

CHAPTER LV.

THE prince had really set out for Zamost a few days before for the purpose of making new levies of troops, and it was not expected that he would return soon. Volodyovski, Zagloba, and Jendzian therefore started on their journey unknown to any one and in the greatest secrecy, — to which only one person in Zbaraj was admitted, Pan Longin; but he, bound by his word, was as silent as if enchanted.

Vershul and other officers who knew of the princess's death did not suppose that the departure of the little knight with Zagloba had any connection with the betrothed of the unfortunate Skshetuski, and thought most likely that the two friends had gone to him the more since they had taken Jendzian, who was known to be a servant of Skshetuski.

They travelled straight to Hlebanovka, and there made preparations for the journey. Zagloba bought first of all, with money borrowed from Pan Longin, five Podolian horses, capable of long journeys. Horses of this breed were used by the Polish cavalry and the Cossacks; they could chase a whole day after a Tartar pony, surpassed in speed even the Turkish horses, and endured better every change of weather and cold, and rainy nights. Five such coursers did Zagloba purchase; besides he got sufficient Cossack clothing for himself and his comrades, as well as for the princess. Jendzian busied himself with the packs; and when all was provided and ready they started on the road, putting their undertaking under the guardianship of God and Saint Nikolai, the patron of young ladies.

So disguised, it was easy to take them for Cossack atamans, and frequently it happened that soldiers from Polish garrisons fastened on them, and guards scattered as far as Kamenyets; but Zagloba explained himself to them easily. They went for a long time through a safe country; for it was occupied by the squadrons of the commander Lantskoronski, which approached slowly toward Bar, in order to keep an eye on the Cossack bands gathering there. It was known universally that nothing would come of the negotiations. War hung over the country, therefore, though

the main forces had not moved yet. The Pereyaslav armistice ended at Whitsuntide; partisan warfare, it is true, had not ended at any time. Now it increased, and both sides were only waiting the word.

At that time spring was rejoicing over the steppe. The earth which had been trampled by the hoofs of horses was now covered with a brocade of grass and flowers which had grown up from the bodies of the slain. Above battle-fields the lark pierced the azure of the heavens; various birds coursed through the air with their cries; the overflowed waters rippled in pools under the warm breath of the wind, and in the evenings the frogs swimming in the tepid water carried on joyous converse till late at night.

It seemed that Nature herself was eager to heal the wounds and cure the pains, to hide the graves beneath flowers. It was bright in the heavens, and on the earth fresh, breezy, glad some; and the whole steppe, as if painted, glittered like an asphodel meadow, changed like the rainbow or like a Polish girdle on which the skilled needlewoman has joined all colors with exquisite taste. The steppe was full of the play of birds, and the broad breeze passed over it, drying the water and embrowning the faces of men.

At such a time every heart rejoices, and is filled with measureless hope. Our knights therefore were full of just such hope. Volodyovski sang continually. Zagloba straightened himself on the horse, put his shoulders with delight to the sun, and as soon as he was well warmed, said to the little knight, —

"I feel well; for, to tell the truth, next to mead and Hungarian wine there is nothing like the sun for old bones."

"It is good for everything," answered Volodyovski. "Just see how animals love to warm themselves in the sun!"

"It is lucky that we are going for the princess at such a time, for in the frosts of winter it would have been difficult to escape with the girl."

"Let us only get her into our hands, and I am a rascal if any man gets her away from us. I tell you, Pan Michael, I have only one fear, and that is in case of war the Tartars might move in those regions and snap us up; for we can get on with the Cossacks. We will give no account whatever to the peasants, for you have noticed that they take us for starshini; the Zaporojians respect the batons, and the name of Bogun will be a shield to us."

"I am acquainted with the Tartars, for while in the Lubni

domains life passed in endless disputes with them. Vershul and I never had rest," answered Pan Michael.

"And I know them," said Zagloba. "I have told you how I passed several years in their company and might have risen to great dignities among them, but since I did n't wish to become a mussulman I had to leave all. Besides, they wanted to inflict a martyr's death on me because I was persuading their principal mulla to the true faith."

"But you said some other time that that was in Galáts."

"Galáts in its own way, and the Crimea in its own. But if you think the world ends in Galáts, then surely you don't know where pepper grows. There are more sons of Belial than Christians in this world."

