

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PAN YAN rode at the head of the prince's squadrons, but to Zbaraj instead of Tarnopol, for a new order had come to march to the latter place; and on the road he told his faithful attendant his own adventures, — how he had been taken in captivity at the Saitch, how long he had remained there, and how much he had suffered before Hmelnitski had liberated him. They advanced slowly; for though they had no trains or baggage, their road lay through a country which was so ruined that the greatest exertions were necessary to obtain provisions for men and horses. In places they met crowds of famished people, especially women and children, who implored God for death or Tartar captivity; for then, though in bonds, they would be fed. And still it was harvest time in that rich land flowing with milk and honey; but the parties of Krivonos had destroyed everything that could be destroyed, and the remnant of the inhabitants fed themselves on the bark of the trees. Near Yampol they first entered a country which was not so much injured by war, and having had more rest and provisions in plenty, they went with hurried march to Zbaraj, where they arrived in five days after leaving Sukhojintsi.

There was a great concourse in Zbaraj. Prince Yeremi was there with his whole army, and besides him no small number of soldiers and nobles had come. War hung in the air, nothing else was mentioned; the town and neighborhood were swarming with armed men. The peace party in Warsaw, maintained in its hopes by Pan Kisel, the voevoda of Bratslav, had not given up, it is true, negotiations, and continued to believe that it would be possible to allay the storm with them; still they understood that negotiations could have results only when there was a powerful army to support them. The Diet of convocation was held therefore amidst the threatenings and thunderings of war such as usually precede an outbreak. The general militia was called out, and enlisted soldiers were concentrated; and though the chancellor and commanders still believed in peace, the war feeling was predominant in the minds of the nobles. The victories won by Prince Yeremi fired the imagination. The

minds of men were burning with a desire for vengeance on the peasants, and a desire to pay back for Jóltya Vodi and Korsún, for the blood of so many thousands who had died martyrs' deaths, for the disgrace and humiliation. The name of the terrible prince was bright with the sunlight of glory, — it was on every lip, in every heart; and together with that name was heard, from the shores of the Baltic to the Wilderness, the ominous word "War!"

War! War! Signs in the heavens announced it also, the excited faces of the populace, the glittering of swords, the nightly howling of dogs before the cottages, and the neighing of horses, catching the odor of blood. War! Escutcheoned men through all the lands and districts and houses and villages drew out their old armor and swords from the storehouses. The youths sang songs about Yeremi; the women prayed before altars; and armored men were marching to the field in Prussia and Livonia as well as in Great Poland and populous Mazovia, and away to God's own Carpathian peaks, and the dark pine forests of Beskid.

War lay in the nature of things. The plundering movement of the Zaporojie and the popular uprising of the Ukraine mob demanded some higher watchwords than slaughter and robbery, than a struggle against serfdom and the land-grabbing of magnates. Hmelnitski knew this well, and taking advantage of the slumbering irritation from mutual abuses and oppressions, of which there was never a lack in those harsh times, he changed a social into a religious struggle, kindled popular fanaticism, and dug in the very beginning between the two camps an abyss which could be filled neither with parchments nor negotiations, but only with blood.

Wishing for negotiations from his soul, he wished them only to secure his own power; but afterward — what was to be afterward the Zaporojian hetman did not think; he did not look into the future and had no care for it. He did not know, however, that that abyss which he had created was so great that no negotiations could fill it, at least in such a time as he, Hmelnitski, could demand. The quick politician did not guess that he would not be able to enjoy in peace the bloody fruits of his life; and still it was easy to understand that when the armed legions should stand before each other, the parchment for the inscription of treaties would be the field, and the pens, swords and lances.

