

back at times in terror before those three, but, urged from behind, pushed on, and died under the blows of the sabre.

"Take them alive to the ataman!" was called out in the crowd. "Surrender!"

But Skshetuski was surrendering only to God; for he grew pale in a moment, tottered, and fell to the bottom of the boat.

"Farewell, father!" cried the sergeant, in despair.

But in a moment he fell also. The moving mass of as sailants covered the boats completely.

CHAPTER XI.

At the house of the inspector of weights and measures, in the outskirts of Hassan Pasha, at the Saitch, sat two Zaporojians at a table, fortifying themselves with spirits distilled from millet, which they dipped unceasingly from a wooden tub that stood in the middle of the table. One of them, already old and quite decrepit, was Philip Zakhar. He was the inspector. The other, Anton Tatarchuk, ataman of the Chigirin kuren, was a man about forty years old, tall, with a wild expression of face and oblique Tartar eyes. Both spoke in a low voice, as if fearing that some one might overhear them.

"But it is to-day?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, almost immediately," answered Tatarchuk. "They are waiting for the koshevoi and Tugai Bey, who went with Hmelnitski himself to Bazaluk, where the horde is quartered. The Brotherhood is already assembled on the square, and the kuren atamans will meet in council before evening. Before night all will be known."

"It may have an evil end," muttered old Philip Zakhar.

"Listen, inspector! But did you see that there was a letter to me also?"

"Of course I did, for I carried the letters myself to the koshevoi, and I know how to read. Three letters were found on the Pole, — one to the koshevoi himself, one to you, the third to young Barabash. Every one in the Saitch knows of this already."

"And who wrote? Don't you know?"

"The prince wrote to the koshevoi, for his seal was on the letter; who wrote to you is unknown."

"God guard us!"

"If they don't call you a friend of the Poles openly, nothing will come of it."

"God guard us!" repeated Tatarchuk.

"It is evident that you have something on your mind."

"Pshaw! I have nothing on my mind."

"The koshevoi, too, may destroy all the letters, for his own head is concerned. There was a letter to him as well as to you."

"He may."

"But if you have done anything, then—" here the old inspector lowered his voice still more—"go away!"

"But how and where?" asked Tatarchuk, uneasily. "The koshevoi has placed guards on all the islands, so that no one may escape to the Poles and let them know what is going on. The Tartars are on guard at Bazaluk. A fish could n't squeeze through, and a bird could n't fly over."

"Then hide in the Saitch, wherever you can."

"They will find me,—unless you hide me among the barrels in the bazaar? You are my relative."

"I would n't hide my own brother. If you are afraid of death, then drink; you won't feel it when you are drunk."

"Maybe there is nothing in the letters."

"Maybe."

"Here is misfortune, misfortune!" said Tatarchuk. "I don't feel that I have done anything. I am a good fellow, an enemy to the Poles. But though there is nothing in the letter, the devil knows what the Pole may say at the council. He may ruin me."

"He is a severe man; he won't say anything."

"Have you seen him to-day?"

"Yes; I rubbed his wounds with tar, I poured spirits and ashes into his throat. He will be all right. He is an angry fellow! They say that at Hortitsa he slaughtered the Tartars like swine, before they captured him. Set your mind at rest about the Pole."

The sullen sound of the kettledrums which were beaten on the Koshevoi's Square interrupted further conversation. Tatarchuk, hearing the sound, shuddered and sprang to his feet. Excessive fear was expressed by his face and movements.

"They are beating the summons to council," said he, catching his breath. "God save us! And you, Philip, don't speak of what we have been saying here. God save us!"

Having said this, Tatarchuk, seizing the tub with the liquor, brought it to his mouth with both hands, and drank,—drank as though he wished to drink himself to death.

"Let us go!" said the inspector.

The sound of the drums came clearer and clearer.

