

AT HOME

AND IN WAR

VERESTCHAGIN



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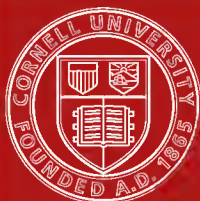
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ALEXANDER VASILYÉVITCH VERESTCHAGIN.

Frontispiece.

AT HOME AND IN WAR

1853-1881

REMINISCENCES AND ANECDOTES

BY

ALEXANDER VERESTCHAGIN

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

By ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

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PART I.
AT HOME.

AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD. — OUR DOMESTICS.

IN the district of Tcherepovsk, government of Novgorod, half a verst distant from the river Sheksna, lies the little village of "Pèrtovka." A slender rivulet, flowing from the neighboring forest, separates it from the manor farm, which is situated on a rise of ground close by. It is not long since Pèrtovka was surrounded on all sides, as by a vast ring of ancient and gloomy pine forests springing from the sandy soil. The low brushwood skirting the fields grew taller and taller, until, two hundred fathoms from the edge of the woods, the stately and lofty pine forest began. The curling crests of the pines waved softly to and fro, like green caps, bending towards each other now and then, and seeming to exchange whispers.

In the midst of the seignorial lands lies a commodious yard. A wooden house, gray in hue, with an upper story, stands at one end of the yard: behind it lies a small garden and a vegetable garden; on the other side of the yard stretches a long, two-story building—the servants' quarters; on the lower floor are two kitchens; on the left, the servants' kitchen, on the right that of the cook; upstairs are the quarters for the house-servants. Beyond are other offices; the drying-room and the ice-cellars, the bath-house and the stables. All these buildings are of wood and are constructed of good timber.

This estate, together with the village and the surrounding forests, belonged to my father, Vasily Vasilyevitch Verestchagin, Collegiate Assessor.

I will make a brief digression, and say a few words about my grandfather and grandmother.

Vasily Matvyevitch Verestchagin was a landed proprietor of small means; his entire estate consisted of a small farm near Vologda, where he had at one time served as inspector of salt.

I cannot give the exact date, but it must have been about 1780 that Vasily Matvyevitch married Natalya Alexyevna Bashmakoff, and immediately transferred his residence from Vologda to her patrimonial domain, the hamlet of Liubetz, situated on the very bank of the Sheksna, five versts from the village of Pèrtovka.

Although Natalya Alexyevna was a strict manager, she was not to be compared, in that respect, with her brother, Piotr Alexyevitch, at whose death she came into possession of Liubetz. A very old woman named Anna, who lived in our house, and who had formerly served the Bashmakoffs in the capacity of chamber-maid, related to me the following in regard to Piotr Alexyevitch:—

“He was a capital master, and under him the peasants were never refused grain or access to the forest; but, God preserve us! if he perceived that a peasant was lazy or intoxicated, your grandfather would fly into a violent passion, and then, misery! He was a good man, but fond of the women; so the peasants couldn’t endure him, and they conspired together and killed him. Your grandmother had a stone monument erected on the spot where he was found dead,” said the old woman. “And the crime would never have been committed, my dear,” continued Anna, “if the rascals had not hidden Valtonka, your grandfather’s dog. He was an enormous beast. We were always catching it from your grandmother because of him, because he made so much dirt in the rooms. So on that day the villains hid him under a beer-kettle, which was turned upside-down in the front yard. Your grandfather went out in the evening to take a walk, and whistled. No dog; so he went on alone. Then four of the godless wretches fell upon him outside the village, near the corn-kilns. Timoshka, the shepherd, and three others. They say,” added the old woman, in a whisper, “that your grandfather had been in the habit of courting their wives pretty often of an evening. When the villains attacked him, he started to run, they say, but tripped and fell yonder where the monument stands; then they split his skull with a pole-bolt. As for Valtonka, he seemed to have heard what was going on; he

scrambled out, found his master, and licked his hands all over until it was a pity to see."

"Well, and what then? did the judge come?" I asked.

"The judge came, my young master, the judge came from the town. He lived at your grandmother's a whole month; he nearly drove the whole village frantic. He even examined the little children,—and what could the little ones know? 'What's your father's name?' says he. 'Daddy.'—'And your mother's?'—'Mammy.' And so he had to give it up. They sent three or four men into exile. But what a fine, lively fellow your grandfather Piotr Alexyevitch was: small in stature, with black hair; a real gentleman."

I know but few particulars concerning my grandfather Vasily Matvyevitch. He died in 1806; so far as I have heard, he was a kindly man, who won the respect and love of his neighbors.

My grandmother, Natalya Alexyevna, had a large property, and belonged to the ancient and noble house of Bashmakoff. It is stated, in the letters-patent, which have been preserved to the present day, that her ancestors had "stoutly and valiantly defended the Christian faith and the Orthodox Church," and had served the Tzars Alexei Mikhailovitch and Feodor Alexyevitch.

Some of the villages mentioned in these letters-patent no longer exist: the village of Baituzovo, for example. Notwithstanding all my inquiries of elderly people, no one had ever heard of any such name.

My grandmother's magnificent forests and intervalles stretched for twenty versts along the banks of the Sheksna; she owned many hundreds of peasants, and much property of every description.

My grandmother exercised great influence, not only in the district, but even throughout the government. She was strict with her peasants, like her brother: a disobedient peasant was handed over as a soldier, without any parleying, and the maid-servant who misconducted herself had her hair cut off, and was banished to the poultry-yard.

On the death of Vasily Matvyevitch, she was left in charge of five children: two sons, Alexei and Vasily, and three daughters, Anna, Sophia, and Nastasya. When they grew up, Natalya Alexyevna went to live in St. Petersburg, and settled in Sergyevskaya street. There she lived well,

and kept open house, as befitted a wealthy gentlewoman of that day, and had her horses and carriages. She became widely acquainted; it appears, so I have heard, that even the all-powerful Araktcheeff¹ visited her and kissed her hand.

Grandmother did not trouble herself much about the education of her children. At first she provided them with a tutor, Monsieur Cabot. She selected him from a party of French prisoners, when, in 1812, they were driven by thousands along the great posting road which led past Liubetz; there, even at the present day, the whitened bones of the buried prisoners lie scattered here and there over a high, sandy hillock.

In St. Petersburg, my uncle Alexei Vasilyevitch entered the chevalier-guard regiment as a *yunker*,² but speedily exchanged into the hussars of the body-guard, where he served his time, residing in Tzarskoe Selo. Being older than my father by six years, he was his mother's favorite. Grandmother spoiled him as much as it was in her power; she paid his regimental debts, and overlooked all his pranks; she loved my father less, and frequently chided him and frightened him to such an extent, when he was a sluggish little boy, that he remained a stammerer ever after.

I have no recollection of any of my aunts. Two of them married; but the third, Nastasya Vasilyevna, died a spinster.

Papa was educated in the Lyceum, was dull at his lessons, and, without finishing his course, was appointed to a post in one of the departments of the Senate. He served as all gentlemen's sons served in the olden time, chiefly for the sake of rank (*tchin*). The head of his division was a certain Yazykoff. Papa told me that the modest Yazykoff, whom Natalya Alexyevna occasionally invited to the house, dared not sit down squarely on a chair in their house, but balanced himself on the edge; and when the lady of the house turned to him, at dinner, with the question, "Is my Vasinka attending his service well?" Yazykoff made haste to calm her by saying, "He attends, my good Natalya Alexyevna, he attends," — whereupon he rose in a fawning

¹ The powerful minister of Alexander I., Pavlovitch.

² A volunteer gentleman-soldier, who will soon become an officer. No previous military training is required, but an examination must be passed in the common branches.

manner, and made his bow to her; but what her Vasinka was doing in the service, and with what he was occupying his time, she never inquired; only whether he was attending and would acquire rank.

On the death of my grandmother, both my uncle and my father retired from the service at almost one and the same time: the former, with the rank of colonel, settled at Liubetz, which had fallen to him by will; and my father with the rank of collegiate assessor. The latter inherited Pèrtovka and several other villages, which, taken as a whole, formed a fine property. In his own district he served three triennial terms as marshal of the nobility.

My first memory of my father is when he was about fifty years old. At that time his hair was still black and curling; he shaved his beard and moustache. Of medium stature and with a prominent stomach, or, as we used to call it in jest, "an excrescence," his person was handsome and sympathetic. He had a soft voice and sang very agreeably. He was of a reticent, phlegmatic character, which did not, however, prevent us boys from sometimes exhausting his patience to such an extent that he would seize us by the ears with both hands and give us a hearty shaking. But this was of rare occurrence.

He was a great stay-at-home, and his favorite occupation consisted in reading, as he lay on the sofa in his dressing-gown, and dozing from time to time — at which times he thrust his book under the pillow.

My father conducted his farming on the old plan, that is to say, he kept cows more for the manure than for milk; he took great care of his woodland, though it did sometimes happen that, in the absence of other marketable property, he split up building timber into firewood.

His large family caused him to be extremely careful. We never travelled otherwise than third-class on the railway, and I remember how, when the conductor came through to inspect the tickets, papa used to order us to crawl under the seats, and would even push us with his foot, saying, "Sit quiet there; what are you moving for!" If the conductor caught sight of us, and made us crawl out, my father would insist, without being in the least put out of countenance, that only half a ticket was required for us. "See how small they are," he would say with conviction to the conductor, at the same time winking signifi-

cantly at us to make us stoop down; "why, they're not ten years old,"—and I, who was the youngest, was older than that.

Papa was a very kind man, and often helped the poor; some needy families received from him, annually, at a stated time, provisions and gifts in money.

Mamma had been a beauty in her youth, it was said, and was a tall, slender brunette. Her mother had died when she was a child, and she had been reared under the supervision of an aged, wise, and pious father. Her character was frank; she could conceal nothing, either grief or joy, but always had to share it with some one on the instant.

She began to occupy herself with housekeeping only when she grew old, but in her youth she confined herself to giving the cook orders about the food. As she was very well acquainted with French, she sometimes read novels and romances; she was a capital needlewoman, and often embroidered with worsted on canvas or in Russian stitch on linen; and she made lace. But she liked best of all to receive guests, and to entertain them; she was very hospitable.

It is easy to recall your childhood, but it is difficult to fix definitely upon the particular circumstance from which your memory begins. You recall one occurrence, and it appears to be the very first, the earliest; but another springs up behind it in your head, and, thrusting aside the first, as it were, says, "No, that is not true; I came earlier."

For instance, I have a vivid remembrance of how, on a cold winter evening, our old nurse, Anna Larivonovna, a tall, gaunt woman, with pendent cheeks, taking advantage of the fact that papa and mamma had gone off somewhere that morning, made haste to wash me and my brother Alyosha. But where did she take it into her head to wash us? In the servants' kitchen—in the Russian stove! Bread had been baked in the oven that morning, so that a good deal of heat still lingered there. There was no one in the servants' kitchen—the house-servants had supped, and there was no one but the chief female cook, stirring about in her pantry with her spoons and pots.

Alyosha and I were standing on the floor, beside the



VASILY VASILYEVITCH VERESTCHAGIN.

(Father of the Author.)

oven, without any clothes on. Nurse, clad only in her shift, her thin black hair tangled on her head, and her scanty plait falling on her breast, was soaping our heads in turn with a bit of soap; after this she smeared us from head to foot with tar (nurse had heard from some one that tar was a fine remedy for scrofula, from which we all suffered as children), and set us on the hearth, after which we crawled into the oven by ourselves. It was light inside the oven, in one corner burned the end of a tallow-candle, stuck on a cresset; beside it an iron kettle with boiling water. The bottom of the oven was strewn with soft straw. It was so warm, so pleasant there, and we were perfectly happy. Nurse crawled in after us with a small trough in her hands. She had now cast aside her shift. Her aged eyes, with their pendulous lower lids, expressed anxiety and fear as to whether she should be successful in accomplishing the desire of her heart—the washing of her nurslings with tar before “their” arrival. And if she did not succeed, and “they” arrived—then she was lost: her master and mistress would scold her, and upbraid her severely. But this was not what nurse feared; her greatest terror was lest they should discharge her completely from her position as nurse, and deprive her of her treasures, her nurslings, whom she loved more than anything else in the world; whom she loved, that is to say, exactly as we loved her.

With her bony hand, she hastily seized a little wooden cup which was floating in the iron kettle, with it ladled out water into the trough, and washed and scoured our little bodies with a bit of soft worsted stocking, folded several times, splashed the hot water on our little faces with her wrinkled palm, and whispered and muttered a charm, “Lord Jesus, most holy Mother of God,” and bent her ear in terror, to hear whether the bell were sounding in the yard, whether the dogs were not barking, whether the runners of a heavy sledge were not squeaking near the manor-house upon the frozen snow.

This is very far away to me. But the following picture seems to belong to a still earlier date.

It is a beautiful summer day; it is warm; the sun shines brightly; the time is after dinner. I, in the little nursery, have climbed upon a footstool by the window, screened from the flies by a hair netting, and, kneeling there, I am

building card-houses on the table. At the opposite side of the room, nurse is lulling to sleep my sister Masha, who is lying on a little wooden couch, with high, black sides, and singing in a gentle and melancholy voice, as she nods her head in time, the familiar song:—

“Out in the yard the lamb doth sleep,
And quietly it lies.
Bye-bye; now, slumber on,
And open not thine eyes.”

I remember very well how, at the words, “Out in the yard the lamb doth sleep, and quietly it lies,” I glance out at the yard, and my eyes seek the spot where that lamb is lying. If nurse sang it, it means that there must be a lamb lying somewhere, and, not finding it, I turn to nurse and ask, “Nurse, where is the lamb lying in the yard?”

Nurse raises herself a little from the small bed, which her breast almost touches, turns towards me her head bound up in a dark cotton kerchief whose ends are spotted with snuff, as she was in the habit of frequently wiping her snuff-stained nose on them, makes an angry motion with her head at me, signifying that I am not to make a noise, and then proceeds with her lay, in the same soothing tone:—

“And when thou art a big girl grown,
Thou’lt walk in silk attire.
Bye-bye; now, slumber on
And open not thine eyes.”

Then, again, I recall just such another summer day, and just such another afternoon. Papa and mamma have gone to their rooms upstairs to rest, and have ordered nurse to put us to bed also. In the large nursery stand two beds, mine and Alyosha’s, not far apart. The room is half dark; the windows are hung with old, wadded coverlets, full of holes. Only a little light makes its way through these holes.

Beside the window in the adjoining room sits our aged nurse, with her bunch of flax thrust under her, spinning industriously. She gently pulls a slender tuft from the mass of flax with her bony fingers, moistens it with spittle,

and pulls the thread out longer and longer, while with her right hand she twirls the distaff regularly and with a kind of whirl. When she has twisted the thread sufficiently, she winds it quickly on the outspread fingers of her left hand, supports the distaff on her stomach, and winds the thread off upon it.

Now and then nurse casts a glance at our little beds, takes from the window-ledge a birch-bark box of snuff, sniffs it with delight, and then goes on with her work again. Alyosha and I are not asleep, and we begin our pranks; we shout, and shake our feet, and drive the old woman out of patience.

"Well, I can't do anything with you, and that's the truth. But just wait a bit!"

She flings her mass of flax on the stove-bench, adjusts the kerchief, which has fallen from her head, and goes out. A few moments later she returns, shakes her fingers at us in a rather mysterious manner, and seats herself again at her spinning. We begin to feel a little afraid; but we cannot understand, as yet, what the matter is.

"Bang, bang, bang," knocks some one at the door.

"Who's there?" asks nurse, and casts a terrified glance at us. I seem to see her now as she appeared at that moment; her kind eyes wide-open, her nose smeared with snuff, she holds her distaff in one hand, her thread in the other, and seems to have become petrified in that attitude.

On hearing the knock, we begin to shake with terror, as though in a fever. Alyosha hastily dives head foremost under the coverlet, but I, although I hide also, peep out little by little, to see what more is coming. The door opens softly, and first of all I behold the paws of some monster, and, following them, the monster itself, with a sheepskin coat wrapped about its head, woolly side out.

"Where are the mischievous monkeys? Give them to me and I'll carry them off with me!" shouts the bugaboo, in a rough voice, pressing the collar of the sheepskin coat to his face, in order to prevent recognition, and he makes a motion with his hands as though on the point of seizing us. Although it strikes me that the bugaboo's voice resembles that of our maid, Agnéya, nevertheless, I dive under the coverlet in affright, more dead than alive, and there fall asleep.

I see before me now my little bed, upstairs in the wooden country-house, beside the big double bed of my parents. In one corner of the chamber gleams a tall glass shrine of holy images; and what images it contained! Images in gold, silver vestments, some adorned with tiny stones of various hues and some without stones. One, a large one, with a golden aureole, especially excited my wonder. Around the images lie numerous Easter eggs, gilded, striped, marbled, yellow, boiled in the outside sheaths of onions, and simply dyed with sandal-wood, but the most precious were of crystal; these, it appeared, were priceless.

And here is papa going to bed at night: the lamp is burning before the images; he says his prayers. I crawl out of my little bed, run to him in nothing but my shirt, and say, "Papa, show me the little crystal egg!" He grasps me under the arms, lifts me up and says: "Well, then, look!" I press my nose and lips against the glass of the shrine, and gaze with intense interest, while the steam from my mouth spreads over the cold glass.

"Well, how now? have you seen all you want? Come, run away, and go to sleep now, for mamma will be coming directly. Now, look!" But I am not very much afraid of mamma, so I stay and wait to see papa bow his head to the ground.

I have not long to wait: after muttering a prayer and heaving a profound sigh, papa crosses himself broadly, and, with a groan, he bows his head to the ground, trying at the same time to spread a tip of his dressing-gown in front of him, so that his forehead may not come in contact with the bare floor, — and this attitude he preserves for a tolerably long time. This is all I want; I climb briskly upon his back, sit astride of him, and feel perfectly happy. . . .

Papa never gets angry at this; if it annoys him very much, he exclaims, "Go, sleep, you little scamp!"

Often in the morning, when he sees that I am not asleep, he takes me out of my crib and sets me on his hairy breast, and begins to relate, for the hundredth time, the tale of "Little Red Ridinghood." I seem to feel at this moment the chill which ran over my skin when, to the question of Red Ridinghood, "But why have you such big teeth, grandmother?" the wolf replies, "The better to eat you with, my dear," and flings himself upon her. At this point, my father used to pretend that he wanted to eat

me. "Am, am!" I wriggle myself free with a shriek, and crawl under the coverlet, and, in spite of the fact that papa told me this story nearly every morning, I shrieked and hid myself on every occasion in precisely the same way.

My education began very early. I recall how I sat on a child's high-chair, painted red; a wide board, with its hollow top for my playthings, prevented my falling out. My governess, Yelizaveta Semyonovna, or, as we called her, Lilya, a very good and kind girl, was teaching me to count; I capered and threw my feet about.

"Don't be naughty! what do you mean by it? how many times have I spoken!" cries the governess, catching my feet, pressing them close and stopping them. — "Come, go on!"

"Ten, eleven, thirteen," I drawl, in a lazy, doleful voice, staring out of the little window the while, and thinking how nice it would be to run away into the garden and play.

"Wrong, twelve! Now, then, repeat! What are you thinking of, Sasha?"

"Twe-e-el-ve!"

"Go on!"

"Thirteen, fourteen!"

"Good! Well!" — Silence.

"Come, what next? — fifteen. . . . There, you are wriggling your feet again! Nurse, give me a string and I will tie them fast!" she exclaims, angrily. But as nurse did not chance to be there, Lilya runs off herself, returns with some sort of a cord, and binds my feet. I fly into a passion, press my lips together, and remain silent; and, no matter what she does to me, I persist in my silence. It ends in her taking me by the hand and leading me to mamma. Mamma is sitting by the hearth, near the window, embroidering on canvas.

"Anna Nikolaevna, Sasha will not mind, and will not learn his lesson," reports Lilya.

"Well, then, my dear, put him in the corner, and let him stand there until dinner time," says mamma, going on with her embroidery, and not even looking at me.

I hang my head, and stand in the corner, twisting the

points of my handkerchief, which protrudes from my pocket. I play with the steel clasps on my tape belt; first, I buckle them, then I unbuckle them. Silence reigns in the room. Lilya has gone off somewhere; all that is heard is the rustle of the worsteds through the tightly stretched canvas. I cast a sidelong glance at mamma, and prepare to beg her pardon.

"Dear mamma, forgive me! I won't do so any more!" bursts from my tongue at length, in German, of course, as the governess had taught me, so that I might the sooner win forgiveness.

"It was not I who placed you there, my dear, so don't ask me!" replies mamma, sternly, trying to thread her needle, and, not succeeding, she twists the end of her thread and accomplishes it at last.

The "fifties" belonged to the period of serfdom. Only indistinct rumors of "freedom" were floating about, and hence I found the old customs still in vogue. There were comparatively few house-servants about the farm in our case; two coachmen, a cook, a gardener, two lackeys, who were also tailors, a cabinet-maker, several weavers, and about five maid-servants, who were continually exhibiting themselves in the maids' room.

They all lived in separate families in the servants' quarters, upstairs. Each family had several vegetable beds assigned to it in the kitchen-garden, and was permitted to keep, at their master's expense, a couple of pigs, for which special pens were constructed near the servants' quarters. When the pig of one of these "menials" had a litter, roast sucking pig speedily made its appearance on our table.

Provisions were dealt out to the house-servants, or a monthly allowance, consisting of flour, salt, and groats, was given them. The monthly allowance was served out to them in the drying-house, by the old housekeeper, Anisya Romanovna, a short, plump woman, who was always spattered with flour, and with spectacles forever on her nose, and who, moreover, was incessantly squabbling with the people and scolding. The house-servants called her "bottomless hell."

I remember well the faces of some of the house-servants to this day, although the greater part of them have long ceased to exist.

I will begin with Mikhailo, the cook; tall, lean, always surly towards his master and mistress, he was summoned to the house every evening.

"Uncle Mikhailo, please to come for your orders!" cries little Nastka, the errand girl, in a shrill voice, as she runs barefooted into the cook's quarters.

At that moment, Mikhailo is lying in his den, on the bench, and, with his legs curled up like a kalatch,¹ is sleeping sweetly, with his palm under his cheek, and protected from the importunate flies by his apron.

On hearing the summons, Mikhailo springs up, first calling to the girl, "I'll come at once." Then overtaking her at a run, he adds angrily, in a low voice, "Go to the deuce!" wipes away the trickling saliva with his fist, and lazily dresses himself. He takes off his dirty apron, tosses it into a corner, and ties on a clean one. He puts on a light gray coat, raising his arms very high in the process, and, stretching out the sleeves, he waves them like the sails of a windmill. After this, he takes from its peg his black silk neckerchief, which is worn to such a degree that it resembles a twisted kerchief with fringe, and ties up his neck with it; sometimes he performed this last operation with great care, spreading the kerchief out very wide so that his neck was hardly visible; but this only happened on especially festive days, when we had a number of guests with us.

Having knotted his kerchief, Mikhailo betakes himself to a corner of his room, and, rising on tiptoe, he takes down from the image-case a dirty fragment of a comb, with which he combs his hair; moistening his palm with spittle, he hastily smooths down his head, and, having thus completed his toilet, he hastens hatless, almost at a run, across the yard, bending his whole body forward and clenching on his way the fluttering skirts of his coat. On arriving at the house, he halts, and, once more smoothing down his somewhat disordered hair, he enters the maid-servants' sitting-room. Here sit several waiting-maids, some at work, others chatting and doing as they please.

"Announce to the mistress that the cook has come," says

¹ A wheaten roll.

Mikhailo, solemnly, in a low tone. One of the maids goes, and announces shrilly, "Mikhailo, the cook, has come!"

"Send him in!" is the reply from the adjoining room.

Mikhailo enters and makes a deep bow, whereupon his smoothly licked hair falls into his eyes once more; throwing it back, he halts by the jamb of the door, and, letting his hands fall along the seams of his trousers, like a condemned man, he prepares to listen.

On the sofa, near the chimney-corner, sit papa and mamma, softly discussing something. Mamma, half reclining, is resting her head against papa's breast, and playing with the tassels of his striped woollen dressing-gown.

"Is that you, Mikhailo?" she inquires, without turning her head.

"Yes, ma'am, Anna Nikolaevna."

"Vasily Vasilitch, my dear! order something. It really is so tiresome, and every time I am at a loss to know what to order."

"But what? I really don't know, either," says papa.

Silence ensues.

"Well, let him make some nettle soup. Cook some eggs with it, do you hear?" and father directs his personal attention to the cook. "And fry them only a little in butter and biscuit-crumbs, as you did the last time, you know?"

"Yes, sir."

Silence.

"Boil a tongue, for a cold dish. Only, see that the horse-radish is as strong as possible! You don't know how to prepare horse-radish! You must steep it in hot bouillon, but God only knows what it is like as you make it!"

"Yes, sir."

"And, by the way, Anna Nikolaevna, have we any game on hand?"

"Of course, Vasily Vasilitch! it was brought recently."

"And are there any hazel hens?"

"Yes, there are hazel hens, also."

"Well, then, roast some hazel hens, and don't dry them up. You always cook them so dry that it is impossible to eat them. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir. How many do you order me to roast?"

"How many! Surely, you know how many there are of us? Well, roast a grouse if there are not enough."

"Yes, sir."



ANNA NIKOLAEVNA VERESTCHAGIN.

(Mother of the Author.)

Pause.

"And what pastry will you order?"

"Make some waffles, and we will eat them with milk."

"Yes, sir. May I go, sir?"

"You may go."

Father yawns, and scratches the back of his neck.

Papa was fond of good eating, and often ordered the diners instead of mamma, who liked to doze on his breast at such times, and exclaim sleepily, now and then, "Ah, we haven't that!" or, "Ah, he doesn't know how to do that!"

When matters had proceeded as far as the pastry, we young ones would begin to tease mamma: "Mamma, do order pastry shells with whipped cream, that's a dear!" and, if she was in a pleasant mood, she would turn to the cook, and say, as though asking his pardon, "Well, pray, make them some shells, then; there's no refusing them."

"Yes, ma'am," the cook would answer, glaring gloomily at us.

Mikhailo was a good cook, but still he often had bad luck with his dishes; this was especially the case with white bread.

"What's this, my dear? what very bad bread we have again!" papa would say, at tea, smelling and crumbling the outside slice of the warm loaf.

"Call the cook!" rings out mamma's stern command.

The latter makes his appearance. His face is troubled; he foresees something disagreeable.

"Come here," says papa in a quiet voice. "Take this, what sort of stuff is this? is it bread? Come, eat it! Here, take it!"

And Mikhailo begins to eat. And it sometimes happened that he was forced to eat the whole loaf to the very end; and the bread was heavy. It was lucky for him if papa's hunting hound Boksa was there, for that helped him a little; when papa turned away, Mikhailo slyly handed over a crust to the dog, which the latter eagerly devoured, wagging his stump of a tail with delight.

"Well, have you finished it?" the question comes, at last.

"Exactly so, sir; I've finished it, sir," replies the cook, stretching out his neck like a crane, and striving to swallow the bits which stick in his throat.

"Well, then, you can go; but look out! don't you dare to send up such bread again."

Mikhailo holds his tongue, and withdraws in silence.

He was of a peaceable disposition, and I do not remember that he was ever known to retort. He would merely repeat his "Yes, sir," or "As your kindness sees fit." Oh, certainly, he was obliged to be peaceable!

The coachman, Polikarp, a short, broad-shouldered, middle-aged man, with a large, bushy, red beard, and eyelids which drooped very much sideways, as in the case of an old setter. Polikarp was a very good coachman, and, although he liked to tipple, and sometimes even to excess, still mamma preferred to ride with him rather than with the other coachman, Mosei, who was not only a drunkard but did not know how to drive.

Polikarp's horses were always in capital condition, and well groomed. But the difficulty was that all this held good only until the first drive to the village of Liubetz, to mass. There was a dram-shop in Liubetz; there was none in Pèrtovka.

Polikarp was strictly enjoined, before any such trip, not to drink.

"Excuse, Vasily Vasilitch, how is it possible? — Is this the first time that I have seen wine? The Lord forgive me . . . may God preserve me . . . be at ease."

When it was time to return in the afternoon, there would be a great search for him, and he would be found what is called dead-drunk. Neither pumping water on him nor rubbing his ears, nor anything else was of any avail, for he only bellowed.

But generally he only got half intoxicated, and was in a condition to drive the carriage; his face, however, which was as scarlet as kumatch,¹ betrayed him. Then, father, as he took his seat in the tarantas, would turn to him with remarks like the following: —

"So you could not resist the temptation to get drunk, hey? Why don't you answer? Very well, then; just let me get home, and I'll give you a sound thrashing."

I remember remarkably well, though I was but a little boy at the time, how this Polikarp was married to a plump, round, red-cheeked maid named Afanasya. The wedding took place in winter. They have just brought the young

¹ A red cotton material.

pair to Pèrtovka, from the ceremony at Liubetz. I am sitting in their room upstairs in the servants' quarters. The apartment is rather dimly illuminated by tallow candles. On the table, which is covered with a coarse cloth, stand several plates, containing gingerbread cakes, dried nuts, and candies. Near by, on a shelf, another dish of gingerbread is visible; they are not the same as those which stand before me — they are not covered with a red coating, but are white, and flavored with peppermint, and their taste is familiar to me. They have been set aside to regale the most honored guests, my parents, whose arrival is momentarily expected. And now the door of the room bursts open, and in flies Vaniushka, the scullion, and shouts: "The masters are coming!" The young couple, delighted and at the same time alarmed, snatch the candles from the table, and dash headlong into the anteroom, hang over the balusters, and light up the space below.

The bridegroom, Polikarp Semyonitch, is dressed like a dandy; a long black cloth waistcoat, with all its hooks and eyes fastened, sets not badly on him. Beneath it a red cotton shirt is seen. His neck is encircled with a brilliant black satin neckerchief. His reddish beard is carefully combed. Afanasya, the bride, is dressed no whit worse than her husband; her muslin gown, of the hue of the moor-berry, is covered, from her shoulders nearly to her heels, with a striped shawl, presented to her by her mistress. Several artificial roses are stuck in her hair.

In the meanwhile, from the top to the bottom of the stairs, the acquaintances and relatives of the young pair, especially the old men and women, range themselves along the wall. They are anxious to take advantage of the auspicious moment to get a closer look at their betters, and to bow as low as possible. Their hard and wrinkled hands are folded across their stomachs, in perfect humility. Their backs and necks make deep, very deep and prolonged inclinations, which seem cut-and-dried. I gaze down from above, not over the balusters, but through them, and try to discover whether my head will go through between the railings. It does go through them with ease; but drawing it back again is a more difficult matter, and the angular posts cut my ears.

Down below a commotion arises. The married pair nudge each other significantly, and exchange glances, the

wife whispers something in her husband's ear, and then both calm down. The outer door flies very wide-open, a stream of icy air penetrates from without into the cottage, pours in upon those standing there, and even reaches me! I feel my knees beginning to shiver under my thin trousers. The light of several candles outlines for a moment the still dirty porch, which has, however, been cleaned, and at its sides heaps of glittering snow, which seems bluish in hue.

The first to enter is my father, in a black wadded cap and a fox-lined coat, with an upturned beaver collar. Behind him comes mamma. Several peasants leap forward to take their outer garments. Papa flings off his coat; then, leaning unceremoniously on some one's shoulder, he kicks off his loose black felt boots, with very short legs, which are slightly powdered with snow. Mamma is cold; and therefore, without removing her black woollen cloak with its squirrel lining, she slowly mounts the stairs behind papa.

"Welcome our benefactors, our masters!" exclaim the old men and women, who are waiting; and one after another they kiss the gentlefolks' hands. Papa is in good spirits to-day.

"Good-day, Grandfather Ivan, how merciful God has been to you! Alive yet?" He addresses the question to a gaunt, little old man, who holds in his hands a tall lamb's-wool cap, which has turned yellow. The old man cannot be less than eighty years old, but his hair is still so dark that it is hardly distinguishable from the tawny, coffee-colored hue of his wrinkled countenance, with its scanty black beard.

"Through your prayers, master," drawls the old man, in a choked and trembling voice, bending still more his already much bent back. Thereupon he fixes on papa his lifeless, weary gaze, as to which it is difficult to decide, at a distance, whether he really gazes or only makes the pretence of doing so. Grandfather Ivan has evidently dressed himself up for this evening, although through the cleanliness of his attire poverty is still perceptible; his threadbare black caftan, which reaches only to his knees, is confined by a red woollen girdle; his blue linen trousers are entirely new — the gloss is not even worn off of them yet; his daughter or granddaughter must have given them to

him, and they have been lying by somewhere in his old woman's chest, awaiting some such festive occasion. His trousers are tucked into heavy, clumsy boots, plentifully besmeared with tar. His boots, also, in all probability, are rarely put on; and his weak legs, which are bent at the knees, like those of a broken-down horse, are unequal to the task of carrying them.

The masters have still several steps to ascend. The young pair, who are awaiting them on the landing, fall down at their feet, as though at the word of command, during which operation, as I take note, the bride very quickly and cleverly spreads the skirt of her gown in front of her, and in this attitude they both remain until the masters reach them and raise them up. With what zeal do they rush forward to kiss the hands of their master and mistress and the hems of their garments! what devotion and submission are expressed on their kindly faces! Papa and mamma behave very graciously towards them, and quietly slip into their hands a bank-note apiece, after which they enter the room, of which not a small part, together with the Russian stove, is shut off by a partition of planed boards.

The partition is pasted over with cheap colored prints; of all these pictures the only one which clings to my memory is the "Battle of Poltava," which represented Peter I. galloping at the head of his army, as though over a pavement of cobble-stones. The very same table at which I had been sitting a moment before is already spread with a fresh cloth; among the previous dishes stands the plate containing the mint gingerbread, my favorite cakes, and a round tart of leavened dough, filled with raspberry preserve. In addition to these, there are several bottles of fruit wines and decanters of vodka.

The people who had been on the staircase made their way cautiously into the room, one by one, in the wake of the master and mistress. They entered quietly, crossed themselves before the images, bowed to us, and then began to converse among themselves, in whispers, the women and old women whispering in such a manner that we could hear distinctly everything that was said, and, huddling together in one corner, in a sort of speechless amazement, they riveted their eyes upon their superiors. And here is Grandfather Ivan, stepping across the threshold with difficulty.

After him crawls in his wife, quite as aged as himself, in a dark sarafan of glossy linen, as new as grandfather's trousers, and of the same color. The old woman's sarafan is buttoned down the middle, for its entire length, with round leaden buttons. It occurred to me at the time, "How nice it would be to cut those buttons off the old woman, and fire them out of my cross-bow; how far they would fly!" Over her sarafan she wears a faded yellow short jacket, edged with white hare-fur. Her head is bound up in a dark kerchief, in a triangular form. The old woman holds in her hands a dark and dirty bundle, with gifts. Wrinkled folds hang on her face, especially on her cheek-bones; her eyes are narrow, bleared, and tearful. As a whole, her face bears an expression as though the old woman were preparing to weep.

The master and mistress proceed to the front corner and seat themselves below the images, near which, on a little shelf, stand the new marriage candles, which have not yet got dusty.

Mamma throws off her cloak into the hands of the bride. The latter flushes up, and does not know where the best place will be to put the cloak; she throws it here, then there, and ends by folding it carefully, fur out, like some sacred thing, and laying it beside the mistress herself, although the heat in the room is intolerable without the cloak. I steal as near the plate as possible, and plant all five fingers on the mint gingerbread. Papa sees it, and raps me in a painful manner on the hand, saying, "Why so greedy?"

My cheerfulness vanishes on the instant. I color up, and for some time I am ashamed to glance around. The young woman places on the table a tray with two wine-glasses; her husband, with trembling hands, fills them with a fruit brandy, of a crimson color, and presents them in silence, with a bow.

"Pray, taste this sweet brandy, Vasily Vasilitch, Anna Mikalovna," pipes Afanasya, hastily, from behind her husband's back, turning quite scarlet as she does so, and she makes haste to offer to the gentlefolks the dishes containing the presents and the tart.

"Now, may God grant you peace and concord," says my father, and he drinks half a glass. — "Wisdom and love," adds mamma, with a smile, and, barely tasting the liquor,

she sets the glass on the tray, and casts a condescending glance at the remaining guests, who are huddled together in the corner. In this glance it was possible to read that mamma was already accustomed to all this servility. She is evidently conscious of her power over those present, in contrast with their absolute nothingness before her. Papa does not cast such a glance, he is not even in the least occupied with that thought; he has fastened his eye on the smoke-stained ceiling, and thoughtfully surveys the cracks, after which he lowers his gaze, inspects the partitions, searches out with his eyes the cockroaches assembled in the crevices, and, flinging down with his hand one that has made haste to crawl upon his collar, he stares indifferently at mamma, yawns and scratches the back of his head. Mamma whispers something in father's ear.

"Come, my dear, come," he drawls in French, whereupon both rise, but without haste. The newly married pair again hasten forward like mad people, to help them put on their cloaks, kiss their hands, and accompany them with obeisances to the bottom of the stairs.

While this was going on, the countenances of both parties seemed of the sort from which one might draw the conclusion that peace and concord were settled upon for a long space of time. But this I did not believe in, and, as a matter of fact, a month had not passed when, one morning, as I am running to the stable, dragging my little sledge after me, lo and behold! Polikarp is grooming our favorite horse, Mashka, who is tied to a post. His appearance is peculiar: his hair is in wild disorder, his short jacket is torn; his face is swollen, especially his eyelids; his eyes are nearly closed. All his clothing, with the exception of the high, gray felt boots, with worn-out heels, fits him in strange fashion. Swearing loudly and cursing the hour of his birth, Polikarp works away angrily over the horse: he shouts and tugs at the halter, and kicks her in the belly with his felt boot, though she has done nothing to deserve it.

I inquire what the matter is — he makes no reply. I run back to my nurse; just at that moment she has run out on the porch, is waving her hands at me and screaming: "You have forgotten your mittens, Sashenka, u-u-u!" I run to her, and ask: —

"Nurse, why is Polikarp in such a rage?"

“Let him alone, my dear; don’t meddle with him,” she says, soothingly, pulling on my mittens. “Papa ordered him to be whipped this morning!”

Our other coachman, Moisei, or, as we called him, Mosei, differed from Polikarp in many respects. Polikarp, when he was sober, was taciturn and sluggish; but this man, on the contrary, was brisk and talkative. He drove badly, was continually lashing the horses, and he invariably watched his chance to strike several times on the self-same spot, chiefly on the legs and under the belly, so that his horses were constantly wincing and switching their tails. He had a habit of clucking at the horses, and he sometimes annoyed father so on the road that the latter would shout: “Do stop your clucking! you have made my ears ache already!”

All these habits he had acquired in Moscow, where he had lived for a time as a droschky-driver.

Something was sure to happen to Mosei on the road, and no trip ever passed off without something of the sort: either the collar-strap broke, or the traces gave way, or a wheel came off the axle, and this was of frequent occurrence. He could not sit quietly on the box, he kept wriggling from one side to the other, pulled his whip from under him a hundred times, lashed the horses, tucked it under him again, and so on, until papa gave him a cuff on the cheek.

In two points he resembled Polikarp, — drunkenness and gluttony. In the first, both were precisely alike; in the second some difference existed. Polikarp was passionately fond of batter-cakes, which were cooked in our kitchen, on festivals, — of a very large size, as big as a platter, quite thick, spiced and almost entirely without butter. Polikarp would eat as many as forty of these at one sitting.

Mosei could never get his fill of stewed cranberries with oatmeal. For this dish he would have been ready to do anything; all the house-servants used to tease him: —

“Well, Mosei, do you want some cranberries and oatmeal?”

“Hand it over!”

“And would you eat it with flies?”

“Hand it over!”

Then they would give him flies in a cup of cranberries,

and he would eat as though nothing were the matter. For the sake of this delicacy, he swam across the Sheksna and back twice without pausing to rest; and the river was about a hundred fathoms broad near us.

Mosei had a son, Alexei; he whipped him nearly every day, wherever it chanced, with whatever came handy, and for any reason, for the merest trifle; and at the very moment when Alexei was dancing with pain, Mosei would pull from his pocket a ginger-cake or a *bublik*,¹ and give it to him, and, smoothing the lad's head, he would say, "Come, now, eat, what are you blubbering about? You're not the only one that gets thrashed. Look there, how they whip the young gentlemen."

The whole form of Ilya, our gardener, is sharply defined in my memory. He was very tall, with long, shaggy hair, mixed with gray; on his brow he wore a narrow strap, which did not prevent his hair falling into his eyes; his chin was never shaved, and his moustache was bristly; his appearance inspired me with a certain incomprehensible terror; he talked loudly, in a rather hoarse voice, and went about in a dark blue checked shirt of glossy linen, with collar unbuttoned, so that the copper cross hanging to a dirty cord was always visible on his breast. The shirt was confined by a narrow red woollen girdle, "with words;"² at his side dangled a copper comb. On his legs he wore light blue linen trousers, and on his bare feet huge shoes. He used a great deal of snuff, and thrust his huge birch-bark snuff-box — his "kettle," as nurse called it — either into his boot-leg, if he had on boots, or simply into the bosom of his shirt.

No matter when you chanced to run into the garden or the kitchen-garden, you invariably found Ilya there, sitting among the beds, and always without his hat; but do not imagine that this was because he was so laborious; no, he was very calmly plaiting baskets from bast, which the shepherds got for him, and they sold the baskets for him on the sly in town.

¹ A small, ring-shaped cake, like a delicate pretzel without salt.

² Words of a prayer printed on a belt, and supposed to preserve the wearer.

I seem now to hear mamma's voice in the garden, "Ilya, Ilya!"

"Hm, hm! Here, mun! here I am, Anna Mikolavna," rang out the reply. After which the whole of his huge body made its appearance among the beds; the baskets, of course, were hidden in the grass, and he was engaged in turning up the earth.

That Polikarp and Mosei were drunkards there was no question; but Ilya was an arch-drunkard, and he drank hard and long. Do what you would with him, punish him as you would, all was of no avail. Ilya remained incorrigible to the day of his death. In addition to this, he had a habit of concealing the smell of vodka with garlic, in consequence of which his approach was perceptible at a considerable distance, and conversation with him at close quarters was impossible. As soon as he entered the vestibule, he exhaled an odor exactly like that of a dram-shop. Had it not been for his wife, Varvara, who had first been our housekeeper, and afterwards mamma's favorite maid, it seems to me that Ilya would have been despatched to serve as a soldier.

I will also mention the small, unshaven face of our old lackey, Ignaty Abramitch, who was also our tailor; but I hardly remember him, and that only because, to the present day, there abides with me that terror with which I peeped through the crack of the door before running through the men-servants' waiting-room, to see whether Ignaty Abramitch were there. He was always sitting on the table, with his legs tucked under him, and with huge spectacles on the tip of his nose, sewing or cutting out something; and as soon as he saw that I was running, he would bend down from the table, and, glaring through his spectacles, he would try to stick his needle into me at the lower end of my spine, saying, "So you're running again, you little scamp!" And I, hugging the wall closely, and defending myself with my palm, flew past him as swiftly as possible.

At Pèrtovka, on great festivals, such as, for example, the day of Saints Kuzma and Demyan, of Frol and Lavr, a special feast was prepared for the house-servants, and, as the peasants in the village brewed beer, we also brewed

some. Papa, having become accustomed to the idea that he could not eradicate drunkenness, winked at the roisterers on such festive occasions, and even, to a certain extent, connived at them. Thus, for instance, we brewed so much beer that every house-servant was able to get intoxicated on it without any assistance from vodka.

I will describe a festival on the day of Kuzma-Demyan, the first of July.¹

The day is warm and sunny. In the yard, in front of the porch of the manor-house, the women have set out long tables from the servants' kitchen. Ulyana, the cook, a rough and very ugly woman, who reviles the servants from morning till night, is putting on the tables — with a countenance of displeasure — half-white patties, with wheaten groats and curds. Slices of black bread, a couple of fingers thick, are also arranged on the tables. Mikhailo, the cook, and his son Vaniushka, with anxious countenances, drag a tub of beer along the well trodden path leading from the cellars to the house, and place it in the middle of the table. Behind them hastens along the fat housekeeper, Anisya Romanovna, with an iron *yendova* (a sort of big cup with a spout) in her hands.

The overseer, all the steady servants, and many of the peasants, those who were the steadiest, assemble in the yard of the manor-house to "congratulate" the proprietor. Now they are all clustered about the tables, bareheaded. Papa comes out on the porch, and greets the peasants.

"W-w-welcome, my ch-ch-children, I c-c-congratulate you on the h-h-holiday," he says, stuttering a little.

"And we also congratulate you, our benefactor! Thanks, dear sir, we thank you most humbly, Vasily Vasilitch!" resounds from the throng in a discordant and long-drawn shout.

In front of them all I see the overseer Alexei; a tall, thin peasant, with dark, curly hair, and a very sympathetic face. His black cloth caftan is rusty with age, and seems brown. It is confined with a red woollen girdle.

As I remember him, overseer Alexei, when he presented himself daily before papa for orders, used to wait in the anteroom, keeping his huge lamb's-wool hat pressed against his stomach with both hands. A dirty cotton handkerchief was always hanging out of the hat. And since, during his

¹ Kuzma and Demyan are the protectors of cattle.

interviews with papa, Alexei stood in a rather doubled-up attitude, his hat hung very low. I remember well how I and my brother Alyosha often used to run up to the overseer at such moments, and, lifting the handkerchief from the bottom of the hat, peep in to see whether there was not something beneath it, for Alexei not infrequently brought us presents from home — batter-cakes, eggs, cheap gingerbread, and so forth. He did not bring us these things in his pocket, but put them straight into his hat, and on his head, covering them with the handkerchief.

Behind Alexei, the overseer, stood the other superintendents of the Pärtovka farm. Nearest of all was Yakoff Trifonoff, of medium height, with black hair sprinkled with gray, and a small beard. He spoke in a pleasant, feminine voice, and lisped. He was fond of tipping, and on festival days he was always exhilarated. Yakoff understood well how to catch fish, and when papa asked him for some large sterlets, Yakoff, measuring off with his right hand upon his left fourth finger one and a half, exclaimed: "As true as can be, Vasii Vasiitch, that is the length they come, under size¹ — the fish are under size — by Heaven, there aren't any big ones!" and Yakoff spoke in such a plaintive, supplicating voice that papa was involuntarily forced to agree. But sometimes he got angry and ordered Alexei, the overseer, to punish Yakoff in the stable, whereupon Yakoff would fling himself on his knees before papa and shriek: "Vasii Vasiitch, my own father, by heavens, there are no big ones, believe, believe!"

On a line with Yakoff Trifonoff stands Ivan Oborin, the tallest peasant in all the village, with a long, blond beard and prominent eyes. I do not recollect his voice, as Oborin was almost always silent. He always got intoxicated on holidays, and fell into a brawl, generally with peasants from other estates, from Olkhoff, Liubetz, and other places. More than once, so far as my memory goes, they broke Oborin's head with stakes, logs of wood, or anything that came to hand. Ivan Oborin was tall and powerful, hence I figured to myself in his person Yeruslan Lazarevitch, of whom nurse sometimes told us stories.

¹ On the Volga and the Sheksna, sterlets are bought by measure, the measure being taken from the eyes to the root of the tail. Fish shorter than seven *vershki* (four feet) in length are considered undersized, and are sold cheap.

Our servants, Polikarp, Mosei, Ilya, Savely the weaver, and some others, nine or ten men in all, are also assembled around the tables, but hold themselves apart. The master retires to his room, and then the scene in the yard changes. The first to step up to the beer is Alexei, the overseer. He carefully lifts from the edge of the tub the bright tin ladle, dips up the beer with it, and, saying to the right and left, "Health on the festival!" he quietly drinks, then takes a bit of tart, places it carefully at the bottom of his hat, covers it with his handkerchief, and, holding his hat with both hands, he directs his course with even steps through the yard, towards the village. After the overseer, Yakoff Trifonoff steps up to the beer with a beaming face; "May the Lord bless the master, and the mistress, and their children!" he exclaims shrilly, in his lisping, womanish voice, and crosses himself with a flourish, glancing askance at the windows of the manor-house. But no sooner has Yakoff grasped the ladle than Mikhailo, the cook, descends hastily from the manor-porch. His face is gloomy, as usual; his body is encircled with a white apron. He runs up to Yakoff, not intentionally, but in passing, as it were, almost snatches the ladle from him and exclaims: "Let me have a swallow, quick, I must run and get dinner," and swiftly drains it dry; then he shakes back his hair, and, inclining his body forwards, as usual, he continues his course to the kitchen in the same manner.

"May the Lord bless the master, and the mistress, and their children," begins Yakoff in a fresh shout, somewhat taken aback by Mikhailo's proceeding, and he drains the ladle. After him the other peasants drink — they, in the quality of guests, drink before the house-servants. And the house-servants stand anxiously awaiting their turn. Ivan Oborin is the last of the muzhiks to take the ladle. The house-servants throng around the tub in a herd. I was fond of watching them drink, so I moved up closer to them. Cries were heard: "Come, Mosei, make haste, after Oborin!" Evidently, all the servants knew how hard it was for Mosei to wait for his turn. Mosei does not wait to be urged; he steps up to the table with decision, flings his cap under it, like a thing useless to him at the present moment, and seizes, not the ladle, but the bowl. He fills it full from the tub, and grasps it in both palms. He wriggles his back a little, with enjoyment, perhaps;

he protrudes his lips like the spout of a pump, and, raising the bowl to his mouth, he blows aside the froth, and begins to drink, without bestowing so much as a glance on any one. He drinks long and without taking breath. Those who are standing in a line with him do not even look at him, knowing well that Mosei will not step aside very soon; and they only sigh, and cough, and exchange occasional glances.

"How does he hold all that drink, the puny beast," growls Polikarp, wrathfully, adjusting his red beard with his outspread fingers. He is very angry with Mosei at the moment. In fact, little as I was, I was alarmed for Mosei at such times. Mosei, though thin and ill-favored, in comparison with the others, drank a fabulous quantity of beer. And Mosei drinks and drinks. Cold beer is savory. Mosei has probably made up his mind to drain the entire bowl to the bottom. And he is already nearing the end, he is already obliged to tip it up.

"The deuce, the devil! you'll burst!" rise cries behind him.

"How he's dipping into it!" But Mosei does not lend an ear; he drinks it all up to the very last drop, even the foam which clings to the sides, and this he sucks in with delight, then sets the bowl in its place. Having made an end after this fashion, he does not even touch the tart or the meat, but betakes himself straight to the hay-loft, where the equipages stand, and, climbing into one of the kibitkas, he arranges himself as comfortably as possible, and goes to sleep.

