

mind," was occupied in bringing Balaban's dragoons to his side.

On Monday the battle began at daybreak. Pan Yan looked on it, as on the first one, with a smiling, happy face. And again the regiments of the crown came out before the intrenchment; but this time, not rushing to the attack, they opposed the enemy where they stood. The steppe had grown soft, not on the surface only, as during the first day of the battle, but to its depths. The heavy cavalry could scarcely move; this gave a great preponderance at once to the flying regiments of the Cossacks and the Tartars. The smile vanished gradually from the lieutenant's lips. At the Polish intrenchment the avalanche of attack covered completely the narrow line of the Polish regiments. It appeared as if that chain might break at any moment, and the attack begin directly on the intrenchments. Skshetuski did not observe half of the spirit or warlike readiness with which the regiments fought on the first day. They defended themselves with stubbornness, but did not strike first, did not crush the kurens to the earth, did not sweep the field like a hurricane. The soft soil had rendered fury impossible, and in fact fastened the heavy cavalry to its place in front of the intrenchment. Impetus was the power of the cavalry, and decided victories; but this time the cavalry was forced to remain on one spot.

Hmelnitski, on the contrary, led new regiments every moment to the battle. He was present everywhere. He led each kuren personally to the attack, and withdrew only before the sabres of the enemy. His ardor was communicated gradually to the Zaporojians, who, though they fell in large numbers, rushed to the attack with shouts and cries. They struck the wall of iron breasts and sharp spears, and beaten, decimated, returned again to the attack. Under this weight the regiments began to waver, to disappear, and in places to retreat, just as an athlete caught in the iron arms of an opponent grows weak, then struggles, and strains every nerve.

Before midday nearly all the forces of the Zaporojians had been under fire and in battle. The fight raged with such stubbornness that between the two lines of combatants a new wall, as it were, was formed of the bodies of horses and men. Every little while, from the battle to the Cossack intrenchments came crowds of wounded men,—bloody,

covered with mud, panting, falling from weakness,—but they came with songs on their lips. Fainting, they still cried, "To the death!" The garrison left in the camp was impatient for the fight.

Pan Yan hung his head. The Polish regiments began to retreat from the field to the intrenchment. They were unable to hold out, and a feverish haste was observable in their retreat. At the sight of this twenty thousand mouths and more gave forth a shout of joy, and redoubled the attack. The Zaporojians sprang upon the Cossacks of Pototski, who covered the retreat. But the cannon and a shower of musket-balls drove them back. The battle ceased for a moment. In the Polish camp a trumpet for parley was sounded.

Hmelnitski, however, did not wish to parley. Twelve kurens slipped from their horses to storm the breastworks on foot, with the infantry and Tartars. Krechovski, with three thousand infantry, was coming to their aid in the decisive moment. All the drums, trumpets, and kettledrums sounded at once, drowning the shouts and salvos of musketry.

Skshetuski looked with trembling upon the deep ranks of the peerless Zaporojian infantry rushing to the breastworks and surrounding them with an ever-narrowing circle. Long streaks of white smoke were blown out at it from the breastworks, as if some gigantic bosom were striving to blow away the locusts closing in upon it inexorably from every side. Cannon-balls dug furrows in it; the firing of musketry did not weaken for a moment. Swarms melted before the eye; the circle quivered in places like a wounded snake, but went on. Already they are coming! They are under the breastworks! The cannon can hurt them no longer! Skshetuski closed his eyes.

And now questions flew through his head as swift as lightning: When he opens his eyes will he see the Polish banners on the breastwork? Will he see—or will he not see? There is some unusual tumult increasing every moment. Something must have happened? The shouts come from the centre of the camp. What is it? What has happened?

"All-powerful God!"

That cry was forced from the mouth of Pan Yan when opening his eyes he saw on the battlements the crimson standard with the archangel, instead of the golden banner of the crown. The camp was captured.

In the evening he learned from Zakhar of the whole course of the storm. Not in vain had Tugai Bey called Hmelnitski a serpent; for in the moment of most desperate defence the dragoons of Balaban, talked over by the hetman, joined the Cossacks, and hurling themselves on the rear of their own regiments, aided in cutting them to pieces.

In the evening the lieutenant saw the prisoners, and was present at the death of young Pototski, who, having his throat pierced by an arrow, lived only a few hours after the battle, and died in the arms of Stephen Charnetski: "Tell my father," whispered the young castellan in his last moments,—"tell my father—that—like a knight—" He could add no more. His soul left the body and flew to heaven.

