

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

will be sufficient. And I do not want to thank this hetman for my freedom and life."

"And whence dost thou know what I shall do with thee?" asked Hmelnitski; and then turning to Tugai Bey, he said: "The war will begin. You will send to the prince, and before the return of your messenger much water will flow down the Dnieper, but I will take you the money myself to Bazaluk to-morrow."

"Give four, and I will not say another word to the Pole," answered Tugai, impatiently.

"I will give four, on your word."

"Hetman," said the koshevoi, "I will count it out this minute. I have it here under the wall, maybe more."

"To-morrow you will take it to Bazaluk," said Hmelnitski.

Tugai Bey stretched himself and yawned. "I am sleepy," said he. "To-morrow before daylight I must start for Bazaluk. Where am I to sleep?"

The koshevoi showed him a pile of sheepskins against the wall. The Tartar threw himself on this bed, and a little later was snorting like a horse.

Hmelnitski walked a number of times across the room, and said: "Slumber escapes my eyelids; I cannot sleep. Give me something to drink, most worthy koshevoi."

"Gorailka or wine?"

"Gorailka. I cannot sleep."

"It is cockerow already," said the koshevoi.

"It is late. Go you to sleep, old friend! Drink and go!"

"Here is to fame and success!"

"To success!"

The koshevoi wiped his lips with his sleeve, then gave his hand to Hmelnitski, and going to the other corner of the room buried himself almost in sheepskins, for his blood had grown cold through age. Soon his snoring answered the snoring of Tugai Bey.

Hmelnitski sat at the table, sunk in silence. Suddenly he started up, looked at Skshetuski, and said: "Well, worthy lieutenant, you are free."

"I am thankful to you, Zaporojian hetman, though I do not conceal from you that I should prefer to thank some one else for my freedom."

"Then do not thank. You saved my life, I return you good; now we are even. And I must tell you also that I will not let you go immediately unless you give me the word of a knight that when you have returned you will say

nothing of our preparation or power or of anything you have seen in the Saitch."

"I see only this, that you offer me useless fruit of freedom to taste. I will not give you such a word; for by giving it, I should act precisely as those who go over to the enemy."

"My life and the safety of the Zaporojian army lie in this, that the Grand Hetman should not move on us with all his forces, which he would not be slow to do should you inform him of our power. Be not surprised, then, if I detain you until I find myself out of danger, unless you give your word. I know what I have undertaken; I know how formidable is the power opposed to me, — the two hetmans, your terrible prince (who is a whole army himself), the Zaslavskis and Konyetpolskis and all those kinglets who keep their feet on the Cossack neck! Not small was my labor, nor few the letters I wrote before I succeeded in putting their watchfulness to sleep; now I cannot allow you to rouse it. Since the masses of the people, with the Cossacks of the towns, and all who are oppressed in faith and freedom will take my side, as well as the Zaporojian army and the Khan of the Crimea, I expect to manage the enemy, for my power will be considerable; but most of all do I trust in God, who has beheld the injustice done, and who sees my innocence."

Here Hmelnitski drank a glass of vodka, and began to walk unquietly around the table. Skshetuski measured him with his eyes, and spoke with power, —

"Do not blaspheme, Zaporojian hetman, by calling upon God and his divine protection; for in truth you will only bring down upon yourself his anger and swift punishment. Is it right for you to call the Highest to your defence, — you, who for the sake of your private squabbles and the injustice done you raise such a terrible storm, kindle the flame of civil war, and join yourself with Pagans against Christians? For what will happen? Whether victorious or vanquished, you will shed a sea of human blood and tears. you will desolate the land worse than locusts, you will shake the Commonwealth, you will raise your hand against majesty, you will desecrate the altars of the Lord; and all this because Chaplinski took some land from you, and threatened you when he was drunk! What do you not attempt? What do you not devote to your private interests? You call upon God; and though I am in your power, though you can take my life and freedom, I tell you that you are a

Satan. Call not God to your assistance, for hell alone can give you aid!"