"Well, what a belly!" growls Polikarp, in a somewhat abashed tone. It is his turn to drink; he is afraid of doing himself discredit in comparison with Mosei, but, nevertheless, he lays hold of the bowl with his thick, calloused hands, and, whispering, "Lord Jesus," he plunges his red and shining face, together with his red mustache and beard, into the white and feathery froth. But Polikarp has not so much "wind" as Mosei; therefore, after the lapse of two or three minutes, he raises his head, exclaims: "Ouf!" inhales as much air as possible into his chest, and falls to again at the tub. After Polikarp, Ilya drinks. He drinks just like Polikarp, with a pause for breath. During the process he coughs several times with his bass voice, which seems to proceed from a cask, pulls a birch-bark

snuff-box from the leg of his boot, takes a pinch, coughs again, and again falls to drinking. He takes turns with Polikarp several times, and they both hover around the tub until they have drained it dry, after which they go off arm in arm to riot through the village.

CHAPTER II.

NURSE ANNA LARIVONOVNA.

OUR nurseries, as I have already said, were situated on the lower floor. Our old nurse was fond of toasting herself on the stove in one of them. She would heat this low stove so that it was impossible to touch it, and climb upon it, and place her back against it, and groan and yawn and say, as she crossed her mouth: "Lie down, my children! sleep, my nurslings! Christ watch over you! oh—oh—ho!" and, driven beyond her powers of endurance by the heat, she would rise and sit on the stove, and scratch herself, and gaze at us as though at some sort of treasures, moisten her fingers, snuff the tallow candle, and lie down again, only, this time, on her side.

Mamma rarely glanced into our apartments. She usually made her appearance in the evening, when they were putting us to bed, and I was afterwards reminded of it by the apparition of the director of the gymnasium in the classrooms. As, on these occasions, some one of the pupils humbly gave warning of the approach, and the teacher also, with servility, rose from his desk to receive him, so, on the former occasions, one of the chamber-maids informed nurse, and the latter began zealously to put in order everything that came to hand, and enjoined us to lie quietly. We would pretend to be asleep; I could hardly wink, and I would with terror behold mamma enter. She wore a calico dress with blue spots, and on her head the familiar white silk kerchief, while in her hands she held a parasol.

"Well, nurse, are the children asleep?" she inquires, sternly.

"Yes, dear madam, they are asleep!" and thereupon nurse calmly folds her hands across her stomach, bows to mamma's girdle, and at the same time, though not daring to touch it with her hand, she endeavors to catch her lady's hand with her lips and kiss it.

"Now, mind, Anna, if the children are not obedient, you

are to tell me." And then she retires with the same even tread, followed by profound reverences.

Nurse, on her side, loved us unspeakably, and concealed all our pranks and capers in every possible way. When she slept remains a mystery to me to this day. No matter when you woke up, you had only to call, "Nurse!" and she instantly made her appearance, in a long white night-dress of coarse linen, with disordered locks and her thin braid of hair; her wrinkled face expressed anxiety.

"What, my dear? what is it, my soul? what is it, my nursling? Do you want a drink?" and she would bring the little jug of kvas which always stood on the window-sill, protected by a paper from the flies; rye biscuits were moistened in the kvas for the sake of the taste. I can see that jug now, with its broken handle, a crack running its whole length, and wound about with yellowish birch-bark.

Nurse was very fond of taking snuff. She had a snuff-box of birch-bark. This box served as the object of her never-ending search; as soon as she felt a desire to take a pinch, the hunt for it began; she would search and search, — it was not to be found — it had disappeared. "O Lord, where have I mislaid it?" glancing askance at us at the same time. We cannot restrain ourselves, and we laugh. "I knew it, I knew that you had made away with my snuff-box. Give it to me this instant; if you don't, truly, I'll complain to your mamma," cries the old woman, trying to appear as angry as possible. And this was why the people called her "the snuff-box."

My four eldest brothers had already long been in the military school, while I and my brother Alyosha were growing up in the country. I lived on peaceable terms with him, but that did not prevent our fighting almost every day. It was quite sufficient for one of our visitors to stir us up: "What's this? — they say that you, Alyosha" [or Sasha], "took to your heels before your brother," — and we would fling ourselves upon each other, and beat each other as hard as we could. Our fights took place on the sly, in a retired corner, because papa could not endure them. On hearing his step, we instantly concluded a peace, kissed each other, and from the bitterest foes became the best of friends. But when, as it sometimes chanced, father came upon us unawares, the matter ended in rueful wise: "What, fighting again!" he shouted; "well,

there's nothing to be done, come and I will reconcile you." — Oh, horrors! we were carried off to be whipped: leaping and beseeching, we ran after him, seized him by the sleeve, ran in front of him and barred the road. — "Dear little papa, my dove, my precious one, forgive us, we'll never do so again!" We kiss and entreat him. But nothing moves papa, he repulses us and says: "Take your hands off of me." — Then, plucking from the broom on his way several pliable twigs, he strips off the dry leaves, and leads us to the vestibule, where the settling of accounts begins. Alyosha, as the oldest, catches it first, but this makes it all the worse for me, since I have to look on at his tortures.

Father performed this operation with the greatest coolness. He laid his coat on a chair, and, gazing at us with unsympathizing eyes, he grasped my brother with his left hand, while with his right he endeavored to unbutton the latter's trousers, and, as they were fastened only by a single button, we resisted this with all our might. But the contest is an unequal one. Gazing at this moment on Alyosha, all in tears, I dance a *trepaka*,¹ and kiss papa: I call him by every endearing name which I can think of. But all is vain. Having finished with Alyosha, and having bestowed upon him a few extra lashes by way of farewell, when the latter has already slipped away from him upon his heels, father takes hold of me and goes through with the same performance.

Having received a few parting cuts at hap-hazard, like Alyosha, and having sat down for a few seconds upon the sore spot on the cold pavement by way of procuring relief, I run bawling to the nursery. Nurse receives me with a howl, embraces me, and immediately examines the chastised spots, exclaiming as she does so: —

"What a wretch of a papa! Bare too, and all on one side! Just see how red it is!" and the old woman bursts into tears of pity.

Alyosha and I spend the whole summer out-of-doors. As soon as we are awake and have drunk our tea, we run to the stable first of all, to take a look at the horses; thence

¹ A very lively and popular Russian peasant dance.

we betake ourselves to the carriage-house, climb on the box of one of the equipages, fasten a rope to the pole, and, flourishing a whip of cord, we set out with a shout on an endless ride. When we are tired of this, we run a race to the brook to bathe, the little boys belonging to the house-servants join us on the way, and we all proceed together, each trying to outstrip the other and to see who will get undressed first, flinging our boots, clothes, and caps down in the road, so that we traverse the last stretch before reaching the brook in a naked condition, and then, with uproar and laughter, we jump into the water. There we are not on our guard as to shouts and merriment; we turn somersaults, we leap and splash, and dive and paddle with our feet, and play every sort of prank. After remaining in the water for a while, we climb out on the banks and begin with our bare hands to make holes, trying to dig down to the water. Having finished one, we begin a second and a third, until we weary of it. Then we roll on the shore in the warm, dry sand, as the cook rolls outlets in biscuit crumbs, and then we fling ourselves into the water once more. And so we continue our sports until nurse leads us off to dinner.

We were very fond of shooting with cross-bows, and each of us had several of them. Savely, the weaver, made our arrows for us. We would go to him in the weaving-room, and entreat him: "Make us an arrow, Savely."

"Eh, I haven't any time," he would answer: "but the master is very good," and he would begin to cut away.

Out I run into the yard with my cross-bow bent, lay the arrow into the notch and shout to my brother: "Lyolya, see, I'm going to hit the ridge-pole!" and I let go the cord. The arrow flies so high that it is barely visible, and, having attained its loftiest point, it seems to pause and to be unwilling to return, then it makes a soft curve, and flies swiftly downward; woe to me if it strikes on a stone or on anything hard, — it always breaks. Then come fresh entreaties: "Savely, make me an arrow."

We frequently betook ourselves, in company with a crowd of village boys and boys belonging to the house, to the brook to drive the fish into nets. This manner of fishing consisted in taking a creel and dropping it to the bottom of the brook at its narrowest part; the space between the creel and the shore was stopped up with whatever came to

hand, sods, chips, twigs ; then we ascended the stream for half a verst, and began to beat the water with small boards, fastened to long poles ; this weapon was called a *botalo*. With what trepidation and expectation did we approach the creel, with what force did we begin to beat the water ; now we might certainly expect to find the creel full of fish. We draw near, we have arrived, we pull it out, each one of us tries to be the first to inspect the results. Now the top of the creel has made its appearance, nothing is visible but shadows, the fish will be further in ; the middle is already visible, and still there is nothing, they must be at the bottom ; and at the bottom are two big brook cockroaches and a snail. Not one of the pike which we had seen in the brook, and for which we had hoped, is there. And how dirty we are ; our trousers and our shirts are all wet and muddy. But this lack of success does not disturb us in the least, and does not annihilate our hopes. We make a second trial, and this time we catch two pike, two or three *vershki*¹ in length. Good heavens, how delighted we are, and with what triumph do we carry them to the kitchen, with what pride do we hand them over to Mikhailo, the cook ! But how great is our disappointment when Mikhailo, instead of praising us, glances angrily at our prey and, without uttering a word, flings our fish to the cat. The cat seizes them, and, growling and purring with satisfaction, sets off, first at a trot, then at a gallop, with her tail elevated in the shape of an interrogation mark, and runs under the floor, while we run weeping to complain to nurse.

We did not enjoy so much freedom in winter, and all our pleasure consisted in sliding down hill on *korezhki*. A *korezhka* is simply a trough with a small seat fastened in the bottom. When the weather permitted, we slid from morning till night, so that nurse found it hard to get us home.

During the long winter evenings, we played in the great hall, where we placed five or six chairs, one behind the other, in single file, strung ropes through their backs and fastened them to the front one. The chairs, of course, represented horses, and the two in the rear were covered with kerchiefs and shawls, forming a sort of wigwam, which represented a carriage. We would crawl in, jerk at

¹ A *vershok* is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

the ropes and the chairs, shout, knock, flourish our whips, and so on for the whole evening.

Sometimes in the evening, when papa was in a good humor, he took his guitar and sang. His favorite song was :—

Brothers, fill your glasses high,
Fill them to the brim with wine ;
Let no dregs in the bottom lie,
Drain the last drop divine.

He sang in a light tenor voice, with much feeling, and liked to have us join in. Therefore, when he sang, mamma used to try to fall into tune with him, although she was rarely successful, and soon gave up the effort. Then father was vexed and said :—

“Come now, join in, my dear Aniuta! Why are you silent?”

“I do sing, I do sing, Vasily Vasilitch; I sing as well as I know how!” she would return, somewhat offended.

CHAPTER III.

THE COLLECTION OF QUIT-RENT. (*Obrok.*)

No little delight was furnished us by Semyon, the pedler, who came to our village every year, shortly before Christmas with several wagon-loads of dry-goods, and remained with us for three or four days.

Semyon was about forty years old, short of stature, stout and red-cheeked, with a small, blond beard, and hair cut in a circle. Before dinner and after dinner he displayed his wares, spreading them out on the hall floor. His gloomy clerk, a tall, dark-complexioned man, did nothing but carry in and carry out heavy linden chests, bound about with stout ropes. Mamma spent all these days in inspecting handkerchiefs, shawls, calico, stuffs, braids, laces, towels, worsteds, canvas, and everything connected with handiwork and dress. We would run in and play pranks and look to see whether Semyon was going to show us the promised toys soon. And now a box has been brought in and opened, and, oh joy, how many precious things for us it contains! Balls and rattles, whistles, india-rubber birds, and, best of all, little tin harmonicas which can be played with the mouth. We surround the box, and rummage in it; Semyon, though busy with other matters, does not forget to dart a sidelong glance from time to time, in order to see that we are not taking anything away.

The chamber-maids, old and young, surround the wares in a dense wall, and timidly, at first, glance at one thing after another. The proprietor skilfully displays his interesting objects before them.

"What a kerchief this is, my dear!" he says approvingly to Liuba, the pretty maid, who, standing behind her friend's back, and resting her chin on the latter's shoulder, is casting longing eyes at the kerchief.

"Please to feel how good it is, my pretty one," and he offers it to her. She touches it slightly, titters, grows confused, and again hides herself behind her friend's back.

"Well, what are you afraid of, buy it if it pleases you!" mamma says, turning to her. She is seated in a soft and very low arm-chair covered with morocco: Variusha and Lilya crawl in front of her on their knees, and take turns in showing her first one thing and then another.

"Ah, Anna Nikolaevna, here's a pretty calico!" cries Lilya, tugging at the piece.

"What do you see in it that is pretty, my good woman? Put it away!"

"Madam, you asked for some green woollen stuff, here it is; just what will suit you!" exclaims Variusha, showing it. Mamma looks at it, pulls off a few threads and lays them on one side. And so the day passes. ●

During the year when my parents took Alyosha to the military school, in M——, my sister Masha and I were left in the town of Tcherepovetz, in care of an intimate friend of ours, an elderly gentlewoman named Anna Ilinishna, to whom we were deeply attached. Really, when I come to think of it now, all these familiar faces flash past me in a dream.

When you begin to reflect more profoundly, to recall all the details of face, manner, garments, all the surroundings, the apartments, when we lived there, a certain singular sensation begins to take possession of you. Something warm and pleasant spreads over your body, and the more you think the more details do you recall. There is Anna Ilinishna, what a stately lady she was! Sixty years of age, above middle height, and rather corpulent; she had a melodious voice, and a fine face, which inspired respect. Her upper lip was covered with small black moustaches, which were very noticeable. Her hair was entirely gray, almost white, and was fastened up behind with a huge tortoise-shell comb adorned with various figures. I often admired this comb as it lay on her toilet-table. Under the hair on her temples, Anna Ilinishna placed small, round, black cushions, in the shape of sausages, pointed at both ends. These cushions were so carefully covered with the hair that they were entirely invisible to the eyes of strangers. Anna Ilinishna always kept her left hand in her pocket, where she had the keys of a multitude of

chests of drawers and cupboards. She walked very fast and enjoyed sound health.

She had one failing; she liked to find out what every one was doing and saying. I can hear her now, sending for her maid Variusha, and giving her orders. "Variusha, my dear, go look through the crack, and see what Vasily Vasilitch is doing." And if any of us young ones remarked upon it to her, and said, "Why do you want to know, Anna Ilinishna? Didn't you say that it wasn't nice to peep and listen?"

"Ah, my dear!" she would exclaim, in a tone of offence, "no one can blame me for that. I never was curious, and I never shall be."

We lived in the principal street, in the house of the merchant's wife, Pustoshkin, and occupied the whole of the lower story, while the County Court was lodged in the upper story.

In consequence of this close acquaintance with justice, several ceremonials of the judicial procedure of that period have been preserved fresh in my memory to this day.

Thus, for example: if a landed proprietor found it necessary to punish his servant or any of his peasants, he sent the individual with a note to the judge, and the matter was attended to forthwith.

As old Anna Ilinishna was a dame who was greatly respected, and who had abundant means, the district officials were ready to carry out her slightest wish with absolute obedience. The district judge, at that time, was Iona Matvyevitch Kiryakoff, an intimate friend of hers.

As I now recall the facts, Anna Ilinishna, driven beyond her patience by the drunkenness of our coachman, Polikarp (of course, my parents had placed all rights and powers over the servants at her disposal during their absence), sent her maid Nastya upstairs to the judge with the injunction:

"Nastya, run upstairs, greet Iona Matvyevitch from me, and request him to come to me instantly; tell him that there is urgent need, do you hear?"

"I obey, madam," and off runs Nastya.

Iona Matvyevitch makes his appearance on the instant all out of breath, in the green uniform prescribed to him, with its bronze buttons; he is fat, very fat, with a double

chin, which is shaved. He kisses the old woman's hand, and she smacks him on the forehead in return.

"What are your commands, my dear Anna Ilinishna? In what way can I serve you?"

"What, indeed, my dear man? it is beyond my strength. Polikarp is incorrigible!"

"What, drunk again? Where is he?"

"He is lying yonder in the kitchen; pray, look at him."

"When he wakes up, my dear madam, send him upstairs to me, and we'll give him a little lesson there."

"Very well, my dear friend, I will send him without fail; only treat him thoroughly well."

"Don't disturb yourself, my dear madam, we know our business. You shall be satisfied."

On waking, Polikarp flings himself at the old woman's feet.

"Dear madam, Anna Ilinishna, forgive; I will not do so again!" he howls.

"No, indeed, Polikarp, I will not forgive you; I will not forgive you on any account. I am tired of you. Go! go!" and the dame waves her hand commandingly.

Polikarp sadly betakes himself upstairs, accompanied by the same Nastya. He returns thoroughly cross, and for two days he does not say a word to anybody, but merely grooms the horses assiduously.

Almost exactly the same scene takes place with the old lady when she receives her *obrok*¹ from the peasants.

The maid appears, and announces:—

"Anna Ilinishna, the overseer from Olkhoff has come with the tax."

"Where is the overseer?" inquires the lady.

"In the anteroom, madam."

The old lady steps into the anteroom.

An elderly serf of lofty stature, with a large gray beard, and in his hand a black lamb's-wool cap, is humbly awaiting his mistress's coming. His coarse gray caftan is confined by a striped girdle, his trousers are of light blue glossy linen; above his bast shoes his legs are wrapped in footbands, and wound about with braided cords. On the appearance of his old mistress, the peasant bows to her feet.

¹ A kind of quit-rent paid by serfs in place of labor, the money being earned at service with strangers or in some trade.

"Ah, for heaven's sake, don't bow so! How I dislike that!" she exclaims.

The overseer rises, and timidly kisses her hand.

"Well, what now? what have you come for?"

"Well, here, my dear mistress, I have brought a bit of the *obrok*. This is a bad year!" he explains, in a deep, weary voice, drawing out his words; "the peasants have got entirely out of grain; there is nothing to eat, wages are wretched." Thereupon, with trembling hands, he unbuttons his collar, and, drawing out the heavy linen money-bag, which hangs upon his breast, and in which is thrust a worn leather purse, he opens it, pulls out several old and dirty bank-bills, and presents them with a bow.

"How much is there here?" asks the mistress, carelessly. "Your arrears amount to more than this, and you come here with this trifle."

"As you please, *matushka*,¹ only the commune sent me. If God will make the grain fruitful next summer, the serfs will pay."

"No, no, that is nonsense; it is impossible to let it stand so! Naska, Nastiushka! run, call Iona Matvyeitch!" cries Anna Ilinishna. "Wait a bit," she says, turning to the peasant, and retires to her own apartments.

Iona Matvyeitch does not make her wait for him; he comes downstairs, and, giving a quick glance at the overseer, he hastens on his way.

"How do you do, Anna Ilinishna?" rings through the apartments.

"Ah, Iona Matvyeitch, how glad I am!" The customary smacking is gone through with. "I thank you, indeed! How kind you are; you never refuse me your assistance!"

"Whatever you command, dear madam, I am delighted to be of service in any way within my power;" and thereupon the two go out into the antechamber.

"Here, now, my dear sir, I ought to receive from the Olkhoff serfs five hundred and forty rubles of arrears, and for the January third, four hundred and thirty-three rubles, and he brings me two hundred rubles in all. Surely, the like of this was never seen. Do help me,

¹ Untranslatable. A respectfully familiar form of address, the word being the diminutive of "mother."

Iona Matvyetch!" and the old lady puts on a lugubrious face.

"Be at your ease, my dear madam, go to your room; you shall receive your money."

She withdraws. Iona Matvyetch, on being left alone, seems instantly to acquire fresh life.

"Who are you? The Olkhoff overseer?" he turns threateningly to the trembling serf.

"Exactly so, my benefactor," replies the latter, dolefully, and bows to the judge's belt.

"You will be pleased to pay that money at once, or you will be thrashed on the spot. You know I give short shrift."

"Dear sir, have mercy!" howls the peasant, and falls at his feet. "As you please, dear sir, but there is no more money."

"You lie, you lie! I know how you have no more. Seek, and you will find."

"By heavens! my own father! I have none!" cries the man, not rising, but shoving his nose into the judge's boot.

"Come, now, get up; shell out, and then I shall not have to bother with you. Hey there, policeman!" shouts Iona Matvyetch, opening the door which leads upstairs.

The policeman makes his appearance.

"Where's the porter? Drag him upstairs!" and he points to the overseer, who is still wallowing about at his feet.

"Dear sir, have mercy! a little can be found."

"A-a, what? Now you sing another song, you old raven?"

The overseer draws from his breast a rag, knotted into a parcel, unties it, and hands him one bank-bill.

"Well, this is little, indeed; why are you trying to impose upon me? You can't sing beggar Lazarus to me. Take him off upstairs!"

"My own father, my benefactor, dear sir, if you were to kill me, I haven't a kopek more!"

The porter makes his appearance to assist the policeman.

"Haul him upstairs, children, and I'll be there directly!" shouts the judge, and off he goes to hand over to the old lady the trifle which he has squeezed out, and to drink a glass of wine by the way. They drag the overseer out and lead him upstairs, with their arms under his,

as though he were an archbishop. On the stairs cries are long heard: "Dear sirs! benefactors! if you were to kill me, I haven't another kopek!"

Having taken a bite and a drink, Iona Matvyeitch soothes the old lady once more, and then sets out to extract the remainder. After a few blows from the switches, the unhappy overseer again begins to shout, "Stay, Orthodox believers, there is a trifle more."

"Well, stop, my brave fellows. Show us what more you have!" orders the judge.

The serf takes off his bast shoes, and extracts from it another trifle.

"What! That's nonsense! Throw him down again, children!"

And they throw him down again. And this process is repeated five or six times.

And this mode of extracting the quit-rent prevailed everywhere. All day long, overseers were brought to the judge, and shrieks resounded:—

"Stop! my own fathers,—stop! there is still a trifle more!"

CHAPTER IV.

A TRIP TO ST. PETERSBURG AND THE RETURN TO THE COUNTRY.

Two years passed and the time came for me to go to Petersburg. I had known of this for a long time, and what alarmed me more than all the rest was the thought of parting from my nurse. This seemed to me so incredibly dreadful that I used to wake up in the night, cry, and say to her: "Nurse, my dear, my soul, surely you won't leave me, surely you will go with me?" But nurse was already suffering more than I was, and at this she burst into tears and began to comfort me and to assure me that she would go with me; and the nearer the time of my departure approached, the more troubled became my nights, and the more frequently did I weep.

The day of departure arrived. Although I was going with my parents and my brothers, still the parting from nurse was very hard for me, for I loved her more than everybody and everything else. Just before we set out, when all the preparations were completed, and when every one was dressed for the road, we assembled in the hall. Papa had on a short blue cloth wadded pelisse. On his neck he wore a striped woollen scarf; across his shoulder hung a fat travelling-bag of yellow leather, in which was placed a package of small bank-notes, for paying the posting fares, copper, silver, and a large travelling clasp-knife with a broken point. I remember that knife from the same time when my recollections of papa begin. Good heavens! how much trouble and terror that knife cost my brother Alyosha and me, when, having taken it from the writing-table for some purpose or other, we broke the point; how cowardly we became, not to put it more strongly, and how we ran slyly with the knife to the blacksmith Timofei, to get him to *glue* on a point; and how he, after turning it over in his black, smoky, calloused hands, refused, to our terror, to mend it, declaring that it was "a

fine bit of work." Do what we would, we could not escape father's wrath. Papa found out and gave us a good shaking by the ears.

In accordance with ancient custom, papa invites us to seat ourselves. We sit down wherever it happens; after remaining seated for a few seconds, all rise and begin to cross themselves and to pray, after which comes a general leave-taking. I cling fast to nurse, and they can hardly get me away from her. All the house-servants and many of the people from the village have assembled to bid us good-bye. They kiss our hands and shoulders, saying: "Farewell, good masters, may God give you luck, may you get to be a general." The yard is full of little boys from the village, all familiar faces, I know every one of them by name, I have played and cut pranks with every one. I am still indebted to the extent of twenty knucklebones to the one who is hiding yonder behind his mother's sarafan; he glances sideways at me, smiles and sucks the sleeve of his dirty shirt; I had hit another, before my departure, in the foot with an arrow from my cross-bow, and he intended to complain to papa, but for some reason he has changed his mind; I had thrown away the leather ball of a third, and this has grieved the lad so that he could hardly refrain from demanding payment from me even at that bitter moment.

And dogs—how many dogs are running about from all over the village: there is Zhutchko and Soloveïko and Syerko and Maltchik and big Kataïko and little Kataïko, one of whose ears always stands up while the other always droops. All of them, apparently, are greatly troubled and thrust themselves, by detachments, under the carriages and among the horses, lolling out their red tongues and diligently searching for something; two of them have already succeeded in picking a quarrel. With hair on end and rearing themselves on their hind legs, they have planted their fore-paws against each other, and are growling angrily and hoarsely at each other, foaming at the mouth the while. All about, barks, howls, the crying of children and women are blended together and produce a considerable noise.

At last we take our places. Mamma is the first to seat herself.

"Hold your horses firmly, my good Polikarp," she

entreats, mounting the tarantas, crossing herself imperceptibly on all sides; the housekeeper, Anisya Romanovna, assists her on one side, and Variusha, the maid, on the other.

"Have no fear, Anna Mikolavna; the horses are quiet," replies he, pulling off his hat and turning half round.

On this memorable day, his appearance is staid; he sits on the box perfectly sober and serious; he holds the reins in both hands; from his right wrist hangs his whip; his blue cloth coat is confined with a scarlet girdle, on his head he wears a silk hat with a steel buckle. Polikarp is only going as far as Liubetz, whence he is to return on horseback. The carriage is to go as far as the railway station of Valdaika, with relays of horses, as there is a post-road from Liubetz.

The tarantas is harnessed to three small but stout bay horses. The pole horse must be dissatisfied because the bridle is drawn too high, and he shakes his head incessantly: *din, din, din — din — din* rings out the bell monotonously from beneath the dark red bow of wood over his head. The right-hand side horse, resting his muzzle against the end of the bow, moves his ears alertly and seems to be discussing the impending journey with the pole horse. The left side horse is dejected over something. Bending his right hind-foot, he seems to be meditating whether the loading of the equipage will soon be completed.

Mosei officiously assists Polikarp; he is to remain at home, and is, therefore, dressed in house attire, in a gray ticking coat, spotted in places with tar, and with an old cap on the back of his head. Mosei, it appears, has already succeeded in swallowing a glass, and that is probably the reason why he winks so vigorously with his left eye. A low-voiced conversation is in progress between them.

"Adjust that rein," requests Polikarp.

"Which one, this?"

"Yonder; you see where it is caught; put it into the bit-strap."

"Why into the bit-strap? Hold! it is better so; it won't get tangled," says Mosei, convincingly.

Polikarp agrees.

"It seems as though that trace were a trifle short," says Polikarp, pointing with his whip.

Mosei grasps the side horse by the bit, clucks with his tongue and starts forward; the trace stretches taut and jerks the carriage; cries are heard.

"Ah, wait! what does this mean? stop!"

The two interlocutors quiet down and continue almost in a whisper:

"That's right; draw it a bit more. There! that's right; let it alone. Cant the bow over. . . . There, that'll do!"

Mamma did not get seated at once. Things were packed in so awkwardly that it was necessary to rearrange many of them. Variusha was a long time pulling out and arranging bags and baskets, so that papa could not refrain from exclaiming:

"Come, now, will you be ready there soon, Aniuta?"

"Ready, Vasily Vasilitch; get in!"

Father mounts the steps, grasps the edge of the door, and bending forward a little into the carriage, he swiftly arranges the cushion on the seat, thrusts another under his side, and then drops ponderously and at once into his place. The tarantas leans a good deal to his side. Papa is heavy.

"Ah, Vasily Vasilitch, how you are crowding me; you have quite crushed my side!" exclaims mamma.

"Well, then, I'll move."

"A little more, you have seated yourself on my bur-nous."

"But where am I to move to — there's no more room!"

"Very well, this will do."

I am placed in the middle, and I beg to be allowed to ride on the box.

"Stuff! nonsense!" says father. "The way is long. You are not going to visit your uncle this time, my boy; you'll get tired."

Nurse stands a few paces away, and never takes her eyes from me. Tears trickle down her tawny and wrinkled face. Clutching at her stomach with her right hand, she presses her mouth together with the left and her handkerchief, in her anxiety to restrain her sobs. She shakes her head bitterly and whispers something to herself; from the movement of her lips I decipher: "Farewell, my bright falcon; farewell, my golden child, my nursling. Ai! I shall die! Ai! my good people, let me embrace him one little time more!"

Mamma, as though jealous of us, gets vexed and cries :

“What tears are these? Aren’t you ashamed, Anna? You are only distressing the child. It seems as though you must have already had time enough to kiss each other.”

I dive into the cushion, and try not to look at nurse any more.

“Well, God be with us, drive on!” orders papa, takes off his hat and crosses himself. All follow his example.

“We-e-ell! God be with you, good people!” cries Polikarp with a drawl, and he shakes the reins. The tarantas rocks and moves heavily along the soft road, and the shafts creak. The peasants, the women, the house-ser-vants, great and small, all bow low, all wish us a pleasant journey. The little boys run after us and accompany us to the village, and some of them, far in front, run at full speed, not daring to look back lest they should waste time; they are desirous of reaching in season the distant gate at the end of the field and of opening it, in the expectation, of course, of receiving a little money for gingerbread. When we begin to pass them, my heart is oppressed within me; I should like to jump out and run back with them. It seems to me as though I do not want fine clothes, nor boots with red morocco tops, nor sweetmeats, nor patties. I want to see nurse, nurse, I want to remain with her, I don’t want to go to that disgusting Petersburg! But there is nothing to be done — I must submit.

On seeing the railway for the first time, I was much im-pressed, never having expected to see such narrow strips of iron. I had imagined the whole road as being covered with sheets of iron, and that heavy tarantases drove upon it.

I was seven years old when I beheld St. Petersburg for the first time. We settled down in the immediate vicinity of the M—— military school.

At first, our life in Petersburg was quiet. It was tur-bled once by papa whipping my brother Serozha for laziness; brother Kolya assisted father on this occasion. Serozha was quite big then, and went to school in the military academy, and it was hard for papa to manage him alone. I remember that I ran away in terror, and hid in a corner, in order not to fall under papa’s eye, for I knew

very well that papa would whip me too, by the way. Owing to my laziness, he never considered this superfluous. Having studied very badly all winter, I returned to the country with my brothers in the summers.

I do not know with what to compare the joy with which one returns to one's beloved native place after a long absence. It seems to me that it is impossible to describe such moments. I can see nurse now, as she runs panting through the yard to meet us. She has lost the kerchief from her head on the way, her hair is in disorder, but she heeds it not; and merely seizes us one after the other, embraces, kisses us, and says: "Woe is me, my falcons, I shall die! And where is Vasilka? And where is Kolinka?"

"They have killed them in the war, nurse," we tell her laughingly.

"Oh Lord, is it possible!" she exclaims, turning pale. "Shame on you, to frighten an old woman!"

Of anecdotes and rejoicings there is no end. Then she leads us off to her own den; there she enjoys herself to the fullest extent; with what all does she not regale us, and, strange to say, with those viands which, under other circumstances, we should not have been allowed to eat—such, for instance, as steamed turnips, cranberries, soaked peas, dried huckleberries, soaked biscuits,—we eat them all from her hand, and everything tastes remarkably good to us.

"Eat, my darlings, eat your fill. When you go to strange parts they starve you to death," says the old woman, and she cannot feast her eyes sufficiently on us.

For several days after that, we were left wholly to our own devices. We did nothing all day long, and had no lessons. After a while, papa begins to say: "Come now, you may run about for a day or two longer, and then you must take to your books, instead of chasing the dogs."

A teacher was hired for the summer for us, a certain Mikhailo Viktorovitch. His duty was to superintend our employments, which were carried on upstairs, and which lasted three hours every day, from nine until twelve o'clock. But so far as his teaching was concerned, it was

ridiculous. We quarrelled and played pranks and chattered. The teacher never interfered with us in the least, but sometimes even took part in the fray; but it sufficed for us to hear father's voice or cough, when we instantly took to our books, stopped up our ears, and began to read aloud.

Father would enter and begin the following dialogue with the teacher:—

“Mikhailo Viktorovitch, please to look after these children and see that they study. There is time enough, they can play and run about; but they must know when to stop. Now, Sasha,” he says, turning to me, “you write like a shopkeeper. You just take paper and pen, and write. You think that that will come of itself. Oh, you block-head! . . . What do you think of yourself? are you preparing to be a shepherd? you study badly and you write shockingly—and what is to become of you?”—I stand in silence, with drooping head. My brothers also hold their tongues and dare not look at my father, for they are conscious that this conversation partly concerns them. No sooner has papa taken his departure than everything is instantly forgotten; books are flung aside, the teacher is thrown down on the floor, and we sit upon him.

At twelve o'clock we went to dinner. We did not breakfast in the country. Papa was so amiable over this that at dinner he never even hinted at the person or the thing with which he was displeased, but only heaped up our plates, and said: “Eat, my dear fellow, eat; you don't get this in Peter!¹ What, you don't want it? Can't you make an effort? Well, that means that you are gorged.” And how we did eat in the country! It was certainly true that it was impossible to get such things in Peter. What would not the sterlet soup alone have cost! They would have served it in a little stewpan as though it were gilded,—with the grease alone a finger thick.

It sometimes happened that, after our morning occupations, papa made us read in Slavonic, under his personal supervision. I remember that I might have run off out-of-doors. All at once I hear the voice of one of my brothers: “Sasha! come read Slavonic,² papa is calling!” Ugh, my dear friends, you get hot all over!

¹ Short for St. Petersburg.

² Verestchagin, Senior, had never taught his sons Slavonic. A parallel instance in English would be requiring a child to read black-letter without instruction.

“And where is papa?”

“In the room with the fireplace.”

I run to the fireplace room; papa is lying on the sofa, in his dressing-gown, with a Slavonic book in his hand. Without glancing at me, he points with his finger and says: “There, begin where your brother left off.”

I look at it — there are signs, red titles, crooked marks. I can decipher nothing, and I remain silent.

“Well, why don’t you speak? Don’t you see? Thank God, it isn’t Chinese!”

I do not know why papa assumes that every man has the gift of reading Slavonic bestowed on him at his birth.

I begin in a trembling voice.

“Wha-at! come, read louder, my dear boy, I can’t hear anything!”

I begin more loudly, but again I halt. Father loses patience.

“Whew, what a chastisement! Fool follows fool, and yet another fool takes his place! Go away!” and he gives me a push in the back of the neck.

Opening the door with my head, I fly into the anteroom, and run to my brothers; at this moment they are dragging a small cart about the yard.

“Well, what? — did he drive you away?”

“Yes.”

“We knew it! Stand on the left side” — and, thrusting into my mouth, a rope in lieu of reins, we race about the yard, forgetting both papa and the Slavonic tongue.

I remember being very much offended with papa once, because he reprimanded me sternly. For several days I avoided meeting him, and only approached him to bid him good-morning and good-night. Papa observed this, and, catching me in the hall, he drew me to an arm-chair, seated himself in it, placed me between his knees, and, softly stroking my head with his palm, he said: “It is a sin, Alexander, to be angry with your parents. Remember what your grandfather used to say: ‘If you have an old man, you want to kill him; if you have no old man, you want to buy one.’” And these few words were uttered in so caressing a tone that I flung myself on papa’s neck and burst into tears.

Our favorite time in summer was the period of the hay-harvest. With what delight did we spend several days at work! Having finished our lessons after a fashion, we take our way, in company with papa, — a whole horde of us, to the meadow, and there work has been going on vigorously since morning. Each of us joins one of the serfs, in order to help him carry the hay-cocks; you seat yourself on the horse, take the hay-cock poles under your armpits and drive the weary horse with them. I was very clever at carrying the cocks, although this is not as easy as it seems. The art cannot be acquired at once; you do not arrive with half the pile — you drop it.

I proceed towards the barn: the dry hay rustles; the horse, stretching himself out, advances step by step, dragging the hay-cock, twitching his ears and kicking at the annoying gadflies. I approach the gates of the barn, and there stand several horses awaiting their turn. And now the gate is free. Work is proceeding briskly in the barn: the peasants, armed with pitchforks, covered with perspiration, and with sleeves rolled up, quickly seize the hay and throw it upstairs, where several women, young men, and girls are posted at each end to receive and press it down. Laughter and chatting goes on among them.

“Come now, you mischievous fellow, why are you pushing!” cries a girl’s voice; “if you don’t keep still, I’ll tell the overseer, and he’ll drive you away from here to toss hay.”

“He’ll drive, he’ll dr-i-ive,” the lad mimics her; “what do you stand in one place for? You were put here to tread down the hay, so mind what you’re about!” And the youth pushes her, she turns a somersault and with a shrill cry slides down. A universal shout of laughter rises.

“Ah, may the Evil One seize you!” cries the girl, crawling out of the hay, and, shaking the straws from her head, she rushes with her rake at her tormentor. The latter has recourse to ignominious flight and runs out of the barn, the girl after him, and for a long time they pursue each other. Breathless and groaning, the girl returns, and grumbles: “Never mind, I’ll pay him off yet, the shameless fellow!” and betakes herself to the loft again, assisted by the obliging children.

I enter.

“Hey there, master, hey there, my fine young fellow,

see how quickly he has returned, and what a pile he has pressed!" say the peasants in praise: "you're earning your bread."

Without dismounting, I wait until they have unloaded. "Well, now, can you take it all up at once?" I inquire of the laborers. Six pitchforks are thrust into the cock at once, they are bent across the knee, and the cock is raised on high, leaving very little behind it.

"Hey, you there, take it!" shout the pitchers, and they watch for a favorable opportunity to overwhelm those standing above. Again shrieks and laughter arise.

"There's your hay-cock, master; fetch another," says one of the peasants, drawing the rope from the hay and pricking my horses' hind-quarters with his fork.

And is not the mowing itself a delight, especially when a long, stately file of mowers, following one after the other, swing their bright scythes through the thick, fragrant grass? The evenly cut heaps lie in regular lines, the spot shorn of its grass stands out sharply, and seems to make the complaint, "Pray, why have you cropped me thus?" But see, the leading mower has paused, he rests his scythe on the ground, takes the tip of the blade in his left hand, and, seizing with his right hand a wisp of grass, he slowly wipes the iron; then he draws from a birch-bark bag fastened to his belt, a small wooden board, spits on it, and begins to whet. One must not undertake to whet without understanding the art, or one will surely cut one's hand. I still have a scar on my finger, although more than twenty years have passed. The peasants have fitted a song to the sound produced by the whetting of a scythe:—

Mow, scythe,
While there is dew;
The dew will vanish,
The mower go home.
The scythe loves the whet-board,
The whet-board sand,
The mower patties.¹

And the scythe, when it is being whetted, really does say: *Kosí-kosá, kosí-kosá.*

While it is being whetted, the man in the rear catches

¹ The Russian words run: *Kosí, kosá, poká rosá; rosá spadyót, kos-étz dóma poídyót. Kosá liúbit lopatótchku, lopatótchka pesotchók, kosétz pirozhetchók.*

up, and does the same. The success of the work depends on the leader, as the rear man cannot advance past the one who precedes him. Therefore, the most diligent and dashing mower is selected to go first.

Papa set great store by fine weather during haying time, and, like every farmer, he endeavored to harvest his hay without rain. I can see him now in his white duck coat, all unbuttoned, without a waistcoat, and trousers, on his head a light gray hat with a broad brim, and with thread gloves on his hands. Leaning on his stout reed cane, with its ivory handle, he quietly makes the circuit of the laborers, and greets them politely:—

“God be our help! God help!”¹

“We beseech your indulgence, dear sir, may He be gracious to you, our benefactor,” is the answer.

Father was one of the very kindest landed proprietors in the district, and it seems that, although his peasants feared him, they also loved him. He never affronted any one gratuitously.

¹ The customary greeting at harvest-time.

CHAPTER V.

OUR SERFS.

IN those days of serfdom, the following custom prevailed with us: the serfs worked two days for themselves and the third day for us. The assistant overseer called the roll of all in the evening; that is to say, he went round to every house, rapped with his staff under the window and communicated the orders of the overseer as to the sort of work to which they were to proceed on the morrow. It sometimes happened that the weather proved unsuited to the work, and then they were all despatched to the forest for mushrooms and berries. Great Heavens! what masses of all these things were brought to our house! The tables, the trays, the benches, the entire balcony and the steps leading to it were covered with them; but, in spite of all this abundance, things never passed off without a scene between the housekeeper and the women, after the style of the following:—

“Why have you brought so little, Anna? Hey? Where are your mushrooms?”

“Truly, Anisya Romanovna, I poured them all out, all, by heavens!”

“You lie, you shameless hussy; I see by your eyes that you are lying! Just see how many the others have.”

She scolds another:—

“Why did you bring such old ones? Look here, you picked wormy ones!” and she angrily breaks and tosses aside the worthless ones. “Eat them yourself, if you like them!”

Not infrequently, some of them received blows from her.

If mamma were satisfied, the peasants were treated to vodka, and gingerbread cakes were distributed to the women, and they were all bound to return home with songs. Whether you liked it or no, sing you must!

We had also in the village our hunters and fishermen.

One of the hunters, an elderly serf, short of stature, round-shouldered, with a sparse red beard, stands in the vestibule. He has come from the forest, in the rain. His gray caftan is drenched through and through. He has not dared to bring his dog Syerko into the house, but has left him in the porch; there the beast is shivering and cringing with cold, and scratching at the door. The huntsman has brought a huge moor-cock and several brace of hazel-hens and heath-hens.

Papa enters.

“Good-day, Stepan.”

“Good-morning, Vasily Vasilitch.”

“Well, have you brought some game?”

“Exactly so; I have brought a trifle to your Grace.”

“Ah! what a fine one! Where did you lay hold of such a fellow?”

“At Verdala, dear sir.”¹

“Thanks, thanks, carry it to the housekeeper.”

“Some powder, please, dear sir, and some shot; my whole supply is exhausted,” requests the huntsman.

He is supplied. In addition to this, a glass of vodka is brought to him, and this is all his reward.

But if you could only have seen his gun — it was simply ridiculous! A long, heavy stock of his own workmanship, bound to the barrel with iron wire, and a wretched flint-lock. What a wonderful hunter Stepan was, and in what dreadful weather he procured our game! Sometimes, apparently, you might lay a wager that you could send the best city sportsman, with an expensive gun and a setter, and he would get nothing; but Stepan would shoot something — he would always shoot something.

Afterwards, when I grew up, I often went to the forest with him.

“Master, hey, master! Get up — it is time!” Stepan would rouse me. I would wake, and glance at the window: the sun was just appearing from behind the forest. I wanted to sleep, my eyes were sticking together.

“The weather is splendid, master, there is no wind. Get up, let us go, it is time!”

There is nothing to be done, I rise and dress. Stepan goes off to inquire about the dog.

I wash myself hastily, and, seizing my gun and equip-

¹ A distant plot of ground in our forest.

ments, I go out into the yard softly, in order not to disturb my brothers.

The huntsman meets me with a reproach. "You sleep long, master, that you do. Look where the sun is. . . . Show me, have you much powder?" and, drawing the stopper from his horn with his teeth, he presents it to me that I may supply him. I pour in the powder. "That will do, thanks," and Stepan seems to regret that his flask is not larger. Having loaded our guns, we set out on our way. "Syerko, come!" he shouts and whistles through his teeth; the dog leaps up, yawns, stretches, and, whining joyously, runs on ahead, wagging his tail.

"Well, master, shall you and I kill anything to-day?" exclaims Stepan, and thereupon he pulls from his pocket a tobacco-pouch and a short, burnt pipe, which he has himself rimmed with copper, and he fills it full of small roots; he strikes a light, applies to it a bit of tinder, and begins to smoke stoutly. The roots hiss and catch fire with a snap. He casts a sidelong glance at me, and, adjusting the fire with his thumb without in the least fearing a burn, Stepan pulls away with satisfaction and spits to one side. The gnats, which have already begun to attack us, fly away.

"Come, master, smoke," and, quickly wiping the dirty stem with his palm, he hands it to me. I take a pull, but immediately begin to cough—his pipe is such a throat-scorching.

By this time we have already crossed the fields and are approaching the dark and lofty forest. The air blows damp and fresh from it. The sun does not penetrate here at all through the thick pine branches. Syerko runs along not far away, on one side, waving his feathery tail several times in a circle; now and then he halts, sniffs and again pursues his path with a light, noiseless trot. All at once, Syerko disappears. Stepan, paying no attention to this, apparently, steps along at a rather rapid rate, smoking and spitting. I follow, fanning myself with a birch bough. After a while, a distant bark is heard. In an instant Stepan hides his pipe, fire and all, in his pocket, takes his gun from his shoulder, and, threatening me with his finger to prevent my making a noise, and to signal to me that I am to follow cautiously, he marches off briskly in the direction of the bark. This becomes constantly louder and more eager,

"Stepanushko, my soul, let me have one little shot," I entreat, almost with tears.

He does not hear. The barking suddenly ceases; the huntsman halts, bends down and stands still, as though rooted to the spot, gazing ahead between the branches. I, also, involuntarily crouch down, though neither seeing nor understanding anything. Syerko breaks out barking afresh and with still greater eagerness. We approach. Here, at last, for the first time, I see clearly that Syerko is standing a few paces from a huge pine tree and barking unweariedly at a woodcock which is perched at the summit, hopping about incessantly, piping and flirting his tail; he flings himself at the tree, tears up the earth with his paws, as though desirous of getting at the bird, and, glancing back, he seeks his master with his eyes. Now and then he pauses for a moment, but begins again, with greater persistency than ever, lolling out his long, red tongue. All this time, the woodcock, perched on his bough, is muttering something to himself; from time to time he bends down and stretches out his neck at the dog, as though inspecting him, and he is evidently very much exercised over him. In the meantime, Stepan creeps as near as possible, thrusts his gun between the branches, takes aim with great care, and pulls the trigger. The shot resounds afar through the forest. The woodcock rolls over, without even a flap of his wings, and, breaking the twigs on his way, falls heavily to the ground. Syerko wants to catch him, but Stepan, knowing his dog's habits, springs out, chases him with the butt-end of his gun, and shouts, "Get out with you, you carrion! . . . Here, master, here's fine food!" and he joyfully lifts the woodcock with his foot. . . . "Whew, what a hearty fellow!"

"And, now, master, we can take a snack. Come, now, did you drink tea?" says Stepan, and at these words he draws from his breast a patty with curds enveloped in a dirty cotton handkerchief, and, breaking off a piece, he hands it to me.

"Come, master, taste it! At home, now, you always eat white bread; ours will not be to your taste," he says, seating himself on a stump and carefully gathering up the falling crumbs.

Syerko has planted himself opposite and watches intently first me and then his master, and seems to wonder

where the patty has disappeared so rapidly. From time to time, he turns his head to one side, gazes entreatingly, follows our every movement and apparently inquires, "When is my turn coming?" His tail beats the earth, sweeping aside the pine chips and twigs which fall in its way. I fling him a morsel. Syerko quickly leaps up, catches it greedily, and, without allowing it to fall, swallows it with a click of his teeth, and seats himself again in his former place.

"My Syerushko is a fine fellow!" exclaims Stepan, and strokes the dog. The latter thrusts his head submissively under his master's hand and blinks innocently, although, at the same time, he casts a sidelong glance at the patty, sniffs, and almost imperceptibly twitches the moist cartilages of his muzzle.

Crossing himself and fastening the woodcock by his neck and legs, the hunter flings his spoils on his back. We pick up our guns and move on.

I managed to shoot, though rarely; and if I chanced to kill my game, Stepan simply went into ecstasies.

"Hey, there! master, you're a fine fellow!" he shouted, flinging himself headlong on the dead bird. "His wing is broken. How you've mangled him!"

He himself was an excellent shot, but only at game that was at rest. He could not make up his mind to fire when the game was on the wing; he was afraid of wasting his charge; and even when the bird flew out under his very nose, he did not fire, but only muttered, with vexation, "Go along with you! what a bit I have missed!" If Syerko chanced to come within reach of him at such moments, he would invariably deal him a blow with his foot or with the butt-end of his gun, shouting, "Be off with you, you dastardly rascal!" Stepan, who was not old, was small, thick-set, and somewhat round-shouldered, and walked without fatigue. He knew the forest as he knew his own five fingers, and, in spite of its extent, he was never bewildered; he would merely glance at the tree-tops and say, "Come on, master, along this path; otherwise, we shall get further into the swamp."

I do not know which found it easiest to get rid of his duties — the huntsman or the fisherman. No matter when

we went to the river-bank with papa, the fisherman was always sitting beside his fishing-hut and grinding away at set-hooks. Small of stature and rather stooping, with some gray hairs already, he was clad in a dirty shirt of coarse linen, and very short trousers of the same, which had, apparently, been torn off to relieve him of the necessity of turning them up when he had to step into the water. Maxim, catching sight of us in the distance, rises, pulls off his hat, presses it with both hands against his stomach, and executes a deliberate and lowly salute.

"God give you luck in your fishing, Maxim!" my fathers shouts to him. "Are there any fish?"

"I chanced on a couple of eight-*vershok* sterlets this morning, and five under-sized fish," replies the man, still holding his hat against his stomach.

"Why do you always feed me on under-sized fish? Give me big ones. I shall have visitors one of these days. Have you set any seines?"

"Yes, dear sir, I have set two. I'm going to clear them this evening with Vaniushka." And, thereupon, plunging all five fingers into his dirty hair, he scratches his head and indolently glances up to see whether the sun is high in the heavens.

"Come to the fish-pond."

Maxim hastily runs into his little hut, brings out a bagnet, and descends the steep bank at a trot. Papa descends in a leisurely way and slowly seats himself in the boat, supporting himself on the shoulder of the fisherman. Maxim's short trousers immediately come into play. Pushing off up to his knees in the water, with one oar he guides the boat towards the pond, grasps one corner and climbs in. The enclosure nearly gives way beneath him. Spreading his feet apart on the edge of the pond, he detaches a key from his girdle, and, having sprung the lock, he pulls open a board trap-door. The inspection of the fish begins.

"There's another one dead, and it wasn't so long ago that I looked at them," and the fisherman takes out with a hand-net a good-sized sterlet, floating belly up, and flings it on the bottom of the boat. "The heat of to-day has overcome it, Vasily Vasilitch; the fish don't bear it well," and he continues to move his hand-net over the bottom. There are numbers of fish, exclusively sterlet, but very few large ones

They all splash, struggle and dash the water about with their tails, endeavoring to escape from their imprisonment.

Having inspected the fish, we return home, accompanied by the same deep bows from the fisherman.

"See to it, Maxim, that I get fish, and large ones at that," my father issues his orders.

"I shall be delighted to try, my benefactor, if only God aids." And, meanwhile, Maxim has disposed of the very best fish to the clerks and pilots of passing vessels, by night. Sometimes he got found out in his rogueries, and then things went hard with Maxim; for a long time afterwards he scratched himself and meditated how, on the next occasion, he could so arrange matters that the devil himself should not find it out.

CHAPTER VI.

UNCLE ALEXEI VASILITCH.

ON Sundays and on great festival days we went to Liubetz, to visit my uncle and to go to mass together. This was a great treat to us. It was not so much that we wished to see my uncle as that we were delighted at the opportunity of riding.

