steppe. The downpour was so dense that nothing was visible a few paces distant and a thick mist rose from the sunbaked earth.

The herd and dragoons will soon be in the camp now.

But immediately in front of the tents the herd divided and dashed to either side in wild panic; three hundred throats uttered a frightful yell; three hundred sabres glittered in the flash of the lightning and the dragoons fell upon the tents.

Before the torrent of rain burst, the Lipkovs had seen the approaching herd in the glare of the lightning; but none of them knew what terrible herdsmen were driving them. They were seized with amazement and alarm and wondered why the herd was rushing direct for the tents and then they began to shout to frighten them away. Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, pushed aside his canvas door and not withstanding the rain he went out with anger on his scowling face. But at that moment the herd divided and amid the torrents of rain appeared savage forms, black and much more numerous than the horse-herds; and then was heard the terrible cry:

“Smite! kill! . . .”

There was no time for anything: not even to guess what had happened, nor even to be frightened. The whirlwind of men, far more dreadful and raging than the storm, swooped on the camp. Before the son of Tukhay Bey could take one step back to his tent he was snatched up with a force that seemed superhuman. Suddenly he felt crushed in a terrible embrace till his bones bent and his ribs broke from the pressure; then, as though through a mist, he saw a face

to which he would have preferred to see that of Satan, and he swooned.

By that time the fight, or rather the ghastly slaughter, had commenced. The tempest, the gloom, the unknown number of the assailants, the suddenness of the attack and the dispersion of the horses were the causes of the faint resistance of the Lipkovs. They were simply seized with the madness of terror. No one knew in what direction to escape or where to hide. Many of them had no weapons at hand and the attack found many others asleep. They therefore massed together, stunned, bewildered, and terrified, jostling; upsetting and trampling each other. They were driven back and overthrown by the chests of the horses and slashed by sabres and mashed by hoofs. No tempest breaks, destroys, and lays waste a young forest, no wolves rend a flock of bewildered sheep as the dragoons trampled and cut down those Lipkovs. Bewilderment on the one hand, and fury and vengeance on the other, filled the measure of their misfortune. Torrents of blood mingled with the rain. It seemed to the Lipkovs as if the heavens were falling upon them and the earth was opening under their feet. The flashing of the lightning, the roar of the thunder, the rush of the rain, and the terror of the tempest answered the awful cries of the slain. The horses of the dragoons also, maddened with fright dashed into the throng, breaking and casting men to the earth. At length the smaller groups began to take to flight, but they had so lost their bearings that they ran about on the field of strife instead of fleeing straight ahead, and they frequently collided like two opposing waves and upset each other and fell under the sword. At last the dragoons completely scattered what was left of them and slew them in the rout, taking no prisoners and mercilessly pursuing them till the trumpets recalled them from the pursuit.

Never was an attack more unexpected, nor a calamity more dreadful. Three hundred men had scattered to the four winds of the earth nearly two thousand picked cavalry whose training was incomparably superior to an ordinary *chambul*. The majority of them were prostrate in red pools of blood and rain. The rest had dispersed and hid their heads, thanks to the darkness, and escaped on foot at random, uncertain whether they would run under the blade a second time. The victors were aided by the tempest and darkness, as though the wrath of the Lord were fighting on their side against traitors.

Night had entirely fallen when Pan Novovyeyaki started at the head of his dragoons to return to the frontier of the Commonwealth. A horse from the herd moved between the young lieutenant and sergeant Lusnia. On the back of this horse, bound with cords, lay the leader of all the Lipkov Tartars, Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, swooning and with broken ribs.

They both looked at him from time to time as carefully and anxiously as if they were carrying a treasure and were afraid of losing it.

The storm began to abate. In the sky heaps of clouds were still scurrying, but in the rents between them the stars were beginning to shine and be reflected in pools of water formed on the steppes by the heavy rain. In the distance towards the frontier of the Commonwealth thunder still occasionally rumbling.

CHAPTER XIII.

The fugitive Lipkovs carried the news of the disaster to the Byalogrod horde. From them couriers took the tidings on to the Ortu-i-Humayun—that is, to the camp of the Padishah,—where it made a sensation.

Pan Novovyeynski had no need to make such haste to flee with his booty to the Commonwealth, for the fact was that not only was he not pursued at once, but also for the two following days. The Sultan was so amazed that he did not know what to do. He immediately despatched Byalogrod and Dobrudja chambuls to ascertain what forces were in the neighborhood. They went unwillingly, for with them it was a question of their own skins. Meanwhile the news spread from lip to lip and assumed the proportions of a considerable calamity. Men from the depths of Asia and Africa who had not hitherto fought against the Poles, and who had heard tales of the terrible cavalry of the unbelievers, were terrified at the thought that they were already face to face with that foe who did not wait for them within his own boundaries, but sought them in the very dominions of the Padishah; the grand vizir himself, and the “Rising Sun of War,” the kaimakan, Black Mustafa, did not know what to think of the attack either. No Turkish head could explain how that Commonwealth, of whose weakness they had heard so much could suddenly make an attack. It is sufficient that thenceforth the march seemed less safe and an easy triumph less probable. At the council of war the Sultan received the vizir and kaimakan with a terrible countenance.

“You have deceived me,” he said. “The Poles cannot be so feeble, since they seek us even here. You told me that Sobieski would not defend Kamenets, and now he is certainly facing us with his whole army . . .”

The vizir and kaimakan tried to explain to their master that this might be some detached party of marauders, but they did not believe that themselves in view of the muskets and straps holding the dragoon-jackets. Sobieski's late ex-

pedition to the Ukraine, which was daring beyond measure and yet victorious, permitted the supposition that on this occasion also that terrible leader meant to be beforehand with the enemy.

"He has no troops," said the grand vizir as they left the council; "but in him there is a lion that knows no fear. If he has assembled even a few thousand and is here, we shall wade in blood to Khotsim."

"I should like to measure my strength with him," said young Black Mustafa.

"May God preserve you from misfortune!" replied the grand vizir.

Gradually however the Byalogrod and Dobrudja chambuls became satisfied that not only were there no large bodies of troops, but none at all in the neighborhood. They discovered the trail of a party of about three hundred horse that had hastened towards the Dniester. The Horde, remembering the fate of Azya's men, made no pursuit for fear of an ambush. The attack remained as something amazing and inexplicable, but gradually, tranquillity was restored to the Ortu-i-Humayun and the hosts of the Padishah again began to advance like a flood.

In the meantime Pan Novovyeyski was returning in safety with his living booty to Rashkov. He made haste, but as experienced scouts ascertained on the second day that there was no pursuit, notwithstanding his haste he moved slowly enough not to overtire the horses. Azya, bound with cords to the back of the horse, was always between Novovyeyski and Lusnia. He had two broken ribs and grew extremely weak, for even the wound inflicted by Basia in his face opened in his struggle with Pan Adam and from riding face downwards. The terrible sergeant was careful not to let him die before reaching Rashkov and thus escape their vengeance. The young Tartar wished to die. Knowing what was awaiting him, he first tried to kill himself with hunger and refused to take food; but Lusnia opened his clenched teeth with a knife and forced down his throat gorzalka and Moldavian wine mixed with ground biscuits. When they halted they threw water on his face, so that the wounds of his eye and nose, on which flies had thickly settled during the journey, should not mortify and bring death to the ill-fated villain.

Pan Adam did not speak to him along the way. Only once, at the beginning of the journey, when Azya offered to

restore Zosia and Eva as the price of life and liberty, the lieutenant cried:

"Thou liest, dog! Thou hast sold them to a merchant of Stambul who will re-sell them in the bazaar."

And immediately they brought forward Elyashevich who repeated in the presence of everybody:

"It is so, Effendi. You sold her without knowing to whom; and Adurovich sold the bagadir's sister although she was with child by him."

After these words for awhile Azya thought that Novovyey-ski would crush him at once in his terrible grip.

Afterwards, when he had lost all hope, he determined to provoke the young giant to kill him in a transport of fury and so escape future torments. Since Novovyey-ski did not want to let his captive out of his sight and always rode near him, Azya began to indulge in boundless and shameless boasts of his deeds. He told how he had slaughtered old Novovyey-ski, and kept Zosia Boska in his tent, and gloated over her innocence, and lacerated her body with rods, and kicked her. The sweat rolled down Pan Adam's pale face in great drops. He listened and could not and did not want to go away. He listened eagerly, his hands trembled, his body shook convulsively; but he conquered himself and did not slay.

But while Azya tortured his enemy he also tortured himself, for the tales he told reminded him of his present misfortunes. A few days ago he was in command of men and living in luxury, a murza, and a favorite of the young kaimakan, and now, bound to the back of a horse and eaten alive by flies, he was going to a terrible death. Relief came when he swooned with the pain of his wounds and with suffering. This increased in frequency till Lusnia began to fear that he might not get him back alive. But they travelled night and day and only allowed the horses what rest was absolutely necessary and Rashkov came nearer and nearer. Still the horned soul of the Tartar would not leave his afflicted body. Instead of that his body was in a continual fever during the last days, and sometimes he fell into a deep sleep. More than once in that sleep or delirium he dreamed that he was still at Khreptyov and that he had to accompany Volodiyovski to a great war; again that he was escorting Basia to Rashkov, or again that he had carried her off and hidden her in his tent; sometimes in his fever he saw battles and slaughter where he was issuing orders beneath his bunchuk as the Hetman of the

Polish Tartars. But awaking came and consciousness with it. Opening his eyes he saw the faces of Novovyeyski and Lusnia and the shakos of the dragoons who had cast off the sheepskin caps of the horseherds, and the reality was so horrible that it really appeared a nightmare. Each motion of the horse tortured him, his wounds burned more and more and he fainted again. Transfixed with agony he again returned to consciousness only to fall into delirious dreams and wake again.

There were moments when it seemed impossible that this miserable being could be Azya the son of Tukhay Bey; that his life so full of unusual occurrences, and promise of a high destiny, was to come to such a sudden and terrible end.

Sometimes also it came into his mind that after torture and death he would go straight to Paradise; but, because he had once professed Christianity and long lived among Christians, he was seized with fear at the thought of Christ. Christ would have no pity on him and if the Prophet were mightier than Christ he would not have delivered him into the hands of Pan Novovyeyski. Perhaps, however, the Prophet would still have mercy and take away his soul before he was tortured to death.

Meanwhile Rashkov was near. They entered the cliff district that indicated the vicinity of the Dniester. In the evening Azya fell into a half-delirious, half-conscious state, in which illusions and reality were mingled. It seemed to him that they had arrived and come to a halt and around him he heard the words "Rashkov! Rashkov!" Then he thought he heard the sound of axes cutting wood.

Then he felt that people were dashing water on his head and then for some time they kept pouring gorzalka down his throat. After that he completely recovered his senses. A starry night was above him and many torches were flaring about him. He heard the following words:

"Is he conscious?"

"Conscious. He seems in his right mind . . ."

At that moment he saw Lusnia's face above him.

"Well, brother," said the sergeant in a quiet voice. "Thy hour has come."

Azya was lying on his back and breathing freely, for his arms were extended above his head, on account of which his expanded breast rose freely and received more air than when he was lying bound to the back of the horse. But he could

not move his arms, for they were tied to an oak staff placed along his shoulders and were tied with straw dipped in tar. The son of Tukhay Bey instantly divined the reason of this but at the same moment he also noted other preparations that told him that his torture would be protracted and horrible. He was stripped from his waist to his feet, and slightly raising his head, between his bare knees he saw a freshly-cut, pointed stake, the butt of which was set against the stump of a tree. From each of Azya's feet extended a rope leading to a whiffle-tree to which a horse was attached. By the light of the torches Azya could only see the rumps of the horses and two men standing a little farther off who were evidently holding the horses by the mouth.

The hapless villain took in these preparations at a glance; then, for some unknown reason, looking at the sky, he saw the stars and the shining crescent of the moon.

"They will drag me on," he thought.

And he immediately clenched his teeth so firmly that his jaws were seized with a spasm. Sweat broke out on his brow and at the same moment his face grew cold as all the blood left it. Then he felt as if the earth were fleeing from under him and his body were flying on and on through some boundless abyss. For a time he lost all consciousness of time and space, and what they were doing to him. The sergeant opened Azya's mouth with a knife and poured in some more gorzalka.

He coughed and spat out the fiery liquor, but was forced to swallow some of it. Then he fell into a very strange state: he was not intoxicated; on the contrary, his brain had never been clearer nor his mind more active. He saw what they were doing and comprehended it all; but he was seized with a strange kind of excitement, an impatience that it was taking so long and that as yet nothing was beginning.

Then heavy steps were heard approaching and Pan Novovyeyki stood before him. At the sight of him every vein in the Tartar's body quivered. He did not fear Lusnia as he despised him too much. But he did not despise Pan Adam; indeed he had no reason to do so; on the contrary, every glance of his eye filled Azya with a certain superstitious terror and aversion. At that moment he thought to himself, "I amin his power; I fear him!" and this was such a terrible feeling that the hair of the son of Tukhay Bey stood upright on his head.

And Novovyeyki said:

"For what thou hast done thou shalt perish in torture."

The Lipkov made no reply but began to pant audibly. Novovyeyiski departed and a silence followed that was broken by Lusnia:

"Thou didst raise thy hand against the lady," he cried in hoarse tones, "but now the lady is at home with her husband and thou art in our hands. Thy hour has come."

With these words Azya's tortures commenced. That terrible being at the hour of his death learned that his treachery and cruelty had been of no avail. Even if Basia had died on the road he would have been consoled by the thought that even if she was not his still she would not belong to anyone else and he was deprived of that consolation at the very moment when the point of the stake was within an ell's length of his body. All had been in vain. So many treasons, so much blood, such great impending punishment for nothing,—for nothing at all. . . Lusnia had no idea how death had been embittered to Azya by those words; if he had known he would have repeated them all along the way.

But there was no time for regrets now; everything must yield to the execution. Lusnia stooped down and seizing both hips he placed them in position and called cut to the men who were holding the horses:

"Move on, but slowly, and together!"

The horses moved forward; the ropes became taut and pulled Azya's legs. In an instant his body was dragged along the earth and reached the point of the stake. Then the point began to penetrate him and something horrible began,—something repugnant to nature and humanity. The bones of the wretch separated; his body parted in two directions; indescribable agony, so awful as almost to verge on some monstrous delight, passed through him. The stake sank deeper and deeper. Azya set his teeth, but could not endure it; his teeth were bared in a horrible grin and from his throat came a noise like the croak of a raven: "Ah! ah! ah!"

"Slowly!" the sergeant ordered.

Then he shouted to the men:

"Pull together! Stop! There, it is finished."

And he turned towards Azya who had suddenly become silent except for a deep rattle in his throat.

The horses were quickly unhitched; then the stake was set up and planted with the thick end in a hole prepared for it and earth was packed round it. The son of Tukhay Bey looked down on the work. He was conscious. This horrible species of punishment was the more awful in that the victims

of impalement sometimes lingered for three days. Azya's head was bowed on his breast; his lips were moving and smacking as if he were tasting something. He then experienced extreme faintness and saw a kind of thick grey mist before his eyes which seemed dreadful for some reason or other, and in this mist he recognized the faces of the sergeant and the dragoons and saw that he was on the stake and that the weight of his own body was sinking him deeper and deeper. Then he began to get numb from the feet upwards and less and less sensitive to pain.

Sometimes that grey mist became obscured and then he would blink with his sound eye in the desire to witness everything before his death. His gaze wandered persistently from torch to torch, for it seemed that there was a rainbow circle round each flame.

But his tortures were not over: presently the sergeant approached the stake with an augur in his hand and cried to those about:

"Lift me up."

Two strong men hoisted him. Azya began to watch him narrowly, blinking, as if trying to find out what kind of man was climbing up to his elevation. Then the sergeant said:

"The lady knocked out one eye, and I vowed to bore out the other."

Then he drove the point into the pupil and gave a couple of twists and, when the lid and delicate skin surrounding the eye were wound round the thread of the augur, he gave a jerk.

Then two streams of blood gushed from Azya's eye-sockets and flowed down his cheeks like two streams of tears.

His face grew paler and paler. The dragoons extinguished the torches in silence as if ashamed that light should shine on such a dreadful deed, and from the moon's crescent fell faint silvery rays on Azya's body. His head bowed low on his breast; but his hands, bound to the oak staff and wrapped in straw dipped in tar, were pointed upwards to the sky, as if that son of the Orient were calling down the vengeance of the Turkish crescent on his executioners.

"To horse!" was heard from Pan Adam.

Before mounting, with the last torch the sergeant set fire to those uplifted hands of the Tartar, and the detachment took their way towards Yampol. Amid the ruins of Rashkov in the middle of the night and the desert, Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, remained on the lofty stake and gleamed there for a long time.

CHAPTER XIV.

Three weeks later at noon Pan Novovyeyski was at Khreptyov. He had been so slow in making the journey from Rashkov, because he had frequently crossed to the other bank of the Dnieper to attack the chambuls and perkulabs of the Sultan's forces at various stanitsas. Afterwards the latter informed the Sultan's forces that they had seen Polish detachments everywhere, and had heard of great armies that would certainly not await the coming of the Turks at Kamenets, but would oppose their advance and measure themselves with them in a general battle.

The Sultan, who had been assured of the helplessness of the Commonwealth, was amazed, and sending Lipkovs, Wallachians, and Danubian hordes in advance, he slowly moved forward, for, notwithstanding his overwhelming strength, he dreaded a battle with the armies of the Commonwealth.

Pan Adam did not find Volodiyovski at Khreptyov, as the little knight had followed Motovidlo to assist the governor of Podlasia against the Crimean horde and Doroshenko. There he gained great victories and added fresh glory to his ancient renown. He defeated the grim Korpan and left his body as food for beasts on the wild fields; he crushed the terrible Drozd, and the doughty Malyshka, and the two brothers Siny, famous Cossack warriors, besides many smaller bands and chambuls.

But when Pan Adam arrived, Pani Volodiyovska was just making preparations to accompany the rest of the people and the tabor to Kamenets, for the invasion made it necessary to abandon Khreptyov. Basia was grieved to leave that wooden fort where she had experienced many adventures, it is true, but where the happiest part of her life had been spent with her husband and in the midst of brave soldiers and loving ones. At her own request she was now going to Kamenets, to the unknown fortunes and perils incident to a siege.

But since she had a masculine spirit she did not give way to grief, but carefully supervised the preparations for the

benefit of the soldiers and the labor. In this she was assisted by Pan Zagloba, who in every adventure surpassed everybody in capability, and by Pan Mushalski, the matchless archer, who was moreover a soldier of dexterous hand and incomparable experience.

Everybody was delighted at the arrival of Pan Adam, although the face of the knight at once revealed that he had not freed Evka, nor the sweet Zosia from Pagan captivity. Basia bewailed the fate of the two ladies with bitter tears, since they must now be regarded as finally lost. Sold to they knew not whom, they might be carried from the bazaars of Stambul, to Asia Minor, or to islands under the Turkish dominion, or to Egypt, and there be locked up in harems; thus it was not only impossible to ransom them, but even to learn where they were.

Basia wept, and so did the wise Zagloba, and even the matchless archer, Mushalski. Pan Novovyey'ski's eyes alone were dry, for tears had already failed him. But when he related how he had gone down as far as Tekich on the Danube and cut the Lipkovs to pieces by the side of the horde and the Sultan, and had captured Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey, the evil enemy, the two old men clattered their sabres and said:

"Give him to us! He should die here in Khreptyov."

"Not in Khreptyov," Pan Adam replied. "Rashkov is the place where he perished, that is the place where he should die; and the sergeant here found for him a torture that was not easy."

Then he described the death by which Azya had died and they listened with terror, but without pity.

"It is well known that the Lord God pursues crime, at last said Zagloba; "but it is wonderful how poorly the Devil protects his servants."

Basia sighed piously and raised her eyes and said, after a short meditation:

"That is because he lacks the power to withstand the might of the Lord."

"Ah, you have said it," remarked Pan Mushalski, "for if the Devil were more powerful than the Lord, which God forbid! all justice would disappear and the Commonwealth with it."

"I do not fear the Turks, in the first place because they are such sons, and in the second because they are children of Belial," Zagloba replied.

For a time all were silent. Pan Adam sat on the bench with his hands on his knees looking at the floor with glassy eyes. Then Pan Mushalski turned to him and said:

"It must have been of some relief," he said, "for it is a great consolation to wreak a righteous vengeance."

"Tell us, has it really relieved your mind? Do you feel better now?" asked Basia with a voice full of pity.

The giant was silent for awhile as though struggling with his own thoughts; at last he said, as though greatly wondering, and in a voice that was almost a whisper:

"Just imagine! As God is dear to me, I thought I should feel better if I were to kill him. . . . I saw him on the stake, I saw him when his eye was bored out, and I told myself that I felt better; but it is not true, not true." . . .

Here Pan Adam put his suffering head in his hands and muttered through his clenched teeth:

"It was better for him on the stake, better with the auger in his eye, better with the flames on his hands, than it is for me with what abides in me, and thinks, and remembers. Death is my only consolation; death, death."

Basia's brave and martial spirit rose at his words, and suddenly laying her hand on the head of the miserable man, she said:

"God grant it to you at Kamenets; for as you truly say, it is the only consolation."

Then he shut his eyes and repeated:

"Oh, that is true! that is true! God repay you!" . . .

They all set out for Kamenets the same evening.

After passing through the gate Basia turned and gazed long and lingeringly at the fort gleaming in the evening glow; at last she crossed herself and said:

"God grant that we may be allowed to return with Michael to thee, dear Khreptyov! . . . God grant that nothing worse be in store for us."

And two tears rolled down her rosy face. Every heart was oppressed with a strange sense of sorrow, and they moved on silently.

Meanwhile darkness fell.

They advanced slowly towards Kamenets on account of the tabor. It included wagons, herds of horses, bullocks, buffaloes, camels, and camp-followers who attended the herds. Some of the servants and soldiers had married at Khreptyov and so there was no lack of women in the tabor. There were

the troops of Pan Adam's command, besides two hundred Hungarian infantry that the little knight had equipped at his own charge, and trained. Basia was their patron; and Kalushevski, a good officer led them. It included no real Hungarians, it received the name only because it had a Magyar uniform. The inferior officers were veterans of the dragoons; but the ranks were composed of murderers and bandits who had been condemned to the rope. They were reprieved on condition of joining the infantry and blotting out their past iniquities with loyalty and valor. Among them also were volunteers who had left their ravines, fields, and other robber haunts to take service at Khreptyov under the Little Falcon rather than have his sword hanging over their heads. These men were not very tractable, nor sufficiently trained as yet; but they were brave and inured to hardship, danger, and bloodshed. Basia was very fond of this infantry as of Michael's child; and the wild hearts of the warriors soon conceived a devotion for the wonderful and kind lady. They were now marching beside her carriage with muskets on their shoulders and sabres at their side, proud to guard the lady, and ready to defend her to the death should any chambul bar her road.

But the road was still open, for Pan Michael was more farsighted than others, and, moreover, he loved his wife too much to expose her to danger by delay. The journey therefore was a quiet one. They left Khreptyov in the afternoon and travelled that evening and all night and the next day they saw the high cliffs of Kamenets.

When they saw them and the bastions of the fort crowning the cliffs they at once were greatly comforted; for it looked unlikely to them for any but the hand of God to destroy that eagle's nest on the summit of jutting cliffs, and surrounded by the bend of the river. It was a lovely summer day. The towers of the churches, peeping over the cliffs, shone like enormous lights and that spot seemed steeped in peace, serenity, and gladness.

"Bashka," cried Zagloba, "the Infidels have gnawed at those walls on more than one occasion and have always broken their teeth on them. Ah, how often have I myself seen them flee, holding themselves by the snout in their agony! God grant it may be so this time!"

"Surely it will," answered the radiant Basia.

"Osman, one of their Sultans, was here. I remember as if

it were to-day; it was in the year 1621. He came himself, the scoundrel, just there from that side of the Smotrych, from Khotsim, stared, and gaped, and stared, and stared, and at last asked, 'Who fortified that place like that?' 'The Lord God,' the vizir replied. 'Then let the Lord God take it, for I am no fool!' And immediately he returned."

"Bah! they returned in a hurry!" interrupted Pan Mushalski.

"They turned back quickly," cried Zagloba, "because we kicked them in the weak side with our lances, and afterwards the knighthood carried me to Pan Lubomirski."

"Were you at Khotsim then?" asked the matchless archer. "I can scarcely believe that there is anywhere where you have not been, or anything you have not done."

Pan Zagloba was rather annoyed, and replied:

"Not only was I there, but I received a wound that I can show you, if you care to see it; I can do so immediately, but we must retire, as it would not be becoming in me to speak of it in the presence of Pani Volodiyovski."

The celebrated archer at once saw that Zagloba was making fun of him, and as he did not feel equal to defeating him in a war of wit he made no further inquiries and turned the conversation.

"What you say is true," he said, "when a man is far away and hears people say, 'Kamenets is not provisioned, Kamenets will fall,' he is seized with dread; but when he sees Kamenets, by God, he is reassured."

"Besides, Michael will be in Kamenets," cried Basia.

"And perhaps Pan Sobieski will send assistance."

"Praise be to God! we are not so badly off after all. Things have been worse, and we did not yield."

"Even if it were worse, the point is not to lose courage. They have not devoured us yet, and they won't as long as we keep our spirits up," said Zagloba.

Cheered by these thoughts they became silent. But suddenly Pan Adam rode up beside Basia; his face, which was usually dark and terrible was now smiling and tranquil. His eyes were fastened in a rapt gaze on Kamenets which was bathed in sunlight; and he was smiling.

The two knights and Basia looked at him in astonishment, not being able to comprehend why the sight of that stronghold should so suddenly have removed all weight from his spirit.