Here Jendzian broke into the conversation. "Not only may we receive harm from Tartars," said he, "but I have not informed you that Bogun told me that unclean powers are guarding that ravine. The giantess herself who guards the princess is a powerful witch, intimate with devils who may warn her against us. I have, it is true, a bullet, which I moulded on consecrated wheat, for a common one would not take her; but besides there are probably whole regiments of vampires who guard the entrance. It is for your heads to see that no harm comes to me; if it should, my reward would be lost."

"Oh, you drone!" said Zagloba. "We have nothing to think of but your safety. The devil won't twist your neck; and even if he should it is all one, for you will go to hell anyhow for your covetousness. I'm too old a sparrow to be caught with chaff; and beat into yourself that if she is a powerful witch I am a more powerful wizard, for I learned the black art in Persia. She serves the devils, and they serve me, and I could plough with them as with oxen; but I don't want to do so, keeping in mind, as I do, the salvation of my own soul."

"That is well, my master; but for this time use your power, for it is always better to be on the safe side."

"But I have more confidence in our just cause and the protection of God," said Volodyovski. "Let the devils be the guard of Horpyna and Bogun, but with us are the angels of heaven, whom the best brigade in hell cannot withstand. On our behalf I make an offering of seven white wax candles to Saint Michael the Archangel."

"Then I will add one more," said Jendzian, "so that Pan Zagloba should n't frighten me with damnation."

"I will be the first to pack you off to hell," said the noble, "if it should appear that you don't know the places well."

"Why should n't I know? If we only reach Valadinka, I can find the place with my eyes bound. We will go along the shore toward the Dniester, and on the right hand will be the ravine, which we shall recognize by this, that the entrance to it is closed with a rock. At the first glance it will seem altogether impossible of entrance, but in the rock is an opening through which two horses can pass abreast. Once inside, no one can escape us, for that is the only entrance and exit. All around, the sides are so high that a bird can barely fly over them. The witch kills people who enter without permission, and there are many bones of men inside. Bogun gave orders not to notice these, but to ride on and shout: 'Bogun! Bogun!' Then she will come out to us with friendship. Besides Horpyna, there is Cheremis, who is a good marksman. We must kill them both."

"I say nothing about Cheremis, but it will be enough to tie the woman."

"How could you tie her? She is so strong that she tears armor to pieces like a shirt, and a horseshoe crumbles in her hand. Pan Podbipienta might possibly overpower her, but not we. But leave the matter; I have a consecrated bullet. Let the black hour come on that she-devil; otherwise she would fly after us like a wolf, and would howl to the Cossacks, and we should fail to bring back not only the young lady, but our own heads."

In such conversation and counsels their time passed on the road. They travelled hurriedly, passing villages, hamlets, farms, and grave-mounds. They went through Yarmolintsi to Bar, from where they were to advance in the direction of Yampol and the Dniester. They went through the neighborhood in which Volodyovski had defeated Bogun and freed Zagloba from his hands; they even came to the same farm and stopped there over night. Sometimes they slept under the open sky in the steppes, and Zagloba enlivened these halting-places by narratives of his previous adventures, some of which had happened and some of which had never taken place. But the conversations were mostly about the princess and her coming liberation from captivity with the witch.

Issuing at length from the regions held in curb by the

garrisons and squadrons of Lantskoronski, they entered the Cossack country, in which nothing remained of the Poles, for those who had not fled were exterminated by fire and sword. May had departed, followed by a sultry June, while they had barely finished a third of the journey, for the road was long and difficult. Happily no danger threatened them from the side of the Cossacks. They gave no account of themselves to the peasant parties, who usually took them for Zaporozian starshini. Still, they were asked from time to time who they were. Zagloba, if the inquirer was from the lower country, showed Bogun's baton; if a common murderer from the mob, then, without getting from the horse, he struck the man with his foot in the breast and knocked him to the ground. The bystanders, seeing this, opened a way for them, thinking that they were not only their own, but also very distinguished, since they struck people,—"perhaps Krivonos, Burlai, or Father Hmelnitski himself."

Zagloba complained greatly of the fame of Bogun, for the Zaporozians annoyed him too much with inquiries about the chief, through which delays on the road were not infrequent. And generally there was no end to the questions,—whether he was well, or alive, for the report of his death had spread as far as Yagorlik and the Cataracts. But when the travellers declared that he was well and free, and that they were his messengers, they were kissed and honored; all hearts were open to them, and even purses, of which the cunning servant of Skshetuski did not omit to take advantage.

