

CHAPTER LVII.

VOLODYOVSKI and Zagloba found all the forces of the Crown assembled at Zbaraj, and waiting for the enemy. The cup-bearer of the Crown, Ostrorog, who had come from Konstantinoff, was there, and Lantskoronski, castellan of Kamenyets, who had gained the first victory at Bar; the third commander, Pan Firlei of Dombrovitsa, castellan of Belsk, and Andrei Serakovski, secretary of the Crown; Konyetspolski, the standard-bearer, and Pshiyemski, commander of the artillery, a warrior specially expert in the capture and defence of towns; and with them ten thousand troops, not counting a number of Prince Yeremi's squadrons previously quartered at Zbaraj.

Pan Pshiyemski, on the southern side of the town and the castle and the two ponds, had laid out a strong camp, which he fortified in foreign fashion, and which it was only possible to capture in front; for at the rear and two sides it was defended by the ponds, the castle, and the river. In this camp the commanders intended to offer resistance to Hmelnitski, and delay his avalanche till the king, with the rest of the forces and the national militia of all the nobility, should come. But was that plan possible of execution in view of the power of Hmelnitski? There was much doubt, and there were reasonable causes for the doubt,—among them the disorder in the camp itself. First of all, secret contention was raging among the leaders. The commanders had come against their will to Zbaraj, yielding in this to the desires of Prince Yeremi. They wished at first to make their defence at Konstantinoff; but when the news went forth that Yeremi would appear in his own person only in case Zbaraj should be the point of defence, the soldiers declared immediately to the leaders of the Crown that they would go to Zbaraj, and would not fight elsewhere. Neither persuasion nor the authority of the baton availed; and in short the commanders discovered that if they should continue in longer resistance, the army, from the heavy hussar regiments to the last soldier of the foreign companies, would leave them and go over to the banners of Vishnyevetski. This was one of those sad cases

of military insubordination of increasing frequency in that time, and caused by the incapacity of the leaders, their mutual disagreements, the unexampled terror before the power of Hmelnitski, and the defeats unheard of till then, especially the defeat of Pilavtsi.

So the commanders had to march to Zbaraj, where the command, in spite of the appointments made by the king, had by the force of circumstance passed into the hands of Yeremi; for the army would obey only him,—fight and perish under him alone. But that leader *de facto* was not in Zbaraj yet; therefore unrest was increasing in the army, discipline was relaxed to the last degree, and courage fell. For it was already known that Hmelnitski, together with the Khan, was approaching with forces the like of which the eyes of men had not seen since the days of Tamerlane. Fresh tidings kept flying to the camp like ill-omened birds,—reports, each more recent and more terrible than the preceding,—and weakened the manhood of the soldiers. There were fears that a panic like that of Pilavtsi might break out suddenly and scatter that handful of an army which stood between Hmelnitski and the heart of the Commonwealth. The leaders themselves had lost their heads. Their contradictory orders were not carried out, or if carried out, with unwillingness. In fact Yeremi alone could avert the catastrophe hanging over the camp, the army, and the country.

Zagloba and Volodyovski dropped at once into the vortex of army life. They had barely appeared on the square when they were surrounded by officers of various regiments, interrupting one another in their inquiries for news. At sight of the Tartar captives, confidence entered the hearts of the curious. "The Tartars are plucked! Tartar prisoners! God gave a victory!" repeated some. "The Tartars are here, and Burlai with them!" cried others. "To arms! To the walls!" The news flew through the camp, and Kushel's victory was magnified along the road. An increasing throng gathered around the prisoners. "Kill them! What are we to do with them?" Questions fell thick as flakes in a snow-storm. Kushel would give no answer, and went with a report to the quarters of Firlei, the castellan of Belsk. Volodyovski and Zagloba were greeted at once by their acquaintances of the Russian squadron; but they escaped as well as they could, for they were in haste to see Pan Yan.

