

regiments assigned to Krívonos drank deeply, for they were going to death. They knew this well themselves, but there was no fear in their hearts. "Once our mother bore us!" repeated they after their leader; and on this account they spared nothing on themselves, as is usual before death. Hmelnitski permitted and encouraged this; the crowd followed their example. The legions began to sing songs in a hundred thousand voices. Horses let loose and prancing through the camp raised clouds of dust, and caused indescribable disorder. They were chased with cries and shouts and laughter. Great crowds loitered along the river, fired muskets, crowded and pushed to the quarters of the hetman himself, who finally ordered Yakubovich to drive them away. Then began fighting and confusion, till a drenching rain drove them all to the wagons and tents.

In the evening a storm burst forth in the sky. Thunder rolled from one end of the clouds to the other; lightning flashed through the whole country, now with white and now with ruddy blaze. In the light of these flashes Krívonos marched out of camp at the head of sixty thousand men, — some from the best warriors, the rest from the mob.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

KRÍVONOS marched then from Bélava Tserkoff through Skvira and Pogrébische to Makhnovka. Wherever he passed, traces of human habitation vanished. Whoever did not join him perished under the knife. Grain was burned standing, with forests and gardens. At the same time the prince carried annihilation in his hand. After the razing of Pogrébische, and the baptism of blood which Pan Baranovski gave to Nyemiroff, the prince's army destroyed a number of other considerable bands, and halted in camp at Raigorod, where during a month they scarcely got off their horses. They were weakened by toil, and death had decreased them notably. Rest was necessary, for the hands of these reapers in the harvest of blood had relaxed. The prince wavered, therefore, and thought whether it would not be better to go for a time to a more peaceable region to rest and recruit his forces, especially his horses, which were more like skeletons of beasts than living creatures, since they had not eaten grain for a month, subsisting only on trampled grass.

But after they had halted a week tidings were brought that reinforcements were coming. The prince went out to meet them, and really met Pan Yanush Tishkyevich, the voevoda of Kieff, who came with fifteen hundred good men, and with him Pan Krishtof Tishkyevich, under-judge of Bratslav; young Pan Aksak, quite a youth yet, but with a well-armed company of his own; and many nobles, such as the Senyuts, the Palubinskis, the Jitinskis, the Yelovitskis, the Kyerdéis, the Boguslavskis, — some with escorts, others without. The entire force formed nearly two thousand horse, besides attendants.

The prince was greatly pleased, and invited thankfully to his quarters the voevoda, who could not cease wondering at the poverty and simplicity of the place. For the prince, by so much as he lived like a king in Lubni, by that much did he permit himself no comfort in the field, wishing to give an example to the soldiers. He lived therefore in one room, which the voevoda of Kieff, squeezing through the narrow door, was hardly able to enter, by reason of his



enormous thickness, till he ordered his attendant to push him from behind. In the cottage, besides the table, wooden benches, and a bed covered with horse-skin, there was nothing except a little room near the door, in which an attendant slept, always ready for service. This simplicity greatly astonished the voevoda, who lived in comfort and carried carpets with him. He entered finally, and gazed with curiosity on the prince, wondering how so great a spirit could find its place in such simplicity and poverty. He had seen Yeremi from time to time at the Diets in Warsaw, was in fact a distant relative of his, but did not know him intimately. Now, when he began to speak with him, he recognized at once that he had to do with an extraordinary man; and he, an old senator and soldier, who used to clap his senatorial colleagues on the shoulders, and say to Prince Dominik Zaslavski, "My dear," and was familiar with the king himself, could not attain familiarity like this with Vishnyevetski, though the prince received him kindly, for he was thankful for the reinforcements.

"Worthy voevoda," said he, "praise be to God that you have come with your people, for I have worked here to my last breath."

"I have noticed, by your soldiers, that they have worked, poor fellows, which disturbs me not a little, for I have come with the request that you hasten to save me."

"And is there hurry?"

"Periculum in mora, periculum in mora! Ruffians to the number of several thousand have appeared, with Krivonos at their head, who, as I have heard, was sent against you; but having received information that you had moved on Konstantinoff, he went there, and on the road has invested Makhnovka, and has wrought such desolation that no tongue can describe it."

"I have heard of Krivonos, and waited for him here; but since I find that he has missed me, I must seek him. Really the affair will not bide delay. Is there a strong garrison in Makhnovka?"

"There are two hundred Germans in the castle, very good men, who will hold out yet for some time. But the worst is, that many nobles have assembled in the town with their families, and the place is fortified only by earth-works and palisades, and cannot resist long."

"In truth, the affair suffers no delay," repeated the prince. Then turning to his attendant, he said: "Jelenksi, run for the colonels!"