In Yampol they were received by Burlai who with Zaporozian troops and the rabble was waiting for the Tartars of Budjak. This was an old and distinguished colonel. Years before he had taught Bogun his military craft. He went on expeditions over the Black Sea with him, and in one of these expeditions the two had plundered Sinope in company. He loved him therefore as a son, and received his messengers with gladness, not exhibiting the least distrust, especially since he had seen Jendzian with Bogun the previous year. But when he learned that Bogun was alive and going to Volynia, from joy he gave a feast to the messengers and drank with them himself.

Zagloba was afraid that Jendzian, when he had drunk wine, might say something dangerous; but it turned out that the youth, cunning as a fox, knew how to manage, so

that speaking the truth only when practicable, he did not imperil their affair, but won still greater confidence. It was strange, however, for our knights to hear those conversations carried on with such terrible sincerity in which their own names were repeated so often.

"We heard," said Burlai, "that Bogun was slain in a duel. And don't you know who cut him?"

"Volodyovski, an officer of Prince Yeremi," answered Jendzian, calmly.

"If I could get my hands on Volodyovski, I would pay him for our falcon. I'd pull him out of his skin."

Volodyovski at this moved his oat-colored mustaches, and looked at Burlai with such a look as a hound gives a wolf which he is not permitted to seize by the throat; and Jendzian said,—

"That's why I give you his name, Colonel."

"The devil will have real fun with that fellow Jendzian," thought Zagloba.

"But," continued Jendzian, "he is not so much to blame himself, for Bogun challenged him without knowing what a sabre he was summoning. There was another noble there, the greatest enemy of Bogun, who had once snatched the princess from his hands."

"And who is he?"

"Oh, he is an old sot who used to hang around our ataman in Chigirin and pretend to be his best friend."

"He'll hang yet!" shouted Burlai.

"I'm a fool if I don't cut the ears off that puppy!" muttered Zagloba.

"They so cut him up," continued Jendzian, "that another in his place would have been eaten by the crows long ago; but there is a horned soul in our ataman, and he recovered, though he barely dragged himself to Vlodava; and there he would have failed surely but for us. We helped him off to Volynia, where our people have the upper hand, and he sent us here for the princess."

"These women will be the death of him," muttered Burlai. "I told him that long ago. Would it not have been better for him to take a girl in Cossack fashion, and then a stone around her neck and into the water, as we did in the Black Sea?"

Here Volodyovski scarcely restrained himself, so wounded was he in his feeling for the sex; but Zagloba laughed, and said: "Surely it would have been better."

"But you were old friends," said Burlai, "you did not desert him in need; and you, boy [here he turned to Jendzian], you are the best of them all, for I saw in Chigirin how you nursed and cared for our falcon. I am your friend for that. Tell me what you want, — men or horses? I'll give them to you, so that no harm may meet you on the return."

"We do not need men," said Zagloba, "for we shall go through our own country and among our own people, and God keep us from evil adventure! It is worse with a large party than with a small one; but some of the swiftest horses would be of service."

"I'll give you such that the ponies of the Khan would not overtake them."

Jendzian now spoke up, not to lose an opportunity: "And give us a little money, Ataman, for we have none, and beyond Bratslav a measure of oats is a thaler."

"Then come with me to the storeroom," said Burlai.

Jendzian did not let this be said twice, and disappeared through the door with the old colonel; and when after a while he returned joy was beaming from his round face, and his blue coat was bulging out over his stomach.

"Well, go with God," said the old Cossack; "and when you get the girl stop in to see me, so that I may look at Bogun's cuckoo."

"Impossible, Colonel," said the youth, boldly; "for that Pole is terribly afraid, and once stabbed herself with a knife. We are afraid that something evil may happen to her. Better let the ataman manage her himself."

"He will manage her; she won't be afraid of him. The Pole is white-handed, does not like the Cossacks," muttered Burlai. "Go! God be with you! You have not far now."

From Yampol to Valadinka it was not so very far; but the road was difficult, or rather a continual absence of roads stretched before the knights; for at that time those regions were still a desert, with rarely a house or a dwelling. They went then from Yampol somewhat to the west, withdrawing from the Dniester, to go afterward with the course of the Valadinka toward Rashkoff; for only thus could they strike the ravine. Light was growing in the heavens; for the feast at Burlai's had lasted till late at night, and Zagloba calculated that they would not find the ravine before sundown; but that was exactly what he wanted,

for he wished after freeing Helena, to leave the night behind him. While they were travelling they spoke of how fortune had favored them so far in everything along the whole road; and Zagloba, mentioning the feast with Burlai, said, —

"See how those Cossacks who live in brotherhood uphold one another in every trouble! I do not speak of the mob, — whom they despise, and for whom, if the devil helps them to throw off our dominion, they will be still worse masters than the Poles; but in the Brotherhood one is ready to jump into the fire for another, not like our nobles."