They went out. The field of Hassan Pasha was separated from the square by a rampart surrounding the encampment proper, and by a gate with lofty towers on which were

seen the muzzles of cannon fixed there. In the middle of the field stood the house of the inspector of weights and measures, and the cabins of the shop atamans, and around a rather large space were shops in which goods were stored. These shops were in general wretched structures made of oak planks, which Hortitsa furnished in abundance, fastened together with twigs and reeds. The cabins, not excepting that of the inspector, were mere huts, for only the roofs were raised above the ground. The roofs were black and smoked; for when there was fire in the cabin the smoke found exit, not only through the smoke-hole, but through every cranny in the roof, and one might suppose that it was not a cabin at all, but a pile of branches and reeds covering a tar-pit. No daylight entered these cabins; therefore a fire of pitch pine and oak chips was kept up. The shops, a few dozen in number, were divided into camp-shops which belonged to individual camps, and those of strangers in which during time of peace Tartars and Wallachians traded,—the first in skins, Eastern fabrics, arms, and every kind of booty; the second, chiefly in wine. But the shops for strangers were rarely occupied, since in that wild nest trade was changed most frequently to robbery, from which neither the inspectors nor the shop atamans could restrain the crowds.

Among the shops stood also thirty-eight camp-drinking shops; and before them always lay, on the sweepings, shavings, oak-sticks, and heaps of horse-manure, Zaporojians, half dead from drinking,—some sunk in a stony sleep; others with foam in their mouths, in convulsions or delirium-tremens; others half drunk, howling Cossack songs, spitting, striking, kissing, cursing Cossack fate or weeping over Cossack sorrow, walking upon the heads and breasts of those lying around. Only during expeditions against the Tartars or the upper country was sobriety enforced, and at such times those who took part in an expedition were punished with death for drunkenness. But in ordinary times, and especially in the bazaar, all were drunk,—the inspector, the camp ataman, the buyers, and the sellers. The sour smell of unrectified spirits, mixed with the odor of tar, fish, smoke, and horse-hides, filled the air of the whole place, which in general, by the variety of its shops, reminded one of some little Turkish or Tartar town. Everything was for sale that at any time had been seized as plunder in the Crimea, Wallachia, or on the shores of Anatolia,—

bright fabrics of the East, satins, brocades, velvets, cotton cloths, ticking, linen, iron and brass guns, skins, furs, dried fish, cherries, Turkish sweetmeats, church vessels, brass crescents taken from minarets, gilded crosses torn from churches, powder and sharp weapons, spear-staffs, and saddles. In that mixture of objects and colors moved about people dressed in remnants of the most varied garments, in the summer half-naked, always half-wild, discolored with smoke, black, rolled in mud, covered with wounds, bleeding from the bites of gigantic gnats which hovered in myriads over Chertomelik, and eternally drunk, as has been stated above.

At that moment the whole of Hassan Pasha was more crowded with people than usual; the shops and drinking-places were closed, and all were hastening to the Square of the Saitch, on which the council was to be held. Philip Zakhar and Anton Tatarchuk went with the others; but Tatarchuk loitered, and allowed the crowd to precede him. Disquiet grew more and more evident on his face. Meanwhile they crossed the bridge over the fosse, passed the gate, and found themselves on the broad fortified square, surrounded by thirty-eight large wooden structures. These were the kurens, or rather the buildings of the kurens, — a kind of military barracks in which the Cossacks lived. These kurens were of one structure and measure, and differed in nothing unless in the names, borrowed from the various towns of the Ukraine from which the regiments also took their names. In one corner of the square stood the council-house, in which the atamans used to sit under the presidency of the koshevoi. The crowd, or the so-called "Brotherhood," deliberated under the open sky, sending deputations every little while, and sometimes bursting in by force to the council-house and terrorizing those within.

The throng was already enormous on the square, for the ataman had recently assembled at the Saitch all the warriors scattered over the islands, streams, and meadows; therefore the Brotherhood was more numerous than on ordinary occasions. Since the sun was near its setting, a number of tar-barrels had been ignited already; and here and there were kegs of spirits which every kuren had set out for itself, and which added no small energy to the deliberations. Order between the kurens was maintained by the *essauls*, armed with heavy sticks to restrain

the councillors, and with pistols to defend their own lives, which were frequently in danger.