The voevoda of Kieff was sitting meanwhile on a bench, and panting. He had some expectation of supper; for he was hungry, and liked good eating.

Presently the tramp of armed men was heard, and the prince's officers entered, — black, thin, bearded, with sunken eyes, with traces of indescribable labor on their faces. They bowed in silence to the prince and his guests, and waited for his words.

"Gentlemen, are the horses at their places?"

"Yes, ready as always."

"It is well. In an hour we will move on Krivonos."

"Hi!" said the voevoda of Kieff; and he looked in wonderment at Pan Kryshstof, the sub-judge of Bratslav.

The prince continued: "Ponyatovski and Vershul will march first; after them Baranovski will go with his dragoons, and in an hour we will move with the cannon of Vurtsel."

The colonels bowed and left the room, and soon the trumpets were heard sounding to horse. The voevoda of Kieff did not expect such haste, and did not indeed wish it, since he was hungry and tired. He counted on resting about a day with the prince, and then moving. Now he would have to mount his horse at once, without sleeping or eating.

"But, your Highness," said he, "are your soldiers able to reach Makhnovka? I see they are terribly tired, and the road is a long one."

"Don't let your head ache over that. They go to a battle as to a concert."

"I see that; I see they are sulphurous fellows. But my men are road-weary."

"You have just said, 'Periculum in mora.'"

"Yes; but we might rest for the night. We have come from near Hmelnik."

"Worthy voevoda, we have come from Lubni and the Trans-Dnieper."

"We were a whole day on the road."

"We a whole month."

The prince went out to arrange in person the order of march. The voevoda stared at the under-judge, struck his palms on his knees, and said, —

"Ah! I have got what I wanted, you see. As God lives, he will kill me with hunger. Here is swimming in hot water for you! I come for aid, and think that after great solicitation they will move in two or three days; but now



they won't give us time to draw breath. May the devil take them! The stirrup-strap has galled my leg; my traitor of an attendant buckled it badly. My stomach is empty. The devil take them! Makhnovka is Makhnovka; but my stomach is my stomach. I am an old soldier, have fought in more wars probably than he has, but never in such helter-skelter fashion. Those are devils, not men; they don't eat, don't sleep, — just fight. As God is dear to me, they never eat anything. They look like ghosts, don't they?"

"Yes; but they have fiery courage," answered Pan Krysh-tof, who was in love with soldier life. "God bless us, what disorder and tumult in other camps when it comes to marching — how much running, arranging wagons, sending for horses! But now, do you hear? the light cavalry is on the march."

"Is it possible? Why, this is terrible," said the voevoda.

But young Pan Aksak clasped his boyish hands. "Ah, that is a mighty leader!" said he in ecstasy.

"Oh, there is milk under your nose!" snapped the voevoda. "Cunctator too was a great leader! Do you understand?"

At this moment the prince came in. "Gentlemen, to horse! We march."

The voevoda did not restrain himself. "Order something for us to eat, Prince, for I am hungry," cried he, in an outburst of ill-humor.

"Oh, my worthy voevoda," said the prince, laughing and taking hold of him by the shoulder, "forgive me, forgive me! With all my heart. But in war one forgets these things."

"Well, Pan Krysh-tof, haven't I told you that they don't eat?" asked the voevoda, turning to the under-judge of Bratslav.

The supper did not last long, and a couple of hours later even the infantry had left Raigorod. The army marched through Vinnitsa and Litin to Hmelnik; on the way Vershul met a Tartar party in Saverovka, which he and Volodyovski destroyed, and freed a few hundred captives, — almost all young women. There began the ruined country; all around were traces of the hand of Krívonos. Strijavka was burned, and its population put to death in a terrible manner. Apparently the unfortunates had resisted Krívonos; therefore

the savage chief had delivered them to sword and flame. On an oak-tree at the entrance to the village hung Pan Strijovski himself, whom Tishkyevich's men recognized at once. He was entirely naked, and had around his neck an enormous necklace of heads strung on a rope; they were the heads of his wife and six children. Everything in the village itself was burned to the ground. They saw on both sides of the road a long row of "Cossack candles," — that is, people with hands raised above their heads, and tied to stakes driven into the ground, wound around with straw steeped in pitch and set on fire at the hands. The greater part of them had only their hands burned, for the rain had evidently stopped the further burning. But those bodies were terrible, with their distorted faces and black stumps of hands stretched to heaven. The odor of putrefaction spread round about. Above the stakes whirled circles of ravens and crows, which at the approach of the troops flew away with an uproar from the nearer stakes to sit on the farther ones. A number of wolves galloped off before the regiments to the thicket. The men marched on in silence through the alley, and counted the "candles." There were between three and four hundred of them.