Events tended, by the force of things, toward war; and even ordinary people, led by instinct alone, felt that it could not be otherwise; and throughout the whole Commonwealth the eyes of men were turned more and more to Yeremi, who from the beginning had proclaimed a war of life and death. In the shadow of his gigantic figure the chancellor, the voevoda of Bratslav, and the commanders were more and more effaced, and among them the powerful Prince Dominik, formal commander-in-chief. Their importance drooped, and obedience to their government decreased. The army and the nobles were ordered to march to Lvoff and then to Gliniani, which they did accordingly in larger and larger divisions. The regular troops assembled, and after them men of the nearest provinces; but immediately fresh events began to threaten the authority of the Commonwealth. Now not only the less disciplined squadrons of the militia, not only the private troops, but the regular soldiers when at the place of muster refused obedience to the commanders, and in defiance of orders marched to Zbaraj to place themselves under the command of Yeremi. This was done first by the nobles of Kieff and Bratslav, who had previously served in large part under Yeremi. They were followed by the nobles of Rus and Lubelsk, and these by the troops of the Crown, and it was not difficult to understand that all would follow in their steps.

Yeremi, who had been slighted, neglected by design, was becoming, by the force of things, the hetman and supreme leader of all the power of the Commonwealth. The nobles and the army, devoted to him soul and body, waited only for his nod. Authority, war, peace, the future of the Commonwealth, rested in his hands. Each day he grew, for each day new squadrons marched to him, and he was becoming so gigantic that his shadow began to fall not only on the chancellor and the commanders, but on the Senate, on Warsaw, and the whole Commonwealth.

In circles hostile to him, those of the chancellor at Warsaw and in the camp of the commander-in-chief, in the suite of Prince Dominik, and around the voevoda of Bratslav, they began to mutter against his measureless ambition and pride; the affair of Gadyach was mentioned, when the insolent prince came with four thousand men to Warsaw, and entering the Senate, was ready to hew down all, not excepting the king himself.

"What might not be expected from such a man, and

what must he be now after that Xenophontine return from the Trans-Dnieper, after all those military advantages and victories which had given him such an immense reputation? To what unendurable haughtiness must that favor of the soldiers and the nobles raise him? Who will stand against him to-day? What will become of the Commonwealth in which one citizen rises to such power that he can trample upon the will of the Senate, and snatch away their authority from the leaders appointed by the Commonwealth? Does he intend really to decorate Prince Karl with the crown? He is Marius, it is true; but God grant that he become not a Coriolanus or a Catiline, for he is equal to both in ambition and pride."

Thus did they speak in Warsaw and in military circles, especially in the suite of Prince Dominik, the rivalry between whom and Yeremi had caused no little damage to the Commonwealth. But that Marius was sitting that moment at Zbaraj, gloomy, unconsulted. Recent victories gave no light to his countenance. Whenever some new squadron of regulars or district militia appeared at Zbaraj he went out to see it, determined its value at a glance, and immediately fell into musing. Soldiers gathered around him with shouts, fell on their knees before him, crying: "Hail, invincible chief, Slavonic Hercules! We will stand by thee to the death." But he answered: "My respects to you, gentlemen! We are all soldiers of Christ, and I am too insignificant in rank to be the steward of your blood;" and he returned to his quarters, fled from men, struggled in solitude with his thoughts. In this way whole days passed.

Meanwhile the town was in a tumult with swarm after swarm of new troops. The militia drank from morning till night; walking along the streets, they raised quarrels and disputes with officers of foreign levy. The regular soldiers, feeling also the reins of discipline relaxed, indulged in eating, drinking, and play. Every day there were new guests; consequently new feasts and amusements with the young women of Zbaraj. The troops crammed every street, were stationed too in the neighboring villages; and what a variety of horses, arms, uniforms, plumes, chain armor, and steel caps, — uniforms of various provinces! It seemed like a general carnival to which half the Commonwealth had come. At one moment dashes in a carriage of some magnate, gilt or purple, drawn by six or eight plumed horses; ahead of it outriders in Hungarian or German liveries; attending it