Philip Zakhar and Tatarchuk went straight to the council-house; for one as inspector, and the other as kuren ataman, had a right to a seat among the elders. In the council-room there was but one small table, before which sat the army secretary. The atamans and the koshevoi had seats on skins by the walls; but at that hour their places were not yet occupied. The koshevoi walked with great strides through the room; the kuren atamans, gathering in small groups, conversed in low tones, interrupted from time to time by more audible oaths. Tatarchuk, noticing that his acquaintances and even friends pretended not to see him, at once approached young Barabash, who was more or less in a position similar to his own. Others looked at them with a scowl, to which young Barabash paid no attention, not understanding well the reason. He was a man of great beauty and extraordinary strength, thanks to which he had the rank of kuren ataman. He was notorious throughout the whole Saitch for his stupidity, which had gained him the nickname of "Dunce Ataman" and the privilege of being laughed at by the elders for every word he uttered.

"Wait awhile; maybe we shall go in the water with a stone around the neck," whispered Tatarchuk to him.

"Why is that?" asked Barabash.

"Don't you know about the letters?"

"The plague take his mother! Have I written any letters?"

"See how they frown at us!"

"If I give it to one of them in the forehead, he won't look that way, for his eyes will jump out."

Just then shouts from the outside announced that something had happened. The doors of the council-house opened wide, and in came Hmelnitski with Tugai Bey. They were the men greeted so joyfully. A few months before Tugai Bey, as the most violent of the Tartars and the terror of the men from below, was the object of extreme hatred in the Saitch. Now the Brotherhood hurled their caps in the air at the sight of him, as a good friend of Hmelnitski and the Zaporojians.

Tugai Bey entered first, and then Hmelnitski, with the baton in his hand as hetman of the Zaporojian armies. He had held that office since his return from the Crimea with reinforcements from the Khan. The crowd at that time

raised him in their hands, and bursting open the army treasury, brought him the baton, the standard, and the seal which were generally borne before the hetman. He had changed, too, not a little. It was evident that he bore within himself the terrible power of the whole Zaporojie. This was not Hmelnitski the wronged, fleeing to the steppe through the Wilderness, but Hmelnitski the hetman, the spirit of blood, the giant, the avenger of his own wrongs on millions of people.

Still he did not break the chains; he only imposed new and heavier ones. This was evident from his relations with Tugai Bey. This hetman, in the heart of the Zaporojie, took a place second to the Tartar, and endured with submission Tartar pride and treatment contemptuous beyond expression. It was the attitude of a vassal before his lord. But it had to be so. Hmelnitski owed all his credit with the Cossacks to the Tartars and the favor of the Khan, whose representative was the wild and furious Tugai Bey. But Hmelnitski knew how to reconcile with submission the pride which was bursting his own bosom, as well as to unite courage with cunning; for he was a lion and a fox, an eagle and a serpent. This was the first time since the origin of the Cossacks that the Tartar had acted as master in the centre of the Saitch; but such were the times that had come. The Brotherhood hurled their caps in the air at sight of the Pagan. Such were the times that had been accepted.

The deliberations began. Tugai Bey sat down in the middle of the room on a large bundle of skins, and putting his legs under him, began to crack dry sunflower-seeds and spit out the husks in front of himself. On his right side sat Hmelnitski, with the baton; on his left the koshevoi; but the atamans and the deputation from the Brotherhood sat farther away near the walls. Conversation had ceased; only from the crowd outside, debating under the open sky, came a murmur and dull sound like the noise of waves. Hmelnitski began to speak:—

"Gentlemen, with the favor, attention, and aid of the serene Tsar¹ of the Crimea, the lord of many peoples and relative of the heavenly hosts; with the permission of his Majesty the gracious King Vladislav, our lord, and the hearty support of the brave Zaporojian armies, — trusting

¹ Hmelnitski is made to apply the title Tsar to the Khan, either to give him more importance in the eyes of the Cossacks or because Tugai Bey was present.

in our innocence and the justice of God, we are going to avenge the terrible and savage deeds of injustice which, while we had strength, we endured like Christians, at the hands of the faithless Poles, from commissioners, starostas, crown agents, from all the nobility, and from the Jews. Over these deeds of injustice you, gentlemen, and the whole Zaporojian army have shed many tears, and you have given me this baton that I might find the speedy vindication of our innocence and that of all our people. Esteeming this appointment as a great favor from you, my well-wishers, I went to ask of the serene Tsar that aid which he has given. But being ready and willing to move, I was grieved not a little when I heard that there could be traitors in the midst of us, entering into communication with the faithless Poles, and informing them of our work. If this be true, then they are to be punished according to your will and discretion. We ask you, therefore, to listen to the letters brought from our enemy, Prince Vishnyevetski, by an envoy who is not an envoy but a spy, who wants to note our preparations and the good-will of Tugai Bey, our friend, so as to report them to the Poles. And you are to decide whether he is to be punished as well as those to whom he brought letters, and of whom the koshevoi, as a true friend of me, of Tugai Bey, and of the whole army, gave prompt notice."