They passed at length that unfortunate village, and breathed the fresh air of the field. But traces of destruction extended farther. It was the first half of July. The grain was almost ripe, for an early harvest was looked for. But entire fields were partly burned, partly trampled, tangled, trodden into the earth. It might have been thought that a hurricane had passed over the land. In fact, the most terrible of all hurricanes had passed, — civil war. The soldiers of the prince had seen more than once rich neighborhoods ruined by Tartar raids; but such a storm, such mad destruction, they had never seen. Forests were burned as well as grain. Where fire had not devoured the trees the bark and leaves were swept from them by a tongue of fire; they were scorched by its breath, smoked, blackened, and the tree-trunk stuck up like a skeleton. The voevoda of Kieff looked, and could not believe his eyes. Maidyanóe, Zbar, — villages, houses, — nothing but burned ruins! On one side and another the men had run off to Krívonos; the women and children had been taken captive by that part of the horde which Vershul and Volodyovski had crushed out. On the earth a wilderness; in the air flocks of ravens, crows, jackdaws, and vultures, which had flown hither, God knows whence, to the



Cossack harvest. Fresher traces of the passage of troops were seen each moment. From time to time they came upon broken wagons, bodies of cattle and men not yet decayed, broken cups, brass kettles, bags of wet flour, ruins still smoking, stacks of grain recently begun and left unfinished.

The prince urged his regiments on to Hmelnik without drawing breath. The old voevoda seized himself by the head, repeating sadly,—

"My Makhnovka, my Makhnovka! I see we shall not come in time."

Meanwhile news was brought to Hmelnik that Makhnovka was besieged, not by old Krivonos himself, but by his son with several thousand men, and that it was he who had committed such inhuman devastations along the road. The place was already taken, according to accounts. The Cossacks on capturing it had cut to pieces the nobles and the Jews, and taken the women of the nobles to camp, where a fate worse than death awaited them. But the castle, under the leadership of Pan Lyeff, held out yet. The Cossacks stormed it from the Bernardine monastery, in which they had put the monks to death. Pan Lyeff, using all his strength and powder, gave no hope of holding out longer than one night.

The prince therefore left the infantry, the guns, and the main strength of the army, which he ordered to go to Bystrika, and galloped on to the relief with the voevoda, Pan Kryshtof, Pan Aksak, and two thousand soldiers. The old voevoda was for delay, for he had lost his head.

"Makhnovka is lost! We shall arrive too late! We would better leave it, defend other places, and provide them with garrisons."

But the prince would not listen to him. The under-judge of Bratslav urged the advance, and the troops rushed to the fight.

"Since we have come thus far, we will not leave without blood," said the colonels; and they went on.

About two miles and a half from Makhnovka a few riders, moving as fast as their horses could carry them, halted in front of the troops. It was Pan Lyeff and his companions. Seeing him, the voevoda of Kieff guessed at once what had happened.

"The castle is taken!" he cried.

"It is!" answered Pan Lyeff; and that moment he fainted, for he was cut with swords, was shot through, and

had lost much blood. But the others began to tell what had taken place. The Germans on the wall were cut down to the last man, for they preferred to die rather than yield. Pan Lyeff had forced his way through the thick of the mob and the broken gates. In the rooms of the tower a few tens of nobles were defending themselves; to those speedy succor should be given.

The cavalry swept on with all speed. Soon the town and castle were visible on a hill, and above them a dense cloud of smoke from the fire which had already begun. The day was coming to an end. The sky was flushed with gigantic golden and purple lights, which the troops mistook at once for a conflagration. By these flashes the Zaporozian regiments could be seen, and dense masses of a mob rushing through the gates to meet the Polish troops,—the more confidently since no one in the town knew of the approach of Yeremi. It was supposed that the voevoda of Kieff alone was marching with succor. It was evident that vodka had blinded them entirely, or the recent capture of the castle had inspired them with immeasurable insolence; for they descended the hill boldly, and only when they had reached the plain did they form for battle, which they did with great readiness, thundering with their drums and trumpets. In view of this a shout of joy went up from every Polish breast, and the voevoda of Kieff had an opportunity to admire a second time the discipline of Vishnyevetski's troops. Halting in view of the Cossacks, they formed at once in battle-array, the heavy cavalry in the centre, the light horse at the wings, so that there was no necessity of manœuvres, they could begin on the spot.

"Oh, Pan Kryshtof, what men!" said the voevoda. "They fell into order at once; they could give battle without a leader."

But the prince, like a provident chief, flew, with baton in hand, between the companies, examined, and gave final orders. The evening twilight was reflected on his silver armor, and he was like a bright flame flying between the ranks, he alone glistening amid the dark armor.