household janissaries, Cossacks or Tartars. At another some legionaries appear glittering in velvet or satin without armor, and thrust apart the crowds with their Anatolian or Persian steeds. The plumes of their caps and brooches at their necks are glittering with brilliants and rubies, but all make way for them in sign of respect. Here before a balcony stands an officer of the country infantry, with fresh, bright collar, a long staff in his hand, pride in his face, a village heart in his breast; farther on glitter the rising helmets of the dragoons, the caps of the German infantry, lynx-skin caps of the militia; servants on errands squirm about as if in hot water. Here and there the streets are packed with wagons; in one place the wagons enter, squeaking mercilessly; every place is full of shouts, and cries of "Out of the road!"—curses of servants, disputes, fights, neighing of horses. The narrower streets are packed to such a degree with hay and straw that it is impossible to squeeze through.

Amidst this multitude of bright uniforms glittering with all the colors of the rainbow, amidst velvet and cloths and shining satin glittering with brilliants, how strangely appear the regiments of the prince, haggard, tattered, emaciated, with rusty armor, faded and torn uniforms! Soldiers of the best regiments looked like wandering minstrels, worse than the attendants from other commands; but all bow before these rags, before this rust and shabbiness, for they are the banners of heroes. War is a cruel mother; like Saturn, she devours her own children, and whom she does not devour, she gnaws as a dog gnaws bones. Those faded uniforms signify stormy nights, marches amidst the rage of the elements or the burning of the sun; that rust on the steel means the unwiped blood of the man himself, of the enemy, or both together. So the Vishnyevetski men had the first place everywhere. They were the story-tellers in the taverns and the quarters, and others were listeners. Sometimes a spasm would seize one of the listeners, and striking his hands on his hips, he would say, "May the bullets strike you, for you are devils, not men!" But they would answer, "Not ours the merit, but the leader's, whose like the round of the earth has not shown to this day." All feasts therefore ended in shouts: "Vivat Yermi! Vivat the prince voevoda, the leader of leaders, the hetman of hetmans!"

The nobles, after they had drunk awhile, would rush out

on the streets and fire guns and muskets. The prince's men warned them that their freedom was but for a time,—that a moment would come when the prince would take them in hand and enforce discipline such as they had never heard of. They took advantage of the opportunity all the more. "Let us rejoice while we are free," they cried. "When the time for obedience comes we will listen, for we have some one to obey who is not *baby* nor *Latin* nor *feather-bed*." And the unfortunate Prince Dominik always came out worst, for the soldiers' tongues ground him to bran. They said that he prayed whole days, and in the evening hung to the handle of a mug, spat on his stomach, and with one eye open inquired, "What is that?" They said also that he took "jalap" at night, and that he saw as many battles as there were depicted on his carpet by Dutch art. No one defended him any longer, and no one pitied him; and those who were in open opposition to military discipline attacked him most savagely.

But all were surpassed by Zagloba, with his satire and ridicule. He had already recovered from the pain in his back, and was now in his element. How much he ate and drank it is vain to describe, for the thing passes human belief. Crowds of nobles followed and surrounded him continually, and he related, talked, and bantered with those who entertained him; he looked down, as an old soldier, on those who were going to war, and said to them, with all the pride of experience,—

"Gentlemen, you know as much about the hardships of war as a nun does of marriage. You have fresh clothes, and perfumed, the odor of which, though pleasant, I shall try in the first battle to keep on the lee side of me. The man who has not snuffed military garlic does not know how it draws tears. No one will bring you, gentlemen, your mug of hot beer of a morning, or your wine punch. The stomach will fall away from you, and you will shrink up like a pancake in the sun. Believe me, experience is the foundation of everything. I have been in many straits, and have captured more than one flag; but I must tell you, gentlemen, that none came to me with such difficulty as that at Konstantinoff. The devil take those Zaporozhians! Seven sweats, I tell you, gentlemen, came out of me before I seized the flag-staff. You may ask Pan Yan, who killed Burdabut; he saw it with his own eyes, and admired the deed. But now all you have to do is to shout in the ear of

any Cossack 'Zagloba!' and you will see what he will tell you. But why do I talk to you, who only know how to kill flies on the walls with the palms of your hands?"

