

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN the warriors drew near each other, they reined in their horses and opened in mutual abuse.

"Come on! come on! We will feed the dogs with your carrion right away!" cried the prince's soldiers.

"Your carrion is not fit even for dogs!" answered the Cossacks.

"You will rot here on the dam, you infamous robbers!"

"For whom it is fated, that one will rot; but the fish will pick your bones soon."

"To the dung-heaps with your forks, you trash! Dung-forks are fitter for you than sabres."

"If we are trash, our sons will be nobles, for they will be born of your girls."

Some Cossack, evidently from the Trans-Dnieper, pushed forward, and placing his palms around his mouth, cried with a loud voice: "The prince has two nieces; tell him to send them to Krivonos."

It grew dim in Volodyovski's eyes when he heard this blasphemy, and he spurred his horse on to the Zaporojian.

Skshetuski, on the right wing with his hussars, recognized him from a distance, and cried to Zagloba: "Volodyovski is rushing on! Volodyovski! Look there! there!"

"I see!" said Zagloba. "He has already reached him. They are fighting! One, two! I see perfectly. It is all over. He is a swordsman, plague take him!"

At the second blow the Cossack fell to the ground as if struck by lightning, and fell with his head to his comrades, as an evil omen to them.

Then a second sprang forward, in a scarlet kontush stripped from some noble. He fell upon Volodyovski a little from the flank, but his horse stumbled at the very moment of the blow. Volodyovski turned, and then could be seen the master; for he only moved his hand, making a light, soft motion, — invisible, so to speak, — but still the sabre of the Zaporojian sprang up, flew into the air. Volodyovski seized him by the shoulder, and pulled him with his horse toward the Polish side.

"Save me, brothers!" cried the prisoner.

He offered no resistance, knowing that in case he did he would be thrust through that moment. He even struck his horse with his heels to urge him on; and so Volodyovski led him as a wolf leads a kid.

In view of this, a couple of tens of warriors rushed out from both sides of the river, for no more could find place on the dam. They fought in single combat, man with man, horse with horse, sabre with sabre; and it was a wonderful sight, that series of duels, on which both armies looked with the greatest interest, drawing auguries from them of the future success. The morning sun shone upon the combatants, and the air was so transparent that even the faces might be seen from both sides. Any one looking from a distance would have thought that it was a tournament or games. But at one moment a riderless horse would spring from the tumult; at another, a body would tumble from the dam into the clear mirror of the water, which splashed up in golden sparks and then moved forward in a circling wavelet farther and farther from shore.

The courage of the soldiers in both armies grew as they beheld the bravery of their own men and their eagerness for the fight. Each sent good wishes to its own. Suddenly Skshetuski clasped his hands and cried, —

"Vershul is lost; he fell with his horse. Look! he was sitting on the white one."

But Vershul was not lost, though he had indeed fallen with his horse; for they had both been thrown by Pulyan, a former Cossack of Prince Yeremi, then next in command to Krivonos. He was a famous skirmisher, and had never left off that game. He was so strong that he could easily break two horseshoes at once. He had the reputation of being invincible in single combat. When he had thrown Vershul he attacked a gallant officer, Koroshlyakhtsits, and cut him terribly, — almost to the saddle. Others drew back in fear. Seeing this, Pan Longin turned his Livonian mare against him.

"You are lost!" cried Pulyan, when he saw the fool-hardy man.

"It can't be helped," answered Podbipienta, raising his sabre for the blow.

He had not, however, his Zervikaptur, that being reserved for ends too important to permit its use in desultory combat. He had left it in the hands of his faithful armor-bearer in the ranks, and had merely a light blade of blue steel en-

graved with gold. Pulyan endured its first blow, though he saw in a moment that he had to do with no common enemy, for his sword quivered to the palm of his hand. He endured the second and the third blow; then, either he recognized the greater skill of his opponent in fencing, or perhaps he wished to exhibit his tremendous strength in view of both armies, or, pushed to the edge of the dam, he feared to be thrown into the water by Pan Longin's enormous beast. It is enough that after he had received the last blow he brought the horses side by side, and seized the Lithuanian by the waist in his powerful arms.