Three regiments formed the centre of the foremost line. The first of these was led by the voevoda of Kieff himself, the second by young Pan Aksak, the third by Pan Kryshtof Tishkyevich; after these, in the second line, were the dragoons under Baranovski, and finally the gigantic husars of the prince, led by Pan Yan. Vershul, Kushel, and



Ponyatovski occupied the wings. There were no cannon, for Vurtsel had remained in Bystrika. The prince galloped to the voevoda, motioned with his baton, and said, —

"Do you begin, because of the injustice done you!"

The voevoda in turn waved his hand; the soldiers bent in their saddles and moved on. It was evident at once by his style of leadership that the voevoda, though heavy and dilatory, — for he was bent with age, — was an experienced and valiant soldier. To spare his troops he did not start them at the highest speed, but led them slowly, quickening the march as he approached the enemy. He went himself in the front rank, with baton in hand; his attendant merely carried his long and heavy sword, but not heavy for the hand of the old voevoda. The mob on foot hurried with scythes and flails against the cavalry, in order to restrain the first impetus and lighten the attack for the Zaporojians. When they were separated by only a few tens of yards, the people of Makhnovka recognized the voevoda by his gigantic stature and corpulence, and began to cry out, —

"Hi! serene great mighty voevoda, the harvest is near; why don't you order out your subjects? Our respects, serene lord! We will perforate that stomach of yours."

They sent a shower of bullets on the cavalry, but without harm, for the horses were going like a whirlwind and struck mightily. The clatter of flails and the sound of scythes were heard on the armor; then cries and groans. The lances opened a way in the dense mass of the mob, through which the infuriated horses rushed like a tempest, trampling, overturning, mashing. And as on the meadow when a rank of mowers advance, the rich grass disappears before them and they go on swinging the handles of their scythes, just so did the broad avalanche of the mob contract, melt, disappear, pushed by the breasts of horses. Unable to keep their places, they began to waver. Then thundered the shout, "Save yourselves!" and the whole mass, throwing down scythes, flails, forks, guns, rushed back in wild dismay on the Zaporojian regiments behind. But the Zaporojians, fearing lest the fleeing throng should disorder their ranks, placed their lances against them; the mob, seeing this resistance, rushed with a howl of despair to both sides, but were immediately hurled back by Kushel and Ponyatovski, who had just moved from the wings of the prince's division.

The voevoda, now riding over the bodies of the mob, was

in the front of the Zaporojians and rushed toward them. They too rushed at him, wishing to answer momentum with momentum. They struck each other like two waves going in opposite directions, which when they meet form a foaming ridge. So horses rose before horses, the riders like a wave, the swords above the wave like foam. The voevoda discovered that he was not working with a mob now, but with stern and trained Zaporojian warriors. The two lines pressed each other mutually, bent, neither being able to break the other. Bodies fell thickly, for there man met man, and steel struck steel. The voevoda himself, putting his baton under his belt, and taking the sword from his attendant, worked in the sweat of his brow, puffing like a blacksmith's bellows. And with him the two Senyuts, the Kyerdéis, the Boguslavskis, the Yelovitskis, and the Polubinskis wriggled as if in boiling water.

But on the Cossack side the fiercest of all was Ivan Burdabut, the lieutenant-colonel of the Kalnik regiment, a Cossack of gigantic strength and stature. He was the more terrible because he had a horse which fought as well as its master. More than one man reined in his steed and drew back so as not to meet that centaur spreading death and desolation. The brothers Senyut sprang at him; but the horse caught in its teeth the face of Andrei the younger and mashed it in the twinkle of an eye. Seeing this, the elder brother, Rafal, struck the beast above the eyes; he wounded, but did not kill it, for the sabre hit the great bronze button on the forehead of the horse. At that moment Burdabut plunged a weapon under the beard of Senyut, and deprived him of life. So fell the two brothers, and lay in their gilded armor in the dust, under the hoofs of horses; but Burdabut rushed on like a flame to more distant ranks, and struck in a flash the attendant of Prince Polubinski, a sixteen-year-old stripling, whose right shoulder he cut off together with the arm. Seeing this, Pan Urbanski, wishing to avenge the death of a relative, fired at Burdabut in the very face, but missed, — only shot away his ear and dashed him with blood. Terrible then was Burdabut with his horse, both black as night, both covered with blood, both with wild eyes and distended nostrils, raging like a tempest. And Pan Urbanski did not escape death; for like an executioner, Burdabut cut off his head with a blow, and the head of old Jitinski in his eightieth year, and the heads of the two Nikchemnis, each with