

Soon awful dreams came to him. It seemed as if nightmares were sitting on his breast, pressing him, squeezing him to the ground, binding him hand and foot. At the same time tumult and as it were the sound of shots struck his ears; a glaring light passed his closed lids, and struck his eyes with an unendurable flash. He wished to rouse himself, to open his eyes, and he could not. He felt that something unusual was happening to him, — that his head was dropping back as if he were being carried by hands and feet. Then fear seized him; he felt badly, very badly, very heavy. Consciousness returned in part, but strangely, for in company with such weakness as he had never felt in his life. Again he tried to move; but when he could not, he woke up more and opened his eyelids.

Then his gaze met a pair of eyes which were fastened on him eagerly; their pupils were black as coal, and so ill-omened that Zagloba, now thoroughly awake, thought at the first moment that the devil was looking at him. Again he closed his eyes, and again he opened them quickly. Those eyes looked at him continually, stubbornly. The countenance seemed to him familiar. All at once he shivered to the marrow of his bones, cold sweat covered him, and down his spine to his feet passed thousands of ants. He recognized the face of Bogun!

CHAPTER XL.

ZAGLOBA lay bound hand and foot to his own sabre, which was passed across behind his knees, in that same room in which the wedding was celebrated. The terrible chief sat at some distance on a bench, and feasted his eyes on the terror of the prisoner.

"Good-evening!" said he, seeing the open lids of his victim.

Zagloba made no answer, but in one twinkle of an eye came to his senses as if he had never put a drop of wine to his mouth; the ants which had gone down to his heels returned to his head, and the marrow in his bones grew cold as ice. They say that a drowning man in the last moment sees clearly all his past, — that he remembers everything, and gives himself an account of that which is happening to him. Such clearness of vision and memory Zagloba possessed in that hour; and the last expression of that clearness was a silent cry, unspoken by the lips, —

"He will give me a flogging now."

And the leader repeated, with a quiet voice: "Good-evening!"

"Brr!" thought Zagloba, "I would rather go to the furies."

"Don't you know me, lord noble?"

"With the forehead, with the forehead! How is your health?"

"Not bad; but as to yours, I'll occupy myself with that."

"I have not asked God for such a doctor, and I doubt if I could digest your medicine; but the will of God be done."

"Well, you cured me; now I'll return thanks. We are old friends. You remember how you bound my head in Rozlogi, do you not?"

Bogun's eyes began to glitter like two carbuncles, and the line of his mustaches extended in a terrible smile.

"I remember," said Zagloba, "that I might have stabbed you, and I did not."

"But have I stabbed you, or do I think to stab you? No! For me you are a darling, a dear; and I will guard you as the eye in my head."

"I have always said that you are an honorable cavalier," said Zagloba, pretending to take Bogun's words in earnest. At the same time through his mind flew the thought: "It is evident that he is meditating some special delicacy for me. I shall not die in simple style."

"You speak well," continued Bogun. "You too are an honorable cavalier; so we have sought and found each other."

"What is true is that I have not sought you; but I thank you for the good word."

"You will thank me still more before long; and I will thank you for this, that you took the young woman from Rozlogi to Bar. There I found her; and I would ask you to the wedding, but it will not be to-day nor to-morrow, — there is war at present, — and you are an old man, perhaps you will not live to see it."

Zagloba, notwithstanding the terrible position in which he found himself, pricked up his ears. "To the wedding!" he muttered.

"But what did you think?" asked Bogun. "That I was a peasant, to constrain her without a priest, or not to insist on being married in Kieff. You brought her to Bar not for a peasant, but for an ataman and a hetman."

"Very good!" thought Zagloba. Then he turned his head to Bogun. "Give the order to unbind me," said he.

"Oh, lie awhile, lie awhile! You will go on a journey. You are an old man, and you need rest before the road."

"Where do you wish to take me?"

"You are my friend, so I will take you to my other friend, Krivonos. Then we shall both think how to make it pleasant for you."