They grasped each other like two bears when they are fighting for a female. They wound themselves around each other like two pines which, having grown from a single stump, intertwine till they form but one tree. All held breath and gazed in silence on the struggle of the combatants, each one of whom was considered the strongest among his own. You would have said that both had become one body, for they remained a long time motionless. But their faces grew red; and only from the veins which swelled on their foreheads, and from their backs bent like bows, could you suspect under that terrible quiet the superhuman tension of the arms which crushed them.

At length both began to quiver; but by degrees the face of Pan Longin grew redder and redder and the face of the Cossack bluer and bluer. Still a moment passed. The disquiet of the spectators increased.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a hollow, smothered voice: "Let me go —"

"No, my darling!" Something gave a sudden and terrible rattle, a groan was heard as if from under the ground, a wave of black blood burst from Pulyan's mouth, and his head dropped on his shoulder.

Pan Longin lifted the Cossack from his seat, and before the spectators had time to think what had happened, threw him on his own saddle and started on a trot toward Skshetusk's regiment.

"Vivat!" cried the Vishnyevetski men.

"Destruction!" answered the Zaporojians.

Instead of being confused by the defeat of their leader, they attacked the enemy the more stubbornly. A crowded struggle followed, which the narrowness of the place made the more venomous; and the Cossacks in spite of their

bravery would certainly have yielded to the greater skill of their opponents, had it not been that suddenly the trumpets from the camp of Krivonos sounded a retreat.

They withdrew at once; and their opponents, after they had stopped awhile to show that they had kept the field, withdrew also. The dam was deserted; there remained on it only bodies of men and horses, as if in testimony of that which would be, — and that road of death lay black between the two armies, — but a light breath of wind wrinkled the smooth surface of the water and sounded plaintively through the leaves of the willows standing here and there above the banks of the pond.

Meanwhile the regiments of Krivonos moved like countless flocks of starlings and plover. The mob went in advance, then the regular Zaporojian infantry, companies of cavalry, Tartar volunteers, and Cossack artillery, and all without much order. They hurried before the others, wishing to force the dam by countless numbers, and then inundate and cover the army of the prince. The savage Krivonos believed in the fist and the sabre, not in military art. Therefore he urged his whole power to the attack, and ordered the regiments marching from behind to push on those in front, so that they must go even if against their will. Cannon-balls began to plunge into the water like wild swans and divers, causing no damage however to the prince's troops, by reason of the distance. The torrent of people covered the dam and advanced without hindrance. A part of that wave on reaching the river sought a passage, and not finding it turned back to the embankment, and marched in such a dense throng that, as Osinski said afterward, one might have ridden on horseback over their heads, and so covered the embankment that not a span of free earth remained.

Yeremi looked on this from the high shore, his brows wrinkled, and from his eyes flashed malicious lightning toward those crowds. Seeing the disorder and rush of the regiments of Krivonos, he said to Makhnitski, —

"The enemy begin with us in peasant fashion, and disregarding military art, come on like beaters at a hunt, but they will not reach this place."

Meanwhile, as if challenging his words, the Cossacks had come to the middle of the embankment. There they paused, astonished and disquieted by the silence of the prince's forces. But just at that moment there was a movement

among these forces, and they retreated, leaving between themselves and the embankment a broad half-circle, which was to be the field of battle.

Then the infantry of Koritski opened, disclosing the throats of Vurtsel's cannon, turned toward the embankment, and in the corner formed by the slough and the embankment shone among the thickets along the bank the muskets of Osinski's Germans.

It was clear in a moment to military men on whose side the victory must be. Only a mad leader like Krivonos could rush to battle on conditions according to which he could not even pass the river in case Vishnyevetski wished to prevent him.

But the prince permitted part of his enemy's army to cross the embankment so as to surround and destroy it. The great leader took advantage of the blunders of his opponents, who did not even consider that it was impossible to reinforce his men on the other bank, except through a narrow passage over which no considerable number of men could be sent at one time; practised soldiers therefore looked with wonder at the action of Krivonos, who was not forced by anything to such a mad undertaking.

He was forced by ambition alone and a thirst for blood. He had learned that Hmelnitski, in spite of the preponderance of power under Krivonos, fearing the result of a battle with Yeremi, was marching with all his forces to his aid. Orders came not to deliver battle; but for that very reason Krivonos determined to deliver it.