But he exclaimed:

"Praised be the name of the Lord! there was a world of suffering, but now happiness is near me."

Then he turned to Basia.

"They are both with the bailiff, Tomashevich, and it is well that they have concealed themselves there, for in a fortress like that that robber cannot harm them."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked Basia in terror.

"Zosia and Evka."

"God help you!" cried Zagloba; "do not give way to the Devil."

But Pan Adam continued:

"Neither is it true, as they say, that Azya killed my father."

"His mind is wandering," whispered Pan Mushalski.

"Allow me," said Novovyeytski again, "I will hasten on in advance. It is so long since I saw them that I am pining for them."

"Ah! There seems to be the booth of my beloved."

With that his great head began to sway from side to side and he spurred on.

Pan Mushalski beckoned to some dragoons and followed, to keep an eye on the madman. Basia hid her rosy face in her hands and scalding tears began to trickle through her fingers.

"He was such a fine fellow, like gold, but such misfortunes are more than a human heart can bear. . . . Besides mere vengeance will not restore the spirits." . . .

Kamenets was busy with defensive preparations. On the walls, in the old castle, and at the gates, especially the Russian gates, the various nationalities in the town worked under their own bailiffs, among whom Tomashevich held the first place on account of his great daring and skill in handling cannon. At the same time Poles, Russians, Armenians, Jews, and Gypsies emulated each other with the spade and wheelbarrow. Officers of various regiments supervised the work; sergeants and soldiers assisted the citizens, and even nobles set to work, forgetting for once that God had created their hands for the sabre alone and allotted all other work to men of lowly rank. Voytsiekh Humyetski, the banneret of Podolia, himself set an example that brought tears into people's eyes, for with his own hands he brought stones in a barrow. There was great bustle in the town and castle. The Dominicans, Jesuits, Brothers of St. Francis, and Carmelites went about among the throngs blessing the effort of the people.

Women carried food and drink to the laborers and the soldiers' eyes were attracted by beautiful Armenian women, the wives and daughters of rich merchants, and yet more lovely Jewesses from Karvasera, Javnets, Zinkoviets and Dunaygrad.

But Basia's entrance attracted the attention of the crowds more than anything else. There were undoubtedly more distinguished women in Kamenets, but none whose husband had a greater military reputation. In Kamenets they had also heard of Pani Volodiyovski herself as a marshal lady who was not afraid to dwell on a watch-tower in the wilderness among wild people, and who accompanied her husband on expeditions, and, when abducted by a Tartar, had managed to overcome him and make her escape in safety from the hands of the ravisher. So she was extremely famous. But those who did not know her and had not seen her yet supposed her to be some giantess who could break horse-shoes and crush armor. Therefore what was their surprise to see a little, rosy, childish face! "Is that Pani Volodiyovski herself, or her little daughter?" people in the throng asked. "Herself," answered those who knew her. And citizens, women, priests, and soldiers were all overcome with admiration. They gazed no less wonderingly at the invincible garrison of Khreptyov and at the dragoons, among whom Pan Adam was riding calmly with wandering glances, and at the terrible faces of the marauders who were transformed into Hungarian infantry. But at Basia's side marched a few hundred men who were worthy of all praise, being soldiers by profession, and so the townspeople gained fresh courage. "That is no ordinary force; they will look the Turks boldly in the face," cried the people in the throng. Some of the citizens, and even of the soldiers, particularly those of the regiment of Bishop Tjebitski, that had recently arrived at Kamenets, thought that Pan Michael himself was with the party and cried:

"Long live Pan Volodiyovski!"

"Long live our defender! The most famous cavalier!"

"Vivat Volodiyovski! vivat!"

Basia's heart swelled as she listened, for nothing is dearer to a woman than her husband's fame, especially when it sounds on the lips of people in a great city. "There are so many knights here," Basia thought, "and my dear Michael is the only one they acclaim." And she wanted to join in the chorus "Vivat Volodiyovski!" herself, but Zagloba told her that she must comfort herself as a person of distinction and

bow from side to side as queens do when entering a capital. He also saluted, sometimes with his cap and sometimes with his hand, and when acquaintances began to honor him with vivats he addressed the crowd:

“Gracious gentlemen, he who endured Zbaraj will hold out in Kamenets.”

In accordance with Volodiyovski's instructions the party went to the newly-built cloister of the Dominican nuns. The little knight had his own house in Kamenets; but, as the cloister was in a remote spot, out of the reach of cannon-balls, he preferred to settle his beloved Basia there, more especially as he anticipated a hearty welcome on account of his benefactions to the cloister. Indeed the *abyss*, Mother Victoria, the daughter of Stephen Pototski, Voyevoda of Bratslav, received Basia with open arms. The embraces of the abbess were followed by other greatly-loved ones;—those of her aunt, Pani Makovyetska, whom she had not seen for some years. They both shed tears and so did her uncle, the Stolnik of Litychov, with whom Basia had always been a favorite. They had scarcely dried their joyful tears when Krysia Ketling rushed in and fresh greetings commenced; then Basia was surrounded by the nuns and noble strangers and acquaintances;—Pani Martsinova Bogush, Pani Stanislavska, Pani Kalinovska, Pani Khotsimirski, Pani Voytsyekhova Humyetska, the wife of the banneret of Podolia, a great cavalier. Some, like Pani Bogush, asked after their husbands, while others asked what Basia thought about the Turkish invasion and whether, in her opinion, Kamenets would hold out. Basia was delighted to see that they regarded her as an authority on military matters, and looked for comfort from her lips. So she did not stint her gifts. “Nobody says,” she said, “that we cannot hold out against the Turks. Michael will be here to-day, or to-morrow, or in a couple of days at the furthest; and when he takes the defence in hand, you, ladies, may sleep in peace. Besides the fortress is exceedingly strong; thank God, I have some little knowledge in such affairs.”

Basia's confidence comforted the hearts of the women; in particular they were reassured by the promise of Pan Michael's arrival. Indeed, his name was held in such honor that, although it was evening, the officers of the place immediately began to come and pay their respects to Basia. After the first greetings, everyone asked when the little knight would return, and whether he really meant to shut himself up in

Kamenets. Basia only received Major Kvasibrotski, who commanded the infantry of the Bishop of Cracow; the secretary, Jevuski, who had succeeded Pan Lanchyski, or rather was acting as locum tenens in command of the regiment; and Ketling. No others were admitted that day, as Basia was tired after the journey, and moreover she had to see after Pan Novovyeyski. That unfortunate man had fallen from his horse at the very gate of the convent and had been carried unconscious to a cell. They immediately sent for the same doctor who had cured Basia at Khreptyov. The doctor said that Pan Adam had a serious brain disease and gave little hope of his recovery. Basia, Pan Mushalski, and Zagloba sat up late, talking about the affair and dwelling on the knight's unhappy lot.

"The doctor told me," said Zagloba, "that if he recovers consciousness, and is bled freely, his mind will not be deranged and he will bear his misfortune with a lighter heart."

"There is no consolation for him now," said Basia.

"It would often be better for a man to have no memory," said Pan Mushalski; "but even animals are not without it."

The little, old man demurred to this remark of the famous archer's.

"If you had no memory you couldn't go to confession," said the latter; "and you would deserve hell-fire like a Lutheran. Father Kaminski has already cautioned you against blasphemy; but repeat the *Paternoster* to a wolf and he would rather be devouring a goat."

"What kind of a wolf am I?" asked the famous archer. "There was Azya; he was a wolf."

"Didn't I say so?" asked Zagloba. "Who was the first to say, 'there's a wolf?'"

"Pan Adam told me," said Basia, "that day and night he hears Evka and Zosia calling to him 'rescue,' and how can he rescue? It had to end in an illness, for nobody could endure such suffering. He could survive their death; but not their shame."

"Now he is lying like a log of wood; he knows nothing of God's world," said Pan Mushalski; "and it's a great pity, for he was unsurpassed as a fighter."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by a servant who announced there was a great noise in the town, where people were gathering to see the General of Podolia, who was just entering with a large escort and several tens of infantry.

"The command belongs to him," said Zagloba. "It is brave of Pan Nikolai Pototski to prefer this to any other place, but, as of old, I would rather he were not here. He is opposed to the Hetman; he did not believe the war was coming; and now who knows whether he will not want to surrender."

"Perhaps other Pototskis will come in after him," said Pan Mushalski.

"It is evident that the Turks are not far away," answered Zagloba. "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God grant that the General of Podolia may prove a second Yeremy; and Kamenets a second Zbaraj!"

"It must be; or we shall first die," cried a voice on the threshold.

At the sound of that voice Basia sprang up and, crying "Michael," cast herself into the little knight's arms.

Pan Michael brought much important news from the field and told it to his wife in the quiet cell before communicating it to the military council. He had utterly destroyed a number of small chambuls and had dashed around the camps of the Crimea and Doroshenko with great glory to himself. He had also brought a few dozen prisoners, from whom they might gain intelligence as to the force of the Khan and Doroshenko.

But other raiders had not been so successful. The Chief of Podlasia, commanding considerable forces, had been crushed in a sanguinary battle; Motovidlo had been defeated by Krychinski, who had pursued him to the Wallachian trail with the assistance of the Byalogrod horde and the Lipkows who had survived Pan Adam's victory at Tekich. Before coming to Kamenets, Pan Michael had turned aside to Khreptyov, as he said he had wanted to gaze again on the scene of his happiness.

"I arrived there immediately after your departure," he said, "the place had not yet grown cold and I might easily have overtaken you, but I crossed over to the Moldavian bank to listen in the direction of the steppes. Some chambuls have already crossed, but they fear that if they come out at Pokuts they may unexpectedly come across people. There are others in advance of the Turkish army and they will soon be here. There will be a siege, my most beloved dove, there is no help for it; but we will not surrender, for everyone here is not only defending the country, but his private property as well."

Then he twirled his moustache and put his arms round his wife and kissed her cheeks and they conversed no more that day.

The next morning Pan Michael repeated his tidings at Bishop Lantskoronski's, before the council of war, which in addition to the Bishop, included Pan Nikolai Pototski, General of Podolia; Pan Lantskoronski, Chamberlain of Podolia; Pan Jevuski, Secretary of Podolia; Pan Humyetski, the Standard Bearer; Ketling, Makovyetska, Major Kvasibrotski, and several other officers. In the first place Volodiyovski was not pleased with the General of Podolia's declaration that he would not assume the command himself, but depute it to a council. "In sudden emergencies there ought to be one head and one will," said the little knight. "At Zbaraj there were three men who were entitled to the command, but they resigned it to Prince Yeremy Vishnyovyetski, properly considering that it is better to obey one in times of peril."

These words had no effect. The learned Ketling vainly quoted the example of the Romans, who, being the greatest warriors in the world, instituted the dictatorship. Bishop Lantskoronski, who did not like Ketling,—for he had taken it into his head for some reason or other that, as Ketling was of Scottish birth, he must be a heretic in his secret heart,—retorted that the Poles did not need to learn history from new arrivals; moreover, they had minds of their own and had no need to follow the example of Romans, who were not their superiors in bravery and eloquence, or very little, even if at all. The bishop added, "As there is more blaze from an armful of wood than from one stick, so there is more vigilance in many heads than in one." Thereupon he extolled the General of Podolia's modesty, though the others knew it was rather dread of responsibility, and for his own part he counselled negotiations. As he uttered this word the soldiers sprang from their seats as if scorched. Pan Michael, Ketling, Makovyetska, Humyetski, Jevuski and Kvasibrotski began to grind their teeth and clatter their sabres. Voices exclaimed, "I believe that we did not come here to negotiate!" "The negotiator is protected by his frock!" and Kvasibrotski even cried: "the church porch, not this council, is your place!" and there was a tumult.

At that the bishop arose and said in a loud voice: "I should be the first to give my life for the church and my little lambs; but if I have spoken of negotiations and the desire to temporize, God is my judge that it is not because I want to give up the fortress, but to gain time for the Hetman to gather reinforcements. The name of Pan Sobieski is dreaded by

the Infidels, and even though he has not enough forces yet, if the rumor spreads that he is advancing, the Mussulmans will leave Kamenets quickly enough." And as he spoke so forcibly all were silent and some were glad to see that the bishop really had no thought of surrender.

On this, Volodiyovski said:

"Before the enemy can besiege Kamenets he must destroy Jvanets, because he cannot leave a strong place of defence in his rear. Therefore with the General's permission I will undertake to shut myself up in Jvanets and hold it while the bishop tries to gain time with negotiations. I will take trusty men with me; and Jvanets will stand as long as my life lasts."

At that they all cried:

"By no means can that be, you are wanted here! The citizens will lose heart without you, and the soldiers will not be so willing to fight. By no means! by no manner of means! Who has had more experience? Who went through Zbaraj? And when it comes to a sortie who will lead the men? You would be consumed in Jvanets, and without you here, we should be consumed."

"I am at the disposal of the command," answered Pan Michael.

"Send some young man to be my assistant at Jvanets," said the under-Chamberlain of Podolia.

"Let Novovyeytski go," cried several voices.

"Novovyeytski cannot go, for his head is burning," answered Pan Michael; "he is lying on his bed, and knows nothing of God's world."

"Meanwhile let us decide where each man's place is to be and what gate he is to defend," said the bishop.

All eyes were turned on the General of Podolia, who said:

"Before I give orders I should be glad to have the opinions of experienced soldiers; since Pan Volodiyovski here has the greatest military experience, I call on him first for his opinion."

In the first place Volodiyovski advised that the castles in front of the town should be well garrisoned, for he thought that the main force of the enemy would be directed to them especially. Others were of the same opinion. There were sixteen hundred infantry, so disposed that Pan Myslishevski occupied the right side of the castle and the left was held by Pan Humyetski, celebrated for his exploits at Khotsim. Pan Michael took the most perilous post on the side towards Khot-

sim, and Serdyuk's division was posted lower down. Major Kvasibrotski covered the side towards Zinkoviets; the south was occupied by Pan Vansovich, and the side next the court by Captain Bukar with Pan Krasinski's men. The latter were not volunteers of indifferent quality, but soldiers by profession, so excellent and steady in battle, that to them artillery fire was no more than the heat of the sun to other men. Moreover, serving in the armies of the Commonwealth, which were always small in numbers, from their earliest year they had been accustomed to oppose a foe of ten times their strength and looked upon it as quite a natural thing. Ketting, who was most expert in the art of aiming cannon, was given the general management of the castle artillery. The little knight was to have chief command in the castle, and the General left him at liberty to make a sortie as often as it was necessary and possible.

Knowing now the position of each man, they heartily rejoiced and raised a great shout, at the same time clattering their swords, which was their way of showing their willingness. When he heard this the General said to himself:

"I had no belief that we could defend ourselves and I came here without any faith, only listening to the voice of my own conscience; but who knows? we may repulse the foe with such soldiers! In that case the glory will be mine and they will hail me as a second Yeremy; and in that event it may be that a fortunate star has brought me here."

And as he had before been doubtful of the defence of Kamenets, so now he doubted its capture; so his courage grew and he more actively began to take measures for the strengthening of the city.

It was decided to post Pan Makovyetska at the Russian gate in the city itself with a handful of nobles and Polish citizens who were more than usually martial, and a few dozen Armenians and Jews with them. The Lutsk gate was confided to Pan Grodetski, who was joined by Pan Juk and Pan Matchynski in command of the artillery. The guard of the square in front of the town-hall was commanded by Lukash Dzevanovski, and the noisy Gypsies at the Russian gate were commanded by Khotsimirski. From the bridge to Pan Sinitzki's house the guards were commanded by Pan Casimir Humyetski, the manly brother of Voytsyekh. Further on were to be quartered Pan Stanishevski; and Pan Martsin Bogush at the Polish gate; and Pan Yerzy Skarjinski at the

Spiz Bastion, and Pan Yatskovski beside the Byaloblotski embrasures; and the Butcher Bastion was held by Pan Dubravski and Pan Pyetrashevski. The great intrenchment of the town was entrusted to Tomashevich, the Polish bailiff, and the smaller one to Pan Yatskovski; orders were given to construct a third one, from which, later, a certain Jew, a skilful gunner, greatly annoyed the Turks.

When these arrangements were completed the whole council went to sup with the General, who, at that entertainment, particularly honored Pan Michael with place, food, wine, and conversation, foreseeing that for his deeds during the siege posterity would add the title of the "Hector of Kamenets" to that of the "Little Knight." The latter declared that he meant to serve with the utmost earnestness, and to that end he intended to take a certain vow in the cathedral, and prayed the bishop therefore to allow him to do so on the morrow. The bishop readily acquiesced as he saw that this vow might be to the popular advantage. The next morning there was a solemn service in the cathedral. It was heard with devotion and elevation of heart by knights, nobles, soldiers, and the populace. Pan Michael and Ketling both lay prostrate in the form of a cross before the altar; Krysia and Basia were both kneeling close by, outside the railing, weeping, for they knew that that vow might imperil the lives of their husbands. At the end of the Mass the bishop turned to the people with the monstrance; then the little knight rose and, kneeling on the steps of the altar, in calm tones, though with emotion, said:

"Being deeply grateful for the special benefactions and particular protection that I have received from the Most High God and from His Only Son, I vow and make oath that, as He and His Son have aided me, so to my last breath I will defend the Holy Cross, and since I am entrusted with the command of the old castle, while I have life and can move hand and foot, I will not admit to the castle the Infidel foe, who live in vileness; nor will I leave the wall, nor raise the white flag, even if I have to be buried there under the ruins. . . . So help me God and the Holy Cross! Amen!"

A solemn silence prevailed in the church and then Ketling's voice was heard.

"I vow," he said, "for the special benefactions that I have received in the fatherland, to defend the castle to the last drop of my blood and to bury myself under its ruins rather than allow the foot of an enemy to enter its walls. And, as

I take this oath with a clean heart and out of pure gratitude, so help me God and the Holy Cross! Amen!"

Here the bishop lowered the monstrance and gave it first to Volodiyovski and then to Ketling to kiss. At this sight a loud murmur arose from the numerous knights in the church. Voices were heard: "We will all swear! We will lie upon one another! The fortress shall not fall! We will swear! we will swear! Amen, amen, amen!" The rasping of the sabres and rapiers was heard as they left the scabbards and the church became bright with the steel. The gleam shone on threatening faces and glittering eyes and the nobles, soldiers, and populace were seized with intense and indescribable enthusiasm. Then all the bells rang, the organ rumbled, the bishop intoned the 'Sub Tuum praesidium,' and a hundred voices sounded in answer; and thus they prayed for that fortress that was the watch-tower of Christendom and the key of the Commonwealth.

At the end of the service Ketling and Pan Michael left the church hand in hand. Blessings and praise accompanied their steps, for nobody doubted that they would die sooner than surrender the castle. However, not death, but victory and glory seemed to be hovering over them, and probably among all those people they alone knew how terrible was the oath by which they had bound themselves. Perhaps also, two loving hearts had a presentiment of the destruction that was hanging over their heads, for neither Basia nor Krysia could recover their composure; and when Pan Michael found himself at last in the convent with his wife, choked with tears and sobbing like a little child she nestled up to his breast and cried in broken accents:

"Remember . . . Michael, that . . . God ward off misfortune from you. . . . I . . . I . . . know not . . . what . . . will . . . become of me!"

And she quivered with emotion; the little knight was also greatly moved. His little yellow moustache quivered. Presently he said:

"But Bashka . . . it was necessary, well! well!" . . .

"I would rather die!" cried Basia.

At her words the little knight's lips quivered more violently and he said again and again:

"Quiet, Bashka, quiet!" At length, to calm the woman he loved more than all women on earth, he said:

"Do you remember that when the Lord God restored you to

me I said, 'Whatever return, O Lord God, is right, I promise Thee. . . After the war if I am alive, I will build a chapel, but during the war I must do something remarkable so as not feed Thee with ingratitude?' What is a castle? It is little for such benefits. The time has come. Is it right that the Saviour should say to Himself, 'His promise is a plaything?' May the stones of the castle overwhelm me before I break the knightly word that I gave to God. It is necessary, Bashka, and that's the whole thing! . . . Let us trust in the Lord, Bashka!'

CHAPTER XV.

The same day Pan Michael took some squadrons to the assistance of Pan Vasilkovski who had gone in haste to Hrynchuk, for news arrived that the Tartars had made an attack there, taking captives and cattle, but not burning villages, so as not to attract notice. Pan Vasilkovski soon dispersed them, rescuing the captives and taking prisoners. Volodiyovski took these prisoners to Jvanets and instructed Pan Makovyetska to torture them and take down their confessions in writing, to be forwarded to the Hetman and the King. The Tartars confessed that at the order of the perkulab they had crossed the border with Captain Styngan and with Wallachians; but even under the flames they could not tell how far away at that time the Sultan was with his whole force, for, as they moved forward in irregular bodies, they did not keep in touch with the main army.

However, they all agreed that the Sultan was advancing in force to the Commonwealth and would soon be at Khotsim. These confessions contained nothing new for the future defenders of Kamenets; but since in the king's palace it was not believed that war was coming, the Under-Chamberlain determined to send these prisoners, together with their statements, to Warsaw.

Meanwhile the scouting parties had returned from their first expedition in good spirits. In the evening the secretary of Habareskul, Pan Michael's relative, the senior perkulab of Khotsim, arrived. He brought no letters, as the perkulab was afraid to write; but his orders were to tell his relative Volodiyovski, 'the pupil of his eye and the love of his heart,' to be on his guard, and if there were not sufficient troops to defend Kamenets, to find some excuse for leaving the town, for the Sultan with his whole force had been expected for two days at Khotsim.

Pan Michael sent his thanks to the perkulab and rewarded the secretary and sent him back; he then informed the commandants of the approaching danger. Work on the forti-

fications was pushed hourly with increased energy; Pan Hieronim Lantskoronski, without a moment's delay, went to his Jvanets to keep an eye on Khotsim.

Some time passed in waiting; at length, on the second day of August, the Sultan halted at Khotsim. His regiments extended like a shoreless sea; and at the sight of the last town in the Sultan's dominions, the cry "Allah! Allah!" rose from hundreds of thousands of throats. On the other side of the Dniester lay the defenceless Commonwealth which those innumerable hosts were to overspread like a deluge, or devour like a flame. Crowds of warriors, unable to find room in the town, spread over the fields;—the same fields where some decades earlier Polish sabres had dispersed an equally numerous army of the Prophet. It now seemed that the hour of vengeance had arrived and not one in all those wild legions, from the Sultan down to the camp-follower had any presentiment that those fields would a second time be ill-omened for the Crescent. Hope and even the assurance of victory reigned in all hearts. Janissaries and saphis, crowds of levies from the Balkans and the mountains of Rhodope, from Rumelia, from Pelion and Ossa, from Carmel and Lebanon, from the deserts of Arabia, from the farther banks of the Tigris, from the lowlands of the Nile and the burning sands of Africa, uttering wild shouts demanded to be led at once to the "shore of the unbelievers." But the muezzins began to call to prayer from the minarets of Khotsim and therefore all became silent. A sea of heads in turbans, caps, fezes, burnouses, kefis, and steel helmets bowed to the earth, and the deep murmur of prayer passed over the fields like the hum of an innumerable swarm of bees, and was carried by the breeze across the Dniester towards the Commonwealth.

Then were heard drums, trumpets and pipes, calling to rest. Though the hosts had marched leisurely and comfortably the Padishah wanted to give them a rest at the river after the long journey from Adrianople. He performed his own ablutions in a clear spring near the town and rode thence to the konak of Khotsim; and they began to pitch tents in the fields that soon made the whole surrounding country look as if covered with snow.

It was a lovely day with a beautiful close. After the last evening prayers the camp went to rest. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of fires were blazing. From the little castle

in Jvanets opposite, the light of those fires filled them with dread, for they extended to such a distance that the soldiers who went out to reconnoitre brought in the account, "It looked as if the whole of Moldavia were in flames." But as the bright moon mounted higher in the starry skies they all died down except the watch-fires; the camp grew silent and the quiet of the night was only disturbed by the neighing of horses and the bellowing of the buffaloes feeding on the meadows of Taraban.

But the next day at dawn the Sultan ordered the janissaries and Tartars and Lipkovs to cross the Dniester and occupy Jvanets, the town as well as the castle. The valiant Pan Hieronim Lantskoronski did not await them behind the walls, but, having with him forty Tartars, eighty men of Kiev, and one squadron of his own, he charged the janissaries at the ferry; and notwithstanding a rattling volley from their muskets, he broke that splendid infantry so that they began to retreat to the river in disorder. But in the meantime the chambul, reinforced by the Lipkovs, who had crossed higher up, broke into the town. Smoke and cries warned the brave Under-Chamberlain that the place was in the possession of the enemy. He therefore gave orders for the ferry to be abandoned for the purpose of aiding the unfortunate inhabitants. The janissaries could not pursue, as they were infantry, and he dashed to the rescue at full speed.

Just as he was coming up, his own Tartars suddenly threw down their flag and went over to the enemy. Then followed a moment of great danger. The chambul, aided by the treacherous Lipkovs, thinking the treason would throw them into confusion, fiercely engaged the Under-Chamberlain hand to hand. Luckily the men of Kiev, inspired by their leader's example, offered stout resistance. The squadron broke the enemy, who were not capable of withstanding regular Polish cavalry. The ground before the bridge was soon covered with corpses, especially of the Lipkovs, who kept the field as they were hardier than the average men of the horde. Many of them were afterwards cut down in the streets. Lantskoronski, seeing the janissaries approaching from the river, withdrew behind the walls and sent to Kamienets for aid.