"Well, children, to-morrow is the ninth Friday after Easter; let us go to visit uncle; it is a festival with him," I remember father's saying, after dinner.

"And I, too, papa, and I!"

"All — we will all go," he says, pausing between the words.

In the evening, father steps out on the porch and shouts across the yard to the coachman, "Mo-se-i, Mo-se-i!"

The housekeeper, who chances to be in the drying-house at the time, and who wishes to be obliging, hangs herself over the railing and shouts, shrilly, "Moisei, go to the master! Moisei, the master is calling!" (She alone called Mosei — Moisei.) Mosei flies headlong out of the stable, without his hat, and, on catching sight of the master, he runs to him, waddling like a duck, and endeavoring to hold his hands along the seams of his trousers.

"We will go to Liubetz to-morrow, to mass. Do you hear?"

"I obey, sir."

"In the Petersburg tarantas, with a troika."

"Yes, sir."

"Harness Mashka to the two-wheeled carriage; the children are going."

"Yes, sir."

A pause.

"And if you dare to get drunk," father suddenly breaks out, "I'll beat you to death!" And thereupon he stamps his foot in exasperation.

"If you please, Vasily Vasilitch!"

Mosei instantly assumes a gloomy air, and drops his eyes on the ground.

A brief pause.

"What harness do you command?"

"The Vologda. No bells are necessary."

"Yes, sir! Am I to go, sir?"

"Fie, what a blockhead! If you receive the orders, for whom are they?"

"Yes, sir; I only thought I would ask, sir. Am I to harness early, sir?"

"Certainly, so that we may get to mass in season."

"Yes, sir."

After standing there a few minutes longer, father dismisses the coachman.

No sooner are we awake the next morning than we run to the stable. By the posts, fastened to a ring, stand the side horses of the troika, in their light collars. The carriage-house is open. Polikarp and Mosei appear by turns, their air is anxious, a spasmodic conversation is in progress between them.

"Have you greased the fore-wheels?"

"Not yet."

"What do you mean by it? it's high time."

"The bells are required, aren't they?"

"No, not wanted."

Mosei puts on airs, as he is to drive.

"Are many going?"

"All."

"And the mistress?"

"She's going too, it seems."

"Come, harness up more briskly. You see they are running to inquire."

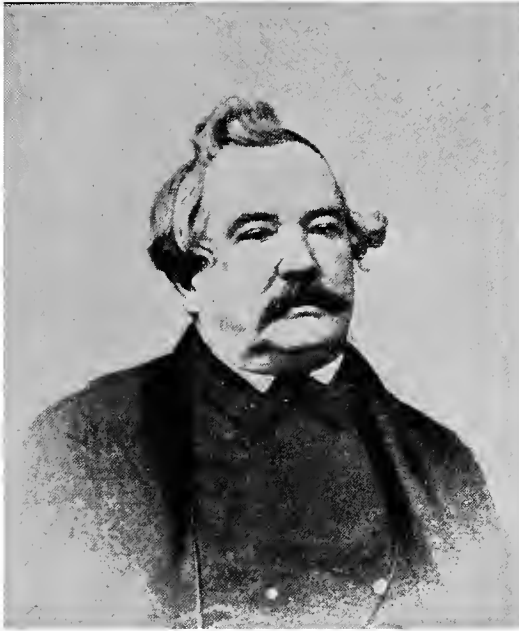
In fact, the maid is running across the yard, rustling in a new calico dress.

She does not run quite up to them, but halts, and cries in a shrill voice: "The mistress has sent to inquire if the horses will be ready soon?"

"Immediately. How she is rigged out, the smart hussy!"

"Perhaps she is going too."

"Why, of course, there couldn't be any mass without her."



ALEXEÏ VASILYÉVITCH VERESTCHAGIN.

(Author's Uncle.)

The maid runs away, entangling herself and raising her long gown too high. She has put it on for the first time, and has begged her mistress to allow her to go to mass to celebrate that event.

A quarter of an hour later, the dark green open carriage, harnessed to three horses, drives out of the carriage-house with a great noise, makes the circuit of the yard and draws up at the porch.

"Tpr-r-r . . . sh-sh-sh . . ." says Mosei, soothing his horses.

"Well, have the bells begun to ring?" asks papa, coming out on the porch, and drawing on his thread gloves. He has thrown a gray lutestring paletot over his black coat; on his head is a soft black hat, with a wide brim; his trousers are of white duck.

"Apparently, they have begun!" replies Mosei, and he glances inquiringly at Polikarp. Polikarp, in the meantime, is walking round the horses and adjusting the harness.

"Yes, the bells have rung for church," he replies, in corroboration, although it was visible from his face that it had never entered his head to listen whether the bells had rung or not, in spite of the fact that father put this question every time that he drove to mass.

They took their seats. I mounted on the box. Two of my brothers rode in the *tarataïka*,¹ which Mosei's Alyoshka brought round a little later. We set out. No sooner had Mosei passed the gate than he began to cluck at his horses and to flourish his whip.

"Sit quiet, don't you touch the horses! Hand your whip here!" and father deprives him of his whip. The coachman proceeds somewhat abashed.

At the last bars, Mosei hastily springs from his seat, although Alyosha and I have already jumped down and opened it.

"What are you doing there! Keep your seat! They are opening it for you!" shouts papa.

"I thought, sir, I would fix things a little, sir," stammers Mosei, and he hastens to draw up the loosened saddle-girth.

"Oh, how tiresome! Where were your eyes?"

Mamma nudges papa to prevent his getting angry. But father is not in a good humor to-day.

¹ "A two-wheeled conveyance.

“ Ah, enough, my dear. They’re dreadfully tiresome ; all that either of them knows how to do is to swill down vodka.”

Mosei leaps hastily on his box, and again begins to cluck and to jerk at his horses. Irritated beyond endurance, father rises and gives the coachman a blow in the neck. The latter’s hat comes near flying off his head.

“ Will you stop clucking ? ”

Mosei is finally quelled, and he drives on without venturing to look round.

We drive for about five versts through a pine forest, over a sandy road full of roots. The forest grows less dense, the light shines through ; in the distance, on the bell-tower, gleams a cross, and behind it a white church, and yonder is the village itself.

Near the church is visible the green manor-house, with an upper story, white columns, and window-shutters of the same.

Passing the fields, we enter the village and draw up at the gate of the manor-house. We pass through the yard to the house. Five dogs of different sizes run barking to meet us. One large, yellow dog, Wolf by name, who must be very old, lies at the very door ; he raises his head and barks dully and spasmodically in a bass voice, without even looking at us, too indolent to turn his aged neck.

On the left side of the yard is the kitchen. The window-frames have been removed, and within we behold the cook and several other men ; all are busily engaged with their work. The fire flashes up incessantly on the hearth-stone, and clouds of vapor arise from the spilled butter. The hissing produced by it, and the clatter of knives, are heard. On the broad work-table, huge sterlets, just killed, are to be seen. The cats have taken up their quarters in the yard beneath the window. Curling their long tails under them, and purring the while, they devour the entrails of the fish which are flung to them. Many cocks and chickens hover about the vicinity. Some of them fight bitterly, with no misgivings that the cook will soon catch one of them, step aside, and, bending down its head, will cut its slender throat with a long, thin knife, and, after holding it for a few seconds by the legs, will fling it on the ground, leaving it fully at liberty to flap its wings as much as it pleases. The chickens run and bustle about. Only one cock, a tall, black

fellow, with golden wings, struts about with measured tread, and glances about on all sides to see whether everything is in order.

We approach the house. The house is of wood and very old, built by my great-great-grandfather about the beginning of the eighteenth century. I remember that once, when I chanced to tumble into the cellar, I was amazed at the thickness of the beams. They were more than twenty-eight inches in diameter. A wide flight of yellow steps leads to the spacious, well-lighted vestibule. Ivan Izotoff, the servant, with long, curling hair, and an amiable smile on his countenance, springs from the oil-cloth sofa to remove papa's coat, remarking, as he does so, that Alexei Vasilitch is on the point of going to mass. Mamma passes at once to the room of the housekeeper, Elizaveta Mikhailovna: uncle was a bachelor.

Passing from the vestibule through a small serving-room, we enter the hall. The first thing which strikes the eye is the huge stove, made of Dutch tiles, in the corner, which is very ancient, decorated with little turrets and columns, and painted with a blue glaze. The walls are covered with French paper of a yellow hue, bearing dark figures. In the most conspicuous place, a marble slab is affixed, with an inscription in gilt letters: —

“The Sovereign Emperor Alexander I. was pleased to dine in this hall, on October 14, 1824.”

Drawing-rooms open from the hall on the right and left: the one on the right called “the blue room,” that on the left “the green room,” from the hangings.

I approach the window and look out. The view on the Sheksna was so beautiful that, every time we came hither, I involuntarily gazed at it. An endless line of vessels moves slowly up the river. Now, a heavy barge passes by; its prow and stern are painted green, the middle is daubed with white horses. The peak of the mast is ornamented with a variegated circlet, with small red flags. On the fore-deck sit the laborers, hatless, at their dinner. Fifteen horses in single file, hardly able to place one foot before the other on the sandy shore, draw the barge by a long hawser. Several sunburnt drivers, covered with dust, all in tatters, with cracked lips, whistle in a deafening manner, crack

their whips, flourish their arms, shout hoarsely, run from one horse to another, and constantly urge them on. Upon a high platform at the stern stands the helmsman, in a red cotton shirt and a tall lamb's-wool cap. Leaning his back against the tiller, he glances at the church, takes off his hat and crosses himself; then applying himself to his business, he grasps the helm, turns round, and shouts in a long-drawn tone:—

“Whip them u-up, whip them u-up, Vaniuka, whip them u-up!”

The horses are urged on with increased energy: the leader must, evidently, have done something very bad, for one of the drivers flies at him, and, in a rage, lashes him on one and the same spot twenty times in succession. The unhappy beast flings himself about in all directions, rears, stretches out, and falls exhausted on his knees.

A second barge follows the first, belonging, evidently, to the same owner; it is painted in the same manner, with similar circlets on the mast. The helmsman tries to stop it.

“Ha-alt, ha-alt!” he shouts, in a long-drawn, monotonous voice, and beckons with his hand as though calling some one to him: “Sto-op a bit!”

The horses stop, and several of them immediately lie down on the yielding sand. The hawser falls into the water, the vessel still advances for a little, then comes to a halt. A third bark makes its appearance. This is drawn by *burlaki*;¹ it appears to be even larger and heavier than the others: the water is almost on a level with its bulwarks.

About half a hundred laborers, even more tattered and burnt than the drivers, hatless, with matted hair, bare-footed, with their arms hanging like whips, drag the bark in silence. Slowly, and with even steps, they advance, throwing the weight of their bodies upon the cruel breast-strap, and, from time to time, they shout: “Pu-ull! pu-ull!” And thereupon they apply their weight more in accord and with more force. From a distance, all these river-boatmen seem one vast being, which is advancing slowly, and swaying regularly from side to side.

The vessel comes in line with the church.

“Chi-il-dren, le-et u-us pra-ay to Go-od!” shouts the

¹ Laborers on the Volga.

helmsman in a bass voice. The boatmen slowly cross themselves without diminishing their gait.

Just as I am gazing upon this, I hear a voice behind me. "Ah, welcome, brother!"

I glance round, uncle is greeting my father. He is of nearly the same height as papa, with the same prominent belly, the same shaven chin, but from military habit he wears a long moustache which is already gray. He always wore a military cap with a red band.

Uncle was noted for his hospitality, and at the same time it was "don't interfere with my humor" with him. The fame of his hospitality had spread throughout the whole government. He was a good-hearted, intelligent man, and as he had good connections in Petersburg, and a fine property, all the district and governmental officials bore themselves towards him with the greatest respect, to put it mildly. On certain festivals, for instance, on Transfiguration day, — the foundation day of the church at Liubetz, on St. Peter's day, and the festival of Our Lady of Kazan, his house was full of guests, principally men. A carouse began, and towards the end there was a great deal of drunkenness. He did not play cards much himself, but he liked to have people play in his house. He liked to drink heartily, and he could carry off a great deal. When every one else was what is called drunk, and had gone to bed, he would be in high spirits, and would growl out: "Tram-ti-ta-tam!" and his face would turn red, especially his nose, which was streaked with dark bluish-crimson veins. When uncle had no guests and he got bored, he would despatch his servant Izotoff to the posting-station to learn whether there were any travellers there. If there proved to be any, the emissary presented himself and delivered his message to the effect that a landed proprietor of that district, Colonel Alexei Vasilitch Verestchagin, besought the honor of the traveller's company to eat a dish of fish soup with him. This invitation was, as a rule, gladly accepted, but sometimes the passing travellers declined, for some reason or other. Then there was a row; the landed proprietor flew into a rage, and ordered that the travellers should receive no horses (he kept the posting-station himself). The latter demanded the complaint book, but the matter was finally adjusted, and in this wise — the travellers went to his house, dined, and were

greatly pleased with their too hospitable host. It sometimes happened that some people, having become intimate with my uncle, remained as his guests for several days, forgetful of their permit to use express horses, and of the complaint-book.

He was very devout, and every autumn he betook himself on foot, accompanied by his housekeeper, Lizaveta Mikhailovna, to the monastery on a pilgrimage. A tarantas¹ and a cart were harnessed up; in the latter were placed casks of vodka, and of berry wines, relishes and various dainties. Izotoff rode in the cart.

Uncle went on foot; when he got tired, he seated himself in the carriage. It was about one hundred and fifty versts to the monastery. He took his bite and his sup on the way, but ate only such things as are permitted during a fast.

I must state that my uncle enjoyed health like iron, and that he was never ill. When any one complained to him, he generally advised him: "Eh, my good fellow, drink and eat, and it will all disappear out of hand."

On his arrival at the monastery, the Superior, an acquaintance and friend of Alexei Vasilitch, led him to a cell. During the first part of his stay, uncle attended all the services punctually; matins, mass, and vespers. But later on he began to inquire about the brethren, to renew old acquaintances, to recall "old times," and it ended in some of them getting intoxicated. Up to the very dead of night knocks would be heard on his door, and calls:—

"In the name of the Father and of the Son! Open!"

Uncle, half awake, would call out: "Izotoff! give him half a shtof² and get rid of him!"

Izotoff would rise quietly, open the door a little way, and, without looking, thrust out a bottle, which was instantly seized with the words: "May the Lord save you!"

After remaining a week, sometimes two, uncle would return home; of course, all the brethren assembled to take leave of him, and to escort him to a distance from the monastery walls.

But let us return to our story.

Having greeted my father, uncle inquired.

"And where is Anna Nikolaevna?"

"She has gone to Lizaveta Mikhailovna," papa replies,

¹ A travelling coach.

² About a gallon and a half.

looks at his watch, and says: "Is it not time to go to church, brother?"

"It is time, certainly," replies the latter. We run up to uncle and greet him. He kisses each of us, strokes our heads, and says:—

"Welcome, welcome, my fine fellows!"

He was very gracious, and we all loved him. He frequently gave us gingerbread and even money.

Father puts on his soft, black hat, uncle his cap with its red band, and we set out for the church. In the yard we meet mamma, and Lizaveta Mikhailovna, a woman still in the full flush of her strength, thirty-five years of age, small of stature and of agreeable features. They are walking along with parasols spread, engaged in a brisk conversation. On seeing mamma, uncle takes off his cap, bows and kisses her hand. Mamma, in turn, kisses him on the brow. They inquire after each other's health, and we pursue our way in a group.

The church is about fifty paces from the house. The bells in the tower are ringing violently.

On catching sight of us from the bell-tower, the child-ringers are desirous of distinguishing themselves, and redouble their exertions. They perform marvels in the way of bending their knees. The little bells blend harmoniously and gradually pass over into deeper sounds, always more bass and still more bass, and then a thick bo-o-o-om covers all the rest. In the midst of this music, we quickly pass the fence. The church doors stand ajar, and sounds of song resound in the distance. The temple is full of worshippers.

In the porch uncle is the first to remove his cap, cross himself and thread his path sideways among the people. We follow him. The people move aside respectfully, tread on each other's heels and make room, bowing the while. Uncle places himself in the very front rank, beside the choir, and lays his cap on the edge. The singing boys gaze curiously, first at him and then at the cap, and then they draw aside as far as possible, in order not to knock it down. We place ourselves immediately in his rear. Father was fond of arranging us children according to our height. On the left the tallest, Kolya, then Vasya, further on Serozha, Misha, Alyosha, and, last of all, me. My sister Masha stood with mamma.

They are singing in both choirs. Near us six men are singing; the old chanter, Semyon, two of his sons, and three lads from the village. Semyon sang in a deep voice which died away as though he were preparing to cry. While he sang, he plucked incessantly with his right hand at his thin beard, and with his left he upheld his right, pressing it close to his stomach. This attitude he did not change during the entire service, even when he returned from the altar, bowing on the way to my uncle and my father. His sons sang entirely out of tune, although Semyon frequently poked first one and then the other in the nape of the neck.

In the left choir sang a young chanter, Andrei, with long blond hair. He was alone and sang literally at the very top of his lungs.

Now and then he glanced proudly at the right choir, and, apparently, all but said: "Although there are six of you, and I am alone, I do not yield to you." "Anew, anew, with the peace of the Lord, let us pray!" snuffles somewhat through his nose, and rather high, the still tolerably youthful priest, Father Methody, emerging from the Imperial doors.

"Lord have me-er-cy." Andrei cleverly catches up the strain in the other choir, and glances condescendingly at Semyon.

All the parishioners set great store by chanter Andrei on account of his voice and his style of singing.

"He's a clever one at singing," they said, although on some occasions he exerted himself so that all one could do was to stop up one's ears.

Father Methody gets through the service with unwonted promptness. Not having any deacon, he himself pronounced the prayer for the health of the Emperor and the Imperial family, and, without finishing the loudly pronounced end of one prayer, he began on another.

Under his management, the whole mass only lasted three quarters of an hour at most. Just before the end, he sent out the chanter with the consecrated wafers, and the latter carried them round on a circular pewter platter; first to my uncle, then to papa, next to mamma, and to Lizaveta Mikhailovna; but to us they gave the broken bits. Uncle took the wafer, smelled of it, for he liked the odor of fresh bread, and placed it in his cap. Father

immediately broke his, tasted it, and gave the remains to mamma, saying; "There, Aniuta, eat; and give some to the children!

Mamma began to share it among us, and as the wafers were generally those from which a bit had been taken for the sacrament,¹ she broke them with great care, in order not to drop the smallest crumb, and if any fell upon her dress or on the floor, we assiduously gathered them up and ate them.

Having given us our share, mamma placed her left palm in a curve under her chin, and began to eat her portion, crossing herself devoutly the while and murmuring a prayer.

The mass comes to an end.

The priest emerges with the cross in his hands, and places himself near chanter Semyon, who holds the cup with the holy water and the sprinkler.

We approach to kiss the cross.

The priest first presents the cross to uncle, lightly sprinkles the crown of his head, upon which a good-sized bald spot is already making its appearance, inquires after his health, and congratulates him on the festival. After him, papa kisses the cross, then mamma. Father Methody also sprinkles them, exchanges greetings and begins to converse with them at considerable length and rather loudly, in the meantime thrusting the cross at us and at all the rest to kiss, without looking to see where it lands, and sprinkling away without even dipping his sprinkler in the cup of holy water.

We leave the church. The day is bright; many people throng the street, all clad in festival attire, and songs are audible here and there; no intoxicated persons are to be seen as yet. At the sight of us, the peasants and the women draw aside with bows, and the little children flee in terror.

"The gentlefolks, the gentlefolks are coming!" they whisper and stare at us with curiosity.

"And who's that big one?" whispers one woman to another, poking the latter with her finger.

"That's Mikolai. And that other one, by his side, is

¹ Such consecrated wafers are usually given to the persons of importance present.

Vasinka," explains the Pèrtovka woman. "Akulina Trifonova must be his nurse."

At that moment, in fact, his foster mother, Akulina steps up to Vasya, a tall young woman, in a blue wadded jacket, with a striped kerchief on her head, a decidedly sympathetic person, who bows to us and utters her greeting: "Good-day, Vasinka! Here's something for you," and she takes an egg from her bosom and presents it to him. My brother is somewhat abashed at first, but afterwards he thanks and kisses her.

No sooner have we reached the house and sat down to our tea than we behold a little old woman, Titovna, who has lived in the house for forty years, running through the hall. "The popes, the popes are coming!" she screams, like a crazy creature, and flies through the hall to meet them.

"The prieth hath arrived," announces Isotoff, lisping.

"Oh, good heavens! why have they come so early to-day?" remarks Lizaveta Mikhailovna, with a face of displeasure, as she rises from the tea-table.

Father Methody and Chanter Semyon enter the hall, and greet us all in detail, then proceed to a corner, where a small table, covered with a white napkin, has been prepared; upon it stand three wine-glasses, turned upside-down, with wax candles stuck fast to them.

Chanter Andrei remains in the anteroom, to get the censer to burning. The anteroom becomes thronged with house-servants and outsiders. Two very neatly clad peasants bring the holy image on towels, and place it on the table. Uncle lights the candles. Father Methody puts on a short vestment, and adjusts it upon his figure with a vigorous movement of the shoulders; then, having arranged his hair on the outside of it, he begins to sing a *Te Deum*, somewhat through his nose, as usual.

"Blessed be the Lord, our God, forever, and henceforth, and forever more."

"Amen," responds Semyon, in a die-away voice.

"Lord, God, reveal thyself to us. . . ." Father Methody takes up the strain, and glances through the window at a handsome vessel which is passing by.

"Blessed is he that cometh!" chimes in Andrei, vivaciously, from the anteroom; he has blown the censer into

a blaze, and is desirous of carrying it on the instant to the priest, who begins to cast impatient glances at him.

The *Te Deum* is speedily brought to an end; our cups of tea have not had time to grow cold, when we sit down to them again. And the priests are conducted to the maids' waiting-room. There a table has been set for them, and, as it is a day of fast, they are served with a pasty from sterlet, which has died and is a little "high," hot pike with horse-radish, and fried bream; besides this, there are two decanters, one of vodka, the other of currant brandy "not sweetened."

Of all these things they ate with satisfaction; all that was left of the pasty was a corner, with the fish picked out: of the bream only the well sucked head and tail remained; not more than half the contents of the decanters was left.

"Well, are you content, Father Methody?" asks uncle, entering the room.

"Thank you sincerely, we are greatly pleased," replies the other, rising. "Very well content! Greatly obliged!" repeat the chanters, also rising, and laying their hands on their hearts.

They soon take their departure to complete their tour through the village.

Not more than an hour before dinner, dust made its appearance far away, beyond the river, on the strand. We fly to look through the telescope, a big brass one on legs, which always stood in the parlor.

Two large travelling-carriages, harnessed with three horses each, were approaching swiftly; the troika in front overwhelming the one in the rear with a thick cloud of dust. Only men were visible in these equipages. The ferry-men have caught sight of the dust in the distance, and make haste to get the boat ready. They pull the ropes quickly and run rapidly from one end of the deck to the other, spreading wide their wet fingers. The weather is perfectly calm, and their conversation can be heard distinctly from the other side of the river.

Both carriages reach the ferry at nearly the same time. The gentlemen descend lazily, stretch themselves, straighten up their shoulders, which are wearied with sitting, shake their dust-covered frieze coats, and step down lightly, without haste, and without compromising their dignity, to

the ferry-boat, which has just touched the shore. The barrier is removed, and the ferry men receive their guests with deep bows. The first troika drives on, and takes up its position in one corner. Before it is properly placed, the faint, distant jingle of a posting bell becomes audible.

"Mikifor! stop a bit! I will run and take a look, a bell seems to be ringing," says the young ferry-man, in a red cotton shirt, and a cap whose vizor is half torn off, to the other man, who is elderly.

"Is it ringing?" returns Nikifor, abandoning his work for a while, and pricking up his ears. A gust of wind bears the sound of the bell to them distinctly.

In the mean while, a weary posting troika has made its appearance on the strand, now lost to sight behind the bushes, and again showing itself from behind them. Thick clouds of dust follow it.

"It must be the captain of the district police, in pursuit!" shouts a ferry-man, from the shore, as he stands on the bottom of an overturned boat, and screens his eyes from the sun with his hand.

The travellers who have just arrived have already seated themselves on the benches of the ferry-boat.

One of them, an elderly gentleman, with close-cut moustache and a round, clean-shaven chin, who is tolerably fat, and dressed in a black coat and a white duck vest and trousers, is sitting with one foot tucked under him.

"K-hi-k-hi-k-hi!" he laughs, displaying his half-decayed teeth, and, taking off his dusty cap, he makes his close-cut gray hair rise still higher above his brow. This is our acquaintance, Feodor Ivanovitch Lepeshkin.

Opposite him stands a small, neat man, with blackish moustache, landed proprietor Mikhail Pavlovitch Shepelyavoff, also in a black coat and white duck waistcoat and trousers; on his head is a naval officer's cap. He is explaining something energetically to Lepeshkin, and all the while spattering the latter directly in the face with saliva. The latter, from force of habit, pays no heed to this, and continues to laugh and curry away at the crown of his head.

On one side, on another bench, sits a small, wrinkled, old retired general, spitting overboard, and admiring the view of the river. His nickname is "the little general," although to his face he is called "Your Excellency." He is one of the small landed gentry of the vicinity. His gray

hair is combed far forward on his temples; his moustache is clipped short; his uniform is very threadbare, and evidently served out its time long ago.

Along the deck of the ferry-boat, in his India-rubber galoshes, noiselessly walks the former forester of the district, in a frieze overcoat, Piotr Stepanovitch Vorobieff, a tall, handsome man, with large side-whiskers. He bites his under lip as he walks, as though saying to himself, "Wait, my dear fellows, I'll part you to-day!" He was very fond of "shuffling the cards."

But now the chief of the district police (*ispravnik*), Vafin, comes up with a great noise, and drives directly upon the boat.

"Ah! What! How! I said that I would overtake you!" he shouts, merrily, while still at a distance. He descends from the posting tarantas, and begins, without ceremony, to kiss them all violently on the lips, without any regard to their wishes in the matter, seizing the cheeks of any one who resists, in his soft, plump, dirty hands, whose nails are gnawed to an incredible extent, and soaked in tobacco-juice, from which they have derived their brown color.

Vafin was a very short and very fat man, of extremely frank and sympathetic exterior, who shaved his beard, but wore his moustache, was excessively jolly and free from care, and who was eternally jesting and laughing. In his company the most serious man was absolutely forced to merriment. He was slovenly to a frightful degree; his green uniform coat was always covered with spots, burnt through, and buttonless; his shirt, too, was soiled, and sprinkled with tobacco ashes, and his hair, which was as white as flax, was always in disorder. He threw his belly forward when he walked, swaying slightly on his short, fat feet. He was always in want of money, but was never despondent.

The *ispravnik* exhibits himself to all his friends, begins to jest and to laugh, as was his wont, and in a few moments he has enlivened them all; even the serious little general has left his seat, and gone up to the rest in order to join in the laugh.

The ferry-boat reaches its landing. The horses go directly to the stable; the guests enter the yard by the nearest wicket, and, first of all, exchange greetings with the

dogs, who bark and wag their tails without abandoning their places. In the anteroom the obliging Izotoff receives the guests, with his never varying smile, helps them to remove their wraps, cleans off their dusty collars and shoes, and conducts them into the room.

"You were long in coming, very long!" rings out the bass voice of the host.

"He is the one to blame!" and the new-comers point to the ispravnik. "We waited and waited, and finally set out alone."

"All the same, I caught up with you!" persists Vafin, and justifying himself to his host, on the ground that he was required somewhere on the way, in a village, to whip three men, he was on the point of kissing uncle on the lips. But the latter, who lived on the highway, had learned the ispravnik's habits but too well; therefore seizing the latter by both hands, he presented his cheek. Papa proved to have less foresight; consequently he immediately felt upon his cheeks those plump palms, and on his lips a swe-e-et, lo-ong-dra-awn kiss.

In the meantime, the old cook, wearing a coat over his red cotton shirt, and girded with a clean white apron, has placed upon one end of the long table an oblong kettle of red copper filled with sterlet soup. The table is covered with a white cloth. Along the table are arranged a dozen bottles of fruit brandy: sweet, half sweet, not sweetened; on the bottles are pasted little labels, with inscriptions in ink: "cranberry," "raspberry," "mountain-ash berry," and so forth. Some are simply marked "errant," probably for the sake of brevity.

"Well gentlemen, I beg of you, pray have the goodness to taste!" cries the host. The cover of the kettle is removed, and uncle himself proceeds to help to the fish soup. This he does solemnly, as though it were some rite, placing in each plate a bit of sterlet and so contriving that there shall be enough for all, and that no one shall be offended.

The hot soup was almost finished, when another outbreak of barking from the dogs made itself heard in the yard, together with the jingle of small bells and the jangling of larger bells. A wealthy neighbor, Prince Galitzin, enters the room, tapping the floor with his cane. Having had a stroke of paralysis, he cannot fully control his left leg, and is unable to walk without a cane. The Prince is about

forty years of age, dark of complexion, tolerably good-looking, with thick, hanging brows, a small, close-cropped beard and a hooked nose. He was a great rake and fond of cards.

"Ah, your Illustrious Highness!"¹ is heard on all sides.

The Prince bows to all, papa moves aside, and the Prince seats himself in the corner, between him and his host.

During dinner, uncle treats his guests incessantly to fruit brandy, and he knows the taste of each one of them in advance.

"Piotr Stepanitch, you like the currant, without sweetening!"

"Feodor Ivanitch, take some mountain-ash! It's excellent, only try it!"

"Your Illustrious Highness! What will you take? And with ice?"

Towards the end of dinner, the guests grow more and more merry. Lepeshkin begins to laugh again loudly, and to rub the hair on the crown of his head upright.

The party is finished, desultory conversations are in progress. In another moment they will rise from the table.

"Take it not in ill part!" exclaims uncle, and is the first to draw back his chair. The rest noisily follow his example. They fling down their napkins at haphazard: on the table, on the chairs, some fall under the table, and one lands directly on a wine-glass of fruit brandy, overturns it, and is stained a deep crimson. All hasten to return thanks to their host.

The card tables are set out in the small green drawing-room. On each lies a pack of cards, marbled red and green, and several bits of chalk, arranged on papers of different colors.

A little later, Piotr Stepanitch Vorobieff makes the round of the guests with a pack of cards in his hand and with the same noiseless tread, and almost as though he were courtesying, and proposes that any one who wishes should draw out a card.

First the Prince, second Lepeshkin, then Shepelyavoff, the fourth is himself — this makes the principal table.

At the second table sit the little general, a thin merchant in the lumber trade, with a goat-like beard, and papa, beside whom I station myself to watch the play. However,

¹ *Siyátelstvo*, the title borne by counts.

neither I nor my brothers ever succeeded in sitting very long beside papa while he was playing, because, although he did not play for high stakes, still, at his very first ill-luck, he would request us peremptorily to take ourselves off, saying :

“Go away, my good fellow, don't stand on my very soul!” and thereupon he would take us by the shoulder and turn us round.

Although the *ispravnik* does not play, he seats himself by Vorobieff, with a long pipe of wild-cherry in his mouth. He takes great interest in the play, draws vigorously at his pipe, emits the smoke in rings, and worries Piotr Stepanitch to such a degree that the latter, unable to endure it, begs him to go away, saying :

“You'd better take yourself off, Vaffin ; you have smoked me so that I cannot breathe.”

“Yes, yes, that would be a good thing,” chime in the others.

Without taking the slightest offence, the *ispravnik* betakes himself to the second table, and seats himself beside the little General, firmly convinced that the latter will not drive him away. Silence reigns in the room ; once in a while we hear : “What's the trump ?” — “Whose turn is it ?” — “These spades are of no account !”

After whist, the first table proceeds to *faro*. Then Vorobieff shows himself at home. With the air of one who knows, and usually with his lips pressed close, he shuffles and cuts the cards ; he lays them out skilfully, coolly writes the score, casts up the reckoning, says very little, and waits patiently until his partner has chosen his card. The Prince loses. He grows excited and doubles his stake.

“Ten rubles a point !” he mutters unintelligibly, with his paralysis-stricken tongue.

“Kopeks counted out ?” asks the banker obligingly.

“Of course !”

The cards are dealt. Vorobieff takes from the table, out of a package covered with small money, a hundred-ruble note and hands it to the Prince. The latter stakes a fresh card.

“*Va banque*,” announces the Prince in the same unintelligible voice, and holds the card on the table, ready to uncover it. The rest of the guests approach the table and take an interest in the way it will end.

“How much is there in the bank?” they ask each other in low tones. One whispers, “three hundred;” another, “four hundred rubles.”

Vorobieff turns the pack in an effective manner, and lays out the cards with pauses. The card is dealt again. The color flies to his face; in his vexation, he tears the whole pack in two at once. Vorobieff did this very cleverly, and not one of the guests could afterwards perform the trick; try as he would, he only succeeded in rumpling the cards.

Piotr Stepanitch has lost; he has no more money with him. He wants to play; he must win once. He retires to a corner arm in arm with Shepelyavoff, and I overhear an indistinct half-whisper:—

“Will you return it to-morrow?”

“By Heavens I will!”

“On your word of honor?”

“On my word of honor.”

Shepelyavoff cautiously unbuttons his waistcoat, then his shirt, pulls from his bosom a concealed purse of buckskin, takes out some sum in bank-notes, and hands it to the unlucky gambler. The play begins again.

About this time, I perceive mamma and Lizaveta Mikhailovna preparing to take a stroll in the village and look on at the choral dance, and I join them: the weather is beautiful, the sun is already sinking in the west.

On the square near the church, about fifty maidens and young men have grasped the ends of kerchiefs and are executing the choral dance, accompanied by songs. The circle moves slowly; pair after pair halts to await its turn. I know many of the girls by name. Here, stately Natalya Mizina is approaching; her face is swarthy and a crimson flush covers her whole cheek. Her striped sarafan, though old, is made of silk; on her shoulders she wears a sleeveless jacket of calico; on her neck are several rows of beads in imitation of amber and pearls; her chestnut hair is bound up with a blue silk kerchief, dotted with small scarlet flowers; from her plait of hair hang two pink ribbons. Everything is pretty and of good quality, only her coarse woollen stockings and her angular shoes detract somewhat from the effect of her costume. Mizina has an agreeable

voice, and she acts as the tune-setter. At the sight of us, she is a little abashed, but continues to drawl rather shrilly: —

“Oĩ, never a soul doth care for me,”

and she glances askance at the mistress.

“Oh, on me not a soul hath pity,”

joins in with a hoarse voice her cavalier, Anton Patin, who follows her. He is a tall, broad-shouldered youth, with the most amiable of countenances. I know him well. He is very strong, and excels all the young fellows in the village at the “tug of war.”

The words which he sang did not, in some way, agree with his figure in the least; why, I reflect, should any one have pity upon him, when he can slay a bull with his fist!

He is dressed far from badly: outside his red cotton shirt, he wears a black waistcoat with brass buttons, in which are set bits of blue glass: his shirt is confined by a woollen girdle with tassels. His black cloth trousers are worn on the knees; his boots shine with tar, his costume is crowned with a new wadded cap with a glossy vizor.

Anton is a trifle under the influence of liquor, and from time to time he courts his lady; she laughs, and defends herself with a small bundle, from which peep forth cracknels and ginger cakes.

After admiring the choral dance to our satisfaction, we proceed further. From behind the corner of a cottage flies what, from his appearance, must be a discharged soldier, in a pink calico shirt, no hat, torn trousers, and with sprawling hands.

“The last day of my beauty’s ado-o-orned! . . .”

he roars, bending his body forward and trying to walk straight ahead, in which he is not wholly successful. Pretending not to see us, he turns abruptly into another street.

“. . . . God’s world!”

his shout floats back to us. He does not prolong the last words, and breaks off short.

Intoxicated people become more and more frequent.

Here, on one side, arm in arm with two young fellows, walks a young woman: her red kerchief has fallen back somewhat from her head, but she does not notice it; one of her cavaliers strikes up on the harmonica, and the woman sings sonorously:—

“If thou, my own sweet,
Were not as thou art!”

The men's voices join in, in a rough, hoarse bass:—

“Ah, so sweet thou wouldst not be
Nor to others give thy heart!”

The cavaliers take off their hats to us from a distance and bow; the young woman does not see us, and continues in shrill tones:—

“To others, sweet, thou wouldst not incline
And leave me here with grief to pine!”

Thirty paces further on stands the dram-shop; a throng is assembled round the door. High words and shouts resound within.

“Come, get out! come, get out!—What do you mean? Come, get out!” We hasten to direct our course as much to one side as possible, and then return home.

Two Pärtovka serfs, in tall lamb's-wool caps, in the shape of truncated cones, and both very much under the influence of liquor, pursue their winding way towards us, embracing and reeling. They walk along without haste, talking in a friendly way, and helping out their meaning by convincing gestures of the hands; from time to time they pause, then move on again.

They are evidently passing through the happiest moments of their lives, forgetting for a time all the misfortunes of serfdom; and their proprietor, and the overseer, and even their hated service. But now one of them has caught sight of his mistress. Recognition overpowers intoxication. The peasant halts; with both hands plucks from his matted head his tall cap, and slowly executes a very, very low bow, almost to the ground, so that his hair nearly sweeps the earth. His companion, who perceives nothing as yet, pursues his path: but, after proceeding a

few paces, he pauses, glances round, and also recognizes the situation of affairs: pulling his hat from his head, he approaches his lady with unsteady steps, kneels down, and begins to cry shrilly, in a quavering, tearful voice:—

“A-a-a-a! De-e-e-ar la-a-a-dy! mi-i-is-tress! Anna Miko-laevna! Grant me your hand to kiss, my bene-fa-a-actress!”

Mamma does not know what to do: she is afraid to give her hand, and she does not wish to offend the serf. The first peasant rescues her from her dilemma; he thrusts aside his friend with a rebuke, and shouts:—

“What are you about, you dolt!—worrying the mistress!” And, ramming his hat down almost to his very eyes, he leads him away.

“Her ha-a-and, o-o-o-only her ha-a-a-and!” we still continue to hear for some time.

In the evening, after tea, Mosei brings round the tarantas; the tarataika follows, and we return to Pèrtovka.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GERMAN BOARDING-SCHOOL. THE ST. PETERSBURG GYMNASIUM.

IN August, 18—, we again arrived in Petersburg. It had been decided to send me to the German boarding-school of Doctor V. I set out with father to be examined. V. himself, a tall, gloomy German, with spectacles on his nose, conducted the examination; he asked me to read, to write, questioned me on the four rules of arithmetic, and I was admitted to the "Sixth," *i. e.*, to the very lowest class. Papa paid sixty rubles for the half-year, and, thrusting three rubles into my hand for pocket-money, went home.

Then I had a little experience. It was twelve o'clock, that is to say, breakfast-time; I see all the scholars going down stairs to the dining-room. So I follow them, and seat myself at the table. As I now remember it, we were served with excellent rice gruel with milk, sprinkled on top with cinnamon and fine sugar—it was very savory; I very calmly eat it all up, and hold my three kopeks in my hand. All at once, up comes some gentleman or other, and with a very angry mien he begins to explain to me that I am a day-scholar, and that I cannot breakfast there. I am very much ashamed. All look at me, laugh, and whisper together. I finally lose my countenance, open my fist, and hand the gentleman the three kopeks. This unexpected act throws the German into a confusion no less great than my own; but, although he allows me to finish my breakfast, he does not forget to remind me that henceforth I must not presume to show myself in the dining-room.

I studied badly; I seldom got good marks.

All branches were there taught in the German tongue, and, so far as I recall, the only thing that has clung by me from that school is the geographical appellation, "Mitteländisches Meer," (The Mediterranean Sea) and a few terms of reproach, such as: sheep's-head, hold your tongue, etc. There was one teacher there, and how he did torment me!

Rarely did a day go by when I reached home on time; I always had to stay a couple of hours after school. This punishment seemed worse than anything else. I was very much mortified to return home later than the rest. You walk along the street and dare not look at people; it seems as though every one were staring at you and saying: "There goes the idler; he has been deprived of his dinner for his laziness!" In order to regain some of the lost time, I returned home on such days almost at full speed. But when you reach your quarters, the hardest minute of all comes, and that is the trouble: when you ring papa will hear and inquire why you are so late. He knows very well already. But there is nothing to be done, I ring. Out comes Marya the cook (formerly our serf), and says with her drawling Vologda dialect: "Without his dinner again," — and opens the door.

Crawling along softly on tiptoe, I advance, with my books pressed tightly under my arm, lest I should drop them, and, glancing at papa's door, I slip into the nursery. But papa has heard the bell: —

"Who's there? Is it you, Alexander?" he calls.

I go to him, and a dialogue ensues between us.

"What now? Without your dinner again! What an infliction you are to me!"

"I went to a comrade's, papa," I say to justify myself, and I kiss his hand.

"When are you going to bring me your marks?"

"They have not been posted yet, papa!" — But I have received them long ago, and dare not show them — they are so very bad.

Six months later, I was transferred to the Petersburg classical gymnasium. From that time I began to study Latin. Through my father's acquaintance with the director of the gymnasium, I was placed in the second class without examination, on condition that I should prepare myself in the matter of Latin during the summer vacation.

In the second class I sought out for myself suitable companions, took my seat with them on the last bench, in the very furthest corner, in order to be left as much at peace as possible. The friends who sat with me were: on one

side, Nikolai Baranovsky, a healthy, red-cheeked lad, of huge stature — together we could stand up against half a score, and we permitted no insults; on my other side sat a quiet, blond Feodor Bedland, half German, half English, a terrible cry-baby — he was forever whining; but this did not prevent his bringing very savory sandwiches from home for his breakfast, and I always devoured them, no matter how well he hid them. Not one of us three succeeded with our Latin. When it came to our bench, the teacher, fat Kossovitch, would call me up first.

“Can you go on, Verestchagin?”

I would rise, take my book and translate.

“No, wrong, sit down, one! Baranovsky!”

The latter would begin to rise slowly, and stretch and stretch until it seemed as though there were no end to him; at length, after extending himself to his full length, he would droop his head on one side without uttering a word. The teacher, without waiting until he had fully stretched himself out, would make a sign with his hand that he should sit down, and call up the next one.

“Bedland.”

Although he was convinced that he should be called upon immediately, the latter would, nevertheless, jump up in alarm on hearing his name, exactly as though he had been pricked with a pin, and instantly drop back again, while Kossovitch, without looking, would set down a zero against him.

We detested this awkward digging at Latin as much as it is possible to detest anything. However, I got along very well on some subjects. Thus, for instance, the teacher of the Russian language was very fond of me: the priest, Father Dmitry, also graciously allowed me to kiss his plump, fat hand, and patted me on the head.

The whole time of my instruction in the gymnasium is closely bound up with the education of my brothers in the N. military school, which was situated a few steps from our lodgings.

My eldest brother, Nikolai, was already an officer at that date, and at the same time he was attending the lectures on natural history at the university.

Kolya learned badly at first, as he himself told me, but afterwards things went better and better, and he finished his course one of the first in the class, receiving, when he was graduated as an officer, as reward, a large field-glass, with the inscription: "For splendid success in study and for excellent conduct."

Kolya was always very anxious about my education. "You ought to develop him, papa, to develop him," he used to enjoin on my father, reading with grief my reports from the gymnasium.

"Now, see here, my dear fellow, develop him all you can. Nothing but twos and ones," said father, pausing now and then, and pointing to the marks.

"Yes, papa, but then he would understand himself that it is necessary to study!" persisted Nikolai.

"And who developed you?" asked father, throwing himself back in his chair and fixing his eyes on my brother. "Come, take him in charge, develop him, I can do no more with him!" And with that the discussion came to an end. Of course, I was not present at these discussions, but I listened at the crack of the door.

All my brothers, according to the prevailing custom of that day, were entered by my father, shortly after their appearance in this world, in the Minor Cadets' School. My father told me that when he handed over my eldest brother, Nikolai, he had a long discussion with the commander of the school; the latter demanded a very large amount for the appointment, but papa said: "You see, your Excellency, that I am your regular taxpayer: I have got six of them in all; so you must come down in your price!" and so he did. It was settled, it seems, at two hundred rubles a nose. From the Minor Cadet School, my brothers were transferred to the N. academy.

Rarely did a day pass without my running to my brothers in the N. school: now I would have a patty to carry, then a box of candy, and again it would be simply for the sake of seeing them.

In the N. academy, as in other government institutions, the cadets were allowed leave of absence only on condition that they had some one to accompany them, and what was

very amusing was that I, a boy of ten, was sent for my brothers, who were much older. I had to go for Alyosha most frequently of all. The doorkeeper and the cadets all knew me, and admitted me directly to the squad. I enter and wait: many cadets are running about, and all seem just alike; all have short jackets and heads like little balls, with hair cut close. Then some one catches sight of me and cries:—

“Verestchagin, Verestchagin! Your brother has come for you!”

In a few moments, Alyosha appears, with a sour visage.

“Well, what now? can you go?” I ask.

“I don’t know; they’ll hardly let one out,” he answers. “I had a five¹ mark in mathematics. Come, let’s go ask Mazepa!” This was the name by which he called the commander of his company, Captain Ivan Petrovitch. We go. At the end of the hall, beside a small table, sits the captain, a small, bald-headed officer in spectacles, who is assiduously picking his nose with his finger. Opposite him, one of the elder cadets, all doubled up, is diligently writing out leaves of absence. Around them swarm “those desirous of being absent on leave.” They present themselves in turn to the commander; whereupon, Ivan Petrovitch pipes out, “Eh! what! who’s this!” surveys him, and invariably discovers some irregularity in dress. If everything is in order, he simply thrusts his hand into the collar of the cadet and pulls out a necktie. “What’s this! Go put yourself in proper order!” The fellow quickly turns aside, and, without leaving the spot, adjusts the necktie, gives himself a shake, and presents himself again, when he receives his permit.

Alyosha’s turn comes. “Who’s this? Verestchagin? You can’t go!” snuffles Mazepa; “you had a five in mathematics.”

“Do let him go! let him go, Ivan Petrovitch; he’ll make it up; this is the last time it will happen. . . .” urge his brother cadets. “His brother has come for him,” they add, motioning to me, at the same time, to present myself to the eyes of the commander. The commander surveys me and finally consents. “Well, go dress yourself!” he says. Alexei runs off and speedily returns in a clean holiday jacket, his cloak, and his new cap, and reports, “Cap-

¹ The twelve-mark system was then in use in the military schools.

tain, Cadet Verestchagin would like leave of absence." Ivan Petrovitch inspects him, and jerks out the necktie. My brother turns sharp round to the left, like the preceding cadet, quickly thrusts the necktie out of sight, and again presents himself. "Eh! what!" he exclaims, as though awaking from sleep. "Well, go! and see here! next time you'll sit out your five mark here over Sunday."

But we have already fled as fast as our feet will carry us.

Another interesting personage there in the academy was the battalion commander, Baron Konstantin Konstantinovich. I seem to see him now, as he stands in the academy church, behind the ranks of pupils; he is tall and stout, with an immense belly, and, with his hands clasped behind him, he rises gracefully on tiptoe, then lets himself down again, whereupon his shoes give a slight squeak, and his whole body sways equally. And thus he used to rock himself during the entire mass or vesper service. When I chanced to encounter him in the corridors of the academy, I always tried to slip past him as speedily as possible; it always seemed to me that he would seize me and crush me like a worm, although, according to what my brothers said, he was very amiable. The following little incident, related to me by my brother Sergyei, serves to illustrate his kindness.

Once upon a time, after long exhortations from our parents, Sergyei promised to study well, and prepared his French lesson for the first class in capital style. The instructor called him up; my brother gave excellent answers, but, to his amazement, he perceived that the Frenchman was setting down a naught against his name in the record-book: this so enraged my brother that he stepped up and spit at the instructor. The spittle landed on the man's waistcoat. Naturally, the Frenchman flew into a passion, and ran, all bespattered as he was, to complain to the director. At first, they wanted to expel Sergyei from the academy, but afterwards they altered this decision, and arranged to have Sergyei flogged on the following Saturday. The battalion commander was, as usual, charged with the execution of this order. But my brother was not flogged. How this came about, I will explain directly. Sergyei had some comrades who were intimately acquainted with the baron's weaknesses; they were very well aware that the baron was not indifferent to

a certain actress. Moreover, he had one peculiarity: he could not hold out when any one touched or embraced his belly; then he yielded utterly, turned good-tempered, and agreed to everything. Here are the snares that were put in operation.

At the appointed day and hour, all was ready—the guard with his little bench and the criminal. The baron enters the guard-room, accompanied by a whole throng of cadets, and seats himself in the arm-chair prepared for him. At that moment, two of his favorites rush up to him, embrace his belly gently with their palms, and begin to relate how they have been to the theatre the evening before, and have seen such and such an actress (the object of his affections).

“How she sang, Konstantin Konstantinovitch! How she played! delightful!”

“And where did you sit? Did you see her near to?” asks the baron, in a bass and somewhat nasal voice. He is touched to the quick. They give him all the details, and, at the same time, keep touching his sides incessantly; the rest of his comrades press close around, and thrust brother Sergyei out of his sight. All that is required is time enough for him to forget Verestchagin. The baron goes into ecstasies over the anecdotes and the pressure on his belly, and begins to converse cheerfully. A considerable time elapses in this manner; the drum beats the call to tea, and only then does he remember. “And where’s Verestchagin? He must be flogged, so that he may not spit any more —” Then a unanimous cry arises, “Konstantin Konstantinovitch, forgive him! he was not to blame; we all heard him give excellent answers, and the instructor marked him zero. Pardon him, pardon him!” Of course, those nearest him try to get hold of his belly as often as possible. The baron cannot resist, and he gives way. “Well, so be it! Look here!” he roars, “I forgive you, but, if the director inquires whether you received your punishment, say that the battalion commander added twenty-five lashes on his own responsibility. Do you hear?” “I hear, sir,” replies my brother, hardly believing his ears that he is released from punishment. The baron retires, and all the cadets rush at my brother and cry, “Well, do you see how we stood up for you? . . . Now, see here, it’s your turn to give a spread.” (That

was the name for a cadet carouse; they bought gingerbread, cakes, and candies, but chiefly patties, from the confectioner's.)

During the winter, cart-loads of provisions were brought to us in St. Petersburg, from the country — whole frozen carcasses of oxen, whole pigs, hams, a mass of chickens, geese, game, and, what was more precious to us than all the rest, small wooden pails of cream, with the skin on it, prepared for us by our dear nurse. With what pleasure, I remember, we opened those pails and feasted on bits of icy cream, which we melted in our tea or ate on bread. For several days we hardly dined, we so overate ourselves on our country presents. Our mouths and hands grew black with dried huckleberries and various preserves. I remember, in this connection, that we once ate perfectly sweet veal. It came about in this wise: several bottles of sweet fruit brandy were hidden inside a calf, and got broken on the road. The fruit brandy had to be concealed on account of the system of brandy-farming then in force, in pursuance of which no sort of spirituous drinks could be carried from one district to another free of duty.