They found him in the castle with Zatsvilikhovski, two Bernardine priests of the place, and Pan Longin Podbipienta. Skshetuski grew a little pale on seeing them, and half closed his eyes, for he was reminded of too much to see them without pain; still he gave a calm and even joyful greeting, inquired where they had been, and was satisfied with the first convenient answer. Since he looked on the princess as dead, he wished for nothing, hoped for nothing, and not the slightest suspicion entered his soul that their long absence related to her. They made no mention of the object of their journey, though Pan Longin looked first on one and then on the other with an inquiring glance, sighed, and turned in his place, wishing to read even a shadow of hope on their faces. But both were occupied with Pan Yan, whom Volodyovski seized by the shoulders repeatedly; for his heart grew soft at the sight of that old and trusty friend, who had passed through so much and lost so much that he had almost nothing to live for.

"We shall have all the old comrades together again," said he to Skshetuski, "and you will be happy with us. A war too will come, I see, such as has not been yet, and with it great delights for every soldier soul. If God gives you health, you will lead the hussars many a time to come."

"God has already returned me my health, and I wish nothing more for myself than to serve while my service is needed."

Skshetuski was in fact well, for youth and his sturdy strength had conquered the illness within him. Grief had bitten his spirit, but it could not bite his body. He had merely grown spare and pallid, so that his forehead, cheeks, and nose seemed formed of church wax. The former austerity had settled firmly on his face, and there was in it the rigid repose that we note in the visage of the dead. An increasing number of silver threads wound through his dark beard. In other regards he differed in nothing from the rest of men, except, contrary to soldier custom, he avoided crowds, noise, and drinking. He conversed more readily with monks, to whose discourse on the life of the cloister and the life to come he listened with eagerness; but he performed his service with diligent care, for the expected siege occupied him equally with all the others.

Soon conversation touched on this subject, for no one in the camp, castle, and town thought of aught else. Old

Zatsvilikhovski asked about the Tartars and Burlai, with whom he had an acquaintance of ancient date.

"That's a great warrior," said he. "It is too bad that he should rise against the country with others. We served together at Khotim. He was still a youth, but already gave promise of ripening into an uncommon man."

"But he is from the Trans-Dnieper, and leads men of that region," said Skshetuski. "How is it, father, that he is now marching from the south, from the direction of Kamenyets?"

"It seems," answered the old man, "that Hmelnitski fixed winter quarters for him there on purpose, since Tugai Bey remained on the Dnieper, and that great murza has a hatred for him from former times. No one has cut up the Tartars like Burlai."

"And now he will be a comrade to them?"

"Yes," said Zatsvilikhovski, "such are the times. But Hmelnitski will watch and keep them from devouring each other."

"When do they expect Hmelnitski here, father?" asked Volodyovski.

"Any day. But who can tell? The commanders should send out scout after scout; but they do not. I was barely able to prevail on them to send Kushel to the south and Piglovski to Cholganski Kamen. I wished to go myself, but there are counsels without end. They should send also the secretary of the Crown with some squadrons. They would better hurry, lest it be too late. God give us the prince at the earliest moment, or we shall be met by disgrace like that of Pilavtsi."

"I saw those soldiers as we rode through the square," said Zagloba, "and I think there are more fools among them than good men. They should be market-boys, not comrades to us who are enamoured of glory, esteeming it beyond our own lives."

"What are you talking about?" blurted out the old man. "I do not belittle your bravery, though once I was of another mind. But all the knights here are the first soldiers that the Commonwealth has ever had. Only a head is needed, — a leader! Lantskoronski is a good skirmisher, but no general; Firlei is old, and as to the cup-bearer, he and Prince Dominik made a reputation for themselves at Pilavtsi. What wonder that no one wants to obey them! A soldier will shed his blood freely if sure that he will not

be destroyed without need. But now, instead of thinking of the siege, they are disputing about positions."

"Are there provisions enough?" asked Zagloba, in alarm.

"Not so many as are necessary; but we are still worse off for provender. If the siege should last a month, there will be only shavings and stones for the horses."