The Padishah had not intended to take the castle of Jvanets that day, rightly thinking that he could crush it

in an instant at the general passage of the hosts. He merely wanted to occupy that point, and thinking the force he sent to be quite sufficient, he sent no more either of the janissaries or the horde. Those who had crossed the river again occupied the place when the squadron had retired within the walls. They did not burn the town, for they wanted it as a future shelter for their own and other detachments, but went to work in it with sabres and daggers. The janissaries seized the young women in the manner of soldiers and cut down the husbands and children with axes; the Tartars were plundering.

Then from the castle-bastion the Poles saw cavalry approaching from the direction of Kamenets. When he heard that, Lantkoronski went out to the bastion with some companions and a field-glass and gazed long and carefully. At last he said:

"That is light cavalry from the Khreptyov garrison, the same that accompanied Vasilkovski to Hrynychuk. It is evident that they have been sent out this time."

Then he began to scrutinize them again.

"I see volunteers. It must be Humyetski."

And in a moment:

"God be praised! Volodiyovski himself is there, for I see dragoons. Worthy gentlemen, let us again dash out from behind the walls and with God's aid we will drive the enemy not only out of the town but across the river."

Then he ran down breathlessly to draw up below, his men of Kiev, and the squadron. Meanwhile the Tartars in the town first saw the approaching troops and raising shrill shouts of "Allah!" began to form in a shambul. Drums and whistles were heard in every street. The janissaries formed with that rapidity in which they were equalled by few troops in the world. The chambul dashed out of the place like a whirlwind and fell upon the light cavalry. The chambul itself, without counting the Lipkovs who had been badly mauled by Lantkoronski, were three times as numerous as the garrison of Jvanets and the approaching reinforcements combined, so it did not hesitate to attack Pan Vasilkovski; but the latter, who was young and impetuous and dashed against every danger ardently and blindly, ordered his soldiers to go at full gallop and flew along like a tornado, paying not the slightest heed to the number of the enemy. The Tartars, who had no taste for close fighting, were dismayed.

at such daring. Notwithstanding the shouts of the murzas in the rear, the shrill tones of the pipes, and the rolling of the drums calling to "kensim"—that is, to cut off the heads of unbelievers,—they began to check and rein in their horses. Their heart and martial spirit was evidently growing momentarily fainter. At last at about a bow-shot's distance from the squadron they parted to either side and discharged a shower of arrows at the charging cavalry.

Pan Vasilkovski, entirely ignorant of the presence of the janissaries who had formed beyond the houses near the river, came up at undiminished speed behind the Tartars, or rather one-half of the chambul. He arrived at close quarters and began to cut down those whose poor mounts did not enable them to flee quickly enough. The second half of the chambul turned in the attempt to surround him; but at that moment the volunteers came up, and the Under-Chamberlain with his men of Kiev. The Tartars, pressed on so many sides, scattered in the twinkling of an eye like sand, and a confused chase began,—of a group by a group and a man by a man,—in which many of the horde were killed, especially by the hand of Pan Vasilkovski, who, single-handed, struck blindly at whole crowds as a hawk swoops on sparrows or bunting.

But Pan Volodiyovski, a cool and keen warrior, kept his dragoons well in hand. Like one who holds trained, eager hounds in strong leashes, not letting them fly at a coming beast, but only when he sees the glowing eyes and gleaming teeth of a savage old boar, so did the little knight despise the mean horde and watch to see whether spahis, janissaries, or other regular soldiery was not behind them.

Pan Lantskoronski rushed up to him with his men of Kiev and cried:

"My benefactor, the janissaries are moving towards the river; let us attack them!"

Volodiyovski drew his sword, and commanded:

"Forward!"

Each dragoon tightened his rein so as to have his horse well in hand, and then the ranks dressed up and advanced as regularly as when on parade. They first went at a trot and then at a gallop, but did not yet let their horses go at full speed. Only after passing the houses near the river to the east of the castle did they see the white felt caps of the janissaries, and knew that they had to deal not with volunteers, but with regulars.

“Charge!” cried Volodiyovski.

The horses extended themselves till their bellies almost touched the ground, as their hoofs scattered lumps of hard earth behind them.

The janissaries, not knowing what force was coming to the aid of Jvanets, were in fact retreating to the river. One body of between two and three hundred men was already at the bank, and its first ranks were stepping into scows, another body of similar size was moving rapidly though in perfect order. When they caught sight of the approaching cavalry they halted and faced the enemy in an instant. Their muskets were lowered in a line and thundred a salvo as if at a review. Moreover these seasoned warriors, counting on their comrades on the bank supporting them with their fire, not only did not retreat after the volley, but followed up their own smoke and dashed savagely at the cavalry with their sabres. Only the janissaries would have been capable of such daring, but they paid dearly for it, because the troopers who could not have restrained their horses even if they had wanted to, struck them like a hammer, and, breaking them in an instant, spread destruction and terror in their ranks. The first rank fell beneath the force of the blow like grain before a whirlwind. - It is true that many of them fell only from the impact, and these regained their feet and ran in disorder to the river, from where the second body kept on firing, aiming high, so as to hit the dragoons over the heads of their comrades.

For a moment the janissaries at the ferry evidently hesitated whether to embark or follow the example of the other detachment and come to close quarters with the cavalry. But they were restrained from the latter course by the sight of groups of fugitives were pressed upon by the chests of the horses and hacked so terribly by the troopers that their fury was only equalled by their skill. Now and then a group too hotly pressed turned in desperation and began to bite like an animal at bay when it sees that it cannot escape. And then those on the bank could see as plainly as in their palms that it was not possible to meet that cavalry with cold steel, so far superior were they in its use. The defenders were slashed with such regularity and rapidity that it was impossible for the eye to follow the movements of the sabres. As when skillfull laborers shelling well-dried peas strike quickly and continuously on the threshing floor till the whole place re-

sounds with their blows and the peas are jumping in all directions, so did the whole river-bank resound with the blows of the sabres and the groups of janissaries, mercilessly slashed, sprang hither and thither like peas out of a pod.

Pan Vasilkovski charged at the head of the cavalry, reckless of his own life. But as a trained reaper surpasses a youth much stronger but less skillful at the sickle than himself,—for while the youth is toiling covered with streams of perspiration, the other goes steadily on and cuts down the hay before him evenly,—so did Pan Volodiyevski surpass the impetuous youth Vasilkovski. Before attacking the janissaries he let the dragoons go forward, while he himself remained somewhat in the rear to watch the whole battle. Standing thus at a distance, he kept careful watch, but every now and then he would spring into the melee and strike and give directions, and then again would allow the battle to recede and then again he would watch and strike. As always happens in a fight with infantry, so then also some of the fugitives were left in the rear of the cavalry. These, having their retreat to the river cut off, fled back towards the town to hide among the sunflowers that were growing in front of the houses; but Volodiyevski saw them. He came up with the first two and gave each a light blow; they immediately fell and, digging their heels into the earth, their souls escaped with their blood through the gaping wounds. When he saw this a third janissary fired at the little knight with his musket but missed; and the little knight struck him with the edge of his sword between the nose and mouth and slew him. Without any delay Pan Michael then sprang after the others, and no village boy gathers a clump of mushrooms so quickly as he gathered those men before they reached the sun-flowers. Only the last two were seized by soldiers of Jvanets and these the little knight ordered to be kept alive.

Being now warmed up and seeing that the janissaries were being hotly pressed at the river, he sprang into the thick of the fight and joining the dragoons began to work in earnest. First he struck in front and then turned to right or left, thrusting once with his sword, and paying no further attention; a white cap fell to the earth with each thrust. The janissaries began to crowd away from him with loud cries; he redoubled the rapidity of his blows and though he remained calm himself no eye could follow the play of his sword and know when he would strike and when he would thrust, for his blade described a gleaming circle around him.

Pan Lantskoronski, who had long heard him quoted as a master of masters, but had not hitherto seen him in action, ceased fighting and looked on astonished, unable to believe his own eyes that one man, though a master, and celebrated as the best cavalier, could accomplish so much. Consequently he raised his hand to his head and his companios heard him keep repeating: "As God lives, they have told me very little about him as yet!" And others cried, "Look at him, for you won't see that again in this world!" But Volodiyovski labored on.

The janissaries driven down to the river now began to throng into the scows in disorder. As the scows were sufficient in number and there were fewer to return than had come, they quickly and easily took their places. Then the heavy oars moved and a space of water momentarily widened between the janissaries and the bank.

But the rattle of musketry began to rise from the scows, to which the dragoons replied; little clouds of smoke rose over the water and trailed in bands. The scows with the janissaries were receding every moment. The dragoons who were left in possession of the field uttered a fierce shout and shaking their fists, cried:

"Ah, off with thee, thou dog, off with thee!"

Though the balls were still plashing Pan Lantskoronski threw his arms around Volodiyovski right on the bank and said:

"I did not believe my own eyes; my benefactor, those are marvels that deserve a golden pen!"

"Natural aptitude and training, that's all. How many wars have I gone through?"

Then, returning Pan Lantskoronski's pressure, he freed himself from his embrace, and looking toward the bank he said:

"Watch, your lordship, you will see another personality."

The Under-Chamberlain turned and saw an officer on the bank drawing a bow.

It was Pan Mushalski.

Hitherto the famous archer had been engaged with the others in a hand to hand fight with the foe; but now that he janissaries had reached so far that bullets could not reach them, he drew his bow and, standing on the highest point of the bank, he first tried the string with his finger and when it twanged sharply he fitted a feathered arrow on it and took aim.

At that instant Volodiyovski and Lantskoronski looked at him. It was a beautiful picture. The archer was sitting on his horse with his left arm extended and holding the bow as if in a vice. He drew back his right hand powerfully to his breast till the veins on his brow swelled, and took careful aim. In the distance, beneath a cloud of smoke, a number of scows were visible on the river which was very high with melted mountain snow and so transparent that the scows and the janissaries sitting in them were reflected in the water. Pistols were silent on the bank and all eyes were turned on Pan Mushalski, or gazing in the direction which the murderous arrow was about to take.

Then the string loudly twanged and the feathered arrow left the bow. No eye could follow its flight; but everybody saw a sturdy janissary standing at an oar suddenly throw up his arms and stagger and fall into the water. The transparent surface splashed up under his weight and Pan Mushalski said:

“For thee, Didyuk!”

Then he took another arrow. “In honor of the Hetman,” he said to his companions.

They held their breath; presently the air again whistled and a second janissary fell in the bottom of the scow.

The oars began to move more quickly on all the scows and struck the clear stream more powerfully; but the famous archer turned with a smile to the little knight.

“In honor of the worthy wife of your lordship.”

A third time the bow was bent; a third time he despatched a bitter arrow; and a third time it sank half its length into the body of a man. A shout of triumph arose on the bank and a shout of rage from the scows. Pan Mushalski then withdrew and the other victors of the day followed him into the town.

On their return they were rejoiced to look upon the harvest of that day. Few of the horde had fallen, for they had not made even one good stand, and when scattered they quickly recrossed the river. But the janissaries lay to the number of several dozens like neatly-bound sheaves. Pan Volodiyovski said as he looked at them:

“Brave infantry! the men rush to battle like wild-boars; but they don’t know more than half what the Swedes do.”

“They fired as a man would crack nuts,” said the Under-Chamberlain.

"That came naturally, not from training, for they have no general training. They were of the Sultan's guard and have some kind of discipline; in addition to these there are irregular janissaries who are greatly inferior."

"We have given them a souvenir! God is gracious to permit us to begin the war with such a noteworthy victory."

But the experienced Pan Volodiyevski thought otherwise.

"This is a small and insignificant success," he said. "It is good enough to inspirit untrained men and citizens, but it will be fruitless."

"But do you not think it will dispirit the Infidels?"

"The Infidels will not be discouraged," he said.

Thus conversing they reached the town, where the people delivered up the two captured janissaries who had tried to hide from Pan Volodiyovski in the sun-flowers.

One was slightly wounded and the other was quite sound and full of wild courage. In the castle the little knight who understod Turkish well enough though he did not speak it fluently, asked Pan Makovyetska to question the man. Pan Makovyetska inquired whether the Sultan himself were in Khotsim and would soon come to Kamenets.

The Turk replied clearly and boldly:

"The Padishah himself is present. In the camp it was said that to-morrow the Pashas Halim and Murad would cross with Mehentysy. To-morrow or the day after the hour of destruction will strike for you."

Here the prisoner put his hands on his hips and, confident in the terror inspired by the name of the Sultan, continued:

"Mad Poles! how did you dare in the presence of the Sultan to attack us and slay his men? Do you think that you will escape harsh punishment? Do you think that this little castle will protect you? What will you be in a few days but captives? What are you to-day but dogs flying at your master's face?"

Pan Makovyetska carefully wrote down everything; but Pan Volodiyovski struck him in the face for his last words, to temper the insolence of the prisoner. The Turk was surprised and immediately became more respectful to the little knight and began to express himself more mildly. When the examination was ended and they had brought him to the hall Pan Volodiyovski said:

"We must send these prisoners and their confession at full speed to Warsaw, for at the court of the king they do not yet believe that war is imminent!

"What are the Mehentysy with whom Halil and Murad have to be provided," asked Pan Lantskoronski.

"Mehentysy are engineers to prepare the earthworks for the guns."

"And what do you think, gentlemen, did that prisoner tell the truth, or did he lie altogether?"

"If you like, gentlemen," answered Volodiyovski, "it is possible to burn his heels. I have a sergeant who executed Azya, the son of Tukhay Bey and who is *exquisitissimus* at that business, but in my opinion the janissary told the exact truth. The passage will soon commence, we cannot prevent it,—no! even if we were a hundred times more numerous. The only thing left is to get together and go to Kamenets with the news."

"I have done so well at Jvanets that I should be very pleased to shut myself up in the castle," said the Under-Chamberlain, "if I were sure that you would occasionally come with aid from Kamenets. After that let what will happen!"

"They have two hundred cannon," said Pan Michael; "and, if they bring two heavy guns across, this castle cannot hold out for one day. I also wanted to shut myself up here, but now I see that it would be futile."

The others agreed with the little knight. Pan Lantskoronski, as though to parade his courage, still insisted for a time on staying at Jvanets, but he was too experienced a soldier not to see that Volodiyovski was right. At last he was interrupted by Pan Vasilkovski who rushed in haste from the field into the castle.

"Worthy gentlemen," he cried, "the river is not to be seen; the whole Dniester is covered with craft."

"Are they crossing?" everybody asked at once.

"They are, as I live! The Turks are on rafts and the chambuls are fording by the horses' tails."

Pan Lantskoronski hesitated no longer; he gave orders at once for the old howitzer to be sunk and for the other things either to be hidden or to be carried to Kamenets. Pan Michael darted to his horse and with his men went to a distant eminence to watch the passage.

The Pashas Halil and Murad were indeed crossing. As far as the eye could reach it saw scows and rafts propelled by oars with measured strokes in the clear water. Janissaries and spahis were moving together in great force, for craft

for the passage had long been prepared at Khotsim. Moreover great masses of troops were standing on the bank in the distance. Pan Michael had supposed that they would build a bridge, but the Sultan had not yet moved his main army. Meanwhile Pan Lantskoronski arrived with his men and they set out for Kamenets with the little knight. Pan Pototski was awaiting them in the city. His quarters were full of the commanding officers, and in front of the quarters were assembled both sexes disquieted, careworn, and curious.

"The enemy is crossing and Jvanets is occupied!" said the little knight.

"The works are completed, and we are waiting," replied Pan Pototski.

The tidings spread to the crowd who began to make a noise like waves.

"To the gates! to the gates!" resounded through the city. "The foe is in Jvanets!" Men and women ran to the fortifications expecting to see the foe; but the soldiers would not let them go to the strategical points.

"Go home!" they cried to the crowds; "you will hinder the defence. Your wives will soon see the Turks close at hand."

However there was no terror in the city, for the news of that day's victory had already spread and it was naturally exaggerated. The soldiers related marvels of the encounter.

"Pan Volodiyovski defeated the janissaries, the Sultan's own guard," was repeated by every lip. "It is not for Infidels to measure strength with Pan Volodiyovski. He cut down the Pasha himself. The Devil is not so terrible as he is painted! And they could not stand against our troops. Good for you dog-brothers! Destruction to you and your Sultan!"

The women again appeared at the entrenchments and bastions laden with flasks of gorzalka, wine, and mead. This time they were gladly welcomed and the soldiers became very joyful. Pan Pototski did not object to this as he wanted to stimulate the courage and cheerfulness of the men, and because there was an inexhaustible supply of ammunition in the city and castle he allowed them to fire salvos in the hope that these sounds of joy would dispirit the foe if it should hear them.

Pan Volodiyovski remained at the quarters of the General of Podolia till nightfall and then he mounted his horse and

tried to escape unobserved with his servant to the convent, with the desire of being with his wife as soon as possible. But his attempt was frustrated, for he was recognized and crowds surrounded his horse. Shouts and vivats arose. Mothers lifted up their children to him.

"There he is! look at him, remember him!" cried many voices. He was greatly admired; but people who knew nothing about war were astonished at his diminutive stature. They could not get it into their heads that so small a man with such a pleasant face, could be the Commonwealth's most terrible soldier, and one whom none could resist. But he rode through the throngs and smiled from time to time, for he was gratified. When he arrived at the convent he fell into Bashka's open arms.

She already knew of the deeds he had performed that day and of all his masterly strokes; the Under-Chamberlain of Podolia had just left the convent and, as an eye-witness, he had given her a detailed report. At the beginning of his tale Bashka had called in all the women present in the convent,—the ladies Pototska, Makovyetska, Humyetska, Ketting, and Hotsimirska,—and as the Under-Chamberlain proceeded she began to be greatly puffed up in their presence. Volodiyovski arrived just after the women had gone. After the greetings the wearied knight sat down to supper. Basia sat beside him, heaped his plate with food and poured mead into his goblet. He was glad to eat and drink for scarcely anything had passed his lips the whole day. In the intervals of eating he would tell something to Bashka, who listened with sparkling eyes and shook her head as was her wont and asked:

"Aha! Well! What then? what then?"

"There are powerful and very savage men among them, but it is difficult to find a Turk who is a swordsman," said the little knight.

"Then I could meet any of them?"

"You could, but you won't, for I won't take you."

"Not for once in my life? You know, little Michael, when you go outside the walls I am not even restless; I know that no one can touch you."

"But can't they shoot me?"

"Be quiet! Is there not a Lord God? You will not let them cut you down, and that's the chief thing."

"I will not let one or two slay me."

"Nor three, Michael, nor four."

"Nor four thousand," said Zagloba, imitating her. "If you only knew, Michael, how she behaved while the Under-Chamberlain was telling the story! I thought I should burst with laughter. As I love God! she snorted just like a goat and looked each woman in the face to see if she was properly impressed. I was afraid that at last the goat would begin to butt;—no very decent spectacle."

The little knight stretched himself after his meal, for he was quite tired; then he suddenly drew Basia to his side and said:

"My quarters in the castle are prepared, but I don't want to go back. Bashka, I suppose I may as well stay here to-night!"

"As you please, little Michael," she replied lowering her eyes.

"Aha!" cried Zagloba, "they regard me here as a mushroom instead of a man, for the abbess invites me to live in the convent. But I'll pay her out; my head on it! Have you noticed how Pani Hotsomirska is casting eyes at me? . . . She's a young widow,—all right!—I won't say any more."

"I think I'll stay," said the little knight.

"If you will only rest well," said Basia.

"Why shouldn't he rest?" cried Zagloba

"Because we shall talk, and talk, and talk."

Pan Zagloba wanted to retire and turned to look for his cap; at last when he found it, he put it on his head and said:

"You will not talk, and talk, and talk."

Then he went out.

CHAPTER XVI.

The next morning at daybreak the little knight went to Knyahin where he fought with the Spahis and captured Buluk Pasha, a famous warrior among the Turks. He spent the whole day in the field, and part of the night taking council with Pan Pototski, and not till the first cock-crow did he lay down his tired head for a little sleep. But he had scarcely fallen into a sweet and deep slumber when he was aroused by the thunder of cannon. His faithful Jmudjian friend and servant Pientk came into the room.

"Sir," he said, "the enemy is before the city."

The little knight jumped out and asked:

"What guns are those?"

"Ours, ours, frightening the Pagans. There is a large body driving cattle off the meadows."

"Are they janissaries or cavalry?"

"Cavalry: quite sorcerers! Our side is frightening them with the Holy Cross, for who knows but that they are devils?"

"Devils or no devils, we must be at them," said the little knight. "Go to the lady and tell her that I am in the field. If she likes to come to the castle to watch she may, if she comes with Pan Zagloba, for I have the greatest confidence in his foresight."

Half an hour later Pan Michael rode into the field at the head of some dragoons and volunteer nobles who thought they would have an opportunity to distinguish themselves in skirmishing. From the old castle a perfect view was to be had of the cavalry, about two thousand in number, partly composed of spahis, but principally of the Egyptian guard of the Sultan. In the latter served wealthy and generous mamelukes from the Nile. Their mail of shining scales, their brilliant kefis, woven with gold, on their heads, their white burnouses and their weapons set with jewels, made them the most brilliant cavalry in the world. They were armed with darts fixed on jointed canes, and curved swords, and knives. Mounted on horses as swift as the wind, they swept over the

field like a rainbow-colored cloud, yelling and brandishing the deadly darts. The Poles in the castle could not look at them enough.

Pan Volodiyovski advanced against them with his cavalry. However it was difficult for both sides to meet with cold steel as the Turks were held in check by the cannon of the castle and they were too numerous for the little knight to go to them and have a trial of strength out of the range of their own cannon. So for some time both sides circled about at a distance brandishing their weapons and uttering loud cries. But at length these empty threats evidently grew distasteful to the fiery sons of the desert, for suddenly single horsemen began to separate from the mass and advance, calling loudly to their opponents. Soon they scattered over the field and gleamed on it like flowers driven in various directions by the wind. Volodiyovski looked at his own men.

"Worthy gentlemen," he said, "they are challenging us. Who will go to the skirmish?"

The fiery cavalier, Pan Vasilkovski, was the first to spring out followed by Pan Mushalski, the infallible archer, but also an excellent skirmisher in hand to hand fight; after them came Pan Myazga of the Prus coat-of-arms who could carry away a finger-ring on the point of his lance at full gallop; after Pan Myazga came Pan Teodor Paderevski, Pan Ozievich, Pan Shmlud-Plotski, Prince Ovsyani, and Pan Murkos-Sheluta, with several other fine cavaliers; a small party of the dragoons also went, attracted by the hope of rich spoil, and most of all, by the matchless horses of the Arabs. The grim Lusnia headed the dragoons, gnawing his yellow moustache and picking out the richest foe from a distance.

It was a beautiful day. They were perfectly visible. One by one the cannon on the walls became silent, till at last all firing had ceased, for the gunners were afraid of hurting their own men; they also preferred to watch the fray than to fire at scattered skirmishers. The two sides advanced towards each other at a walk, at first leisurely and then at a trot, not in line but independently as each man pleased. At length, as they neared each other, they reined in their horses and began to abuse one another to excite their own anger and courage.

"You will not put on any flesh with us, Infidel dogs!" cried the Poles. "Your foul Prophet will not protect you here!"

The others responded in Turkish and Arabic. Many of the skirmishing Poles were acquainted with both tongues, for,

like the famous archer, many had passed through harsh captivity; and so, when the Infidels blasphemed the Most Holy Virgin with special insolence, the servants of Mary felt their hair stand up on their heads with rage and they spurred their horses forward to take vengeance on those who insulted her name.

Who struck the first blow and deprived a man of precious life? First Pan Mushalski with an arrow pierced a young bey, with a purple kefi on his head and dressed in mail of silver scales bright as moonlight. The agonising shaft sank below his left eye, burying itself half its length in his head. He threw back his beautiful head and spread out his arms and fell from his horse. The archer put his bow under his thigh and sprang forward and cut him with the sabre in addition; then, seizing the bey's beautiful weapons, and driving his horse towards the castle with the flat of his sword, he cried aloud in Arabic:

"I wish he were the Sultan's own son. He would rot here before you played the last 'kindya.'"

"When the Turks and Egyptians heard that they were furious and two beys immediately sprang together at Pan Mushalski, but Lusnia, who was as savage as a wolf, intercepted them from one side and bit one of them to death in the twinkling of an eye. He first slashed him over the hand and, as the bey stooped for his fallen scimitar, Lusnia almost severed his neck with a terrible stroke. At that sight the other bey wheeled his horse as swift as the wind to escape, but at that instant Pan Mushalski again took his bow from under his thigh and sent an arrow after the fugitive; it reached him on his flight and sank between his shoulder-blades almost to the feathers.

Pan Shmlud-Plotski was the third to finish his enemy, striking him on the helmet with a sharp battle-axe. The blow drove in the silk and velvet lining of the steel and the hooked point of the axe was imbedded so firmly in the skull that for some time Pan Shmlud-Plotski could not draw it forth. Others fought with varied fortune, but the nobles, being the more skilful fencers, were generally victorious. However two dragoons fell by the powerful hand of Hamdi Bey, who then clove the face of Prince Ovsyani with a scimitar and stretched him on the field. Prince Ovsyani watered his native soil with his blood. Hamdi then turned to Pan Sheluta, whose horse had put its foot into a burrow.

Sheluta, seeing that death was inevitable, preferred to meet the terrible horseman on foot and sprang to the ground. But Hamdi overthrew the Pole with the chest of his horse and reached the falling man's arm with the very point of his scimitar. The arm fell and the bey dashed on through the field in search of other adversaries.

But not many had the courage to meet him, as he was so manifestly and greatly their superior in strength. The wind lifted his white burnoose on his shoulders and fluttered it like the wings of a bird of prey; his gold-wrought mail cast an ominous gleam on his almost black countenance, with its wild and flashing eyes; a scimitar gleamed above his head like the moon's sickle on a clear night.