Pan Yan long after remembered that pale face and those blue eyes gazing upward in the moment of death. Charnetski made a vow over the cold body to expiate the death of his friend and the disgrace of defeat in torrents of blood, should God give him freedom. And not a tear flowed over his stern face, for he was a knight of iron, greatly famed already for deeds of daring, and known as a man whom no misfortune could bend. He kept the vow. Instead of yielding to despair, he strengthened Pan Yan, who was suffering greatly from the disgrace and defeat of the Commonwealth.

"The Commonwealth has passed through more than one defeat," said Charnetski, "but she contains within her inexhaustible force. No power has broken her as yet, and she will not be broken by a sedition of serfs, whom God himself will punish, since by rising up against authority, they are putting themselves against his will. As to defeat, true, it is sad; but who have endured defeat?—the hetmans, the forces of the crown? No! After the defection and treason of Krechovski, the division which Pototski led could be considered only an advance guard. The uprising will spread undoubtedly through the whole Ukraine, for the serfs there are insolent and trained to fighting; but an uprising in that part is no novelty. The hetmans will quell it, with Prince Yermi, whose power stands unshaken as yet; the more violent the outburst, when once put down, the longer will be the peace, which may last perhaps forever. He would be a man of little faith and a small heart, who could admit that some Cossack leader, in company with one Tartar murza, could really threaten a mighty people.

Evil would it be with the Commonwealth, if a simple outbreak of serfs could be made a question of its fate or its existence. In truth we did set out contemptuously on this expedition," said Charnetski; "and though our division is rubbed out, I believe that the hetmans are able to put down this rebellion, not with the sword, not with armor, but with clubs."

And while he was speaking in this manner, it seemed that not a captive, not a soldier after a lost battle was speaking, but a proud hetman, certain of victory on the morrow. This greatness of soul and faith in the Commonwealth flowed like balsam over the wounds of the lieutenant. He had had a near view of the power of Hmelnitski, therefore it blinded him somewhat, especially since success had followed it to that moment. But Charnetski must be right. The forces of the hetmans were still intact, and behind them stood the power of the Commonwealth, the rights of authority, and the will of God. The lieutenant therefore went away strengthened in soul and more cheerful. When going he asked Charnetski if he did not wish to begin negotiations for his freedom with Hmelnitski at once.

"I am the captive of Tugai Bey," said Charnetski; "to him I will pay my ransom. But with that fellow Hmelnitski I will have nothing to do; I give him to the hangman."

Zakhar, who had made it easy for Skshetuski to see the prisoners, comforted him while returning to the telega.

"Not with young Pototski, but with the hetmans is the difficulty. The struggle is only begun, but what will be the end, God knows! The Cossacks and Tartars have taken Polish treasure, it is true, but it is one thing to take and another to keep. And you, my child, do not grieve, do not despair, for you will get your freedom in time. You will go to your own people, and I, old man, shall be sorry for you. It is sad for an old man alone in the world. With the hetmans it will be hard, oh, how hard!"

In truth the victory, though brilliant, did not in the least decide the struggle for Hmelnitski. It might even be unfavorable for him, because it was easy to foresee that now the Grand Hetman, to avenge his son, would press upon the Cossacks with special stubbornness, and would leave nothing undone to break them at once. The Grand Hetman, however, cherished a certain dislike for Prince Yermi, which, though veiled with politeness, was still evident enough in various circumstances.

Hmelnetski, knowing this perfectly, admitted that now this dislike would cease, and Pototski would first reach out his hand in reconciliation, which would secure for him the assistance of a famous warrior and his powerful troops. With such forces united under a leader like the prince, Hmelnetski did not dare yet to measure strength, for he had not yet sufficient confidence in himself. He determined therefore to hasten, and together with the news of the defeat of Jóltya Vodi, appear in the Ukraine, and strike the hetmans before the succor of the prince could arrive.

He gave no rest to his troops, therefore, but at daybreak after the battle hurried on. The march was as rapid as if the hetman were fleeing. It was as if an inundation were covering the steppe and rushing forward, collecting all the waters on the way. Forests, oak-groves, grave-mounds were avoided; rivers were crossed without halting. The Cossack forces increased on the road, for new crowds of peasants fleeing from the Ukraine were added to them continually.