"There is still time to get provender," said Volodyovski.

"Then go and tell them so. God give us the prince! I repeat."

"You are not the only one who is sighing for him," interrupted Pan Longin.

"I know that," answered the old man. "Look out on the square! All at the walls look with longing eyes toward Old Zbaraj; others in the town have climbed the towers; and if any one cries in a joke, 'He is coming,' they are mad with joy. A thirsty stag is not so eager for water as we for the prince. Oh, if he could only get here before Hmelnitski! But I think he must have been delayed."

"We too pray, whole days at a time, for his coming," said one of the Bernardines.

The prayers and wishes of all the knighthood were soon to gain their object, though the following day brought still greater fears and was full of ominous prophecies. On Thursday, July 8, a terrific storm raged over the town and the freshly raised ramparts of the camp. Rain fell in torrents. A part of the earthworks was swept away. Gnyezna and the two ponds overflowed. In the evening lightning struck the infantry under command of Firlei, castellan of Belsk, killed a number of men, and tore the banner to pieces. This was considered of evil omen,—an evident sign of the anger of God, the more since Firlei was a Calvinist. Zagloba proposed that a deputation be sent to him with the request and prayer to become a Catholic, "for there could be no blessing of God for an army whose leader was living in disgusting errors hateful to Heaven." Many shared this opinion; and only the dignity of the castellan's person and the command prevented the sending of the deputation. But their courage fell all the more. The storm raged without interruption. The bulwark, though strengthened with stones, willows, and stakes, became so soft that the cannon began to sink. They were obliged to put planks under the howitzers, mortars, and even under the eight-pounders. In the deep ditches the water roared to the height of a man.

Night brought no rest. The storm drove to the east new gigantic piles of clouds which, concentrating and discharging with terrific noise in the heavens, cast out on Zbaraj their whole stock of rain, thunder, and lightning. Only the servants remained in the tents at the camp; soldiers, officers, and commanders, with the exception of the castellan of Kamenyets, took refuge in the town. If Hmelnitski had come with the storm, he would have taken the camp without a blow.

Next day it was a little better, though rain was still falling. About five o'clock in the afternoon the wind drove away the clouds, the blue sky opened above the camp, and in the direction of Old Zbaraj a splendid seven-colored rainbow was shining. The mighty arc with one arm extended beyond Old Zbaraj, while the other, seeming to drink in the moisture of the Black Forest, glittered, changed, and played on the background of fleeing clouds. That moment confidence entered all hearts. The knights returned to the camp and stood on the slippery bulwark to gladden their eyes with the sight of the rainbow. Immediately they began to talk loudly and to guess what this favorable sign might announce, when Volodyovski, standing with others over the very ditch, covered his panther eyes with his hand and cried,—

"Troops are coming from under the rainbow!"

There was a stir as if a whirlwind had moved the human mass, and then a sudden murmur. The words "Troops are coming!" flew like an arrow from one end of the rampart to the other. The soldiers began to crowd and push, gathering in groups. Murmurs rose and fell; still all hands rested above the eyes; all eyes were turned, strained with effort, into the distance; hearts were throbbing; and all, holding the breath in their breasts, were suspended between hope and fear. Then something began to sway, and swayed still more definitely, and rose out of the distance, and approached still nearer, and became still more distinctly visible, till at last the banners, flags, and bunchuks appeared, later a forest of streamers. The eyes doubted no longer,—it was an army. Then one gigantic shout rose from the breasts of all, a shout of inconceivable joy,—

"Yeremi! Yeremi! Yeremi!"

The oldest soldiers were simply seized with frenzy. Some threw themselves from the ramparts, waded through the ditch, and hurried on foot through the water-covered plain

to the advancing regiments; others rushed to their horses; some laughed; others wept, placing their hands together and crying: "Our father is coming, — our savior, our chief!" It might have seemed that the siege was raised, Hmelnitski finished, and the victory won.