The famous archer despatched two arrows at him, but both merely clashed against his mail and fell powerless on the grass. After the second, Pan Mushalski hesitated whether to shoot a third at the neck of the horse, or rush on the bey with his sabre. But while he was considering the bey caught sight of him and spurred his black stallion towards him.

Both met in the middle of the field. With the desire of exhibiting his great strength and taking Hamdi alive, Pan Mushalski struck up his scimitar with a powerful blow and closed with him; he grasped the bey's throat with one hand and his pointed helmet with the other and dragged from his horse. But his own saddle-girth broke and the matchless archer slipped with it and fell to the ground. Hamdi struck the falling man on the head with the hilt of his scimitar and stunned him. The spahis and mamelukes, who had been fearful on Hamdi's account, now raised joyous shouts and the Poles were greatly distressed. Then the opposing sides dashed towards each other in thick masses, the one to capture the archer and the other to protect his body.

Until now the little knight had taken no part in the skirmish, as his dignity as colonel would not allow it; but, on seeing the fall of Mushalski and the mastery of Hamdi, he determined to avenge the archer and at the same time give heart to his own men. Fired with this thought, he set spurs to his horse and flew across the field as swiftly as a hawk swoops on a flock of plover circling above the stubble. Bashka saw him from the battlements as she gazed through a glass and immediately cried out to Zagloba at her side:

"Michael is charging! Michael is charging!"

"You will recognize him," answered the old warrior. "Watch closely; see where he strikes the first blow! Fear not!"

The glass shook in Bashka's hand. Though as yet there was no discharge in the field from bows or janissary guns, she was not greatly alarmed about her husband's life, still she was seized with ardor, curiosity, and disquietude. At that moment her heart and soul seemed to have left her body and to be flying after him. Her breast heaved quickly and her face flushed deeply. At one moment she had leaned so far over the battlement that Zagloba seized her by the waist for fear that she might fall in to the moat.

"Two are charging Michael," she cried.

"There will be two less," replied Zagloba.

In fact two spahis came out against the little knight. They knew from his uniform that he was a man of some importance and, seeing the diminutive size of the horseman, they thought to gain glory cheaply. The fools! they were flying to certain death; for, when they came up the little knight did not even rein in his horse, but delivered two blows, apparently as light as when a mother pushes two children as she passes. They both fell to the ground and dug their fingers into it and writhed like two lynxes simultaneously struck by two death-dealing arrows.

The little knight sped on towards other horsemen dashing about the field and commenced to spread terrible disaster. As at the end of Mass a boy comes in with a metal extinguisher on a pole and puts out the candles on the altar one after another and the altar is left in darkness, so Pan Michael quenched right and left the brilliant Turkish and Egyptian horsemen and they sank into the shades of death. The Infidels recognized a master above all others and their hearts fainted in them. One by one they turned their horses so as to avoid the terrible leader; the little knight pursued the fugitives like a vicious wasp and pierced one after another with his sting.

At this sight the castle gunners uttered joyous shouts. Some of them rushed up to Basia and kissed the hem of her robe in the height of their enthusiasm; others abused the Turks.

"Restrain yourself, Basia!" cried Zagloba every few moments, while he kept hold of her waist; but Pani Volodiyovska wanted to laugh and cry and clap her hands and shout and watch and fly to her husband in the field.

He continued to despatch spahis and Egyptian beys, till at last cries of "Hamdi! Hamdi!" arose throughout the field.

The followers of the Prophet called aloud for their greatest warrior to match himself with this terrible little cavalier who appeared to be Death in person.

Hamdi had seen the little knight for some time; but at the sight of his exploits he was simply afraid of him. He was terrified at the thought of risking at the same time his great fame and young life against such a dread opponent, and so he pretended not to see him and began to busy himself at the other end of the field. He had just put an end to Pan Yalbjyk and Pan Kos when despairing cries of "Hamdi! Hamdi!" reached his ear. He saw then that he could not keep out of the way any longer and that he must win boundless glory or lose his life. At that moment he uttered so shrill a cry all the cliffs echoed and he spurred his horse as swiftly as a whirlwind towards the little knight.

Volodiyovski saw him from afar and also dug his spurs into the sides of his Wallachian bay. All the others paused in the armed dispute. At the castle, Basia, who had just before witnessed all the deeds of the terrible Hamdi-Bey, became rather pale notwithstanding her blind faith in the little knight, the unconquerable swordsman; but Zagloba was quite easy.

"I would rather be the heir of that Infidel than that Infidel himself," he said sententiously to Basia.

Pientk, the slow Jmudjian, was so sure of his master that his face was not shaded with the least anxiety, but seeing Hamdi charging he began to hum a popular song:

"O thou foolish, foolish watch-dog,
That's a grey wolf from the forest.
Why dost thou chase him
If thou art not able to overcome him?"

The champions met in the centre of the field between the two ranks who looked on from a distance. For a moment the hearts of all died within them. Then serpentine lightning seemed to flash in the bright sun above the heads of the combatants; but the scimitar flew out of Hamdi's hand like an arrow from a bowstring; he bowed on his saddle as if pierced by the point of a blade and closed his eyes. Pan Volodiyovski grasped his neck with his left hand and holding his sabre to his armpit, turned towards his own men. Hamdi offered no resistance; he even spurred his horse forward, for

he felt the point between his armpit and armor. He went like one stunned, with his hands hanging powerless, and tears began to fall from his eyes. Volodiyovski turned him over to the cruel Lusnia, and himself returned to the field.

But trumpets and pipes sounded in the Turkish ranks as a signal for the skirmishers to retreat. They began to retire towards their own troops, carrying with them humiliation, rage, and the memory of the terrible horseman.

"That was Shaitan!" (Satan) the spahis and mamelukes said to each other. "He who meets that man is doomed to death! Shaitan, no other!"

The Polish skirmishers remained for some time to show that they held the field; then, raising three shouts of victory, they withdrew under the cover of their own guns which Pan Pototski ordered to fire again. But the Turks began to retreat altogether. For some time yet their burnouses and their colored kefis and glittering helmets gleamed in the sun and then disappeared on the horizon.

Only the Turks and Poles who had fallen beneath the sword remained. Servants came out of the castle to collect and bury their own people. The ravens came to work at the burial of the Infidels, but they did not stay long, for fresh legions of the Prophet frightened them away that evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

On the following day the vizir himself arrived before Kamenets at the head of a numerous army of spahis, janissaries, and general levies from Asia. From the great strength of his force it was concluded that he would storm the place at once; but he wished only to examine the walls. Engineers accompanied him to inspect the fortress and earthworks. Pan Myslishevski this time went out against the vizir with some infantry and mounted volunteers. Another skirmish began which was favorable to the besieged, though not so brilliant as the previous day. At last the vizir ordered the janissaries to make an attempt against the walls. The thunder of cannon at once shook the city and castle. When the janissaries came opposite the command of Pan Podchaski they all fired a great volley; but Pan Podchaski answered from above with a well-directed fire and, as there was some fear of cavalry flanking the janissaries, they retired along the Jvanets road and returned to the main camp.

In the evening a certain Bohemian slunk into the city; he had been a groom of the aga of the janissaries and had deserted after being bastinadoed. The Poles learned from him that the Turks had fortified themselves at Jvanets and occupied broad meadows on this side of the Dljuka village. They made minute inquiries of the fugitive as to the general opinion among the Turks whether they could capture Kamenets or not. He replied that the courage of the army was high and the omens were favorable. A couple of days before a kind of column of smoke, slender at the base and expanding above in the form of a great bush, had risen from the earth in front of the Sultan's pavilion. The muftis had interpreted this as signifying that the glory of the Padishah would reach to the Heavens and that he would be the ruler to crush Kamenets, hitherto impregnable. This had greatly strengthened the hearts of all in the army. The fugitive added: "The Turks fear Pan Hetman Sobieski and relief; they remember of old the danger of meeting the troops of the Commonwealth

in the open field, though they are willing to meet Venetians, Hungarians, or any other people. But, since they have intelligence that there are no troops in the Commonwealth, they are generally of the opinion that they will take Kamenets, though not without trouble. **Black Mustafa**, the kaimakan, has simply counselled to storm the walls; but the more cautious vizir prefers to invest the city with regular works and rain grenades into it. After the first skirmishes the Sultan agreed with the vizir, and so a regular siege is to be looked for."

Thus spoke the deserter. On hearing this news, Pan Pototski, and the bishop, the Under-Chamberlain, Pan Volodiyovski and all the other superior officers were greatly grieved. They had reckoned on stormings and hoped by the defensive condition of the place to repulse them with severe loss to the enemy. They knew by experience that storming-parties suffer great losses, and that every attack repulsed weakens their courage and strengthens that of the besieged. As at Zbaraj the knights at last came to delight in resistance, battle, and sorties, so the inhabitants of Kamenets might acquire the love of fight, especially if every attack should end in defeat for the Turks and victory for the city.

But a regular siege, in which the digging of approaches and mines and the emplacement of guns constitute the whole matter, would only tire out the besieged, weaken their spirit, and incline them to negotiate. It was difficult also to depend upon sorties, for it was not wise to strip the walls of soldiers, and should the servants and others be led beyond the walls, they could hardly withstand against the janissaries.

When they considered all this the chief officers were greatly troubled and it seemed less likely that the defence would have a happy ending. In fact there was small chance of success on account of the state of affairs among themselves as well as on account of the Turkish force. Pan Volodiyovski was a matchless soldier and very celebrated, but he did not possess the majesty of greatness. The man who has the sun in himself can warm all others wherever they may be; but he who is merely a flame, however ardent, can only warm those who are closest to him. Thus it was with the little knight. He did not know how to inspire others with his own spirit, and could not do it even as he could not impart his own skill in fencing. Pan Pototski, the supreme chief, was no warrior; and moreover he had no faith in himself, or in others,

or in the Commonwealth. The bishop relied principally on negotiations; his brother had a heavy hand, but his head was equally heavy. Relief was improbable, for, though the Hetman, Pan Sobieski, was a great man, he had no power at that time. Powerless also was the King and the entire Commonwealth.

On the 16th of August the Khan arrived with the Horde, and Doroshenko with his Cossacks, and occupied an enormous expanse of the fields extending from Orynina. Sufan Kazi Aga on that day invited Pan Myslishevski to a conference and advised him to surrender the place, for by so doing he would receive more favorable conditions than had ever yet been heard of in the history of sieges. The bishop was curious to learn what were these favorable conditions, but he was shouted down in the council and a refusal was sent back in reply. On the 18th of August the Turks began to advance, and the Sultan with them.

They came on like a boundless ocean,—infantry, janissaries, and spahis. Each pasha led the forces of his own pashalik, comprising inhabitants of Europe, Asia, and Africa. They were followed by an enormous train of baggage-wagons, drawn by mules and buffaloes. That hundred-hued swarm, variously costumed and armed, seemed to be endless. From dawn till night those leaders kept coming, moved from place to place, stationed posted troops, moved about in the fields and pitched their tents, that occupied such tremendous expanse that from the towers and highest points of Kamenets not a field free from canvas was visible. It looked to the gazers as if snow had fallen and covered the whole region round about. The work was accomplished amid volleys of musketry, for the jannissaries protecting it fired ceaselessly at the walls of the fortress and were answered by a continuous cannonade from the walls. The cliffs echoed the thunder and smoke rose and obscured the blue of the sky. Towards evening Kamenets was so hemmed in that nothing could leave it but pigeons. The firing ceased only when the first stars began to twinkle.

For several succeeding days the firing at and from the walls was kept up without ceasing. It resulted in great loss to the besiegers, for immediately a group of janissaries gathered within range, white smoke spurted from the walls and balls fell among them, scattering them like a flock of sparrows when they are fired at with fine shot from a musket. In the meantime the Turks, being evidently ignorant that in both castles

and in the town there were long-range guns, pitched their tents too near. By Pan Michael's advice this was allowed, and not till the hour of rest, when the soldiers had crowded into those tents to avoid the heat, did the walls roar with continuous thunder. Then there was a panic; the balls tore through the tents, broke the poles, struck the soldiers, and scattered sharp fragments of rock about. The janissaries retreated in dismay and confusion, uttering loud cries; in their flight they overturned other tents and carried fear with them in every direction. While they were in this disorder Pan Volodiyovski fell upon them with troopers and hewed them till a strong force of cavalry came to their aid. Ketling principally directed this fire, and next to him the Polish bailiff, Cyprian, effected the most havoc among the Infidels. He sighted every gun and applied the match himself; then he would shield his eyes with his hand and watch the effect of the shot, exulting in his success.

However, the Turks were digging approaches, making intrenchments, and arming them with heavy guns. But, before firing them, a Turkish envoy came under the walls, fastened a letter from the Sultan to a pike, and exhibited it to the besieged. The Sultan summoned the city to surrender, while extolling his own power and clemency to the skies.

"My army," he wrote, "may be likened to the leaves of the forest, and the sands of the sea. Look at the sky and, when you see the countless stars, let your hearts be afraid and say one to another, 'Behold, such is the force of the believers. But because I am a king, merciful above all other things, and a grandson of the True God, I receive my right from God. Know that I hate stubborn men, therefore do not oppose my will but surrender your city. If you resist, you shall all perish under the sword, and no voice of man will be raised against me.'"

They consulted at length what reply to give to this letter and rejected Zagloba's rash advice to cut off a dog's tail and send it by way of a response. Finally they despatched a man named Yuritsa, who was well versed in Turkish. He carried a letter that read as follows:

"We have no desire to anger the Sultan, but we do not consider it our duty to obey him, for we have not taken an oath to him but to our own lord. We will not surrender Kamenets, for we are bound by an oath to defend the fortress and churches so long as we have life."

After this reply the officers went to their posts on the walls. Bishop Lantskoronski and the General of Podolia took advantage of their absence to send another letter to the Sultan, asking for an armistice of four weeks. When the news of this spread around the gates there was an uproar and clattering of sabres. The officers said to each other, "Here we are roasting at the guns and behind our backs they are secretly sending letters, although we are members of the council."

At the evening 'kindya,' the officers went in a body to the General of Podolia, with the little knight and the stolnik of Latychof at their head, both being greatly upset by what had occurred.

"How is this?" asked Makovyetska. "Are you already thinking of surrendering, since you have sent another envoy? Why was this done without informing us?"

"Indeed," said the little knight, "since we were called to the council it was wrong to send any letters without our knowledge. Neither will we allow anyone to utter the word 'surrender,' if anybody wants to do so let him resign his post."

His lips twitched as he spoke; since he was a soldier of the most scrupulous obedience he was deeply grieved to speak thus against his superiors. But as he had vowed to defend the castle to the death, he thought: "It is incumbent on me to speak."

The General of Podolia was confused and replied:

"I thought it was done with general consent."

"There is no consent. We will die here!" cried many voices.

"I am glad to hear that," said the General, "for faith is dearer to me than life, and I have never known cowardice, and never shall. Noble gentlemen, stay to supper, and we shall come to an agreement more readily."

But they would not stay.

"Our place is at the gates, not at the table," said the little knight.

At this moment the bishop arrived, and, learning what was the matter, he at once turned to Pan Makovyetska and the little knight.

"Worthy gentlemen," he said, "we are all agreed in what we have at heart and nobody has said a word about surrendering. I sent to ask for an armistice for four weeks; I wrote thus: 'In that interval we will send to our king for help and await his instructions and God will decide the rest.'"

When the little knight heard that he was still more dis-

turbed, but now he was carried away with anger and scorn at such military ideas. A soldier from his boyhood, he could not believe his ears, nor that anybody could propose an armistice to a foe to allow him to send for help.

The little knight looked from Makovyetska to the other officers and they looked at him.

"Is this a jest?" cried several voices. Then they were all silent.

"Your lordship," at last said Pan Michael, "I fought through the Tartar, Cossack, Moscow, and Swedish wars, and I never heard of such reasons. The Sultan has come here to please himself, not us. How should he consent to an armistice when we write that at its expiration we expect assistance?"

"If he does not consent, the situation will be still the same," said the bishop.

"Whoever prays for an armistice," said Volodiyovski, "shows fear and weakness, and whoever looks for assistance doubts his own strength. The Infidel will come to this conclusion from your letter, and thus it has wrought irreparable injury."

When the bishop heard this he grew sad and said:

"I might be elsewhere, and because I did not desert my flock in time of need I have to submit to reprimand."

The little knight was immediately sorry for the worthy prelate, so he put his arms about his knees and kissed his hands and said:

"God preserve me from uttering any reprimand here; but as this is a council; I speak what is dictated by my experience."

"What is to be done then? Let the fault be mine, but what is to be done? How repair the harm?" asked the bishop.

"How repair the harm?" repeated Volodiyovski.

After a moment's thought, he joyously raised his head.

"Well, it is possible. Worthy gentlemen, I beg you to follow me."

He went out, followed by the officers. A quarter of an hour later all Kamenets shook with the roar of cannon. Volodiyovski dashed outside the walls with volunteers, and falling upon the sleeping janissaries in the trenches, he sabred them till he dispersed and drove the whole force to the main camp.

Then he returned to the General of Podolia and found the bishop with him.

"Here," he cried joyfully, "here is counsel for Your Highness."

CHAPTER XVIII.

After that sortie the night passed in desultory firing; at dawn it was announced that several were standing near the castle waiting till men were sent out to parley. Let be what would it was necessary to know what they wanted, and so the chiefs Pan Makovyetska and Pan Myslishevski were deputed by the council to meet the Infidels.

A little later they were joined by Pan Casimir Humyetski and they went out. There were three Turks,—Mukhtan-Bey, Salomi, Pasha of Rustchuk, and Kozra, an interpreter. The meeting took place in the open air outside the castle gate. On seeing the envoys the Turks began to bow and put the tips of their fingers to their hearts, mouths, and brows; the Poles politely saluted them, and inquired their mission. Salomi replied:

“Dear men, a great wrong, over which all who love justice must weep, has been done to our Lord, and for this the Eternal will punish you unless you correct it without delay. Behold, of your own will you sent Yuritsa, who beat his forehead before our vizir and prayed him for a suspension of hostilities. When we, trusting in your virtue, left the trenches, you commenced to fire on us with cannon and, springing out from behind the walls, you strewed the ground with corpses to the very tents of the Padishah; which deed cannot go unpunished unless you at once surrender the castle and the city and exhibit great regret and repentance.”

To this Makovyetska made reply:

“Yuritsa is a dog who exceeded his instructions, for he ordered his attendants to display a white flag, for which he will be judged. On his own initiative the bishop made inquiries whether an armistice could be arranged; but you did not cease firing during the despatch of those letters. (I myself am witness to that, since I was wounded in the mouth by shattered stones.) So that you have no right to ask us to cease firing. If you have now come prepared with an armistice, it is well; if not, tell your lord, dear men, that we will defend the walls

and town as before until we perish, or, what is more certain, until you, dear men, perish among these rocks. We have nothing more to give you except wishes that God may multiply your days and permit you to live to an old age."

Then the envoys immediately separated. The Turks returned to the vizir, and Makovyetska, Humyetski, and Myslishevski to the castle. They were deluged with questions as to how they had dismissed the envoys. They repeated the Turkish message.

"Don't accept it, dear brothers," said Casimir Humyetski. "In short, those dogs want us to deliver up the keys of the city before evening."

To this many voices answered with their favorite expression:

"That Infidel dog will not put on flesh with us. We will not surrender; we will drive him away in disorder. We do not want him."

After this decision they all separated and the firing at once recommenced. The Turks had already succeeded in mounting many heavy guns and their balls flew over the ramparts and began to fall into the city. The gunners in the city and castles worked in the sweat of their brow for the rest of the day and all night. When a man fell there was no one to take his place, and they were short of men to carry ammunition. Not till nearly dawn did the uproar somewhat abate.

But the day was scarcely growing grey in the east and the rosy gold-edged band of dawn appearing when the alarm was sounded in both castles. All who were sleeping sprang to their feet and drowsy crowds poured into the streets intently listening. "They are getting ready to storm," some of them said to the others as they pointed in the direction of the castle. "But is Pan Volodiyovski there?" frightened voices asked. "He is," others replied.

The chapel bells were rung in the castles and everywhere was heard the roll of drums. In the morning twilight, when the town was comparatively silent, these noises sounded solemn and mysterious. At that moment the Turks played the "kindya;" one band took it up from another and so it rolled throughout the enormous camp. The Infidels began to swarm about the tents. As the dawn brightened, the mounds, trenches, and approaches started out of the darkness extending in a long line facing the castle. The heavy Turkish guns immediately thundered along the whole line; the cliffs of the

Smotrych echoed back the thunder and the noise was as dreadful as if all the thunders in heaven's magazine had caught fire and exploded at once and brought down the dome of clouds with them to the earth.

That was an artillery battle. The city and castles gave mighty response. The sun and daylight were soon obscured by the smoke and the Turkish works were invisible. Kamenets was hidden and only one immense cloud filled with lightning, thunder and uproar, was to be seen. But the guns of the Turks carried farther than those of the city. Death soon began to cut down people in Kamenets. Several guns were dismantled. At the arquebuses men fell by twos and threes. A Franciscan Father while blessing the guns had his nose and part of his lip carried away by a wedge from under a cannon and two very resolute Jews who were assisting to work that gun were killed.

But the Turkish guns played principally on the city entrenchments. Pan Casimir Humyetski sat there like a salamander amid tremendous fire and smoke; half of his company had fallen and nearly all the survivors were wounded. He himself had lost his speech and hearing; but with the assistance of the Polish mayor he silenced the enemy's battery, at least till fresh guns were brought up.

A day passed, and a second, and third; and that dreadful artillery duel did not cease for an instant. The Turks had four reliefs of gunners a day; but in the city the same men had to work the whole time without sleep and almost without food; half-stifled with smoke, many were wounded with flying masonry and splinters of the gun-carriages. The soldiers were steadfast but the hearts of the inhabitants began to fail them. At last it became necessary to drive them with clubs to the guns, where they fell in heaps. Fortunately, on the third evening, from Thursday to Friday, the guns were chiefly turned on the castles.

Both, but the old one especially, were showered with bombs from the great mortars which, however, did little damage because each grenade was visible in the dark and a man could avoid it. But towards morning, when the men were seized with such weariness that they could not keep their feet, they perished in considerable numbers.

The little knight, Ketling, Myslishevski, and Kvasibrodzi replied to the Turkish fire from the castles. The General of Podolia visited them repeatedly and moved unconscious of danger, though anxious, amid a hail of bullets.

However, towards evening, when the fire had grown still hotter, Pan Pototski approached Pan Volodiyovski.

"Colonel," he said, "we shall not hold out."

"We shall hold out so long as they confine themselves to firing," answered the little knight, "but they will blow us out of here with mines, for they are constructing them."

"Are they really mining?" asked the general in alarm.

Volodiyovski replied:

"Seventy guns are playing and their roar is almost continuous, but there are quiet moments. When one comes, lean your ear intently, and listen."

Just then it was not necessary to wait long, more especially as an accident favored them. One of the Turkish siege-guns burst, causing considerable confusion. From other trenches inquiries were made as to what had occurred, and so the bombardment temporarily ceased.

Pan Michael and the General approached the edge of one of the abutments of the castle and began to listen. Presently they clearly discerned the sound of pickaxes striking the stone of the wall.

"They are mining," said Pan Pototski.

"They are mining," repeated the little knight.

Then they were silent. The General's face betrayed great alarm; he lifted his hands and pressed his brow. Seeing that Volodiyovski said:

"That is the usual thing in every siege. At Zbaraj they were digging under us night and day."

The general raised his head.

"What did Prince Vishnyovyetski do?"

"We retired from wide ramparts within narrower ones."

"But what ought we to do?"

"We ought to take the guns and everything movable with them and transfer them to the old castle; for that is founded on rock that the Turks cannot mine. I always thought that the new castle would merely serve as the first line of defence; after that we must blow it up with powder and the real defence will commence in the old one."

A moment's silence followed, and the General again bowed his anxious head.

"But if we have to evacuate the old castle, where shall we go?" he asked in a broken voice.

At this question the little knight straightened himself and pointed his finger to the earth:

"I shall go there!"

At that moment the guns again thundered and a whole flock of grenades began to fly to the castle; but as darkness shrouded the world they were perfectly visible. Volodiyovski took leave of the general and went round the walls. Proceeding from one battery to another he encouraged the men everywhere and gave advice; at last he met Ketling and said:

"Well, how goes it?"

Ketling smiled.

"The grenades make it as bright as day," he said, pressing the little knight's hand. "They do not stint us with fire."

"One of their good guns burst; did you do it?"

"I did."

"I am dreadfully sleepy."

"So am I, but there is no leisure for that."

"Bah!" exclaimed Volodiyovski, "and the little wives must be frightened; at that thought sleep takes flight."

"They are praying for us," said Ketling, raising his eyes towards the flying grenades.

"God grant health to mine and thine!" cried Pan Michael.

"There are no women among all upon earth"—began Ketling.

But he did now conclude, for the little knight at that moment turned towards the interior of the castle and suddenly cried loudly:

"For Heaven's sake! Save us! What do I see?"

And he sprang forward. Ketling looked round in astonishment. A few paces distant in the courtyard of the castle he saw Basia, Zagloba, and the Jmudjian Pientk.

"To the wall! to the wall!" cried the little knight, dragging them as quickly as possible under cover of the battlements. "For Heaven's sake!"

"Ah!" said Zagloba brokenly, as he panted, "persuade such a woman yourself if you can. I remonstrate with her and say, 'You will destroy both yourself and me.' I kneel down,—no use. Could I allow her to go alone? Ugh! No use, no use! 'I will go, I will go,' I cried. Take her!"