Having taken Polónnoe, he got the taste of blood, and did not like to divide it with any one; therefore he hastened. He would lose half of his men,—well, what of that! With the rest he would overwhelm the slender forces of the prince and cut them to pieces. He would bring the head of Vishnyevetski as a present to Hmelnitski.

The billows of the mob had reached the end of the embankment, passed it, and spread over the half-circle abandoned by Yeremi's army. But at this moment the concealed infantry of Osinski opened upon them in the flank, and from the cannon of Vurtsel there bloomed out long wreaths of smoke, the earth trembled from the roar, and the battle began along the whole line.

Clouds of smoke concealed the shores of the Sula, the pond, the embankment, and even the field itself, so that all was hidden, save at times the scarlet, glittering uniforms

of the dragoons, and the crests gleaming over the flying helmets, as everything seethed in that terrible cloud. The bells of the town were ringing, and mingled their sad groans with the deep bellowing of the guns. From the Cossack camp regiment after regiment rolled on to the embankment.

Those who crossed and reached the other side of the river extended in the twinkle of an eye into a long line and rushed with rage on the prince's regiments. The battle extended from one end of the pond to the bend in the river and the swampy meadows, which were flooded that rainy summer.

The mob and the men of the lower country had to conquer or perish, having behind them water, toward which they were pushed by the infantry and cavalry of the prince.

When the hussars moved forward, Zagloba, though he had short breath and did not like a throng, galloped with the others, because in fact he could not do otherwise without danger of being trampled to death. He flew on therefore, closing his eyes, and through his head there flew with lightning speed the thought, "Stratagem is nothing, stratagem is nothing; the stupid win, the wise perish!" Then he was seized with spite against the war, against the Cossacks, the hussars, and every one else in the world. He began to curse, to pray. The wind whistled in his ears, the breath was hemmed in his breast. Suddenly his horse struck against something; he felt resistance. Then he opened his eyes, and what did he see? Scythes, sabres, flails, a crowd of inflamed faces, eyes, mustaches,—and all indefinite, unknown, all trembling, galloping, furious. Then he was transported with rage against those enemies, because they are not going to the devil, because they are rushing up to his face and forcing him to fight. "You wanted it, now you have it," thought he, and he began to slash blindly on every side. Sometimes he cut the air, and sometimes he felt that his blade had sunk into something soft. At the same time he felt that he was still living, and this gave him extraordinary hope. "Slay! kill!" he roared like a buffalo. At last those frenzied faces vanished from his eyes, and in their places he saw a multitude of visages, tops of caps, and the shouts almost split his ears. "Are they fleeing?" shot through his head. "Yes!" Then daring sprang up in him beyond measure. "Scoundrels!" he shouted, "is that the way you meet a noble?" He sprang among the fleeing

enemy, passed many, and entangled in the crowd began to labor with greater presence of mind now.

Meanwhile his comrades pressed the Cossacks to the bank of the Sula, covered pretty thickly with trees, and drove them along the shore to the embankment, taking no prisoners, for there was no time.

Suddenly Zagloba felt that his horse began to spread out under him; at the same time something heavy fell on him and covered his whole head, so that he was completely enveloped in darkness.

"Oh, save me!" he cried, beating the horse with his heels.

The steed, however, apparently wearied with the weight of the rider, only groaned and stood in one place.

Zagloba heard the screams and shouts of the horsemen rushing around him; then that whole hurricane swept by and all was in apparent quiet.

Again thoughts began to rush through his head with the swiftness of Tartar arrows: "What is this? What has happened? Jesus and Mary, I am in captivity!"

On his forehead drops of cold sweat came out. Evidently his head was bound just as he had once bound Bogun. That weight which he feels on his shoulder is the hand of a Cossack. But why don't they hang him or kill him? Why is he standing in one place?

"Let me go, you scoundrel!" cried he at last, with a muffled voice.

Silence.

"Let me go! I'll spare your life. Let me go, I say!"

No answer.

Zagloba struck into the sides of his horse again with his heels, but again without result; the prodded beast only stretched out wider and remained in the same place.

Finally rage seized the unfortunate captive, and drawing a knife from the sheath that hung at his belt, he gave a terrible stab behind. But the knife only cut the air.

Then Zagloba pulled with both hands at the covering which bound his head, and tore it in a moment. What is this?