"It will be hot for me," muttered Zagloba; and again the ants were walking over his back. At last he began to speak: —

"I know that you are enraged at me; but unjustly, God knows. We lived together, and in Chigirin we drank more than one bottle. I had for you the love of a father for your knightly daring; a better love you did not find in the whole Ukraine. Isn't that true? In what way have I crossed your path? If I had not gone with you to Rozlogi, we should have lived to this day in kind friendship; and why did I go if not out of friendship for you? And if you had not become enraged, if you had not killed those unhappy people, — God is looking at me, — I should not have

crossed your path. Why should I mix in other men's affairs? I would have preferred to see the girl yours; but through your Tartar courtship my conscience was moved, and besides it was a noble's house. You yourself would not have acted otherwise. I might, moreover, have swept you out of the world with the greatest gain to myself. And why did I not do it? Because I am a noble. Be ashamed of yourself too, for I know you wish to take vengeance on me. As it is, you have the girl in your hands. What do you want of me? Have not I guarded as the eye in my head this your property? Since you have respected her it is to be seen that you have knightly honor and conscience; but how will you extend to her the hand which you steep in my innocent blood? How will you say to her, 'The man who led you through the mob and the Tartars I delivered to torment'? Have shame, and let me go from these bonds and from this captivity into which you have seized me by treachery. You are young, and know not what may meet you, and for my death God will punish you in that which is dearest to you."

Bogun rose from the bench, pale with rage, and approaching Zagloba, began to speak in a voice stifled with fury, —

"Unclean swine! I will have straps torn from you, I'll burn you on a slow fire, I'll drive spikes into you, I'll tear you into rags."

In an access of fury he grasped at the knife hanging from his belt, and for a moment pressed it convulsively in his hand. The edge was already gleaming in Zagloba's eyes, when the chief restrained himself, thrust the knife back into the scabbard, and cried: "Boys!"

Six Zaporojians came into the room.

"Take that Polish carrion, throw it into the stable, and guard it as the eye in your head!"

The Cossacks took Zagloba, — two by his hands and feet, one behind by the hair, — and carrying him out of the house bore him through the yard, and threw him on a dung-heap in the stable standing at one side. Then they closed the door. Complete darkness surrounded the prisoner, but in the cracks between the wall-planks and through holes in the thatch the dim light of night penetrated here and there. After a while Zagloba's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. He looked around, and saw there were no pigs in the stable, nor Cossacks. The conversation of the latter, however, reached him clearly through all the four walls. Evi-

dently the whole building was surrounded closely; but in spite of these guards Zagloba drew a long breath.

First of all, he was alive. When Bogun flashed his knife above him he was convinced that his last moment had come, and he recommended his soul to God,—it is true with the greatest fear. But evidently Bogun decided to save him for a death incomparably more complicated. He desired not only to take revenge, but to glut himself with vengeance on the man who had stolen from him the beauty, belittled his Cossack glory, and covered him with ridicule, swaddling him like a baby. It was therefore a gloomy prospect for Pan Zagloba; but he was comforted by the thought that he was still living, that likely they would take him to Krivonos and begin to torture him there, and consequently he had a few, perhaps a number of days before him. In the mean while he lay in the stable alone, and could in the midst of the quiet night think of stratagems.

That was the one good side of the affair; but when he thought of the bad ones the ants began to travel over his spine in thousands.

"Stratagems! If a pig lay here in this stable, he would have more stratagems than I, for they would not tie him crosswise to a sabre. If Solomon had been bound in this way, he would have been no wiser than his trousers or my boot-heel. Oh, my God, my God, for what dost thou punish me? Of all people in the world I wanted most to avoid this scoundrel, and such is my luck that he is just the man I have not avoided. I shall have my skin dressed like sviboda cloth. If another had taken me, I might promise to join the rebellion and then run away. But another would not have believed me, and this one least of all. I feel my heart dying within me. The devils have brought me to this place. Oh, my God! my God!"

But after a while Zagloba thought that if he had his hands and feet free, he might more easily use some stratagem. Well, let him try! If he could only push the sword from under his knees, the rest would go on more easily. But how was he to push it out? He turned on his side, he could do nothing; then he fell into deep thought.

Next he began to rock himself on his back with increasing rapidity, each moment pushing himself half the length of his body ahead. He got heated; his forehead was in greater perspiration than during the dance. At times he stopped and rested; at times he interrupted the work, for

it appeared some one of the Cossacks was coming to the door; then he began with renewed ardor. At last he pushed himself forward to the wall.