They brought news of the hetmans, but contradictory. Some said that Prince Yeremi was yet beyond the Dnieper; others that he had joined the forces of the crown. But all declared that the Ukraine was already on fire. The peasants were not only fleeing to meet Hmelnetski in the Wilderness, but burning villages and towns, throwing themselves on their masters, and arming everywhere. The forces of the crown had been fighting for the past two weeks. Stebloff was destroyed; at Derenhovtsi a bloody battle had been fought. The town Cossacks in various places went over to the side of the people, and at all points were merely waiting for the word. Hmelnetski had reckoned on all this, and hastened the more.

At last he stood on the threshold. Chigirin opened wide her gates. The Cossack garrison went over at once to his regiments. The house of Chaplinski was wrecked; a handful of nobles, seeking refuge in the town, were cut to pieces. Joyful shouts, ringing of bells, and processions ceased not for a moment. The whole region flamed up at once. All living men, seizing scythes and pikes, joined the Zaporojians; endless crowds hastened to the camp from every side. There came also joyful, because certain, tidings that Yeremi had indeed offered his assistance to the hetmans, but had not yet joined them.

Hmelnetski felt relieved. He moved on without delay, and advanced through insurrection, slaughter, and fire.

Ruin and corpses bore witness to this. He advanced like an avalanche, destroying everything in his path. The country rose before him, and was a desert behind. He went like an avenger, like a legendary dragon; his footsteps pressed out blood, his breath kindled conflagrations.

In Cherkasi he halted with his main forces, sending in advance the Tartars under Tugai Bey and the wild Krivonos, who came up with the Polish hetmans at Korsún and attacked them without delay. The Tartars were forced to pay dearly for their boldness. Repulsed, decimated, scattered, they retreated in confusion.

Hmelnetski hurried to their aid. On the way news reached him that Senyavski with some regiments had joined the hetmans, who had left Korsún, and were marching on Boguslav. This was true. Hmelnetski occupied Korsún without resistance, and leaving there his trains and provisions, in a word, his whole camp, hurried after them. He had no need to follow long, for they had not gone far. At Krutaya Balka his advance guard came upon the Polish camp.

It was not given to Skshetuski to see the battle, for he remained in Korsún with the camp. Zakhar lodged him on the square, in the house of Zabokshytski, whom the crowd had already hanged, and placed a guard from the remnants of the Mirgorod kuren; for the crowd robbed continually, and killed every man who seemed to them a Pole. Through the broken windows Skshetuski saw the multitude of drunken peasants, bloody, with rolled-up shirt-sleeves, going from house to house, from cellar to cellar, and searching all corners, garrets, lofts; from time to time a terrible noise announced that a nobleman, a Jew, a man, a woman, or a child had been found. The victim was dragged to the square and gloated over in the most fearful manner. The crowd fought with one another for the remnants of the bodies; with delight they rubbed the blood on their faces and breasts, and wound the still steaming entrails around their necks. They seized little Jews by the legs and tore them apart amid the wild laughter of the mob. They rushed upon houses surrounded by guards in which distinguished captives were confined, — left living because large ransoms were expected from them. Then the Zaporojians or the Tartars standing guard repulsed the crowd, thumping the assailants on the heads with their pikestaffs, bows, or ox-hide whips. Such was the case before the house where

Skshetusi was. Zakhar gave orders to handle the crowd without mercy, and the Mirgorod men executed the order with pleasure; for the men of the lower country received the assistance of the mob willingly in time of insurrection, but had more contempt for them than they had for the nobility. It was not in vain therefore that they called themselves "nobly born Cossacks." Later Hmelnitski himself presented more than once considerable numbers of the mob to the Tartar, who drove them to the Crimea, where they were sold into Turkey and Asia Minor.

The crowd rioted on the square, and reached such wild disorder that at last they began to kill one another. The day was drawing to an end. One side of the square and the priest's house were on fire. Fortunately the wind blew the fire toward the field, and prevented the extension of the conflagration. But the gigantic flame lighted up the square as brightly as the sun's rays. The excitement became too great for restraint. From a distance came the terrible roar of cannon; it was evident that the battle at Krutaya Balka was growing fiercer and fiercer.

"It must be pretty hot for ours there," muttered old Zakhar. "The hetmans are not trifling. Ah! Pan Pototski is a real soldier." Then he pointed through the window at the crowd. "Oh!" said he, "they are revelling now; but if Hmelnitski is beaten, then there will be revelling over them."

At that moment the tramp of cavalry was heard, and a number of riders rushed to the square on foaming horses. Their faces black from powder, their clothes torn, and the heads of some of them bound in rags showed that they had hurried straightway from battle.

"People who believe in God, save yourselves! The Poles are beating ours!" they cried in loud voices.

