

where was a throng, a stir, a bustle, as in a bee-hive. The most varied costumes and colors were to be seen. There were present soldiers of the prince from different regiments, haiduks and Turkish grooms, Jews in black cloaks, peasants, Armenians in violet caps, Tartars in fur coats. The air was full of the sounds of different languages, of shouts, curses, cries of children, barking of dogs, and bellowing of cattle.

The people greeted the approaching regiments joyfully, for they saw in them assurance of safety and deliverance. Some went to the castle to shout in honor of the prince and princess. The most varied reports passed through the crowd, — one that the prince would stay in Lubni; another that he was going far away to Lithuania, where it would be necessary to follow him; a third, that he had already defeated Hmelnitski. The prince, after the greeting with his wife was over, and the announcement of the journey on the following day, looked with anxiety on those crowds of wagons and people which were to follow the army, and be fetters to his feet by lessening the speed of the march. His only comfort was the thought that beyond Bragin, in a quieter country, all would disperse, take refuge in various corners, and be a burden no longer. The princess herself, with ladies in waiting and the court, were to be sent to Vishnyovets, so that the prince without care or hindrance might move into the fire with his whole force. The preparations at the castle had been made already, — wagons were filled with effects and valuables, supplies were collected, all persons of the court were ready to take their seats in the wagons and on horseback at a moment's notice. This readiness was the work of Princess Griselda, who in calamity had as great a soul as her husband, and who, in truth, was equal to him in energy and unbending temper.

The prince was pleased with what he saw, though his heart was rent at the thought that he must leave the Lubni nest in which he had known so much happiness and had won so much glory. This sorrow, too, was shared by the whole army, the servants, and the entire court; for all felt certain that when the prince would be far away in battle, the enemy would not leave Lubni in peace, but would avenge on those beloved walls all the blows which they had suffered at the hands of Yeremi. Cries and lamentations were not lacking, especially among the women, and among those whose children were born there, and those who were leaving the graves of their parents behind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAN YAN, who had galloped in advance of the regiments to the castle to inquire for the princess and Zagloba, did not find them. They had neither been seen nor heard of, though there was news of the attack on Rozlogi and the destruction of the troops at Vassilyevka. The knight locked himself up in his quarters at the arsenal, together with his disappointed hopes. Sorrow, fear, and affliction rushed upon him again; but he defended himself from them as a wounded soldier on the battle-field defends himself from crows and ravens flocking around to drink his warm blood and tear his flesh. He strengthened himself with the thought that Zagloba, being fertile in stratagems, might make his way to Chernigoff and hide on receiving news of the defeat of the hetmans. He remembered then that old man whom he met on the way to Rozlogi, and who, together with his boy, as he said himself, had been stripped of his clothes by some devil, and had sat three days in the reeds of the Kagamlik, fearing to come out into the world. The thought occurred to Skshetuski at once that it must be Zagloba who had stripped them in order to get a disguise for himself and Helena. "It cannot be otherwise," repeated he; and he found great consolation in this thought, since such disguise made flight much more easy. He hoped that God, who watches over innocence, would not abandon Helena; and wishing the more to obtain this favor for her, he determined to purify himself from his sins. He left the arsenal therefore; and on searching for the priest Mukhovetski, and finding him engaged in consoling some women, he begged to have his confession heard.

The priest led him to a chapel, entered the confessional at once, and began to hear him. When he had finished, the priest instructed, edified, and consoled him, strengthened his faith, and then rebuked him, saying: "A Christian is not permitted to doubt the power of God, or an individual to grieve more over his own misfortune than that of his country; but you have more tears for your personal interests — that is, for your friends — than for the nation, and grieve more over your love than over the catastrophe that has

come upon all." Then he described the defeats, the fall, the disgrace of the country, in such lofty and touching speech that he roused at once great patriotism in the heart of the knight, to whom his own misfortunes seemed so belittled that he was almost unable to see them. The priest reproved him for the animosity and hatred against the Cossacks which he had observed in him.

"The Cossacks you will crush," said he, "as enemies of the faith and the country, as allies of the Pagan; but you will forgive them for having injured you, and pardon them from your heart, without thought of vengeance. And when you manifest this, I know that God will comfort you, restore your love to you, and send you peace."

Then the priest made the sign of the cross over Pan Yan, blessed him, and went out, having enjoined as penance to lie in the form of a cross till morning before the crucified Christ.

The chapel was empty and dark; only two candles were burning before the altar, casting rosy and golden gleams on the face of Christ, cut from alabaster and full of sweetness and suffering. Hours passed away, and the lieutenant lay there motionless as if dead; but he felt with increasing certainty that bitterness, despair, hatred, pain, grief, suffering, were unwinding themselves from his heart, — crawling out of his breast, creeping away like serpents, and hiding somewhere in the darkness. He felt that he was breathing more freely, that a kind of new health and new strength were entering into him, that his mind was becoming clearer and a species of happiness was embracing him; in a word, he found before that altar and before that Christ all, whatever it might be, that a man of those ages could find, — a man of unshaken faith, without a trace or a shadow of doubt.