No Cossack. Deserted all around. Only in the distance was to be seen in the smoke the red dragoons of Volodyovski flying past, and farther on the glittering armor of the hussars pursuing the remnant of the defeated, who were retreating from the field toward the water. At Zagloba's

feet lay a Cossack regimental banner. Evidently the fleeing Cossack had dropped it so that the staff hit Zagloba's shoulder, and the cloth covered his head.

Seeing all this, and understanding it perfectly, that hero regained his presence of mind completely.

"Oh, ho!" said he, "I have captured a banner. How is this? Did n't I capture it? If justice is not defeated in this battle, then I am sure of a reward. Oh, you scoundrels! it is your luck that my horse gave out! I did not know myself when I thought I was greater in strategy than in bravery. I can be of some higher use in the army than eating cakes. Oh, God save us! some other crowd is rushing on. Don't come here, dog-brothers; don't come this way! May the wolves eat this horse! Kill! slay!"

Indeed, a new band of Cossacks were rushing toward Zagloba, raising unearthly voices, closely pursued by the armored men of Polyanovski. And perhaps Zagloba would have found his death under the hoofs of their horses, had it not been that the hussars of Skshetusk, having finished those whom they had been pursuing, turned to take between two fires those onrushing parties. Seeing this, the Zaporojians ran toward the water, only to find death in the swamps and deep places after escaping the sword. Those who fell on their knees begging for quarter died under the steel. The defeat was terrible and complete, but most terrible on the embankment. All who passed that, were swept away in the half-circle left by the forces of the prince. Those who did not pass, fell under the continual fire of Vurtsel's cannon and the guns of the German infantry. They could neither go forward nor backward; for Krivonos urged on still new regiments, which, pushing forward, closed the only road to escape. It seemed as though Krivonos had sworn to destroy his own men, who stifled, trampled, and fought one another, fell, sprang into the water on both sides, and were drowned. On one side were black masses of fugitives, and on the other masses advancing; in the middle, piles and mountains and rows of dead bodies; groans, screams, men deprived of speech; the madness of terror, disorder, chaos. The whole pond was full of men and horses; the water overflowed the banks.

At times the artillery was silent. Then the embankment, like the mouth of a cannon, threw forth crowds of Zaporojians and the mob, who rushed over the half-circle and went under the swords of the cavalry waiting for them.

Then Vurtsel began to play again with his rain of iron and lead; the Cossack reinforcement barred the embankment. Whole hours were spent in these bloody struggles.

Krivos, furious, foaming at the mouth, did not give up the battle yet, and hurried thousands of men to the jaws of death.

Yeremi, on the other side, in silver armor, sat on his horse, on a lofty mound called at that time the Kruja Mogila, and looked on. His face was calm; his eye took in the whole embankment, pond, banks of the Sluch, and extended to the place in which the enormous tabor of Krivos stood wrapped in the bluish haze of the distance. The eyes of the prince never left that collection of wagons. At last he turned to the massive voevoda of Kieff, and said,—

"We shall not capture the tabor to-day."

"How? You wished to —"

"Time is flying quickly. It is too late. See! it is almost evening."

In fact, from the time the skirmishers went out, the battle, kept up by the stubbornness of Krivos, had lasted already so long that the sun had but an hour left of its whole daily half-circle, and inclined to its setting. The light, lofty, small clouds, announcing fair weather and scattered over the sky like white-fleeced lambs, began to grow red and disappear in groups from the field of heaven. The flow of Cossacks to the embankment stopped gradually, and those regiments that had already come upon it retreated in dismay and disorder.

The battle was ended, and ended because the enraged crowd fell upon Krivos at last, shouting with despair and madness,—

"Traitor! you are destroying us. You bloody dog! We will bind you ourselves, and give you up to Yeremi, and thus secure our lives. Death to you, not to us!"

"To-morrow I will give you the prince and all his army, or perish myself," answered Krivos.

But the hoped for to-morrow had yet to come, and the present to-day was a day of defeat and disorder. Several thousand of the best warriors of the lower country, not counting the mob, lay on the field of battle, or were drowned in the pond and river. Nearly two thousand were taken prisoners; fourteen colonels were killed, not counting sotniks, essauls, and other elders. Pulyan, next in command to Krivos, had fallen into the hands of the enemy alive, but with broken ribs.