Uncle Alexei Vasilievitch came to spend a week or two with us every year in Petersburg, at Christmas time. With him came several landed proprietors of his acquaintance, all from Tcherepoff. That was a merry time for us. One of uncle's comrades, Lepeshkin, as soon as he arrived, took us to Tikhonoff's confectioner's shop, by the Nikolai bridge; there he sat down to read the papers, while he permitted us to eat cakes and to drink chocolate to our hearts' content; we worked so fast that the confectioner could hardly keep the account. Alyosha and I endured this successfully. Misha, whose stomach was decidedly weaker, had to have mustard plasters applied to the back of his neck and the pit of his stomach that night, and a big brass basin placed near his bed in case of emergencies.

Lepeshkin was a very queer man; he was a wealthy proprietor, all alone in the world, a great stay-at-home, and a manager who did not like to waste a single kopek. All the year long he amassed money merely to squander it in two weeks in Petersburg. Nearly the same was the case with Uncle Alexei Vasilievitch and the other men from Tchere-

poof. All they did, for whole festivals, was to roam about from one public-house to another. They could be recognized afar off; they always walked together, all of them in a group, generally in the middle of the street, clad in varied travelling-coats, flying open, one in a bear-skin, another in raccoon-skin, a third in a simple wolf-skin, in rusty sea-bear caps and gray felt boots, into which their trousers were negligently tucked. They conversed very loudly in the street, flourished their hands, and, if one of them halted for any reason, the rest all followed his example. Papa would gaze at them in the distance, from the window, and cry to us, "Children, children, look the-ere! the-ere go our Tcherepoff men!" It was hard to mistake them.

They usually lodged in Great Garden Street, next door to the Public Library, in the dirty old Balabin Hotel. I often went to see them. Heavens! what a hotel that was! smoke, bad odors, a dirty, narrow staircase, small rooms; next door an organ roared so that you could hear it all over the house, but they cared not so long as they could drink and carouse. If any one suggested to them that they should change their hotel, they replied, "My dear fellow, we wouldn't change our inn for anything; they've known us here these thirty years."

Once Uncle Alexei Vasilyevitch came to us on New Year's Eve, decidedly tipsy, and quite late — and they put him to bed in the parlor. The next morning, just as he had waked up, and was rubbing his eyes and yawning, all in disorder, the door opened and there entered an acquaintance of ours, a poor Frenchwoman, with a bag in her hand, and, mistaking uncle for papa, she made him a courtesy and congratulated him: "I congratulate you, monsieur, on the grand festival."

At first uncle stared at her, and then he began to shout: "Avaunt, beggar!" So that she could hardly stir, she was so greatly terrified. Papa laughed over this many a time.

After they had spent all their money in carousing, and borrowed enough for their journey from their kind friends, uncle and the rest of the Tcherepoff men, all together and at one bound, betook themselves to their own parts. On the very day of his arrival in the village, uncle went to the bath. He steamed himself very hot, as though desirous of washing away all the Petersburg dirt at one sitting, and took up his country life again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE N—— PROVINCIAL GYMNASIUM.

IN the year 18—, shortly after the emancipation of the peasants from servile dependence, my parents removed to the country and transferred me from the Petersburg gymnasium to the town of V——.

Here I began to study very well at first. I still have in my possession a letter from my father in which he writes: "I thank you, my dear Sasha, for the pleasure which you have given us old folks by your success." I was so unaccustomed to reading thanks for my study that for a long time I doubted whether this had actually been written to me. But after the lapse of a few months I began to study badly, and the authorities greeted me less affably.

Our director was a certain Nikolai Ivanitch, a middle-aged gentleman, short of stature and very fat; his beard and moustache had never grown; he had a large, double chin, and a thin, snuffling voice. On all these accounts he received the nickname of *the woman*. He was constantly saying: "Yes, yes, my good fellow, yes!" and he altered his mode of address from *thou* to *you*, according to his mood. If he was angry, he would say: "Thou knowest nothing, my good fellow!" And if he was pleased, then it was: "I thank you, Mr. N., very good." In appearance he was very amiable, but if you bit into him he turned out to be very different.

As a historico-philologist, Nikolai Ivanitch loved and revered the Latin language, to which he had taken a passionate fancy in his early childhood, the result of his being of ecclesiastical descent. In the absence of our instructor, he often gave us lectures on this subject.

Nikolai Ivanitch was very hot-tempered and irascible, and he absolutely had not the patience to explain a point to a pupil and show where the latter must seek his error. He once flew into such a passion that he turned as red as a

lobster, hammered on the desk with his fist, and screamed at the pupil: "Why, my good fellow, you're a fool!" But he bethought himself after a few moments, and begged pardon.

I recall one comical scene with him. An inspector, Prince L——, came to us from Petersburg. He entered the class-room in company with the director. They seated themselves: it was the class in mathematics. The Prince threw himself back in his chair, put one leg over the other, and toyed with his pencil. The pencil fell and rolled away; Nikolai Ivanitch flew after it, but his sudden attack prevented his picking it up, gave it fresh impulse, and the pencil rolled further. The Prince also started after it, and they would have jumped about for a long time, to our great delight, had not a pupil picked up the pencil.

Nikolai Ivanitch sneezed in an extremely ridiculous manner, and not as other people sneeze, two or three times, —no, he sneezed fifteen times in succession, and his fat face flushed with blood, his little eyes grew still narrower, and he bounced about in his seat, gazing around, in the meanwhile, to see if any one were laughing at him. And we were aware of this; therefore, shielding ourselves with our books, we tried not to look at him, for otherwise it was impossible to refrain from laughter.

The director was a small, perfectly bald old man, Sergyei Livovitch, nicknamed "the pumpkin!" On his temples only grew a little hair, which he was constantly stroking to the front. His standard expressions were: "Come, now!" or, "Whew, good heavens!" Whatever he said, he invariably added: "Come, now!" He had served in the gymnasium for thirty years, and, for all I know to the contrary, he serves there still.

Sergyei Livovitch knew that he was called "pumpkin," and once when, during a lesson in physics, he was explaining about plane and curved surfaces, one of the pupils asked him: "Sergyei Livovitch, if you were to take a pumpkin and set it on a slope, would it roll?"

"Come, now! Whew! what a fool, of course it would roll!" he answered, and then, comprehending the point, he added, wrathfully: "But come, now! roll out of the class-room." He was rough with the pupils, and constantly called them asses, fools, and blockheads; but no one took any offence at this from him. In spirit he was a

kindly old fellow, and only scolded out of habit of thirty years' standing.

In the town of V——, I "boarded" in a very modest family. My father paid sixteen rubles a month for me; this included everything: food, and room, tea, sugar, service, fire and lights. I lived as I pleased: no one looked after my behavior and study; I rarely sent home the reports about my studies, and, when I did, I scratched them out where they were too bad. If I took a fancy, I went to the gymnasium; if not, I stayed at home or betook myself to a well known public-house called "London," to play billiards. The marker, Yakoff, was an intimate friend of mine; as soon as he caught sight of me, he would bow very amiably and inquire: "Would you like a game of pyramid?"

I did not trouble myself much about my studies, although the inspector simply did not know what to do with me.

"Come, now! look you, just look: 244 lessons missed in half a year!" he shouted to me, when reading the report of our standing. "Who ever heard the like! Come, now! you can't remain a third year! Come, now! They'll expel you! Just look out, they'll expel you."

But I paid no heed to his words. "You lie," I thought, "you lie, you'll promote me."

I always had money — if my father did not send it, I borrowed, and got trusted to a small but constant amount. I spent most of my time at Koryagin's.

He was a sufficiently interesting person, and I will therefore pause a little over him.

About thirty versts from V——, my father owned an estate, which he leased to a neighboring farmer, Ardalion Ardalionovitch Koryagin. His father was the serf of a wealthy proprietor of the district, named Kremneff, whom he served in the capacity of manager. His son Ardalion, having received in his childhood the most limited of educations, undertook his father's duties on the death of the latter. Ardalion Ardalionovitch, by his sagacity, speedily increased the revenues of the estate, improved the horse-breeding establishment, and soon so endeared himself to the proprietor that the latter began to repose the most entire confidence in him. Koryagin neither injured his master nor forgot himself. He gradually acquired land from the neighbors, and accumulated for himself a tolerably large

property. Having settled accounts with Kremneff, he busied himself exclusively with his own farm, and before long he had placed it in such a state that it was considered a model establishment. His grain bore fabulously; his neighbors would not believe what they heard of his harvest.

At the time when I made Koryagin's acquaintance, he was forty years of age. He was plump, broad-shouldered, of medium height, with a noticeably well developed chest, a short neck and a fleshy head, and with small, vivacious eyes. His full, bushy black beard gave him an air of respectability. A single glance at his figure was sufficient to convince one that this man would not sell himself cheap.

He was extremely fond of bear-hunting, spent a great deal of money on battues, and travelled hundreds of versts for this purpose. He set out on the chase armed with a bear-spear, and accompanied by his coachman, Afrikan, a short, squat man, with a red beard, who was charged with carrying a trusty double-barrelled gun, in case of any emergency.

This gun was as impressive as its master. It was of very large calibre, and very heavy. About ten pounds of lead had been run into the stock, in order to make the butt end as steady as possible. "Here, sir, please to look," its owner said to me, shouldering the double-barrelled weapon as though it had been a feather, though I could hardly raise it to my cheek; "it doesn't tremble in my hand now."

"But why do you carry it when you have a bear-spear?" I inquire.

"Why? Why if the bear-spear were to break, I should be left without a weapon. That happened to me once at Darguna; the bear sprang up, and flung himself upon me, and struck me with his paw, so that the wood broke like a straw. It was well that Afrikashka did not get frightened—he handed me the gun instantly; otherwise, that beast would most assuredly have crushed us both!"

"Please to tell me how you hunt," I inquire with interest.

"How—why, it's very simple. You enter the beast's den with your companion, and you try to dislodge him from his hole, and then, there are the dogs, and they worry him; and then they get him angry. You have to look sharp when he crawls out. It is well if he rears himself on

his hind-paws, and makes for you; you want nothing better; but if he leaps out at once, and, dropping his head between his forepaws, flies at you like a hurricane, there is nothing to be done with your bear-spear; throw it away as quickly as possible, and seize your gun. The whole point lies in not yielding to fear; your hand must not tremble. And you must try to hit him under his fore-shoulder blade, just where his heart is, and you'll lay him out on the spot. I have killed twenty of them," he added.

Tame bears were also reared at Koryagin's, and a place was set aside for them near the granaries, where they walked about at the end of a chain, like a sort of guards. Once, when I went to see him in the country, he asked me if I would not like to look at the young bear-cubs which had lately been brought. We set out for the granaries, and I take a look; two big yearling *Mishkas*¹ are sitting side by side on the balcony, staring dolefully, lolling out their red tongues, and from time to time lying down on their backs and turning somersaults. Their eyes were very amiable, and tempted one to approach and stroke them. I halt at a respectful distance, and gaze. But *Ardalion Ardalionitch* marches straight up to them, and begins to play with them; to play pranks, to roll them over, to wrestle with them, and to scratch their bellies, and is evidently on the most intimate terms with them. He calls one of them "*Trishka*," and the other "*Mashka*." "Ah, you, *Trishka*, what a rogue you are!" he says, struggling with the creature, and striving to throw it—"just look, he wants to slap me with his paw! I'll give it to you!" and he immediately overturns him on the ground. Having finished his frolic with one, he steps up to the other. Taking courage, I step up to *Trishka* after him. As the beast snorts and flings himself at me, I spring back in alarm, stumble, and roll headlong away from him. But the bear, rearing himself on his hind-legs, tugs at his chain with all his might, flourishes his paws in the air, and begins to roar. Koryagin, on perceiving this, instantly rushes to him, grasps him by the collar, with wonderful strength, lifts him clear of the ground, and gives him such a shaking that poor *Trishka*, roaring at the top of his

¹ A bear is called *Mishka* in Russia, as he is called *Bruin* elsewhere. *Mishka* corresponds to *Mike*.

lungs, crawls off to his hut, and, stretching himself out there, begins to lick his paw and growl.

Koryagin was also very fond of horses. From morning till night, gypsies and horse-dealers jostled each other in his stables. He was as much at home with them as in the bosom of his family; he chattered, and disputed, and struck hands on bargains, entreated them despairingly, scolded, flew into a passion, but the matter was finally settled, and all went to the house together, where, over a glass of brandy, they uttered good-wishes and long life to the "new acquisition."

And who would not have been pleased in Koryagin's village?

If you wanted to drive, all you had to do was to step into the stable and order them to harness up any trotter you liked, — there were twenty standing there, — either a single horse or a pair, or a troika; there was no prohibition. If you wanted to play billiards, you walked upstairs, and there, in a large room, stood a very fair billiard-table. I do not remember the time when some one was not knocking the balls about. A multitude of visitors came to him. Chambers were always in readiness for them upstairs, on the same floor with the billiard-room. In the morning, his guests would seize a cue before they even washed themselves and set up a clashing, and so it went on until dinner-time. On a small table in the corner, all day long, stood a tray full of decanters of various sorts of vodka; a good lunch was served, but soon nothing remained of it but the fragments, a few grains of caviar, and brownish rinds of cheese gnawed to the verge of impossibility; moreover, in extreme cases, they were annihilated also.

I remember how our host used to come upstairs to us early in the morning, stretch himself out on the bed of one of the elect, who thereupon gladly moved aside and cleared a place, and begin to tell where he had already been and what he had done; then he would propose that some one should play a game with him, and so it went on interminably. They rarely played for money, generally for a crawl, for fun, that is to say, whoever lost had to crawl several times under the table; there was never any dust there — it was all wiped off by their backs. The most amusing sight of all occurred when Koryagin had to

crawl. He never was willing to confess that he had lost; he disputed and got angry, and argued to the contrary, and only crawled when a general shout arose. I can see him now, as he crawls under, amid universal laughter and uproar, and immediately shouts, "Come, now, let's have another!" and begins a new game.

Ardalion Ardalionitch was a noted bone-setter. He had learned this art from his old father, who had also successfully treated dislocations and fractures. Sick people were brought to him from distant places. I was myself a witness of the wonders which he performed on the sick, and I also saw people who had been healed and who had returned to thank him. It was only necessary to glance at their faces in order to convince one's self of their sincerity.

He healed and provided medicine gratuitously. It was interesting to watch how lightly and wisely that apparently grim, heavy man treated the sick: he would seat an ailing child on his knee; he would whine with pain and terror, but Koryagin would persuade him, pet him, give him some trifle to play with, and, at the same time, imperceptibly feel of the injured spot. "He has a dislocation, my good woman," he would say to the mother of the child, who was standing by, with tears in her eyes. "It must be put in place."

"My dear man, Ardalion Ardalionitch, help us! my own father, cause us to pray to God for you forever!"

"All right! there's no need of bowing down to me; we'll see what can be done, and, in the meantime, do you take this ointment and rub it into the lame spot to-night, and to-morrow we will see what God will send."

Ardalion Ardalionitch had a brother Nikifor, a deaf-mute from his birth, who had been brought up in the Petersburg institution for deaf-mutes. At first, he made excellent progress in drawing, so that he even received the gold medal at the examination, but, having once come to his brother in the country, he was unwilling to return to Petersburg, and preferred entertaining the latter's guests. He was entirely deaf, but could talk a little, though with difficulty, and his speech resembled a prolonged bellow. If any one came and inquired for the master, Nikofor was equal to the occasion; he would make his appearance, with a serious, preoccupied countenance, and announce, "My brother has gone out; he will be here directly. Pray sit

down and wait," and then he would offer something to drink. "Would you not like a glass of brandy?" Under this gracious pretext he managed to get a drink himself. Receiving and entertaining several men in this way, Nikifor would become more and more serious and perspire profusely. By this time he began to go about on tiptoe, as though stealing around, and tried to hold himself up by the walls. His fingers swelled up, and spread apart all the more widely as Nikifor became more intoxicated, so that, at last, they resembled inflated gloves. Nikifor could never sit up till supper-time, but laid himself down long before in some comfortable place, and went to sleep.

In the morning he rose earlier than any one else, shaved himself clean, smoothed himself down, made himself look well, and then strolled about the yard and the stables, with a self-satisfied mien, as though nothing had occurred.

He was almost as strong as his brother, and was passionately fond of wrestling: whenever, with whomsoever, and as much as ever you pleased, — untiringly; if there was no one, he betook himself to the bears and wrestled with them. It sufficed to appear to be desirous of measuring your strength against his, and Nikifor would immediately bellow with delight, fling himself on you, and seek furiously to overthrow you, exactly like a bear, and then, beware! no quarter was shown; Nikifor struck from the shoulder, and his deafness prevented his hearing either remarks or cries or prayers. To tell the truth, this rendered it not particularly pleasant to wrestle with him. He dislocated the arm of one opponent, in the calmest manner, without even suspecting it, and, when it was explained to him what was done, he merely roared, "It's a pity, really, it's a pity! Why didn't he tell me?" and how could you tell him, when he would not have heard if you had fired off a cannon at his very ear!

He and I were great friends. When he came to the town of V——, he always ran to me. He always appeared foppishly dressed, pomaded, with his chin cleanly shaven, and the ends of his moustache delicately curled; he greeted me in a friendly manner, and, with a bellow, transmitted the greetings of his relatives: "Ardalion wishes to be remembered to you, and his wife also; they want to know why you have not been to see us for so long," he shouted, in my very ear, probably imagining that I was also deaf.

And he was lying all the while; no one had inquired, but he was simply desirous of pleasing me in this manner, knowing that I liked pretty Mrs. Koryagin, and that I wanted to go thither as soon as possible.

After walking about the room a little, he began to rub his hands uneasily, and finally asked:—

“Where did you use to keep your currant brandy, Sasha? Give me some; and you’ve got something cold!”

“I have no more currant brandy, but here is some plain vodka, if you like.”

Nikifor made a grimace. “I don’t like it plain; well, hand it over; it’s all the same; I’ll drink a glass.” Then he sat down to the decanter and there remained until he had drained it dry. Once he got so tipsy that when he went away he left a bit of the skirt of his overcoat on the latch of the door, under the impression that I had grasped it and would not let go.

He was rather afraid of his brother Ardalion, and sometimes drove him out of patience with his drunkenness. Their conversations were conducted on their fingers. “You’d better take yourself off to the church and paint the images; you have received the order, now go to work. Masha,” cries Ardalion, to his wife, “don’t give Nikifor any more vodka. He is drunk all the time; it’s time to stop. One must have some sense of decency and know when to hold up.”

After such speeches, Nikifor went about gloomily for some time, and, when he encountered his brother, he slipped past on tiptoe, with a sidelong glance, and sometimes he disappeared for a couple of weeks to carouse at some neighbor’s.

After studying for seven years in the V— Gymnasium, and passing through but four classes during all this time, I finally, with great difficulty, reached the seventh. That year, mamma herself came to live in V—, in order to superintend my studies. She was very desirous that I should finish my course with a certificate, without which, as every one knows, it is impossible to enter the university.

I remember that year very well, especially the final examinations. Where did I get my application at that

time! For whole nights I sat over my books, and I learned whole pages of Latin by heart; and it is useless to mention Körner's grammar, for it seemed as though I could say on what page every rule was situated. And all led to nothing—the fatal two-spot ruined everything.

And how many times before that day did I go with my good mother to the Cathedral of the All-merciful Saviour, to pray to God; and how many services we heard, how many candles we burned, how many prostrations upon the earth we made—and all in vain! Mamma prayed fervently to the Lord, that he would lead into the true path, and confer wisdom upon her son, his servant Alexander, and aid him to pass a good examination, particularly in Latin.

I can see her now, the darling mother; she is kneeling before the image of the Saviour; she wears a black cashmere dress, over which is thrown a gray talma, with a hood for the head, and a black silk bonnet, with a black ostrich feather. Resting her left hand on her parasol, and raising her right to make the sign of the cross, she bends her gray head a little on one side, and slowly shakes it, murmuring with feeling: "Open to us the doors of mercy, most blessed Mother of God," and she bows her head to the ground, while her whisper, quite audible at first, grows softer and softer, until, at the conclusion of her prayer, it dies away altogether. I stand there utterly unaffected by her prayer, and think to myself: "Why does she pray in vain? For no matter how much she may pray, the director will put down that one mark, and I shall no more get a glimpse of that certificate than I can of my own ears!" Then the thought suddenly flashes across me: "What if God should have mercy, and do the impossible,¹ how nice it would be!" And I kneel down and bow to the earth.

The final examinations were accompanied by especial solemnity in our gymnasium. Omitting all the other examinations, which I passed successfully, I will describe only that in Latin, as being the most memorable.

On the eve of the examination, the yellow tables and the blackboards from the class-rooms were carried into the great hall. In the centre was placed the long examination table, covered with green cloth, and around it about ten arm-chairs.

¹ "Send a troika."

On the day of the examination, we were all in our seats in good season. None of the authorities had yet made their appearance. Lively conversations were in progress. Some one asks: "Listen, that isn't necessary, is it."

"What do you mean? God be with you, where did you get that idea? I learned it. Come, ask Kriloff."

Kriloff is the head scholar, who is aiming at the gold medal, and he is reading with his nose thrust into his book and his ears stopped up with his palms.

"Listen, Kriloff, my dear fellow, is this required or not?" asks his comrade, touching him lightly.

"Don't touch me, let me alone, I haven't any time to spare!" replies the latter, without changing his attitude, and goes on with his reading.

"Eh, he doesn't want to answer; a pretty comrade he is!" growls his interrogator, and he goes off to find some one who can inform him whether that point is omitted or not. But it is too late. Both leaves of the door burst open hastily, and into the hall flies the tall, thin janitor of the gymnasium, Alexei, who had a peculiar talent for stumbling. Crying from afar, not very loud, but very significantly, "They are coming!" he flies at the boards, hastily removes the accumulated dust with a hare's-foot, gives the table-cloth a twitch, rearranges the chairs, and, stumbling over one of them, he swiftly disappears.

The first to enter is the "old woman director," and he bows to us courteously, with the sweetest of smiles. After him comes the inspector, only not Sergyei Livovitch, "Come, now!" — he had received another appointment, but tall Lestchinsky, nicknamed "the broom." He enters with dignity, drawing himself up stiffly, as though he had swallowed a yard-stick. He carries under his arm, with an air of importance, a portfolio of papers, and, casting a glance at us from beneath his brows, he gives a barely perceptible nod. The instructors and assistants follow in a long line.

"Eh, what a lot of them they've collected," I say to myself, — "and all for the sake of torturing us."

They take their seats.

"Well, how now, gentlemen? Yes! yes!" exclaims the director; "with whom shall we begin?" Thereupon he picks up the list, and, being long-sighted, he holds it off at some distance for inspection. A death-like silence reigns in the hall.

“Mr. Kriloff,” he snuffles loudly. — The hearts of all of us feel lighter.

Kriloff steps out with a long stride, and, approaching the table, executes a sweeping bow. “The old woman” says something amiable to him, the instructors smile indulgently.

“Pray, take the trouble, Mr. Kriloff, to translate this passage,” and, rising from his chair, Nikolai Ivanitch points it out with his finger.

Kriloff reads and translates. Meanwhile, the director is conversing softly with the Latin instructor, and, after a brief discussion, he exclaims: “Yes! yes! yes! very good, sir! I thank you, Mr. Kriloff.” Kriloff bows twice and retires.

“There now,” I say to myself, “there are lucky people in this world; they demanded a couple of lines of him, and that settled it. But you can sit on and suffer and wait! Much better be called up at once; the matter can have but one termination.”

In this manner, they questioned the best scholars first, proceeding gradually to those who were weaker.

At twelve o'clock there was a recess, and the instructors went off to smoke; there were ten of us—pale and tortured with suspense—who remained unquestioned. And there was some cause for turning pale; the majority of the students belonged to people of small means, and the question of the result of the examination was a question of life or death to them. I had many comrades who, receiving a scholarship of nine rubles a month, supported upon this sum themselves, their parents, and five or six little brothers and sisters. And how great was their poverty! I remember going to see one of them—there were two tiny rooms in the underground story of an old, half-ruined wooden house. The water sucked up from under the floor, when you stepped upon it. My head almost touched the ceiling. Dampness reigned everywhere. The little brothers and sisters, pale, gaunt, and half-naked, were crying with cold and hunger. The sick mother was groaning on the stove. And to study under such melancholy circumstances as these—and on a scholarship at that! The situation of such a student, when he receives defective marks, can easily be imagined. First of all, he loses his scholarship. He is not permitted to spend a second year in the seventh class, he cannot enter a higher educational institu-

tion without a certificate, he knows no trade, and what is he to do? His position is worse than that of the lowest workman, as a gymnasium student is not fit for any physical labor. All these gloomy thoughts, no doubt, occurred to many of them, more than once. With trembling hands, they nervously turned over all their books, searched through them, turned the leaves, and listened anxiously to hear whether they were not coming. The examiners enter, and seat themselves in their former places.

"Mr. Verestchagin!" resounds, in a snuffing voice, through the hall.

"Oh! I'd like to kill him!" flashes through my mind. I step forward, bow, and wait.

"Yes! here, Mr. Verestchagin, let us examine your acquirements," says the director in an insinuating tone, glancing at the Latin instructor. The latter gazes at me through his spectacles, in a serious, almost startled way, and almost seems to say: "Well, Verestchagin, my friend, you are lost!" My heart beats violently; a sort of nausea overpowers me.

"Here, Mr. Verestchagin, translate this for us, and make a syntactical analysis of it;" and Nikolai Ivanitch points with his nail to the point where I am to begin, and the point where I am to leave off, and then throws his heavy body back in his chair with satisfaction.

I begin to translate, and get entangled at the very first words.

"Yes! yes!" snuffles the "old woman," without correcting me, "yes! yes! bad, sir! very bad, sir!"

He throws me into a perspiration. I pull out my handkerchief, and wipe my face and brow. After waiting a little, Nikolai Ivanitch, in a soft treacherous voice, asks the teacher:—

"That will do for him, I think?"

I seem to be surrounded with steam; "Enough, is it?" I say to myself. "That means that I am really lost!"—"Nikolai Ivanitch," I say, turning to him, "ask me something else, for I know; this is the only place that I am weak on, I got a little confused!"

"Yes! yes! he got confused! I know how you got confused, my dear fellow;" and, fluttering over the pages of the record-book, he points at the number of lessons which I have skipped.

“Look there! That’s the way to get confused! What’s this? For the first term two hundred and eighty lessons, for the second one hundred and seventy — this, my good fellow, makes four hundred and fifty lessons in two terms. What was to be expected of you after that?” he snuffles, growing more and more heated.

“Please, Nikolai Ivanitch, ask me something else,” I entreat him, “I really do know!”

“Yes, you know, perhaps you do know, but you keep it to yourself; you don’t impart it to us,” he jests, glancing laughingly at those about him.

“Well, we might put some more questions to him,” says the assistant Kunitzin in a bass voice: he was the instructor in history, and liked me because I worked well in his department.

“Yes, yes, you might put some more if you please,” snuffles the director again, bristling up and evidently displeased at Kunitzin’s suggestion.

“Well, here, explain to us the change from the gerund into the gerundive — it’s the simplest sort of a question!” And glancing at the other instructors, he leaned his elbows on the table and prepared to listen attentively. But I had never been able to acquire that gerundive during the whole course of my ten years’ study of Latin. In vain did the director prick up his ears, he heard nothing from me.

I held my peace and perspired.

“Well, what now, my dear fellow? No, plainly, we’ve had enough of you!” And he nodded at me with decision.

I emerged from the hall as from a bath, having made myself a solemn promise to punch him, on our first meeting, with anything that came to hand.

In all probability, my face was not very tranquil on my return home, for mamma, instead of getting angry over my lack of success, began to console me, and hypocritically assumed a most indifferent mien: she was simply afraid that I would do something desperate to myself in my despair.

“Enough, Sasha! What’s the use of grieving so! Do you think that your career is ruined because of this? What ails you, God be with you! Well, you can’t go to the university, so we will try some other institution.”

“Ah, mamma, do stop, please! As if you didn’t know

that, with this miserable certificate, I can't show my nose anywhere!" I said to her, as I strode from one corner of the room to another like a madman.

She and I discussed and planned a great deal, that day, what was to be done, and where I could get in.

The thing that troubled me most was what papa would say. I was very fond of him, and it was hard for me to reveal my position to him. His fervent wish to see me in the university could not be realized.

"Well, Sasha, we'll try to get you into a military school. You are fond of horses — you may be able to serve in the cavalry. They don't require Latin there."

This idea took possession of my brain, and was eventually realized.

CHAPTER IX.

THE N—— ACADEMY. PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF OFFICER.

AT the beginning of August, 18—, I went to Petersburg with my mother to enter one of the military institutions. As the university was not to be thought of, my father decided that I was to enter an infantry school. "In the infantry," he said, "you can serve more cheaply, and you will have no horse to groom." Immediately after our arrival, we bought a book giving the requirements for entrance examinations, with a detailed account of where certain information was demanded; where instruction was free, and where it had to be paid for.

"Come, now, Sasha, let us see what will be best!" says mamma, turning over the leaves of the book. I walk about the hotel room with my hands in my pockets and listen.

"School of Architecture! Well, that does not suit us: you don't want to be an architect." So we look further: first we examine the civil schools; perhaps I can get in there by some means! She had not yet lost the hope of seeing me in the civil service.

"The Technological Institute! Well, there mathematics are necessary—so that is not for us, either." And mamma shakes her head. She has decidedly become accustomed to the idea that she must pass the examinations with me.

"Look at the military institutions—what's the use of talking about the civil ones!" I interrupt capriciously.

"Very well, my dear, we'll try the military!" she makes haste to say in a soothing tone.

"The Academy for his Imperial Highness' pages. That won't do for us! They're all the children of generals there."

"First Military Academy! There, Sasha, that's a good

school. And Kolya Nilovitzky is studying there, and he will be a companion for you."

I step up and glance at the book.

"It's a free institution, Sasha! You remember what papa enjoined on us. Try to enter a free institution — at imperial expense."

"But there must be a great many who wish to enter there; we must find out what vacancies there are. Where are the authorities now? Where are we to find them?"

"They must all be in Krasnoe Selo now, Sasha: we must go thither!"

"Then, let us go there." Our preparations did not require much time; we looked at the hours for trains in the newspapers, and went thither that same day. We saw the director and learned what was necessary. There proved to be ninety vacancies and four hundred applicants for admission; that meant that one must be on the alert. The examinations began on August 10. On the following day, we went to the inspector, who lived in the building of the academy. He received us very cordially, and behaved in the best possible way with regard to my position. He made me stay to dinner the first day, and conversed with me for a long time.

"Well, how are you in mathematics — strong?" he asks.

"Not particularly; but I am very glad that they don't require Latin here — I am disgusted with it."

"But they drove it into you well — do you remember the exceptions?"

"Yes, indeed —" and I begin: —

"Many nouns there are in *is*
Masculini generis:
Panis, pinis, crinis, finis,
Ignis, lapis, pulvis, cinis."

The inspector begins to laugh. Encouraged by the laugh, I continue: —

"Amnis, axis, and canalis,
Sanguis, unguis, glis, annalis
Fascis, axis, funis, vectis."

The inspector chokes with laughter, and the tears stream down his cheeks.

"That will do! that will do!" and he waves his hand.

“Well, my dear fellow, you have nearly killed me!” he says, blowing his nose and wiping away the tears with his handkerchief. “You’re strong in Latin, there’s no denying it! But now solve this problem for me,” and he propounds one in algebra. I try and try, and I cannot solve it.

“That’s the point, my dear fellow! But do you come here every day. I have a young man here, a relative of mine, who is studying that. You shall prepare yourselves together. There’s a whole week yet, and perhaps you can get ready. To speak frankly, I do not expect that you will pass the examination in mathematics. However,” he added, “there’s no use in prophesying.”

I thanked him for his invitation, and began to go there every day to study, when I immediately perceived that my knowledge of mathematics was really far weaker than it should have been. The inspector helped me as much as he could, and every time he requested me to repeat the exceptions to him, and every time he laughed until he cried.

The examinations began. I broke down in the very first, on algebra. I went to the inspector.

“Well, my dear fellow, did you break down?”

“Yes.”

“Well, this is my advice to you; enter the N— Academy; you’ll certainly hold out there, and be one of the first. All the counts and princes enter there; such heads,—it’s terrible! you’ll be one of the strongest there! Really, you’d better enter, only don’t forget to drive up to the entrance with a trotter,—they like that. To be sure, you have to pay four hundred rubles a year, but, in return, you get into the Guards.”

I reported this conversation to mamma, and she immediately flew to her little book for information: “N— Academy. Charges, four hundred and fifteen rubles a year.”

“Well, Sasha, there’s nothing else to be done; we must make the trial. Of course, papa will not be pleased, but how can it be otherwise?” We decided to go.

In the morning we betook ourselves on foot to the Gostinnoi Dvor. We entered the chapel. Mamma, as usual, lighted several candles, and prayed fervently. We hired an *isvostchik*, though not one with a trotter, but with a good horse, and with a top which folded back, a clean har-

ness, and even a driver with a handsome beard, so that we drove up to the entrance in excellent style.

"The chief of the academy is not at home, madam! Please apply to the commander of the squadron, Colonel Baron Rosenberg!" reports the Swiss, a tall, moustached ex-uhlan, and he courteously conducts us to the commander's door.

We had to mount to the third story to find the Baron. Mamma is tired and cannot walk.

"Oh, Sasha, you will be the death of me," she says, clutching at the balusters and trying to summon her strength. "Good heavens, I shall die on a staircase one of these days. . . . How much torture I am enduring for you! Will you ever recall all this?" and she coughs violently; I stand above her on the landing, and feel abashed lest some one should find us in that situation.

"Come, now, mamma, climb up, it is not far."

"Oh, Sasha, Sasha! you don't believe that! I should be glad to do it, but I have not the strength!" I descend and assist her to mount. We contrive, in some manner, to reach the door.

"Wait," she whispers, "don't ring,—let me get my breath!" She raises her handkerchief to her mouth and coughs. "Now, then, may the Lord grant his blessing!" She forces herself to assume a courageous air.

I ring. A lackey makes his appearance.

"Is the Colonel at home?"

"He is at home. Whom shall I announce, madam?"

"Verestchagina," explains mamma.

"Madam Verestchagin; yes, madam. Please to come into the reception room."

We enter a spacious cabinet. Rugs cover the floor; in front of the window stands a large writing-table, on which are scattered various paper-weights in the shape of horses, horses' heads, saddles, hoofs, and stirrups. On the walls and on easels are plaster and bronze statuettes of horses; they are also hung with pictures of horses which have distinguished themselves in races. Everywhere are saddles, bridles, whips, a multitude of pistols, sabres, swords, and daggers.

After the lapse of a few minutes, the Colonel enters, a short, stout man, in a frock-coat with buttons of the Guards and a red collar, red-headed, red as fire in the face, with

hair clipped close, and a smooth-shaven chin, bristling moustaches, a piercing glance, and a crafty face. His whole exterior was stern, and he spoke in a bass voice.

The Baron bows very politely, moves forward an arm-chair for mamma, and requests her to take a seat. Mamma introduces herself, and presents me. I stand respectfully beside her chair.

The Colonel, first of all, makes inquiries concerning our fortune, and how much I can receive every year from home.

“He has a fine property, Colonel; he can easily have three thousand a year.” (Here mamma added a thousand.)

“Have you a stud, madam?”

“No stud, but my son is extremely fond of horses!”

Meanwhile, I am thinking: “Why does mamma explain that I am fond of horses? Liking horses and having a stud are two very different things.”

Rosenberg inspects my gymnasium certificate, finds it *very good*, and requests us to return in three days.

“You will undergo an examination for verification in history, and then *you will be* received,” he says, turning to me. “Bring the money for the half-year to the treasurer.”

We take our leave and return home with tranquil hearts.

“Now, Sasha, work these three days! Study well!” mamma entreats on the way.

“I’m not afraid of history; I might be of anything else, but I shall get through with this.”

Three days later, I go alone to the academy; I am asked a few trivial questions about the history of the Middle Ages, and then I am informed that I am admitted.

“Go to the tailor’s, get fitted to a uniform, and then show yourself to me,” orders the Colonel. “Orderly! Conduct Verestchagin to Major Savin, and say that he is to ‘fit him out,’ immediately.”

“Yes, Colonel!” replies the orderly — a well built cadet in a short jacket with a red collar, two chevrons on his shoulder-straps, blue cavalry trousers, and boots with spurs. Across his shoulder hangs a sabre on a white sword-belt. He conducts me through a court-yard to a separate building, where the workshops are situated.

“You need boots, also,” the cadet says, turning to me and casting a swift glance at my feet. “They can fit you to good ones, only don’t pay any attention to the steward, in case he should take it into his head to scream at you.

He's such a Jew that he's ready to choke over every pair."

We enter the tailor's shop. Fifteen workmen of various statures, tattered, unkempt, shaven and unshaven, with spectacles on their noses and without spectacles, are sitting there in pairs, with their legs tucked under them, sewing away on clothes for the cadets.

In the last room, stuffed from top to bottom with uniforms, cavalry trousers, cloaks, caps, boots, sword-belts, and all sorts of adjuncts to uniform, sits the Major—the steward; moderately tall, thin, his black whiskers streaked with gray, he is bending over a table, with a pen in his mouth, and auditing accounts. He carefully draws his middle finger down the line of figures; on arriving at the bottom, he removes the pen from his mouth, jots down the sum total, thrusts the pen into his mouth again, and proceeds with his reckoning.

"Major! the Colonel requests you to fit him to a uniform at once," says the cadet, touching his right hand to his visor and pointing to me with his left.

"Who's this?" asks the Major, harshly, and in a frightened sort of way, stopping his writing and staring at both of us through his spectacles.

"What's your surname?" he inquires, abruptly.

"Verestchagin, Major."

"Are you here at government expense?"

"At my own, Major."

"Ah, at your own; so you order your own uniform, and it will be made here!" proposes Savin. Thereupon the wrinkles which had begun to appear upon his face begin to smooth down, his eyes lift up like those of a bird of prey, and even the tip of his nose seems to become hooked and to be preparing to peck out my last kopek.

I stand there in indecision. My guide makes a negative sign to me with his head,—which means that I am to refuse.

"For the time being, Major, please to provide me with a government uniform, and then I will see about it!"

"See about it, indeed!" he cuts me short,— "order it now! a cadet of the Guard wants to get along with only government uniforms, it's disgraceful!"

Although shivers of terror begin to course over my body, I do not yield, and there is nothing for the Major to

do but to consent. They fit me. Everything is as it should be. I step up to the Major.

“Turn round!” he shouts.

I turn abruptly to the right.

“Oh, ye guards, who ever heard of turning like that!” and he takes me roughly by the shoulders and turns me round to the left.

“Very good; now go and show yourself to the Colonel.”

“Please to give me some boots also!” I say.

“Wha-a-a-at! what are you driving at?” exclaims the steward, menacingly, staring at me with the most impudent gaze. That glance alone was enough to tell you with whom you had to deal. All this time the orderly continues to encourage me with signs.

“Mine are broken!” I persist, and I point to a crack in my boot.

“If you haven’t any boots, you’d better not force your way into the Guards!” and, becoming convinced that he cannot get rid of me, the steward, sadly and with lowered voice, gives the order to measure me for some boots.

We return to the commander of the squadron.

“Savin always behaves like that with new fellows,” said the orderly to me on the way. “He frightens them and they give in and order their own uniforms, and that is all he wants. He’s a low-born fellow, a soldier’s son, who has risen in the service, and he has been steward here for a great many years. A song has been made about him,” and the cadet strikes up:—

“Farewell, Savin, our steward stern,
Thief of our rolls and patties;
From them thou hast built thyself a house
Which fronts upon the alley.”

“Isn’t that a pretty song?”

“It couldn’t be better!”

We ascend the stairs to the commander of the squadron.

“Well, sir, show yourself! . . . What’s this! Who ever saw the like!” he exclaims angrily, and points out my collar to the orderly. “Couldn’t they fit him any better than that?” The latter stands motionless.

“Turn round!”

I turn as Savin had instructed me.

“Well, it’s all right behind. Present yourself to the

officer of the day; get your leave of absence, and please to report yourself on the evening of August 30. And behave yourself well!"

"Yes, Colonel, I will try."

"Did you give the money to the treasurer?"

"Yes, Colonel, and here is the receipt."

"Very good! now, you may go; greet your mother from me."

"Yes, Colonel."

I depart, escorted by the same cadet. On taking leave of him, I go to the officer of the day.

On the first floor, to the right of the anteroom, is affixed a small sign with the inscription, "Guard-Room." I enter. On the oil-cloth sofa sits a handsome young officer of uhlans, with his elbow resting on a table, engaged in reading a French romance. On the table are his cap, a list of the cadets, pen and ink. In the corner, on a small table beneath the mirror, stands a decanter of water.

I present myself. "Lieutenant, Cadet Verestchagin desires leave of absence!"

The lieutenant rises, politely inquires my name, and inscribes it on the list.

"You must report here at nine o'clock on the evening of the 30th."

"Yes, lieutenant," and I touch my cap.

"This is the way to salute," he says, and corrects me.

"Do you know to whom you are to face about?"

"Certainly, lieutenant, to all the imperial family and all generals."

"But to the commander of the squadron,—he is a colonel?"

"To him, also."

"Very good. You may go."

I fly joyfully to mamma. She is highly delighted. "Ah, Sasha, my dear, how glad I am! You have found a place, at last, thank God!" and she embraces me and kisses me and cannot refrain from weeping.

"How pretty your uniform is, Sasha!" she says, smiling through her tears. "But why is your breast so red?"

"This is called the facings."

"And your trousers—they're real general's trousers!"

"Ha! ha! ha! trousers! . . . they are *tchaktchiri*, not

trousers!" I correct her — when only an hour previously I had called them trousers myself.

"Well, Sasha, my darling, I will go with you to-morrow to Peter the Great's little house, to pray to the Saviour; perhaps he will help you to reach the grade of officer, and rejoice the hearts of us old people!" And again she weeps, and her tears drop upon my new facings.

"Have they given you a long leave of absence, my dear?"

"I must report myself on the evening of the 30th."

"What! Go away on your name-day! Had you forgotten that the 30th was the day of your guardian angel?" But she immediately regains her equanimity, fearing to upset me. "Well, if such are your orders, there is nothing to be done; you must go."

Ten days remain before the beginning of school; mamma cannot gaze at me enough. During this time, we visit all our relatives and acquaintances, and mamma exhibits me to all of them and tells them how delighted she is with my new appointment.

The 30th of August speedily arrives. At half-past eight in the evening I again enter the guard-room, and report myself, only not to the uhlan but to an officer of the mounted grenadiers. Around him stand several cadets, conversing amicably. Conversation ceases on my appearance. All eyes are turned on me. I am scrutinized from head to foot like some sort of a wild beast.

"Lieutenant, Cadet Verestchagin has returned from his leave of absence," I say, not in the least boldly. The officer makes a note of it, and says, as though speaking to himself, "Pretty early, my good fellow, pretty early!"

"Ten o'clock was the hour to come; why did you return so early?" one of the cadets asks me, in a reproachful tone, in which a profound compassion over my loss of an hour and a half is audible.

"Very good," says the officer, with a nod. "Do you know in which platoon your cot is?"

"In the second, I think, Lieutenant."

"You think! There's no such thing as *thinking* here; you've got to know!" and he bestows a stern glance upon me.

"I'll show him the way," offers one of the bystanders. We set out. "Vandal!" I hear behind me, but I have not the slightest suspicion that the epithet refers to me.

Two broad staircases lead from the lower landing to the second story, straight to the hall, or, as it was called with us, the central landing. At that moment fifty cadets were strolling merrily round the hall. One very fat fellow, with a Mongolian cast of countenance, and plump hands, was playing the grand piano with dash, and singing, in French:—

“Oh, love, oh li lon la
Oh la li . . .”

wriggling his shoulders the while and making voluptuous motions, rolling his eyes at the ceiling, screwing them up, and languishing. . . . Around him stands a considerable crowd, which joins in the refrain, and swoons in imagination. The fat fellow suddenly changes with a crash to the air:—

“And when the little breeze doth blow,
The little breeze, the little breeze,

.
Ye maids, my friends,
Ah, ye, my friends.”

All who are in the hall join in. Several pairs are immediately formed, and waltz; two leap forward and dance a vigorous cancan, inventing the most incredible figures. After admiring the dancers, I go in search of my bed.

On the right of the hall begin the class-rooms, or auditoriums; on the left are two large sleeping-rooms, or dormitories. They are separated by a broad corridor. In the dormitory on the right, the first platoon is lodged; in that on the left, the second platoon; the third and fourth are quartered in the third story; there also are situated the hospital and the hippological cabinet.

Lengthwise of the room, in two rows, head to head, stand the iron beds, with flimsy woollen coverlets, and the name of the owner inscribed over each. Small chests of drawers fill in the intervals. The rooms are rather dimly lighted with gas.

“Here’s your bed,” says my guide to me.

We bow to each other. I am left alone. All at once, I hear a bass shout behind me:—

“What’s your name, ‘vandal’?”

I glance round. Across the next bed to me lies a cadet

of unusual height, with a pimpled face, staring intently in my direction.

“What do you wish?” I inquire as courteously as possible.

“You’re a vandal!” the other repeats, approaching me.

“Why am I a vandal?”

“Don’t you know,” he rumbles in a bass voice, broken by pauses, “that all new-comers are vandals, Scythians, Sarmatians?” — and so saying, he unceremoniously flings himself on my bed. I hold my peace, and place my belongings in my chest of drawers.

My new interlocutor turns his head, and slowly reads the inscription over my bed

“Ve-re-stcha-gin. Do you come from the military gymnasium?”

“No, from the civil one.”

“From which?”

“From V——”

“How is it there — cold?”

“Not very.”

“Who are your parents?”

“Landed gentry.”

“Rich?”

“So-so; they have enough to live on.”

“Vandal, vandal!” — Silence.

“Send for some pastry,” is his next request.

“What sort?”

“Twofold vandal! Sweet, of course, — will you send?”

“Very well, how many?” and I feel for my purse.

“Ten will be enough,” and without awaiting my answer, he shouts so that he can be heard nearly all over the establishment: — “Lackey on duty!” — In a minute, a tall, whiskered, wrinkled lackey, in a black coat with cloth buttons, and a red collar, makes his appearance.

“Zaryetchny, run for some cakes, fetch ten, only try to get almond cakes, — do you hear!” and he points to me. I hand over a ruble bank-bill, and the lackey disappears. My new acquaintance grows more amiable in anticipation of the cakes, and begins to give friendly advice.

“Inscribe yourself in my division.”

“What division?”

“For recitations. Have you been through fortifications?”

"No."

"Well, here, then, if you belong to my division, you will not fall to Glagolin. He's such a beast, my dear fellow,—just terrible. It is all through him that I am a 'major.'"

"What is that?"

"Why, this: any one of us who remains a second year in the lowest class is called a major. You see that you don't know anything, and what a vandal you are!"

I humbly acknowledge the justice of my new title.

The lackey returns very much out of breath, and reports rapidly:—

"There are only three with almonds, your Excellency; the rest are with apple," and he places on the chest of drawers in front of us a package and the change. He withdraws on receiving twenty kopeks.

"Help yourself!" I suggest.

At that moment, two more cadets enter arm in arm; on catching sight of the cakes, they approach and seat themselves beside my neighbor.

Again come the same questions: "What's your name, vandal?"—I tell them and treat them.

"Will you not have some?"—They each take a cake.

"Have you ridden on horseback much?" inquires my first acquaintance.

"I often rode at home. Here, I suppose, the manner of riding is entirely different, according to rule."

"Yes; we have a strict commander. He often instructs the divisions himself. He rides capitally!"

A bugle sounds.—"Roll call! Roll call!" resounds on all sides. We go downstairs to the hall of assembly, which adjoins the guard-room. It is so long that it affords room for the whole squadron. The cadets draw up in line. The quartermaster, a short cadet with three chevrons on his shoulder-straps, and a very good-looking fellow, gives the command smartly: "Eyes front!" He begins the roll-call. I stand and tremble: all at once, it appears that my name is not there, they have forgotten me! But later on I hear, "Verestchagin!"—"Here!" I cry, and recover my equanimity.

Roll-call comes to an end. The order follows: "Left, right shoulder front, march!" Spurs clash merrily: stepping at first almost at the same spot, then with ever in-

creasing stride, the squadron noisily leaves the hall, and, having reached the staircase leading upstairs, it disperses through the rooms. The lamps are extinguished, and it is dark in the dormitories.

I go to my bed, undress and lie down. The bed seems hard and narrow, the coverlet short: Savin does not allow himself to be forgotten even here.

In half an hour, all is still. The officer of the day, with the cadet on duty and the orderly, makes the round of the dormitories, and sees whether the cadets are sleeping in their places, and whose cots are empty.

“Whose bed is this?” inquires the officer, halting beside mine. I pretend to be asleep. The soldier bends down, and reads with difficulty in the dark: “Ve-re-stcha-gin — a new-comer, sir!”

“Wake him up! How untidy to fling down his clothes and boots like that!” They shake me; I make my excuses, and arrange things as they should be.

“Please to hang your kepi up over your head — you don’t understand orderliness!” says the officer to me; then goes his way. His comments are to be heard for a long time in the dormitory.

Everything seems to have settled down.

“Keep still, vandals!” suddenly resounds through both platoons. The cadets of the advanced class are returning from late leave: they march through the rooms like absolute masters, without in the least heeding the fact that their comrades have long been asleep; they talk loudly and gayly about the places where they have been, and what they have done.

“Silence, what’s all this, we can’t sleep!” shouts some one, in a sleepy voice; they moderate their tones, and at the same time try to divine to whom the voice belonged — whether it was to a vandal: of course, they would not have obeyed in the latter case, but would have certainly cursed him well. At last, all is quiet.

“Get up! get up!” I hear through my half-waking state. I open my eyes, it is morning — the same officer of the day and orderly are making the round of the rooms, and rousing the cadets. They hardly approach the cadets of the advanced class, or, as they were called, cornets, at all, but only the new-comers.

“If you don’t rise instantly, you’ll have to go on duty

to-day!" says the officer of the day, sternly, to a tall blond cadet, who is stretching himself and yawning lazily.

"Why, it's only half-past six!" he replies, pointing to a gold watch, which lies beside him on his chest of drawers, with a heavy gold chain and a whole bunch of trinkets.

"Answering back, vandal! take his name!" the non-commissioned officer orders the orderly, and passes on, still crying: "Get up, get up!"

"Eh, he tried to frighten me!" growls the new-comer. "Well, if I must go on duty, I will; do you suppose I am afraid?" but five minutes later he is ready, and, flinging a towel across his shoulder, and, holding in his hands a box which contains soap, powders, and tooth-brushes, perfumes, eau de cologne, and various objects in the cosmetic line, he goes to the wash-room.