There was fear in Basia's face and her brow was puckered as if about to weep. But it was not the grenades that she dreaded, nor the whizzing of the balls, nor the scattering stone, but her husband's anger. So she clasped her hands like a child in fear of punishment and exclaimed in sobbing tones:

"I could not, Michael dear; as I love you I could not.

Don't be angry, Michael dear! I cannot stay there while you are perishing here. I cannot, I cannot!" . . .

Indeed at first he was angry and had exclaimed, "Bashka, you have no fear of God!" but he was seized with a sudden tenderness and his voice stuck in his throat, and not till that beloved shining head was resting on his breast did he say:

"You are my faithful friend until death."

And he kissed her hands.

But Zagloba went up to the wall and said to Ketling.

"And yours wanted to come too, but we deceived her, telling her that we were not coming. How could she come in such a state? . . . A general of artillery will be born to you. I'm a rascal if he won't be a general. Well, on the bridge between the city and the castle the grenades are falling like peas. I thought I should burst, . . . with anger, not with fear. . . . I slipped on some sharp pieces of shell and cut myself. I shan't be able to sit down for a week without pain. The nuns will have to anoint me without minding their modesty. . . . Phew! but those rascals are firing. May the thunderbolts strike them! Pan Pototski wants to resign the command to me. . . . Give the soldiers a drink, or they won't hold out. . . . See that grenade! As God lives, it will fall somewhere near us! Hide yourself, Basia! By God, it is near!"

But the grenade fell far away instead of near, for it fell on the Lutheran church of the old castle. Ammunition had been stored there as the dome was very strong, but the grenade broke the dome and exploded the powder. The foundations of both castles were shaken by an explosion louder than the thunder of guns. Terrified voices were heard on the battlements. Both the Polish and Turkish guns were silent.

Ketling left Zagloba and Volodiyovski left Basia. They both sprang to the walls with all the power of their limbs. For some time they were both heard giving orders with panting breasts; but their voices were drowned by the rattle of drums in the Turkish trenches.

"They will make an assault," whispered Zagloba.

In fact when the Turks heard the explosion they apparently supposed that both castles were destroyed and that the defenders were half buried in the ruins and half paralyzed with fear. Under that impression they prepared to storm the place. Fools! They did not know that only the Lutheran church had gone up! The only effect produced by the ex-

plosion was the shock; not even a gun had been dismounted in the new castle. But the roll of the drums grew more and more hurried in the trenches. Janissaries came crowding out of the trenches and advanced towards the castle at the double. It is true that no lights were visible in the castle or Turkish trenches, but it was a clear night and the moonlight revealed dense masses of janissary white caps rising and falling in the rush like waves driven by the wind. Some thousands of janissaries and several hundred volunteers were dashing on with fury and the certain hope of victory in their hearts; but many of them would never again see the minarets of Stambul, the bright waters of the Bosphorus, and the dark cypresses of the cemeteries.

Volodiyovski ran along the walls like a spirit.

"Don't fire! Wait for the word!" he cried at every gun.

The dragoons with their muskets were lying flat on the battlements, breathing hard with determination. There was silence, except for the hurried tread of the janissaries, sounding like low thunder. The nearer they came the more sure they felt of taking the castle with one stroke. Many thought that those of the defenders who were left had retired into the city and that the battlements were deserted. When they reached the fosse they began to fill it with fascines and sacks of straw; and filled it in the twinkle of an eye. On the walls the silence was unbroken.

But when the front ranks stood on the material with which they had filled the fosse, the report of a pistol was heard in one of the embrasures and a shrill voice shouted:

"Fire!"

Both bastions and the connecting rampart burst at the same moment into one long stream of fire. The thunder of cannon, the rattle of musketry, and the shouts of the storming-party were all mingled. When a dart cast by the hand of a strong hunter plunges half its length into the belly of a bear, the beast rolls itself up, roars, casts itself down, squirms, straightens out, and rolls up again, and the crowd of janissaries and irregulars acted just in that manner. Not a single shot of the defenders was thrown away. Cannon, charged with grape, laid the men as flat as a pavement, exactly as a mighty wind levels standing grain at one blast. Those who were attacking the connecting rampart between the bastions found themselves under three fires, and they became a panic-stricken mass in the centre and fell so thickly that they formed a quiv-

ering heap. Ketling rained grape-shot from two guns on that mass, and at last when they began to take to flight he closed the narrow exit between the two bastions with a shower of lead and iron.

The assault was repulsed along the whole line and the janissaries left the fosse and fled like madmen, howling with terror. In the Turkish trenches they began to throw flaming tar-buckets and torches, turning night into day, so as to make a sortie in pursuit difficult.

Meanwhile, Volodiyovski, seeing that mass hemmed in between the bastions, shouted for his dragoons and sallied out. The hapless Turks again attempted to escape through the exit; but Ketling raked them so dreadfully that he soon obstructed the entrance with a heap of bodies as high as a wall. The survivors were doomed, for the besieged would not take any prisoners, and so they began to defend themselves in desperation. Strong men collected in little groups of two, three, and five, and supporting each other back to back, armed with darts, battle-axes, yatagans, and sabres, fought madly. Their terror, despair, and the certainty of death were changed into a feeling of fury. They were seized with the fever of battle. Some in their rage rushed single-handed on the dragoons. These fell beneath the sabres in an instant. It was a struggle between two opposing furies, for the dragoons, from toil, sleeplessness and hunger, were possessed with the rage of wild animals against a foe to whom they were superior in skill in the use of cold steel; they therefore caused dreadful havoc.

To illuminate more fully the scene of strife, Ketling ordered tar-buckets to be lighted, and their blaze revealed uncontrollable Mazovians fighting with janissaries with sabres and grasping them by the hair and beard. The savage Lusnia in particular raged like a wild bull. At the other end Pan Volodiyovski was fighting in person, and knowing that Bashka was watching him from the walls, he outdid himself. As a savage weasel breaks into grain where a swarm of mice have taken up their abode and does fearful execution among them, so the little knight rushed like a spirit of destruction among the janissaries. His name was already familiar to the besiegers, both from previous encounters and from the tales of the Turks at Khotsim. The impression was general that no man could meet him and escape death, so that many a janissary, hemmed in between the bastions, seeing Pan Michael suddenly before him, did not even defend himself,

but shut his eyes and fell beneath the thrust of the little knight's sword with the word "kismet" on his lips. At last the resistance grew feeble and the remaining Turks rushed to the rampart of bodies that blocked the entrance and were cut to pieces there.

The dragoons then returned across the filled fosse singing, yelling, and panting and reeking with blood; the castle and Turkish trenches cannonaded each other for a time and then were silent. Thus ended that artillery duel that had lasted for several days, concluding with the assault of the janissaries.

"Praise be to God!" cried the little knight, "we shall have rest till the morning 'kindya' at least, and in truth we are entitled to it."

But it was only an apparent rest, for later in the night they heard through the stillness the sound of mattocks striking the stony wall.

"That is worse than artillery," said Ketling as he listened.

"Now would be the time to make a sortie," said the little knight, but it is impossible, as the men are worn out. They have not slept nor have they eaten; for, though they had food, they had no time to take it. Moreover the enemy have some thousands guarding the sappers to prevent opposition from our side. There is nothing for it but to blow up the new castle ourselves and retire into the old one."

"Not to-day," replied Ketling. "Look, the men have fallen like sheaves of corn and are in a stony sleep. The dragoons have not even wiped their sabres."

"Bashka, it is time to go home to sleep," said the little knight.

"Very well Michael," answered Basia obediently, "I will do as you command. But the convent is shut up now; I would rather stay and watch over your sleep."

"I think it very strange," said the little knight, "that sleep has fled from me after such labor, and I have not the least desire to rest my head."

"Because you excited your blood among the janissaries," said Zagloba. "It was always so with me; I could never get any sleep after a battle. But as for Bashka, why should she drag herself to a shut gate? Let her stay here till the morning."

Basia embraced Zagloba in her delight, and the little knight, seeing how anxious she was to stay, said:

"Let us go into the rooms."

They went in, but everything was thick with dust raised by the concussion of the cannon-balls against the walls. It was impossible to stay there, so they went out again and settled down in a niche where the old gate had been walled up.

Pan Michael reclined against the masonry and Basia nestled up to him like a child against its mother. It was a warm and sweet August night. The silver light of the moon illuminated the niche and bathed their faces with its rays. Below, in the courtyard of the castle, were groups of sleeping soldiers and the bodies of those killed during the bombardment, as there had been no time yet to bury them. The tranquil light of the moon stole over those heaps as if that solitary of the sky wanted to find out who was merely asleep from weariness and who had fallen into eternal sleep. Farther away was outlined the wall of the main castle which cast a black shadow half across the courtyard. Beyond the walls, human voices arose from between the bastions where the sabred janissaries lay. They were the camp-followers and those dragoons who preferred spoil to sleep and were stripping the corpses. Their lanterns gleamed like glow-worms over the field of battle. Some of them were calling to one another and one was softly singing a sweet song, strangely at variance with the work in which he was engaged at that moment:

“ Nothing is silver, nothing is gold to me now,
Nothing is fortune.
Then let me starve to death at the crooked fence,
If only beside thee !”

But presently the movement decreased and at last ceased entirely. A silence followed that was broken only by the distant noise of the mattocks striking the rocks and the cries of the sentries on the walls. That silence and moonlight and quiet night soothed Pan Michael and Basia. A vague longing stole into their hearts and a faint pleasant melancholy. Basia raised her eyes to her husband's face and, seeing that his eyes were open, she said:

“Michael dear, you are not asleep?”

“It is strange: I don't want to sleep.”

“Is it pleasant for you here?”

“Quite pleasant. And you?”

Basia nodded her bright head. “Ah, Michael dear, so pleasant! Ah, ah, ah! Didn't you hear what that man was singing? Then she repeated the last words of the little song:

“ Then let me starve to death at the crooked fence,
If only beside thee. . . .”

A moment's silence followed which was interrupted by the little knight:

"Listen to me, Bashka."

"What, Michael dear?"

"To tell the truth we are marvellously happy in each other and I think that if one of us were to fall the grief of the other would be boundless."

Basia quite understood that when the little knight said "if one of us were to *fall*," instead of *die*, he was only thinking of himself. It occurred to her that perhaps he did not expect to survive that siege and wanted to accustom her mind to such an end, so her heart was seized with a terrible presentiment and she clasped her hands and said:

"Michael dear, have pity on yourself and me!"

In somewhat moved though quiet tones the little knight replied:

"But look, Bashka, you are wrong; for if you only think about it, what is this temporal existence? Why should we wrench our feelings about it? Who would be satisfied to possess love and happiness here when everything snaps like a dry twig,—who?"

But Basia was shaken with weeping, and kept repeating:

"I will not! I will not! I will not!"

"As I love God, you are wrong," the little knight repeated. "Look, think of it! above there, beyond that quiet moon is a realm of everlasting bliss. Talk to me of that. Whosoever reaches those fields will take breath for the first time as after a long journey and feed in peace. When my time comes—and that is the business of a soldier—you ought simply to say: 'That's nothing! Michael's gone. True, he has gone far away, farther than Lithuania; but that's nothing, because I shall follow him.' Bashka control yourself; do not weep. The first to go will prepare quarters for the other; that's all."

Here he seemed to obtain a vision of approaching events; for he raised his eyes to the moon and continued:

"What is this mortal life? Grant that I may be there first, waiting for some one to knock at the Gate of Heaven. St. Peter opens it! I look; who is it? My Bashka! Save us! Oh, I shall leap then! Oh, I shall cry then! Dear God, words fail me. And there will be no tears; nothing but endless joy; and there will be no Infidels, nor cannon, nor mines under walls, but only peace and happiness. Ah, Bashka, remember, this life is nothing!"

"Dear Michael, dear Michael!" repeated Basia.

And again silence fell, interrupted only by the distant monotonous sound of the mattocks.

"Bashka, let us say a *Pater* together," Volodiyovski said at last

And those two souls, pure as their tears, began to pray. As they repeated their *Paters* peace fell upon them both, and then sleep mastered them and they slumbered till the first break of day.

Pan Volodiyovski led Basia away before the morning "kindya" to the bridge connecting the city with the old castle. At parting he said:

"Remember, Bashka; it's nothing!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Immediately after the "kindya" the thunder of cannon shook the castles and city. The Turks had dug a fosse beside the castle five hundred ells long. In one place they were digging deep at the wall itself. From their trench the janissary muskets fired constantly at the walls. The besieged made ramparts of leather bags stuffed with wool, but, as missiles and grenades were continually cast from the trenches, the bodies fell thickly around the guns. At one gun, six of Volodiyovski's infantry were killed with one grenade, and other gunners were constantly falling. Before evening the chiefs saw that they could not hold out any longer, especially as the mines might be exploded at any moment. Therefore, during the night, the captains led out their men, and before the morning, in the midst of ceaseless firing, they had transferred all the guns, powder, and provisions to the old castle. They could hold out longer there, as it was built on a rock, and it was particularly difficult to undermine it. When Pan Michael was consulted about the matter at the council of war he stated that he was ready to defend it for a year if no one would enter into negotiations. His words spread to the city, and greatly relieved all hearts, for the people knew that the little knight would keep his word, even at the cost of his own life.

When the new castle was evacuated powerful mines were placed along the front and both bastions. These exploded about noon with a tremendous noise, but caused no serious loss to the Turks, for, remembering yesterday's lesson, they had not yet ventured to occupy the abandoned place. But both bastions and the front and main body of the new castle formed one enormous mass of ruins. It is true that these ruins made it difficult to approach the old castle, but they afforded perfect cover to sharpshooters, and what is worse, to the miners, who, not at all daunted at the sight of the mighty cliff, began to bore a fresh mine. This work was supervised by skillful Italian and Hungarian engineers in

the service of the Sultan, and it made rapid headway. The besieged could not hit the enemy with either cannon or musket, as they were invisible. Pan Michael was thinking of a sortie, but could not immediately undertake it as his soldiers were too weary. Blue lumps as large as loaves of bread had formed on the dragoons' right shoulders from the constant recoil of the butts of their guns. Some could scarcely move their arms. It was plain that, if the boring should continue for any length of time without check, the main gate of the castle would be blown into the air without fail. Foreseeing this, Pan Volodiyovski gave orders to have a high wall built inside the gate, and said without losing courage:

"What do I care? if the gate is blown up, we will defend ourselves behind the wall; if the wall is blown up, we will have a second one made beforehand, and so on, as long as we have an ell of ground under our feet."

"But when the ell is gone?"

"Then we shall be gone too," answered the little knight.

In the meantime, he ordered hand-grenades to be thrown at the enemy, which caused considerable damage. The most effective man at this work was Lieutenant Dembinski, who killed innumerable Turks until a grenade, which he had ignited too soon, burst in his hand and tore it off. Captain Shmit perished in the same way. Many fell by the artillery, and many by musket-shots from the janissaries concealed in the ruins of the new castle. During this time they rarely fired the castle guns, and this considerably disturbed the council. "They are not firing, so it is evident that Volodiyovski himself has doubts about the defence." This was the general opinion; none of the military dared to be the first to say that the only thing left was to obtain the best conditions, but the Bishop, who had no knightly ambition, said so openly; but first, Pan Vasilokovski was sent to the General for news from the castle. He answered: "It is my opinion that the castle cannot hold out till evening, but here they think otherwise."

On reading this reply, even the officers began to say:

"We have done what we could, no one has spared himself, but what is impossible, is impossible. We must think of conditions."

These words reached the city and a great multitude of people assembled in consequence. They thronged in front of the town hall, alarmed, silent, and hostile, rather than

inclined to negotiate. Some rich Armenian merchants were secretly glad that the siege would come to an end and trade begin again, but other Armenians who had long been settled in the Commonwealth were very favorable towards it; in addition to them, the Poles and Russians wanted to defend themselves. "If we wanted to surrender, we ought to have done so at first," it was whispered here and there; we couldn't have obtained much, but now there will be no favorable conditions and it would be better to bury ourselves beneath the ruins."

The murmurs of discontent grew louder and louder, till suddenly they changed into enthusiastic shouts and cheers.

What had happened? On the square Pan Volodiyovski had appeared with Pan Humyetski; as the general had sent them for the purpose of making a report of what had happened in the castle. The crowd was seized with enthusiasm. Some shouted as though the Turks had already burst into the town, while tears came into the eyes of others at the sight of that idolized knight, whose appearance showed his great exertions. His face was black with the smoke of the powder, and haggard; his eyes were red and sunken, but he had a joyous expression. When he and Humyetski had made their way through the crowd and entered the council, they also received a joyful greeting there. The Bishop spoke at once.

"Beloved brothers, he said, "*Nec Hercules contra plures*, the general has already written that you must surrender."

At this, Humyetski, who was very impulsive and of noble family, and didn't care for anyone, cried sharply:

"The general has lost his head, but at least he has this virtue, that he exposes it to danger. As for the defence, I leave that for Pan Volodiyovski to describe, as he is better able."

The eyes of all were turned on the little knight, who twisted his yellow moustache and said:

"For Heaven's sake! who talks about surrendering? have we not sworn to the living God, to fall one above the other?"

"We have sworn to do all that is in our power, and we have done that," replied the Bishop.

"Let every man answer for what he has promised. Ketting and I have vowed not to surrender the castle until death, and we will not surrender, for if I am bound to keep the word of a knight to every man, what must I do to God, who is above all in majesty?"

"But how is it with the castle? We have heard that there is a mine under the gate, can you hold out long?" cried many voices?

"There is, or will be a mine under the gate, but behind the gate there is a good wall, and I have ordered falconets to be mounted on it. Dear brothers, fear the wounds of God; remember that by surrendering you will be forced to give up churches into the hands of Infidels, who will convert them into mosques to celebrate bawdy discourses in them. How can you mention surrender with such a light heart? With what conscience can you think of opening a gate into the heart of the country to the foe? I am in the castle, and have no fear of mines, and you, far away here in the city, are afraid. By the dear Lord, we will not surrender while we live. Let the memory of this defence remain with those who come after us, like the memory of Zbaraj."

"The Turks will reduce the castle to a heap of ruins," cried a voice.

"Let them, we can defend ourselves from a heap of ruins." Here the little knight somewhat lost patience.

"And I will defend myself from a heap of ruins, so help me God. Finally, I tell you, that I will not surrender the castle. Do you hear?"

"But will you destroy the town?" asked the Bishop

"If opposing the Turks will destroy it, I would rather destroy it. I have taken my oath, I will not waste any more words, I will return to the guns for they defend the Commonwealth instead of betraying it."

Then he departed, followed by Humyetski who slammed the door. They both hurried away, for they really felt happier amid ruins, corpses, and shot, than among men of weak faith. Pan Makovyetska overtook them on the way and said:

"Michael, tell the truth, did you talk of resistance only to strengthen their courage, or will you really be able to hold out in the castle?"

The little knight shrugged his shoulders.

"As God is dear to me, if only the city will not surrender I will defend the castle for a year."

"Why don't you fire the guns, that's why people are alarmed and talk about surrendering?"

"We don't fire them because we are busy with the hand-grenades, which have done considerable injury to the mines."

"Listen, Michael, have you sufficient force in the castle to

support the Russian gate from the rear? for if the Turks break in, which God prevent, they will reach the gate. I am keeping watch with my whole force, but with only the townspeople and without soldiers I don't know what to do."

"Then the little knight answered: "Do not fear, dear brother, I have fifteen guns trained on it. Make your mind easy also about the castle. Not only will we defend ourselves, but we will reinforce you at the gates when it is necessary."

When he heard that, Makovyetska was greatly delighted, and wanted to depart, but the little knight detained him, and inquired further:

"Tell me, you are oftener at the council, do they only want to try us, or do they really intend delivering Kamenets into the hands of the Sultan?"

Makovyetska bowed his head.

"Michael," he said, "tell the truth now, must it not end in that? We shall resist for a time yet, one week, two, a month, two months; but it will be the same in the end."

Volodiyovski looked gloomily at him, then he raised his hands and cried,

"And thou too, Brutus, against me! Well, in that case, you will have to enjoy your shame alone. To such diet I am not accustomed."

And they parted with bitterness in their hearts.

The mine under the chief gate of the old castle exploded soon after Pan Volodiyovski's return. Bricks and stones were scattered abroad and dust and smoke arose. The gunners' hearts were overcome with terror. For some time the Turks rushed into the breach as sheep rush through the open gate of a sheepfold, when the shepherd and his assistants drive them in with whips. But Ketling breathed on the mass with the charges of six guns previously prepared on the wall; he breathed once, twice, thrice and swept them out of the court. Volodiyovski, Humyetski, and Myslishevski, hurried up with infantry and dragoons and covered the walls as rapidly as flies on a sultry day cover the carcass of a horse or ox. Then a duel began between the muskets and janissary guns. Balls fell on the wall like rain, or like the grains of wheat cast from the shovel of a sturdy peasant. The Turks were swarming among the ruins of the new castle, they sat in twos, threes, fives, and tens, in every hollow, behind every fragment, behind every stone, and in every gap

in the ruins, and fired without a moment's pause. Fresh reinforcements constantly arrived from the direction of Khotsim. Regiment followed regiment, crouched among the ruins, and immediately began to fire. The new castle seemed to be paved with turbans. From time to time, these masses of turbans suddenly sprang up with frightful yells and sprang to the breach; and then Ketling's voice was raised and the bass of the cannon drowned the rattle of musketry and a storm of grape-shot with a whistling and dreadful rattling threw the mass into confusion, laid them out on the earth, and choked the breach with a quivering heap of human flesh. Four times the janissaries sprang to the assault and four times Ketling hurled them back, and scattered them as a storm scatters a cloud of leaves. Alone, amidst the fire, smoke, showers of earth, and exploding grenades, he seemed an angel of war. His eyes were fixed on the breach and not the slightest anxiety was visible on his calm brow. Now and then he would seize the lintstock from the gunner and touch the priming. Sometimes he would cover his eyes with his hand to watch the effect of the shot; sometimes he would turn with a smile to the Polish officers and say:

"They cannot enter."

Never was the rage of assault repulsed with such fury of resistance. The officers and men emulated each other. It seemed that these men's attention was directed to everything but death, and death mowed them down quickly. Pan Humyetski fell and so did Pan Mokoshytski, the commander of the men of Kiev. At length the white-haired Pan Kalushovski put his hand to his breast with a groan; he was an old friend of Pan Michael's, as gentle as a lamb, but as terrible a soldier as a lion. Pan Michael caught the falling man who cried, "Give me your hand, give me your hand quickly;" then he added, "Praise be to God!" and his face grew as white as his beard and moustache. That was before the fourth attack. A body of janissaries had entered the breach, or rather they could not leave it, because of the too dense cloud of missiles. Pan Michael sprang upon them at the head of his infantry, and they were struck down in a moment with the stocks of the muskets.

Hour followed hour, and the fire did not slacken; but in the meantime, tidings of the heroic defence spread through the town, exciting enthusiasm and martial ardor. The Polish inhabitants, particularly the young men, began to call on

one another, and gaze at one another, and mutually encourage each other. "Let us carry aid to the castle, let us go, let us go. We will not allow our brothers to perish. Come boys!" This kind of exclamation was heard on the square and at the gates, and soon a few hundred men, variously armed, but with courage in their hearts, advanced towards the bridge. The Turks directed a terrible fire on the young men, and stretched many of them in death, but some of them crossed and began to work on the walls with great zeal against the Turks.

The fourth attack of the Turks was repulsed with terrible loss and it seemed that a moment of rest must come. Vain hope! The rattle of the janissary musketry was kept up till evening. Not till the evening kindya was played did the guns become silent and the Turks leave the ruins of the new castle. The surviving officers then went outside the wall. The little knight, without a moment's pause, ordered the breach to be filled up with whatever materials could be found, such as blocks of timber, fascines, earth, and rubbish. Infantry, retinue, dragoons, rank and file, all vied with each other, regardless of rank. The Turkish guns were expected to begin firing again at any moment, but that was a day of great triumph for the besieged over the besiegers. All their faces were aglow and their hearts flamed with hope and the desire for further victory.

Ketling and Pan Michael, grasping one another's hand after their toil, went the round of the square and the walls, leaned out through the embrasures to look at the court-yard of the new castle, and rejoiced at the bountiful harvest.

"Corpses lie there beside corpses," said the little knight pointing to the ruins, "and there are such heaps at the breach that you would require a ladder to cross them. Ketling, that is the work of your cannon."

"The best thing is," answered Ketling, "that we have repaired the breach. The approach is closed to the Turks and they must make a new mine; their force is as boundless as the sea, but a siege of this kind for a month or two must disgust them in time."

"By that time the Hetman will aid us. But come what may, you and I are bound by our oaths," said the little knight.

At that moment, they gazed into one another's eyes and Pan Michael asked in lower tones:

"Have you done what I told you?"

"All is ready," replied Ketling in a whisper, "but I do not think it will come to that, for we may hold out here for a long time and have many such days as this.

"God grant us such a morrow."

"Amen!" added Ketling as he raised his eyes to Heaven.

Further conversation was interrupted by the thunder of cannon. Bombs began again to fly against the castle. However, many of them burst in the air and died away like summer lightning.

Ketling watched them with the eye of an expert and said: "In that trench yonder, from which they are firing, the fuses of the grenades have too much sulphur."

"Other trenches are beginning to smoke," said Volodiyovski.

In fact they were. As, when one dog barks in the middle of a quiet night, others begin to accompany it, till at last, the entire village is filled with the noise, so one cannon in the Turkish trenches aroused all the neighboring ones, and the besieged place was surrounded with a crown of grenades. Now, however, the enemy was firing at the city, not at the castle. But mining was heard going on on three sides. Though the mighty rock had almost rendered the efforts of the miners of no avail, it was clear that the Turks had determined at all costs to blow that rocky nest into the air.