"To-morrow we will cut them all up," said Krivos. "I will neither eat nor drink till it is done."

In the opposite camp the captured banners were thrown down at the feet of the terrible prince. Each of the captors brought his own, so that they formed a considerable crowd,—altogether forty. When Zagloba passed by, he threw his down with such force that the staff split. Seeing this, the prince detained him, and asked,—

"And you captured that banner with your own hands?"

"At your service, your Highness."

"I see that you are not only a Ulysses, but an Achilles."

"I am a simple soldier, but I serve under Alexander of Macedon."

"Since you receive no wages, the treasurer will pay you, in addition to what you have had, two hundred ducats for this honorable exploit."

Zagloba seized the prince by the knees, and said, "Your favor is greater than my bravery, which would gladly hide itself behind its own modesty."

A scarcely visible smile wandered over the dark face of Skshetuski; but the knight was silent, and even later on he never said anything to the prince, or any one else, of the fears of Zagloba before the battle; but Zagloba himself walked away with such threatening mien that, seeing him, the soldiers of the other regiments pointed at him, saying,—

"He is the man who did most to-day."

Night came. On both sides of the river and the pond thousands of fires were burning, and smoke rose to the sky in columns. The wearied soldiers strengthened themselves with food and gorailka, or gave themselves courage for to-morrow's battle by relating the exploits of the present day. But loudest of all spoke Zagloba, boasting of what he had done, and what he could have done if his horse had not failed.

"I can tell you," said he, turning to the officers of the prince, and the nobles of Tishkyevich's command, "that great battles are no novelty for me. I was in many of them in Moldavia and Turkey; but when I was on the field I was afraid—not of the enemy, for who is afraid of such trash!—but of my own impulsiveness, for I thought immediately that it would carry me too far."

"And did it?"

"It did. Ask Skshetuski. The moment I saw Vershul falling with his horse, I wanted to gallop to his aid without

asking a question. My comrades could scarcely hold me back."

"True," said Skshetuski, "we had to hold you in."

"But," interrupted Karvich, "where is Vershul?"

"He has already gone on a scouting expedition, he knows no rest."

"See then, gentlemen," said Zagloba, displeased at the interruption, "how I captured the banner."

"Then Vershul is not wounded?" inquired Karvich again.

"This is not the first one that I have captured in my life, but none cost me such trouble."

"He is not wounded, only bruised," answered Azulevich, a Tartar, "and has gulped water, for he fell head first into the pond."

"Then I wonder the fish didn't die," said Zagloba, with anger, "for the water must have boiled from such a flaming head."

"But he is a great warrior."

"Not so great, since a half John¹ was enough for him. Tfu! it is impossible to talk with you. You might learn from me how to capture banners from the enemy."

Further conversation was interrupted by the youthful Pan Aksak, who approached the fire at that moment.

"I bring you news, gentlemen," said he, with a clear half-childish voice.

"The nurse has n't washed his bib, the cat has drunk his milk, and his cup is broken," muttered Zagloba.

But Pan Aksak paid no attention to this fling at his youth, and said: "They are burning Pulyan."

"The dogs will have toast," said Zagloba.

"And he is making a confession. The negotiations are broken. Kisel is nearly wild. Hmel² (hops) is coming with all his forces to help Krivonos."

"Hops? What hops? Who is making anything of hops? If hops are on the road, there will be beer then. We don't care for hops," said Zagloba, looking at the same time with fierce, haughty eyes at those around.

"Hmel is coming; but Krivonos didn't wait, therefore he lost —"

"Yes, he played and lost."

"Six thousand Cossacks are already in Makhnovka. Two thousand Bogun is leading."

¹ A pun on "Pulyan," which in Polish means "half Yan," or John.

² "Hmel," a nickname for Hmelnitski among the Poles, = "hops."

"Who? who?" asked Zagloba instantly, in a changed voice.

"Bogun."

"Impossible!"

"That is the confession of Pulyan."

"Ah, here is a cake for you, grandmother!" cried Zagloba, piteously. "Can they get here soon?"

"In three days. But on the way to battle they will not hurry too much, so as not to tire their horses."