Tumult and disorder followed. The multitude moved like a wave tossed by the wind. Suddenly wild dismay possessed all. They rushed to escape; but the streets were blocked with wagons, one part of the square was on fire, there was no place for flight. The crowd began to press and cry, to beat, choke one another, and howl for mercy, though the enemy was far away.

The lieutenant, when he heard what was taking place, grew almost wild from joy. He began to run through the room like a madman, to beat his breast with his hands with all his power, and to cry, —

"I knew that it would be so! As I am alive, I knew it! This is the meeting with the hetmans, with the whole Commonwealth! The hour of punishment has come! What is this?"

Again resounded the tramp; and this time several hundred Tartar horsemen appeared on the square. They rushed on at random. The crowd stopped the way before them. They rushed at the crowd, struck, beat, and dispersed it; they lashed their horses, urging them on to the road leading to Cherkasi.

"They run like a whirlwind," said Zakhar.

Scarcely had Skshetusi moved when a second division flew by, and after that a third. The flight seemed to be general. The guards before the houses began to grow uneasy, and also to show a wish to escape. Zakhar hurried through the porch.

"Halt!" cried he to the Mirgorod men.

Smoke, heat, disorder, the tramping of horses, sounds of alarm, the howling of the crowd in the light of the conflagration, were blended in one fearful picture on which the lieutenant gazed through the window.

"What a defeat there must be! what a defeat!" cried he to Zakhar, not considering that the latter could not share his delight.

Now a new division of fugitives rushed by like lightning. The thunder of cannon shook the houses of Korsun to their foundations. Suddenly a shrieking voice began to cry right there at the house, —

"Save yourselves! Hmelnitski is killed! Hmelnitski is killed! Tugai Bey is killed!"

On the square there was a real end of the world. People in terror rushed into the flames. The lieutenant fell upon his knees, raised his hands to heaven, —

"Oh, almighty, great, and just God, praise to thee in the highest!"

Zakhar interrupted his prayer, running into the room from the antechamber.

"Come now," said he, panting, "come and promise pardon to the Mirgorod men, for they wish to go away; and if they go, the crowd will fall upon us."

Skshetusi went out to the porch. The Mirgorod men were moving around unquietly before the house, exhibiting a firm determination to leave the place and flee by the road leading to Cherkasi. Fear had taken possession of every

one in the town. Each moment new crowds came, fleeing, as if on wings, from the direction of Krutaya Balka, — peasants, Tartars, town Cossacks, Zaporojians, in the greatest disorder. And still Hmelnitski's principal forces must be fighting yet. The battle could not be entirely decided, for the cannon were thundering with redoubled force. Skshetuski turned to the Mirgorod men.

"Because you have guarded my person well," said he, loftily, "you need no flight to save yourselves, for I promise you intercession and favor with the hetman."

The Mirgorod men uncovered their heads. Pan Yan put his hands on his hips, and looked proudly on the square, which grew emptier each moment. What a change of fate! Here is the lieutenant, a short time since a captive, dragged after the Cossack camp; now he has become among insolent Cossacks as a lord among subjects, as a noble among peasants, as an armored hussar among camp-followers. He, a captive, has now promised favor, and heads are uncovered in his presence, while submissive voices cry with that prolonged tone indicating fear and obedience, —

"Show favor to us, lord!"

"It will be as I have said," returned the lieutenant.

He was indeed sure of the efficacy of his intercession with the hetman, with whom he was acquainted, for he had often borne letters to him from Prince Yeremi, and knew how to secure his favor. He stood, therefore, with his hands on his hips; and joy was on his face, lighted up with the blaze of the conflagration.

"Behold! the war is at an end, the wave is broken at the threshold!" thought he. "Pan Charnetski was right: the forces of the Commonwealth are unexhausted, its power unbroken."

When he thought of this, pride swelled his breast, — not ignoble pride, coming from a hoped-for satisfaction of vengeance, from the conquest of an enemy; not the gaining of freedom, which now he expected every moment; nor because caps were removed before him; but he felt proud because he was a son of that victorious and mighty Commonwealth, against whose gates every malice, every attack, every blow, is broken and crushed like the powers of hell against the gates of heaven. He felt proud, as a patriotic nobleman, that he had received strength in his despondency, and was not deceived in his faith. He desired no revenge.

"She has conquered like a queen, she will forgive like a mother," thought he.