By the orders of Ketling and Pan Volodiyovski, the defenders again began to throw hand-grenades, guided by the sound of the mattocks. But at night it was impossible to see whether this means of defence effected any damage. The eyes and attention of all were directed to the city, against which whole showers of flaming grenades were flying. Some of them burst in the air, but others described a fiery arc in the sky, and fell on the roofs of houses. Immediately a blood-red glare pierced the darkness in several places. The church of St. Catherine was burning, as well as the church of St. George in the Russian quarter, and soon the Armenian cathedral was in flames. But the latter had already been set on fire during the day, and now it merely caught fire again from the grenades. The conflagration momentarily increased and illumined the whole neighborhood. The din from the city penetrated to the old castle. It might have been imagined that the whole city was in flames.

"That's bad," cried Ketling, "for it will weaken the courage of the inhabitants."

"Let everything burn, said the little knight, "so that only the rock is not destroyed, from which we may defend ourselves."

Now the noise increased. The fire extended from the cathedral to the Armenian warehouses of costly merchandise. The latter were built on the square belonging to that people; great wealth was being consumed there in gold, silver, divans, furs, and sumptuous fabrics. Presently, tongues of fire appeared above the houses here and there.

Volodiyovski was greatly disturbed.

"Ketling," he said, "see to the throwing of the grenades and do as much damage as possible to the mining. I will hasten to the town for my heart is grieved for the Dominican nuns. Praise be to God that the Turks are leaving the castle in peace, so that I can be absent."

In fact, just then there was not much to do in the castle, so the little knight mounted his horse and rode away. Not till two hours later did he return, accompanied by Pan Mus-halski, who recovered from the hurt received at the hand of Hamdi-Bey and now came to the castle with the thought that, during the assaults, with his bow he might inflict great loss on the Infidels and gain boundless glory.

"Welcome," said Ketling, "I was alarmed. How is it with the nuns?"

"All is well," replied the little knight, "not a single shell has burst there. The place is very quiet and safe."

"Thank God for that ! But Kryisia is not alarmed?"

"She is as quiet as if in her own home. She and Bashka are in the same cell, and Pan Zagloba is with them. Pan Novovyeyski, who has recovered consciousness, is also there. He begged to come to the castle with me, but he cannot yet stand on his feet for long. Go there now, Ketling, while I take your place here."

Ketling embraced Pan Michael, as his heart drew him strongly to Kryisia; and he ordered his horse to be brought at once. But before it came, he asked the little knight what tidings he had from the city.

"The inhabitants are extinguishing the flames with great bravery," the little knight answered, "but when the more wealthy Armenian merchants saw their merchandise burning they sent deputations to the Bishop insisting on a surrender. When I heard that, I went to the council, though I had promised myself not to go there again. I struck that man's face

who insisted most strongly on surrendering, and therefore, the Bishop rose against me in wrath. The situation is evil, brother, people are becoming more and more cowardly, and our readiness for the defence seems to them of little import. They blame but do not praise, saying that we are vainly exposing the place. I also heard that Makovyetska was attacked because he opposed negotiations. The Bishop himself said to him, 'We are deserting neither our faith nor our king, but what is the good of further resistance? See!' he said, 'what will result from it—shrines desecrated, honorable ladies insulted, and innocent children dragged into captivity. With a treaty,' he said, 'we can assure their fate and gain a free evacuation.' Thus spoke the Bishop, but the general nodded and said. 'I would sooner perish, but that is true!'"

"God's will be done!" said Ketling.

But Pan Michael wrung his hands.

"Even if that were true," he cried, "but God is witness that we can still defend ourselves."

Meanwhile the horse was brought; Ketling mounted hurriedly.

"Cross the bridge warily," said Pan Michael on the way, "for the grenades are falling thickly there."

"I shall be back in an hour," said Ketling, as he rode away.

Volodiyovski started to make the round of the walls with Mushalski.

In three places where the hammering was heard hand grenades were thrown. Lusnia was directing this work to the left of the castle.

"Well, how goes it there?" asked Volodiyovski.

"Badly, Pan Commandant!" replied the seargent. "The dog-bloods are sitting in the cliff and only occasionally at the entrance is a man hurt by a fragment of shell. We haven't done much. . . ."

Elsewhere the case was even worse, especially as the sky had darkened and rain was falling, which damped the fuses of the grenades. The work was also impeded by the darkness.

Pan Michael drew Mushalski a little aside and suddenly halted and said,

"Listen, suppose we try to suffocate these moles in their burrows!"

"To me it looks like certain death for they are guarded by whole regiments of janissaries. But let us try!"

"It is true that they are guarded by regiments; but it is a very dark night, and they are quickly cast into confusion. Just think! they are talking of surrendering the town. Why? Because they tell us, 'There are mines under you; you are not defending yourselves.' We should silence them, if to-night we could send the tidings, 'The mine no longer exists!' Is it worth while laying down one's head in such a cause, or not?"

Pan Mushalski reflected for a moment and cried:

"It is worth while! It is, as God lives!"

"A little while ago they began to mine in that spot," said Pan Volodiyovski; "those we will leave unmolested, but here and on this side they have bored deep into the rock. You take fifty dragoons and I will take the same number and we will try to suffocate them. Are you willing?"

"I am,—more so every moment. I will take some spikes in my belt for the cannon; perhaps I may be able to spike some of those falconets on the way."

"As for spiking, I doubt it, though there are some falconets standing near; but take them. We will only wait for Ketling; he knows how to render aid in a sudden emergency better than others."

Ketling returned as he had promised; he was not a moment late. Half an hour later two detachments of fifty dragoons each went to the breach, slipped quietly out on the other side and disappeared in the darkness. Ketling ordered grenades to be thrown for a little while only and then he ceased and waited. His heart beat anxiously for he well knew what a bold undertaking it was. A quarter of an hour went by, half an hour, an hour; it seemed that they should be there already and begin; in the meantime he laid his ear to the ground and could clearly distinguish the dull sound of the mattocks.

Suddenly at the left base of the castle there was a pistol-shot which did not make too loud a report on the damp air on account of the firing from the trenches; and might have passed without attracting the attention of the garrison but for the terrible din that followed it. "They are there," thought Ketling, "but will they return?" And then arose the shouts of the men, the roll of drums, the shrill sound of pipes, and lastly the rattle of musketry, but hurried and desultory. The Turks were firing in crowds from all sides; it was evident that whole divisions had hastened to the as-

sistance of the sappers. But as Pan Michael had anticipated, the janissaries were thrown into disorder and confusion; they were afraid of hitting one another and so uttered loud shouts and fired at random, and often in the air. The noise and firing increased momentarily. When weasels, thirsting for blood, break at night into a sleeping poultry shed the quiet building is soon filled with noise and cackling: a similar uproar suddenly arose around the castle. From the earthworks they began to throw grenades at the walls to illuminate the scene. Ketling trained his guns on the Turkish troops on guard and replied with grape-shot. The Turkish approaches and the walls blazed in turn. The alarm was beaten in the city for everybody thought that the enemy had burst into the fortress. In the earthworks the Turks thought that a strong sortie was making a simultaneous attack on all their trenches and they were thrown into a general panic. Night favored the desperate undertaking of Pan Volodiyovski and Pan Mushalski as it had become very dark. The discharges of cannon and grenades pierced the darkness only momentarily and left it blacker than before. Lastly, the sluices of Heaven were suddenly opened and torrents of rain poured down. Thunder outroared the guns, rolling, muttering, howling, and rousing dreadful echoes among the cliffs. Ketling sprang from the wall at the head of several men and ran to the breach and waited.

But he did not wait long. Dark forms soon came thronging in between the timbers that barred the opening.

"Who goes there?" cried Ketling.

"Volodiyovski," was the reply. And the two knights fell into each other's arms.

"Well, how goes it there?" asked the officers, as they rushed out to the breach.

"God be praised! the sappers are slain to the last man and their tools are broken and scattered. Their labor is fruitless."

"God be praised! God be praised!"

"But is Mushalski with his men?"

"He has not arrived yet."

"We might go to his aid. Gracious gentlemen, who will volunteer?"

But at that moment the breach was again filled. Mushalski's men were hastily returning greatly reduced in number for many had fallen under the bullets. But they returned

clated for they had been equally successful. Some of the soldiers had brought back mattocks, drills, and pickaxes as a proof that they had been into the mine itself.

"But where is Mushalski?" inquired Pan Michael.

"True, where is Pan Mushalski?" repeated several voices.

The men under the command of the famous archer began to look at one another; at length a dragoon who was severely wounded said in faint tones:

"Pan Mushalski has fallen. I saw him when he fell. I fell beside him, but I rose, and he remained. . . ."

The knights were deeply grieved to hear of the famous archer's death, for he was one of the foremost cavaliers in the forces of the Commonwealth. They again questioned the dragoon as to how it had happened but he was unable to reply for blood was streaming from his wounds and he fell to the earth like a sheaf of corn.

The knights began to lament over Pan Mushalski.

"The army will cherish his memory," said Pan Kvasibrodski, "and whoever survives the **siege** will extoll his name."

"There will never be such another archer," cried a voice.

"He had a stronger arm than any man in Khreptyov," said the little knight. "With his fingers he could press a dollar into a new board. Pan Podbiyenta, the Lithuanian, alone surpassed him in strength; but Podbiyenta was slain at Zbaraj, and no living man has such strong hands except perhaps Pan Novovyeyski."

"A great loss, a great loss!" exclaimed others. "Such cavaliers were only born in old days."

Honoring the memory of the archer in this manner they scaled the wall. Pan Michael immediately despatched a messenger to the general with tidings that the mines were destroyed and the miners slain by a sortie. This intelligence was received in the city with great astonishment, but also,—who would have imagined it!—with secret annoyance. The general and the bishop did not believe that these passing successes would save the city, but only rouse the terrible lion still more. They could be advantageous only in case of an agreement to surrender in spite of them; so the two principal leaders determined to carry on further negotiations.

But neither Pan Volodiyovski nor Ketling imagined for a moment that the happy tidings would produce such an effect. On the contrary, they felt sure that the faintest heart would gain courage and that all would burn with the desire

for a furious resistance. It was impossible to take the city, without first taking the castle and so if the castle not merely resisted but kept on thundering the besieged had not the least necessity to enter into negotiations. There was abundance of provisions and ammunition and therefore all that was necessary was to watch the gates and extinguish the fires in the city.

During the entire siege this was the most joyful night for Pan Michael and Ketling. They had never been so hopeful of issuing alive from those Turkish toils and bringing those beloved heads out in safety.

"A couple more assaults," said the little knight, "and as God is in Heaven, the Turks will be sick of them and will rather try to starve us out. And we have sufficient supplies here. September is approaching and rain and cold will commence in two months. Those troops are not very hardy; let them once get well chilled and they will retire.

"Many of them are from the lands of Ethiopia," said Ketling, "or from various places where pepper grows and any frost will nip them. At the worst we can hold out for two months; even under assaults. Moreover it is impossible to imagine that no aid will be sent to us. The Commonwealth will finally awaken and even if the Hetman should not be able to assemble a large force he can still annoy the Turks with attacks."

"Ketling, it appears to me that our last hour has not struck yet."

"It is in God's hands, but it also appears to me that it will not come to that."

"Even though someone has fallen, like Pan Mushalski. Well, it can't be helped! I am dreadfully grieved about Mushalski, though he died a cavalier's death."

"God grant us no worse one, if only deferred! for I confess to you, Michael, I should be sorry for. . . . Krysia."

"Yes, and I . . . for Basia; we will work earnestly and perhaps there is mercy above us. For some reason I am very light-hearted. We must do something noteworthy to-morrow as well!"

"The Turks have used boards for protection. I have thought of a method used in setting fire to ships; the rags are now steeping in tar so that by noon to-morrow we will burn all those works."

"Ah," cried the little knight, "then I will head a sortie,

During the conflagration there will be much confusion in any case and it would never occur to them that we would make a sortie during daylight. To-morrow may be better than to-day, Ketling."

They talked thus with sanguine hearts and then went to rest as they were very weary. But the little knight had not slept for three hours, when he was roused by Lusnia.

"Pan Commander, we have news."

"What is it?" cried the vigilant soldier springing up immediately.

"Pan Mushalski is here."

"For God's sake! What are you telling me?"

"He is here. I was standing at the breach and heard somebody on the other side calling in Polish, 'Do not fire, it is I.' I looked, and there was Pan Mushalski, returning in the clothes of a janissary."

"God be praised!" cried the little knight as he sprang to greet the archer. Dawn was already breaking. Pan Mushalski was standing outside the wall in a white cap and mail, looking so exactly like a genuine janissary as to make one doubt one's own eyes. When he saw the little knight, he hurried up to him, and began to give him joyful greeting.

"We have already mourned over you," cried Volodiyovski.

Then several other officers with Ketling among them ran up. They were all indescribably astonished, and interrupted each other with questions as to how he came to be in a Turkish disguise.

"On my way back I tripped against the body of a janissary and struck my head against a cannon ball and though I wore a cap bound with wire I was stunned. My head is still tender and susceptible to the slightest injury after that blow that I received from Hamdi-Bey. When I recovered consciousness I was lying on a dead janissary like a bed. I felt my head; it was rather painful, but there was not even a lump on it. I took off my cap and the rain cooled my head as I reflected: 'This is lucky for me. It struck me that it would be a good idea to take that janissary's uniform and take a stroll among the Turks. I speak their language as well as I do Polish and no one could detect me by my speech and my face is not unlike that of a janissary I will go and listen to what they say.' At intervals I was afraid when I remembered my former captivity; but I proceeded. It was a dark night with only

an occasional light. I tell you, gentlemen, I went about among them as if they had been my own men. Many of them were lying under cover in the trenches; I approached them. One would ask, 'Why are you wandering about?' 'Because I cannot sleep,' I answered. Others were sitting in groups talking about the siege. There is great consternation among them. With my own ears I heard how they complained of our Khreptyov commander here present,' here Pan Mushalski bowed to Volodiyovski. I repeat their very words because the blame of an enemy is the highest praise. 'While that little dog,' they said,—thus did the dog-brothers designate your grace!—'while that little dog defends the castle we shall not capture it.' Others said, "Bullets and iron will not harm him, but from him Death blows like a pestilence." Then the whole group would begin to complain: 'We alone do the fighting while the other troops are doing nothing; the other troops are lying with their bellies to the sky. The Tartars are plundering; the spahis are strolling about the bazaars. The Padishah says to us, 'My dear lambs;' but it is evident the we are not so very dear to him since he sends us her to the shambles. We will not stand it long, but will go back to Khotsim, and if they try to prevent us it may end in the fall of some lofty heads.'"

"Do you hear, gentlemen?" cried Volodiyovski, "when the janissaries mutiny the Sultan will be frightened and raise the siege."

"As God is dear to me I am telling the simple truth," said Mushalski. "It is easy for the janissaries to rebel and they are greatly dissatisfied. I think they will attempt one or two more assaults and then gnash their teeth at their aga, at the kaimakan, and even at the Sultan himself."

"So it will be," cried the officers.

"Let them attempt twenty assaults; we are prepared," cried others.

They clattered their sabres and looked at the trenches with blood-shot eyes and drew deep breaths; as he heard it the little knight whispered to Ketling:

"Another Zbaraj! Another Zbaraj!"

But Pan Mushalski again commenced: "I have told you all that I heard. I was sorry to leave them as I might have learned more but I was afraid to be caught by the dawn. I next went to the trenches where there was no firing so as to slip past in the dark. I look and see no regular sentries,

only groups of janissaries wandering all about. I approach a frowning gun and nothing is said. You know I took spikes for the guns. I push a spike quickly into the touch-hole; it won't go in,—it needs the blow of a hammer. But since the Lord God endowed my hand with some strength (more than once you have witnessed my performances) I press the spike; it grates slightly but goes in up to the head. . . . I was glad beyond measure."

"As God lives! did you do that? Did you spike the big gun?" asked many voices.

"I spiked that one and another, for the business went so favorably that I was loth sorry to leave it and so I went to another gun. My hand is somewhat sore but the spike went in."

"Gracious gentlemen, cried Volodiyovski, "no one present has done greater things; no one has covered himself with such glory. Vivat Pan Mushalski!"

"Vivat! vivat!" cried the officers.

After the officers the soldiers began to shout. The noise was heard in the Turkish trenches and alarmed them and dispirited them still more. But the overjoyed archer bowed to the officers and exhibited his mighty palm which resembled a shovel; there were two blue marks on it.

"As true as God lives! here is the witness," he said.

"We believe!" cried everybody. "God be praised that you returned in safety!"

"I passed the boarding and wanted to burn that work, but had nothing to do it with."

"Michael," cried Ketling, "do you know that my rags are ready? I am beginning to think about that boarding. Let us show them that we are foremost in the attack."

"Begin! begin!" cried Pan Michael.

He himself ran to the arsenal and sent fresh tidings to the city :

"Pan Mushalski was not killed in the sortie; for he has returned after spiking two heavy guns. He went among the janissaries who are thinking of mutinying. In an hour we shall burn their woodworks and if at the same time it is possible to make a sortie I shall do so."

The messenger had scarcely crossed the bridge before the walls were trembling with the roar of guns. This time the castle commenced the thundering dialogue. In the pale light of dawn the blazing rags flew like flaming banners and fell

on the timber. The night rain that had wetted it was of no avail. The timbers soon caught fire and blazed. Ketling followed up the rags with grenades. The weary throngs of janissaries evacuated the earthworks in the first few moments. They did not play the "kindya." The vizir himself appeared at the head of fresh legions, but doubt had evidently stolen into his heart, for the pashas heard him muttering:

"To those men battle is sweeter than rest. What kind of people dwell in that castle?"

Throughout the army terrified voices were heard exclaiming:

"The little dog is begining to bite! The little dog is begining to bite!"

CHAPTER XX.

When that happy night, so full of omens of victory, passed, August 26th followed, that day which became the most important in the annals of that war. In the castle some great effort was expected on the side of the Turks. In fact, about dawn the mattocks were heard striking on the left of the castle louder than ever before. The Turks were evidently making haste on a new mine, more powerful than any yet. Strong bodies of troops were protecting this work at a distance. The trenches began to swarm. From the innumerable colored banners that dotted the plain like flowers in the direction of Dlujek, it was evident that the vizir himself was coming to direct the assault. Fresh cannon were placed on the earthworks by the janissaries, great masses of whom covered the new castle, taking shelter in its trenches and ruins, so as to be ready for a hand-to-hand fight.

As has been said, the castle was the first to begin to speak, and that so effectually that it caused a temporary panic in the entrenchments. But the bimbashes speedily rallied the janissaries and at the same moment every Turkish gun raised its voice. Grenades, flying about the heads of the besieged; smoke was mingled with dust and the heat of fire with that of the sun. Men could scarcely breathe, and their sight failed them. The roar of guns, the bursting of grenades, the crashing of cannon-balls against the rocks, the din of the Turks and the shouts of the defenders made a terrible concert which was accompanied by the echoes from the cliffs. Missiles rained upon the castle, the city, the gates, and all the bastions. But the castle furiously defended itself; to thunder it replied with thunder, and trembled and flashed and smoked and roared, its guns belching forth fire and death and devastation as if it was carried away with Jove's anger and as if it had forgotten itself amid flames and wafted to drown the Turkish thunders and sink into the earth or gain the victory.

In the castle the little knight ran amid flying balls, fire, dust, and smoke from gun to gun, from one wall to another,

and from niche to niche; he himself resembled a destroying flame. He seemed to duplicate and triplicate himself: he seemed ubiquitous. He yelled and gave encouragement. When a gunner fell he took his place, and after instilling hope into the men's hearts, he proceeded to another spot. His ardor was communicated to the soldiers. They believed that this was the last assault and would be followed by peace and glory and their breasts were strong with the faith in victory. Their hearts grew strong and vehement and they were seized with the madness of battle. From moment to moment shouts and challenges issued from their throats. Some of them became possessed with such fury that they went outside the walls to engage the janissaries at close quarters.

Under cover of the smoke the janissaries twice advanced to the breach in dense masses, and twice they fell back panic-stricken leaving the ground strewn with their bodies. About noon the volunteers and irregulars were sent to their assistance; but the less disciplined throngs, though driven forward with darts, only raised frightful howls and were unwilling to attack the castle. The kaimakan came but that did no good. Each moment the confusion increased threatening to become a general panic. At length the men were recalled and the guns were alone worked on ceaselessly as before, hurtling thunder on thunder and lightning on lightning.

Whole hours passed in this way. The sun had passed the meridian and gazed down on that struggle rayless, red, and smoky, as if veiled in a haze. About three in the afternoon the roar of the guns had become so mighty that the loudest words shouted in the ear could not be heard. The air in the castle was as hot as an oven. The water poured on the guns turned to steam, mingling with the smoke and obscuring the light; but the guns kept on roaring.

Just after three o'clock the biggest culverins of the Turks were shattered. A few Paters later the mortar standing beside them was hit by a long shot and burst. Gunners perished like flies. Every instant it was becoming more evident that the invincible castle was gaining the upper hand and would roar down the Turkish thunder and utter the final word of victory.

The Turkish fire gradually began to slacken.

"The end is near!" Volodiyovski shouted with all his might into Ketting's ear. He wanted his friend to hear those words amid the uproar.

"I think so too!" answered Ketling. "To-morrow, or longer?"

"Perhaps longer. Victory is ours to-day."

"And through us!"

"We must think about that new mine."

The Turkish fire was growing feebler and feebler.

"Keep up the cannonade!" cried Volodiyovski.

And he sprang among the gunners and cried: "Fire, boys, till the last Turkish gun is silenced! To the glory of God and the Most Holy Virgin! To the glory of the Commonwealth!"

The soldiers, seeing that the assault was coming to an end uttered a loud shout and poured shot and shell into the Turkish trenches with still greater enthusiasm.

"We'll play an evening 'kindya' for you, dogs," cried many voices.

Suddenly a wonderful thing occurred. All the Turkish guns ceased at once as if they had been cut off with a knife. At the same time the musketry-fire from the janissaries in the new castle also ceased. For some time yet the old castle continued to thunder but at last the officers began to look at each other and inquire:

"What is it? What has happened?"

Ketling grew uneasy, and ceased firing also.

One of the officers suggested.

"Perhaps there is a mine under which is to be exploded immediately. . ."

Volodiyovski's threatening glance transfixed the man and said: "The mine is not ready; and even if it were only the left side of the castle could be blown up by it and we will defend ourselves among the ruins while there is breath in our nostrils. Do you understand?"

Then there was silence not broken even by a shot from the trenches or the city. After the thunders that had made the walls and the ground tremble there was something solemn in that silence, but also something ominous. The eyes of all were intently fixed on the trenches, but nothing was to be seen through the clouds of smoke.

Suddenly the measured sound of mattocks was again audible on the left side.

"I told you that they are only making the mine," said Pan Michael.

And he turned to Lusnia:

"Sergeant, take twenty men and examine the new castle for me."

Lusnia quickly obeyed and in a moment disappeared beyond the breach. There was again silence, only broken by occasional groans or gasps of the dying, and the strokes of the mattocks.

There was rather a long wait till the sergeant returned.

"Pan Commandant," he said, "there is not a living soul in the castle."

Volodiyovski gazed at Ketling in amazement. "Have they already raised the siege or what? The smoke renders everything invisible."

But the smoke was gradually thinned by the wind and at last its veil was rent above the city. At that moment a shrill and dreadful cry arose from the bastion:

"There are white flags above the gates! We are surrendering!"

As they heard it the officers and men turned towards the city. Every face reflected awful amazement, words died away on every lip and they gazed at the city through wreathes of smoke. In the city white flags were really waving on the Russian and Polish gates. Farther away one was visible on the bastion of Batory.

"Ketling, do you see," he whispered, turning to his friend.

"Ketling's face was also pale.

"I see," he replied.

And for some time they gazed into each other's eyes with looks that said everything which two blameless and fearless soldiers like themselves had to say—soldiers, who had never broken their word in their lives, and had sworn before the altar to die rather than surrender the castle. Now, after such a defence, after a struggle which recalled the days of Zbaraj, after an assault which had been repulsed, and after a victory, they were ordered to break their oaths, surrender the castle, and live.

As hostile balls had been flying over the castle shortly before, so now, ill-omened thoughts were flying in clouds through their heads. And their hearts were oppressed with boundless sorrow—sorrow for two loved ones, sorrow for life and happiness; so they looked wildly at one another, and directed occasional glances full of despair towards the city, as if wanting to assure themselves that their eyes were not deceiving them, and that the hour had really struck.

Then horses' hoofs sounded from the direction of the City, and in a few moments, Horain, the general of Podolia's orderly rushed up to them:

"An order for the commander," he cried, reigning in his horse.

Volodiyovski took the order, read it in silence and presently, amid a silence like that of a grave, said to the officers:

"Gentlemen, the commissioners have crossed the river in a boat, and have gone to Dljuka, to sign conditions. Presently they will come here. . . We must withdraw the troops from the castle before evening and raise the white flag immediately."

No one answered a word. The only sound heard was quick breathing.

At last, Kvasibrodzki said:

"We must raise the white flag, I will gather the men."

Here and there, words of command were heard. The soldiers began to take their places in the ranks, and shoulder arms. The clatter of muskets and a measured tramp awakened echoes in the silent castle.

Ketling went up to Pan Michael. "Is it time?" he asked.

"Wait for the commissioners, let us hear the conditions. . . besides, I will go down myself."

"No, I will go. I know the places better, I know the position of everything."

Further conversation was interrupted by shouts.

"The commissioners are returning; the commissioners are returning!"

The three unfortunate envoys presently entered the castle. They were Grushetski, Judge of Podolia, the Chamberlain, Jevuski, and Pan Myslishevski, Banneret of Chernigov. They came in gloom, with bowed heads; on their shoulders shone kaftans of gold brocade which had been given to them by the Vizir.