Hmelnitski stopped. The tumult outside the windows increased every moment. Then the army secretary began to read, first, the letter of the prince to the koshevoi ataman, beginning with these words: "We, by the grace of God, prince and lord in Lubni, Khorol, Pryluky, Gadyatch, etc., voevoda in Russia, etc., starosta, etc." The letter was purely official. The prince, having heard that forces were called in from the meadows, asked the ataman if that were true, and summoned him at once to desist from such action for the sake of peace in Christian lands; and in case Hmelnitski disturbed the Saitch, to deliver him up to the commissioners on their demand. The second letter was from Pan Grodzitski, also to the chief ataman; the third and fourth from Zatsvilikhovski and the old colonel of Cherkasi to Tatarehuk and Barabash. In all these there was nothing that could bring the persons to whom they were addressed into suspicion. Zatsvilikhovski merely begged Tatarehuk to take the bearer of his letter in care, and to make everything he might want easy for him.

Tatarchuk breathed more freely.

"What do you say, gentlemen, of these letters?" inquired Hmelnitski.

The Cossacks were silent. All their councils began thus, till liquor warmed up their heads, since no one of the atamans wished to raise his voice first. Being rude and cunning people, they did this principally from a fear of being laughed at for folly, which might subject the author of it to ridicule or give him a sarcastic nickname for the rest of his life; for such was the condition in the Saitch, where amidst the greatest rudeness the sense of the ridiculous and the dread of sarcasm were wonderfully developed.

The Cossacks remained silent. Hmelnitski raised his voice again.

"The koshevoi ataman is our brother and sincere friend. I believe in the koshevoi as I do in my own soul. And if any man were to speak otherwise, I should consider him a traitor. The koshevoi is our old friend and a soldier."

Having said this, he rose to his feet and kissed the koshevoi.

"Gentlemen," said the koshevoi, in answer, "I bring the forces together, and let the hetman lead them. As to the envoy, since they sent him to me, he is mine; and I make you a present of him."

"You, gentlemen of the delegation, salute the koshevoi," said Hmelnitski, "for he is a just man, and go to inform the Brotherhood that if there is a traitor, he is not the man; he first stationed a guard, he gave the order to seize traitors escaping to the Poles. Say, gentlemen, that the koshevoi is not the traitor, that he is the best of us all."

The deputies bowed to their girdles before Tugai Bey, who chewed his sunflower-seeds the whole time with the greatest indifference; then they bowed to Hmelnitski and the koshevoi, and went out of the room.

After a while joyful shouts outside the windows announced that the deputies had accomplished their task.

"Long life to our koshevoi! long life to our koshevoi!" shouted hoarse voices, with such power that the walls of the building seemed to tremble to their foundations.

At the same time was heard the roar of guns and muskets. The deputies returned and took their seats again in the corner of the room.

"Gentlemen," said Hmelnitski, after quiet had come in

some degree outside the windows, "you have decided wisely that the koshevoi is a just man. But if the koshevoi is not a traitor, who is the traitor? Who has friends among the Poles, with whom do they come to an understanding, to whom do they write letters, to whom do they confide the person of an envoy? Who is the traitor?"

While saying this, Hmelnitski raised his voice more and more, and directed his ominous looks toward Tatarchuk and young Barabash, as if he wished to point them out expressly.

A murmur rose in the room; a number of voices began to cry, "Barabash and Tatarchuk!" Some of the kuren atamans stood up in their places, and among the deputies was heard the cry, "To destruction!"

Tatarchuk grew pale, and young Barabash began to look with astonished eyes at those present. His slow mind struggled for a time to discover what was laid to his charge; at length he said, —

"The dog won't eat meat!"