Hmelnitski grew purple and reached for his sword. He looked at the lieutenant like a lion about to roar and spring on his victim, but he restrained himself. Fortunately, he was not drunk yet. Perhaps, also, disquiet had seized him, maybe certain voices called from his soul to turn from the road; for suddenly, as if wishing to defend himself before his own thoughts, he said,—

"From another I should not have endured such speech, but do you have a care that your boldness does not exhaust my patience. You frighten me with hell, you speak to me of private interests and of treason. And from whence do you know that I have risen to avenge private wrongs alone? Where should I find assistance, where those thousands who have already taken my side and who are taking it, if I wished merely to redress wrongs of my own? Look around at what is going on in the Ukraine. Oh, rich land, motherland, native land! And who in her is sure of to-morrow, who in her is happy, who is not robbed of his faith, spoiled of his freedom; who in her is not weeping and sighing?—save only the Vishnyevetskis, the Pototskis, the Zaslavskis, Kalinovskis, Konyet-spolskis, and a handful of nobles! For them are crown estates, dignities, land, and people,—for them happiness and golden freedom; and the rest of the nation in tears stretch forth their hands to heaven waiting for the pity of God, since the pity of the king cannot help them. How many, even of the nobility, unable to bear this intolerable oppression, have fled to the Saitch, as I myself have fled? I want no war with the king, I want no war with the Commonwealth! It is the mother, and he is the father. The king is a merciful lord; but the kinglets!—with them it is impossible for us to live; their extortions, their rents, meadow-taxes, mill-taxes, eye and horn taxes, their tyranny and oppression exercised through the agency of Jews, cry for vengeance. What thanks has the Zaporozhian army received for great services rendered in numerous wars? Where are the Cossack rights? The king gave them, the kinglets took them away. Nalivaika quartered! Pavlyuk burned in a brazen bull! The blood is not dry on the wounds inflicted by the sabres of Jolkevski and Konyet-spolski! The tears have not dried for those killed and empaled on stakes; and now look! What is gleaming in

the sky?"—here Hmelnitski pointed through the window at the flaming comet,— "The anger of God, the scourge of God! And if I have to be the scourge of God on earth, then let the will of God be done! I will take the burden on my shoulders."

Having said this, he raised his hand above his head and seemed to flame up like a great torch of vengeance, and began to tremble; and then he dropped on the bench, as if bent down by the weight of his destiny.

Silence followed, interrupted only by the snoring of Tugai Bey and the koshevoi, and by the plaintive chirp of the cricket in one corner of the cabin.

The lieutenant sat with drooping head, as if seeking answers to the words of Hmelnitski, as weighty as blocks of granite; at length he began to speak in a quiet and sad voice,—

"Alas! even if that were true, who art thou, Hetman, to create thyself judge and executioner? With what tyranny and pride art thou carried away? Why dost thou not leave judgment and punishment to God? I do not defend the wicked, I do not praise injustice, I do not call oppression right; but, dost thou believe in thyself, Hetman? Thou complainest of oppression from the kinglets,—that they listen neither to the king nor justice. Thou condemnest their pride, but art thou free of it thyself? Do you not raise your hand upon the Commonwealth, on right and majesty? You see the tyranny of lordlets and nobility, but you do not see that were it not for their breasts, their bosoms, their breastplates, their power, their castles, their cannon, and their legions, this land, flowing with milk and honey, would groan under the hundred times heavier yoke of the Turk and the Tartar! For who would defend it? By whose care and power is it that your children are not serving as janissaries, and your women dragged off to infamous harems? Who settled the desert, founded villages and towns, and raised up the sanctuary of God?"

Here the voice of Skshetusi grew stronger and stronger; and Hmelnitski looked with gloomy eyes into the bottle of *vodka*,¹ put his clinched fists on the table, and was silent as if struggling with himself.

¹ The author uses sometimes the word *vodka* and sometimes *gorailka*. The first is Polish; the second Little Russian. Both mean a liquor distilled generally from rye. When *vodka* is used it might mean that the liquor was from Poland, and when *gorailka* that it was of Ukraine origin; but here the words are used indifferently.