"Not at all, my master," said Jendzian. "I was among them a long time, and I saw how they tear one another like wolves; and if Hmelnitski were gone, who sometimes by power, sometimes by policy, keeps them in check, they would devour one another. But this Burlai is a great warrior among them, and Hmelnitski himself respects him."

"But you feel contempt for the man, of course, since he let you rob him. Oh, Jendzian, you will not die your own death!"

"What is written for each man, my master, that he'll have; but to deceive an enemy is praiseworthy, and pleasing to God."

"I do not blame you for that, but for greed, which is the feeling of a peasant, unworthy of a noble; for this you will be damned without fail."

"I will not spare money for candles in the church when I succeed in gaining anything, so that God too should have some profit from me and bless me; and it is no sin to help my parents."

"What a rascal, what a finished scoundrel!" cried Zagloba to Volodyovski. "I thought my tricks would go with me to the grave; but I see that this is a still greater rogue. So through the cunning of this youth we shall free our princess from Bogun's captivity, with Bogun's permission, and on Burlai's horses! Has any man ever seen such a thing? And to look at him you would not give three copper coins for the fellow!"

Jendzian laughed with satisfaction, and said: "Will that be bad for us, my master?"

"You please me, and were it not for your greed I should take you into my service; but since you have tricked Bogun in such style, I forgive you for having called me a sot."

"It was not I who called you that, but Bogun."

"Well, God has punished him."

In such conversation the morning passed; but when the sun had rolled up high on the vault of heaven they became serious, for in a few hours they were to see Valadinka. After a long journey they were near their object at last; and disquiet, natural in such cases, crept into their hearts. Was Helena still alive? And if alive, would they find her? Horpyna might have taken her out, or might at the last moment have hidden her somewhere else among the secret places of the ravine, or have killed her. Obstacles were not all overcome yet, dangers were not all passed. They had, it is true, all the tokens by which Horpyna was to recognize them as Bogun's messengers, carrying out his will; but would the devils or the spirits forewarn her? Jendzian feared this most; and even Zagloba, though pretending to be an expert in the black art, did not think of this without alarm. In such a case they would find the ravine empty or (what was worse) Cossacks from Rashkoff ambushed in it. Their hearts beat more strongly; and when finally, after some hours yet of travelling, they saw from the lofty rim of the ravine the glittering ribbon of water, the plump face of Jendzian paled a little.

"That is the Valadinka," said he, in a suppressed voice.

"Already?" inquired Zagloba, in an equally low voice. "Are we so near as that?"

"May God guard us!" replied Jendzian. "Oh, my master, begin your exorcisms, for I am awfully afraid."

"Exorcisms are folly. Let us bless the river and the secret places,—that will help more."

Volodyovski was the calmest of all, but he kept silent, examining however his pistols carefully, and added new powder; then he felt to see if his sabre would come out of the scabbard easily.

"I have a consecrated bullet too in this pistol here," said Jendzian. "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Let us move on!"

"Move on! move on!" said Volodyovski.

After a time they found themselves on the bank of the little river, and turned their horses in the direction of its course. Here Volodyovski stopped them, and said,—

"Let Jendzian take the baton, for the witch knows him, and let him be the first to talk with her, so that she may not get frightened at us and run off with the princess into some hiding-place."

"I will not go first, no matter what you do," said Jendzian.

"Then go last, you drone!"

Having said this, Volodyovski went first, after him Zagloba, and in the rear with the pack-horses clattered Jendzian, looking around with apprehension on every side. The hoofs of the horses rattled over the stones, around about reigned the dull silence of the desert; but grasshoppers and crickets hidden in the cliff chirped, for it was a sultry day, though the sun had passed the meridian considerably. Night had come at last to the eminence, rounded like an upturned shield, on which rocks fallen apart and burnt from the sun presented forms like ruins, tumble-down houses, and church-steeple; you might have thought it a castle or a place stormed by an enemy.

Jendzian looked at Zagloba and said: "This is the Devil's Mound; I know it from what Bogun told me. No living thing passes here by night."