"But I will hurry!" muttered Zagloba. "Oh, angels of God, save me from that ruffian! I would gladly give my captured banner if that water-burner would only break his neck on the way to this place. I hope too that we shall not wait here long. We have shown Krivonos what we can do, and now it is time to rest. I hate that Bogun so much that I cannot call to mind his devilish name without abomination. I did make a choice! I couldn't stay in Bar? Bad luck brought me here."

"Don't worry yourself," whispered Skshetuski, "for it is a shame! Between you and me nothing threatens you here."

"Nothing threatens me? You don't know him! Why, he might creep up to us now among the fires here." Zagloba looked around disquieted. "And he is as enraged at you as at me."

"God grant me to meet him!" said Pan Yan.

"If that is a favor, then I have no wish to receive it. In my character of Christian I forgive him all his offences willingly, but on condition that he be hanged two days before. I am not alarmed, but you have no idea what surpassing disgust seizes me. I like to know with whom I have to deal, — if with a noble, then a noble; if with a peasant, then a peasant, — but he is a sort of incarnate devil, with whom you don't know what course to take. I ventured many a thing with him; but such eyes as he made when I bound his head, I cannot describe to you, — to the hour of my death I shall remember them. I don't wish to rouse the devil while he sleeps. Once is enough for a trick. I will say to you also that you are ungrateful, have no thought of that unhappy woman."

"How so?"

"Because," said Zagloba, drawing the knight away from the fire, "you stay here and gratify your military caprice and fancy by fighting day after day, while she is drowning

herself in tears, waiting in vain for an answer. Another man with real love in his heart and pity for her grief would n't do this, but would have sent me off long ago."

"Do you think then of returning to Bar?"

"Even to-day, for I have pity on her."

Pan Yan raised his eyes yearningly to the stars and said,—

"Do not speak to me of insincerity, for God is my witness that I never raise a bit of bread to my mouth or take a moment of sleep without thinking of her first, and nothing can be stronger in my heart than the thought of her. I have not sent you with an answer hitherto because I wished to go myself to be with her at once. And there are no wings in the world and no speed which I would not use could they serve me in going to her."

"Then why don't you fly?"

"Because I cannot before battle. I am a soldier and a noble, therefore I must think of honor."

"But to-day we are after the battle; therefore we can start, even this minute."

Pan Yan sighed.

"To-morrow we attack Krivonos."

"I don't understand your ways. You beat young Krivonos; old Krivonos came, and you beat old Krivonos. Now what's-his-name (not to mention him in an evil hour), Bogun, will come, you will beat him. Hmelnitski will come. Oh, what the devil! And as it will go on this way it would be better for you to enter into partnership with Podbipienta at once, then there would be a fool with continence plus his mightiness Skshetuski, total two fools and one continence. Let's have peace, for, as God lives, I will be the first to persuade the princess to put horns on you; and at Bar lives Andrei Pototski, and when he looks at her fire flashes out of his eyes. Tfu! if this should be said by some young fellow who had not seen a battle and wanted to make a reputation, then I could understand; but not you, who have drunk blood like a wolf, and at Makhnovka, I am told, killed a kind of infernal dragon of a man-eater. I swear, by that moon in heaven, that you are up to something here, or that you have got such a taste of blood that you like it better than your bride."

Skshetuski looked involuntarily at the moon, which was sailing in the high starry heavens like a ship above the camp.

"You are mistaken," said he, after a while. "I do not want blood, nor am I working for reputation, but it would not be proper to leave my comrades in a difficult struggle in which the whole regiment must engage, *nemine excepto*. In this is involved knightly honor, a sacred thing. As to the war it will undoubtedly drag on, for the rabble has grown too great; but if Hmelnitski comes to the aid of Krivonos, there will be an intermission. To-morrow Krivonos will either fight or he will not. If he does, with God's aid he will receive dire punishment, and we must go to a quiet place to draw breath. During these two months we neither sleep nor eat, we only fight and fight; day and night we have nothing over our heads, exposed to all the attacks of the elements. The prince is a great leader, but prudent. He does not rush on Hmelnitski with a few thousand men against legions. I know also that he will go to Zbaraj, recruit there, get new soldiers,—nobles from the whole Commonwealth will hurry to him,—and then we shall move to a general campaign. To-morrow will be the last day of work, and after to-morrow I shall be able to accompany you to Bar with a clean heart. And I will add, to pacify you, that Bogun can in no wise come here to-morrow and take part in the battle; and even if he should I hope that his peasant star will pale, not only before that of the prince, but before my own."