Volodiyovski was awaiting them, resting against the gun pointing towards Dljuka, which was still hot and smoking. All three greeted him silently.

"What are the conditions?" he asked.

"The city will not be pillaged, the inhabitants are assured of life and property. He who does not want to remain may retire to wherever he likes."

"And Kamenets?"

The commissioners bowed their heads.

“Goes to the Sultan forever and ever. . .”

The commissioners did not depart by the bridge, for it was blocked by crowds of people, but they went out by the southern gate. When they had gone down they entered the boat to go to the Polish gate. On the strand, along the river between the cliffs, the janissaries began to appear. The people came flocking from the town in greater and greater numbers and occupied the place opposite the old bridge; many of them wanted to come into the castle, but by the little knight's orders, they were prevented from doing so by the departing regiments.

When Volodiyovski had mustered the men, he called Pan Mushalski and said to him:

“Old friend, do me one more service; go at once to my wife and tell her for me”—here the little knight's voice stuck in his throat, for some moments. “And say to her for me . . .” here his voice again choked . . . “and tell her for me,” here he said quickly: “this life is nothing.”

The archer departed. . . The troops gradually followed him. Pan Michael mounted his horse and directed the march. The castle was evacuated slowly because of the rubbish and debris which blocked the way.

Ketling approached the little knight, “I will go down,” he said, setting his teeth.

“Go, but wait till the troops are all gone; go.”

Then they clasped each other in a long embrace. The eyes of both shone with unusual brilliancy. At length Ketling darted away towards the vaults.

Pan Michael took off his helmet; for a while he gazed at the ruins, at that scene of his glory; the rubbish, the corpses, the shattered walls, the ramparts, and the guns; then he raised his eyes, and began to pray.

His last words were, “O Lord, grant that she may bear this patiently, give her peace. . .”

Ah! Ketling had made haste, not even waiting until all the troops had marched out, for at that moment, the bastions trembled, a frightful roar rent the air, bastions, towers, walls, horses, guns, men, living and dead, masses of earth. . . all torn up with a flash and mixed and welded together as it were, into one dreadful charge flew into the air. . .

Thus perished Volodiyevski. . . The Hector of Kamenets, the first soldier of the Commonwealth.

In the seminary of Stanislav, stood a lofty catafalque in the

centre of the chapel; it was surrounded with flaring tapers and on it lay Pan Volodiyovski in a double coffin of lead and wood. The lids had been fastened down, and the funeral service was just concluding.

It was the widow's earnest wish that the body should rest in Khreptyov, but since the whole of Podolia was in possession of the enemy, it was decided to inter it temporarily at Stanislav, for to that place the exiles of Kamenets had been sent under a Turkish escort and delivered over to the troops of the Hetman there.

All the bells of the seminary were tolling. The chapel was filled with a crowd of nobles and soldiers who wanted to take a last look at the coffin of the Hector of Kamenets and the first cavalier of the Commonwealth. It was whispered that the Hetman himself was to be present at the funeral, but as he had not yet arrived, and as the Tartars might come in a chambul at any moment, it was decided not to put off the ceremony.

Old soldiers, friends or subordinates of the deceased, stood around the catafalque in a circle. Among others present were Mushalski, the archer, Pan Motovidlo, Pan Snitko, Pan Hromyka, Pan Nyenashinyets, Pan Novovyeytski, and many other old officers of the military post. By a fortunate coincidence, there was no man lacking of those who had sat in the evening on the benches around the hearth at Khreptyov; they had all come out of the war in safety with the exception of the man who was their leader and model. That good and just knight, terrible to the foe, and loving to his own; that matchless swordsman, with the heart of a dove, lay there high among the candles in immeasurable glory, but in the silence of death. Hearts hardened by warfare were overcome with sorrow at that sight; yellow rays from the candles gleamed on the stern suffering faces of the warriors, and glittered in the tears trickling from their eyelids. Within the circle of soldiers lay Basia, extended on the floor in the form of a cross, and near her Zagloba, old, broken, decrepit, and trembling. She had followed the hearse bearing that most precious coffin from Kamenets on foot. And now the moment had come when that coffin must be consigned to the earth. The whole way as she walked, scarcely sensible, as if not belonging to this world and now, beside the catafalque, she kept repeating with unconscious lips, "This life is nothing!" she repeated it

because that beloved one had commanded it, for it was his last message to her, but that repetition and those syllables were mere sounds without substance, or truth, or meaning, or comfort. No, 'this life is nothing,' merely meant to her sorrow, darkness, despair, mortification, merely irreparable misfortune, merely crushed and broken life; a false statement that there was nothing about her, neither mercy nor hope, that there was simply a desert, and would be one which can only be filled by God when he sends death.

The bells tolled, mass was concluded at the high altar. At last, the deep voice of the priest thundered as if issuing from the depths, *Requiescat in pace*. Basia trembled feverishly and her dulled brain was only conscious of the thought, "Now, now, they are going to take him away from me!" But they had not yet reached the end of the ceremony. The knights had prepared many speeches to be given when the coffin was lowered, and in the meantime, Father Kaminski ascended the pulpit; he was the same who had frequently been at Khreptyov, and had prepared Basia for death when she was ill.

In the church people began to hawk and cough, as is usual before a sermon, then there was silence and all eyes turned to the pulpit. In the pulpit, the roll of a drum was heard.

The listeners were amazed. Father Kaminski was beating the drum as if for an alarm; suddenly he stopped and a dead silence followed. Then the drum was heard a second time and then a third; suddenly the priest threw the drumsticks on the floor of the church and cried:

"Pan Colonel Volodiyovski."

He was answered by a horrible scream from Basia. The emotion in the church was something terrible. Pan Zagloba got up and carried the swooning woman out with the aid of Mushalski.

In the meantime the priest continued, "For God's sake, Pan Volodiyovski, they are sounding the alarm, there is war, the enemy is at the boundary, and you do not spring up to seize your sabre and mount your horse? What has come to you, soldier, have you forgotten your former virtue, do you leave us alone with grief and terror?"

The breasts of the knights heaved and the church broke out into universal weeping, several times repeated, as the priest extolled the deceased's virtue, patriotism, and bravery. The preacher was carried away by his own words; his face grew

pale; his brow broke out into perspiration and his voice shook. He was carried away by grief for the little knight, grief for Kamenets, grief for the Commonwealth, ruined by the hands of the followers of the Crescent, and finally he concluded his eulogy with this prayer:

“O Lord, they will convert the churches into mosques and read the Koran in places where the Gospel has been read until now. Thou hast cast us down, O Lord, Thou hast turned away thy face from us, and delivered us over to the power of the vile Turk. Inscrutable are thy decrees, O Lord, but who now will resist the Turk. What armies will fight against him on the border; Thou, from whom nothing in the world is hidden, Thou knowest best that there is no cavalry superior to ours. What cavalry can charge for thee, O Lord, like ours? Wilt thou bring to nought defenders, behind whose back the whole of Christendom might glorify Thy Name. O gracious Father, do not desert us, have mercy upon us. Send us a defender, send a destroyer of the vile Mohammedan; let him come here, let him stand among us, let him raise our fallen hearts; send him, O Lord. . . !”

At that moment, the people at the door made way and the Hetman, Pan Sobieski, walked into the church; all eyes were turned upon him, a quiver ran through the people and he strode with jingling spurs to the catafalque, lordly, mighty, with the face of a Caesar. He was followed by an escort of iron cavalry.

“Salvator!” cried the priest in prophetic ecstasy.

Sobieski knelt beside the catafalque and prayed for the soul of Volodiyovski.

EPILOGUE.

More than a year had passed since the fall of Kamenets, when the contention of parties having somewhat ceased, the Commonwealth at length came out to defend its Eastern boundary.

And it came out offensively. The Grand Hetman, Sobieski, advanced with 31,000 cavalry and infantry to Khotsim, in the Sultan's dominions, to attack the immeasurably superior forces of Hussein Pasha at the latter fortress.

Sobieski's name had become terrible to the foe. During the year that followed the capture of Kamenets, the Hetman, with only a few thousand men had accomplished so much, and so greatly injured the innumerable hosts of the Padishah, destroyed so many chambuls, rescued such crowds of captives, that old Hussein, though superior in numbers, commanding picked cavalry, and helped by Kaplan Pasha, did not venture to oppose the Hetman in an open field and determined to defend himself in a fortified camp.

The Hetman invested that camp with his army, and it was generally known that he intended to take it by assault. By some, this was considered an enterprise unheard of in military history, to attack a superior army, protected by walls and entrenchments, with an inferior one. Hussein had one hundred and twenty guns, while there were only fifty in the Polish camp. The Turkish infantry was three times as numerous as the Hetman's forces. Of the janissaries alone, so terrible in hand-to-hand fighting, there were 18,000, but the Hetman believed in his star, and in the spell of his name, and lastly in the men under him.

Regiments, trained and tried in fire, marched under him, men who had grown up from their childhood amid the din of war, and passed through innumerable expeditions, campaigns, sieges and battles. Many of them remembered the terrible days of Khmyelnitski, and Zbaraj and Berestechko. Many had served through all the Swedish, Prussian, Moscow, inter-necine, Danish, and Hungarian wars. He was accompanied

by the escorts of Magnates, formed of veterans only; there were soldiers from the frontier posts, to whom war had become what peace is to other men: the ordinary business and course of life. Under the Voyevoda of Russia, there were fifteen squadrons of huzzars, cavalry whom foreigners considered matchless, there were light squadrons, the same at whose head the Hetman had so disastrously defeated detached Tartar chambuls after the fall of Kamenets, lastly, there were the land infantry, who could charge janissaries with the butts of their muskets without firing a shot.

Those veterans had been reared by warfare, for it had reared entire generations in the Commonwealth, but hitherto they had been scattered, or in the service of contending parties. Now that internal union had assembled them in one camp and under one command the Hetman with such soldiers hoped to crush the more powerful Hussein and the equally powerful Kaplan. At the head of these veterans were trained chiefs who had inscribed their names more than once in the history of the late wars, in the revolving wheel of victory and defeat.

The Hetman himself stood at the head of them all like a sun, and directed thousands with his will, but who were the other leaders who were to cover themselves with fame at this camp of Khotsim? They were the two Lithuanian Hetmans, the chief one, Pats, and the Field Hetman, Michael Casimir Radzivil. These two joined the royal armies a few days before the battle, and now, by Sobieski's orders, they took up their position on the heights connecting Khotsim and Jvanets.

Twelve thousand warriors obeyed their orders, among whom were two thousand picked infantry. From the Dniester southwards stood the allied regiments of Wallachia, who deserted the Turkish camp on the eve of the battle to unite their strength with the Christians. On the flank of the Wallachians with his artillery stood Pan Kantski, who could not be equalled in capturing fortified places, in throwing up earthworks and handling cannon. He had been trained abroad, but soon excelled the foreigners themselves. Behind Pan Kantski stood Korytski's Russian and Mazovian infantry; and further on, the field Hetman of the kingdom, Dmitri Vishnyovyetski, the cousin of the feeble king. Under him was the light cavalry. Next to him, with his own-force of infantry and cavalry, stood Pan Andrey Pototski, once an opponent of the Hetman's and now an admirer of his genius. In the rear of himself and Korytski, under Pan Yablinovski,

Voyevoda of Russia, stood fifteen squadrons of Hussars in glittering mail, with helmets casting a threatening shadow on their faces, and with wings at their shoulders. The forest of lances reared their heads above these squadrons, but the men stood calm, confident in their invincible strength, and sure that it would be theirs to decide the victory.

There were warriors inferior to these in renown, but not in manliness, there was the Podlasian Castellan, Pan Lujetski, whose brother had been slain by the Turks in Bodjanov, for which deed he had sworn a deathless vengeance. There was Pan Stefan Charnyetski, nephew of the great Stefan, and Field Secretary of the Kingdom. During the siege of Kamenets he had headed a whole party of nobles at Golemb as one of the King's partisans, and had almost stirred up civil war, and now he wanted to distinguish himself by his bravery. There was Gabriel Silnitski, whose whole life had been spent in war, and whose head was already whitened with years; there were other voyevodas and castellans, who were not so experienced in previous warfare, nor so famous, and therefore were more desirous of glory.

Among the knighthood that were not invested with senatorial rank, though more than usually famous, was Pan Skshetuski, the celebrated hero of Zbaraj, a warrior who was held up as a model to the knighthood. He had shared in every war undertaken by the Commonwealth for thirty years. His hair was gray, but he was surrounded by six sons as strong as six wild boars. Four of these were already acquainted with war, but the two younger had still to serve their novitiate, therefore they were burning with such martial ardor that their father had to restrain their impatience with words of advice.

The comrades regarded this father and his sons with great respect, but greater admiration was evoked by Pan Yarotski, who, blind in both eyes, the paragon of the Bohemian King Yan, joined the campaign.

He had neither children nor relations, he was led by the hands of attendants; his only hope was to lay down his life in battle, benefit his country, and gain glory. There also was Pan Jechytski, whose father and brother fell in that year. There was also Pan Motovidlo, who not long before had escaped from Tartar captivity and taken the field with Pan Myslishevski. The former wanted to avenge his captivity, and the latter, the injustice which he had suffered at Kamen-

ets where, in spite of the conditions and his dignity as a noble, he had been beaten with rods by the janissaries. There were knights of great experience from the outposts of the Dniester: the wild Pan Rushchyts and the matchless archer Mushalski, who had brought a sound head out of Kamenets, because the little knight had sent him with a message to Basia. There was Snitko, and Pan Nyenashinyets, and Pan Hromyka, and most wretched of all, Pan Adam Novovyeyksi.

Even his friends and relatives desired death for this man for there was no consolation left for him. After regaining his health, Pan Adam had destroyed chambuls for a whole year, pursuing Lipkovs with special tenacity. After Pan Motovidlo's defeat by Krychinski, he had hunted Krychinski through the whole of Podolia, giving him no rest, and causing him no end of trouble. In one of these expeditions he had captured Adurovich and flayed him alive. He spared no prisoners, but his sufferings found no relief. He joined the Russian voyavoda's hussars a month before the battle.

This was the knighthood with which Pan Sobieski took up his position at Khotsim. These warriors were anxious to wreak vengeance for the wrongs of the Commonwealth in the first place, but secondly, for their own. In constant warfare with the Infidels in that blood-stained land, nearly every man had lost some dear one, and carried in his heart the remembrance of some awful calamity. Therefore, the Grand Hetman hastened to battle, for he saw that the fury in the hearts of his soldiers was like the fury of a lioness whose cubs have been stolen from the jungle by reckless hunters.

On November 9, 1674, the business commenced with skirmishing. In the morning, throngs of Turks appeared before the walls, and throngs of Polish knights eagerly hastened to meet them. Men fell on both sides, but the Turks suffered the greater loss: however, only a few Turks or Poles of note fell. At the very beginning of the skirmish, Pan May was pierced by the scimitar of a gigantic spahi, but the head of the latter was almost severed at a blow by Pan Yan's youngest son. This deed earned for him the praise of his prudent father, and great glory.

They fought singly or in groups, the spectators of the struggle gained courage and became more eager every moment. In the meantime, detachments of the army were placed around the Turkish camp, each in the position assigned by Sobieski. The latter took up his position on the old Yassy road, behind

Korytski's infantry, and gained a view of Hussein's entire camp, and his face expressed that serene tranquility possessed by a master who is sure of his art before he commences his labor. Now and then he despatches adjutants with orders, and then he thoughtfully watched the skirmishing. Towards evening the Voyeroda of Russia came to him.

"The intrenchments are so extensive," he said, "that it is impossible to make a simultaneous attack on all sides."

"To-morrow, we shall be in the intrenchments and the day after we shall cut down those men in three-quarters of an hour," Sobieski calmly replied.

Meanwhile night came on. The skirmishers retired from the field. The Hetman ordered all the divisions to approach the entrenchments in the darkness; Hussein prevented this as much as possible with heavy guns, but with no result. Towards morning the Polish divisions again slightly advanced. The infantry began to throw up breast-works. Some of the regiments had advanced to within a musket shot. The janissaries opened a close fire. By the Hetman's command, there was scarcely any reply to these volleys, but the infantry prepared for a hand-to-hand attack. The soldiers only awaited the signal for a wild charge. Grape-shot flew over their long line with whistling and a noise like flocks of birds. Pan Kantski's artillery began the attack at daybreak and did not cease for one moment. Not till the battle was over was it known what tremendous destruction had been wrought by its missiles falling in the places most thickly covered with the tents of the janissaries and spahis.

Thus passed the time till noon, but as it was November and the day was short, haste was necessary. Suddenly, all the benbens and small and great drums were heard. Some dozen thousands of throats shouted with one voice. The infantry, supported by light cavalry, rushed in the dense mass to the attack.

They attacked the Turks simultaneously at five points. The foreign regiments were led by Yan Dennemark and Christopher De Bohan, experienced warriors. The former of a fiery nature rushed on with such élan that he reached his entrenchment and almost destroyed his own regiment, for he encountered a volley from twelve or fifteen hundred muskets. He himself fell. The soldiers began to waver, but at that moment De Bohan came to the rescue and stopped a panic. With a step as steadily as on parade and keeping time to the

fosse with fascines, was the first to cross it beneath a storm music, he marched the whole distance right up to the Turkish intrenchments answering volley with volley, and, filling the posse with fascines, was the first to cross it beneath a storm of bullets; he raised his cap to the janissaries, and ran his sword through the first banneret. Carried away by the example of such a colonel, the soldiers sprang forward and a terrible contest commenced, in which discipline and training vied successfully with the fierce courage of the janissaries.

But dragoons were quickly brought up from the small villages of Taraban by Tetwin and Doenhoff; another regiment was headed by Aswer Greben and Haydepol, all distinguished soldiers who, with the exception of Haydepol, had covered themselves with great glory in Denmark under Charnyetski. The troops under their command were big and doughty, selected from men on the Royal domains, and well trained to fight on foot and horseback. The gate was defended against them by irregular Turkish soldiers, who, though in great force, were quickly thrown into confusion and forced to retreat; when they came to close quarters they only defended themselves when they had no chance of escape. That gate was the first one opened, and the cavalry were the first to pass it to the interior of the camp.

At the head of the Polish militia, Pans Kobyletski, Michael Jebrovski, Pyotrkovchyk, and Galetski, stormed the entrenchments at three other points. A most stubborn fight raged at the main gate on the Yassy road where the Mazovians came in contact with the guard of Hussein Pasha. The vizir considered that gate of the utmost importance, for the Polish cavalry might dash into the camp through it, so he determined to defend it to the last, and constantly pushed fresh bodies of janissaries to the front. The militia took the gate at one stroke and then exerted all their strength to retain it. They were driven back by cannon balls and a storm of bullets from small arms. Every moment fresh bodies of Turkish warriors sprang out of the clouds of smoke to attack them. Pan Kobyletski did not wait for them, but sprang at them like a raging bear, and two walls of men clashed together, swaying backwards and forwards at close quarters in disorder, in a vortex, in rivers of blood, and on heaps of corpses. They fought with every kind of weapon; with swords, knives, gunstocks, shovels, clubs, etc., and sometimes the crush became so tremendous and terrible, that men grappled with each other

and fought with fists and teeth. Hussein twice attempted to break the infantry with a cavalry charge; but each time the infantry fell upon him with such extraordinary resolution that the cavalry had to retreat in disorder. Pan Sobieski at last took pity on his men and sent all the camp-servants to their assistance.

Pan Motovidlo was leading them. This mob, very seldom employed in battle, and armed with all kinds of weapons, dashed forward with such ardor that they even roused the Hetman's admiration. It may be that they were inspired with the desire for spoil; it may be that the fire that possessed the whole army that day was communicated to them also. It is sufficient that they charged the janissaries as if they were only smoke and were so irresistible that at the first onset they drove them back a musket's shot from the gate. Hussein cast fresh regiments into the vortex of battle and the struggle was instantly renewed and lasted for whole hours. Meanwhile Korytski at the head of picked regiments attacked the gate in force; in the distance the hussars, like a huge bird lazily rising for flight, also advanced towards the gate.

At that moment an orderly rushed up to the Hetman from the eastern side of the camp.

"The voyevoda of Belsk is on the walls," he cried with heaving breast.

He was followed by a second:

"The hetmans of Lithuania are on the walls!"

He was followed by others and all with similar news. The world had grown dark, but there was light in the Hetman's face. He turned to Pan Bidzinski by his side and said:

"It will be the cavalry's turn next; but that will be in the morning."

Nobody in either the Turkish or Polish army knew or imagined that the Hetman meant to put off the general attack till the next morning. Far from it! Orderlies carried orders to the captains to hold them in readiness at any moment. The infantry stood in close ranks and the cavalry kept their hands on their sabres and lances. They were all impatiently awaiting the word, for the men were cold and hungry.

But no commands arrived and hours passed on. The night became as black as a shroud. A drizzling rain had set in about one in the afternoon, but about midnight it gave way to a fierce wind with hail and snow. Its blasts froze the marrow in the bones of men; the horses were scarcely able to keep

their feet, and men were numbed. The sharpest dry frost could never be so bitter as that hail and snow that cut like a scourge. Momentarily expecting the signal, it was not possible to think about eating and drinking, or kindling fires. The weather grew worse every hour. That was a memorable night,—“a night of torture and gnashing of teeth.” The voices of the captains crying “Stand! stand!” were heard every instant; and the soldiers, perfectly disciplined, stood alert, motionless, and patient.

But the stiffened Turkish regiments, equally alert, stood facing them in the hail, and tempest, and darkness.

Among them also nobody lighted a fire, or ate, or drank. The attack of the whole Polish force might occur at any moment, and so the spahis could not let their sabres out of their hands. The janissaries stood like a wall with their muskets ready to shoot. The hardy Polish soldiers, inured to the rigors of winter, could spend such a night; but the others, reared in the mild climate of Rumelia, or among the palms of Asia Minor, were suffering more than they could endure. At last Hussein found out why Sobieski did not commence the attack. It was because that frozen rain was the Poles' best ally. It was clear that, if the spahis and janissaries were to be forced to stand through twelve such hours as those, the cold would lay them down like sheaves on the morrow. They would not even try to defend themselves;—at least till they were warmed by the heat of battle.

Both Poles and Tartars comprehended this. About four in the morning Hussein was approached by two Pashas,—Yanish and Kiaya, the leader of the janissaries, an old warrior of experience and renown. Both their faces were troubled and anxious.

Kiaya was the first to speak: “Lord, if my ‘lambs’ have to stand like this till daylight, neither bullets nor sword will be needed against them.”

“Lord,” said Yanish Pasha, “my spahis will freeze and be unable to fight in the morning.”

Hussein pulled at his beard, foreseeing defeat for his army and ruin for himself. But what could he do? If he allowed his men to fall out even for a moment, or light fires to warm themselves with hot food, the attack would commence at once. Even now the trumpets sounded at the walls at intervals as if the cavalry were about to advance.

Kiaya and Yanish Pashas could only see one way to escape

disaster, and that was not to await the attack, but to strike at the foe with the entire force. It mattered not that he was prepared; for, though he was ready to attack, he himself did not anticipate attack. Perhaps they might drive him out of the trenches; in the worst case defeat was only a probability in a night battle, but in the morrow's fight it was certain.

But Hussein did not care to take the old warriors' advice.

"What?" he cried; "you have lined the camp with trenches, regarding them as the one safe-guard against that hellish cavalry,—that was your counsel and precaution; and now you say something else!"

He did not issue the command. He merely ordered the cannon to fire, which was instantly answered with great effect by Pan Kantski. The rain became colder and colder and cut more and more cruelly; the wind roared and howled and penetrated clothing and skin and froze the blood in the veins. Thus passed that long November night during which the strength of the warriors of Islam failed in them and despair invaded their hearts with a foreboding of defeat.

Even at daybreak Yanish Pasha again approached Hussein and advised him to retreat in order of battle to the bridge over the Dniester and cautiously commence the game of war there. "For," said he, "if the troops cannot withstand the charge of the cavalry they can retreat to the opposite bank and be protected by the river." But Kiaya, the chief of the janissaries, did not agree with this opinion. He thought that Yanish's counsel came too late and feared that an order to retreat might throw the entire army into immediate panic. The spahis supported by the djamaks must meet the first shock of cavalry of the unbelievers even if they are all destroyed thereby. By that time the janissaries will come to their support and when the first charge of the unbelievers is checked God may perhaps send the victory."

Kiaya and Hussein followed this advice. Multitudes of mounted Turks went to the front and the janissaries and djamaks were disposed in their rear around Hussein's tents. Their serried ranks presented a splendid and awe-inspiring spectacle. The white-bearded Kiaya, "Lion of God," who had led only to victory till that time, flew along their close ranks strengthening and encouraging them and recalling former battles and their own unbroken power to their memories. They also far preferred battle to that idle waiting amid storm and rain and wind that pierced them to the bone; and so,

although they could scarcely hold the muskets and spears in their stiffened hands, their spirits rose at the thought that they would warm them in battle. The spahis awaited the attack with far less desire, because they had to face its first fury, and secondly, because among them were many natives of Asia Minor and Egypt who were only half-alive after that night, as they were extremely sensitive to cold. The horses also suffered considerably and, though covered with splendid caparisons, they stood with their heads lowered to the earth, breathing columns of steam from their nostrils. With blue faces, and half-sightless eyes, the men had not the least thought of victory. Their sole thought was that death would be preferable to such torture as they had experienced during the past night, but flight to their distant homes, beneath the hot beams of the sun, would be better still.