"If it does not, it can," answered Zagloba. "Tfu! what a cursed land! But at least we are on the right road."

"The place is not far," said Jendzian.

"Praise be to God!" answered Zagloba; and his mind was turned to the princess.

He had wonderful thoughts, and seeing those wild banks of the Valadinka, that desert and silent wilderness, he scarcely believed that the princess could be so near,—she for whose sake he had passed through so many adventures and dangers, and loved so that when the news of her death came he knew not what to do with his life and his old age. But on the other hand a man becomes intimate, even with misfortune. Zagloba, who had grown familiar with the thought that she had been taken away and was far off in Bogun's power, did not dare to say now to himself: "The end of grief and search has come, the hour of success and peace has arrived." Besides other thoughts crowded to his brain: "What will she say when she sees him? Will she not dissolve into tears when like a thunderbolt comes to her that rescue, after such long and painful captivity? God has his wonderful ways," thought Zagloba, "and so succeeds in correcting everything that from this come the triumph of virtue and the shame of injustice. It was God who first gave Jendzian into the hands of Bogun, and then made friends of them. God arranged that War, the stern mother, called away the wild ataman from the fastnesses to which like a wolf he had carried his plunder. God afterward delivered him into the hands of Volodyovski, and again brought him into contact with Jendzian. All is so arranged that now,

when Helena may have lost her last hope and when she expects aid from no side, aid is at hand! Oh, cease your weeping, my daughter! Soon will joy come to you without measure! Oh, she will be grateful, clasp her hands, and return thanks!" Then she stood before the eyes of Zagloba as if living, and he was filled with emotion and lost altogether in thinking of what would happen in an hour.

Jendzian pulled him by the sleeve from behind. "My master!"

"Well!" said Zagloba, displeased that the course of his thoughts was interrupted.

"Did you not see a wolf spring across before us?"

"What of that?"

"But was it only a wolf?"

"Kiss him on the snout."

At this moment Volodyovski reined in his horse. "Have we lost the road," he asked, "for it should be here?"

"No, we have not," answered Jendzian; "we are going as Bogun directed. I wish to God it were all over."

"It will not be long, if we ride well."

"I want to tell you another thing. When I am talking to the witch keep an eye on Cheremis; he must be a terribly nasty fellow, but shoots fearfully with his musket."

"Oh, cavalry, don't be afraid!"

They had barely gone some yards when the horses pricked up their ears and snorted. Jendzian's skin began to creep at once; for he expected that at any moment the howling of vampires might be heard from the cliffs in the rocks, or some unknown and repulsive form would creep out. But it appeared that the horses snorted only because they were passing near the retreat of that wolf who had so disturbed the youth a little while before. Round about was silence; even the grasshoppers had ceased chirping, for the sun had already inclined to the other side of the sky. Jendzian made the sign of the cross and calmed himself.

Volodyovski held in his horse suddenly. "I see the ravine," said he, "in the throat of which a rock is thrust, and in the rock there is a breach."

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" muttered Jendzian.

"After me!" commanded Pan Michael, turning his horse.

Soon they were at the breach, and passed through as under a stone arch. Before them opened a deep ravine, thickly overgrown with bushes at the sides, widening in

the distance to a broad half-circle, — a small plain, enclosed as it were by gigantic walls.

Jendzian began to shout as loud as the power in his breast permitted: "Bogun! Bogun! Witch, come out! Bogun! Bogun!"

They halted and remained for some time in silence; then the youth began to shout again: "Bogun! Bogun!"

From a distance came the barking of dogs.

"Bogun! Bogun!"

On the left rim of the ravine on which the ruddy and golden rays of the sun were falling the thick branches of the plum and wild-cherry trees began to rustle; and after a while there appeared, almost at the very source of the spring, a human form, which bending forward and covering its eyes with its hand looked carefully at the travellers.

"That's Horpyna," said Jendzian; and putting his palms around his mouth, he began to shout a third time: "Bogun! Bogun!"

Horpyna began to descend, bending back to keep her balance. She came on quickly, and after her rolled along a sort of dumpy little man with a long Turkish gun in his hand. Twigs broke under the weighty step of the witch; stones rolled from under them and rattled to the bottom of the ravine. Bent in that fashion, in the ruddy glare she seemed really some gigantic superhuman creature.

"Who are you?" called she in a loud voice, when she had reached the bottom.