After that he began to sway in another direction, not from head to foot, but from side to side, so that every time he struck lightly against the wall with the sabre, which was pushed in this way from under his knees, moving more and more toward the middle of the stable from the side of the hilt. Zagloba's heart began to beat like a hammer, for he saw that this method might be effectual.

He worked on, trying to strike with the least noise, and only when the conversation of the Cossacks was louder than the light blow. At last the moment came when the end of the sheath was on a line with his wrist and his knee, and further striking against the wall could not push it out. But hanging from the other side was a considerable and much heavier part of the sabre, taking into consideration the hilt with the cross usually on sabres. Zagloba counted on that cross.

He began to rock himself for the third time, but now the great object of his efforts was to turn himself with his feet toward the wall. Attaining this, he began to push himself up with his feet. The sabre still clung under his knees and his hands, but the hilt became more and more involved in the uneven surface of the ground. At length the cross caught rather firmly. Zagloba pushed the last time. For a moment joy nailed him to the spot; the sabre had dropped out.

He removed his hands then from his knees, and though they were still bound he caught the sabre with them. He held the scabbard with his feet and drew out the blade. To cut the bonds on his feet was the work of a moment. It was more difficult in the case of his hands. He was obliged to put his sabre on the ground with the edge up, and draw the cords along the edge until he had cut them. When he had done this he was not only free from bonds, but armed. He drew a long breath, then made a sign of the cross and began to thank God.

But it was very far yet from the cutting of the bonds to the rescuing of himself from the hands of Bogun.

"What further?" asked Zagloba of himself.

He found no answer. The stable was surrounded by Cossacks; there were about a hundred. A mouse could not have passed through unobserved, and what could a man as bulky as Zagloba do?

"I see that I am beginning to come to the end of my resources," said he to himself. "My wit is only good to grease boots with, and you could buy better grease than it from the Hungarians at the fair. If God does not send me some idea, then I shall become roast meat for the crows; but if he does send me an idea, then I promise to remain in continence like Pan Longin."

The louder conversation of the Cossacks behind the wall interrupted his thoughts. He sprang up and put his ear to a crack between the timbers. The dry pine gave back the voices like the sounding-board of a lute.

"And where shall we go from here, Father Ovsivuyu?" asked one voice.

"To Kamenyets, of course," said another.

"Nonsense! The horses can barely drag their legs; they will not get there."

"That's why we stop here; they will have rest by morning."

A moment of silence followed; then the first voice was heard lower than before. "And it seems to me, father, that the ataman is going from Kamenyets to Yampol."

Zagloba held his breath.

"Be silent if your young head is dear to you!" was the answer.

Another moment of silence, but from behind the other walls came whispering.

"They are all around, on the watch everywhere," muttered Zagloba; and he went to the opposite wall.

Meanwhile were heard the noise of chewing oats and the snorting of horses evidently standing right there; among these horses the Cossacks were lying on the ground and talking, for their voices came from below.

"Ah!" said one, "we have come here without sleeping, eating, or feeding our horses, so as to go on the stake in the camp of Yeremi."

"The people who have fled from Yarmolintsi saw him as I see you. What they tell is a terror. He is as big as a pine-tree; in his forehead are two firebrands, and he has a dragon under him for a horse."

"Lord, have mercy on us!"

"We ought to take that Pole with the soldiers and be off."

"How be off, when as it is the horses are just dying?"

"A bad fix, brother! If I were the ataman, I would cut off the heads of those Poles, and go back to Kamenyets, even on foot."

"We will take him with us to Kamenyets, and there our ataman will play with him."

"The devils will play with you first!" muttered Zagloba.

And, indeed, in spite of all his fear of Bogun, and maybe especially because of that, he had sworn that he would not yield himself alive. He was free from bonds, and he had a sabre in his hands,—he would defend himself. If they cut him to pieces, all right; but they would n't take him alive.

The snorting and groaning of horses excessively road-weary drowned the sound of further conversation, and immediately gave a certain idea to Zagloba.

"If I could get through the wall," thought he, "and jump on horseback suddenly—it is night, and before they could see what happened I should be out of sight. It is hard enough to chase through the ravines and valleys by sunlight, but what must it be in the dark? God grant me an opportunity!"