Then he burst out into idiotic laughter, and after him others. And all at once the majority of the kuren atamans began to laugh wildly, not knowing themselves why. From outside the windows came shouts, louder and louder; it was evident that liquor had begun to heat their brains. The sound of the human wave rose higher and higher.

But Anton Tatarchuk rose to his feet, and turning to Hmelnitski, began to speak: —

"What have I done to you, most worthy hetman of the Zaporozhie, that you insist on my death? In what am I guilty before you? The commissioner Zatsvilikhovski has written a letter to me, — what of that? So has the prince written to the koshevoi. Have I received a letter? No! And if I had received it, what should I do with it? I should go to the secretary and ask to have it read; for I do not know how to write or to read. And you would always know what was in the letter. The Pole I don't know by sight. Am I a traitor, then? Oh, brother Zaporozhians! Tatarchuk went with you to the Crimea; when you went to Wallachia, he went to Wallachia; when you went to Smolensk, he went to Smolensk, — he fought with you, brave men, lived with you, and shed his blood with you, was dying of hunger with you; so he is not a Pole, not a traitor, but a Cossack, — your own brother; and if the hetman insists on his death, let the hetman say why he insists.

What have I done to him? In what have I shown my falsehood? And do you, brothers, be merciful, and judge justly."

"Tatarchuk is a brave fellow! Tatarchuk is a good man!" answered several voices.

"You, Tatarchuk, are a brave fellow," said Hmelnitski; "and I do not persecute you, for you are my friend, and not a Pole, — a Cossack, our brother. If a Pole were the traitor, then I should not be grieved, should not weep; but if a brave fellow is the traitor, my friend the traitor, then my heart is heavy, and I am grieved. Since you were in the Crimea and in Wallachia and at Smolensk, then the offence is the greater; because now you were ready to inform the Poles of the readiness and wishes of the Zaporozian army. The Poles wrote to you to make it easy for their man to get what he wanted; and tell me, worthy atamans, what could a Pole want? Is it not my death and the death of my good friend Tugai Bey? Is it not the destruction of the Zaporozian army? Therefore you, Tatarchuk, are guilty; and you cannot show anything else. And to Barabash his uncle the colonel of Cherkasi wrote, — his uncle, a friend to Chaplinski, a friend to the Poles, who secreted in his house the charter of rights, so the Zaporozian army should not obtain it. Since it is this way, — and I swear, as God lives, that it is no other way, — you are both guilty; and now beg mercy of the atamans, and I will beg with you, though your guilt is heavy and your treason clear."

From outside the windows came, not a sound and a murmur, but as it were the roar of a storm. The Brotherhood wished to know what was doing in the council-room, and sent a new deputation.

Tatarchuk felt that he was lost. He remembered that the week before he had spoken in the midst of the atamans against giving the baton to Hmelnitski, and against an alliance with the Tartars. Cold drops of sweat came out on his forehead; he understood that there was no rescue for him now. As to young Barabash, it was clear that in destroying him Hmelnitski wished to avenge himself on the old colonel of Cherkasi, who loved his nephew deeply. Still Tatarchuk did not wish to die. He would not have paled before the sabre, the bullet, or the stake; but a death such as that which awaited him pierced him to the marrow of his bones. Therefore, taking advantage of a moment of quiet which

reigned after the words of Hmelnitski, he screamed in a terrified voice, —

"In the name of Christ, brother atamans, dear friends, do not destroy an innocent man! I have not seen the Pole, I have not spoken with him! Have mercy on me, brothers! I do not know what the Pole wanted of me; ask him yourselves! I swear by Christ the Saviour, the Holy Most Pure, Saint Nicholas the wonder-worker, by Michael the archangel, that you are destroying an innocent man!"

"Bring in the Pole!" shouted the chief inspector.

"The Pole this way! the Pole this way!" shouted the kuren atamans.

Confusion began. Some rushed to the adjoining room in which the prisoner was confined, to bring him before the council. Others approached Tatarchuk and Barabash with threats. Gladki, the ataman of the Mirgorod kuren, first cried, "To destruction!" The deputies repeated the cry. Chernota sprang to the door, opened it, and shouted to the assembled crowd, —

"Worthy Brotherhood, Tatarchuk is a traitor, Barabash is a traitor; destruction to them!"