Next morning the lieutenant was as if reborn. Work, movement, and bustle began, for this was the day of leaving Lubni. Officers from early morning had to review the regiments to see that horses and men were in proper order, then lead them to the field, and put them in marching array. The prince heard holy Mass in the Church of St. Michael, after which he returned to the castle and received deputations from the Greek clergy and from the townspeople of Lubni and Khoról. Then he mounted the throne, in the hall painted by Helm, surrounded by his foremost knights; and here Grubi, the mayor of Lubni, gave his farewell in Russian in the name of all the places belonging to

the prince's Trans-Dnieper domains. He begged him first of all not to depart, not to leave them as sheep without a shepherd; hearing which, other deputies, clasping their hands, repeated, "Do not go away! do not go away!" And when the prince answered that he must go, they fell at the feet of their good lord in regret, — or pretended regret, for it was said that many of them, notwithstanding all the kindness of the prince, were very friendly to the Cossacks and Hmelnitski. But the more wealthy of them were afraid of the disturbance which they feared would arise immediately on the departure of the prince and his forces. Vishnyevetski answered that he had tried to be a father, not a lord, to them, and implored them to remain loyal to the king and the Commonwealth, — the mother of all, under whose wings they had suffered no injustice, had lived in peace, had grown in wealth, feeling no yoke such as strangers would not fail to lay upon them. He took farewell of the Greek clergy with similar words; after that came the hour of parting. Then was heard throughout the whole castle the weeping and lamentation of servants; the young ladies and ladies in waiting fainted, and they were barely able to restore Anusia Borzobogata to her senses. The princess herself was the only woman who entered a carriage with dry eyes and uplifted head, for the proud lady was ashamed to show the world that she suffered. Crowds of people stood near the castle; all the bells in Lubni were tolling; the Russian priests blessed with their crosses the departing company; the line of carriages and equipages could scarcely squeeze through the gates of the castle.

Finally the prince mounted his horse. The regimental flags were lowered before him; cannon were fired from the walls. The sounds of weeping, the bustle and shouting of crowds were mingled with the sounds of bells and guns, with the blare of trumpets and the rattle of drums. The procession moved on.

In advance went the Tartar regiments, under Roztvo-rovski and Vershul; then the artillery of Pan Vurtsel, the infantry of Makhnitski; next came the princess with her ladies, then the whole court, and wagons with valuables; after them the Wallachian regiment of Pan Bykhovets; finally, the body of the army, the picked regiments of heavy artillery, the armored regiments, and hussars; the rear was brought up by the dragoons and the Cossacks.

After the army came an endless train of wagons, many-

colored as a serpent, and carrying the families of all those nobles who after the departure of the prince would not remain east of the Dnieper.

The trumpets sounded throughout the regiments; but the hearts of all were straitened. Each one looking at those walls thought to himself: "Dear houses, shall I see you again in life?" It is easy to depart, but difficult to return; and each left as it were a part of his soul in those places, and a pleasant memory. Therefore all turned their eyes for the last time on the castle, on the town, on the towers of the Polish churches, on the domes of the Russian, and on the roofs of the houses. Each one knew what he was leaving behind, but did not know what was waiting there in that blue distance toward which the tabor was moving.

Sadness therefore was in the soul of each person. The town called to the departing ones with the voices of bells, as if beseeching and imploring them not to leave it exposed to uncertainty, to the evil fortune of the future; it called out as if by those sad sounds it wished to say farewell and remain in their memory.

Though the procession moved away, heads were turned toward the town, and in every face could be read the question: "Is this the last time?"

It was the last time. Of all the army and throng of thousands who in that hour were going forth with Prince Vishnyevetski, neither he himself nor any one of them was ever to look again upon that town or that country.

The trumpets sounded. The tabor moved on slowly, but steadily; and after a time Lubni began to be veiled in a blue haze, the houses and roofs were blended into one mass brightly distinct. Then the prince urged his horse ahead, and having ridden to a lofty mound stood motionless and gazed long. That town gleaming there in the sun, and all that country visible from the mound was the work of his ancestors and himself. For the Vishnyevetskis had changed that gloomy wilderness of the past into a settled country, opened it to the life of people, and it may be said, created the Trans-Dnieper. And the greater part of that work the prince had himself accomplished. He built those Polish churches whose towers stood there blue over the town; he increased the place, and joined it with roads to the Ukraine; he felled forests, drained swamps, built castles, founded villages and settlements, brought in settlers, put down robbers, defended from Tartar raids, maintained

the peace necessary to husbandman and merchant, and introduced the rule of law and justice. Through him that country had lived, grown, and flourished,—he was the heart and soul of it; and now he had to leave all.