But an opportunity was not to be obtained easily. It was necessary either to throw down the wall—and to do that he would have to be Pan Podbipienta—or to burrow under it like a fox; and then they would surely hear, discover, and seize the fugitive by the neck before he could touch the stirrup with his foot. A thousand stratagems crowded into Zagloba's head; but for the very reason that they were a thousand no one of them presented itself clearly.

"It cannot be otherwise; only with my life can I pay," thought he.

Then he went toward the third wall. All at once he struck his head against something hard. He felt; it was a ladder. The stable was not for pigs, but for buffaloes, and half the length it had a loft for straw and hay. Zagloba without a moment's hesitation climbed up. Then he sat down, drew breath, and began slowly to pull up the ladder after him.

"Well, now I am in a fortress!" he muttered. "Even if they should find another ladder, they could n't bring it here very quickly; and if I don't split the forehead of the man who comes here, then I'll give myself to be smoked into bacon. Oh, devil take it!" he burst out after a while, "in truth they cannot only smoke me, but fry and melt me into tallow. But let them burn the stable if they wish,—all right! They won't get me alive; and it is all the same whether the crows eat me raw or roasted. If I only

escape those robber hands, I don't care for the rest; and I have hope that something will happen yet."

Zagloba passed easily, it is evident, from the lowest despair to hope, — in fact, such hope entered him as if he were already in the camp of Prince Yermi. But still his position had not improved much. He was sitting on the loft, and he had a sabre in his hand; he might ward off an attack for some time, but that was all. From the loft to freedom was a road like jumping from the stove on your forehead, — with this difference, that below the sabres and pikes of the Cossacks watching around the walls were waiting for him.

"Something will happen!" muttered Zagloba; and approaching the roof he began to separate quietly and remove the thatch, so as to gain for himself an outlook into the world. This was easily done, for the Cossacks talked continually under the walls, wishing to kill the tedium of watching; and besides there sprang up a rather strong breeze, which deadened with its movement among the neighboring trees the noise which was made in removing the bundles. After a time the aperture was ready. Zagloba stuck his head through it and began to look around.

The night had already begun to wane, and on the eastern horizon appeared the first glimmer of day. By the pale light Zagloba saw the whole yard filled with horses; in front of the cottage rows of sleeping Cossacks, stretched out like long indefinite lines; farther on the well-sweep and the trough, in which water was glistening; and near it again a rank of sleeping men and a number of Cossacks with drawn sabres in their hands walking along that line.

"There are my men, bound with ropes," muttered Zagloba. "Bah!" he added after a while, "if they were mine! But they are the prince's. I was a good leader to them; there is nothing to be said on that point. I led them into the mouth of the dog. It will be a shame to show my eyes if God returns me freedom. And through what was all this? Through love-making and drinking. What was it to me that trash were marrying? I had as much business at this wedding as at a dog's wedding. I will renounce this traitorous mead, which crawls into the legs, not the head. All the evil in the world is from drinking; for if they had fallen upon us while sober, I should have gained the victory in a trice and shut Bogun up in this stable."

Zagloba's gaze fell again on the cottage in which the chief was sleeping, and rested at its door.

"Sleep on, you scoundrel!" he muttered, "sleep! And may you dream that the devils are skinning you, — a thing which will not miss you in any case! You wanted to make a sieve out of my skin; try to crawl up to me here, and we shall see if I do not cut yours so that it would n't do to make boots for a dog. If I could only get myself out of this place, — if I could only get out! But how?"

Indeed the problem was not to be solved. The whole yard was so packed with men and horses that even if Zagloba had got out of the stable, even if he had pushed through the thatch and sprung on one of the horses that stood right there, he could in no wise have pushed to the gate; and then how was he to get beyond the gate? Still, it seemed to him that he had solved more than half the problem. He was free, armed, and he sat in the loft as in a fortress.

"What the devil good is there," thought he, "in getting out of the rope if you are to be hanged with it afterward?" And again stratagems began to bustle in his head; but there were so many of them that he could not choose.

Meanwhile the light increased, the places around the cottage began to emerge from the shadow; the thatch of the cottage was covered as if by silver. Zagloba could distinguish accurately particular groups; he could see the red uniforms of his men, who were lying around the well, and the sheepskin coats under which the Cossacks were sleeping near the cottage.