Meanwhile the regiments of the prince had drawn so near that the banners could be distinguished. In advance came, as usual, the light regiments of the prince's Tartars, the Cossacks, and the Wallachians, after them Makhnitski's foreign infantry, then the cannon of Vershul, the dragoons, and the heavy hussar regiments. The rays of the sun reflected on their armor and on the points of their upraised lances. All marched in unusual splendor, as if the halo of victory were around them.

Skshetuski, standing with Pan Longin on the ramparts, recognized from afar his own squadron, which he had left in Zamost, and his faded cheeks colored a little; he drew several deep breaths, as if he had thrown some great weight from his breast, and his eyes grew glad; for days of superhuman toil were near him too, as well as heroic struggles which heal the heart better than all, and hurl down painful memories deeper and deeper somewhere into the bottom of the soul.

The regiments continued to approach, and barely a thousand yards separated them from the camp. The officers too had hurried up in order to witness the entrance of the prince; the three commanders also, and with them Pan Pshiyemski, Pan Konyetepolski, Pan Marek Sobieski, starosta of Krasnostav, Pan Korf, and all the other officers, as well of Polish as foreign command. All shared in the universal joy; and especially Lantskoronski, one of the commanders, who was more a knight than a general, but enamoured of military glory. He stretched his baton in the direction from which Yeremi was coming, and called in a voice so loud that all heard him, —

"There is our supreme chief, and I am the first to give him my command and my office."

The regiments of the prince began to enter the camp. They were three thousand men in all; but the courage of the garrison increased by a hundred thousand, for they were the victors from Pogrébische, Nyemiroff, Makhnovka, and Konstantinoff. Then acquaintances and friends greeted one another. After the light regiments Vershul's artillery came in at last with difficulty, bringing twelve cannon.

The prince, who had sent his regiments from Old Zbaraj, entered after sunset. All that was living assembled to greet him. The soldiers, taking lamps, candles, torches, bits of pitch-pine, surrounded the prince's steed and barred his advance. The horse was caught by the bridle, so that the warriors might sate their eyes with the sight of the hero; they kissed his garments, and almost bore him away on their shoulders. The excitement rose to that degree that not only soldiers of his own regiments but of foreign companies declared they would serve three months without pay. The throng became denser each moment, so that he was unable to move a step. He sat then on his white steed, surrounded by the soldiery as a shepherd by his flocks, and there was no end to shouts and applause. The evening was calm and clear, thousands of stars glittered in the dark sky, and then appeared favorable omens. Just as Lantskoronski approached the prince to deliver the baton into his hand, one of the stars, torn away from the sky and drawing after it a stream of light, fell with a noise, and was quenched in the direction of Konstantinoff, from which Hmelnitski had to come. "That is Hmelnitski's star!" shouted the soldiers. "A miracle! a miracle!" "An evident sign!" "Vivat Yeremi victor!" repeated a thousand voices. Then Lantskoronski approached and gave a sign with his hand that he wanted to speak. Immediately there was silence, and he said, —

"The king gave me this baton, but into your more worthy hands do I yield it, wishing to be first to obey your orders."

"And we are with him," repeated two other commanders.

Three batons were extended to the prince; but he drew back his hand, saying, "It was not I that gave them, and I will not receive them."

"Let there be a fourth with the three," said Firlei.

"Vivat Vishnyevetski! vivat the commanders!" shouted the knights. "We will die together!"

At that moment the prince's steed raised his head, shook his purple-stained mane, and neighed mightily, so that all the horses in the camp answered him in one voice.

This too was considered prophetic of victory. The soldiers had fire in their eyes; their hearts were hot with thirst for battle; the quiver of eagerness ran through their bodies. The officers shared the universal ecstasy. Prince Ostrorog wept and prayed. Lantskoronski and the starosta of Krasnostav began first to wave their sabres, encouraging

the soldiers, who, running to the edge of the rampart and stretching out their hands in the darkness, shouted in the direction from which they expected the enemy, —

“Come on, dog-brothers! You will find us ready for you!”