At half-past seven, we descend to the dining-room to tea; a cup of tea with a roll is set out for each cadet. The tea is poor, not sweet, the rolls fairly good. Then the squad draws up in line in the hall of assembly. The head of the academy enters, Baron Glaube, a tall, thin, stately general, with large grayish side-whiskers. Stammering slightly, he delivers a speech touching what is expected of us and how we are to conduct ourselves as "cadets of the Guard." During his speech, the General twists his whiskers with one hand, while with the other he makes gestures to emphasize his meaning.

Baron Rosenberg stands gravely at some distance from him. With one foot thrust forward, and his chest puffed out like a sergeant-major, he taps his back with the visor of his cap; now and then he casts a significant glance at one or another of us, and, apparently, all but says aloud: "Listen, my good fellow; that is meant for you. Remember, make a note of it!" After the General has finished, he also makes a speech, which, though brief, is powerful. While delivering this speech, the Colonel keeps his right hand in the breast of his coat, and with his left continues to toy with his cap.

"I hope, gentlemen," he adds, in conclusion, "that I shall not be obliged to quarrel with you, and to have recourse to harsh measures. I always have been and I always shall be the best friend and protector of the cadets. Up to the present time, the 'cadet of the Guard' has worn his uniform with honor; he has always upheld, and I hope

that he always will uphold, the glory of our academy." At these words, he casts a searching glance on the cadets, and seems much affected.

"We'll try, Colonel, we'll try!" all shout.

They begin to divide us: into platoons, according to our height; into sections, according to our acquirements; and into reliefs, according to our skill in riding. My height placed me in the first squad, but for riding I was set down in the very youngest—the vandals.

Spurs were not given to the novices at once, but according to their progress in riding; one fellow would shake about for three months without them, and only put them on just before leave of absence.

Our superiors presented a strong contrast: the head of the academy was wholly engrossed with the mental progress of the students; he knew by heart just which cadet was weak, and on what subject, when and for what he received a bad mark, and when it ought to be corrected. He never concerned himself with the military duties; a cadet might be the finest of horsemen, but if he had received a poor rating for the week, the General would not grant him leave of absence.

The commander of the squadron, who was of as much importance as he in the academy, if not even more, directed all his attention, in his turn, to horsemanship; the learned branches did not exist for him. If a fellow rode well, he might request leave of absence from the Baron with confidence. Rosenberg could not endure those who studied hard and rode badly.

The consequence of this variance of opinion among the authorities was that scenes of the following nature frequently occurred with the cadets.

On Saturday afternoon, a cadet betakes himself to the Colonel, and requests leave of absence. In his recitations he has received neither more nor less than zero; but he rides in the crack squad, and is to be officer of the day himself to-morrow, Sunday. The Colonel comes up to him:—

"What do you say?" he asks his favorite.

"Colonel . . . give me leave of absence . . . my aunt has come to town to-day, and she's going away to-morrow!" is his tune.

"Have you asked the head of the institution?" asks

the commander, taking care at the same time not to fall in with the latter himself.

"No, sir, not at all, Colonel."

"Have you said your lessons, sir?" Rosenberg pursues his inquiries in a roguish yet quiet voice, in order that Glaube may not hear.

The cadet stammers.—"Yes—I have said them. . . . Yes—badly," he replies.

The Colonel has no curiosity to learn how much he has received, being convinced beforehand that it cannot be much more than a cipher.

"Well, you may go until ten o'clock."

"Give me until twelve, please, Colonel!"

"Wha-a-a-at, sir!" Then he smiles, softens down and . . . and . . . gives him leave.

It is not yet dark that afternoon when this same cadet is driving along the Nevsky Prospect with a dandified *isvostchik*. . . . Glaube encounters him—and makes a note of it.

The next day he is summoned to the chief's quarters to give an account of himself. The General steps out, sternly twisting his whiskers.

"D-d-did y-y-you attend r-r-recitations on Saturday?" he stammers.

"Yes, your Excellency."

And he feels, meanwhile, that he will not escape arrest.

"H-h-how m-m-much d-d-did you g-g-get?"—the General's hand twists his beard still more fiercely.

"It was a very bad mark, your Excellency."

"H-h-how m-m-much?"

"Nothing, your Excellency."

"H-h-how d-d-did y-y-you d-d-dare to ask C-c-colonel Rosenberg f-f-for l-l-leave of absence? C-c-consider yourself under arrest, g-g-go! Call the officer of the day," shouts the General to the Swiss. The officer makes his appearance.

"Officer, p-p-please to p-p-place this gentleman under arrest for three days. You will release him for his recitations." With a nod, the General withdraws to his rooms.

Again, the bad horseman presents himself in his turn, to the head of the academy, to petition for leave of absence. He is one of the very best, so far as his studies are concerned.

“Why do you ask! Your marks are good, you may go. Go, g-g-go, with God’s blessing.”

The cadet shifts from foot to foot, and does not stir from the spot.

“Why don’t you go?” inquires the General, and his hand is all ready to fly at his whiskers and twirl them.

“Your Excellency, the Colonel deprived me of my leave of absence yesterday, for bad horsemanship,” the cadet complains, almost weeping.

The General hesitates:—“Very well, sir, I will speak to Baron Rosenberg, you may go. Go, g-g-go!” and he escorts the cadet to the door himself.

The cadet goes off on leave, and in the theatre he runs against the Colonel. The latter looks askance at him. The poor fellow’s heart sinks within him. “I’m done for, deuce take it,” he thinks; “he’ll blow me up, he’ll blow me up, he’ll certainly blow me up.”

The next day, his squad has a riding-lesson; he enters the riding-school, mounts his horse and takes his place. There are thirty fellows in the squad. They wait for the officer, he does not appear—he is ill; Rosenberg himself will superintend the drill. The poor cadet’s heart sinks into his heels.

“Hush, hush,” he hears the whisper: “the Colonel! the Colonel!”

The commander, dressed in a gray coat, with one hand thrust into the breast of his coat, the other in his pocket, steps quietly to the centre of the riding-school.

“Good-morning, gentlemen,” he says, greeting them as usual in his hoarse voice, gazing at all in general and at no one in particular, and he takes the whip from the soldier on duty.

“We wish you good health, Colonel,” resounds the unanimous response, although the one who is about to suffer would, of course, like to have the Baron sink through the earth anywhere at that moment.

“Left, single file at two horses’ distance, at pace, march!” shouts the commander, monotonously, and, drawing back, he makes room for number one.

One after another the cadets pass by at a walk, with heads turned in the direction of their officer, as much as to ask: “How am I?”

“Ha-a-alt!” The company comes to a stand-still.

The unlucky cadet is directly opposite the Colonel. The Baron steps up to him, with his switch under his arm.

"How ought you to hold your arms?" he inquires sardonically, foaming with wrath. — "How were you taught? — the right hand higher!" he bursts forth, and lashes the horse with his whip . . . then again, again, and yet again. The horse rears and springs to one side like a mad creature.

"Lubberly civilian!" roars the Baron, hoarsely; — "it's a disgrace to ride worse than the lowest vandal, and you in the eldest class at that! Set him down!" he shouts to the quartermaster; "three days' duty! The first Sunday without leave of absence, and the second, and the third!" adds the Colonel, becoming more and more furious. The cadet, in the meantime, is careering round the riding-school, bent double, having lost his stirrups, and struggling to keep his seat.

"Dig a radish,¹ dig, dig a radish!" shouts the Colonel, running after the cadet, and cracking his whip over the fellow's very ears.

The latter recovers himself in some way, the horse quiets down, and the cadet resumes his place.

"Tr-r-r-rot!" orders Rosenberg. The horses snort and gladly break into a trot.

"One-two, one-two, one-two," repeats the commander, in time; "don't increase the distance!" and, flourishing his whip at those who are lagging behind, he gives a prolonged shout.

"Volt, ma-a-arch!" The horses all turn together, make a turn and proceed at the same pace.

Seriously, concentratedly, as one man, the cadets flash past the commander, rising in regular measure from the saddle, and pounding down in it; the horses snort more and more violently.

"Wa-a-alk!" The horses immediately subside into a walk, trying at the same time to free themselves from the bridle, and stretching their necks.

"Dismount! Lead your horses!" shouts the Colonel, and quits the riding-school with dignity.

¹ "To dig a radish" meant to tumble off one's horse, an expression which was very insulting to a cavalry cadet.

At first my lot was cast with a very fine officer; he took a fancy to me, and placed me at the head of the first riding squad; but I was afterwards transferred to another company; the Colonel did not like this officer, and it was the worse for me. They ceased to place me at the head. Still, I did not grieve, but exercised well and prepared my recitations carefully.

Our day was divided as follows: at 7:45, tea; at 8, classes; and by 12 o'clock we had got through four lessons in succession; from 12 to 12:30, breakfast, after which, until three o'clock, we were occupied with military exercises; at 3 o'clock, dinner. After dinner, we prepared our lessons.

On Wednesdays and Saturdays, the instructors assembled in the evening, and from six o'clock until nine they questioned the cadets on what they had gone over during the week, and fixed the marks — which was called "rehearsal." According to these marks the cadet was promoted to chevrons, and from them the average standing for the year was deduced, which was of great significance during examinations.

During the first history rehearsal, I discovered how much knowledge of this subject the cadets possessed. I remember instructor Dolinovitch asking a cadet to tell him about the war for the father-land (1812): the cadet asked, a tall fellow of imposing exterior, with large side-whiskers and a moustache, very seriously affirmed that the war for the father-land began under Catherine the Great and ended under Paul Petrovitch.

He is told: "Enough, sit down." He perceives that he will receive a bad mark.

"Ivan Ivanitch! Permit me to correct myself. I will prepare myself for the next time," he entreats.

"Very good, sir, you may do so," answers the instructor

The cadet goes off to his dormitory, perfectly happy, and strikes up on the way: —

"Messieurs the cornets
Have nought o'er which to grieve,
For them the merest trifle 'tis
With these vandals to live."

Another, on being questioned about Potemkin, replies about Vasily the Dark.

On the first occasion, I simply bit my lips to keep from

laughing when I saw with what serious countenances they offered these absurdities. The "majors," in particular, distinguished themselves; we had six of them among us. Among them, I think I shall never forget Prince Utkin—a tall, black-haired, gaunt fellow, with bristly moustache and a low forehead; he wore low heels, and walked lightly, almost noiselessly. Our recitation rooms were large, and the Prince always sat on the rear bench, where he either dozed in the calmest manner, or played cards with his comrades, without even the faintest idea of what the instructor was explaining; it is a chance if he even knew that a lecture was in progress. As I now recall the circumstances, Dolinovitch, observing that Prince Utkin was dozing, raised his voice and continued: "Napoleon I., after the battle of Austerlitz, moved forward, as Prince Utkin knows. . . ." The latter immediately sprang up, gazed about in alarm, and then sank back into his place with a displeased countenance, and dropped off to sleep again.

A great many other cadets, like the "majors," rarely took a book in their hands. What was the use? Expulsion from the academy for defective studies was a rare occurrence; many, many who lagged behind the second year in the lower course, that is to say, who became "majors," were infallibly promoted to the upper class, though they never touched a book. In the upper class, if you studied well, you would finish in the first rank, that is to say, with a right to enter the Guards; and if you did not study at all, you would come out as a cornet in the army, and that with right to seniority. And, on these grounds, the elder class regarded themselves as cornets, and every one of them, on his promotion from the younger class, fitted himself out with a cornet's cap of the regiment which he intended to enter. In these caps, for the time being, they only dared to go to the bath, which was situated in the same court-yard as the academy, and where we were taken once a week. We did not wash much, but went chiefly for the sake of the fun.

"Are you going to the bath, your blagorodie?"¹ the lackey asked me on the first Saturday. "I must go," I thought, "it will be required of me." So I took my linen, and set out. The anteroom to the bath was crowded; there were twenty of us undressing, the majority in cor-

¹ Well born.

nets' caps. One of the lower class also presented himself with the same, but he was immediately deprived of it and rebuked: "Milksop, vandal, how dare you put on a cornet's cap! What impudence!"

The "majors" enjoyed the rights of cornets, and therefore they walked about boldly in their caps. I undressed and went to the bath. It was quite cold; it was filled with steam to the very ceiling, and the two gas-jets were barely visible. There were a good many cadets there, but hardly any one was washing himself; in the middle of the bath two were wrestling; several others were standing around them, looking on and making remarks.

"No, Khrist should not wrestle with Ivanoff; Ivanoff is the stronger!"

"Why do you grasp under the arms!" shouts Khrist, in a weary voice, and raises his perspiring head. "Catch hold as I do, do you see; where are your hands?" and, breathless, he again presses his chin against his opponent's shoulder. Louder groans and indistinct exclamations become audible: "What? No, stop — just wait!"

In one corner stands another group of cadets, talking about a horse running away with an officer at the parade on the preceding day.

"What did the Emperor say?"

"He did not notice it, it seems."

"Yes, nonsense, he did not notice it! No, he certainly did notice it, but he said nothing," returns another, with a significant look.

"Was the horse good?"

"A splendid horse! He bought it of Count Nostitch; exactly like our Pheasant, only it can't be so tall!"

"Not so tall! Taller, not shorter! I saw it; I know!"

A dispute begins; without awaiting the termination of the quarrel, I pass into the hot section, whence resounds our academy song, expressing the cornet's farewell to the institution, and which was called the "Wildbeastiad."

On the benches lie several cadets of the upper class, singing at the top of their lungs:—

Farewell to you, our teachers — a-all,
The objects of our general hate;
Never again will you get me
A learned book in hand to take. . . .

Farewell, hard riding without stirrups,
 Banquettes, traverses, and barbettes;
 Farewell, ye myriad rules of science,
 Farewell, ye xs, pluses, zeds.

“Ha, a vandal!” shouts one, on catching sight of me. “Give me some cold water!” and he hands me an empty wooden tub. I take it without remonstrance, place it under the faucet, and return.

“Thanks, vandal!” The cornet wets his head, freshens himself up, lies down on his stomach, and, placing the palms of his hands under his head, he proceeds to chime in with his comrades:—

Farewell our Glaube, General;
 Thou always wert for us a wag,
 And this alone did grieve us all—
 Thou wouldst not skip the rehearsal.

Th’ implacable foe of infantry,
 The teacher bold of our squadron,
 In riding-school inflexible,
 Farewell, farewell, our fierce Baron.

I stand on one side and listen to the roar of these healthy voices.

“What are you gaping at, vandal!” shouts a second cadet to me: “better come here and rub my back. Take the bast wisp.”

“What the deuce!” I say to myself; “have I turned into a bath servant?” But it would have been ill-advised to refuse. I take the bast wisp and begin to rub! The cornet grunts with satisfaction, and rolls from side to side.

“You’re a fine fellow, vandal, thanks—here, a bit more in this spot,—higher up; that’s it, there. Now, that’ll do, my fine fellow, thank you; I didn’t expect it of you!”

While I am rubbing, his comrades continue their song:—

Farewell, Savin, our steward stern,
 Thief of our rolls and patties;
 From them thou hast built thyself a house
 Which fronts upon the alley.

Farewell, our Schnitzel, little Jew,
 With all thy stupid vaulting;
 Not soon again thou’lt force on me
 Sizo,¹ with pain and halting. . . .

¹ A figure in the volt—“the scissors.”

'Tis time to close our "Beastiad,"
 So, beasts, we bid you all adieu;
 The smart cornet will soon forget
 Your senseless, sheepish crew.

The song is finished; they crawl off the shelf and begin to drench themselves; this operation lasts almost as long as the song. Then they go to the cold chamber; there several more join them. All stand in a circle and sing:—

Oh when the Judgment Day arrives,
 A fine parade we'll show;
 The cornets up to heaven will rise,
 The vandals march in the same row.

Then all of a sudden they change their tune, and begin merrily:—

Messieurs the cornets
 Have naught o'er which to grieve,
 For them the merest trifle 'tis
 With these vandals to live.

 For them we do not wail,
 And them we do not beat;
 Them for their deeds we praise
 And for a trifle beat.

Having finished their song, they all go off together. to dress.

The time is after breakfast. The cadets are on their way to the riding-school, in detached groups; to-day the assignment of posts for the autumn parade takes place.

In the spacious riding-school, the squadron is drawn up on foot, in two ranks. Colonel Rosenberg, with a list in his hand, is walking from one flank to the other, and arranging the detachments. On one side stand the officers of the divisions, conversing softly in their dread of disturbing the commander.

"Captain Polbin!" rings out the voice of the commander.

The lank hussar captain, in a much worn hussar jacket of a turquoise-blue hue, with a sleepy expression of countenance, leaps forward as though stung, and directs his course

at a jump towards the voice, putting one hand to his cap, and grasping his sword with the other.

"Has Bogdanoff braced up?" inquires the Baron, casting a sidelong glance at the doubtful rider.

"He is getting along a little better, he's improving, Colonel," replies Polbin, drawing himself up and following his superior.

"Well, take your place!" he orders the cadet, gruffly; "and attend to me—use your ears—don't go to sleep!"

The cadet joyously takes his place in the ranks. He had not in the least expected to take part in the parade, as he had sprained his ankle a short time previously, had lain in hospital for a considerable period, and had got out of practice in horsemanship. The Colonel proceeds with the roll, and assigns the horses:—

"Sharigin—on Vestalka. Verestchagin—on Barbaris."

I am horrified! Barbaris bucks.

"Bezborodko—on Ulanka."

Several of my comrades burst into a laugh. Ulanka is the most miserable horse in the squadron; it will not stir from the spot, but merely stands and flirts its tail. Bezborodko, a fine young fellow, cannot believe his ears, and stands for a long time as though thunderstruck at such a surprise.

"Dadonoff—on Grátchika." Rosenberg continues to shout, walking along the line, and putting down his finger against the names.

"Colonel, allow me to ride . . ." Dadonoff mutters something with a sour face.

"Wha-a-at, sir?" asks the Colonel, angrily, making a jump at Dadonoff, then bending down and staring him in the face; "if that doesn't please you, you needn't ride at all!"

Dadonoff bites his tongue.

The ordering of ranks is at an end.

"Captain Schnitzel!" shouts the Colonel, to an officer in the uniform of uhlans, "please to make this unparadonable squad toe the mark for me!"—and he points to the remaining twenty cadets.—"What a disgrace not to know how to ride at all!"

Rosenberg takes his departure; the cadets follow him in a crowd.

The next day, the squad drill is prepared at one o'clock,

on the place in front of the academy. At the conclusion of the formation in line, the front rank is drawn up with lances, the rear rank with sabres. As yet, there is no commander. The officers of the platoons stand with their faces turned towards their men, and converse with the non-commissioned officers. The place is muddy. The horses have already succeeded in bespattering themselves. A crowd has collected, and is staring at them.

“Hush! hush!” a whisper suddenly makes itself heard. — “The Colonel!”

From the gate of the academy comes the Colonel on his inevitable bay steed *Gvardeïtza*.

“Eyes fro-o-ont!” shouts the eldest of the officers, zealously.

The commander rides up at a gallop, and salutes, while still at a distance.

“Good-morning, gentlemen!”

“We wish you health, Colonel!” replies the squadron, this phrase sounding precisely as though the cadets had shouted, “one — two.”

He makes the round of the cadets at a walk, halting beside almost every one of them, inspects them attentively, and finds some criticism to make to each; now, “body upright;” again, “toes against your horse;” then, “head higher;” and most frequently of all, “foot well down at heel.” He has made the rounds of all, he has corrected all. With the same gallop as before, he retires to one side, wheels round sharply, and gives the abrupt command: —

“Squadron, draw sabres!”

Then unsheathing his own, he adds slowly, “Lan-ces in ha-a-and!”

The lance-bearers fell into motion, and began to draw into line; the sabres gleamed, and were some time in coming into line with the shoulder.

“Squadron, dress up on the right!” orders Rosenberg, in such a way that the *o* is almost inaudible, but seems soft, and slides into *a* and does not cut the ear at all.

“Don’t rein in there, you!” he shouts at one who has come near advancing a little, but has taken fright and drawn back too far. The Baron dashes up to the cadet in a rage, with one jerk reins in poor *Gvardeïtza*, so that the creature slides back several paces, as though on

a sledge, upon his hind legs, and covers himself with mud.

“You spoil my whole front!” bursts out the commander; the blood rushes to his face, he foams at the mouth, his brows are scowling.

“Advance! more, more still! haven’t you any eyes!” — and then he gallops back to his place.

“Defile!” shouts the commander, in a hoarse tone; “the chief point is — calmness; rear rank, don’t close up, keep even, don’t break file, look out! and use your ears — listen to orders!”

“Defile!” he roars, frantically, waving his sword above his head; “steady on the right, trot!” Then he seems himself to grow taller, rises in his stirrups, spreads his legs wide apart.

“Ma-a-arch!” The Colonel makes a violent gesture with his sabre, then lowers it in exasperation, dropping his head at the same time as though just then and there he had reached the conclusion of his earthly existence. But this only lasts a moment, he again “makes the salute to superiors,” and awaits the march past of the squadron. Like a black wave the squadron approaches, ever nearer, ever more evenly, and passes the threatening commander as though drawn up along a cord.

He is happy: “Good!” he shouts, and overtakes the squadron at full speed. “The same, once more!” Having made us file past five times, the Colonel brings the drill to a close.

It is the day of the parade. A vigorous cleaning and dressing have been going on from early morning, in all the dormitories of the academy. The perspiring lackeys fly hither and thither like crazy men; one runs with a new uniform, another with gloves, a third with a new white plume, adjusting it on his way, with dirty trembling hands; a fourth, all crimson with fatigue, with despair written on his face, tugs away at “his gentleman’s” boots, while the latter, lying back on his bed with his foot in the air, shouts capriciously: —

“Again! Come again, just a little more!”

“Oï, your Excellency, give me time to rest a bit!” says the weary servant, gloomily drawing from his pocket a dirty, checked cotton handkerchief, and mopping his perspiring brow. — “And who made your Excellency such

tight boots?" he inquires, as he betakes himself to his former work with renewed energy.

"Don't jabber, put it on quick!" shouts the future cornet, and he braces the boot, which is half on, against the servant's stomach.

With clenched teeth and protruding eyes, the lackey frantically grasps the straps of the boot, makes an effort, and goes dancing about the room in company with the bed and the coruet. A final effort and the boot has leaped into place.

"Well, glory to God!" growls the servant.

"Quick, my dear fellow, help me dress!" entreats the cadet, jumping up and admiring his boots.

"Fall in!" rings out the command.

"Ah, good Heavens, 'fall in'!"

But he is ready. All draw up on the lower landing. The commander comes out with an anxious face, and once more enjoins us: —

"Remember, gentlemen, you are not to break ranks; the rear file must not ride down the rest; and the chief thing of all — attend to the word of command."

We go out into the court-yard. The soldiers are holding the horses, already saddled, by the bridles, and the adjustment of stirrups begins.

"Come, pull it up another hole!" a cadet entreats his soldier.

The latter pulls away.

"One more!"

"It can't be done, your Excellency; there are no more holes."

"Well, then, tie it in a knot."

The man ties a knot.

The long expected command rings out: "Mo-ount!" All mount quickly; the lances gleam redly in a long, level line in the front rank; the white plumes wave gently in the breeze, and surround the heads of the cadets like a white fringe. All faces are cheerful and impatient; all are anxious to start as soon as possible. Gvardeïtza is led up for the Colonel; two soldiers solicitously help him mount. He is in the saddle. He casts one last glance of his experienced eye over his little army, and gives the command: —

"Squadron, to the right! Right by threes, ma-arch! — left shoulder to the front!"

The horses' hoofs pound the frozen earth; they cross the unfrozen mud, and throw up dirty, snowy clods.

We ride on in great good-humor, hands on hips, and glance about us on all sides. We pass the Church of the Trinity, the Ismailovsky Bridge, ride along the Vosnesensky (Assumption) Prospect, and turn into the Sadovaya (Garden Street); then we cross the Nevsky Prospect and ride on to the "Empress' Field." Numbers of cavalrymen are already there. We are placed in one column of platoons, on the right of the Horse-guards. Our pride at once suffers a fall; the Horse-guards have not only better horses and handsomer uniforms, but they are also more dashing.

However, our colonel loses none of his dignity; all he does is to exchange greetings with the commanders of the cavalry divisions, and to give both hands at once, to right and to left, with the most imposing air. Important personages, generals, counts, and princes, hasten to speak with him. Impossible! Rosenberg is a man in great demand. One man has a son, another a brother in the school, and they must salute the commander.

Two good hours elapse before we hear the distant "Hurrah!" Nearer and nearer, louder and louder, and ever clearer it rings out. Our hearts beat more violently; we grasp our bridles more firmly — the Emperor is on the left flank of the Horse-guards. The drums rattle. The Emperor salutes the soldiers.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" the regiment responds.

His Majesty approaches at a moderate pace. A vast suite surrounds him on all sides, like a cloud.

"Eyes front, officers!" orders Rosenberg, purple with excitement.

"Good-day, cadets," the Emperor salutes, with a slight lisp, and nods courteously; he wears the uniform of the Preobrazhensky regiment; on his neck is the blue ribbon of the order *pour le mérite*; in his button-hole, the St. George. The breeze flutters the plume on his casque violently.

He rides past us at the same pace; he gazes at each one of us intently with his large eyes, as though desirous of seeing a familiar face.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" we shout. He has passed. Half an hour later the parade begins.

The infantry marches past in long, orderly lines, company after company, battalion after battalion, in perfect step. The regiments have begun to diminish. The dense, crowded mass of lances has grown thin. . . . The infantry has passed by. After it thunders past the artillery; it advances now at a walk, again at a trot. One battery flies by at full speed; the wheels rumble, the guns rattle; the gun-crew, jolted in every joint, and with difficulty clinging fast to the limbers, make an effort, nevertheless, to glance at the Emperor.

After the artillery comes the cavalry; first, the body-guard dashes past with a shout; after it, we are sent forward at a trot. At first, as during drill, we form our line badly, but in front of the Emperor himself we draw up as though ruled by a cord, and pass in excellent style.

“Good, gentlemen, good!” the Tzar thanks us. “Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!” we reply, and, in our delight, we become confused and get almost into a heap.

The parade has come to an end. We return to the academy. Those who desire it can obtain leave of absence. Some take it, others remain and continue to walk round the institution for a while longer in their parade uniforms, as though loath to part with them.

With his head thrust forward like a bull’s, morose, with his hands thrust into his pockets, Prince Utkin strolls through the corridor, jingling his spurs.

“Ge-entlemen, officers,” he howls, all at once, so that the whole academy can hear, becoming suddenly inspired with the spirit of war. One of his friends walks quietly up to him, salutes and reports in the phrase which he has been drilled to, “Sent to your Imperial Majesty as orderly from the N— academy.” “Good!” says the Prince, thanking him, and, after exchanging an embrace, they both betake themselves to the smoking-room.

Day follows day. The season of festivals is over. Spring is approaching; we have begun to talk about surveys, examinations, and camps.

“Surveying is jolly fun,” says one of the “majors” to me.

“What peculiarity is there about it?”

“What, indeed! You go where you like and do what you please, and no one interferes with you.”

“And how about the plans? Who works them out?”

“Plans! Oh, you — dunce, what are topographers for? You just give one of them five rubles, and he'll sketch you such a plan as you never imagined even in your dreams.”

“And the officers do nothing about it?”

“The officers, indeed! They play billiards all day long in the restaurant, as calmly as possible. Do you suppose that they are going to tramp over the marshes with us?”

We prepared to take our surveys: we have been divided into parties of six men each. On the appointed day, we betook ourselves to the Peterhof station, where railway carriages were in readiness for us. The cadets took their places in the third-class carriages, the officers in those of the second class. The head of the institute arrived before the departure of the train. He looked to see how we were seated, and whether everything was in order: if there was anything on hand that was prohibited, and, finding nothing, he went away.

No sooner had the General taken his departure, and the train started, than the scene in the carriages underwent a sudden change. From beneath the benches there crawled out concealed pedlers, with wines, fruits, gingerbread cakes, various relishes, and whole dozens of champagne — chiefly from the Don. There arose a popping of corks and the roar of songs. The pedlers, with the most crafty of countenances, assiduously offered first one “drink” and then another.

“I have no money with me, my good Vaska!” shouts one cornet to a sharper of his acquaintance.

“Please, your Illustrious Highness! Shall we not trust you? — Pray, take my whole tray!” proposes Vaska, lifting from his head his felt hat, with its steel buckle. He is a broad-shouldered native of Yaroslav, with a red goat's-beard, a long, gray, sleeveless waistcoat of ticking, and a white apron bound about him. Ever and anon he draws from his bosom his greasy morocco pocket-book, then thrusts it in again, in which the original small handful of silver is speedily converted into a package of bank-bills; to these are added, on the sly, divers notes written in

pencil, on scraps of paper, by such "Illustrious Highnesses" as have no money about them.

The notes were for insignificant sums: for five, ten, or fifty rubles; there were no notes for over one hundred rubles.

The pedlers were good-natured fellows, and put implicit faith in these notes. They traded well; at the end of the journey the only articles left unsold were tin boxes of candy.

We alight at New-Peterhof. The elder class goes in one direction, the younger class in another.

Colonel Norkin, the instructor in topography, assigns us our tasks.

"Here, Verestchagin," he explains, "this is your 'base,'"—and he points to a little house; "give me your drawing-block; here is where your house stands,"—and he makes a mark with a pencil. "From here you will proceed yonder in the direction of those elevations; you will determine the distance by pacing it; set down those heights, the streams, ravines, and all intersections in general, which fall in your way. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Colonel!"—I start off, and assume an air of setting to work.

"Hand me your sketching-block, Tanyeff," the Colonel says, addressing a tall, thin cadet, who had just been telling me that he had engaged a topographical clerk, who had promised "to sketch him a splendid plan for three rubles."

Tanyeff hands over his sketching-block, listens to the Colonel with the greatest attention, apparently, and repeats incessantly, in the most submissive tone: "Yes, Colonel, I understand." But, in point of fact, he is not listening at all, and he is not even thinking of anything whatever: his thoughts have flown far away—and whither? We shall see presently.

Having set all the tasks, the Colonel goes off to town; we immediately come together and discuss how we shall proceed and what we shall undertake.

"Do you know, gentlemen, where we will go?" says Tanyeff; "to that little village yonder, near the mill. I remember from last year that there is a very pretty Finnish girl there; let's go and buy some milk from her!"

All day long we stroll about among the villages, sing songs, and play pranks; in the evening we betake ourselves

to the railway station, and the night we spend at the academy.

For three days in succession we conduct ourselves in this uproarious manner. I and two others of my party have made sketches after a fashion; not one of the rest has done anything, except to black in their bases; and Tanyeff has even lost his block altogether.

In spite of all this, at the appointed time, every cadet handed in a capitally sketched plan of the locality assigned to him, with all sorts of minute details. All received good marks. And both the cadets and the authorities were satisfied.

Our examinations began in the middle of May and lasted until the end of the month. I did not pass them at all brilliantly: I was almost floored in fortifications. I only pulled through thanks to Drill-master Protopopoff.

In the N— Academy, as in other military institutions, every officer had his pet, his favorite, whom he protected, at whose leaves of absence he connived, and whom he extricated from examinations. My protector was Captain Protopopoff, a thin, short, beardless uhlan, with the longest of moustaches, which he could almost tuck behind his ears, as the saying goes. He was very irascible, but, at the same time, of a very upright, open character.

My acquaintance with him began in the following manner. Protopopoff was an ardent lover of rural economy. Once, after a drill, during which he had rated me soundly, he stepped up and said to me: "Well, my good fellow, it's impossible to give the order 'march' so quietly; you must do it loudly, so that the most distant soldier may hear. Ma-a-arch!" and he shouted at the top of his lungs in my very ear, so that the drum of my ear came near splitting. Protopopoff had an extremely heavy voice. Then he inquired: "Nikolai Vasilyevitch, the cheese-manufacturer, can't be any relative of yours?"

"My own brother, Captain," I answered.

"I ought to have guessed it long ago," he exclaimed, with rapture, and, thrusting my arm through his, he dragged me off to his quarters, to drink tea. From that time forth, until my graduation as an officer, we remained friends.

Knowing that I was weak in fortifications, he promised to come to the examination.

The examination began, and I was called up. The instructor ordered me to draw a plan. I did not know how. Protopopoff was not there. What was I to do? But just then the door opened, and in came Protopopoff. After conversing for a few minutes with the instructor, the latter dismissed me, saying hastily: "Take your seat; six marks."

I bowed to him cordially, and happy at having received a six mark, or, as we called it, *the mark of spiritual peace*; I left the class-room, heartily wishing all good-luck to Captain Protopopoff.

On the day following the examinations, we all went to camp at Krasnoye Selo. Our barracks were placed directly opposite the Duderhof Hills, alongside of his Majesty's body-guard.

Life was of the dullest sort there: every day we were drilled, without regard to weather. We had to rise even earlier than at the academy. It did not please me, especially at first, to get out of my bed in the morning, in a damp tent, after a rain.

Here Savin, the steward, distinguished himself still further; he gave us such tea as it was impossible to drink, no matter how much you might wish it—exactly like *sbiten*¹ at a booth.

The manœuvres began early in August. I did not take part in them. I contrived to obtain leave of absence, and to go to see my parents in the country. On the 30th of August, I was in the academy again, no longer as a vandal, but as a cornet. Then began again the same round of studies, the same military instructions, the same inspections and parades; Savin was the same, and the tea was as bad as ever.

The officers and instructors no longer treated us as before, but in a more friendly manner; we instinctively felt that the officer's shoulder-straps were drawing near. Each one of us began to seek out comrades to keep after graduation, and officer's memorandum-books, containing a list of the regiments, were to be seen with increasing frequency in the hands of the cadets. In the evening, we assembled in groups and discussed: where it would be best to choose one's place, in what regiment, which uniform was the hand-

¹ A drink composed of hot water, molasses, and spices.

somest, where a horse could be bought, and from whom one should order one's uniform.

There were many cadets whose circumstances had already decided in advance where they were to go. But there were also many who could not make up their minds for a long time: first, the quarters did not suit them; then, the facings were hideous; and again, the commander of the regiment was a dog.

In one corner of the fourth platoon, on the left flank, a cadet with curly black hair has flung himself on the bed; his face is swarthy, his nose hooked, he must be a Caucasian, and, with his elbow propped up on his pillow, he is listening attentively to his friend, who is sitting beside him, and monotonously going over the list of regiments in the book.

"Stop, stop! Where's the Akhtyr hussar regiment stationed?"

"At N——."

"Who's the commander?"

"So-and-so."

"I don't know him. God be with him! . . ."

"Well, go on!"

"The Elizavetgrad regiment — a blue jacket, stationed in N——, Commander N——," the other proceeds with his catalogue, in the same monotonous voice.

"A fine regiment; it's a pity about the blue jacket, it spots quickly," and the Caucasian takes the book from his companion, as though desirous of convincing himself that the jacket is actually blue.

"Listen, my dear fellow," cries one on the right flank, to a comrade who is passing by, "of whom have you ordered your saddle? — of Levengren?"

"No; of Koch."

"All wrong. Levengren makes better ones now."

"That's according as you think."

"But I know." The passing cadet halts. A long discussion ensues between them on the question: who does the best work — Koch or Levengren?

In the evening, and during our leisure time in general, our graduation was the constant theme of conversation. Calculations and computations were made as to the cost of a uniform, of a horse, and as to how much money there was on hand, and how much our parents would send.

Most of them had money, but I know of some who could not imagine how they were to extricate themselves and pay for everything. Some of them ordered their saddles and various other appurtenances before the Christmas holidays, and after the holidays cadets were constantly to be met with at the military tailors' and in the shops for officers.

Sunday. Along the Bolshaya Morskaya, splash-splash, through the slush, goes a hackney sleigh. The gaunt little horse, of a lightish brown, can hardly run, in spite of the sound blows upon the back and legs dealt by the phlegmatic *isvostchik*, an infirm, half-blind old fellow, with a scanty beard. As he assiduously lashes his horse, the driver does not even suspect that he has already, more than once, struck with his whip the white plume of the cadet, his passenger, who, with one hand thrust under the ragged fur lap-robe, is supporting with the other an old lady, his mother.

The old lady is bending forward and clutching the driver's belt with her middle finger, as with a hook. Her bare hand is red with cold, but she does not notice it. Her son is ashamed of the shabby equipage, of the bare, red hand of his mother, and of the shabby cloak which she wears.

"If you would only put on your gloves, mamma; really one is ashamed to ride with you. Don't be afraid; you won't fall out; I'm holding you!" he says, sarcastically, avoiding her glance.

"I should think you ought to be ashamed to say such things. Who is going to look at an old woman like me?" she returns, and, with a movement of her shoulders, she adjusts her cloak, which is slipping off. The cadet pulls up his bashlik, and tries to arrange it in such a manner that no one may recognize him. They are on their way to the Gostinnoi Dvor, to buy the articles required for an officer.

"Hey! hey! look out!" the impressive bass voice of a coachman rings out behind them. A large gray trotter, harnessed to a light sleigh, and emitting thick clouds of steam from his dilated nostrils, overtakes the hackney

sleigh. The passenger, also a cadet with a white plume, turns round, recognizes his cringing comrade, kisses his hand to him several times, and, with a condescending smile, proceeds on his way. He is a future hussar of the Guard. He stops at the door of a dashing tailor. Let us follow him. The proprietor comes to meet the cadet, salutes him, and hastens joyfully to try on his hastily basted jacket.

"Please to make it fit well," lips the cadet, admiring himself in the mirror.

"You shall be satisfied, your Illustrious Highness! . . . What sort of beaver will you have on your great-coat?" And the proprietor throws various sorts out of his drawer; some perfectly black and downy, with a few white hairs, some that are not so downy, with a brownish hue, and more white hairs; some quite gray. There are multitudes of collars; he can choose to his taste.

The cadet does not know which are the best.

"Select that which pleases you, your Illustrious Highness, and write your name on it," says the proprietor, solicitously, and he hands him a pen.

The latter looks at the prices, chooses the most expensive, writes his name on it, and then goes off, escorted by the proprietor to his very equipage. The bearded coachman inclines his head a trifle, and, having negligently listened to the order, "Home!" shakes his reins. The trotter quivers, and flies along the broad street, spattering the passers-by, as they draw aside, with the dirty, sticky Petersburg snow.

For a long time I could not decide which to enter, the Guards or the army. My standing in my studies gave me a right to the Guards, but I was afraid that living expenses would be too high; and I had no desire to vie with the wealthy, as many did. "Why should I do that," I said to myself, "when, with my means, I can serve in the army and deny myself nothing?"

Two of my companions, with whom I was anxious to remain, were of the same opinion, so we decided to enter the army. The problem now was — what regiment? For a long time we turned over our little book, and inspected the

regiments ; here, again, Captain Protopopoff was of assistance to us.

“Enter the Dniepr uhlaus ; what could be better ? ” he shouted, one day, on meeting me. “It’s a fine regiment ; the society is capital, so’s the station. What more do you require ? ”

I reported this to my comrades — they betook themselves to the little book once more — to see what sort of facings were worn by the Dniepr uhlaus, to what division they belonged, and who was the commander. All proved to be everything that could be desired ; the station was the town of Staroselsk, the facings were handsome, the commander of the regiment an excellent man. We decided to enter it.

The final examinations came on, and I passed them better than those preceding promotion to the upper class. I will relate, by way of giving a specimen, how Tanyeff went through his examination in fortifications.

In the large recitation-room stand three black-boards, on which the cadets under examination are carefully drawing the sketches assigned to them. The examiners are two instructors and the inspector ; the rest of the authorities, have taken themselves off, some to smoke, and others elsewhere.

On the black-board to the left, near the window, Tanyeff is drawing a large cannon with its limbers ; he draws every screw with the most minute detail, and every nut ; behind, he places a soldier with a swab, who must have just discharged the cannon, since the artist covers the board behind him with extremely thick smoke ; a terrible uproar is going on. He has finished. The instructors come up — and look ; the cannon is capitally drawn.

“What was assigned to you to draw ? ” they ask him.

“A barbette with a projecting corner.”

“And where is it ? ”

“There was no room, Colonel,” replies Tanyeff, with perfect seriousness. “However, if you wish, I will draw it ! ” And he did not draw it.

The cannon produced its due effect, nevertheless. It was so cleverly sketched that they asked Tanyeff a few nonsensical trifles, and then dismissed him in peace, giving him six marks.

After the camp, at the beginning of August, the manœuvres commenced. Not one of us did anything but count the days and await his promotion with impatience.

Each separate detachment had assigned to it for the manœuvres an officer of the staff, or, as we called them, "the moment," which they could not endure. We called them so because, during the parades on the Tzaritza's Meadow, the marshals, the officers of the general staff, just before the defiling of the troops, had a habit of riding past the divisions and reminding them "not to let the moment pass."

I can see it now — the May parade; one minute before it is our turn to pass the Emperor at a trot, an officer of the general staff, pale and excited, gallops up, and shouts to us: —

"Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, don't let the moment pass, the moment, the moment!" . . . and then disappears among the divisions.

The point lay here — that every division which paraded was bound to form the best possible line at the instant when it arrived opposite his Majesty.

This is what happened to our "moment," during the manœuvres; after one passage, Rosenberg halts the squadron, dismounts, and summons the trumpeter orderly to hold his horse. The trumpeter is not there; the Colonel flies into a rage. After a while the man makes his appearance.

"Where have you been?" inquires the commander.

"I have been holding Mr. Moment's horse, your Excellency," says the trumpeter, in excuse, pointing at an officer of the general staff, who is standing near by, and who hears the whole of this conversation distinctly. A terrific shout of laughter went up. It appeared that the trumpeter was firmly convinced that "Moment" was the surname of the officer, as he was frequently called so during the period of the manœuvres.

On the 10th of August, about four o'clock in the afternoon, we are resting, and discussing one thing — always the same, *i. e.*, our promotion. We look up — some one is shouting and waving his cap; nearer and nearer comes our cadet, shouting, "Hurrah, hurrah!" What is the meaning of this?

"Hurrah, hurrah! The Emperor has congratulated us — we are officers!"

Behind him appears a calash. The chief of the military academies, General Isakoff, is standing up in it, and waving his cap; he drives up, and announces to us: "The Emperor has charged me to congratulate the upper class on their promotion to the rank of officers."

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!"

The most incredible uproar arises; nobody wants to listen to anything; no authority is recognized; every cadet mounts his horse and gallops away to Krasnoye Selo, to don his officer's uniform, shouting, "Hurrah!" on the road, until he is hoarse.

When I gallop up to the camp, I no longer recognize many of my comrades. I gaze, and there are only officers walking about — hussars, cuirassiers, uhlands, dragoons, and cossacks.

That very day we betake ourselves to Petersburg, to christen our new uniforms.

With what can one compare the happy sensations of a newly fledged officer, when, in his new uniform, trailing his sword and jingling his spurs, he struts through the broad streets of Petersburg, conscious that he is his own master. In my opinion, these moments are the very happiest in life.

A few days later there was a dinner at Borel's, at which our entire graduating class, ninety men strong, was present.

Many toasts were given, and a great deal of champagne was drunk, and much crockery was broken. People crowded round the windows of the restaurant for a long time, to listen to our "hurrahs!"

The festivities concluded with a trip to Demidron.¹

On my return to camp on the following day, I found a letter from mamma. It was written in a weak, sickly hand. My mother announced that she had come to Petersburg for the advice of a doctor, and was staying at the Znamenskaya Hotel.

A few hours later, I cautiously approach mamma's room, and knock. The door is opened by our little maid, Terentievna, half dressed, and all dishevelled.

"Ah, Alexander Vasilitch, welcome!" she exclaims, bridling and covering her bosom with her kerchief. I greet her and enter the chamber.

¹ A restaurant in the Demidoff garden; not very respectable at that time.

“Good Heavens! why, he is an officer!” shrieks mamma, and, clasping her hands, she springs from her bed and falls fainting on my breast. Tears choke her, she cannot say a word, and she drops powerless on her bed.

“Sáshenka! I am ill again!” she whispers.

I look at her — again the same dull, sunken eyes, the same pallor, the same dejection, which forebodes nothing good. I seat myself beside her, and begin to soothe her.

“And I did not even know, my darling, that you had been promoted,” she says, and strokes my head with her thin hand, and gazes at me with her kind, loving eyes, through her tears.

“I shall never rise again, Sashenka! I feel that I shall never leave my bed!”

I continue to comfort her; I embrace her; I kiss her eyes, her cheeks, her lips, and wink hard in order to keep myself from weeping.

“Have you been promoted long?”

“On the 10th of August, mamma!”

“And will you stay long with me?”

“I cannot stay long, mamma; I must be with my regiment by the 20th of September, and I must see papa before that.”

“Papa indeed! Papa is well, thank God. Stay with me,” she entreats, pitifully, clinging to my hands, and seeming to be afraid to release them. — “But what is the use of saying that! — you must see papa too, and how the dear man will rejoice when he sees you an officer! Lord! Lord! I shall never see him again!” — And again mamma bursts into tears.

I left her in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. Three days after my sad parting with my mother, I go to the country, to see my father. On the way I regain more and more of my pleasant frame of mind. The memory of my sick mother is gradually erased. My new position of “officer” flatters my imagination.

Not more than a day and a half later, I have reached my native village of Liubetz, on the steamer. Good Heavens! how my heart beats, even now, at the very memory of those precious, happy minutes, the happiest ones in life! Can

they ever be forgotten! The steamer stops at the ferry. I go leaping up the sandy shore, and enter the yard. No one is visible. It is still early, seven or eight o'clock in the morning. I enter the cook's quarters. Mikhailo, the cook, already an old man, on catching sight of me, is greatly rejoiced, and runs to kiss my hand (he retained in full the habits of his days of serfdom), and announces that "papa has gone to the Dubrovsky field." Without entering the house, I run in search of him. On the way I exchange hasty greetings with the women and the peasants. They all salute me joyously, amazed at my new uniform. Before leaving the steamer, I had put on a clean white linen coat, whose gilt buttons now gleam brightly in the sun.

I quickly pass the village, the corn-kilns, descend to the little bridge, enter the pope's field and then the Dubrovsky meadow. Papa is not in sight. I open the gate, ascend the slope a little way, and yo-onder is papa! the-ere he is, in a white duck coat, leaning on his cane. But what a gray beard he has grown! — One would not recognize him! Heavens! how anxious I am to embrace my father as speedily as possible, and all the blood flies to my heart. And father has already caught sight of me, and hastens to meet me, evidently as fast as his strength will permit, supporting himself carefully on his stick. What would I not give now to behold once again that kind, happy, cheerful face, those uplifted and outstretched arms ready to clasp me in their warm embrace!

I remained with my father for two weeks, and then departed to service in my regiment.

CHAPTER X.

WITH THE REGIMENT.

IN the railway station at Kieff, I met my comrades from the academy, and thence we drove together in a post-troika to the town of Staroselsk.

We arrived early in the morning, and stopped at the post-house. After drinking tea, we went to have a look at the town. It proved to be different in no respect from other Little Russian provincial towns; in the very centre was a square, with a church, and rows of shops; around it several two-story (and even three-story) stone houses. Thence, after the fashion of radiating rays of the sun, extended, in all directions, narrow streets of little houses, of three tiny windows each, thatched with straw or roofed with tiles. It was dangerous for a stranger to enter the yards; a couple of fierce dogs were sure to fly at him, and, therefore, if any outsider approached the house, he had to flourish a cudgel incessantly behind him, as though it had been a tail, and keep it up until the master of the house made his appearance.

The streets were, for the most part, unpaved, and extremely dusty. But in wet weather, as I had an opportunity later on to convince myself, they became so muddy that, before crossing them, it was necessary to consider, and very seriously, too, where it would be most advisable to ford them.

About mid-day we donned our uniforms, and, hiring two *isvostchiks*, we went to report ourselves to the commander of the regiment, and to call on our new comrades.

The Colonel occupied a large house on the place. While the man was announcing us, we stood in the anteroom, beautifying ourselves before the mirror, arranging each other's epaulets and facings, twitching things into place, dusting each other, and settling among ourselves which of us should enter first.

From a side door enters the small, gray-haired Colonel, with a black moustache; he politely invites us into the drawing-room, asks us to seat ourselves, inquires our names, and informs us of the regulations which he has instituted in the regiment. On taking leave of us, he reminds us that he pardons twice, but the third offence he punishes.

We depart, not wholly satisfied with our commander.

We go to the regimental adjutant. Our knocks bring no one to the anteroom; we pass through the yard, to the kitchen. There an orderly, in a dirty shirt thrust into military trousers, is engaged in cleaning a boot, which he has mounted on his hand.

"Is the Adjutant at home?"

"No, he has gone to Major Kruzo," replies the man, with a Little Russian accent.

"And where does the Major live? Show us!" and we retire to the entrance. The orderly follows us, and, without removing his hand from the boot, he points out with his blacking-brush the course which we must take.

"Yonder, your Excellencies. All the gentlemen are there; this is the Major's name day," he adds.

We give him our cards, dismiss our carriages, and set out on foot in the direction indicated.

We approach a small red house, with a tiny garden. Through the wide-open windows loud-toned conversation is heard; epaulets flash past; some one sings in a tenor voice:—

"Not yet the cocks have three times crowed,
No soul is yet awake . . ."

In the shade beside the gate lies a weary droshky driver, in his carriage, sleeping sweetly, with his head thrown back. Some one's whiskers are on the point of thrusting themselves out of the small window, but, on catching sight of us, they immediately disappear. All becomes silent in the rooms. We enter the antechamber: outer garments are scattered about it; in one corner stand swords and a priest's staff. The door into the apartments is ajar; we remove our coats, tell the orderly our names, and the latter opens the door without any superfluous remarks.

The spacious room is full of smoke; in the centre stand

two *ombre* tables, at which are seated ten officers, some playing, others looking on. In the corner is another table, with vodka and relishes; several officers are standing round it and taking a sip. Both host and guests are evidently awaiting our appearance, and, therefore, as soon as we enter, they rise in a body and salute us. Then begins a hand-shaking, and a jingling of spurs.

The host, Major Kruzo, in spectacles, with a bristly moustache and a hoarse voice, speedily makes us acquainted with all present — among the rest, with the regimental chaplain, who is seated among the players.

“Here,” says Kruzo, turning to us, “permit me to introduce our regimental priest. He’s a very fine man; he drinks and takes his bite and plays cards.”

The pope is very much delighted with this presentation; and he laughs, and pulls his hair from under the collar of his cassock.

“This is capital! Here you have made the acquaintance of nearly all the officers at once. Who of us is not present?” the host inquires of those about him, and he glances interrogatively at them.

“Rudanovsky,” says a voice.

“Well, he’s sitting with his Khfenya,” remarks the Major.

“Avdyenko!”

“It’s not worth while to mention him,” — and the host waves his hand; he is evidently angry with Avdyenko.

“Well, gentlemen, take a glass in honor of the arrival!” And the Major pours out several glasses of vodka. We approach the table. The host is the first to throw the whole contents of his glass into his mouth at once. The rest follow his example.

“Why don’t you drink, Verestchagin?” he shouts; “come, won’t you take some sherry?”

He takes a bottle in which a little is rolling round in the bottom, and pours it out; it amounts to about half a glass, while fragments of the cork float about in it.

“Eh, the dregs are sweet!” exclaims the host, with a grunt.