The multitude answered with a fearful howl. Confusion continued in the council-room; all the atamans rose from their places; some cried, "The Pole! the Pole!" others tried to allay the disturbance. But while this was going on the doors were thrown wide open before the weight of the crowd, and to the middle of the room rushed in a mass of men from the square outside. Terrible forms, drunk with rage, filled the space, seething, waving their hands, gnashing their teeth, and exhaling the smell of spirits. "Death to Tatarchuk, and Barabash to destruction! Give up the traitors! To the square with them!" shouted the drunken voices. "Strike! kill!" And hundreds of hands were stretched out in a moment toward the hapless victims.

Tatarchuk offered no resistance; he only groaned in terror. But young Barabash began to defend himself with desperate strength. He understood at last that they wanted to kill him. Terror, despair, and madness were seen on his face; foam covered his lips, and from his bosom came forth the roar of a wild beast. Twice he tore himself from the hands of his executioners, and twice their hands seized him by the shoulders, by the breast, by the beard and hair. He struggled, he bit, he bellowed, he fell on the ground, and again rose up bleeding and terrible. His

clothes were torn, his hair was pulled out of his head, an eye knocked out. At last, pressed to the wall, his arm was broken; then he fell. His executioners seized his feet, and dragged him with Tatarchuk to the square. There, by the light of tar-barrels and the great fires, the final execution began. Several thousand people rushed upon the doomed men and tore them, howling and struggling among themselves to get at the victims. They were trampled under foot; bits of their bodies were torn away. The multitude struggled around them with that terrible convulsive motion of furious masses. For a moment bloody hands raised aloft two shapeless lumps, without the semblance of human form; then again they were trampled upon the earth. Those standing farther away raised their voices to the sky, — some crying out to throw the victims into the water, others to beat them into a burning tar-barrel. The drunken ones began to fight among themselves. In the frenzy two tubs of alcohol were set on fire, which lighted up the hellish scene with trembling blue flames; from heaven the moon looked down on it also, — the moon calm, bright, and mild. In this way the Brotherhood punished its traitors.

In the council-chamber, the moment the Cossacks dragged Tatarchuk and young Barabash through the doors there was quiet, and the atamans occupied their former places near the wall; for a prisoner was led forth from the adjoining closet.

The shade fell upon his face; in the half-light could be seen only the tall figure, with simple and haughty bearing, though with hands bound together. But Gladki threw a bundle of twigs on the fire, and in a moment a bright flame shot up and covered with a clear light the face of the prisoner, who turned to Hmelnitski.

When he saw him Hmelnitski started. The prisoner was Pan Yan.

Tugai Bey spat out husks of sunflower-seeds, and muttered in Russian, —

"I know that Pole; he was in the Crimea."

"Destruction to him!" cried Gladki.

"Destruction!" repeated Chernota.

Hmelnitski mastered his surprise, but turned his eyes to Gladki and Chernota, who under the influence of that glance grew quiet; then turning to the koshevoi, he said: "And I know him too."

"Whence do you come?" asked the koshevoi of Pan Yan.

"I was coming with an embassy to you, koshevoi ataman, when robbers fell upon me at Hortitsa, and, in spite of customs observed among the wildest people, killed my men, and, regarding neither my office of envoy nor my birth, wounded me, insulted me, and brought me here as a prisoner; for which my lord, Prince Yermi Vishnyevetski, will know how to demand of you account, koshevoi ataman."

"And why did you dissemble? Why did you crush the head of a brave man? Why did you kill four times as many people as your own number? And you came with a letter to me to observe our preparations and report them to the Poles! We know also that you had letters to traitors in the Zaporozian army, so as to plan with them the destruction of that whole army; therefore you will be received, not as an envoy, but as a traitor, and punished with justice."