"He is an incarnate Beelzebub. I have told you that I dislike a throng; but he is worse than a throng, though I repeat it is not so much from fear as from an unconquerable aversion I have for the man. But no more of this. To-morrow comes the tanning of the peasants' backs, and then to Bar. Oh, those beautiful eyes will laugh at the sight of you, and that face will blush! I tell you, even I feel lonely without her, for I love her as a father. And no wonder. I have no legitimate children; my fortune is far away, for it is in Turkey, where my scoundrelly agents steal it all; and I live as an orphan in the world, and in my old age I shall have to go and live with Podbipienta at Myshekishki."

"Oh, no; don't let your head ache over that! You have done something for us; we cannot be too thankful to you."

Further conversation was interrupted by some officer who passing along inquired: "Who stands there?"

"Vershul!" exclaimed Skshetuski, recognizing him by his voice. "Are you from the scouting-party?"

"Yes; and now from the prince."

"What news?"

"Battle to-morrow. The enemy are widening the embankment, building bridges over the Stira and Sluch, and on the morrow wish to come to us without fail."

"What did the prince say to that?"

"The prince said: 'All right!'"

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing. He gave no order to hinder them, and axes are chopping; they will work till morning."

"Did you get informants?"

"I captured seven. All confessed that they have heard of Hmelnitski, — that he is coming, but probably far away yet. What a night!"

"Yes, you can see as in the day. And how do you feel after the fall?"

"My bones are sore. I am going to thank our Hercules and then sleep, for I am tired. If I could doze a couple of hours — good-night!"

"Good-night!"

"Go you to sleep also," said Skshetuski to Zagloba; "for it is late, and there will be work to-morrow."

"And the next day a journey," said Zagloba.

They turned, said their prayers, and then lay down near the fire.

Soon the fires began to go out one after another. Silence embraced the camp; but the moon cast on the men silver rays, with which it illumined every little while new groups of sleepers. The silence was broken only by the universal, mighty snoring, and the call of the sentinels watching the camp.

But sleep did not close the heavy lids of the soldiers long. Scarcely had the first dawn whitened the shadows of night when the trumpets in every corner of the camp thundered the *reveille*.

An hour later the prince, to the great astonishment of the knights, drew back along the whole line.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BUT it was the retreat of a lion needing room for a spring.

The prince purposely allowed Krivonos to cross so as to inflict on him the greater defeat. In the very beginning of the battle he had the cavalry turned and urged on as if in flight, seeing which the men of the lower country and the mob broke their ranks to overtake and surround him. Then Yeremi turned suddenly, and with his whole cavalry struck them at once so terribly that they were unable to resist. The prince's troops pursued them five miles to the crossing, then over the bridges, the embankment, and two miles and a half to the camp, cutting and killing them without mercy. The hero of the day was the sixteen-year-old Pan Aksak, who gave the first blow and produced the first disorder. Only with such an army, old and trained, could the prince use such stratagems, and feign flight which in any other ranks might become real. This being the case, the second day ended still more disastrously for Krivonos than the first. All his field-pieces were taken, and a number of flags, — among them several royal flags captured by the Cossacks at Korsun. If the infantry of Koritski and Osinski with the cannon of Vurtsel could have followed the cavalry, the camp would have been taken at a blow. But before they came up it was night, and the enemy had already retreated a considerable distance, so that it was impossible to reach them. But Zatsvilikhovski captured half the camp, and with it enormous supplies of arms and provisions. The crowd seized Krivonos twice, wishing to give him up to the prince; and the promise of an immediate return to Hmelnitski barely sufficed to save him. He fled therefore with the remaining half of his tabor, with a decimated army, beaten and in despair, and did not halt till he reached Makhnovka, where when Hmelnitski came up, in the moment of his first anger, he ordered him to be chained by the neck to a cannon.

But when his first anger had passed the Zaporojian hetman remembered that the unfortunate Krivonos had covered Volynia with blood, captured Polonnœ, and sent thousands of nobles to the other world, left their bodies without burial,