“Your trouble is vain, Major,” I say, as I refuse. But it is hard to escape from the host, and I drink in order to appease him.

Leaving the Major, we make the round of the other

officers, and leave our cards everywhere. We arrive at the quarters of Captain Piotr Petrovitch Rudanovsky; he lives in his own separate house. He has served many years in the regiment, and long managed the camp-servants.

The door is opened for us by a barefooted little girl, who informs us that the master is asleep. Then, not giving us time to utter a word, she screams: "But I will tell the mistress!" and thereupon she vanishes.

We enter the drawing-room. The greatest order and cleanliness reign everywhere; the walls, the floors, the ceilings, the jambs of the windows and doors, all shine as though brand-new. The furniture has white chintz covers. On the table are several ash-trays, in the corners stand spittoons; it is plain that the mistress of the house has an eye to cleanliness.

In a little while there comes, with deliberation, from the private apartments, a tall, stout, middle-aged man, with eyes heavy with sleep, a round, pendent, badly shaved chin, and a closely trimmed gray mustache. Closing the door carefully behind him, he steps softly up to us, and greets us. The shoulder-straps on his soiled coat are frayed and bent to such a degree that it is difficult to determine what rank they indicate.

The Captain gives us seats, and then begins to ask us from what academy we come, from what government, whether we are recently from Petersburg, what is the news, where we are staying, and where we think of hiring quarters. Piotr Petrovitch was a thorough-going Little Russian; he pronounced all his *os* like *o*, and instead of *kvartir* he said *khvater*; he called a phaeton a *khvaeton*; instead of *Fenya*, he said *Khfenya*.

"And here is my wife!" he exclaims. "Khfenya, some of your *akhvitzera*¹ from Petersburg have come to call."

"Very glad to see you, sir," says his wife, a plump lady, with a white fillet round her head. She seats herself not far from her husband: one of my comrades sits down beside her, and immediately begins to inquire where we can best hire lodgings.

"You, probably, all desire to lodge together?" asks the hostess, surveying us, and, laying her hands on her knees,

¹ This pronnciation of "officer" will serve to illustrate the Little Russian accent, which it is hopeless to think of reproducing in translation. — *Trans.*

palm to palm, she nods her head in a sympathizing manner.

"You might look at the Mandrykins' — they have good lodgings, which are not dear. Petenka, Piotr Petrovitch!" she appeals to her husband, "do you know whether those lodgings at the Mandrykins' are taken?"

"Oh, they are to be had! They should look either at the Mandrykins' or at the Gnilosirotffs'; they have elegant quarters," advises Piotr Petrovitch.

We thank them, and, after sitting awhile, we take our departure, escorted by our hosts to the very gate.

Piotr Petrovitch was an upstart soldier of fortune.

As he afterwards related to me, the commander of his squadron was a great gambler, and when he returned from his cards, they knew instantly, in the squadron, whether he had won or lost, since, in the first case, the commander, in making his rounds of the stables, exchanged courteous greetings with the men, praised them, and gave them money for vodka; but when the reverse was the case, he scolded everybody, and beat and thrashed, right and left, all who came within reach. Piotr Petrovitch, in his capacity of quartermaster to the squadron, suffered more than any one else.

From the post of quartermaster, Piotr Petrovitch was eventually promoted to the rank of an officer. He served a long, long time before he got to be captain. On becoming more intimately acquainted with him, I was convinced that he had no pity on the soldiers, and that he regarded them in the light of some sort of cattle, from whom one might demand as much service as one liked, and to whom it was only necessary to grant a very little rest, food, or clothing. It was plain that Rudanovsky, who had himself gone through the whole painful Nikolaevsky school, now that he had become an officer, was passing on to the soldiers all that he himself had suffered.

A few months after joining the regiment, one of my comrades described to me the following scene. He was on duty in the regiment, and, as it chanced on that particular day, Rudanovsky, the commander of the camp-train, was charged with whipping a delinquent soldier. My comrade, as officer of the day, was present at the scene. Two soldiers held the criminal on the bench, and two administered the chastisement. It struck Rudanovsky, who was calmly looking on, with his hands behind his back, that one of these sol-

diers was beating too lightly; without uttering a word, he advanced one step, then another, and then, with the full sweep of his arm, he struck the man in the face with his fist, adding: "Do you know, so-and-so, that thirty years ago they gave me three hundred lashes for this very same thing!" After that the soldier began to strike harder.

Piotr Petrovitch went about in a coat which was so rusted and faded with age that it seemed to be yellow; the waist, flaps, and pockets of this paletot were, at least, a quarter of an arshin¹ lower down than they should have been; his shoulder-straps were the identical ones which he had purchased on his promotion to the rank of officer; on attaining further rank, he had only added the stars; and on becoming a captain, he had ripped them all off. His sword-belt was broader than that of any one else in the regiment—the gift of his former battalion commander. In bad weather, Rudanovsky turned up his extremely high collar, and relied upon a huge, knotty cudgel, as a protection from the dogs.

A few days after joining the regiment, we were assigned our posts in the battalions, and mine was in the first battalion. We hired lodgings on the boulevard, that is to say, in the best part of the town, and very pleasant they were. at twenty rubles a month.

Our new comrades came to call upon us on the following day. One of the first to make his appearance was Piotr Petrovitch, in epaulets, and very good ones too, a very clean coat, and everything else quite respectable. He was so closely shaved that his soft cheeks and chin shone as though they had been buttered. His hair was greased down smooth, and brought forward on the temples.

No sooner had he entered and exchanged greetings than I asked him to take off his sword, which dangled from that remarkably broad sword-belt of his. Then I offered him a glass of wine.

Piotr Petrovitch did not seem to be averse to drinking. Only he did not drink like all the rest of the world, but in a manner peculiar to himself; he grasped his glass in two fingers, spreading the others far apart, and, raising the vodka to his nose, he smelled it, carrying on conversation the while. After remaining in this attitude for a considerable time, he placed the glass on the table, then took it up again; and this manœuvre he repeated several times in succession, as though tempting himself. And it was only when

¹ Seven inches.

I pointed to his glass that, without interrupting the conversation, he pushed aside my hand with his disengaged hand, pursed up his mouth into a ring, and, after smelling the vodka once more, threw back his head and drank it slo-o-owly and with de-e-li-ight.

He could drink a great deal, but it was never perceptible, and his health was robust.

There were a great many Polish names in our regiment; besides Captain Rudanovsky there were Captain Dubovsky, Lieutenant Vitkovsky, Major Plestchevsky, Cornet Sty-tchevsky, and Doctor Shklyarevsky. The last was a very handsome, jolly, and witty man. How he did play comic parts in amateur theatricals — it was simply wonderful!

Avdyenko also came — the man whom Major Kruzo did not like. After drinking a glass, he took Rudanovsky by the arm, and, nibbling at a crust of bread and cheese, he led the latter aside, and, as both belonged to the commissariat department, a conversation immediately arose between them, scattered words of which reached my ears now and then — clothing money, ration money, candle money, and so on.

Last of all, the division commanders, both colonels, made their appearance.

The first, Ivan Ivanitch Dyatchkoff, was a short, completely bald old man, with long, sharp-pointed side-whiskers. Only a few slight traces lingered on his temples to prove that his head had also been ornamented with hair in the past.

He walked in a bent attitude, leaning on a thin cane, and he wore his overcoat with his arm in one sleeve only.

Dyatchkoff impressed one favorably at first sight; he appeared to be a very kindly, simple old man, who suffered in the cause of right, and who did not wish to get mixed up with any regimental gossip. But when you came to know him better, it turned out that this old gentleman was excessively fond of every sort of scandal. He could not leave a single officer in peace. He knew everything: this man had quarrelled with that one, and that other man had complained of still another man, and so-and-so had borrowed money, and such-and-such a man wanted to resign, and so forth and so on.

Ivan Ivanitch's eyes were small, very quick, and darted glances from beneath his brows. His whole face reminded me of a Siberian marmot, which thrusts itself out of its

hole, glances hastily about, sniffs the air, and then hastily disappears. He had a very deep bass voice, which was not at all suited to his small stature.

On the very first day, Dyatchkoff initiated me into all the secrets of regimental life; he told me who was a bachelor, who was married, who was not married but lived as though he were, how many children each had, and whether they were nice children, what his own wife was like, and how many children she had. At the conclusion of the conversation, he added that, had it not been for various intrigues, he would have been regimental commander long ago.

"Farewell, my dear fellow; come to us as often as you can. Marya Alexandrovna will always be very glad to see you! We are a-a-always at home; we never go anywhere," he rumbled in his bass voice, as he pressed my hand in leave-taking.

The other division commander, my namesake, Alexander Vasilievitch Yegorieff, was a tall, elderly, sympathetic man, also with big side-whiskers, but with a very shrill little voice.

Yegorieff called every one "my dear fellow," and the officers called him "Sanetchka" to his face; and it struck me as very peculiar, the first day, that the cornets should treat a division commander like a person precisely on their own level; the man was evidently accustomed to it and probably thought that all was as it should be.

I remained a month in Staroselsk, after which I went thirty versts away, to the large village of Kotlyarevka, where the fourth division was stationed. It was commanded by an elderly major, Arnold Alexandrovitch Bilboquet — a blond of medium height, with big side-whiskers, broad chest, and a face like a wild beast.

Judging from his accent, he came from the Baltic Provinces.

"Well, when you are settled in your lodgings, come and see the drill, and how I exercise the squad," he said, uttering each word very distinctly.

"And when will there be a riding drill, Major?"

"To-morrow morning, at eight o'clock."

The next day I rise earlier than usual and go to see it. Kotlyarevka is an extensive village. On the post which stands on the bridge in the centre of the settlement a board bearing this inscription is nailed up: "Men, 4545 souls; women, 5780." As in Staroselsk, the lines of shops, the church, and several pretty two-story buildings stand in the centre of the village; the streets are long, narrow, and dirty.

Long before I reach the riding-school, I hear imperious shouts, "Halt! down muzzles!"—and then blows resound distinctly—whack, whack! . . . I approach nearer, and perceive a tolerably spacious square, enclosed by a low fence, and sprinkled with straw instead of with sand as it should be. A squad of soldiers in short jackets are executing the volt at a gallop. The horses entangle their feet in the straw, and stumble. Bilboquet, in his overcoat, with his arms through the sleeves, whip in hand, is running from one soldier to another; he is cursing, and striking them in the face with his fist, adjusting it in such a manner as to deal the blow with the ring which he wears on his forefinger.

"What! dropped your bridle again, you beast!" he shouts to one soldier.

The man cannot hold his horse, strive as he will; the straw has twined thickly around its hind legs, and the horse sinks over slowly on its side, as though hamstrung. The Major seizes his whip and lashes the horse, cleverly contriving to give the rider a cut at the same time.

"Quartermaster, mount Kharitonenko on the fence; let him sit there! . . ." I glance at the fence, and there several soldiers are already seated, and, with gloomy countenances, are "keeping their feet well down at the heel."

One soldier has been mounted on a barebacked horse, without a bit; his feet have been tied under the animal's belly, and he is then driven round the riding-school. The poor fellow reels, clutches at his horse's mane from time to time, and careers in terror round the ring, in the fear of breaking his neck.

"There, my dear fellow! that's the way these beasts must be drilled," my new commander explains to me, with a smile of self-satisfaction.

Foot-drill follows the riding-lesson. Then the peculiar cries of the commander make themselves heard.

"Give me a stick, Ryabo-Kobylka," says Bilboquet, addressing the inferior officer, who follows the Major like a shadow, never quitting him for an instant, with a big cudgel in his hand.

"When I have to give you a drubbing there on the right flank, you'll know how I want you to walk!" shouts the commander to the detachment, raining blows upon those who are nearest him, and making them march past him again, while he beats time with his hands, and exclaims, spasmodically:—

"Left, left, left."

I began to take part in the exercises. I taught the soldiers reading and writing and gymnastics. At the end of a month, I was bored to such an extent that I removed to Staroselsk, in order to be nearer to the staff. And there too I grew bored. I longed to go home, to the country, to manage the farm. In the evening I strode up and down my room and meditated on the country and farming; and I thought what fine order I would maintain, and of how many cows and horses I would buy, and of what my equipages should be; I would purchase the adjoining bits of woodland from my brothers, and so on and so on. I recollect that one evening I had been engaged in such thoughts for a long time. It was two o'clock in the morning—I was still striding up and down, and I was already the possessor, not only of my brothers' bits of land but of the neighboring forest of Prince Galitzin also; I had already set up a stud, with forty mares and ever, ever so many stallions! One dark bay beauty I was using in a racing-sledge on the principal street of the town of Tcherepovetz; I drew up in front of the shop of Merchant Myeff. Philip Vasilitch came out, greeted me, patted my horse on the neck, and said:—

"It's a good horse—a good one, yes, a good one; and what's the price, Alexander Vasilitch?" . . . The loud snores of the orderly asleep in the anteroom bring me back to reality; I go and rouse him:—

"Razuvaeff, you beast, what are you snoozing for? Get up," and I give him a punch in the side.

"What, sir? I'm not asleep, sir!" he exclaims, jump-

ing up, wiping off his spittle with his fist, and scratching his back.

“Hurry up and pull off my boots!” Razuvaeff follows me; a dialogue begins between us.

“Have you cleaned the chestnut?”

“Yes, your Excellency.”

“Is there hay?”

“There is, your Excellency.”

“Have they sent the order of the day?”

“Just so, sir.”

“Give it here!” Razuvaeff fetches the order-book. I read; I am appointed officer of the day for the regiment to-morrow.

“You ugly mug, why didn’t you tell me that I was detailed for duty to-morrow?” I berate the poor orderly, without myself knowing for what. Razuvaeff mutters something and carries off my boots and clothes to his room.

A month later I hand in my petition to be discharged from the service, and, taking leave of absence while awaiting my discharge, I go off to the village, after serving in the regiment for eight months.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE COUNTRY.

“WELL, then, if it is time, begin, and God’s blessing be with you. And how is it, by the acre?”

“We can call in help, and the Gorodistch people will come gladly, and the Pyekhtyeff people will not refuse; you might get as many as are needed. But now you will not find laborers on the instant.”

This dialogue takes place between me and Andrei, the overseer, on the same small balcony where, a year earlier, my father discussed matters with this same Andrei. I now issue the orders to the overseer. My father sits in the hall and reads the newspaper. He takes but little part in the management of the estate. I often consult with him, to gratify him.

“Papuliushka, we think of beginning the mowing on Sunday. What is your opinion?” I shout.

“As you like; God be with you!” his voice rings out, and a minute later father himself comes out to us, in his inevitable white duck coat.

“If you are going to hire help, don’t forget to call in the people of Gorodistch. It’s a big village!” my father advises me.

“That is what we mean to do, and the Pyekhtyeff people, too, and the Liubetz people of course; we shall have a considerable number — what do you think, Andrei?” I ask.

“There must be about a hundred and fifty men coming!”

Sunday arrives. In the people’s quarters, in the kitchen, the stoves are heated almost before it is light, and a vigorous cooking is going on: bread is put in the oven, and patties; iron caldrons are filled with porridge and buckwheat groats. Several assistant cooks, flushed and perspiring, hurry about, stumble over one another, scold and quarrel, but proceed with their work.

The weather promises to be beautiful. Workmen throng the front yard, to set up tables for the people; they nail together trestles, place poles across them, then smooth boards, and tables are prepared both suitably and speedily.

The bells have already rung for church, when a throng of people, in holiday attire, set out from Gorodistch, beyond the river, to Liubetz. The bright scythes glint in the sunlight. People are collecting from all quarters, from Gorodistch and Pykhtyeff and Pertovka, so that, instead of one hundred and fifty men, over two hundred assemble. The fat cook only groans: —

“Oh, Lord, how they have swarmed down! what am I to feed them on? Such a lot of them have come!”

But, as in the morning, all do not dine at once; but as they arrive, so each succeeds in drinking a small glass, and taking a bite, after which they turn to their work.

The “help” are disposed in parties over the mowing-land, and separated from each other. The work proceeds bravely, and by mid-day a respectable portion of the “intervale” is cut.

At that hour a cart of patties and vodka arrives from Liubetz. The people prepare to eat; each laborer receives a patty with wheaten grits, and a glass of vodka, after which they betake themselves to their work again. It is still a long time before sunset when the mowers begin to take observations on the height of the sun; they stop more frequently to whet their scythes. Cries are audible: “It is time to stop; home is not near, it is not soon reached!”

They have finished their work. The mowers have gone off in a body to Liubetz, to sup. Two ferry-boats will hardly hold them. They have crossed the river; they have assembled at the manor-house, and seated themselves at the tables. Conversations go on in the interval of waiting for vodka. The cooks scuttle about assiduously, and distribute linden-bark baskets, with spoons, salt, and slices of bread, which the unfastidious guests speedily dispose of; this does not take place without jests and remarks.

“What a big spoon you have given me, old woman! One can ladle out a good deal in it!” shouts a robust, well grown young fellow, with a small reddish beard, raising the spoon high above his head.

“Stop your noise! you’ll gorge yourself even with that!” grumbles the old woman in passing.

"Gorge myself! — just see how you've swelled up on the master's bread, until you're as broad as you are long!" remarks the fellow, in displeasure; but the cook heeds him not.

Vodka is carried round to the people, and I also walk round with a bottle, and treat them.

"Eh, master, that's famous vodka, not like what we get in the public-house," says a peasant, approvingly, as he wipes his lips with his sleeve.

"Of course, it isn't public-house vodka," joins in his neighbor. In the agonizing interval of awaiting his turn, he has already dipped his crust a number of times in salt, to awaken his thirst.

Cabbage soup is served out to them, after which comes vodka again. Some do not drink, but give their glasses to their relatives and friends. One tall, swarthy old man in particular, with a harsh countenance, and gray, beetling brows, drinks a great deal and with a sort of exasperation. He sits between his two young grandchildren; they do not drink, but hand their share to their grandfather.

After the cabbage soup come wheat groats, liberally buttered, and then vodka again. Even before the groats have been served, songs have begun simultaneously in various quarters. The guests grow ever merrier, the songs ring out more and more loudly. Here, just at the corner of the first table, a young fellow, with flushed face and tipsy eyes, has caught his neighbor, a young girl, round the neck, and both are singing vigorously, the cavalier, meanwhile, to produce a greater effect, bending his head down from time to time, and twisting it round. Another young fellow accompanies him on the harmonica, with all his might; he flirts the instrument from side to side, with great feeling, then raises it to his very ear, and apparently listens to the working of the mechanism.

"Ah, adown the Vólga, adown the river,
To Makar's house, and to the fair . . ."

the singers strike up, in tipsy voices — a song which is familiar the whole length of the Volga; the harmonica executes the same thing after them. Those who are sitting by listen attentively; some hum an accompaniment, others only wag their heads.

At the same table rings out a favorite local song. Twenty persons sing it together. The men howl it out in the most unmerciful manner; the women shriek with all their might:—

“When I was a young maid,
Some flowers I so-o-owed with art;
At all, at a-all the flowers I ga-azed,
And within me di-ied my heart!”

All the voices have grown so hoarse that it is difficult to make out the words.

The vodka is carried round for the last time.

The cross old man, in spite of the fact that he has been drinking for three, is still dissatisfied.

“Vodka, master! Why do you grudge it? You have summoned us to help you, so now give us our fill! Vo-o-o-dka-a!!” he yells, gazing maliciously around, as though in search of backers. Then he rests his forehead on the table.

“Andreï, give him another glass; we don’t want him howling,” I say to the overseer.

“But he will tipple himself to death, Alexander Vasilitch, for he has drunk beyond measure already,” says the overseer, with a discontented face.

One more glass is given to the old man. He takes a little of the vodka in his mouth, but it is beyond his strength to swallow it; it runs down on his breast, and he rolls under the table, muttering some incoherent remarks.

In the meantime the dances begin. One young woman leaps on the table, and dances there; spoons and cups are crushed to atoms under her feet, and fly on all sides. The cooks rush at her in a rage, and drag her off the table without further parley. The woman, not in the least abashed, continues her dance on the ground.

“Ugh! ugh!” she exclaims, setting her arms akimbo, and throwing out her feet. One peasant, no longer young, of short stature, and with a small red beard, cannot resist; he takes off his long coat, and sets to dancing with squats and leaps; but, owing to the weakness of his legs, it turns out very badly, and he frequently sits squarely down upon the ground, in consequence of which he soon brings his performance to a close.

All have feasted to their hearts’ content; several men

have crawled under the tables, in search of their caps; others are lying flat and moving their fingers a little; others still do not move their fingers, but only drool.

I go off to my chamber, to sleep. I cannot sleep—it is stifling. I go out on the balcony. What a night!

The crests of the dark forest on the horizon seem to be on fire with the golden rays of advancing dawn. The river is as smooth as a mirror. The willow bushes on the banks are reflected in it upside down. A barely perceptible dew spreads over all the water meadows, and covers them with its thin, white cloud. The harsh croaking of the landrail, and the metallic shriek of the grasshoppers alone disturb the silence. Upstream on the Sheksna, a raft makes its appearance; whew, how long it is! what a lot of it has already passed, and the end is not visible yet. But here it is at full length; at night, in particular, it seems still longer.

“Kru-i, kru-i!” . . . the rudder grates at the prow, as a woman steers the raft along the current.

“Kru-i, kru-i!” . . . the same grating responds at the stern. In the middle of the raft a hut is visible; alongside it burns a fire; two raftsmen are sitting beside it, engaged in conversation; several of their words are distinctly audible to me. The little fire, and the raftsmen, and the raft itself are clearly reflected in the river. It seems as though the reflection were on the very point of breaking loose from the raft, and driving headlong to the bottom.

The raft slowly passes the village; the creaking of the rudder becomes fainter and fainter. Everything round about seems to have fallen asleep, to have sunk into repose!

“Sa-a-a-shinka-a, my priceless fri-i-iend,
Whe-e-en shall I e'er forget thee-e-e!”

a woman's voice floats indistinctly across the stream, and dies away. I go in to sleep.

In the morning, the cross old man was found under the table in the yard, already cold. His nephews came for him, carried him home, and buried him.

It is delightful in the country, especially in summer;

you get up early, the sun is only just rising from behind the forest; all about, you hear the lowing of the cattle, the shouts of the herdsmen, the cracking of their long whips. The ground is not yet dry, the grass is like silver under its covering of sparkling drops of dew.

Tuk — tuk — tuk — some one is dealing persistent blows with a hammer, sharpening his scythe. A hatless peasant, in a white shirt, has taken shelter under the shed roof. Having fixed his iron block in a crevice of the beam, and placed his scythe in it, he is dealing swift and even blows upon it with his hammer; he pauses for a second, scrutinizes the edge, tries it on his nail, and then, spitting on his hammer, he again flattens the edge of his scythe.

But this is a belated mower. The women are already on their way to the meadows, with their sickles thrown over their shoulders. In their hands they bear baskets, wooden pails, and bundles. They chatter incessantly about their domestic affairs. From their voices you would suppose that there were twenty of them, while, in reality, there are not more than six — two old women and four young ones. The old women's sarafans are of coarse, glazed linen, of a dark blue hue; their feet are thrust into bast shoes, and wound with foot-cloths, while their heads are bound up in wretched, faded kerchiefs. The young women are much better dressed; they have shoes, and their sarafans and kerchiefs are of many colors; they are ruddy and healthy; their energetic voices present a sharp contrast to the shrill tones of the old women.

"Don't tell me, and don't tell me, my good woman! I saw how your man came home last night — dru-u-unk, oh, so drunk . . ." drawls one young woman, as she disappears round the corner of the house. In their train, also with a bundle in his hand, frisks a barefooted little lad; on his head he wears something in the guise of a hat; his long-skirted coat trails on the ground. This wretched little fellow is sucking at a crust of bread, as he skips along.

The harvest is in full swing. In the peasants' fields, female figures are to be seen, now here, now there, raising high above their heads bundles of the grain which they have cut. I too ought to begin to reap my harvest, but there are no laborers.

"Well, how now? have you found any?" I shout from

the porch to the overseer; he approaches gloomily, with drooping head.

"I have found Bobylok and half a score of men. No more are to be had — they say that they must harvest their own grain. The Liubetz people have promised to help on Sunday," replies the overseer, gloomily.

Sunday comes; half a hundred women and girls assemble in the yard. They, like the men, in haying-time, receive their dinner and a glass of vodka. The majority of them drink, though only after energetic persuasion; only the very young girls refuse, and give their share to the older ones.

"O-o-o-h, 'twould be a sin for an old woman like me to drink," says a tall, elderly, large-featured woman, in a blue, wadded jacket. From her bluish nose, one might argue that she was in the habit of making frequent use of this phrase. With trembling hand, she seizes the glass, crosses herself with a flourish, and drinks it all to the very last drop, deliberately, and with evident enjoyment.

"See how the old ones do it!" she says, and turns the empty glass upside down on her head.

Another refuses for a long time, and assures the overseer that "she won't as much as take it in her mouth."

"And don't a-a-ask me, my dear man, I wouldn't do it for a-a-anything; mu-u-uch obliged to you," and she waves aside the glass.

"What are you afraid of? Drink just one. You've come to help, you see; how can you refuse to drink? Taste the master's vodka; come, drink a little half at least," the old overseer says, persuasively.

"Well, per-haps a tiny half-glass," she assents, and, urged on by the overseer, she leaves hardly any at the bottom.

"Well, how people do drink vodka!" exclaims the woman, with a laugh, and, wiping her mouth with her sleeve, she adjusts the kerchief on her head, and runs off to her work, in pursuit of the others.

I follow the women to the fields. Rows of female backs, bent over the rye, present a variegated picture, in their holiday attire. Their conversations resound afar. Two women have already succeeded in quarrelling to such a degree that they do not even perceive my approach; it seems as though they were on the point of laying violent hands upon one another. Without paying any attention to

them, I pass them by, and seek with my glance the person whom I want.

There she is! Pretty Katya is reaping by the side of her friend, Annushka. The latter, though not bad-looking, is not nearly so pretty.

Katya is eighteen years of age, of medium stature, well built, rosy, with a thick black braid of hair, teeth as white as pearls, black arching brows,—in short, a beauty. I step up to them.

Both girls have seen me, have dropped on the ground and begun to reap industriously. The straw fairly crackles beneath their sickles.

The girls glance sideways at me, whisper together, and begin to laugh. They are evidently desirous that I should approach closer.

“Good-day, my beauties; God give you good harvest!” I say to them.

“We thank you,” they answer, haltingly, giggle, and proceed with their work.

“Eh, what a pretty girl Katya is!” I say to myself, and I fasten my eyes upon her. “What arms, what white shoulders, and what a full bust!”

Just then Katya turns towards me, and makes a withe. The straw curls about swiftly in her hands, and the girl looks roguishly at me, laughs, and again, conscious of her beauty, seems to say: “Well, how am I—handsome?”

“I wish you girls would sing something,” I say to them.

The girls exchange glances, and continue to reap in silence.

“How quiet you have grown.”

“They don’t dare, master,” the overseer explains to me. “Step on ahead, and they will begin.”

I walk on; and, in fact, these sounds are wafted to me:—

“Beside the Don there strolleth
A Cossack young and bold.
The lonely maiden weepeth
By the river swift and cold.”

I glance back. Katya is making a new withe, and, gazing after me, and spitting on the handle of her hook, she sets to reaping again.

PART II.

IN WAR.

REMINISCENCES AND SKETCHES FROM THE
RUSSO-TURKISH WAR OF 1877-78.

IN WAR.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.—ON THE ROAD.—ON THE DANUBE.

IN the winter of 1876, I was living with my parents in Petersburg, doing nothing, and greatly bored. The year 1877 arrived, and there began to be rumors of a war with Turkey.

In April, I receive a telegram from my brother Vasily, the painter, in Paris, to the following effect: "If you want to take part in the war, join the Caucasian division of General Skobelev, Sr.; he consents to take you."

Up to that time, I had never even heard the name of "Skobelev;" but, being convinced that my brother would not recommend me to a bad commander, I seized upon his suggestion with joy.

Telegram in hand, I betook myself to the headquarters of the irregular army. There I luckily chanced upon the amiable chief of the department, Colonel Birk, who explained to me how and what I must do, in order to join as speedily as possible.

Skobelev's Cossack division was, at first, to have consisted of the Don, the Kuban, the Terek, and the Terskogor regiments. Which it was best to select, I did not know. Birk advised the Terek army. "I'm a Terekman myself, and my advice to you is to enter there," said he. And upon that we decided.

I wrote my application, enclosed my papers, and betook myself to the chief of the council, General Boguslavsky. This general also proved very courteous, and that very day he ordered inquiry to be made of the chief of staff of the

active army, General Nepokoitchitzky (the headquarters were then in the Rumanian town of Ploeshti), whether any obstacle existed to my joining. It appeared that none did exist. Ten days later, while breakfasting in a restaurant, I read in the "Invalid" that Alexander Verestchagin, lieutenant in retreat, is enrolled in the Vladikavkaz Cossack regiment, of the army of the Terek, as *sotnik*.¹

"How prompt!" I thought. Leaving my breakfast unfinished, in my delight, I hastened to the barracks of the body-guard, to order a uniform, and also to see whether I could find a good horse for sale, as I had heard from various persons, and had also read in the newspapers, that the army was in need of horses, that it was impossible to purchase good horses there, and that it was indispensable to provide one's self in Russia.

A couple of days later I presented myself to General Boguslavsky, in my new uniform, thanked him heartily, and also Colonel Birk, for his sympathy towards me, and then I began my preparations for my long journey. These preparations did not take long, but my parting from my parents proved harder than I had supposed that it would be.

My father escorted me to the distance of several stations on the Nikolaevsky railroad.

I shall never forget the parting glance which he cast upon me as the train moved off. With a weak and trembling hand, he made the sign of the cross over me for my journey, and bestowed his benediction: "Farewell, my dear fellow, farewell! Christ be with you, Christ be with you!" resounded for a long time in my ears. The train had been moving for a long time, the station was no longer visible, and still his kind, sad, old face, with its trembling jaw, was plainly present before my eyes.

At that moment, I somehow did not realize the terribly painful feeling which I was causing my father by my departure;—although my desire to share in warlike deeds was perfectly natural. And at that time, too, I was not capable of feeling very sad: my new blue tunic, my black coat with its silver cartridge pouches, the dagger, and the sword which I wore and which attracted so much attention to me from the public, and, in addition to this, the military dis-

¹ *Sotnik*, in the Cossack regiments, now means Lieutenant. Formerly it meant Captain; Captain is now *Esaul*.

tinctions which my imagination painted so vividly for me, — all these things diverted my attention and lessened the grief of parting.

I settled down in the corner of the railway-carriage, and summoned all my forces to keep from crying. I was more ashamed of tears than of anything else at that moment. What! a Cossack, so valiant of aspect, with such a terrible cap, suddenly to burst out crying? What would my neighbors think of me? They are all gazing at me with such admiration, and scrutinizing my uniform with curiosity! I involuntarily turn towards the window, and fall to thinking. But here is the first whistle, we approach a station, I go out — and my grief begins to be somewhat dissipated. The gendarme on the platform draws up and salutes me; the ladies and young girls gaze at me with interest. All this gently tickles my vanity, and my heart grows lighter.

I travel swiftly southward. Moscow, Orel, Kursk, Kieff are imperceptibly left behind. Father, mother, brothers, my only sister, all recur less and less frequently to my mind. New thoughts, new dreams engross me.

Everywhere on the road there is great animation. All that one sees is troops and still more troops; an endless number of platform-cars loaded with weapons, equipments, and provisions. Hundreds of soldiers' heads protrude from the windows of the railway-carriages, and drone out songs, and they are all bound for the same place as myself.

War, war! what a strange word! How awkward and unwonted it sounds! You feel that there is something evil in it.

During the journey, of course, the only talk to be heard is of war; whether the attack will be made soon, when the passage will begin, whether it is true that it is fixed to take place near Nikopolis, and so on.

At that time, our army was still lingering in Rumania. The emperor and the chief headquarters were at Ploeshti. From Kishineff, I travelled in the military train. This town surprised me by the immense quantity of sand and dust in its streets. You literally had to wade to your ankles in the sand. But no one paid any attention to it at the time — it was not a question of sand!

Rumania, at the first glance, differs but little from our Bessarabia; there are the same woodless tracts, the same long lines of carts drawn by oxen, almost the same dress

on the natives, only that the eye is struck by the huge straw hats. On the stations the inscriptions ran: Tikile-shiti, Fitileshti, Torgoveshti, and an endless file of *shti, shti, shti, shti*, — and finally I reached Ploeshti. It is a neat little town, and all the tiny houses are pretty, all separate, with gardens, but with no end of dust and sand.

Here I cleaned myself off, braced myself up, and set off to find the chief of the army staff, General Nepokoitchitzky. In the streets I encountered a great many of our officers. Yonder, clinking his spurs, a tall, lean aide-de-camp of the Sovereign walks along the dusty sidewalk, in measured strides, exactly as though stamping off each step, — a colonel in a white duck coat with aiglets. Holding up his sword as he goes, the colonel twists his long moustache thoughtfully, and seems to be satisfied with himself. Trotting along with a mincing gait, with a peculiar outward twist, the staff clerk overtakes him, and touches his cap. His whole figure seems to express: "We are the same here as in Petersburg; wherever we may go, it is all the same to us." In the clerk's left hand is a corded book, which he presses tight to his hip, out of respect for his superior officer.

From behind the corner of a house emerges a short, fat, elderly general, with his hair brushed forward on his temples, his cheeks and chin cleanly shaven. He is proceeding quietly, walking heavily, as though afraid of disturbing what is contained in his extremely prominent paunch.

The general is carefully explaining something to his companion, a young infantry officer, obviously an adjutant. The latter, in the meantime, is fairly crawling out of his skin in his endeavors to explain to the officer in what the question consists. He runs forward a little way, halts for a moment, raises himself on tiptoe, and, without bending the knee, bows respectfully and says: "We notified them to this effect, your Excellency; we received such and such a report."

Being a man of small importance, I did not even succeed in getting a sight of the chief of staff of the army, but reported myself to some colonel or other, whose name I do not now recall. From him I learned that I must go to the village of Zhurzhevo, where I should find Skobelev and his regiment. The Vladikavkaz and Kuban regiments were

occupying the outposts from Zhurzhevo up the line of the Danube.

On the morning of the next day, I pursued my course further. I must add that in Ploeshti I looked up my horse. I purchased it in the body-guard of his Majesty. The horse was a bay, very strong and muscular. He now travelled in the same train with me.

From the very beginning of my journey, I had frequently reflected on what manner of folks the Cossacks might be, how I was to get into their good graces, whether I did not look ridiculous in their uniform, and whether I had put it on properly. Now, at the end of my journey, these thoughts began to trouble me still more. My principal anxiety was riding in Cossack fashion, and the Cossack *dzhigitovka*,¹ of which I had a very confused idea. I assumed that every Cossack officer ought to know it to perfection.

In addition to this, I was disquieted by the fact that I did not smoke. Having read "Taras Bulba" and Cossack songs, one of which, among other things, says, "*tiutium* ² and a pipe the Cossack needs for the road," I concluded that all Cossacks smoked, and that tobacco and a pipe were the indispensable appurtenances of every Cossack. On this supposition, I had supplied myself in Peter with a short pipe and a pouch of tobacco, and, although I had never taken a pipe in my mouth up to that time, I now filled it as I sat in the railway carriage, and leaning out of the window, I smoked and spit and tried in every way to play the hardened Cossack smoker.

I had taken great pains about all such trifles and nonsense; but, in my inexperience, I had never thought of the things which are really indispensable to the Cossack. Thus, for instance, I had not supplied myself with a *burka* (felt cloak). A Cossack without a felt cloak was undone — and that is all there is to say! The simple fact that I was entering on the campaign without a *burka*, proved that I was not a Cossack, and that I possessed not even an idea about Cossacks.

I arrive at Bukharest. The first impression produced by the city is very favorable. It is all buried in gardens. The principal street, Mogashoi, is long and broad, and with

¹ Expert riding, as practised by North American Indians, etc.

² A very poor sort of tobacco.

pavements such as not only Moscow but even Petersburg might envy. And the public carriages here are a perfect delight. For a *lei* and a half (a franc and a half) you can ride all over town with a pair of horses in a calash, such as you would have to pay ten rubles¹ for in Petersburg. The drivers here are chiefly Russian *Skoptzi*.² On catching sight of a Russian officer, they vie with each other in shouting, just as in Russia, "Your Highness, ride with me — I'll drive you well!" And, in fact, they did!

"When shall we have such turnouts in Peter?" I said to myself, as I threw myself back in the Rumanian calash.

One flagrant defect strikes the eye in Bukharest — the lack of water. The one little stream here smells more vilely than the Moika in Petersburg.

I left Bukharest in the evening, and early the next morning the Turkish shore was visible. Advancing a little further, the vast, broad mass of the Danube spread out blue before me. Zhurzhevo stands on the very shore. The train did not go within a verst of the town, as the Turks were bombarding it from Rustchuk every little while.

In Zhurzhevo I was to have found the commander of the division, Lieutenant-General Dmitri Ivanovitch Skobelev, "Senior." His son, Mikhail Dmitrievitch, had been temporarily appointed head of his staff.

A few days previous to my departure from Petersburg, I had received a letter from my brother Vasily, informing me that he was setting out for the Danube to join Skobelev. "Of course," I thought, "I shall see my brother also in Zhurzhevo!" It was not without emotion that I stepped out of the railway carriage, saddled my horse, mounted, and rode off in search of the staff of the Cossack division. It was not difficult to find. Captain of the general staff, Sakharoff, a very sympathetic man, furnished me with full particulars, told me where the Vladikavkaz regiment was stationed, and praised the commander of the regiment, Levis-of-Menar.

The elder Skobelev was not in Zhurzhevo, he had gone off somewhere to the outposts. Captain Sakharoff was well acquainted with my brother Vasily, and informed me that my brother was with the Kuban troops, at Maly-Dizhos, but that his quarters were here in the town and close at hand. "His wagon must be here, and his

¹ At the present rate, about \$5.00. ² A peculiar religious sect.

horse; you had better make use of them," was Sakharoff's advice. On taking leave of him, I took my way to my brother's quarters.

The town presented a gloomy aspect at that time. The bombardment, which had taken place a few days previously, had ruined many buildings. The streets were deserted. Not a soul anywhere, and only in the outskirts of the town were living creatures to be seen. The bombs had pierced round holes in the walls of many houses, and cracks radiated from them in all directions, like the rays of the sun. It was a sad sight to behold the pretty little houses ruined by bombs.

But here are my brother's quarters. I entered several empty rooms without any furniture. In one corner of the anteroom a Cossack of the Don was making a great noise with the trunks. Greeting him and introducing myself, I ordered him to harness the team and drive me to my brother at Maly-Dizhos; but I made him to drive me first to the quarters of the younger Skobelev; he lived near by.

I approach the entrance and ring—a Kuban Cossack opens the door.

"Is the General at home?"

"Certainly!"

"Announce: Captain Verestchagin desires to report to his Excellency."

The Cossack retires. In a few minutes a tall, spare, well built, blond man comes out to the entrance, a General in the suite of his Highness, wearing a linen coat, with the order of the George about his neck, takes me affably by the hand, and says with an indistinctness of speech which transforms the letters *r* and *l* into something like *g*:—

"You are Vasily Vasilitch's brother; I am very glad to make your acquaintance. But just at present I have no commission and therefore I cannot take you with me. You must go to the regiment; it is stationed at Parapan, about twenty versts from here. But as soon as I do receive an appointment, I promise to attach you to my person. Farewell for the present; remember me to your brother."

Mikhail Dmitrievitch pressed my hand, and we parted.

While talking to me, Skobelev rubbed his hands and gazed at the long, polished nails on his slender fingers, or pulled out the cartridge pouches and then restored them to their former position. He struck me as bored, in some way,

disenchanted; and in his words, "As soon as I receive an appointment," there lurked doubt.

From Skobeleff I ran to take a look at the Danube. What breadth!—it must certainly be four versts. What a marvellous river! The day was overcast. The Danube appeared like a vast, dark gray expanse. The lofty shore opposite (the enemy's), merging into the horizon, involuntarily riveted my attention, and made me think: "What is going on yonder, beyond those hills? Somewhere there the Turks are swarming. Some time or other we shall be there; but shall we ever get there? Such a broad expanse is not to be compassed at a single leap!" flashed through my mind.

There, to the left, Rustchuk gleams white; its tapering minarets sharply characterize it as a Mussulman town. Beyond it, on the height, rises their chief redoubt, Levan-Tabia; our guns on the shore, placed not far from Zhurzhevo, fire at it now and then.

In the month of May, the Danube is still in a state of flood; only the green rushes rise above it here and there. I gaze attentively at the Turkish shore, as yet not reached by our troops. How I should like to get a good look at it, to find out how the people live there, what the buildings are like, whether the Turks themselves are not worthy of note. But the Danube is too broad, and, although my field-glass is very powerful, it is difficult to distinguish anything whatever at that distance.

An hour later I was seated in a light Rumanian wagon, Ivan the Cossack was whipping up his fat, well fed, light bay horse, while my horse was fastened behind the team. The road ran up the Danube, where lay the Cossack posts. First came those from Kuban, those from Terek should follow. I had hoped to find my brother in the first village, Maly-Dizhos, where the Kuban companies were stationed. Just in front of the village ran the line of our naval batteries of heavy calibre, which played upon Rustchuk. The batteries were so well masked with brushwood that to the enemy they were almost invisible, and therefore, as I afterwards learned from the naval officers, there was hardly any loss in our batteries.

"Ivan, is your master in this village?" I inquire of the Cossack, and point to a hamlet which is visible a short way off.

"Yes," he replies, gruffly. My driver seems very taciturn. This Cossack was a very peculiar fellow; he was constantly dissatisfied with something. I remember how he pestered my brother Sergyei, to whom he was, at one time, attached:—

"There's no grain, your Excellency," he snuffles, assuming the most pitiable mien.

"Then, go to the troop!" shouts Sergyei.

"I've been there, and they won't give me any; they say that they haven't received any yet." Sergyei tosses him a ruble for oats. Ivan withdraws, but not for long; he speedily makes his appearance again, and begins to whine afresh.

"Your Excellency, there's no hay."

"Why didn't you ask for it at once?" shouts his master.

"There was a little, but it has just given out;" and, having obtained another ruble by his importunity, he retires to his own quarters, probably scheming on the way thither in what manner he can squeeze still another ruble from the master.

I enter Maly-Dizhos. It is a hamlet greatly resembling ours in Little Russia, except that the roofs are not of straw, but of tiles. Here and there, in the streets, the figures of Kuban Cossacks are visible; one, with a business-like air, in a long coat and sabre, strides hastily along, evidently on his way "to the Captain," or "to the regimental commander;" others, in red tunics, flying unfastened, are strolling about and chatting together.

Ivan drove me straight to the tiny cottage where my brother, Vasily, had halted. He was at home. Bending over his work-box, he was carefully cleaning the old colors from his palette with a knife.

I had not seen my brother for three years. He had become decidedly older, his baldness had become very marked, his beard had grown still longer, his eyes seemed to have grown narrower and to have sunk into their orbits. He looked brisk and cheerful.

"Ah, how are you?" he shouts, on catching sight of me. We embrace. "Come, now, show yourself. Hey, what an absurd cap! The Cossacks will laugh at it." My brother has no suspicion of the fact that his words are like a shower of boiling pitch to me. My *papakha* was tall, shaggy, and very good,—but such as our soldiers had worn in the Caucasus thirty years before. His remarks abashed me.

"Why do you think so?" I ask him.

"I tell you that it is so. Change it; heed my advice," he says, with a laugh, and surveys me from head to foot.

"Kaïtoff!" calls my brother.

A handsome young Cossack makes his appearance; he must be a mountaineer, judging from his face.

"Here is my brother, Alexander Vasilievitch; let me introduce you."

"Welcome!"¹ mumbles the man, with the peculiar accent which distinguishes the native of the Caucasus.

I give him my hand in indecision, not knowing the customs, and whether an officer can shake hands with a simple Cossack. But Kaïtoff proved to be an Osetin volunteer. And the volunteer militia enjoyed special rights and privileges in the Caucasus as well as here.

"Look, Kaitoff, see what a ridiculous cap my brother has; it's all wrong, isn't it?"

"Yes, those caps are old-fashioned; none such are worn now. This is the sort of a *papakha* that you need; young lamb's skin, and not at all like that."

And he pulls his own cap from his head. His *papakha* was much lower; the fur was short and shining. I requested Kaïtoff to procure me one like it, and gave him a gold piece wherewith to purchase it. Then we went to take a look at my horse.

Here the mountaineer quite thawed with pleasure.

"A fine horse, by Heavens, a fine horse!" he exclaims, stroking its neck and back. "This horse will please Levis." And in order to still further convince himself of the animal's good qualities, he gives its tail a stout tug.

I was greatly delighted at the praise of my horse. It convinced me that I had not made a mistake; and, on the march, a horse is an important consideration, especially among the Cossacks, since they have to be always in the vanguard.

"Pray, watch yourself carefully; the Cossacks are a sensitive people, and instantly perceive when anything is not as it should be," says Vasily to me. "Don't get to be hail fellow well met with them, don't take to addressing them as 'thou' at once, bear yourself independently, and, the chief point of all, don't offend your Cossacks. We will go

¹ It is useless to attempt to reproduce the peculiarities of pronunciation which the author notes.



VASILY VASILYÉVITCH VERESTCHAGIN.

(The Artist.)

to dine," pursues my brother, "with Yakoff Petrovitch Tzvyetkoff, the commander of this hundred. He's a very delightful man; pray, be delicate and cautious with him. Although he looks simple, he will understand in an instant if you say anything improper."

Having discussed our home affairs to our heart's content, we set off to dine at Tzvyetkoff's. Yakoff Petrovitch lived in a comfortable little house on the bank of the Danube. In the anteroom, two Cossacks, in dirty, torn tunics, were occupied in household matters; one was plucking a chicken, the other was stitching up the commander's trousers. The commander himself, on catching sight of us, rushed to put on his coat, and had already nearly succeeded in getting one sleeve on when my brother stopped him.

"That will do, Yakoff Petrovitch; why such ceremony?" Vasily reproves him. "Permit me to introduce to you my brother Alexander."

We greet each other cordially. Tzvyetkoff is far from good-looking: small of stature, weak, with a closely trimmed moustache and an unshaven chin. He afterwards let his beard grow, which suited his thin face. His pronunciation was Little Russian. He dressed with such extreme simplicity that he might have been taken for a common Cossack, instead of the commander of the company.¹ His tunic was made of dark calico, and reminded one of a woman's jacket, with a fitted waist, such as village women among us wear on holidays. His trousers were wide and black, and not of cloth but of cotton stuff. He wore on his feet not boots but leather stockings, or, as I learned afterwards, "tchevyaki."

"Pray, take a seat, Vasily Vasilyevitch," the host says, obligingly, pulling at and setting to rights whatever comes to hand.

"Shtchablykin, is the beet soup ready?" he shouts to his Cossack in the anteroom.

"Wait a bit," . . . an impatient voice replies.

"Here, Vasily Vasilitch, sit here; it's softer." The host continues to fidget, and places us on the bench, after spreading his felt cloak on it.

"You belong to the Vladikavkaz regiment?" Yakoff Petrovitch says, turning to me, and, without awaiting a reply, he continues: "Your men are stationed near here;

¹ Called a "hundred," *Sotnya*, in Cossack regiments.

they occupy the posts twelve versts from here, not more. Do you know the commander of your regiment, Colonel Levis? A fine man, everybody praises him."—Then, probably considering that he had fulfilled the requirements of politeness, and had conversed with the new-comer, he addressed to my brother questions on what interested him more than anything else. My brother had already made me acquainted with these questions on the way, because Yakoff Petrovitch put the very same ones to him every time that my brother went to see him.

"Vasily Vasilievitch, what have you heard? — what is gold worth now?" asked the host, in a voice which seemed to indicate that he had never even thought of asking him about this matter before.

Of course, my brother gives the same answer as on the day before and on the day before that; also, of course, not showing that he is heartily tired of it.

"Well, and as to rewards, have you heard anything? It is said that they intend to reward the Cossacks for the *labors which they have undergone?*" and, at these words, Tzvyetkoff fixes on my brother a look of amazement, as though, probably, he were not in a condition to explain to himself in what those "labors undergone" consist.

"I don't know; perhaps they will present them for reward," assents Vasily Vasilievitch, not wishing to disenchant his credulous host.

In the meantime, I learn from the conversation that the commander of the Kuban regiment, Colonel Kukharenko, also lives in Maly-Dizhos, a few steps from Tzvyetkoff.

I instantly decide to take advantage of this favorable opportunity to present myself to him, and, promising Yakoff Petrovitch to return to dinner, I set out.

At the entrance to Kukharenko's quarters stand two well built Cossacks, in their tcherkeskas,¹ and with their weapons: one of them goes to announce me. I hear a stammering voice say: "A-a-ask him in."

I enter. The tiny room is completely covered with rich rugs, horse-cloths, and felts. The walls are also hung with costly weapons, bits, and saddles. The host is a man of forty, small in stature, with a flaxen beard, in a Cossack cap (Kukharenko had a habit of wearing his *papakha* and a foppish red tunic in the house); from his rich leather

¹ The close-fitting Cossack coat.

belt hangs a dagger of artistic workmanship, and gilded. Everything indicates that Kukharenko, like a true Cossack, is fond of arms.

"Wel-welcome, Verestchagin! pr-pray, enter our cottage," says he, with a stutter, as he comes to meet me, and offers me his hand. Kukharenko is possessed of a very engaging appearance, and involuntarily inspires the opinion regarding him: "Here's a Cossack, body and soul; this man will not fly from the Turk, he will defend himself." And I feel ashamed of my comparatively shabby outfit of weapons, and of my figure.

"S-s-show me your sabre," he says to me. "There," I say to myself, "that's the sort of a question that one Cossack should ask another Cossack on their first meeting;" and I timidly unsheath my sword, and hand it to him.

"A g-good sword, a good one." The Colonel tests it on his nail, then slashes the air with it.

"Now, s-show your d-dagger. And your d-d-dagger is good also."

Kukharenko had been forewarned of my arrival, by my brother Vasily, and as all the Cossacks, from Skobelev down, greatly esteemed Vasily, Kukharenko was exquisitely amiable to me.

"W-where's your b-brother Vasily Vasilyevitch? Probably at Tzvyetkoff's. They're great f-friends; you couldn't part them even by pouring water over them!" he exclaims.

After conversing with him for a few moments, I hastened back.

"Serve quickly, Shtchablykin!" cries Tzvyetkoff, on seeing me.

The dinner consisted of beet soup and chicken, with rice. Both seemed very appetizingly prepared. We ate the chicken with our hands, as there was but one fork, and that hardly held fast to the handle. Yakoff Petrovitch first carved the chicken with the small knife attached to his dagger, and then each of us took his piece, and gnawed away at it, wiping our hands on one common towel, of very doubtful cleanliness. Before dinner, the idea seemed to strike the host, at the sight of the towel, that he would like to change it for a clean one, but he probably thought afterwards, "Never mind, this will do!" And so it remained.