"And who are they?" continued Skshetuski. "Have they come from Germany or from Turkey? Is it not the blood of your blood, and the bone of your bone? Are not the nobility yours, and the princelets yours? If that is true, then woe to thee, Hetman; for thou art raising up the younger brothers against the elder, and making parricides of them. Oh, in God's name, even if they were wicked, — even if all of them, as many as there are, have trampled upon justice, violated rights, — let God judge them in heaven, and the Diet on earth, but not you, O Hetman! Are you able to say that among yours there are only just men? Have yours never been guilty, that you have a right to cast a stone at another for his guilt? And if you ask me, Where are the rights of the Cossacks, I answer: Not kinglets betrayed them, but Zaporozhians, — Loboda, Sasko, Nalivaika, and Pavlyuk, of whom you falsely say that he was roasted in a brazen bull, for you know well that this is not true! Your seditions, your disturbances and attacks, made like attacks of Tartars, were put down. Who let the Tartars into the boundaries of the Commonwealth, so that when they were coming back laden with booty, they might be attacked? You! Who — God guard us! — gave their own Christian people into captivity? Who raised the greatest disturbances? You! Before whom is neither noble nor merchant nor village safe? Before you! Who has inflamed domestic war, who has sent up in smoke the villages and towns of the Ukraine, plundered the sanctuaries of God, violated women? You! you! What do you want, then? Do you want that the rights of making civil war and of robbing and plundering should be granted you? In truth, more has been forgiven you than taken away! We wished to cure putrid members instead of cutting them off, and I know no power in the world but the Commonwealth that would exhibit equal patience and clemency by permitting such an ulcer in its own bosom. But what is your gratitude in response? There sleeps your ally, but the raging enemy of the Commonwealth, — your friend, but the foe of the cross and Christianity, — not a kinglet of the Ukraine, but a murza of the Crimea; and with him you will go to burn your own home, and with him to judge your own brother. But he will lord it over you, and you will be forced to hold his stirrup."

Hmelnitski emptied another glass of vodka. "When we, with Barabash, were with his Majesty the King, and when we wept over the oppression and injustice practised

on us, he said, 'But have you not muskets, and have you not sabres at your side?'"

"If you were standing before the King of kings, he would say, 'Forgive your enemies, as I forgive mine.'"

"I do not wish to war with the Commonwealth."

"But you put your sword to its throat."

"I go to free the Cossacks from your fetters."

"To tie them in Tartar bonds!"

"I wish to defend the faith."

"In company with the Pagan."

"Stop! You are not the voice of my conscience. Stop, I tell you!"

"Blood will weigh you down, the tears of men will accuse you, death awaits you, judgment awaits you!"

"Screech-owl!" shouted Hmelnitski in rage, and flashed a knife before the breast of Skshetuski.

"Strike!" said Skshetuski.

Again came a moment of silence; again there was nothing to be heard but the snore of the sleeping men and the plaintive chirp of the cricket.

Hmelnitski stood for a time with the knife at Skshetuski's breast; suddenly he trembled, he bethought himself, dropped the knife, and seizing the decanter of vodka, began to drink. He emptied it, and sat heavily on the bench.

"I cannot stab him," he muttered, — "I cannot. It is late — is that daylight? — but it is late to turn from the road. Why speak to me of judgment and blood?"

He had already drunk much; the vodka was rising to his head. He went on, gradually losing consciousness: "What judgment? The Khan promised me reinforcements. Tugai Bey is sleeping here! To-morrow the Cossacks march. With us is Saint Michael the victorious! But if — if — I ransomed thee from Tugai Bey — remember it, and say — Oh, something pains — pains! To turn from the road — 't is late! — judgment — Nalivaika — Pavlyuk —"

Suddenly he straightened himself, strained his eyes in fright, and cried: "Who is there?"

"Who is there?" repeated the half-roused koshevoi.

But Hmelnitski dropped his head on his breast, nodded a couple of times, muttered, "What judgment?" and fell asleep.

Skshetuski grew very pale and weak from recent wounds and from the excitement of talking. He thought therefore that perhaps death was coming, and began to pray aloud.