That night no man slept in the camp, and till daybreak there was thunder of shouts with the rushing to and fro of lamps and torches.

In the morning Pan Serakovski, secretary of the Crown, came with a scouting-party from Cholganski Kamen, and brought news that the enemy were twenty-five miles from the camp. The party had a battle with a superior force of Tartars, in which the two Mankovskis and Pan Oleksich had fallen, with a number of good soldiers. The informants brought in declared that behind this body the Khan and Hmelnitski were marching with all their forces. The day passed in waiting and preparations for defence. The prince, having taken the command, without further delay put the army in order; he showed each part where to stand, how to defend itself, and how to give succor to the rest. The best spirit reigned in the camp, discipline was restored, and instead of the former confusion, antagonism of authority, and uncertainty, accuracy and order were everywhere present. Before mid-day all were in their places. The pickets thrown out before the camp reported at intervals what was doing in the neighborhood. The camp attendants despatched to the adjacent villages brought in provisions and forage, whatever was yet to be found. Soldiers standing on the ramparts chatted merrily and sang, and they passed the night slumbering by the fires, sabre in hand, with the same readiness as if the assault might begin at any moment.

At daylight something dark began to appear in the direction of Vishnyovets. The bells in the town rang an alarm, and in the camp the prolonged plaintive sound of the trumpets roused the soldiers to wakefulness. The infantry regiments mounted the ramparts, the cavalry took position in the intervals, ready to rush forward at the signal of attack, and through the whole length of the ditch ascended slender streaks of smoke from the lighted matches.

At this moment the prince appeared on his white steed. He was in silver armor, but without a helmet. Not the least concern was visible on his forehead, but gladness shone out of his eyes and his face.

“We have guests, gentlemen, we have guests!” he repeated, riding along the ramparts.

Silence followed, and then could be heard the waving of banners, which the light breath of air now raised and now wound around the staffs. Meanwhile the enemy came so near that it was possible to take them in with the eye.

This was the first wave; not Hmelnitski himself, with the Khan, but a reconnoitring party made up of thirty thousand chosen Tartars, armed with bows, muskets, and sabres. Having captured fifteen hundred men sent out for provisions, they went in a dense mass from Vishnyovets; then, stretching out in a long crescent, they began to ride around from the opposite side toward Old Zbaraj.

The prince, satisfied that this was merely a party, ordered the cavalry out of the intrenchments. The voices of command were heard; the regiments began to move and issue from behind the ramparts like bees from a hive. The plain was soon filled with men and horses. From a distance could be seen the captains riding around the squadrons and putting them in line of battle. The horses snorted playfully, and sometimes their neighing went through the ranks. Then from out this mass pushed forth two squadrons of Tartars and Cossacks, and advanced on a light trot; their bows shook on their shoulders, and their caps glittered. They rode in silence; and at their head was the red Vershul, whose horse reared under him as though wild, throwing his front hoofs in the air as if wishing to escape the bit and spring at once into the tumult. The blue of heaven was unspotted by a cloud; the day was clear, transparent, and the assailants were visible as on the palm of the hand.

Now there appeared from the side of Old Zbaraj a small wagon-train of the prince, which had not succeeded in entering with the army, and was hurrying with all its might to escape capture at a blow by the Tartars. Indeed it had not escaped their glance, and the long crescent moved swiftly toward it. Cries of “Allah!” flew to the ears of the infantry on the ramparts; the squadrons of Vershul shot on like a whirlwind to the rescue.

But the crescent arrived at the train sooner, and engirdled it in a moment as if with a black ribbon; and simultaneously several thousand of the horde turned with an unearthly howl to surround Vershul in like manner. Here might be noted the experience of Vershul and the skill of his soldiers. Seeing that they were flanking him on right and left, he divided his forces into three parts and sprang to the sides; then he divided them into four, then into two;

and each time the enemy had to turn with his whole line, for he had no opponent in front and his wings were already broken. The fourth time they met breast to breast; but Vershul struck with all his force in the weakest part, burst through, and immediately found himself in the rear of the enemy, whom he left, and rushed like a tempest to the train, regardless of pursuit.