And it was not that colossal fortune, great as an entire German principality, which the prince regretted, but he had become attached to the work of his hands. He knew that when he was absent everything was absent; that the labor of years would be destroyed at once; that toil would go for nothing, ferocity would be unchained, flames would embrace villages and towns, the Tartar would water his horse in those rivers, woods would grow out of ruins; that if God granted him to return everything would have to be begun anew, and perhaps his strength would fail, time be wanting, and confidence such as he had enjoyed at first would not be given him. Here passed the years which were for him praise before men, merit before God; and now the praise and the merit are to roll away in smoke.

Two tears flowed slowly down his face. These were his last tears, after which remained in his eyes only lightning.

The prince's horse stretched out his neck and neighed, and this neighing was answered immediately by other steeds under the banners. These sounds roused the prince from his reverie and filled him with hope. And so there remains to him yet six thousand faithful comrades,—six thousand sabres with which the world is open to him, and to which the prostrate Commonwealth is looking as the only salvation. The idyl beyond the Dnieper is at an end; but where cannon are thundering, where villages and towns are in flames, where by night the wail of captives, the groans of men, women, and children are mingled with the neighing of Tartar horses and Cossack tumult, there is an open field, and there he may win the glory of a savior and father of his country. Who will reach for the crown, who rescue the fatherland, disgraced, trodden under the feet of peasants, conquered, dying, if not he, the prince,—if not those forces which shine there below him in their armor and gleam in the sun?

The tabor passed by the foot of the mound; and at the sight of the prince standing with his baton in his hand on the eminence under the cross, all the soldiers gave forth one shout: "Long live the prince! long live our leader and hetman Yeremi Vishnyevetski!"

A hundred banners were lowered to his feet. The hus-

sars sounded their horns, and the drums were beaten to accompany the shouts. Then the prince drew forth his sabre, and raising it with his eyes to heaven, said, —

"I, Yeremi Vishnyevetski, vovoda of Rus, prince in Lubni and Vishnyovets, swear to thee, O God, One in a Holy Trinity, and to thee, Most Holy Mother, that, raising this sabre against ruffianism by which our land is disgraced, I will not lay it down while strength and life remain to me, until I wash out that disgrace and bend every enemy to the feet of the Commonwealth, give peace to the Ukraine, and drown servile insurrection in blood. And as I make this oath with a sincere heart, so God give me aid. Amen!"

He stood yet awhile longer looking at the heavens, then rode down slowly from the height to the regiments. The army marched that evening to Basani, a village belonging to Pani Krynitska, who received the prince on her knees at the gate; for the peasants had laid siege to her house and she was keeping them off with the assistance of the more faithful of her servants, when the sudden arrival of the army saved her and her nineteen children, of whom fourteen were girls. When the prince had given orders to seize the aggressors, he sent a Cossack company to Kanyeiff under command of Captain Ponyatovski, who brought that same night five Zaporojians of the Vasyutin kuren. These had all taken part in the battle of Korsún, and when burned with fire gave a detailed account of the battle. They stated that Hmelnitski was still in Korsún, but that Tugai Bey had gone with captives, booty, and both hetmans to Chigirin, whence he intended to return to the Crimea. They heard also that Hmelnitski had begged him earnestly not to leave the Zaporojian army, but to march against the prince. The murza, however, would not agree to this, saying that after the destruction of the armies and the hetmans, the Cossacks could go on alone; he would not wait longer, for his captives would die. They put Hmelnitski's forces at two hundred thousand, but of rather poor quality; of good men only fifty thousand, — that is, Zaporojians and Cossacks subject to lords, or town Cossacks who had joined the rebellion.

On receiving these tidings the prince grew strong in spirit, for he hoped that he too would increase considerably in strength by the accession of nobles on the west of the Dnieper, stragglers from the army of the Crown, and detachments belonging to Polish lords. Therefore he set out early next morning.

Beyond Pereyasláv the army entered immense gloomy forests extending along the course of the Trubej to Kozelets, and farther on to Chernigoff itself. It was toward the end of May, and terribly hot. In the woods, instead of being cool, it was so sultry that men and horses lacked air for breathing. Cattle, driven after the army, fell at every step, or when they caught the smell of water, rushed to it as if wild, overturning wagons and causing dismay. Horses too began to fall, especially those of the heavy cavalry. The nights were unendurable from the infinite number of insects and the overpowering odor of pitch, which the trees dropped in unusual abundance by reason of the heat.

They dragged on in this way for four days; at length on the fifth day the heat became unnatural. When night came the horses began to snort and the cattle to bellow plaintively, as if foreseeing some danger which men could not yet surmise.