Although Yakoff Petrovitch's eyes seemed indifferent and unsympathetic, he did his best to please us.

We moistened our dinner with bad Rumanian wine, after which he wished to entertain us with songs. And then, for the first time, I heard Cossack songs.

"Come, now, Shtchablykin, call the singers!" commanded our host; and within a quarter of an hour, fifteen Cossacks had assembled before our windows. One of them appeared with a great instrument in the nature of a drum—the "talambas."

The singers clear their throats, and form in a compact circle. At this moment I look up, and Yakoff Petrovitch is hastily seizing from the wall his violin; he raises it to his ear, tunes it rapidly, and then flies to the centre of the group. On festive occasions, the commander of the troop was fond of directing and accompanying the singers himself. The chorister begins, the rest take up the strain, and then I observe that the respected commander is sawing away zealously on the same strings, without a change of any sort, and that he only presses them for show. One song ends and another begins, but the music is still the same. And if any one had glanced at Tzvyetkoff's countenance, at that moment, how serious and triumphant he would have found it! It was plain that he considered himself a great artist, and was convinced that he afforded his hearers inexpressible delight by his playing.

From the faces of the Cossacks, one might also assume that they entertained the same opinion of their commander, although, possibly, this arose chiefly from respect for him as the head of the troop.

When the long-drawn songs came to an end, and the merry ones began, it was impossible to look without laughing at Yakoff Petrovitch, as he sawed away with his bow on his strings, broke off playing for a moment, with a sort of rage, mopped his perspiring face with the full sleeve of his coat, and then, pressing his fiddle to his chin, began to saw away again, casting sidelong glances at us from time to time, in order to discover what impression he was producing on us by his "music."

"Hey, there, Yakoff Petrovitch, you're a fine fellow!" shouts my brother, clapping his hands; and I too praise and applaud. Tzvyetkoff twirls the fiddle cleverly round his head, and winds up: "I never have had any lessons; I taught myself," he says, innocently, and wipes his perspiring brow with the skirt of his coat, then seats himself beside us, on his felt cloak.

CHAPTER II.

PARAPAN, SKRYDLÖFF AND THE TURKISH MONITOR. — THE FIRST MAN KILLED.

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon, I proceeded further in the same conveyance, but in a new cap, which Kaitoff had bought for me; at the end of an hour and a half I entered a large settlement, also situated on the bank of the Danube. This was Parapan.

There were several very respectable little houses here, painted white, for the most part. The regimental staff and the quarters of the regimental commander were located on the bank of the Danube, in a handsome manorial residence, with a large, shady garden. On the upper balcony of this house was constructed something in the nature of an observatory; and there stood a large telescope, around which crowded several Cossacks and naval men. Later on, I frequently admired the wonderful view of the Danube from this balcony, and gazed long through the glass, and tried to see whether I could distinguish the enemy anywhere on the river. The glass had been placed there by our sailors, in order that they might watch the movements of the enemy's iron-clads.

My wagon comes to a stand-still at the gate of the house where the regimental staff is quartered, and I cross the yard on foot. The regimental standard and money chest are visible at the entrance; beside them stands a sentry with a drawn sword. My attention is involuntarily attracted by this sentry. Almost an old man, he is still very alert, broad-shouldered, with a closely cropped gray beard and thick, beetling eyebrows. From his belt hangs a long, black dagger, with a bone handle. His appearance is quite different from what I had seen among the Kuban Cossacks.

The sentry does not alter his attitude in the least at my approach; hand on hip, as he was, so he remains. It is only when I look at him that, instead of saluting with his

sword, as the regulations direct, he changes it to his left hand, casts a stern glance at me from beneath his brows, raises his right hand to his cap, and drawls out, "Good-day." "Here's a clever soldier," I say to myself, "who knows the regulations well."

I mount to the second story. A Cossack in a blue tunic conducts me to the commander of the regiment.

In a large, light room, with windows opening on the Danube, a stout, round-shouldered man, of medium height and about fifty years of age, was pacing from corner to corner, with his plump white hands clasped behind his back. His hair was cut short, his moustache was long, his beard small and round; he was dressed in a black lasting tunic, and polished camp shoes.

This was Colonel Oscar Levis-of-Menar, a Swede by birth, but a thorough Russian in character and habits.

When I entered, the Colonel was talking with his adjutant, a young man in a cossack coat and shoulder knots.

"How quickly you have come! We have not even received orders with regard to you yet," says Levis, after I have reported myself.

"Yes, I made haste, Colonel; the order was issued only five days ago, and I have spent all the time on the road."

"Well, Andreï Pavlovitch, where shall we put him?" says the Colonel to the adjutant. The latter is standing there with a sort of satisfaction on his face. Lyapin, that was his name, had a most frank, Russian, and simple-hearted countenance, which was always content and smiling. In all the days that followed, I never saw Lyapin gloomy.

"The Captain can be quartered downstairs; there's no one there but Vasily Mironitch," he replies.

"Well, very good! show him the way. I think you must be tired from the journey." The Colonel accompanies us to point out my new quarters.

"To what troop shall we assign him?" the Colonel pursues his inquiries.

"To the third, with Pavel Ivanovitch, I suppose," replies Lyapin, and he glances at me in a self-satisfied way.

"Good!" Levis says, curtly. He cuts his words off so short that in *khorocho* (good) only the last *o* is audible, the first two being entirely elided.

"Who is this?" I inquire of the adjutant, as we pass



SOTNIK LYAPIN.

the standard and the sentry. The latter, meanwhile, makes the salute precisely as he had made it to me, transferring his sword to his left hand and raising his right to his cap.

"He is a horseman, an Osetin. They are Asiatics, you know, and it is impossible to require special formalities from them. They are all volunteers; they have joined the expedition of their own free will," explains Lyapin, and, at the same time, he flies up to the Osetin, to show him how to salute with his sword.

"How many times have I shown you! There! hold it so. Now, do you understand?" he exclaims, sternly.

"Good, g-oo-d, I un-der-stand, un-der-stand," drawls the man, with an Asiatic accent, bowing slightly, and trying to remember how he must hold his sword.

I am installed in a room beside the office, with the cashier, a little man, who was engaged, on our entrance, in counting over money. Whole piles of bank-notes, bags of gold and bags of silver, he had counted over, laying what he had been over on one side, and at the same time checking it off on the abacus with a clatter.

On perceiving the Colonel, the cashier rose slightly, phlegmatically greeted first the commander of the regiment, then me, with an air of having always known me, and then he dropped back instantly into his seat. He was sure, in advance, that it would never occur to the commander of the regiment to remark upon his remaining seated in his presence, being aware that the business in which he was engaged was too deeply interesting to all present. Each person was probably thinking, "Let him finish as speedily as possible, and then, perhaps, he will pay me."

"Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight," muttered the cashier, reckoning up the package of bank-bills.

The room to which they conducted me adjoined the office where the officers were constantly jostling each other; therefore, it was immediately filled with my new comrades. Lyapin introduced me to them.

I could hardly manage to salute them all and reply to their greetings. Many faces were exactly such as I had imagined — the genuine conquerors of the Caucasus.

They were not the young officers of the Guard whom I was accustomed to see in Petersburg. Here, for the most

part, they were old men, with gray hair, who had seen service, and on many a breast hung the bronze crosses in memory of the Caucasus. All this deeply interested me, and greatly surprised me. Especially interesting to me seemed one tall, gray-haired old man, who, to my mind, bore a strong resemblance to "Uncle Yeroshka," in Lyof Tolstoi's "Cossacks." His broad body was lightly draped in a white cotton tunic, unfastened; on his feet he wore *tchevyaki*,¹ and very wide black lasting trousers outside his boots, which were very dirty. He was the *Esaul* (Captain) who had charge of the regimental transports. It seemed as though one needed but to glance at the harsh, wrinkled face of this aged esaul, with his closely cropped head and bristling moustache, in order to picture to one's self his whole past life and service. His face betrayed that the Esaul had been on campaigns, and had also lived long at home. He knows what a Cossack requires in the field, he is an expert in horseflesh, but he will not err in purchasing an ox for the plough, and he will also know how to select a kerchief for his wife which shall be to her taste.

He gazed at me not without irony, that is to say, with a glance which seemed to say, "We know you, we know you, my good fellow. Oh, how many of you there have come among us in our generation! they have flitted hither and flitted away again. We have served with them. Here are we, the natives; we are no mates for you!"

As long as the commander of the regiment remained in the room, the 'old man hid himself, as it were, in the crowd, being, probably, ashamed of his *négligé*. But as soon as the Colonel had taken his departure, he came forth and began to jest with us, and to excite our merriment by his tales. The Esaul had a voice which was directly the reverse of his huge frame — very small.

"Vasya, Vasya!" he cries, in jest, to the cashier, as he stands in the middle of the room, with his arms akimbo, and a short pipe between his teeth. "Mironitch, when will you give us our allowances? Pray, are you going to forget us entirely?" then he approaches and jestingly takes from the other a package of gold.

"Come, now, . . . stop . . . what sort of jokes are these!" cries the cashier, snatching the package in affright. "You'll get it when your turn comes. How

¹ The nature of this foot-gear will be seen a page or two further on.

could I forget, when you have not given your receipt in the book?" — and Mironitch plunges into his accounts once more.

"But you know," the old man says, cheerily, turning to me, and at the same time picking up a twig from the floor and digging out the ashes from his pipe there in our presence, "what the Moskalei were like among us Tchetchentzi in the olden days?" (Soldiers from Russia are called Moskalei in the Caucasus.)

"Please to tell us," I entreat, almost leaping for joy, at the idea that I am about to hear a story from a genuine Caucasian.

"I remember what a lot of them were driven down on us," begins the Esaul, with evident scorn for the Moskalei. "Well, they were a raw, heavy race, in warm jackets, and how were they to chase over the mountains after our Tchetchenenians! For these are an Asiatic tribe, and crafty. One will creep up like a cat at night, when it's so dark that you can't see your hand before you; but he knows, the rascal, that the post must be close by, and shouts: 'Sioldier, sioldier, where are you?' And he, like a fool, tells him: 'Here I am!' and then the Tchetchenian goes at the voice, and heels over head goes the soldier." And the old Esaul, at the picture of the way in which the soldier goes "heels over head," breaks into a peal of laughter, and throws back his gray head and roars with laughter.

This laughter, to tell the truth, produces an unpleasant effect on me. "What does he find laughable about that?" I say to myself. At that moment, another officer joins us, my future company commander, also an Esaul.

"Ah, Pavel Ivanitch," cries Lyapin, "here's a new officer for you — Captain Verestchagin."

We make acquaintance. Pavel Ivanovitch, to my eyes, also presents the type of the Cossack of the Caucasus, such as I had seen them in pictures; his head was closely shorn, his moustache black and long, and his chin shaved. On glancing round and perceiving that there was no place for him to sit, that all the seats are occupied, he gathers up his Cossack coat, as women tuck up their petticoats, and squats down on his heels in the centre of the room.

"There, now," I say to myself, "what's the matter with him? — has he got the stomach-ache?"

Nothing of the sort. Pavel Ivanovitch extracts a cigarette from his silver cigar-case, lights it, as he squats there, and enters into conversation. "Stop," I reason with myself; "this means that the Caucasians have a peculiar way of sitting!" And I recall the fact that I had observed just such figures on my entrance to Parapan. From a distance, they resembled huge eagles.

"I must certainly try to sit like that," I say to myself. But as it would have seemed ridiculous to quit my chair on the instant and squat down, I postponed this experiment to a more convenient season.

On the first day, I made the acquaintance, not only of all the officers of my regiment, but of the officers of the Osetin division. Properly speaking, the Osetin division should have already been joined in Russia to the division of the Ingushi (a Caucasian tribe), and, under the leadership of Colonel Pankratoff, have formed the separate Terek mountaineer regiment. But the Ingushi had, in some way, been delayed on the road, and had fallen directly into the Rustchuk detachment of the Tzarevitch, where they made the whole campaign; but the Osetini were ordered to unite with our regiment.

I could not get to sleep for a long time on that first night, I had seen so many new faces, garments, and manners, and had heard so many tales. Early on the following morning, Lyapin, gay and content as ever, runs down to inquire after me, and we go off together to the third troop, to my new company commander. The company was encamped in a pretty grove near the Danube. A few paces distant gleamed the white tent of the commander of the troop, near which was visible the small green guidon of the troop, in the nature of a flag, thrust into the ground.

Pavel Ivanovitch had but just dressed, and was trying with all his might and main to draw on his *tchevyaki*. This was no easy matter, as it seemed to me at the first glance. This sort of foot-gear consists of two parts; the *tchevyaki* proper, or foot, generally of goat's hide, and legs of the same. Well made *tchevyaki* ought to encase the instep as a kid glove fits a lady's hand; for that reason they are made very tight, and they can only be got on after a preliminary soaking in water.

Pavel Ivanovitch's *tchevyaki* were too small, so he was panting and swearing and squeezing his fingers, and yet

could hardly get them on. His foot was very small and handsome.

"Tell me, Esaul, why you wear *tchevyaki*? are they more comfortable to walk in than boots?" I inquire.

"They set easier on the foot, and are pleasanter to walk in," he explains, evidently delighted at a chance to get rid of them.

"And can I get some of any one here?"

"Yes, certainly, take these; they'll send me another pair from home."

"And how much are they worth?"

"I'll take ten *monyeti* from you (a ruble is called a *monyet* in the Caucasus). And while thus naming a price which is three times what they are worth, he assumes a most innocent look. I hand over two gold pieces and receive the *tchevyaki*, without even troubling myself to try them on.

Meanwhile, Lyapin sits there staring with all his might. He had by no means expected that his friend would so promptly succeed in palming off on his new comrade a thing that was utterly useless to him.

I never wore those *tchevyaki* afterwards. Walking in them proved to be a very painful operation, and as soon as one stepped on a stone, one shrieked. The common Cossacks, especially the Osetini, used them from habit, for the sake of economy, and to save their boots.

Dropping the money into a long, knitted purse, and thrusting this into his trousers, the company commander becomes more loquacious. His face, which has been stern and forbidding, becomes cheerful.

"You must have a Cossack assigned to you, to look after your horse, and to cook your beet soup sometimes," he says. "Grishka, call the quartermaster," to a young Cossack who is fussing about the tent. Semyon Kikot, the quartermaster, speedily presents himself.

"All is well in the third troop, Esaul," he mutters, halting at the entrance and peering into the tent at us. His huge stature would have rendered it somewhat uncomfortable for him to enter it.

"He must have a cossack assigned to him. Is there any one there?" says Pavel Ivanitch, nodding his head towards me. The quartermaster surveys the new officer with curiosity, and then, after a pause, he replies condescendingly:

"Yes, Lamakin might do; he's a smart, peaceable fellow."

A long pause ensues, after which the commander of the troop, with feigned calmness of mien, dismisses the quartermaster, saying:—

“Good! Now, go to your quarters and rest for a while.”

We betake ourselves to the troop, to inspect my horse. On the way we met a young Osetin, officer Gaitoff, a dzhigit, handsome and clever. He pleased me at first sight, and throughout the whole campaign he remained my best comrade. On seeing the horse, Gaitoff asks permission to ride him a little in dzhigit fashion. Of course, I consent. Gaitoff mounts the horse, jerks the bridle once, twice, and at the same time flourishes his whip, but without striking him, only cracks it, threatens and then lowers it sharply with a swish. The horse begins to quiver all over, rolls his eyes, gets excited, prances up and down, and does not know how to escape from the situation. He has already gathered himself together in a ball, curved his back and pressed his hind feet close to his fore-feet, like a cat ready to spring upon her prey. Then the rider bends down, says “sh-sh-shoo!” and away he goes. The space does not permit of a long gallop; the rider soon brings the horse to a standstill, and so vigorously that he almost sinks back on his haunches. “My poor animal,” I think, as I look on at all this, “how dear this dzhigit riding costs you!”

Gaitoff performs various evolutions, goes into ecstasies over the horse, and tells me that it is the best beast in the regiment. After such praise, my friendly feeling for him acquires fresh strength.

That day I visited the Osetin division. It lay on the other side of the settlement. What fine-looking men are the Osetini; splendid fellows all, as though picked out to match. The entire division consisted of volunteers. Their horses and arms were far handsomer than those of the Cossacks. The complete equipment, including the horse of some of the horsemen, was worth from seven to eight hundred and even a thousand rubles, while among the Cossacks it was not worth more than from one hundred and fifty to two hundred. What particularly struck me with regard to the Osetini was their walk and bearing. The bearing of every Osetin was like that of a prince: he stepped out with dignity and importance, with a consciousness of his own worth; his left hand thrust into his belt, and his right on the handle of his dagger. They all walk and ride exclu-

sively in *tchevyaki*, as they consider them easier on the foot, and easier to ride in, because the foot slips less in the stirrup.

A few days later, the commander of our division, Lieutenant-General Dmitri Ivanovitch Skobelev, arrived in Parapan. I immediately reported myself to him.

The elder Skobelev was of lofty stature, with large features and a long flaxen beard. He wore a blue Cossack coat of the Guards, embroidered with silver braid. He talked deliberately, through his nose, and, in conversation, he bel- lowed constantly: it made no difference whether he was asking a question or answering it, every phrase was fol- lowed by a snuffling m-m-m-m. On the thumb of his right hand he wore a ring with a huge diamond, and when he greeted any one he offered only two fingers.

My brother Vasily came to Parapan rather suddenly with his friend, Lieutenant Skrydloff, as though for the jaunt, and informed me, as a secret, that it had been decided that early on the following morning the naval troops were to place torpedoes in the Danube, nearly opposite Parapan, and that, in case any of the Turkish iron-clads should at- tempt to prevent this, Skrydloff was to deliver an attack with the torpedo boat "Shutka" (Jest), and blow up the iron-clads. My brother Vasily was to take part in this at- tack. He begged me not to mention this to any one, fear- ing lest the authorities should forbid Skrydloff to take my brother with him. Skrydloff invited me to go with them to take a look at the "Jest," and we set out.

In a small bay, within sight of the Danube, lay a tiny steam-launch, painted the color of the water. The crew was protected from bullets by an iron roof, which several sailors were engaged, during our visit, in overlaying in spots with coals and sand.

"Look out, don't oversleep yourself, we shall be opposite you early to-morrow morning," Skrydloff said to me as we parted.

Although I said not a word about this to any one, by even- ing everybody in our regiment knew that it was the inten- tion to place a line of torpedo obstructions on the morrow.

When I woke on the following day, it was already light.

I spring hastily from my bed, give my face a scanty rinsing, dress, seize my field-glass, and run to the shore.

The sun has just risen, not opposite Parapan, but on the left, towards Rustchuk, from behind the steep Turkish shore, and is reflected in the river like a spot of fire. The bluish summits of the mountains, illuminated by the rays of the sun, stand out sharply against the crimson heavens. The Danube is tranquil and superb. In places, fresh aggregations of moisture, like clouds, are slowly separating from the river, as though loath to part from it. The drops of dew upon the bushes on the shore and on the reeds are lighted by the sun's rays into all the colors of the rainbow. Even on the tiny island yonder, almost in the middle of the Danube, the dew sparkles like diamonds. The opposite shore and the portions of the river adjoining it, which are not yet illuminated, appear as one solid, dark expanse. All is calm and quiet, and no movement is visible anywhere.

But now, from our water batteries, half a hundred sazhen¹ distant from me, a cannon shot resounds, and, in a few seconds, a sheaf of splashes far away, three versts in front of me, under the enemy's bank, mark the place where the missile has fallen. I stand there as though rooted to the spot, and cannot make out what they are firing at.

"Yonder, your Honor, yonder; see where their iron-clads are, yo-o-nder, just under the shore," says a Cossack, standing behind me, and he points at the expanse with his finger. "And he's firing too!"

At that moment, from beneath the enemy's shore, a white puff of smoke makes its appearance; a few seconds more, and the charge falls into the water, without reaching us. I gaze more intently, and see that, in reality, some steam-vessel, whether an iron-clad or not I cannot make out, has moved slowly along the bank up the Danube, and has discharged one of her side-guns.

"You didn't make much by it, that time, my good fellow! You're in fun, you don't throw far enough!" The crowd, consisting chiefly of Cossacks and sailors, which has gathered around me, darts witticisms. The imposing figure of the elder Skobelev, in his blue Cossack coat and tall cap with its red top, is seen in front of the throng. In the meantime, the Turks on the other shore roll up artillery, and open fire on our battery. Again the flame flashes forth, followed by smoke — the flight of the shell is

¹ There are seven feet in a sazhen.



LIEUTENANT (NOW CAPTAIN) SKRYDLOFF.



even heard, like a faint humming or the cooing of birds. My heart sinks a little, but this is not fear, since I have never seen the disastrous effects of a shell, — only a very strong curiosity to know where the charge will fall. The shell splashes into the water, having struck a little short of us. Again laughter and jests run rife among the audience, but this time they are not so bold; this shot has evidently been more successful. After this shot comes a third; the shell bursts in the yard of the regimental staff, and comes near striking the elder Skobelev, who is slowly returning to staff quarters.

After this shot, the witticisms cease. The gaping audience begins to disperse, under various pretexts. A Cossack beside me scratches his head and says, "I must go and water my horse," and off he goes. Another discovers the necessity of "seeing the quartermaster." Some, who are more frank, simply walk off, having remarked aloud that if they stay there, they need expect nothing good; with such shooting, you cannot preserve your bones.

Our battery does not doze either. Several shots are discharged from it, and with such success that the Turks speedily remove their guns.

Meanwhile, the steamer continues to move along, almost imperceptibly, close to the shore, and from time to time fires a shot from its cannon; but with what object, it is impossible to make out. The infantry must be lying in hiding in one spot on the slope of the other shore, since an unbroken line of puffs of smoke from musketry appears there; and their dull, reverberating crash is heard in the distance; but again, I cannot make out in what direction this firing is. I understand that it must be at our sailors, but I am terribly vexed that I cannot see them, although this is not surprising, since their boats are very small.

This spectacle continues three hours, then all becomes still. The iron-clad disappears.

I return home, making up my mind, on the way, that either Skrydloff has postponed the attack, or that, if he has attempted to make the attack, he has been unsuccessful, since, in the contrary circumstances, the explosion would have been heard.

About mid-day, I am walking with some comrades along the shore, when we behold a row-boat approaching. Every one on the bank, at once hastens to learn the meaning of

this. The boat comes nearer and nearer, and we can distinguish one of our naval officers, standing erect in the centre of it. Cossacks of the Ural, in their tall, shaggy caps, are seated at the oars. Their comrades, who have escorted Skobelev, Sr., from Maly-Dizhos to Parapan, press to the shore, and await with impatience the arrival of the boat.

"Was all successful?" rings a shout from the shore.

"Gorshkoff is killed," comes back the faint reply.

The crowd grows silent for a moment. This is *the first man killed*, and they will see him in a moment more. Complete silence ensues. Only the rattle of the oars and the splashing of the water are audible. The boat makes the shore. The spectators hasten there to look. I stand behind on a hillock, where I can see well. Slowly his comrades lift the body of their fellow-soldier.

"He was a fine fellow," says some one in the throng. As soon as the drooping head of the dead man became visible, bound with a blood-stained white handkerchief, it seemed exactly as though something had stung me; for a moment I realized the frightful reverse side of war. I beheld a healthy, powerful man struck down by a bullet, his pale face framed in a black beard, his strong hands hanging. I beheld standing around him his comrades, as strong and healthy as he had been; I glanced at their gloomy, swarthy faces; I heard the sighs, the remarks of the crowd which had assembled;—in a word, I beheld those details of war which it is difficult to reproduce with the pen.

Those present involuntarily bared their heads. On all faces, a heavy, oppressive feeling was manifest. The Ural Cossacks laid their comrade on their shoulders, and bore him to the tiny, yellowish church, which stood near by, on the very shore.

Wonderful fact! I afterwards took part in several great battles; I saw hundreds of the slain, but this *first man killed*, whom I had beheld in the midst of peaceful surroundings, without cannon shots and volleys of musketry, produced upon me a crushing impression. In an instant, all those joyous dreams and the charms which I had fancied that I should perceive in war took their flight, and before my eyes there flitted long the head of Gorshkoff, bound up in that white handkerchief, and with its pallid, deathly face.

That same day, towards evening, Levis hastily came to me, and said abruptly, as was his wont, "Go upstairs; they have brought your brother here; he is wounded. But don't be alarmed, there is no danger. Skrydloff is there too, and wounded also," he added, as though to comfort me.

Hardly knowing what I did, I flew up to him, and found, in a small chamber, two beds placed; one empty, as my brother had jumped out of it, and was standing, clad only in his blood-stained shirt, in front of Skrydloff, eagerly explaining something to him. Skrydloff was lying stretched out motionless, and requesting my brother, in a calm voice, to lie down and not to get excited.

Skrydloff was wounded severely, even dangerously, by a musket-ball in both legs.

"Just imagine," says my brother, turning to me with unusual animation, "when we began to approach the steamer, they began to shower bullets on us; in spite of this, we drew still nearer, and all that remained to do was to come in collision; the boom with the torpedo was ready. Skrydloff shouts: 'Go ahead!' I hear, 'Yes sir!' but they couldn't. Our guides from the batteries had been killed by the bullets. At that time they wounded me, Skrydloff, and several sailors besides."

"Where are you wounded?" I inquired.

"Here, on the right thigh. At first I did not notice it, only I felt something warm; I touched it — it was a hole, and my finger went in; I tried two, and two went in. I looked at my finger, and there was blood on it. But as we did not succeed in blowing them up, we retreated. Then their courage revived on the steamer, and they rattled down on us with everything that came to hand; cannons, rifles, pistols. They pierced the boat with shells. We baled out the water with our caps, with our hands."

"How did you save yourselves?"

"It was wonderful, wonderful!" he went on. "Now, judge for yourself; they saw this bit of a thing bearing down upon them, under full steam. At first, the Turks could not understand the meaning of it; but, when they did make out that it was a torpedo boat, they were seized with terror; the captain and crew leaped on the rail in order to throw themselves into the water. And such a misfortune; all of a sudden!" — Thus my brother related

it, with feverish animation, and grieved sincerely. Although he looked cheerful, his too highly colored face showed that something was wrong with him. His wound had been dressed.

"Is your wound from side to side?" I asked.

"How could it be otherwise, brother! Some villain fired his pistol at me, almost point-blank. No, Nikolaï Ilarionovitch, judge for yourself, just imagine . . ." and my brother turns again to Skrydloff.

"Calm down, Vasily Vasilitch; go to bed, you can't change things now," Skrydloff entreats him, and then, all of a sudden, he springs up in bed himself, and exclaims, "And what if they were suddenly to shell out the order of Vladímir for me! hey! That would be fine!"

"It can't be," shouts Vasily; "the George, most assuredly the George! You did your work! How are you to blame if the crew were killed?"

At that moment the doctor enters, advises them both to be quiet, and to go to sleep, and requests me to go away.

A few days later, they were both taken to Bukharest.

CHAPTER III.

IN ZIMNITZA. — SKOBELEFF ON THE DANUBE.

WITHIN a few days of my arrival in Parapan, I had become entirely familiar with Cossack life: I strapped on my dagger, put on my silver ribbon, and wore my cap cleverly, and even learned to sit on my heels. So that if any new officer had joined the regiment from Petersburg, he would not have been able to say in regard to me: "Ah, this is the Verestchagin whom I have often seen in Petersburg, on the Nevsky!"

I was already changed: I had had my hair cropped very close, like an ordinary Cossack, and had trimmed my beard in an even circle like an Osetin. But I could not learn to drink; and they drank stoutly among us.

Skobelev, Sr., did not command us long. Our division was reorganized, and a Caucasian Cossack brigade was organized. Our former Colonel of Brigade, Wulfert, whom, by the way, I did not see even once, was replaced by Colonel Tutolmin. We saw our new brigade commander on the road from Parapan to Zimnitza.

I remained only a few days in Parapan. Orders soon arrived to march to Zimnitza. We had already come under the command of Dmitri Ivanovitch Skobelev, and on the way, just in what place I do not recall, Colonel Tutolmin arrived, a small, thin, swarthy, very vivacious, and still young man. He immediately took charge of the brigade, and on this occasion delivered a speech, which he began by raising his right hand and exclaiming: "Good-day, fri-i-ends!"

It became known to us during the night, before we reached Zimnitza, that our forces, to the number of one brigade of infantry, Dragomiroff's division, had crossed the Danube. The loss was differently estimated: one put it at five hundred men, another at one thousand. The general

report was that the crossing had been effected very successfully.

We entered Zimnitza; Colonel Tutolmin, Levis, and the majority of the officers, among them myself, having arrived in advance of the brigade, galloped through the town, to take a look at the place where the crossing had been made.

Zimnitza is a small and extremely dusty town. When we galloped through it, the horses' feet raised such a dust that it was impossible to distinguish anything two paces in advance. I was actually afraid of coming into collision with some obstruction, or of tumbling into the gutter. On reaching the outskirts of the town, we saw the following spectacle: far away, on the Danube, on the summit of a wooded height, the town of Sistovo gleamed whitely. On the very crest, something in the nature of a fortress was visible. The banks of the Danube are extremely lofty, steep, and utterly inaccessible. Only in one small spot, a little to the left, there is barely visible a gorge or slope. To this spot our pontoons had been directed at the crossing.

Zimnitza is not directly on the Danube. First, for about a verst, extends a low-lying plain, covered with water in some places, and then, running round it, comes the real shore, sloping, very slimy, swampy, and covered with tall willow-bushes.

During the time which we stood there and gazed, desirous of seeing something which might suggest to us the battle which had taken place, all was quiet in every quarter. Bits of clothing and splinters of wheels lay scattered here and there. Neither was there anything visible on the opposite shore, for our heroes at that time stood in the shady grove on the road to Sistovo.

We returned separately, one by one. At the extremity of the town, on the square, I beheld several large white tents, above which floated flags with red crosses. "The wounded must be lying there," I said to myself. I fastened my horse to a ring and entered the nearest tent.

The first thing that struck my eye was a soldier lying on a table, in nothing but his shirt, quite motionless under the influence of chloroform. His right leg was terribly swollen and blue close to the hip. As an assistant surgeon informed me, the bone had been splintered inside by a ball: such a wound is usually fatal.

"May I take a look?" I asked quietly, of the doctor, who had evidently just been inspecting the wound, and was now dangling his hands from the wrist as a dog dangles his paw, when he is pointing, and is meditating in embarrassment as to what is the best thing for him to do. The doctor wore no coat, and had on an oil-cloth apron.

"Pray, do so," replied the latter, bestowing a searching glance upon me. "But if you have never been present at operations, I should not advise it. There is very little that is interesting about it," he added, rummaging among his instruments.

I heeded his advice, and fled, for I felt that I should not be able to endure the sight.

Our brigade pitched its camp. On the right were the Kuban men, on the left Vladikavkazians; still further to the right the mountain battery of Colonel Kostin, attached to our brigade. Here we lived merrily: we rode to the town for our meals, to learn the news, and to meet our officer acquaintances.

The headquarters were then in the town itself, and were situated in an extensive garden on the bank of the Danube. I went there once to Professor Botkin,¹ who lived in a tent a few paces from the little house occupied by the Emperor.

There was a drinking-bout every evening at the quarters of some one of our officers. It usually began with collops, decorously, quietly, and the singers sang harmoniously. But it ended very sadly; many of the Cossack guests were helped off to their tents by the elbows. I retain a particular memory of one such carouse at Esaul Kiziloff's.² He was youthful, not only in aspect but, as it afterward appeared, in fact also. By birth, Kiziloff was a Grebenskoï Cossack, of medium stature, very broad in the shoulders, with a large head, a short neck, a sunburnt face, a reddish beard, small, narrow eyes, and a hoarse voice. He drank for ten, though he never got drunk, but only became a little exhilarated. The singers in his hundred were capital. Kiziloff loved to sing, and understood the art.

One evening, after twilight, Lyapin flew up to me and

¹ Professor Botkin is Court Physician. — *Trans.*

² In this chapter some of the names are fictitious.

said: "Are you going to Kiziloff's? He has a collop party to-night. He has invited everybody, and requested that you should also be informed. Oscar Alexandrovitch has already gone to him."

"Good! let's go, only give me a chance to buckle my saddle-bags¹ first," I replied, fastening the bags which I had but recently purchased.

We set out. The sound of the *talambas* (a sort of drum) is heard at a distance, but the words of the song cannot be distinguished as yet. We draw nearer. In front of the tent of the company commander, we see the officers lying on outspread felt cloaks. Kiziloff rises, lifts his glass on high, and proposes some one's health. Shouts are heard—"Hurra-ah, hurra-a-ah!!" The singers strike in unanimously: "Long life, long li-ife, long, long li-i-ife to him!"

"Hey, Verestchagin, come here. Won't you take a glass?" shouts the host, on catching sight of me; then he seats himself, and pours out a glass of red wine. Almost all our officers are here, and my Pavel Ivanovitch is here also, as well as several Osetin officers. Before each stands a glass of red wine. In the centre, amid the circle of guests, burn candles in glass shades. There is a good deal of intoxication about. Toast follows toast. Near by a small fire has been built, but it has already burnt down. Two Cossacks, with flushed faces, squatting on their heels, are hastily toasting some pieces of mutton, spitted on long, thin rods. The bits of meat are still raw; as illuminated by the light of the fire, they look perfectly red. The juice drips down, falls into the fire, and sputters appetizingly.

"Bondarenko, throw on another knot," shouts one of the Little Russian Cossacks, in a startled voice. "There's no heat."

He had already served the officers with five skewers of collops, was now toasting the sixth with the same patience, and would thus continue to cook an incalculable quantity.

The singers are singing, gathered in a group on one side. Their faces are barely visible; only if you glance downward, their caps, lying on the ground, loom darkly in the distance, as though on the horizon.

¹ In the saddle-bags are placed all articles most indispensable on a journey. Common Cossacks carry theirs with them; officers take theirs on pack-horses.

“Well, come now! give us ‘*Kazbulat, the Bold,*’” commands the host.

“Stop, stop! give them a glass apiece first!” shouts a hoarse voice. The wine is passed round to the singers, who exchange glances and clear their throats. It is evident that they are desirous of singing the new song better than the others; probably it is a favorite of their commander:—

“Poor is thy highland cot and mean, oh, Kazbulat the bold,
But from the royal treasury I’ll shower upon thee gold,”—

the singers strike up unanimously and harmoniously. This song really proves to be Kiziloff’s favorite, for he seizes his glass, and, throwing back his head in ecstasy, he joins in, “But from the royal treasury I’ll shower upon thee gold.” Hereupon, in the exuberance of his feelings, he closes his little eyes, and elevates his shoulders.

“I’ll deck thy lowly cottage with ornaments so fine,”

the basses rumble,

“The floor and walls I’ll hang about with Persian rugs divine.”

These words are given more lightly, and the tenors ring out more clearly. We all listen to this song with pleasure, but not for very long, for it occurs to an Osetin officer to propose Levis’ health for the third time.

“Giantalman, lat us drink ta the halth of aour praisceless, pracious Ascar Alexandrovitch Levis,” he drawls out, in his Osetin accent. Of course, all chime in, “Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!” The song comes to an end and is replaced by a triple “Long life to him!” Levis’ fat, healthy cheeks redden and shine terribly, like Moscow fish patties. Levis does not rise or return thanks for the honor, but merely clinks glasses in the most amiable manner, without even making any distinction of persons.

“The commander’s song!” yells Esaul Stryelensky, hoarsely, wishing to treat his friend to his favorite song.

Another momentary pause ensues among the singers, and then the chorister begins in a light tenor, with a sort of despair in his voice:—

“He came, the under-officer,
He came to be her guest . . .”

Here the other voices join in:—

“He came, the fine young fellow,
He came to be her guest . . .”

This ballad is merry and is sung quite briskly.

“No sooner had he come to her
But off again flew he . . .
Leaving his little sweetheart . . .
Then sobbeth, waileth she. . . .”

“Boom — boom — boom — boom — boom,” roars the talambas.

“Gentlemen, to the health of our brave and beloved Colonel, Piotr Fedorovitch Sorokhin!” shouts, with the same Osetin accent,¹ the Osetin Major Liseneff, a small, stout gentleman, with a long, blond beard and quick eyes.

“Eh, the Oseti are cunning; they are Asiatics,” whispers Pavel Ivanovitch to me, as he lays his head on my knee. “Perhaps he thinks that Sorokhin will be informed that he was the first to propose his health.”

Pavel Ivanitch seems vexed, for some reason, with the Osetin, though this by no means interferes with his breaking a glass to the health of the new-comer.

“In fact,” I say to myself, “the Osetini must be pretty thorough flatterers. Where, for instance, did Liseneff learn that Sorokhin is brave, beloved, and possessed of other such qualities? Levis, — well, that is another matter; he has served a great many years in the Caucasus, and is known to everybody. But Sorokhin has only just arrived from Petersburg, and Liseneff has never so much as heard of him or set eyes on him.”

At that moment Sorokhin comes up briskly.

“Excuse me, gentlemen, for being so late,” he says, addressing us all, and the host in particular.

He wears a dark gray Cossack coat, with the sleeves thrown back as he had observed in genuine Cossacks. His red tunic is without galloons, his cap is on the nape of his neck — in a word, he is a Cossack, and that is all there is to be said. Sorokhin was really tardy, for not all were in a state to rise at once in answer to his greeting. Some rose up a little; others only made the attempt, and it ended there.

“Here, fetch it here!” shouts Kiziloff to a Cossack with a skewer of hot collops in his hand. The Cossack removes

¹ It is useless to attempt to reproduce this accent. — *Trans.*

a piece of the meat from the wand to the iron plate in front of Sorokhin with his knife, and serves us with the remaining bits. All take them directly with their hands and devour them. The collops are very savory.

"We have just drunk your health, Colonel," says Liseneff, turning to Sorokhin, with an insinuating tone, and, having sucked his bone, he wipes his greasy hands on his long beard, and then smears them lightly, and as though casually, over his head.

Hard as Sorokhin tries to resemble the real mountaineer in exterior and manners, he is unequal to imitating this proceeding, and therefore, not finding a napkin, he pulls out his pocket-handkerchief and wipes his hands on that.

With Sorokhin's arrival, the merriment of the company seems to abate. But, after a little, it resumes its previous character; songs and endless toasts begin once more.

It is already three o'clock in the morning. My eyes are sticking together; my head begins to droop about violently, and no wonder; although I have refrained from drinking, it is possible to get too much in the course of seven or eight successive hours, even if you only take the merest sips. I glance about me; the first picture has undergone a notable change; day is already beginning to dawn: the horses are dozing at their picket-ropes; some are lying down, having strained their halters; others are standing with drooping heads. Half the guests have disappeared. Levis and Sorokhin are gone. The Osetini have also dispersed. I and a few officers alone remain. Of the singers, also, there are only a few; one is sleeping on the damp grass not far off, with his hands under his head. The rest are singing in wild, hoarse voices.

A few paces from the host's tent some one is groaning distressingly, exactly as though sea-sick. I go to take a look. I see what must be an officer, standing all doubled up. One of the Cossacks is holding his head respectfully. The ailing man is thumping himself vigorously under the shoulder-blade with his left hand, while with his right he twitches convulsively; it is evident that he is suffering violently. I draw nearer, and gaze in his face; he proves to be my most respected company commander.

"What's the matter with you, Pavel Ivanitch? Let me hold your head," I suggest.

The Cossack gladly resigns this task to me, and goes off.

The sick man's brow is damp and hot, and his face is pale.

"The deuce! Kiziloff! what diabolical stuff did he give us — couldn't he get anything better!" he exclaims brokenly, and thereupon he is seized with a fresh attack of illness. . . .

"Well, how do you feel now? better?"

"Whew, whew!" splutters my most respected commander, wiping his mouth with his sleeve, and, without bidding his host farewell, he totters off towards his own company, cursing everything and everybody in the world on his way. I put my arm through his and accompany him.

Once, as I am sitting in my tent, towards evening, I see a number of our mounted Osetini galloping past me to the town, one after the other. I inquire what there is on hand, and whither they are hastening. It appeared that the younger Skobelev had come to Tutolmin with a proposition, whether the latter would consent to make the attempt to swim our brigade across the Danube, founding his suggestion on the fact that we have no cavalry at all on the other side of the river, though it is indispensable there; and there is nothing upon which to transport us across, as the bridge is not yet ready. But Tutolmin and Levis have refused point-blank, very justly thinking that such an attempt might end in the destruction of the brigade, as the Danube was about four versts wide at that time, so Mikhaïl Dmitrieff has requested them to call for volunteers to swim across the Danube on horseback with him. And it was these volunteers that I had seen.

"Saddle, quick!" I shout to my Cossack, and at the end of two or three minutes I am galloping to the shore. There I find nearly all my officers. Skobelev, Sr., stands in front, between Levis and Tutolmin, and gazes in horror at his son, who, clad only in his shirt, and with his cross of the George about his neck, mounts his tall, dark bay horse, and descends to the river. The horse resists a little at first, neighs, and pricks up his ears, but then he begins to strike out boldly. At first, Skobelev must have clung to the horse, as his shoulders were visible at a tolerable height above the water; but after a while he suddenly

sinks to his neck. I afterwards learned that he had slipped off the horse, in order to relieve him, and had grasped his tail, and in that manner he swam, aiding himself with hands and feet. Terror seizes upon his father, and he begins to shout through his nose:—

“Misha, co-o-ome ba-a-ack! Misha, you will dro-o-own, Misha, Misha!”

We all feel pity, as we look at the old man.

But Misha swam on further and further, without glancing round. Several Osetini dashed after the General. One began by swimming very well, but afterwards he began to sink, in company with his horse; a boat was speedily despatched to him.

My first impulse, on arriving on the shore at a gallop, had been to undress. Two minutes had not elapsed when I was mounted on my horse again, and was urging him into the water. The horse stepped in, swam a few strokes, and then turned back, paying no heed to all the blows which I showered upon him. Alongside of me, the commander of the second corps, Astakhoff, drove his horse into the water, with the same result. And, in the meantime, Skobelev has almost disappeared, and his head only is barely visible as a black spot. In order to soothe our consciences, Astakhoff and I get into a boat, take our horses by the bridles, and in this manner we proceeded to a little island not far away. It was only when I reached it, and glanced at the vast watery expanse which still remained to the Turkish shore, that it became apparent to me how sensibly my horse had behaved in disobeying me. There is no doubt but that I should have been drowned, as I was no swimmer; and whether my horse could swim well I did not know. How I had come, at first, to fling myself in pursuit of the General, with so much decision, I could never afterwards explain to myself. One thing only I remember, that no sooner had I caught sight of the figure of Skobelev descending the bank to the Danube than I made up my mind that it was better to drown than to desert him.

When Astakhoff and I had returned to the shore, and were dressing ourselves, there rode up to us the adjutant of the commander-in-chief, Colonel Strukoff, a tall, thin man, with long moustaches. He praised us, and told us that our exploit would be reported to his Majesty that very day. The elder Skobelev, meanwhile, was still standing on the

self-same spot, and intently watching a black speck, which was barely visible on the surface of the river.

It afterwards appeared that Mikhaïl Dmitryevitch attained the opposite shore, though with great difficulty. And, hence, if so excellent a swimmer as Skobelev, on the very finest of horses, came near being drowned, what would have happened to the brigade if Tutolmin had consented to his proposition, and had despatched the brigade to swim across the Danube? Would many men have accomplished it?

I soon met Mikhaïl Dmitryevitch Skobelev again. In some way I learned that he had been ordered to make a reconnoissance in the vicinity of Sistovo. I immediately betook myself to headquarters, where Skobelev was then living, and found him strolling in the garden, arm in arm with a young colonel of the Guard. Skobelev was explaining something to his companion, in an excited manner, constantly halting and seizing him by the button.

"What do you say, my dear sir?" he inquires, on catching sight of me.

I explain that I have heard casually about a reconnoissance, and that, if possible, I should like to take part in it.

"Good!" says he. "Be in Sistovo to-morrow evening, at General Dragomiroff's quarters. I shall be there," and he was on the point of bidding me good-day, when I again addressed him, and said:—

"Could you not ask the commander of my regiment for me, your Excellency? otherwise, he will not let me go." These words evidently did not please the General. His face assumed a look of displeasure, and he said:—

"Well, my dear sir, do as you see fit, but I will not make the request; and I warn you *that if you are going to ask leave of your superiors, on every occasion, you will never go anywhere.*" Then he pressed my fingers slightly, and speedily disappeared among the tents.

Contrary to my expectation, Levis never thought of interfering with me, and only said, "This is the way I look at it," and raised his outspread fingers in front of his eyes.

The next day, towards evening, without saying a word to any of my comrades, I mount my horse, and direct my

course to the Danube, to the spot where the crossing had been made. Here a small ferry-boat transferred passengers from one shore to the other. An artillery general stepped upon the ferry-boat at the same time as myself. Immediately I struck up an acquaintance with him, and we left the boat on the Turkish shore like old friends.

With what eagerness I gazed upon the scene of our first fight — a fight, it might be said, for life or death, as there was no retreat for our army, and the Danube lay behind us. The spot was an open space, bordered with trees and bushes; all about were strewn numerous rags, caps, tattered shirts, and trousers, which had probably served as the first bandages for wounds. The entire locality round about was beaten hard with hoofs, and presented a sharp contrast to the surrounding country. Hardly any plants existed here. Upon me — as I was a novice — such a spectacle acted powerfully. My imagination began to depict this terrible struggle in divers forms. I dismounted, bent over and searched carefully to see whether I could find any traces of blood.

Just then my fellow-traveller shouted to me: —

“Hey, Sotnik! what’s that? We shall have plenty of time to look, God willing. Come on, it’s high time!” Such a picture possessed but little interest for him. We move on; behind us rides an artillery soldier, in attendance on the General.

“At last I am on the Turkish shore!” I meditate upon the road, in an exalted mood. A cheerful feeling pervades my whole body. The road, shortly after leaving the shore, gradually ascends the hill, and passes among trees. Everything occupies my attention, and I stare curiously to see what trees there are about; it seems to me that I have not seen any such in Russia or Rumania.

“What sort of a tree is this?” I inquire of my fellow-traveller.

“This is a walnut tree, and that one is a pear,” he replies.

“Just observe, if you please,” I say to myself, “the whole forest consists of fruit-trees here.”

After riding a couple of versts, we perceive our infantry encamped on both sides of the road. I gaze with involuntary reverence on these heroes, whose difficult lot it has been to make a road across the Danube. Their rifles are

stacked in long lines. Each soldier is occupied with his own duties: one, with his kettle, is on his way for water; another, with a rag wound round his ramrod, is cleaning his gun; several, collected in a group, are discussing something. No songs or merry-making are to be heard; a sort of isolation is perceptible. I afterwards heard from the officers there that the position of our soldiers on the other shore had been anything but enviable at first; their force was small, prompt assistance was not to be depended upon from any quarter, and at the same time they had no reliable information with regard to the enemy; an attack might be expected at any hour. The result of all these circumstances was that the soldiers' nerves were strained to the utmost; instances occurred where a soldier started up at night, seized his rifle, and sprang forward, shouting "Hurrah!" which, of course, created an alarm throughout the entire camp.

We ride on. It is already dark. The sun has set. In the distance, buildings loom darkly; we approach the town. The streets are narrow. The houses, of a very peculiar construction, are small, stuffy, and raised on slender props; almost every one has a balcony, with an awning. Long stone walls extend on both sides of the way. Not a soul is visible anywhere. The city seems dead: the glass in the windows is broken; utter silence reigns everywhere. Only the sound of our horses' hoofs on the stone pavement resounds sadly through the streets. The yawning doors, the broken windows, appear by night like so many black spots, and stare discourteously. One imagines that some person will dart out with a knife, or fire a rifle at one. We have mistaken our road, and encounter a wall. We are forced to turn back.

"Well, what's this? where have we got to?" the General says to me, in a rather uneasy voice. "Come, now, Sotnik! you have Cossack eyes, spy out our road!" he cries. I ride back and soon find it.

Ten minutes later we catch sight of fires. It turns out that all the while we had been riding through the Turkish quarter of the town, which the Bulgarians had pillaged and laid waste as soon as the Turks retreated. Now comes the Bulgarian quarter. Here the houses are almost identical in architecture, but no devastation is seen. The fires flash up more frequently; yonder in the court-yard of

one house, a troop of our soldiers has drawn up in line, and is singing "Our Father," but mournfully, as though afraid that some one will hear. A soldier whom we encounter points out to us the quarters of General Dragomiroff. We ride into the yard. The Artillery General goes upstairs, I remain below, and learn from an infantry officer, Captain Masloff, that General Skobelev is with Dragomiroff, and that he must not be disturbed at present.

"You have probably come in on account of the reconnaissance. It is not yet known when it will take place," says Masloff. "I am going to take part in it also."

After waiting awhile, I go to a small house in the neighborhood to seek quarters for the night. On the steps I am met by a Bulgarian, the master of the house, in a black costume embroidered in Turkish fashion; on his head is a fez.

"Welcome, welcome, Captain," he says courteously, placing his left hand on the pit of his stomach, and trying with his right to catch my hand, in order to place it upon his forehead. His wife follows him out upon the porch—a woman still young, with a sad face, who is dressed all in black, and resembles a nun. Both politely invite me to enter.

The house is divided by partitions into two portions. The first large chamber on the right, they place at my disposal. On the floor, in the front corner, is spread a rug; at its head lie long white cushions; along the wall are disposed, in the form of divans, various sorts of feather beds, coverlets, wraps, and rugs. The mistress of the house goes off to her own apartments, and I begin to install myself in my new quarters. I take off my weapons and lay them on the rug.

"Well, are there any Turks about?" I ask my host.

"No, none; all have run off to the Balkans, aho!" shouts the Bulgarian, and in confirmation he waves his hand in the direction of the Balkans. I scrutinize him by the light of the fire. He is a fine-looking man, beardless, swarthy in complexion, with a long black moustache; a black silk tassel swings picturesquely from his red fez.

"Come, sit down; let's have a chat," I suggest to him, and point to a place beside me. He bows, evidently delighted at such condescension, presses my hand slightly, and seats himself, but not with his feet curled round like a

kalatch,¹ in Turkish fashion, but, probably out of respect to me, in the way in which children sit when they are tired of kneeling. Then the host draws from his girdle a brass cigar case full of tobacco, dexterously rolls a cigarette, and presents it to me. We smoke and chat, on warlike topics, of course. After a while, the hostess brings in supper; a chicken prepared in a curious Bulgarian fashion, with garlic and red pepper. I make an excellent supper, and lie down to sleep.

On the following day, I betake myself with my comrades to Skobeleff. He informs us that we must all wait, that he himself does not yet know when the reconnoissance will take place; possibly this evening — perhaps to-morrow.

Having nothing else to do, I go to take a survey of the town. The majority of the houses have gardens, and are surrounded by clay or stone walls. They are not so pretty nor so neat to look at from without as from the court-yard. The streets are all very narrow, crooked, dirty, and abominably paved. From the town above to the Danube beneath runs a tortuous path. Along the quay is seen a whole row of warehouses and shops; and, above all, a great many dram-shops.