Old soldiers, beholding this from the ramparts, stood with armored hands on their hips, crying: "May the bullets strike them, only the prince's captains lead in that style!"

Then Vershul struck in the form of a sharp wedge the ring surrounding the tabor, and pierced it as an arrow pierces a man. In the twinkle of an eye he was in the centre. Now instead of two battles there raged one, but all the more stubborn. It was a marvellous sight. In the centre of the plain was a small tabor, like a moving fortress, throwing out long streaks of smoke and vomiting fire; without, a black and wildly moving swarm, as one gigantic eddy followed another, horses fleeing without riders; within, noise, uproar, and the thunder of guns. In one place some were rushing through others, in another they struggled unbroken. As a wild boar at bay defends himself with his white tusks and tears the raging dogs, so that tabor in the midst of the cloud of Tartars defended itself desperately, hoping that assistance greater than Vershul's would come from the camp.

The red coats of the dragoons of Kushel and Volodyovski soon twinkled on the field. You would have said they were red leaves of flowers driven by the wind. They rushed to the cloud of Tartars and disappeared in it as in a black forest; so for a time they were invisible, but the uproar increased. The troops wondered why the prince did not send force enough at once to the succor of the surrounded; but he delayed, wishing to show exactly what he sent, and in this way to raise their courage and prepare them for still greater perils.

However, the fire in the tabor grew weak; it was evident they had no time to load, or the barrels of the muskets had grown hot. The shouts of the Tartars increased continually; the prince therefore gave a signal, and three hussar squadrons—one (his guard) under Skshetusk, the second under the starosta of Krasnostav, the third a royal squadron under Piglovski—rushed to the battle from the camp. They struck them as an axe strikes

they broke the ring of Tartars at once, threw them back, scattered them, pressed them to the woods, re-dispersed and drove them more than a mile from the camp. The little tabor entered the intrenchments in safety, amidst joyous shouts and the thunder of cannon.

The Tartars, however, feeling that Hmelnitski and the Khan were following, did not disappear altogether, but came again, and shouting "Allah!" galloped around the whole camp, occupying at the same time the roads, highways, and villages, from which pillars of black smoke were soon rising to the sky. Many of their skirmishers came near the trenches; against these the soldiers of the prince and the quarter-soldiers rushed out at once, singly and in parties, especially from the Tartar, Wallachian, and dragoon squadrons.

Vershul was unable to take part in the skirmishes; for, struck six times in the head while defending the tabor, he lay as if dead in the tent. Volodyovski, red as a lobster, though untouched, still unsatisfied, took his place, and moved first to the field. These skirmishes, at which the infantry and heavy cavalry looked from the camp as at a spectacle, lasted till evening. Sometimes one side excelled, sometimes the other; they fought in groups or singly; captives were taken alive. But Pan Michael, as soon as he struck any one and finished him, turned again, and his red uniform circled over the whole field of battle. At last Skshetusk pointed him out from a distance to Lantskoronski as a curiosity, for as often as he met with a Tartar it might be said that lightning had struck that man. Zagloba, though beyond the hearing of Pan Michael, encouraged him with shouts from the ramparts. From time to time he turned to the soldiers standing around, and said,—

"Look, gentlemen! I taught him to use the sabre. Well done! If he goes on, with God's help, he will equal me soon."

But now the sun had gone down, and each skirmisher began to withdraw slowly from the field, on which remained only bodies of horses and men. From the town the first sounds of the "Ave Maria" were heard.