Then suddenly some figure rose from the rank of the sleepers and began to pass with slow step through the yard, halting here and there near men and horses, speaking for a moment with the Cossacks who were guarding the prisoners, and at last approached the stable. Zagloba supposed at first that it was Bogun, for he saw that the guards spoke to that figure as subordinates to a superior.

"Eh!" he muttered, "if I had a musket now, I would show you how to cover yourself with your feet."

At this moment the figure raised its head, and on its face fell the gray light of the morning. It was not Bogun, but the sotnik Golody, whom Zagloba recognized at once, for he knew Golody well from the time of his own intimacy with Bogun in Chigirin.

"Well, boys, you are not asleep?" said Golody.

"No, father, though we should like to sleep. It is about time to change guard."

"It will be changed immediately. And that devil's imp has not got away?"

"No, no!—unless the soul has gone out of him, father, for he has n't moved."

"Ah! he is an old fox. But look, see what he is doing, for he would go through the ground."

"This minute!" answered a number of Cossacks, going to the door of the stable.

"Throw out hay from the mow! Rub the horses! We will start at sunrise."

"All right, father!"

Zagloba, leaving at once his lookout in the opening of the thatch, crawled to the hole in the floor. At the same moment he heard the creak of the wooden hinges and the rustling of the straw under the feet of the Cossacks. His heart beat like a hammer in his breast, and he pressed the hilt of the sabre in his hand, renewing in his soul the oath that he would resign himself to be burned with the stable or be cut to pieces rather than be taken alive. He expected every moment that the Cossacks would raise a fearful uproar, but he was deceived. For a time he heard them walking more and more quickly through the whole stable. At last one said,—

"What the devil is the matter? I can't find him. We threw him in here."

"He is n't a werewolf, is he? Strike a light, Vassily; it is as dark here as in a forest."

A moment of silence followed. Evidently Vassily was looking for flint and tinder, while the other Cossacks began to call in a low voice: "Where are you?"

"Kiss the dog's ear!" muttered Zagloba.

Steel struck flint, a cluster of sparks flashed forth and lighted the dark interior of the stable and the heads of the Cossacks in their caps, then deeper darkness came down again.

"He is not here! he is not here!" cried excited voices.

That moment one sprang to the door. "Father Golody! Father Golody!"

"What's the matter?" cried the sotnik, approaching the door.

"There is no Pole."

"How, no Pole?"

"He has gone into the ground; he is n't anywhere. O God, have mercy on us! We struck fire; he is not here."

"Impossible! Oh, you will catch it from the ataman! Has he escaped, or how is it? You have been asleep."

"No, father, we have not slept. He did n't get out of the stable on our side."

"Be quiet! don't wake the ataman. If he has n't gone out, then he must be here. Have you looked everywhere?"

"Everywhere."

"On the loft too?"

"How could he crawl on the loft when he was bound?"

"You fool! If he had n't unbound himself, he would be here. Look on the loft! Strike a light!"

Sparks flashed again. The news flew in a moment among all the guards. They began to crowd to the stable with the haste usual on sudden occasions; hurried steps were heard, hurried questions and still more hurried answers. Advices crossed one another like swords in battle.

"To the loft! to the loft!"

"But watch outside!"

"Don't wake the ataman; if you do, there will be terror."

"The ladder is gone!"

"Bring another!"

"There is none anywhere."

"Run to the cottage; see if there is one there."

"Oh, curse the Pole!"

"Go up the corners to the thatch; get in through the thatch."

"Impossible; for the roof projects and is fastened with planks."

"Bring the lances; we will go up on the lances. Ah, the dog! he has hauled up the ladder."

"Bring the lances!" roared Golody.

Some ran for the lances, while others stretched their heads up toward the loft. Already scattered light penetrated through the open door into the stable; and with its uncertain gleam was to be seen the square opening in the loft, black and silent. From below were heard single voices.

"Now, sir noble, let down the ladder and come. You won't get away, anyhow; why put people to trouble? Come down, oh, come down!"

Silence.

"You are a wise man. If it would do you any good, you might stay up there; but since it won't help you, come down of your own accord, be a good fellow."

Silence.