Meanwhile the roar of cannon was changed to prolonged thunder. Horses' hoofs clattered again over the empty streets. A Cossack, bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves, dashed into the square on a barebacked horse, with the speed of a thunderbolt; his face, cut open with a sword, was streaming with blood. He reined in the horse, stretched forth his hands, and when he had taken breath, with open mouth began to cry, —

"Hmelnitski is beating the Poles! The serene great mighty lords, the hetmans and colonels, are conquered, — the knights and the cavalry!"

When he had said this, he reeled and fell to the ground. The men of Mirgorod sprang to assist him.

Flame and pallor passed over the face of Skshetuski.

"What does he say?" asked he feverishly of Zakhar. "What has happened? It cannot be. By the living God, it cannot be!"

Silence! Only the hissing of flames on the opposite side of the square, shaking out clusters of sparks, and from time to time a burnt house falls with a crash.

Now more couriers rush in. "Beaten are the Poles, — beaten!"

After them follow a detachment of Tartars. They march slowly, for they surround men on foot, evidently prisoners.

Skshetuski believes not his own eyes. He recognizes perfectly on the prisoners the uniform of the hetmans' hussars; then he drops his hands, and with a wild, strange voice repeats persistently, "It cannot be! it cannot be!"

The roar of cannon was still to be heard. The battle was not finished, but through all the unburnt streets Zaporojians and Tartars were crowding in, their faces black, their breasts heaving, but they were coming as if intoxicated, singing songs. Thus return soldiers from victory.

The lieutenant grew pale as a corpse. "It cannot be!" repeated he in a hoarser voice, — "it cannot be! The Commonwealth —"

A new object arrested his attention. Krechovski's Cossacks enter the town, bringing bundles of flags. They come to the centre of the square, and throw them down. Polish flags!

The roar of the artillery weakens, and in the distance is heard the rumble of approaching wagons. One of them is

in advance,—a lofty Cossack telega, and after it a line of others, all surrounded by Cossacks of the Pashkoff kuren, in yellow caps; they pass near the house where the Mirgorod men are standing.

Skshetuski put his hand over his eyes, for the glare of the burning blinded him, and looked at the prisoners sitting in the first wagon. Suddenly he sprang back, began to beat the air with his hands, like a man struck with an arrow in the breast, and from his lips came a terrible unearthly cry: "Jesus, Mary! the hetmans!"

He dropped into the arms of Zakhar; his eyes became leaden, his face grew stiff and rigid as that of a corpse.

A few minutes later three horsemen rode into the square of Korsún, at the head of countless regiments. The middle rider, in red uniform, sat on a white horse, holding a gilded baton at his side. He looked as proud as a king. This was Hmelnitski. On one side of him rode Tugai Bey, on the other Krechovski.

The Commonwealth lay prostrate in dust and blood at the feet of a Cossack.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME days passed by. It appeared to men as if the vault of heaven had suddenly dropped on the Commonwealth. Jólitiya Vodi; Korsún; the destruction of the armies of the crown, ever victorious hitherto in struggles with the Cossacks; the capture of the hetmans; the awful conflagration in the whole Ukraine; slaughters, murders, unheard of since the beginning of the world,—all these came so suddenly that men almost refused to believe that so many misfortunes could come upon one land at a time. Many, in fact, did not believe it; some became helpless from terror, some lost their senses, some prophesied the coming of antichrist and the approach of the day of judgment. All social ties were severed; all intercourse between people and families was interrupted. Every authority ceased; distinction of persons vanished. Hell had freed from its chains all crimes, and let them out on the world to revel; therefore murder, pillage, perfidy, brutality, violence, robbery, frenzy, took the place of labor, uprightness, and conscience. It seemed as though henceforth people would live not through good, but through evil; that the hearts and intentions of men had become inverted, and that they held as sacred that which hitherto had been infamous, and that as infamous which hitherto had been sacred. The sun shone no longer upon the earth, for it was hidden by the smoke of conflagrations; in the night, instead of stars and moon, shone the light of fires. Towns, villages, churches, palaces, forests, went up in flames. People ceased to converse; they only groaned or howled like dogs. Life lost its value. Thousands perished without an echo, without remembrance. And from out all these calamities, deaths, groans, smoke, and burnings, there rose only one man. Every moment loftier and higher, every moment more terribly gigantic, he wellnigh obscured the light of day, and cast his shadow from sea to sea. That man was Bogdan Hmelnitski.

A hundred and twenty thousand men, armed and drunk with victory, stood ready at his nod. The mob had risen on all sides; the Cossacks of the towns joined him in every