Night fell gradually; still darkness did not come, for fires in the country about gave light. Zalostitsse, Barzyntse, Lublyanki, Striyovka, Kretovitse, Zarudzie, Vakhlovka were burning; and the whole vicinity, as far as the eye could reach, was blazing in one conflagration. The

smoke in the night became red; the stars were shining on the rosy background of the sky. Clouds of birds rose from the forests, thickets, and ponds with a tremendous noise, circled in the air lighted by the burning, and looked like flying flames. The cattle in the camp, terrified by the unusual spectacle, began to bellow plaintively.

"It cannot be," said old soldiers to one another in the trenches, "that the Tartars of that party have set such fires; surely Hmelnitski, with the Cossacks and the whole horde, are advancing."

These were not empty surmises, for Pan Serakowski had brought intelligence on the preceding day that the Zaporozhian hetman and the Khan were in the rear of that party. They were expected therefore with certainty. The soldiers were in the trenches to a man; the citizens were on the roofs and towers; all hearts were unquiet; women were sobbing in the churches, stretching out their hands to the most holy sacrament. Uncertainty, worse than all, oppressed with immeasurable weight the town, the castle, and the camp.

But it did not last long. Night had not fallen completely when the first ranks of the Cossacks and Tartars appeared on the horizon; then the second, third, tenth, hundredth, thousandth. You would have said all the forests and groves had torn themselves suddenly from their roots, and were marching on Zbaraj. In vain did the eye seek the end of those ranks; as far as the eye reached swarms of men and horses were blackening, vanishing in the smokes and fires of the distance. They moved like clouds, or like locusts which cover the whole country with their terrible moving mass. Before them went the threatening rumble of human voices, like wind in a forest among the branches of the ancient pines; then, halting about a mile and a quarter away, they began to settle down and make fires for the night.

"You see the fires," whispered the soldiers; "they extend farther than a horse could go in one journey."

"Jesus and Mary!" said Zagloba to Skshetuski. "I tell you there is a lion in me and I feel no alarm; but I would that a blazing thunderbolt might crush them all before morning. As God is dear to me, there are too many of them. Unless perhaps in the valley of Jehoshaphat there will not be a greater crowd. And tell me, what do those scoundrels want? Would not every dog-brother of them be better at home, working his serfage peaceably for his

land? What fault is it of ours if God has made us nobles and them trash, and commanded them to obey? Tfu! I am beside myself with rage. I am a mild-mannered man, soft as a plaster; but let them not rouse me to anger! They have had too much freedom, too much bread; they have multiplied like mice in a barn; and now they are dying to get at the cats. Ah, wait! There is one cat here called Yeremi, and another called Zagloba. What do you think, will those two enter upon negotiations? If the rebels had surrendered with obedience, then their lives might be granted, might they not? One thing disturbs me continually, — are there provisions enough in the camp? Oh, to the devil! Look, gentlemen; fires beyond fires, and still fires! May black death fall on such a crowd!"

"Why talk about treaties," said Skshetuski, "when they think they have us all under their hands, and will get us to-morrow?"

"But they won't get us, will they?" asked Zagloba.

"Well, the will of God for that. In any case, since the prince is here, it won't come easy to them."

"You have consoled me indeed. I do not care that it should not come easy to them, but that it should not come at all."

"It is no small pleasure for a soldier not to yield his life for nothing."

"True, true! But may lightning strike the whole affair, and your consolation with it!"

At that moment Podbipienta and Volodyovski approached.

"They say that the Cossacks with the horde are half a million strong," said the Lithuanian.

"I wish that you had lost your tongue," said Zagloba; "you have brought good tidings."

"It is easier to kill them in assault than in the field," continued Pan Longin, mildly.

"Now that our prince and Hmelnitski have met at last, there will be no talk about negotiations. Either master or monk.¹ To-morrow will be the day of judgment," said Volodyovski, rubbing his hands.