"But how was it, — how?" asked a crowd of young men.

"Well, gentlemen, do you want my tongue to get red-hot with turning in my mouth, like an axle in a wagon?"

"Then you must pour wine around it," said the nobles.

"We might do that," answered Zagloba; and glad to find grateful listeners, he told them all, from the journey to Galáts and the flight from Rozlogi, to the capture of the banner at Konstantinoff. They listened with open mouths. Sometimes they murmured when, glorifying his own bravery, he presumed too much on their lack of experience; but he was invited and entertained each day in a new place.

The time was passed, then, in pleasure and tumult at Zbaraj, till old Zatsvilikhovski and others of a more serious turn wondered that the prince suffered these feasts so long. But Yeremi remained in his own quarters. It was evident that he gave rein to the soldiers, so that all might taste every enjoyment before new conflicts. Skshetuski arrived now, and dropped as it were at once into a whirlpool of boiling water. He wanted rest in the circle of his companions; but still more did he wish to visit Bar, — to go to his loved one, and forget all his past troubles, all his fears and sufferings, in her embrace. He appeared before the prince therefore without delay, to report on his expedition to Zaslav and obtain leave of absence.

He found the prince changed beyond recognition, so that he was astonished at his appearance, and asked in his mind: "Is this the chief whom I saw at Makhnovka and Konstantinoff?" For there stood before him a man bent with the burden of care, with sunken eyes and shrivelled lips, as if suffering from a grievous internal disease. When asked for his health he answered briefly and dryly that he was well, so the knight did not dare inquire further. Having made his report, he began immediately to ask for two months' absence from the squadron, that he might marry and take his wife to Skshetushevo.

On hearing this the prince woke as it were from sleep. The expression of kindness habitual to him reappeared on his gloomy face, and embracing Pan Yan, he said, —

"This is the end of your suffering. Go, go! May God bless you! I should like to be at your wedding myself, for I owe that to Kurtsevichovna, as the daughter of Vassily,

and to you as a friend; but at this time it is impossible for me to move. When do you wish to start?"

"To-day, if I could, your Highness."

"Then set out to-morrow. You cannot go alone. I will give you three hundred of Vershul's Tartars to bring her home in safety. You will go quickest with them, and you will need them, for bands of ruffians are wandering about. I will give you a letter to Andrei Pototski; but before I write to him, before the Tartars come, and before you are ready, it will be to-morrow evening."

"As your Highness commands. I make bold to request further that Volodyovski and Podbipienta go with me."

"Very well. Come again to-morrow morning for my farewell and a blessing. I should like also to send your princess a present. She is of a noted family. You will both be happy, because you are worthy of each other."

The knight knelt and embraced the knees of his beloved chief, who repeated several times, —

"God make you happy! God make you happy! But come again to-morrow morning."

Still the knight did not go; he lingered as if wishing to ask for something else. At last he broke out: "Your Highness!"

"And what more do you say?" asked the prince, mildly.

"Pardon my boldness, but — my heart is cut, and from sorrow comes great boldness. What affects your Highness? Does trouble weigh you down, or is it disease?"

The prince put his hand on Skshetuski's head. "You cannot know this," said he, with sweetness in his voice. "Come to-morrow morning."

Skshetuski rose and went out with a straitened heart.

In the evening old Zatsvilikhovski came to Skshetuski's quarters, and with him little Volodyovski, Pan Longin, and Zagloba. They took their seats at the table, and Jendzian came into the room bearing a keg and glasses.

"In the name of Father and Son!" cried Zagloba. "I see that your man has risen from the dead."

Jendzian approached, and embraced Zagloba's knees. "I have not risen from the dead, for I did not die, thanks to you for saving me."

Then Skshetuski added: "And afterward he was in Bogun's service."

"Oh, that fellow would find promotion in hell," said Za-