CHAPTER V.

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

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

But he understood himself that he had raised his eyes so high that he could not strengthen himself with the least hope, especially since Pan Bodzynski and Pan Lyassota came to make proposals for the princess in the name of Pan Pshiyemski, son of the voevoda of Lenchitsk. The unfortunate Volodyovski therefore told his new troubles to the lieutenant, initiating him into all the affairs and secrets of the castle, to which he listened with half an ear, since his mind and heart were otherwise occupied. Had it not been for that mental disquiet which always attends even mutual love, Skshetuski would have felt himself happy on returning, after a long absence, to Lubni, where he was surrounded by friendly faces and that bustle of military life to which he had long grown accustomed. Though Lubni, as a lordly residence, was equal in grandeur to any of the seats of the "kinglets," still it was different from them in this, — that its life was stern, really of the camp. A visitor unacquainted with its usages and order, and coming, even in time of profoundest peace, might suppose that some military expedition was on foot. The soldier there was above the courtier, iron above gold, the trumpet-call louder

than sounds of feasts and amusements. Exemplary order reigned in every part, and a discipline elsewhere unknown. On all sides were throngs of knights of various regiments, armored cavalry dragoons, Cossacks, Tartars, and Wallachians, in which served not only the whole Trans-Dnieper, but volunteers, nobles from every part of the Commonwealth. Whoever wished training in a real school of knighthood set out for Lubni; therefore neither the Mazur, the Lithuanian, the man of Little Poland, nor even the Prussian, was absent from the side of the Russian. Infantry and artillery, or the so-called "fire people," were composed, for the greater part, of picked Germans engaged for high wages. Russians served principally in the dragoons, Lithuanians in the Tartar regiments; the men of Little Poland rallied most willingly to the armored regiments. The prince did not allow his men to live in idleness; hence there was ceaseless movement in the camp. Some regiments were marching out to relieve the stanitsas and outposts, others were entering the capital, — day after day drilling and manœuvres. At times, even when there was no trouble from Tartars, the prince undertook distant expeditions into the wild steppes and wildernesses to accustom the soldiers to campaigning, to push forward where no man had gone before, and to spread the glory of his name. So the past spring he had descended the left bank of the Dnieper to Kudák, where Pan Grodzitski, in command of the garrison, received him as a monarch; then he advanced farther beyond the Cataracts to Hortitsa; and at Kuchkasy he gave orders to raise a great mound of stones as a memorial and a sign that no other lord had gone so far along that shore.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Order reigned in all the lands of the prince, with plenty, justice, peace, but also terror, — for in case of the slightest opposition the prince knew no bounds to his anger and to the punishments he inflicted; to such a degree was magnanimity joined with severity in his nature. But in those times and in those regions that severity alone permitted life and the labor of men to thrive and continue. Thanks to it alone, towns and villages rose, the agriculturist took the place of the highwayman, the merchant sold his wares in peace, bells called the devout in safety to prayer, the enemy dared not cross the boundaries, crowds of thieves perished, empaled on stakes, or were changed into regular soldiers, and the wilderness bloomed.

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

Pan Longin Podbipienta, seeing the prince for the first time at the funeral, could not believe his own eyes. Having heard so much of his glory, he imagined that he must be a sort of giant, a head above the race of common men; while the prince was really of small stature, and rather delicate. He was still young, — in the thirty-sixth year of his age, — but on his countenance military toil was evident; and as he lived in Lubni like a real king, so did he share in time of campaign and expedition the hardships of the common soldier. He ate black bread, slept on the ground in a blanket; and since the greater part of his life was spent in labors of the camp, the years left their marks on his face. But that countenance revealed at the first glance an extraordinary man. There was depicted on it an iron, unbending will, and a majesty before which all involuntarily inclined. It was evident that this man knew his own power and greatness; and if on the morrow a crown were placed on his head, he would not feel astonished or oppressed by its weight. He had large eyes, calm, and indeed mild; still, thunders seemed to slumber in them, and you felt that woe would follow him who should rouse them. No man could endure the calm light of that look; and ambassadors trained at courts on appearing before Yeremi were seen to grow confused and unable to begin their discourse. He was, moreover, in his domain beyond the Dnieper a genuine king. There went out from his chancery privileges and grants headed, "We, by the grace of God Prince and Lord," etc. There were few magnates whom he considered equal to himself. Princes of the blood of ancient rulers were his stewards. Such in his day was the father of Helena, Vassily Bulyga Kurtsevich, who counted his descent, as already mentioned, from Koryat; but really he was descended from Rurik.

There was something in Prince Yeremi which, in spite of his native kindness, kept men at a distance. Loving soldiers, he was familiar with them; with him no one dared to be familiar; and still, if he should ask mounted knights to spring over the precipices of the Dnieper, they would do so without stopping to think. From his Wallachian mother he inherited a clearness of complexion like the color of iron at a white glow, from which heat radiates, and hair black as a raven's wing, which, shaven closely at the sides of his head, was cut square above the brows, covering half his forehead. He wore the Polish costume, and was not

over-careful of his dress. Only on great occasions did he wear costly apparel; but then he was all glitter from gold and jewels.

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

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

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

"It is easy for you to talk; you have but to wish and Anusia Borzobogata will not avoid you. She spoke of you very handsomely all the time. I thought at first that she was rousing the jealousy of Bykhovets; but I see that she

was ready to put him on a hook, feeling living sentiment in her heart for you alone."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What has happened to him?" asked of herself the petted favorite of the whole castle; and stamping with her little foot, she determined to investigate the matter. She did n't love Skshetuski; but accustomed to homage, she was unable to endure neglect, and was ready from very spite to fall in love with the insolent fellow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"From the Crimea."