He was right. In that war the two most terrible lions had not yet stood eye to eye. One had crushed the hetmans and the commanders; the other powerful Cossack atamans. On the footsteps of both followed victory; each was a ter-

¹ This means, "Everything or nothing;" "Carry the day or go to a monastery."

ror to his enemies. But whose side will be weightiest in a direct encounter? This was to be decided now. Vishnyevetski looked from the intrenchments on the countless myriads of Tartars and Cossacks, and strove in vain to embrace them with the eye. Hmelnitski looked from the field on the castle and camp, thinking in his soul: "My most terrible enemy is there; when I have finished with him, who can oppose me?"

It was easy to guess that the conflict between these two men would be long and stubborn, but the result could not be doubtful. That prince in Lubni and Vishnyovets stood at the head of fifteen thousand troops, counting the camp-servants; while the peasant chieftain was followed by mobs, from the Sea of Azoff and the Don to the mouth of the Danube. The Khan too marched with him at the head of the Crimean, Belgorod, Nogai, and Dobrudja hordes; men marched with him who dwelt on the tributaries of the Dniester and the Dnieper, men from the lower country, and a countless rabble from the steppes, ravines, woods, towns, hamlets, villages, and farms, and all who had formerly served in private regiments or those of the Crown; Cherkes,¹ Wallachians, Silistrians, Rumelians, Turks, bands of Serbs and Bulgarians were also in that host. It might appear that a new migration of nations had abandoned the dreary abodes on the steppes, and were moving westward to win fresh lands and found a new kingdom.

This was the relation of the struggling forces, — a handful against legions, an island against the sea. No wonder then that many a heart was beating with alarm. Not only in that town, not only in that corner of the land, but in the whole Commonwealth they looked on that lonely trench, surrounded by a deluge of wild warriors, as the tomb of great knights and their mighty chief.

Hmelnitski too looked on it in just the same way; for scarcely were the fires well kindled in his camps, when a Cossack envoy began to wave a white flag before the trenches, to sound a trumpet, and cry out not to shoot.

The guards went and brought him in at once.

"From the hetman to Prince Yeremi," said he to them.

The prince had not yet dismounted, and was on the bulwark with face as calm as the sky. The flames were reflected in his eyes, and invested his delicate white countenance with rosy light. The Cossack standing before the

¹ Circassians from the Caucasus.

face of the prince lost his speech; his legs trembled under him, and a shiver went through his body though he was an old wolf of the steppes and had come as an envoy.

"Who are you?" asked the prince, fixing his calm glance upon him.

"I am the sotnik Sokol, — from the hetman."

"And why have you come?"

The sotnik began to make bows as low as the stirrups of the prince. "Pardon me, lord! I tell what has been commanded me. I am to blame in nothing."

"Speak boldly!"

"The hetman commanded me to inform you that he has come as a guest to Zbaraj, and will visit you in the castle to-morrow."

"Tell him that not to-morrow, but to-day I give a feast in the castle," answered the prince.

In fact an hour later the mortars were thundering salutes, joyous shouts were raised; all the windows of the castle shone with a thousand gleaming lights.

The Khan, hearing the salutes of the cannon and the sound of trumpets and drums, went out in front of the tent in company with his brother Nureddin, the Sultan Galga, Tugai Bey, and many murzas, and later sent for Hmelnitski.

The hetman, though he had been drinking, appeared at once. Bowing and placing his fingers to his forehead, his beard, and his breast, he waited for the question.

The Khan looked long at the castle, shining in the distance like a gigantic lantern, and nodded his head slightly. At last he passed his hand over his thin beard, which fell in two long tresses upon his weasel-skin shuba, and asked, pointing to the gleaming windows, —

"Zaporojian hetman, what is that?"

"Most mighty Tsar," answered Hmelnitski, "that is Prince Yeremi giving a feast."

The Khan was astonished. "A feast?"

"He is giving a feast for the slain of to-morrow," said Hmelnitski.

That moment new discharges thundered from the castle, the trumpets sounded, and mingled shouts reached the worthy ears of the Khan. "God is one!" muttered he. "There is a lion in the heart of that infidel." And after a moment of silence he added: "I should rather be with him than with you."

Hmelnitski trembled. He paid for the indispensable