"They smell blood!" was said in the tabor among the crowds of fugitive families of nobles.

"The Cossacks are pursuing us! there will be a battle!"

At these words the women raised a lament, the rumor reached the servants, panic and disturbance set in; the people tried to drive ahead of one another, or to leave the track and go at random through the woods, where they got entangled among the trees.

But men sent by the prince soon restored order. Scouts were ordered out on every side, so as to be sure whether danger was threatening or not.

Skshetuskii, who had gone as a volunteer with the Walachians, returned first toward morning and went straightway to the prince.

"What is the trouble?" asked Yeremi.

"Your Highness, the woods are on fire."

"Set on fire?"

"Yes; I seized a number of men who confessed that Hmelnitski had sent volunteers to follow you and to set fire, if the wind should be favorable."

"He wanted to roast us alive without giving battle. Bring the people here!"

In a moment three herdsmen were brought, — wild, stupid, terrified, — who immediately confessed that they were in fact commanded to set fire to the woods. They confessed also that forces were despatched after the prince, but that they were going to Chernigoff by another road, nearer the Dnieper.

Meanwhile other scouts returned. All brought the same report: "The woods are on fire."

But the prince did not allow himself to be disturbed in the least by this. "It is a villanous method," said he; "but nothing will come of it. The fire will not go beyond the rivers entering the Trubej."

In fact, into the Trubej, along which the army marched to the north, there fell so many small rivers forming here and there broad morasses, impassable for fire, that it would have been necessary to ignite the woods beyond each one of them separately. The scouts soon discovered that this was being done. Every day incendiaries were brought in; with these they ornamented the pine-trees along the road.

The fires extended vigorously along the rivers to the east and west, not to the north. In the night-time the heavens were red as far as the eye could see. The women sang sacred hymns from dusk to the dawning of the day. Terrified wild beasts from the flaming forests took refuge on the road and followed the army, running in among the cattle of the herds. The wind blew in the smoke, which covered the whole horizon. The army and the wagons pushed forward as if through a dense fog, which the eye could not penetrate. The lungs had no air; the smoke bit the eyes, and the wind kept driving it on more and more each moment. The light of the sun could not pierce the clouds, and there was more to be seen in the night-time than in the day, for flames gave light. The woods seemed to have no end.

In the midst of such burning forests and such smoke did Prince Yermi lead his army. Meanwhile news came that the enemy was marching on the other side of the Trubej. The extent of his power was unknown, but Vershul's Tartars affirmed that he was still far away.

One night Pan Sukhodolski came to the army from Bodenki, on the other side of the Desna. He was an old attendant of the prince, who some years before had settled in a village. He was fleeing before the peasants, but brought news as yet unknown in the army.

Great consternation was caused when, asked by the prince for news, he answered: "Bad, your Highness! You know already of the defeat of the hetmans and the death of the king?"

The prince, who was sitting on a small camp-stool in front of the tent, sprang to his feet. "How? — is the king dead?"

"Our merciful lord gave up the spirit in Merech a week before the catastrophe at Korsún."

"God in his mercy did not permit him to live to such times!" said the prince; then seizing himself by the head, he continued: "Awful times have come upon the Commonwealth! Convocations and elections, — an interregnum, dissensions, and foreign intrigues, — now, when the whole people should become a single sword in a single hand. God surely has turned away his face from us, and in his anger intends to punish us for our sins. Only King Vladislav himself could extinguish these conflagrations; for there was a wonderful affection for him among the Cossacks, and besides, he was a military man."

At this time a number of officers — among them Zatsvilikhovski, Skshetovski, Baranovski, Vurtsel, Makhnitski, and Polyanovski — approached the prince, who said: "Gentlemen, the king is dead!"

Their heads were uncovered as if by command. Their faces grew serious. Such unexpected news deprived all of speech. Only after a while came an expression of universal sorrow.

"May God grant him eternal rest!" said the prince.

"And eternal light shine upon him!"

Soon after the priest Mukhovetski intoned "Dies Iræ;" and amidst those forests and that smoke an unspeakable sorrow seized their hearts and souls. It seemed to all as if some expected rescue had failed; as if they were standing alone in the world, in presence of some terrible enemy, and they had no one against him except their prince. So then all eyes turned to him, and a new bond was formed between Vishnyevetski and his men.

That evening the prince spoke to Zatsvilikhovski in a voice that was heard by all, —

"We need a warrior king, so that if God grants us to give our votes at an election, we will give them for Prince Karl, who has more of the military genius than Kazimir."

"Vivat Carolus rex!" shouted the officers.

"Vivat!" repeated the hussars, and after them the whole army.

The prince voevoda had no thought, indeed, that those shouts raised east of the Dnieper, in the gloomy forests of Chernigoff, would reach Warsaw, and wrest from his grasp the baton of Grand Hetman of the Crown.