Many of the Polish troops who were unsufficiently clothed had died on the walls before day; but on the whole, they had endured the cold far better than the Turks, for they were strengthened by the hope of victory and an almost blind faith that since the Hetman had ordained that they must stiffen in the rain, the torture must infallibly result in their own advantage, and the hurt and ruin of the Turks. However, even they gladly greeted the first beam of dawn.

At that moment Sobieski appeared at the walls.

That day there was no bright dawn in the sky, but there was brightness in his face; for when he saw that the enemy meant fight in the camp, he was sure that that day would result in a terrible rout to Mohammed, so he went from regiment to regiment repeating: "For the desecration of churches! for blasphemy against the Most Holy Virgin in Kamenets! for injury to Christendom and the Commonwealth! for Kamenets!" The soldiers' faces assumed a terrible expression, as if to say, "We can scarcely restrain ourselves! Let us go, Grand Hetman, and you shall see!" The gray morning light momentarily grew brighter and brighter and from the fog rows of horses heads, forms of men, lances, standards, and finally regiments of infantry became more distinct every moment. First they advanced through the fog towards the enemy like two rivers on the flanks of the cavalry; then the light cavalry moved, leaving only a broad track in the centre, along which the hussars were to charge at the right moment.

Every head of an infantry and every captain had his instructions and knew what to do. Pan Kantski's artillery be-

gan to speak more deeply and elicit also strong response from the Turkish side. The musketry rattled and a mighty shout arose throughout the camp;—the attack had commenced.

The foggy atmosphere obscured the view, but the sounds of the struggle reached the spot where the hussars were awaiting. The clash of weapons and the yells of the men could be heard. The Hetman who had remained with the hussars until then, and was talking with the Russian Voyevoda, suddenly stopped and listened.

The infantry are engaged with the Djamaks, the front ranks are dispersed, he said to the voyevoda.

Presently, when the musketry was slackening, suddenly a mighty volley roared, quickly followed by another. It was evident that the light cavalry had driven back the spahis and were face to face with the janissaries.

The Grand Hetman set spurs to his horse and sprang to the battle at lightning speed at the head of a small body of men. The Voyevoda of Russia remained behind with the fifteen squadrons of hussars who, in perfect order, were only awaiting the signal to dash to the front and decide the fate of the battle.

They waited for some time yet, and in the meantime, in the heart of the camp, it seethed and roared more and more terribly. Sometimes the battle seemed to roll towards the right, and sometimes to the left. Now towards the Lithuanian regiments, and now towards the Voyevoda of Belski; exactly as in a storm, when thunders roll across the sky. The artillery-fire of the Turks was slackening, while Pan Kantski's guns redoubled their energy. In the course of an hour it appeared to the Voyevoda of Russia, that the might of the struggle moved to the centre immediately in front of his hussars.

At that moment, the Grand Hetman galloped up at the head of his escort. His eyes were flashing fire. He reined in his horse near the Voyevoda and cried:

“At them now, with God's aid!”

“At them!” shouted the Voyevoda of Russia.

And the captains repeated the order after him. With a dreadful noise that forest of lances dropped with one movement level with the horses' heads and fifteen squadrons of that cavalry which was accustomed to destroy everything before it, advanced like a mighty cloud?

From the day when, during the three day's battle at Warsaw, the Lithuanian hussars under Polubinski had split the

entire Swedish army like a wedge, and penetrated it, no one remembered an attack made with such force. Those squadrons started at a trot, but at two hundred paces distance, the captains ordered "Gallop!" The men shouted "Strike, kill!" in answer, and bent in their saddles as the horses went at full speed. Then that column sweeping on like a tornado composed of horses, iron men, and levelled lances, partook somewhat of the resistless character of an element let loose. It moved like a storm or a raging river, with fury and uproar. The earth trembled under its weight, and even if no man had levelled a lance, or drawn a sabre, it was evident that the mere weight and shock of the hussars would overturn, trample, and shatter everything before them, just as a tornado shatters and levels a forest. Thus they swept on to the bloody field, strewn with bodies, where the battle was raging. The light cavalry were still fighting on the wings with the Turkish cavalry, which they had succeeded in driving back some distance. But in the centre the dense ranks of the janissaries stood like an indestructible wall. Again and again the light cavalry had broken themselves against that wall, as a rolling wave breaks itself on a rocky shore. It was now the task of the hussars to shatter and destroy it.

Several thousands of muskets thundered like a single report. In another moment the janissaries settled themselves more firmly on their feet and some blinked their eyes at the sight of the terrible charge; the hands of some of them trembled as they grasped their spears, and the hearts of all were beating like hammers, their teeth were clinched, and their breasts heaving terribly. The hussars are just upon them. The loud breathing of the horses is heard. Destruction, annihilation, and death are swooping down on them.

"Allah! . . . Jesu Maria!" . . . These two cries are mingled as terribly as if they had never broken from human breasts till that moment. The living wall shakes, bends and breaks. The dry snapping of broken lances for a moment drowns every other sound, and then is heard the clash of iron, the sound as of thousands of hammers striking violently on anvils, as of thousands of flails on a threshing-floor, and single and collective cries, groans, shouts, reports of pistols and guns, and howls of terror. Attackers and attacked are mingled in an indescribable vortex. A slaughter follows. From under the press blood flows, warm, steaming, and spreading its raw odor on the air.

The first, second, third, and tenth rank of the janissaries are lying like a pavement, trampled with hoofs, pierced with lances, and slashed with swords. But the white-bearded Kiaya, "Lion of God," casts all his men into the seething battle. It matters not that they are levelled like grain before a tempest. They fight, they are seized with rage, they breathe forth death, and seek it. The lava of horses' chests presses against them, bends, and upsets them. They lay open the horses' bellies with their knives, thousands of sabres ceaselessly slash them, blades rise like lightning and fall on their heads, necks, and hands. They slash the hussars on the legs and knees, they coil about and bite like venomous reptiles, they die and avenge themselves.

Kiaya, "Lion of God," constantly hurls fresh forces into the jaws of death. He encourages them to fight by his cries and with uplifted scimitar he rushes himself into the press. Then a gigantic hussar, destroying everything before him like a flame, falls upon the white-bearded old man and, rising in his stirrups, to give a more terrible stroke, brings a two-handed sword down on the white head with an awful sweep. Neither the scimitar, nor the helmet forged in Damascus, can resist the blow, and Kiaya, cleft almost to the shoulders, falls to the earth as if struck by lightning.

Pan Novovyeyski, for it was he, had already caused terrible havoc, for no one could withstand the strength and sullen fury of the man; but now he had done that utmost service by cutting down the old hero who alone kept up the obstinate fight. The janissaries raised a dreadful cry at the sight of the death of their chief, and some of them aimed their muskets at the breast of the cavalier. He turned towards them like dark night, and before they could be sabred by other hussars the shots rang out, Pan Adam reined in his horse, and bowed in his saddle. Two comrades grasped him by the arms, but a smile, long a stranger guest, illuminated his gloomy face, his eyes rolled in his head, and his white lips whispered words which no one could distinguish in the roar of battle. Meanwhile, the last ranks of the janissaries wavered.

The valiant Yanish Pasha endeavored to renew the fight, but his men had fallen into a panic and all efforts were useless. The ranks were broken and shattered, driven back, beaten down, trampled and slashed, and they could not recover their order. Finally they broke like an over-strained chain and men flew apart from each other in all directions

like separate links, yelling, shouting, casting away their weapons, and covering their heads with their hands. The cavalry followed them up, and not finding any room for separate flight, they huddled together in dense masses, on whose necks the cavalry rode swimming in blood. Pan Mushalski, the archer, struck the valiant Yanish Pasha such a fierce blow on the neck with his sabre, that his spinal marrow gushed out and stained his silk shirt and the silver scales of his mail.

The djamaks, defeated by the Polish infantry, and part of the cavalry which was dispersed at the very beginning of the battle, in fact a whole Turkish division, now fled to the opposite side of the camp where was a rocky ravine some dozens of feet deep. They were driven there by the madness of terror. Many cast themselves over the precipice, not to escape death, but death at the hands of the Poles. Pan Bidzinski, the Crown Commander, obstructed the way of this despairing crowd, but the avalanche of fugitives carried him along with it and cast him to the bottom of the precipice, which in a few moments was filled almost to the brink with heaps of slain, wounded, and suffocated men.

Dreadful groans arose from the bottom; bodies were quivering, kicking one another, or clawing in the agonies of death. The sound of groaning and the writhing of the bodies lasted till evening, but more and more faintly, till at dark they ceased altogether.

The effect of the shock of the hussars was frightful.

Eight thousand sabred janissaries lay near the trench surrounding the tents at Hussein Pasha, without counting those who perished in the flight, or at the foot of the precipice. The Polish cavalry was among the tents; Pan Sobieski had triumphed. The trumpets were giving forth their blare of victory when the battle suddenly flamed up again.

When the janissaries were routed, the vizir, Hussein Pasha, at the head of his mounted guards and all the surviving cavalry, fled through the gate leading to Yassy; but when the squadrons of Dmitri Vishnyovyetski intercepted him outside, and began to slash without mercy, he turned back to the camp to seek another outlet of escape, just as a wild beast surrounded in a forest seeks an outlet. He came back with such a rush that in a moment he scattered the light squadron of Semenovs, threw the infantry, who were partly occupied in pillaging the camp, into disorder, and reached to within half a pistol shot of the Hetman himself.

"In the very camp," afterwards wrote Pan Sobieski, "we came near being defeated, and our escape from death must be attributed to the extraordinary resolution of the hussars. In fact, the pressure of the Turks was tremendous, under the impulse of utter despair, and it was the more terrible because entirely unexpected; but the hussars, who had not yet cooled from the heat of battle, immediately charged them with the greatest impetus. Prusinovski's squadron first advanced and brought the attackers to a halt. He was followed by Pan Yan Skshetuski with his men, and then the whole army,—cavalry, infantry, and camp-followers,—every man as he was and wherever he happened to be; they all charged the enemy with the greatest fury, and there was a battle somewhat disordered, but not less furious than the hussars' charge on the janisseries.

When the struggle was over the knights looked back with wonder on the valor of the Turks, who, attacked by Vishnyov-yetski and the Hetmans of Lithuania and surrounded on all sides, defended themselves with such fury that, although Sobieski allowed the Poles to take prisoners then, they were scarcely able to take the handful of captives. Finally, when the heavy squadrons dispersed them after half an hour's fighting, single groups and single horsemen fought to the last gasp, calling upon Allah. Many glorious deeds were performed, the memory of which has not perished among men. The Field Hetman of Lithuania slew a strong Pasha who had killed Pan Rudomina, Pan Kimbar, and Pan Rdultovski, but the Field Hetman, coming upon him unnoticed, cut off his head with one blow. Pan Sobieski slew before the army a spahi who had fired a pistol at him. Pan Bidzinski, the Crown Commander, escaping from the ravine by some miracle, although bruised and wounded, at once dashed into the thick of the fight and fought till he fainted with exhaustion. He was sick for a long time, but recovered his health after some months and again went to the field with great glory to himself.

Of less celebrated men, Pan Rushchyts fought the most furiously, destroying horsemen as a wolf snatches sheep from a flock. Pan Yan Skshetuski on his part performed wonders, and his sons fought around him like young lions. Sorrowfully and regretfully did these knights afterwards think of what Pan Volodiyovski, that swordsman above all others, would have performed on that day, had it not been that he

had been in the earth for a whole year resting in God and in Glory. But others trained in his school gained sufficient fame for him and for themselves on that field of carnage.

Besides Pan Novovyeyski, two of the old knights of Khreptyov fell in that renewed fight: Pan Motovidlo and the terrible archer, Mushalski. Several balls simultaneously pierced Motovidlo's breast and he fell like an oak that has reached its term. It was said by eye-witnesses that he fell by the hand of those Cossack brothers who had struggled to the last under Hohol against their mother-country and Christendom. Strange to relate, Pan Mushalski died by an arrow from the bow of some fugitive Turk; it pierced his throat just at the moment when, at the final defeat of the Infidel, he was putting his hand to the quiver to send fresh unerring messengers of death in pursuit of the flying. But his soul had to join the soul of Didyuk, so that the friendship begun on the Turkish galley might endure bound together in eternity. The old comrades of Khreptyov found the three bodies after the battle and took a tearful farewell of them, though they envied their glorious death. Pan Novovyeyski had a smile upon his lips and his face was calm and serene; Pan Motovidlo seemed to be peacefully sleeping; and Pan Mushalski had his eyes raised as if in prayer. They were buried together on that glorious field of Khotsim beneath the cliff on which, as an eternal memorial of the day, their three names were engraved beneath a cross.

The leader of the entire Turkish army, Hussein Pasha, escaped on a swift Anatolian steed, but only to receive a silken cord from the hands of the Sultan at Stambul. Of the magnificent Turkish army only small bands were able to carry away whole heads from the disaster. The last legions of Hussein Pasha's cavalry fell into the hands of the troops of the Commonwealth. Thus, the field Hetman drove them to the Grand Hetman, and he drove them to the Lithuanian Hetmans, and they back again to the Field Hetman, and so in turn, till almost the whole of them had perished. Scarcely one of the janissaries escaped. The whole enormous camp was streaming with blood mingled with snow and rain. So many bodies lay there that nothing but crows, ravens, and wolves prevented a pestilence, which usually comes from decaying bodies. The Polish troops were inspired with such an ardor of battle, that, without waiting to draw breath after the victory, they captured Khotsim. Immense spoil was taken in

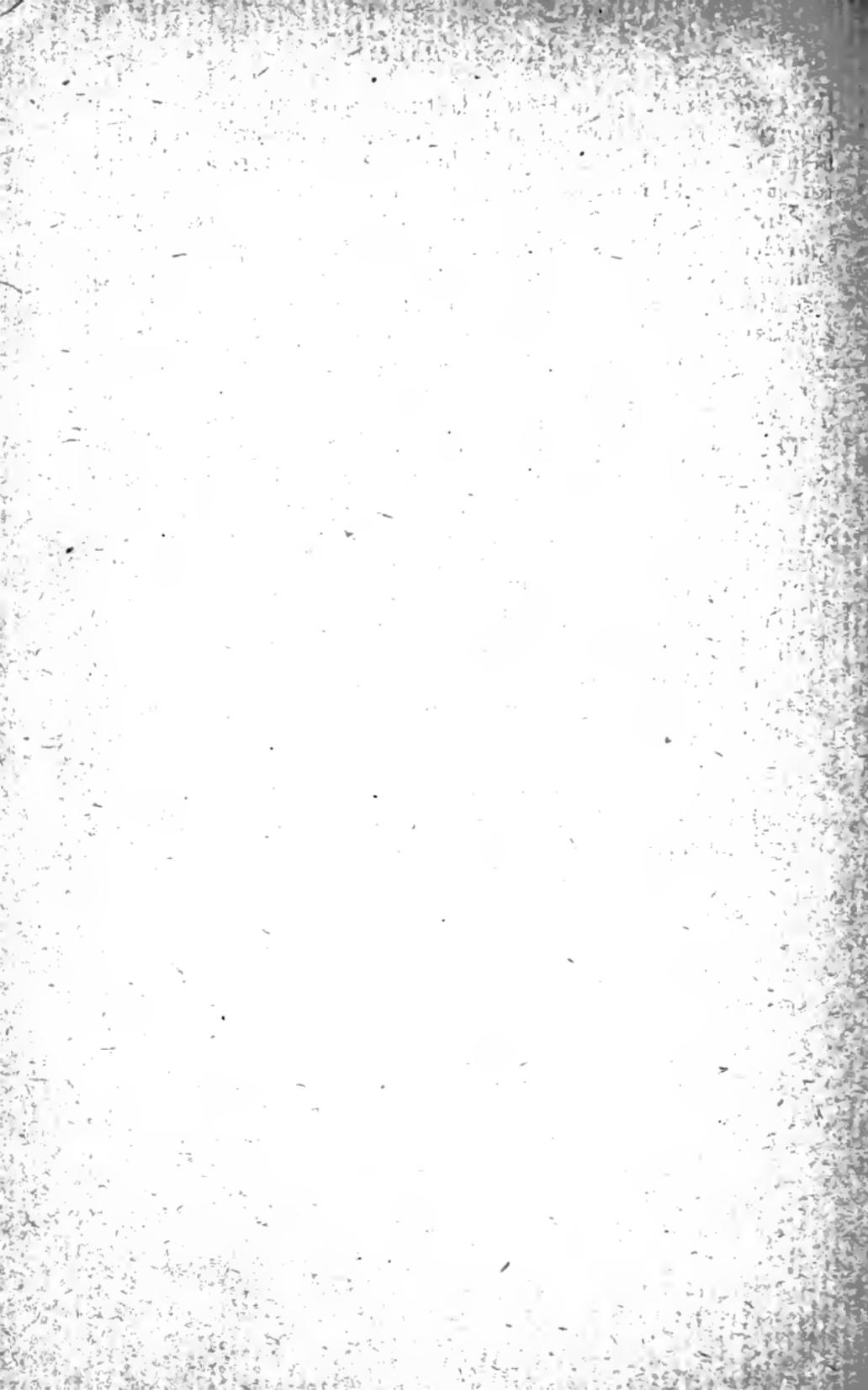
the camp itself. The Grand Hetman took one hundred and twenty guns and three hundred flags and standards from that field on which the Polish sabre had celebrated a great triumph for the second time in the course of a century.

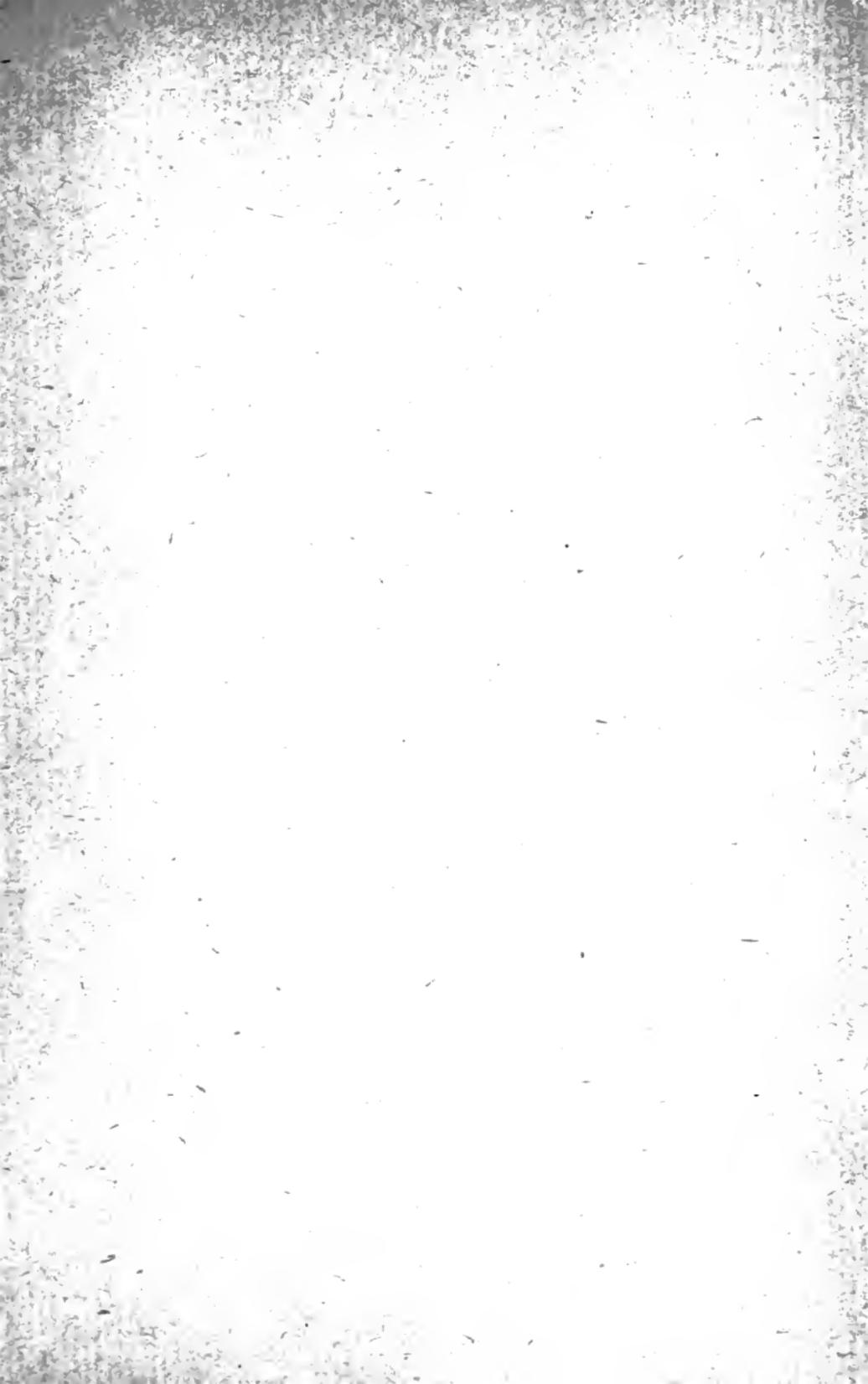
Pan Sobieski himself stood in Hussein Pasha's tent, which sparkled with rubies and gold, and sent forth news of the fortunate victory in every direction by swift couriers. Then were assembled the cavalry and infantry; all the squadrons, Polish, Lithuanian, and Cossack and the whole army stood in battle array. A Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated and on the same square, where the day before Muezzins had cried "La Allah illa Allah!" *Te Deum Laudamus* was chanted.

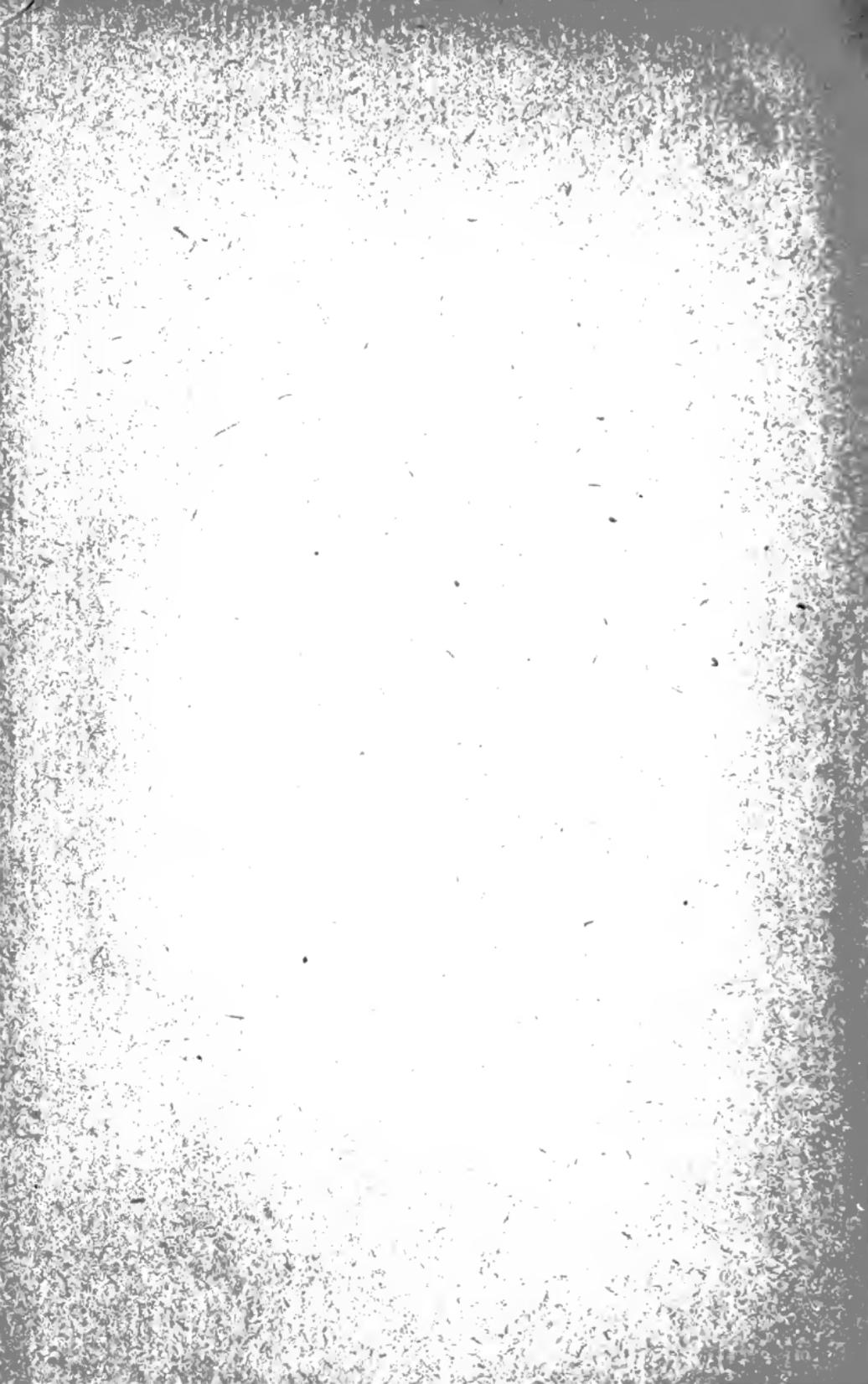
The Hetman, extended in the form of a cross, heard mass and the chant, and joyful tears were flowing down his worthy face when he rose. At that sight the legions of knights not yet cleansed from the blood, still trembling after their exertions in the fight, thrice uttered the mighty thundering shout: "Vivat, Joannes victor!"

Ten years later, when the might of King Yan the Third (Sobieski) hurled the Turkish power at Vienna to the dust, that shout was repeated from sea to sea, from mountain to mountain, throughout the world, wherever bells called the faithful to prayer.

Here ends this series of books, written in the course of several years and with no little labor, for the strengthening of men's hearts.









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