"You deceive yourself, koshevoi, and you, self-styled hetman," said the lieutenant, turning to Hmelnitski. "If I brought letters, every envoy does the same when he goes to strange places; for he takes letters from acquaintances to acquaintances, so that through them he may have society. And I came here with a letter from the prince, not to contrive your destruction, but to restrain you from deeds which are an unendurable outrage to the Commonwealth, and which in the end will bring ruin on you and the whole Zaporozian army. For on whom do you raise your godless hands? Against whom do you, who call yourselves defenders of Christianity, form an alliance with Pagans? Against the king, against the nobility, and the whole Commonwealth. You therefore, not I, are traitors; and I tell you that unless you efface your crimes with obedience and humility, then woe to you! Are the times of Pavlyuk and Nalivaika so remote? Has their punishment left your memory? Remember, then, that the patience of the Commonwealth is exhausted, and the sword is hanging over your heads."

"Oh, you son of Satan!" shouted the koshevoi. "You bark to squeeze out and escape death; but your threatening and your Polish Latin won't help you."

Other atamans began to gnash their teeth and shake their sabres; but Skshetuski raised his head still higher, and said, —

"Do not think, atamans, that I fear death, or that I defend my life, or that I am exhibiting my innocence. Being a noble, I can be tried only by equals. Here I am standing,

not before judges, but before bandits, — not before nobility, but before serfdom, — not before knighthood, but before barbarism; and I know well I shall not escape my death, with which you will fill the measure of your iniquity. Before me are death and torment; but behind me the power and vengeance of the Commonwealth, in presence of which you are all trembling."

Indeed the lofty stature, the grandeur of his speech, and the name of the Commonwealth made a deep impression. The atamans looked at one another in silence. After a while it seemed to them that not a prisoner, but the terrible messenger of a mighty people, was standing before them.

Tugai Bey murmured: "That is an angry Pole!"

"An angry Polé!" said Hmelnitski.

A violent knocking at the door stopped further conversation. On the square the remains of Tatarchuk and Barabash had been disposed of; and the Brotherhood sent a new deputation. A number of Cossacks, bloody, panting, covered with sweat, drunk, entered the room. They stood near the door, and stretching forth their hands still steaming with blood, began to speak.

"The Brotherhood bow to the elders," — here they bowed to their girdles, — "and ask that the Pole be given them to play with, as they played with Barabash and Tatarchuk."

"Let them have the Pole!" cried Chernota.

"No," cried others, "let them wait! He is an envoy!"

"To destruction with him!" answered a number of voices.

Then all were silent, waiting for the answer of the koshevoi and Hmelnitski.

"The Brotherhood ask; and if he is not given, they will take him themselves," said the deputies.

Skshetuski seemed lost beyond redemption, when Hmelnitski inclined to the ear of Tugai Bey and whispered, —

"He is your captive. The Tartars took him, he is yours. Will you let him be taken from you? He is a rich nobleman, and besides Prince Yeremi will ransom him with gold."

"Give up the Pole!" cried the Cossacks, with increasing violence.

Tugai Bey straightened himself in his seat and stood up. His countenance changed in a moment; his eyes dilated like the eyes of a wildcat, they began to flash fire. Suddenly he sprang like a tiger in front of the Cossacks who were demanding the prisoner.

"Be off, clowns, infidel dogs, slaves, pig-eaters!" bellowed he, seizing by the beard two of the Zaporojians and pulling them with rage. "Be off, drunkards, brutes, foul reptiles! You have come to take my captive, but this is the way I'll treat you." So saying, he pulled some by the beard; at last he threw one down and began to stamp on him with his feet. "On your faces, slaves! I will send you into captivity, I will trample the whole Saitch under foot as I trample you! I will send it up in smoke, cover it with your carcasses."

The deputies drew back in fear; their terrible friend had shown what he could do.

And, wonderful thing in Bazaluk, there were only six thousand of the horde! It is true that behind them stood the Khan and all the power of the Crimea; but in the Saitch itself there were several thousand Cossacks besides those whom Hmelnitski had already sent to Tomakovka, — but still not one voice was raised in protest against Tugai Bey. It might be that the method with which the terrible murza had defended his captive was the only one practicable, and that it brought conviction at once to the Zaporojians, to whom the aid of the Tartars was at that time indispensable.