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

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

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

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

"Why is he invincible?"

"He cannot marry."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Tell him so."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still, the temptation was great. That imp, looking from behind the shoulder of the princess, possessed such charm, those eyes shone so clearly, that something drew Pan Longin on to glance at them even once more. But that moment he remembered his vow. Zervikaptur stood before him, his ancestor Stoveiko Podbipienta, the three severed heads, — and terror seized him. He made the sign of the cross, and looked at her no more that evening. But next morning, early, he went to the quarters of Pan Yan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So one must wait for the Cossacks?"

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

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

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

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

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

But Skshetuski was unable to follow this advice himself. His melancholy increased continually. He was annoyed by the festivals at the castle, and by those faces on which some time before he gazed with such pleasure. Bodzynski and Rozvan Ursu departed at last, and after their departure profound quiet set in. Life began to flow on monotonously. The prince was occupied with the review of his enormous estates, and every morning shut himself in with his agents, who were arriving from all Rus and Sandomir, so that even military exercises took place but rarely. The noisy feasts of the officers, at which future wars were discussed,

wearied Skshetuski beyond measure; so he used to go out with a gun on his shoulder to Solonitsa, where Jolkefski had inflicted such terrible defeats on Nalivaika, Loboda, and Krempski. The traces of these battles had already disappeared from the memory of men, and the field of conflict; but from time to time the earth cast up from its bosom whitened bones, and beyond the water was visible the Cossack breastwork from behind which the Zaporojians of Loboda and the volunteers of Nalivaika had made such a desperate defence. But a dense grove had already spread its roots over the breastwork. That was the place where Skshetuski hid himself from the noise of the castle; and instead of shooting at birds he fell into meditation, and before the eyes of his spirit stood the form of the beloved maiden called hither by his memory and his heart. There in the mist, the rustle of the reeds, and the melancholy of those places he found solace in his own yearning.

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

All this time Helena would have to remain under guardianship in which Skshetuski had no trust, in a real den of wolves, among wild, uncouth people, ill disposed to him. They had, it is true, to keep faith for their own sake, and really they had no other choice; but who could guess what they might invent, what they might venture upon, especially when they were pressed by the terrible Bogun, whom they seemed both to love and fear? It would be easy for Bogun to force them to yield up the girl, for similar deeds were not rare. In this way Loboda, the comrade of the ill-starred Nalivaika, had forced Pani Poplinska to give him her foster-daughter as wife, although she was of good family and hated the Cossack with her whole soul. And if what was said of the immeasurable wealth of Bogun

were true, he might remunerate them for the girl and the loss of Rozlogi. And then what? "Then," thought Pan Yan, "they will tell me with a sneer, 'Your lash is lost,' they will vanish into some Lithuanian or Mazovian wilderness, where even the hand of the prince cannot reach them."

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

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

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

Pan Longin showed himself a worthy descendant of his ancestor Stoveiko in the full sense, for with one blow he swept off the front half of the bear's head, together with his paw, before the eyes of the whole court. This proof of extraordinary strength was seen from the window by the prince himself, who took Pan Longin afterward to the apartments of the princess, where Anusia Borzobogata so tempted him with her eyes that next morning he had to go to confession, and for three days following he did not show himself in the castle until by earnest prayer he had expelled every temptation.

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

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

"Have you a letter?"

"I have. Here it is."

The lieutenant tore it open and began to read. For a long time he had been in doubt whether in the most favorable event Jendzian would bring a letter, for he was not sure that Helena knew how to write. Women in the country were uneducated, and Helena was reared among illiterate people. It was evident now that her father had taught her to write, for she had sent a long letter on four pages of paper. The poor girl didn't know how to express herself elegantly or rhetorically, but she wrote straight from the heart, as follows: —

"Indeed I shall never forget you. You will forget me sooner, for I hear that there are deceivers among you. But since you have sent your lad on purpose so many miles, it is evident that I am dear to you as you are to me, for which I thank you with a grateful heart. Do not think that it is not against my feeling of modesty

to write thus to you about loving ; but it is better to tell the truth than to lie or dissemble when there is something altogether different in the heart. I have asked Jendzian what you are doing in Lubni, and what are the customs at a great castle ; and when he told me about the beauty and comeliness of the young ladies there, I began to cry from sorrow" —

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

"Everything good," answered Jendzian.

The lieutenant read on: —

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

"You answered well," said the lieutenant.

Jendzian did n't know what the question was, for the lieutenant read to himself ; but he put on a wise look and coughed significantly. Skshetuski read on: —

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

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

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

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

Then he began to examine Jendzian on every point.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How did they discover that?"

"Well, you see, this is how it was. They had a dispute with the Sivinskis which they bound themselves to settle by payment. When the time came, they went to Bogun with, 'Lend us money!' 'I have some Turkish goods,' said he, 'but no money; for what I had I squandered.' When they heard this, they dropped him, and their affection turned to you."

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

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

"Well, well, take the saddle too."

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

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

"I was, but did n't find Bogun. Old Colonel Loboda is sick. They say Bogun will succeed him soon. But something strange is going on. Hardly a handful of Cossacks have remained in the regiment; the others, they say, have gone after Bogun, or run away to the Saitch; and this is very important, for some rebellion is on foot. I wanted to know something certain about Bogun, but all they told me was that he had crossed to the Russian bank.[1] 'Well,' thought I, 'if that is true, then our princess is safe from him;' and I returned."

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

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

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

The second sign was the more serious. The Saitch, confined within too narrow limits, was unable to feed all its inhabitants; expeditions were not always successful; besides,