"How are you, bass-viol!" said Jendzian, to whom his usual deliberation returned at the sight of human beings instead of spirits.

"You are Bogun's servant? I know you, you fellow; but who are these?"

"Friends of Bogun."

"Ah, she is a handsome witch," muttered Pan Michael, under his mustaches.

"And what have you come for?"

"Here is the baton, the knife, and the ring for you, — you know what they mean?"

The giantess took them in her hands and began to examine them carefully; then she said, —

"They are the same! You have come for the princess?"

"Yes. Is she well?"

"She is. Why did n't Bogun himself come?"

"Bogun is wounded."

"Wounded? I saw that in the mill."

"If you saw it, why do you ask? You lie, you bugle-horn!" said Jendzian, confidently.

The witch showed in a smile teeth white as the teeth of a wolf, and doubling her hand nudged Jendzian in the side: "You are a boy, you are a fellow, you are."

"Be off!"

"You won't give a kiss, will you? And when will you take the princess?"

"Right away; we will only rest the horses."

"Well, take her! I will go with you."

"What do you want to go for?"

"Death is fated for my brother; the Poles will empale him on a stake. I will go with you."

Jendzian bent toward the saddle as if for easier conversation with the giantess, and his hand rested unobserved on the butt of a pistol.

"Cheremis! Cheremis!" said he, wishing to turn the attention of his comrades on the dwarf.

"Why do you call him? His tongue is cut out."

"I am not calling him, I'm only admiring his beauty. You will not leave him, — he is your husband."

"He is my dog!"

"And there are only two of you in the ravine?"

"Two, — the princess is the third."

"That's well. You will not leave him?"

"I will go with you," said she.

"But I tell you that you will remain."

There was something in the voice of the youth of such a character that the giantess turned on the spot with an alarmed face, for suspicion suddenly entered her mind.

"What do you mean?" asked she.

"This is what I mean!" answered Jendzian; and he thundered at her from the pistol so near that the smoke covered her completely for a moment.

Horpyna pushed back with open arms; her eyes protruded, a kind of unearthly yell rose out of her throat; she tottered and fell on her back, full length.

At the same moment Zagloba cut Cheremis through the head with a sabre so that the bone gritted under its edge. The deformed dwarf uttered no groan; he merely wound himself in a lump like a worm, and began to quiver. But the fingers of his hand opened and closed in succession like the claws of a dying wild-cat.

Zagloba wiped the steaming sabre with the skirt of his coat. Jendzian, springing from the horse and taking up

a stone, threw it on the broad breast of Horpyna; then he began to look for something in his bosom.

The enormous body of the witch dug the ground yet with its feet, convulsions twisted her face terribly, on her grinning teeth came out a bloody foam, and dull rattles issued from her throat.

Meanwhile the youth got from his bosom a piece of consecrated chalk, drew a cross with it on the stone, and said: "Now she will not rise!" Then he sprang into the saddle.

"To horse!" commanded Volodyovski.

They rushed like a whirlwind along the brook running through the middle of the ravine; they passed the oaks scattered thinly along the road, and a cottage appeared before their eyes. Farther on was the lofty mill, the moist wheel of which glittered like a ruddy star in the rays of the sun. Under the cottage two enormous black dogs, tied with ropes at the corner, sprang at the men, barking with rage and howling.

Volodyovski, riding in advance, arrived first, sprang from his horse, ran to the entrance, kicked in the door, and rushed to the anteroom with clattering sabre.

In the anteroom on the right through an open door was seen a wide room, with shavings scattered about and a smoking fireplace; on the left the door was closed. "She must be there!" thought Volodyovski; and he sprang toward the door. He pushed; it opened. He stepped on the threshold and stood there as if fastened.

In the depth of the room, with head resting on the edge of a couch, was Helena Kurtsevichovna, pale, with hair falling on her neck and shoulders. With frightened eyes fixed on Volodyovski, she asked: "Who are you? What do you want?" for she had never seen the little knight before.

He was astonished at the sight of that beauty and that room covered with silk and brocade. At last he came to his speech, and said hurriedly: "Have no fear, we are the friends of Skshetuski."

That moment the princess threw herself on her knees: "Save me!" she cried, clasping her hands.

Just then Zagloba, trembling, purple, and out of breath, rushed in. "It is we!" cried he, — "it is we with succor!"

Hearing these words and seeing the familiar face, the princess bent over like a cut flower, her hands dropped, her eyes were covered with their bordered curtains. She had fainted.