The deputation went out on the square, shouting to the crowd that they would not play with the Pole, for he was Tugai Bey's captive and Tugai Bey said he himself was wild! "He has pulled our beards!" cried they. On the square they began immediately to repeat: "Tugai Bey is wild!" "Is wild!" cry the crowd, plaintively, — "is wild, is wild!" In a few minutes a certain shrill voice began to sing near the fire, —

Hei, hei!
Tugai Bey
Is wild, roaring wild.
Hei, hei!
Tugai Bey,
Don't get wild, my friend!"

Immediately thousands of voices repeated: "Hei, hei! Tugai Bey!" And at once rose one of those songs which afterward spread over the whole Ukraine, as if the wind had carried it, and was sung to the sound of lyre and teorban.

But suddenly the song was interrupted; for through the gates, from the side of Hassan Pasha, rushed a number of men who broke through the crowd, shouting, "Out of the

way! out of the way!" and hastened with all speed to the council-house. The atamans were preparing to go out when these new guests fell into the room.

"A letter to the hetman!" shouted an old Cossack. "We are from Chigirin. We have rushed on night and day with the letter. Here it is!"

Hmelnitski took the letter from the hands of the Cossack, and began to read. Suddenly his face changed; he stopped the reading, and said with a piercing voice, —

"Atamans! The Grand Hetman Pototski sends his son Stephen with his army against us. War!"

In the room there rose a wonderful sound, — uncertain whether of joy or amazement. Hmelnitski stepped forward into the middle of the room, and put his hand on his hip; his eyes flashed lightning, his voice was awful and commanding, —

"Atamans, to the kurens! Fire the cannon from the tower! Break the liquor-barrels! We march at daybreak to-morrow!"

From that moment the common council ceased, the rule of atamans and the preponderance of the Brotherhood were at an end. Hmelnitski assumed unlimited power. A little while before, through fear that his voice might not be obeyed, he was forced to destroy his opponents by artifice, and by artifice defend the prisoner. Now he was lord of life and death for them all.

So it was ever. Before and after expeditions, even if the hetman was chosen, the multitude still imposed its will on the atamans and the koshevoi for whom opposition was coupled with danger. But when the campaign was declared, the Brotherhood became an army subject to military discipline, the atamans officers, and the hetman a dictator in command. Therefore, when they heard the orders of Hmelnitski, the atamans went at once to their kurens. The council was at an end.

Soon the roar of cannon from the gates leading from Hassan Pasha to the square of the Saitch shook the walls of the room, and spread with gloomy echoes through all Chertomelik, giving notice of war.

It opened also an epoch in the history of two peoples; but that was unknown to the drunken Cossacks as well as to the Zaporojian hetman himself.

CHAPTER XII.

HMELNITSKI and Skshetuski went to spend the night at the house of the koshevoi, and with them Tugai Bey, for whom it was too late to return to Bazaluk. The wild bey treated the lieutenant as a captive who was to be ransomed for a large sum, and therefore not as a slave; and with greater respect indeed than he would have shown perhaps to Cossacks, for he had seen him formerly as an envoy at the court of the Khan. In view of this the koshevoi asked Pan Yan to his own house, and also changed his bearing toward him. The old koshevoi was a man devoted body and soul to Hmelnitski, who had conquered and taken possession of him. He had observed that Hmelnitski seemed anxious to save the life of the captive at the time of the council; but he was more astonished when, after having barely entered the room, Hmelnitski turned to Tugai Bey.

"Tugai Bey," said he, "how much ransom do you think of getting for this captive?"

Tugai Bey looked at Skshetuski and answered: "You said this was a man of distinction, and I know that he was an envoy of the terrible prince, and the terrible prince is fond of his own men. Bismillah! one pays and the other pays — together —" here Tugai Bey stopped to think — "two thousand thalers."

Hmelnitski answered: "I will give you two thousand thalers."

The Tartar was silent for a moment. His black eyes appeared to pierce Hmelnitski through and through. "You will give three," said he.

"Why should I give three when you asked two yourself?"

"For if you wish to have him, it is important for you; and if it is important, you will give three."

"He saved my life."

"Allah! that is worth a thousand more."

Here Skshetuski interfered in the bargain. "Tugai Bey," said he, with anger, "I can promise you nothing from the prince's treasury; but even if I had to injure my own fortune, I would give you three. I have almost that much saved in the prince's hands, and a good village, which