As I am strolling along the water-side, I, quite by accident, make the acquaintance of a regimental priest. I glance up, and there, on a bench near a dram-shop, sits a robust priest, his beard mixed with gray, and with a sleepy, bloated face; his pronunciation resembles the Little Russian. (He was born in Bessarabia.) The pope is exhibiting to an officer of my acquaintance a fine gray Bulgarian horse, which he has just purchased (during the campaign, even the priests rode). The officer introduces me to the priest, then he mounts the horse and rides past the priest at a walk, a trot, and gallops at full speed; the horse proves to be a capital animal, the priest is in ecstasies, and conducts us into the dram-shop, to drink to his new acquisition.

He did not own that horse long. I soon learned from the pope himself that he had some occasion to go to Sistovo once more on his new horse, and that, on his way back, before he reached the Danube, one of the Russians dragged him off the horse, mounted it, and rode off, shouting back, by way of farewell: "The idea of your riding such a horse, father!" Sad as was this fact in itself, it was impossible

¹ A wheaten roll.

afterwards to gaze without laughing on the huge, melancholy countenance of the priest, who was always a trifle under the influence of liquor, when he narrated this occurrence to me every time he met me, in the calmest of voices.

"Let him have it, let him have it! God be with him! God gave, God hath taken away. I have never written about it, or made any complaint," he said, in a hoarse voice, gloomily shaking his shaggy head. But, nevertheless, as I was told, he had been running about everywhere making reports and complaints, and advertising! In vain; the horse had disappeared, leaving no trace behind — and the father's five and twenty half-imperials were gone.

Afterwards, on taking a closer survey of this priest, I found that he was a very original individual. Not once during the entire campaign did I ever see him at work or at the hospital. He was to be found only with the baggage-train, stretched out on a wagon and always under the influence of liquor. Once, during the battles at Plevna, my brother Vasily asked him: "Aren't you going to the scene of combat, my dear sir?" and he replied in the calmest of voices: "It's not worth while — they won't reward me."

He lived and ate during the campaign with the superintendent of the baggage-train, who never summoned him to dinner otherwise than as follows: "Hey there, pope, fetch along your vodka, come gobble!"

But I will return to the reconnoissance. The first day passes without anything happening; likewise, the second: on the third, we learn that there will be no reconnoissance. The officers disperse. Skobelev also rides back to Zimnitza. I ride with him. On the way he once more assures me that as soon as he shall have received an appointment he will immediately attach me to himself as orderly officer. I part from him greatly pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

ACROSS THE DANUBE. — IN TIRNOVA.

THE bridge was ready. That same day many corps, of various sorts, crossed the Danube, among others the — infantry division of General X. under whose orders we were temporarily placed. We were to join him near the hamlet of Deli-Suly, several versts from the Danube.

Early on the following morning, our brigade sets out. In front marches the Thirtieth regiment of the Don, the Orloff. Before reaching the bank, we are overtaken by the Emperor and the Tzesarevitch in a calash with a pair of black horses, and he gives us his good-wishes on our crossing the Danube. He receives in reply the most hearty and enthusiastic “Hurrah!”

It did not seem as though it would take long to cross on the bridge; nevertheless, it was evening when we reached the other shore — so much time was taken up by the train, the company, regimental, Cossack, hospital wagons, and so on. The bridge was divided almost in the middle, into two halves, by a small island. It was constructed on boats or pontoons, some of iron, some of wood. The pontoons were kept in place by anchors; over these were laid beams, and over them a smooth plank roadway. Along the sides of the bridge stood soldiers, who saw to it that the troops and the baggage-train passed over as quietly as possible, and that no horses were allowed to trot.

It was already completely dark when the brigade, after advancing ten versts, halted at a gorge near the hamlet of Deli-Suly. I was officer of the day for the regiment on that occasion, and was setting the night watch, when I was summoned to the brigade commander. I go. Colonel Tutolmin is seated beside Levis on a felt cloak, near a blazing camp-fire, and drinking tea. On catching sight of me, he gives me his orders: “Verestchagin, take three Osetini and go along the road to Tzarevitch: look up the commander of

the — division, General X., ask him from me where the brigade is to march, so that we may be at his disposal. Do you understand? Say this: 'Colonel Tutolmin, commander of the Caucasian Cossack brigade, has ordered me to ask your Excellency where he is to take his brigade?'"

I mount my horse and ride off, accompanied by three Osetini.

It is about midnight. I am obliged to outstrip several columns of troops, artillery, wagons, transports, and baggage-trains. We ride nearly all night, without halting to rest, and at sunrise we behold a large infantry camp. This is the — division. Cavalry and artillery are visible, but in front, on the right flank, Cossack figures are also to be seen. This proves to be the Cossack infantry battalion of Esaul Bashtannik.

I dismount and set out on foot to find the tent of the commander of the division.

"Yo-o-onder, your Honor, is where the General's tent stands," says a soldier, and indicates my course with his hands.

I approach and ask the servant, who is brushing the General's clothes: —

"Can I see the General?"

"Impossible, your Honor; the General is still asleep," he replies, pausing in his work for a moment.

"You must wake him; the business demands haste," I explain. "Announce that a Cossack officer has come from Colonel Tutolmin."

The servant approaches the tent cautiously, on tiptoe, and, lifting the flap, disappears. Through the canvas I can hear the dialogue between the General and his servant; then the General's cough resounds, and, finally, General X. himself makes his appearance, a tall, thin man, with side-whiskers, and wearing an overcoat.

"What do you say, sir?" he says, addressing me.

I repeat Tutolmin's message word for word. Thereupon, the General replies: —

"Well, my dear sir, say to Colonel Tutolmin that he is to go where he thinks best; I have no authority over your brigade. I'm all in the woods myself," and the commander of the division throws out his hands in bewilderment, bows, and retires into his tent.

As I passed the Cossack infantry, I wanted to enter and

make the acquaintance of their colonel, since I had often heard of him as a dashing fellow. Esaul Bashtannik was already awake. Seated on his bed, with his feet dangling, he was drinking tea, in nothing but his underclothes. We struck up an acquaintance of the most friendly description on the instant. But, as it lasted only a few minutes, Bashtannik's form has been erased from my memory. So far as I recall him, he was a short, broad-shouldered man, with an expansive chest, and a big, round head on a short neck. He had a blond beard, as I remember him, cut close in a circle. His face was kindly, frank, and inspired confidence.

"Do you see that small forest yonder, on your way back? You can save six versts by a short cut to the brigade," said Bashtannik, as he took leave of me. I never saw him again. He was shortly afterwards surrounded, with his men, by the Turks, somewhere near the Balkans, and a pyramid was made of their heads, Bashtannik's being found lying at the peak.

My fellow-travellers, the Osetini, were greatly pleased at the new road, as it took us past the abandoned village of Sary-Yar, where they hoped to obtain a sheep, and broil some chops. As they had reckoned, so it came to pass. The Osetini caught a very good sheep, and, before I had succeeded in stretching out to my mind on my felt cloak, the sheep was killed, skinned, and his fat shoulder was turning before a small fire.

The Osetini appeared to be a very obliging race. This obligingness went so far that when I requested them to boil some eggs, which they had also procured somewhere or other, one of them, after boiling the egg, removed the shell, cut it in halves on his wide palm with his dagger, sprinkled salt over it, and held it so near my mouth that all I had to do was to chew it.

Proceeding farther, we came across a Bulgarian, and asked him to show us the shortest way to Deli-Suly. The Bulgarian walked on before us, flourishing his staff, and so fast that our horses almost had to trot to keep up with him.

"Well, are there any Bashi-buzuks here?" shout the Osetini at him, with a laugh. But the Bulgarian is not inclined to laugh; he takes his threadbare black turban from his head, mops his shaven and perspiring brow, covers his head

again, and then pursues his way with the same swift step as before.

"Te," he clicks his tongue in Turkish fashion, "there are no Bashi-buzuks, there are Circassians," says the Bulgarian, impressively, and points in the direction whither we are riding. We soon catch sight of mounted figures ahead, which bear a strong resemblance to our Cossacks. Our guide announces that they are Circassians; we halt and gaze. The figures also halt and begin to wheel about, and thus give a concerted signal. One of the Osetini gallops forward, in order to ascertain what people they are; they prove to be our own Cossacks.

Our trip might be considered a fortunate one, since we had barely escaped encountering a numerous band of Circassians, who had been in a skirmish just in front of us, with our brigade. We had several men killed and wounded. The band was repulsed with great loss. Had I not rested at Sary-Yar, I should have encountered them.

I communicated the General's answer to Tutolmin. The Caucasian Cossack brigade pursued its way to the village of Bulgareni, where we arrived on the evening of the 23d of June, and pitched our camp near the bridge across the river Osma.

The country at this spot presents a broad plain, surrounded by heights. The side towards the enemy was hemmed in by a prolonged elevation, along which our outposts were stationed. On the right flowed the narrow *Çama*, with its rounded, oozy banks. Although this little stream is not very deep, it might present a serious obstacle in the case of an attack by the enemy.

Two or three days later, there came to us a whole party of mounted Bulgarians from the town of Plevna, situated about thirty versts from Bulgareni. They requested us to take immediate possession of their city, saying that there were no Turkish troops there.

These Bulgarians appeared very well-to-do; their clothing was handsome, and they were mounted on fine horses. The deputation passed the night with us, and on the following day returned home. The commander of the brigade, Colonel Tutolmin, communicated this to the commander of

the ninth corps, General Krüdner, and on the 27th of June, while we were still awaiting his reply, the Turks took possession of Plevna. This we learned from the inhabitants who fled from there.

We despatched two regiments to Plevna, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Bibikoff, with two cannon. But what could he do? He fired upon them in vain, and a day later he returned to Bulgareni. I did not take part in this reconnoissance, as the first two companies went.

On the following day, that is to say, on the 28th of June, towards evening, I was summoned to Levis. I buckled on my sword and set out. The commander of the regiment was pacing about his tent, without his cap, as usual, and with his hands clasped behind his back. Beneath his white calico tunic, which was unbuttoned, the red tassels of the silk suspenders, which supported his wide, ash-colored trousers of lasting, were visible.

“Would you like to go out on a scouting party?” he asks me. “We are going to send out half a company, with an officer, to hunt up the Duke of Leuchtenberg’s brigade. So I have proposed to Tutolmin to send you. Would you like to go?” and Levis looks at me with a caressing, kindly gaze.

“I shall be very glad, Colonel, if I may be permitted.”

“Then, go to the brigade commander, and say that I sent you.” And Levis bows, and disappears into his tent.

The brigade commander was sitting near his tent, on a felt cloak, with several Kuban officers, and all were gazing at a map that was spread out before them.

“Gurko has already occupied Tirnovo,” I hear Tutolmin’s voice from afar; “here he is — do you see, gentlemen?” The officers bend over, and gaze intently at the map.

“Ah, good-morning, Verestchagin. Pray, did Colonel Levis send you?” he says, turning to me and offering his hand. “First sit down, here, as near as possible. Won’t you have some tea?”

I thank him and decline.

“Well, this is the matter in hand,” begins Tutolmin, trying to express himself as laconically as possible, in which he was very rarely successful. “First of all, tell me frankly whether you wish to go, whether you feel yourself equal to execute this commission? It is a rather serious one!”

Of course, I declared that I wished to go, and that I would exert all my powers to fulfil the commission as well as possible.

“Well, sir, very good, sir. The business is this: we must join forces with Duke Nikolai Maximilianovitch Leuchtenberg, who should be with his brigade, somewhere in the vicinity of these localities,” — and Tutolmin points out on the map the stretch of country between Bulgareni and Tirnovo, about a hundred versts in extent.

“You must find him, at any cost; search for three days, four, a week even, but bring back an answer where he is and where he intends to go. You will find us here, in the interval between Bulgareni and Nikopolis. Set out, therefore, as early as possible, to-morrow morning, with half a company.”

On my return to the troop, my comrades showered me with questions: — where I was going, whether it was for long, and why I had been appointed instead of some one else. Some of them rejoiced that I was to have the command, others seemed envious. My company commander was displeased; it struck me that he would not have been averse to going himself.

I wake early, and make my preparations briskly. The half-company already stands drawn up in line, with its back to the rising sun. Long, sharply defined shadows are cast upon the still damp earth by the horsemen. The weather is fine. The commander of the troop issues from his tent at the same time as myself, clad only in his tunic; bids the Cossacks good-morning, and curtly informs them that they are going on a distant scouting party, warns them to be prudent, not to disperse among the settlements, to take good care of their horses, and appoints as sergeant-major Sergeant Larin, an elderly, broad-shouldered Cossack with a large red beard.

“Now go, and God bless you!” says Pavel Ivanitch. I mount my horse, and we start.

The farther we proceed, the lighter I feel in spirit. Now we have passed the last sentinel, and the camp is no longer in sight. Never before have I felt so well. I now recognize myself as a commanding officer; no one is over me. If I like, I can ride on; if I like, I can halt, and send scouting parties out in various directions. All this pleases me greatly.

Here is a small stream. I halt for a quarter of an hour, merely to water the horses; then we ride on. The sun begins to burn fiercely. Far away, on the banks of the Osmá, the pretty village of Lyetnitza is seen. In front of it, at the water-side, are several mills. In the midst of the settlement, a large building can be seen, apparently the residence of a landed proprietor. Some one of the Turkish authorities has probably lived in it. The site of Lyetnitza is extremely pretty; round about are groves of forest trees, open pasture land, gardens, and fields. But this hamlet is cheerful only on the exterior; within it no inhabitants are seen; only dogs are running mournfully about, and they even bark at us. We halt at the very house which was seen at a distance, and dismount. I immediately order Larin to look up forage for the horses, and also to see whether some stray sheep cannot be got for the men. The settlement proves to be not entirely deserted; the village elder, corresponding to our *stárosta*, soon presents himself, escorted by several Bulgarians. Cossacks follow them.

“Here, your Excellency, we’ve found some *bratushki!*”¹ cries, from a distance, Corporal Pantchok, a tall, alert, well built Cossack. From the look in his eyes, it is evident that he will procure whatever he is ordered to obtain, even if it be from the depths of the sea.

“Welcome, welcome!” shout the Bulgarians, and bow humbly to us, as they remove their black turbans, and press them to their hearts. Their heads are smooth-shaven, with the exception of the very crown, on which long tufts are left. They are dressed in short gray jackets, edged with black braid; their trousers are also gray, in Turkish fashion; their footgear resembles bast shoes, except that it is of leather.

“Well, how now?” I say, addressing myself to the elder; “have you grain and hay? have you barley?”

“We have, we have, plenty; wait a bit and we’ll bring it,” they reply, and the elder, accompanied by the Bulgarians, sets off at a run for his cottage. Ten minutes later, an abundance of the fruits of the earth are laid before us; hay, barley, several rams, chickens, geese, milk, wine, grain.

¹ The Bulgarians called the Russians *bratushki*, brothers, out of respect. The Russians adopted the term to designate Bulgarians, but in a scornful sense.

In addition to this, the elder himself brings us, by way of dessert, a linden-bark basket of perfectly green plums.

The Cossacks speedily dispose of all these goods. Kettles are soon boiling with mutton, fowls, and geese. They turn cutlets on skewers before the glowing coals. The Cossacks are in ecstasies; in camp, of course, they would not have all this.

The Bulgarians seat themselves in the vicinity, with their feet tucked under them, and gaze at our cookery with curiosity. Their faces strike me as not so much melancholy as apathetic; it is evident that they had already grown accustomed to the idea that the Turks would pounce down upon them, if not to-day, then to-morrow, and rob them of everything they possess.

"Hey there, Tchorbadzhi (elder), have you heard whether many, a great many of our cavalry have passed anywhere in this vicinity?" I explain.

"They have passed—they have passed, to Tirnovo," the Bulgarians shout almost simultaneously, and wave their arms in the direction of Tirnovo.

"Very good," I say to myself; "that means that we are on the right track."

A couple of hours later, we set out along the road indicated to us by the Bulgarians. It is already after mid-day. Skirmishing parties, of two men each, are sent out in front and on both sides. The road is level. The country round about is covered with brushwood, principally oak. Across the road, and almost invisible, crawls a tortoise as big as a saucer. I had never seen a tortoise close to, so I order one of the Cossacks to give it to me. The Cossack hands it. Sh-sh-sh—it spits, and draws within its shell its small, scaly head and paws. I give the tortoise to the Cossack, to keep for our amusement. The bushes come to an end, and they are succeeded by an extensive field of maize. All over it, but only here and there, far apart, stand solitary, wide-branching trees, a peculiarity which I had never met with in Russia.

"Come, brothers, sing us a song," I say to the Cossacks, on perceiving that they are beginning to be drowsy; I pull out my pipe, fill it, and begin to smoke, saying to myself, "In what respect am I not a Cossack now?" I am in command of a half-company on hostile soil, and we may come in collision with the enemy at any moment; there

will be an engagement, the Cossacks will receive crosses, and they will hang something on my breast also, probably . . .” Just at that moment, I hear one of the Cossacks strike up in a thin, thoroughly feminine voice:—

“ Pear-tree, my little pear-tree-e-e,
Pear-tree in my garden gre-eeen!”

I glance round and take a look; a small, sandy-complexioned Cossack, more resembling a boy than a war-like Cossack, is singing, with his eyes screwed up. Another Cossack chimes in with him on the *zurna*.¹

This song puts me in a very pleasant mood; every vein, every bone in my body is thrilling with pleasure:—

“ And none must climb my pear-tree,
And none must break the green.”

I join in softly, and beat time with my whip. “It’s a good thing, all the same, that I joined the campaign!” I say to myself. “Isn’t this the only place? what if I had been sitting in Peter now, and reading the newspapers?”

In spite of the songs, we move forward very fast. I do not remember at precisely what village we began to encounter dead horses on the side of the road, evidently abandoned by Leuchtenberg’s brigade. In some places, several such bodies lay together.

About five o’clock in the afternoon, we made another halt, and an hour later we started afresh. We rode until far into the night. I was constantly in hopes that we should overtake the Duke. We passed the night in a large settlement, in which there were shops and a church, both, of course, boarded up. Having supped, we posted sentinels, and lay down to sleep. I recollect that I did not fall asleep at once, but wondered for a long time how many versts we had gone that day. I calculated that we had been fifteen hours on the road. We had ridden at least seven versts an hour, as our horses had gone, not at a walk, but at a gallop. The sum total amounted to one hundred and five versts. But, in the meantime, what amazed me was that I did not feel especially fatigued. I attributed this to the easy gait of the horse, and to the Cossack saddle, with its soft cushion. It reminded me of

¹ A small pipe in the nature of a whistle.

the time when, during my service in the uhlan regiment, I had had occasion to ride forty versts without dismounting, and when I had been so greatly fatigued that I could hardly walk on the following day. Neither did the Cossacks complain of weariness. There were no laggards, not a single horse had gone lame; that meant that all was well so far!

We rise with the sun in the morning, drink our tea, and set out once more on our way. Two hours later, before reaching the hamlet of Samovoda, we perceive columns of dust far away to our left. We cannot make out what it is. We draw nearer, and it turns out to be our troops marching along the highway, column after column, battery after battery. These were our principal forces on the march, in company with the commander-in-chief. The road on which we were riding came out on the highway at the settlement of Samovoda. We halted in the village at the cross-roads, and immediately encountered Skobelev, Sr., who was trotting quietly along on a light bay horse.

"Hail, Cossacks!" he says, through his nose, to the half-company, and then, in the same nasal tone, he asks me, "Where are you bound?" I explain.

"Very good, stay here; his Highness will be along directly. Of course he will wish to see you." And Dmitry Ivanovitch extends two fingers to me in leave-taking, according to his usual custom.

And now there approaches a calash, drawn by a pair of black horses. The blooded horses are evidently exhausted with the unwonted heat and the rough, dusty road. Grand-duke Nikolai Nikolaevitch has changed greatly since I saw him three years ago at the manoeuvres at Krasnoye Selo. He has grown thin and yellow, and his eyes have sunk into his head; probably, his recent illness in Kishineff has wrought this change in him! He is riding with the chief of the staff, General Nepokoitchitzky. The equipage comes nearer and nearer, my heart beats more and more violently. I see that his Highness has already caught sight of us.

"Eyes front!" I give the command to my Cossacks, and become motionless on the instant.

"Good-morning, Vladikavkazians!" shouts the commander-in-chief, cheerily, and at the same time he makes me a sign with his hand to approach. I gallop up and follow the equipage on the right side, at a walk.

The Grand-duke inquires my name, where I am going, how many Cossacks I have; he listens attentively to my tale of Plevna, and, on learning that I am in quest of the Duke of Leuchtenberg, he informs me that the Duke has gone to the Balkans, in company with General Gurko. The commander-in-chief orders me to remain for the present at his disposal, to attach myself to the Cossacks of the Guard, who were riding behind in the train, and to await his further commands in Tirnovo.

Behind the calash of the commander-in-chief follow a crowd of generals, of officers of every possible grade and manner of armament, chiefly from the general staff. There were also not a few treasury officials, officers of the commissariat, of the postal service, the telegraph and diplomatic corps. . . . All these occupied a considerable space, so that I did not at once reach the Cossacks of the Guard. I was immediately surrounded by the officers of the suite, who were desirous of making my acquaintance, and also of learning what the Grand-duke had been talking to me about so long. I then made the acquaintance of his Highness' Secretary, Colonel Dmitry Antonovitch Skalon, a very agreeable man, and also with Colonel Hasenkampf, to whom I repeated my entire conversation with the Grand-duke.

By this time, we had already passed Samovoda. The inhabitants met and accompanied us with shouts: "Long live the Emperor Alexander!" "Long live the Grand-duke Nicholas!" They beat upon sheets of iron, tossed up their caps, and everywhere unfeigned joy was manifest.

The nearer we came to Tirnovo, the more picturesque the country became. In the distance were to be seen, here mountains, covered with thick, dark green, and there abrupt, naked cliffs. A tiny house has nestled against the peak of a lofty crag in the low-lying valley of the river Yantra, on our left; from a distance it resembles a long, white nest. This is the celebrated monastery of the Mother of God, of Tirnovo.

At length, Tirnovo itself makes its appearance. How marvellous and singular is the site of this town! It is precisely like a tremendous stone basin, along whose edges have clamped themselves the most various forms of white houses, with red-tiled roofs. Below, in the heart of the town, far below, gleams the swift, narrow Yantra.

Apparently, people have collected here from the whole

of Bulgaria. Look where you would, there was nothing to be seen but Bulgarians, in the most festive array, shouting, beating loudly upon anything that came to hand, and endeavoring in every possible way to display their sincere joy at the arrival of the Grand-duke with the troops. The burning mid-day sun brilliantly illuminated the whole of this endless train of our soldiers, weary, covered with dust, and, alongside, the merry, joyous faces of the Bulgarians, both men and women, both old and young.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEFENCE OF SELVI.

THE Grand-duke and the headquarters established themselves in the town garden. I and my half-company remained a few paces distant from the square, near the Cossacks of the Guard. After making sure that my men and horses were well fed, I went to take a look at the town. Everywhere there was such a hurly-burly in progress as I had never seen before. The inhabitants were standing in a dense wall on both sides of the street, and staring at the passing troops, wagons, and baggage-train, and making their comments. I halted beside one group, and tried to follow their remarks. Their attention was particularly attracted by an officer's elegant troika of brown horses, with bells, harnessed to a light tarantas. The Bulgarians nodded their heads approvingly, uttered exclamations of amazement, and smiled with satisfaction. The squeaking of the wheels, the trampling of the horses, the shouts of the wagoners, the cracking of the whips, — all mingle in one confused roar.

I proceed farther — the shops and restaurants are full of guests. Yonder, on the other side of the street, in the dram-shop, what a lively trade is in progress! The Bulgarian proprietor, in his short, black jacket, and minus his hat, can hardly succeed in satisfying all demands. Before one can make his way to the counter, a fresh group of soldiers comes up.

“Hey, there, friend! give us some wine!” shouts one of them, and, elbowing his way through the throng, he flourishes a twenty-kopek piece over his head. After him enter several men, who must be sutlers in the train of the army, in caps with red bands. The revolvers hanging to their belts, and the swords suspended over their shoulders, give them a certain warlike aspect. They proceed confidently to the further corner, and seat themselves at a separate table. The host, without heeding the shouts of the soldier with the twenty-kopek bit, hastens to the sutlers.

At the very entrance to the dram-shop, against the fence, still another gay fellow, with his sheepskin cap tilted on the nape of his neck, has taken refuge. With legs crossed under him, like a kalatch, he is phlegmatically toasting something, that appears to be in the nature of a sausage, over a small chafing-dish. The butter is hissing invitingly in the little frying-pan, and tickles the olfactory nerves of the passing soldiers, who are hungry. One of them, weary and sunburned, with his knapsack upon his shoulders, halts near this lure, first gazes in indecision, then takes a piece.

"How much money?" he asks the host. The soldier has already succeeded in learning a little Bulgarian.

"Two *galagan*," replies the Bulgarian, in a tone of utter indifference as to whether the man before him is a Jew, a German, a Tatar, or a Russian; it is "two *galagan*," all the same, and that is the end of the matter.

"One is enough," returns the soldier, decisively, and is on the point of eating. The man seizes him by the hand, but it is too late; the soldier has already stuffed the whole sausage into his mouth at once, after which he thrusts his hand into his pocket in search of the *galagan*.

At this moment I am overtaken by a merry company of grooms and servants of the headquarters.

"Aren't you lying?" shouts a fat groom, of very respectable appearance, with Emperor Nikolai side-whiskers, and in a cap of the Horse-guards. (It seemed as though he ought not to be keeping company with such young folks.)

"What's the need of lying, if you've seen her wave from the window yourself?" retorts a young lackey, in a cap with a velvet band, and a smoothly shaven face. He strides briskly forward, fidgets, and flourishes his hands.

"Move on, move on, be more lively about it! Good Heavens, Serega's a brave young fellow! . . . He's managed to sniff around here already . . ." exclaims his comrade, approvingly, just such another pert little lackey, with the same smooth-shaven face. He taps Serega on the back as he steps along with a little leap from foot to foot, in his anticipation of pleasure. They both make a short turn into a dirty, narrow little alley.

"Du-u bist der kle-e-eine Postillion,
Die ganze Welt bereist ich schon¹ . . ."

¹ "Thou art the little postillion,
Already through the world I've gone."

sounds the fragment of a familiar air, which has accompanied the troops from Kishineff to Zimmitza. And here it is again!

"Tari-tari," squeaks the fiddle, and after it resound once more the slender voices of charming German girls. The tipsy voices of men accompany them in a hoarse bass.

"When did they manage to get here?" I say to myself, as I pass the alley.

After taking a considerable circuit, I return to my company at about five o'clock in the afternoon. Sergeant-major Larin reports that they have sent for me from the headquarters of his Imperial Highness. I hasten there.

In the shady garden, among the trees, the tents of the headquarters shine white. In the centre stands the commodious tent of the Commander-in-chief. The Grand-duke is seated in an arm-chair, a few paces distant from the dinner-table, which is covered with a white cloth. With his body bent forward a little, he is sketching on the ground with a reed cane. Several glittering officers are standing behind him and conversing softly among themselves.

"Ah, how d'ye do, how d'ye do!" cries the Commander-in-chief, affably, on catching sight of me, and he offers his hand.

I hasten up and kiss the Grand-duke on the shoulder, after which I step back and prepare to listen.

"Well, what news do you hear from your brother Vasily?" inquires the Grand-duke, cheerfully. "Did you know that they had performed an operation on him?"

"No, I have heard nothing of it, your Imperial Highness."

"Really, really! He is better now. It seems that you have still another brother who is an artist; what is his . . ." and the Commander-in-chief lays his finger to his brow in an effort to recall his name.

"Sergyei, your Highness," prompts a handsome, sandy-complexioned officer, who has just made his appearance behind the arm-chair. From the tone of his voice, from his manner of addressing the Grand-duke, I perceive that this colonel is the most indispensable of men here. He bows to his powerful chief in the most exquisitely courteous manner, listens politely, replies briefly, then straightens himself up quickly but with dignity, and, having

bestowed upon some one of the by-standers a smile or a phrase, he assumes a submissively expectant attitude, knowing well that he will be in request again immediately.

The Grand-duke inquires after the health of my Cossacks, whether there are any sick ones, in what condition my horses are; and then he dismisses me, giving me notice that I shall soon be obliged to set out on the Selvi highway.

It is already dark on the following evening when I am called to the Grand-duke again. The Commander-in-chief converses with me through the window of his tent. In front of him, on a table, lies a plan of the military movements. The Grand-duke explains that a deputation has just arrived from the town of Selvi, with a petition requesting us to defend their town as speedily as possible from the Bashi-buzuks and Circassians, who have attacked the people in great numbers.

"I shall send you with your command," says his Highness. "Set out as soon as it is light in the morning. On your way you will pick up a platoon of Don Cossacks from the post, and with their assistance you will drive out that rabble. Hold your position in Selvi until I send reënforcements; and see to it that you are brave, and report directly to me. Now, farewell, and God be with you! Go to Levitzky,¹ and you will receive your instructions."

Thus speaks the Grand-duke, and in his voice there is more of entreaty than of command.

Having received my orders from the Commander-in-chief, I return to my quarters, issue the necessary commands as quickly as possible, give orders that I am to be waked before sunrise, and lie down to sleep. My Cossack Lamakin covers me with my felt cloak. But the thought that in a few hours I shall be obliged to enter into conflict with the enemy does not allow me to sleep very soundly.

"And who knows!" flashes across my mind; "perhaps the first bullet will send me to sleep forever! And it may chance that I shall save the town and receive the George." And, while I doze thus, morning imperceptibly draws near. In my dreams I hear Larin say to Lamakin, "Wake the Captain; day is breaking."

"Rise, your Honor." The latter rouses me cautiously, and lifts my felt cloak. "All are saddling."

¹ Assistant of the Chief of Staff of the army.

The moon is shining with full splendor when we set out on our way. The Cossacks raise their caps and cross themselves devoutly; they draw the straps of their daggers tighter, and adjust their rifles in their cases. Hardly any conversations are heard; we proceed gravely, I might even say gloomily. On our departure from Tirnovo, we are joined by twenty Bulgarians, the Selvi deputation of the evening before. One handsome, swarthy young Bulgarian, Dmitry Kara Ivanoff, pleases me greatly.

He immediately reports to me, in broken French, how large their city is, who is attacking them, in what numbers, on what sides, and so forth.

While we are talking, the moon has imperceptibly disappeared. On the left of the highway it becomes possible to distinguish the crests of the Balkans. Up to that time, they have appeared as a dark, indistinct streak. The sun is not yet up, but its rays are already beginning to gild the bluish ridge of the mountains. Here and there the peaks, cut off by clouds, seem to be hanging in the sky.

As our army has not yet penetrated thus far, the road is not spoiled, but is so smooth and even that, as the saying goes, "you could roll over it on your side!"

Here is the bridge across the Yantra. Here is the place where the roads intersect; the one on the left runs to Gabrovo. This is almost half of our journey. We ride on. It is a beautiful morning. It is cool, and there is no dust; everything around seems to be enveloped in a thin, transparent shroud. Here, at last, the sun is peeping above the Balkans. Although the crests of the mountains are now distinctly outlined, the mountains themselves and the foot-hills are buried in deep shadows.

We proceed at a very rapid pace, sometimes even at a trot. Three hours later, two Bulgarians come galloping to meet us. Their stirrups are drawn up so high that their knees reach nearly to their horses' necks. The fellows urge on their horses incessantly with their whips, and hammer their sweating sides with their heels. The heads of the Bulgarians are wrapped in something which is in the nature of a white towel, in such a manner that the tops of their red fezes, as well as their black tassels, stand out distinctly. In spite of their troubled mien, the fellows seem very comical to me. They flourish their elbows vigorously in their desire to augment the swiftness of their horses.

Their shouts are heard a long way off.

"Forward! forward! The Bashi-buzuks, the Circassians have come! We beseech you!" They gallop up to me, and kiss my hands.

My horse is going at so powerful a trot that most of the Cossacks have to gallop. Selvi comes into sight from the top of a small hillock. It is situated on an open plain; beyond it, five or six versts away, run wooded heights. Behind the town, in various directions, now here, now there, puffs of smoke from rifles rise into the air.

In front of the town, across the river Rushitza, runs a bridge. Men, women, and children meet us, shrieking and howling, and point with terror in the direction of the enemy.

In the town we are joined by a company of mounted Bulgarians, rifles in hand, so that when we gallop out upon the plain we present a tolerably imposing force.

This is what is revealed to our gaze. About half a company of Cossacks of the Don, the very same whom I was to have picked up in a settlement on the way, have ranged themselves in a line, and are repelling the enemy with their fire, without dismounting. I immediately order my men to draw up in a line on the left, and to support the Don Cossacks with volleys from their rifles. I cannot, at first, make out at whom they are firing. I ride up to their commander, the small, swarthy Esaul Antonoff, who is at that moment eagerly making his arrangements, shouting and fidgeting about.

"'Twas God himself who sent you to our assistance!" he exclaims, tragically, on seeing me. We immediately make acquaintance, and consult as to the best mode of action. We decide to dash forward to the attack with all our forces, and to drive the enemy as far into the woods as possible. In the meantime, the Cossacks continue their fire. I gaze intently through my field-glass, to see at whom they are firing.

"Is it possible that you don't see? Yo-onder, they're running about from behind the sheaves of grain," Antonoff says to me, and points at some sheaves lying about a verst distant from us.

I really do begin to make out the forms of men. Now they squat down, again they run from one pile of sheaves to another. They are the Bashi-buzuks. They are hiding

behind a rick of grain and firing in our direction. Here, for the first time, I become acquainted with the whistle of bullets. Overhead I hear something like the humming of bees, and, if one of the Cossacks had not informed me that this was the whistle of a bullet, I should, in all probability, have taken it for the humming of bees for a long time still. "So that is the way that bullets whistle!" I say to myself, and I feel a sort of pride, a certain sort of self-satisfaction, at being under fire, and at not being afraid. "I will advance still farther, and I shall not feel afraid!" And I actually shout to my Cossacks, "Come, my men, forward! press forward! Why should we heed the rabble yonder? Advance boldly, fire well, aim carefully!"

At that moment, my senior Sergeant-major Larin comes up, and reports:—

"Your Honor, the Bulgarians must be sent forward; what do they mean by firing over our heads so wildly? Before we know it, they'll be hitting some of our men!"

I glance towards the rear, and cannot refrain from a laugh.

A crowd of mounted Bulgarians have collected together a few paces from me, and are discussing something with martial fervor. Then one elderly Bulgarian, in a black jacket, emerges from the throng, and, without dismounting, he rests his heavy antediluvian musket with its butt against his belly, which is thickly enveloped in a sash, and prepares to fire. Anastas (that is the Bulgarian's name) holds his gun at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, and his comrades all look on with approbation at his preparations. When the gun is aimed, the marksman turns aside a trifle, closes his eyes a little, and drops the flint. Simultaneously with a flood of sparks comes a deafening crash, and immediately thereafter Anastas tumbles from his horse. His comrades fly to his assistance, and raise him respectfully. Sad to say, at the very moment when Anastas dropped his flint, a ball from the enemy must needs strike him in the knee. Our zealous helpmates carry the wounded man home solemnly, with sorrow depicted on their countenances. Although we are now left alone, we no longer fear to receive bullets in our backs from them.

The ignorance of the Bulgarians in the use of fire-arms is explained thus: the Turks strictly prohibited their car-

rying or even touching a gun. Any Turk could slay with impunity any Bulgarian whom he found with a gun in his hands.

The exploits of the Bulgarian troops in Shipka speedily proved that the Bulgarians in no wise deserved the ridicule which we bestowed upon them at first, but convinced us, on the contrary, that they knew how to defend themselves when circumstances required it.

In the meantime, the Cossacks continued to fire incessantly, without dismounting, and, of course, they fired past, since the enemy rarely showed themselves, and then only for a moment, after which they retreated to shelter once more. We approach the heights step by step. We ride now through stubble-fields, now through meadows, now through brushwood; we descend into a gorge and climb out again.

The foe retreats farther and farther into the forest. At last we ride at full speed. The Don Cossacks and my Vladikavkazians mingle, ride past Antonoff and me with the Cossack shout, disperse, and disappear into the forest. The trumpeter is obliged to sound the call for a long time, in order to summon the men. One after another they return, at a foot pace, dusty and perspiring, on weary horses.

"Well, have you cut the rabble into pieces?" Antonoff asks his men, in a snuffling voice, and not without some triumph over mine, although he is evidently convinced in advance that they can hardly have succeeded in cutting up anybody, as the Bashi-buzuks would not wait until the Cossacks came up and spitted them on their lances.

"Yonder, your 'nor, beyond the ravine, we laid low twenty of them!" replies a tall, robust Don Cossack, with a heavy moustache and a smooth-shaven face, in a nasal tone. As though in confirmation of his words, he gives his long, blond hair a valiant toss.

"Brave fellows! brave fellows! thanks!" says Antonoff.

My men also assemble gradually. I draw out my notebook in order to write down the names of those who have distinguished themselves, and call up Larin.

"Your Honor, Gasiuk and I cut down two yonder, near that tree," my Sergeant-major Pantchok reports, in an insinuating voice, and points to a sandy-complexioned, bearded Cossack, in a blue coat. At that moment Gasiuk

assumes an expression from which one might persuade one's self that he actually has cut down one.

I glance inquiringly at Larin; he reasserts his statement, and I note them down.

"Well, and who else?" I ask.

"Babenko, I believe you killed one also?" shouts Larin.

"I shot him with my gun, Ivan Semyonitch," replies the man, turning his face to me in an instant, and seeming to become petrified in that attitude.

Babenko had been engaged at the moment in relating something to his comrades in a very lively manner. He and Pantchok and Gasiuk comprehend that they must make the most of this opportunity, and therefore his face also assumes the most frank and irreproachable expression.

It is long past mid-day when both companies, having formed in columns, by threes, right, return, singing, to Selvi. Antonoff and I, of course, rode on ahead, cheerful and content with ourselves. How could we help rejoicing? The enemy has been repulsed, the field of battle remains in our possession, the town is saved for the time being.

The Don Cossacks, throwing their lances over their shoulders, sing songs; their leader beats time zealously with his hand, and, rising in his stirrups, from time to time, he casts a glance at his singers.

The Don Cossacks are larger than our Cossacks. Their songs seem to me to be much rougher and more abrupt. The words of the songs are not distinguishable, as they are singing at a considerable distance. And now my red-haired Levtschenko clears his throat, and strikes up hoarsely:—

"Come sit down, my guests,
I will sing you a song. . ."

Other voices take up the refrain:—

"We went here, we went there,
We went over the hills;
We served for three years,
Yet feared we no ills.
Of this service of mine
I will sing you a song."

And again I begin to rejoice, and to thank God that he has aided me to take part in the war. "Good, good! jolly! capital!" I say to myself, and I bestow a friendly pat on the foam-flecked neck of my horse.

The inhabitants, great and small, pour out of the town, to meet us two versts away. Their delight is indescribable. With shouts of "Long live the Emperor Alexander! Long live Duke Nikola!" they kiss not only Antonoff's hands and mine, but even the Cossacks' stirrups. The men offer jugs of wine, the women and young girls throw wreaths over the necks of the Cossacks and of their horses, and thrust flowers into their hands. I become weak from excess of delight and no longer guide my horse, because my hands are seized and covered with kisses. Everywhere there are enthusiasm and exultation.

In the meanwhile, my Cossacks ride on, not daring, without permission, to halt in order to moisten their parched throats with the wine which has been given to them. They glance askance at the jugs, and continue to sing, not without pride. They understand very well that their songs induce an exalted state of mind in the inhabitants.

"Tell me, my wife,
What's thy life without me?"

Levtchenko continues to set the tune, and, flourishing his doubled whip over his head, he glances with decision at his comrades. They strike up in unison:—

"Were I to tell thee truly,
Thou sure wouldst beat me sore,
Fiu! fiu! fiu!"

Perfectly crimson with their efforts, the whistler strains his cracking lips to bursting. His eyes seem on the point of leaping from their sockets; the whole man, for the moment, has entered into his whistling.

CHAPTER VI.

IN SELVI.

A MASS of various eatables, sheep roasted whole on huge spits, geese, and fowls, with various sauces, were placed on the ground, in two rows; and, in addition to this, there were vessels, vodka (rakia), milk, heaps of barley, and whole stacks of hay, awaiting our arrival.

Our small troop was utterly lost amid the throng of inhabitants, who now crowded round our tents, and gazed upon us in wonder. To tell the truth, this was decidedly embarrassing; the Cossacks would not have been averse to taking some rest after passing ten hours in the saddle.

Not content with gazing from a distance, they pressed up to the very tents, pulled up the edges, and stared in exactly as though at some prodigy. There was no end to their amazement and exclamations: "Cossack! Circassian!" were all that was to be heard on all sides.

First of all, Antonoff and I made haste to write our reports to the authorities. I was obliged to make mine to the Grand-duke, as well as to Tutolmin. We settled the number of the enemy, with mutual consent, at 1500 Bashibuzuks and Circassians. Twenty men had been killed on the side of the enemy, while our loss consisted of one Cossack and two horses.

When night descended, I set out to place the sentinels. Here, again, the Bulgarians excited our laughter. They proffered their services for guard duty with particular zeal, and, as I consented to accept them, there were over a hundred men at some of the posts. It cost us no little trouble to persuade them to remain quiet for the night, without talking or smoking, but, most of all, not to build fires. This last point was most displeasing of all to them, and when I went once more, at midnight, to review the posts, the Bulgarians had, for the most part, dispersed to their homes, "to prepare supper," as some of those who remained informed me.



COLONEL (NOW GENERAL) TUTOLMIN.

During the whole time of the firing, Dmitry Kara-Ivanoff had remained beside me, as interpreter, and had never moved a step from my person. That evening he brought to me his aged parents, and introduced them.

The sun had set, it was time to sleep. On this occasion my Lamakin had exerted himself to such an extent in my behalf, and had dragged so much fresh, sweet-scented hay into the tent, that I fell asleep as soon as I lay down, in the midst of the chatter of the people who kept jabbering away somewhere or other in the vicinity of the Cossacks.

I wake. It is morning. I rub my eyes and stare about; the door of the tent is opened cautiously, and there peers in at me the smiling face of a Bulgarian, with a shaven chin and black moustaches. He has left his turban outside the tent, in token of humility. This man had taken upon himself, on the previous evening, to see to our food, and now, on perceiving that I am awake, he inquires cheerfully: "Do you want coffee, milk, Captain?"

In one hand, on a tray, he holds a small, whitish cup; in the other, a smoke-begrimed coffee-pot. Without awaiting my reply, he crawls towards me on his knees, through the narrow tent, with a good deal of boldness, and begins to pour the coffee. The coffee resembles some muddy beverage full of grounds, into which sugar has been dropped. After this Bulgarian, other individuals began to crawl in—all my acquaintances of the preceding evening—and to seat themselves about, all cheerful, all well satisfied.

I finally come out from the tent, clad only in my tunic, to wash. Far away, in front of me, the Balkans loom darkly. They rise heavenward in a lofty wall, and seem desirous of screening the rest of the world from the sun. But, in the meantime, it is rising above their dentated crests, and sailing along coquettishly across the crimson sky, precisely as though it were boasting of its beauty in the presence of all: "Pray, look at me, good people! How handsome I am, how bright and fine, and made of pure gold!" The crimson clouds round about it draw aside and make way, as though in amazement, assuming for the time being its hue of gold. The crests of the mountains, too, seem to gaze upon each other more amiably. Yonder is the familiar peak on which I have so often gazed before, and calculated how many versts distant from me it might be, and it too seems more cheerful, and appears to be bidding me good-morning. How

deeply, how deliciously I breathe in the air at that moment! I hastily wash myself in cold water, which Lamakin pours over my hands, in a thin stream, from a tall brass ewer. He has, evidently, but just captured this ewer and is plainly proud of his acquisition, knowing that it will not be disagreeable to me.

"Where did you get that?" I inquire, wiping my hands, which are red with cold, on a Bulgarian towel, embroidered in gold. "A Bulgarian brought it, your Excellency," he answers, roughly.

"How much did you pay him?"

"Why should I pay him? It isn't his, it's Turkish!" and, displeased because I have not praised his new booty, he splashes out the rest of the water on the ground, and so heedlessly that the spatters fly upon my boots, after which he goes off to his own tent.

A few paces distant from the tents, with uncovered head, stands the presiding officer of the local "city council," a fine-looking man, named Ivantchu Angeloff. His neck is somewhat bent, out of respect. He is dressed in European fashion, in a black coat. He has a soft, insinuating voice and polite manners. Ivantchu is conversing in a whisper with a tall priest, clad in a voluminous, black cassock; on the pope's head is a tall, black cowl, spreading at the top. The hands of both of them are folded calmly on their breasts. Both are patiently watching my tent and waiting for me to make my appearance. Near by stand several other men; especially prominent among them is the figure of a small, brisk Bulgarian, with short, bristling moustache sprinkled with gray. He is dressed in a gray pea-jacket. His name is Vasily Angeloff. His unusually resonant voice is never silent for a moment. Vasily Angeloff shouts and fidgets, and asks the Cossacks repeatedly: "Is there anything you want?" And if he receives in reply, "We want nothing," then he finds that something is required. Turning to the surrounding crowd, he calls some one in a commanding tone: "Dimitro, Dimitro, come hither," he shouts sharply, and, extending his arm, he makes signals from his wrist that some one is to approach. Tall, robust Dimitro comes forward at his leisure. He is dressed in a white cloth jacket, trousers of the same, very wide and buttoned at the bottom into gaiters, like liveried footmen. Several yataghans, pistols, and knives are thrust into his girdle, by way

of keeping up his courage. The red fez on his head is wound about with a towel.

On hearing the commands of his superior, Dimitro removes his head-gear with an apathetic air, extracts a dirty handkerchief from the bottom of his fez, mops his perspiring and closely shaven head, and then directs his course swiftly towards the town, to carry out his orders.

I drink my coffee and go to take a look at the town. The presiding officer and the members of the "city council," and a few other people, follow me respectfully, and explain to me everything which we encounter in our path that is worthy of note.

On the way, I learn that the greater part of the Turkish families in Selvi have been placed under arrest by the Bulgarians, for fear that they might join the Bashi-buzuks, and that they are now lying in chains in the dungeons of the "Konak" (which is the name applied by them to their police department). I go to take a look at the prisoners. There prove to be, in fact, a number of Turks, of all possible ages and growths, in various costumes, lying in the dungeons, bound hand and foot with long chains. In those same chains the Turks had bound the Bulgarians not very long before.

The malice with which the Bulgarians gazed upon the imprisoned Turks was something to see. With what a satisfied air did they chat together and cluck with their tongues!

I glanced at them and went on. As I was traversing a narrow lane, leading past a very pretty garden, my companions pointed out to me, with a look of importance, a little house which was to be seen in the middle of the garden, and informed me that there resided a mulla, their principal enemy and oppressor. According to their statements, all the misfortunes which had overtaken the town proceeded from this man. At the time of the attack by the Bashi-buzuks, the mulla had, it seems, flung to the air from the mosque the green banner of Mahomet, had sent express messengers after the Circassians, and had done other things of a like nature. No one could make up his mind to arrest him; I decided to leave the mulla in peace for the present.

Everywhere the people welcomed me with sincere joy, and almost every one tried to make his way to me and kiss my hand.

As we were passing through the principal street, an old

Bulgarian descended from the balcony of a tall and handsome house, to meet us. His appearance struck me as singular. He was rather tall of stature, stout, stooping, with a face which had not been shaved for a long time, so that his cheeks and chin were covered with a short, bristly, white beard. His gait was feeble and languid. The whole aspect of this Bulgarian was expressive of inconsolable despair. I was particularly impressed by his eyes. They were almost invisible, to such an extent were they concealed by his swollen lids. The old man invited us to enter his house. Here, over a cup of coffee, the old man told me that he had had an only son, whom the Turks, at the instigation of that same mulla, had seized and tortured to death—for what cause was unknown to him.

“From that day forth I have been weeping, weeping, and I cannot weep my eyes dry,” he said, wiping his swollen lids with his sleeve. While he was talking, the old man held his hands folded on his breast, and gazed heavenward. The members of the town council sat beside me on the rug. They had evidently grown weary long ago of the endless wails and tears of their comrade. With serious faces, they smoked away at their twisted cigarettes in their reed mouth-pieces, sipped coffee out of tiny cups, and shook their heads compassionately.

“If I could, I would rend that mulla asunder with my own hands,” exclaimed the old man, as he took leave of me. Our life here would have been a merry one had not one circumstance troubled us. In Antonoff’s troop there was a young officer, I do not recollect precisely whether he was a lieutenant or an ensign, a very good and pleasing fellow, Gurbanoff by name. Antonoff despatched Gurbanoff on a skirmishing party, with ten Cossacks, I believe. In the first settlement, apparently utterly deserted, Gurbanoff halted to rest. I do not know whether he posted sentinels or not; but before the Cossacks had thoroughly settled themselves, the Circassians pounced down upon them. Gurbanoff and several men were killed, and the rest fled. One of them told me afterwards that he hid himself near by, in a field of maize, and heard the cries of his commander for assistance, but did not come forth, because he was afraid that they would kill him.

“Eh, your Honor, and his dagger was lost and his knife was of silver,” added Gurbanoff’s orderly, with a penitent

heart, as he related the affair to me. (Although Gurbanoff was a Don Cossack, he wore a dagger in his belt during the campaign.) This affair produced a deep impression upon our little detachment, and rendered us more prudent for the future.

Early in the morning, I hear, through my dreams, a peculiarly loud uproar, the trampling of horses, strange voices, and talking. Some one asks: "So it was in this narrow valley that the skirmish took place?" and then comes the answer: "Just so, your Honor." "Well, and is your commander, Sotnik Verestchagin, still asleep? Probably, he is fatigued after the affair of yesterday?" These questions were very much to my taste. From them it can be judged that the persons discussing it have a very exalted idea of our deeds. "Who can they be?" I ask myself. I peep out through a hole in the tent, and see that two squadrons of Cossacks of the Guard have arrived from Tirnovo, and have pitched their tents alongside ours.

A few paces from my tent stand groups of the officers, with whom I have become acquainted at headquarters. Among them are visible the elegant forms of the Imperial Aide-de-camp, Colonel Zherebkoff, of the commander of the Cossacks of the Guard, Colonel Orloff, the adjutant of the commander-in-chief, and several officers of the Cossacks of the Guard. The sun, which has but just risen, brilliantly illuminates their dazzling uniforms.

The news of our defence of the town of Selvi has apparently produced a good impression at headquarters, and has raised Antonoff and myself greatly in the estimation of the officers. With significant mien, they now point out to each other the valley which lies spread out before their eyes, and discuss and dispute among themselves, and wait with impatience for me or Antonoff to show ourselves outside our tents. Our Cossacks do not waste their chance, and recount the Lord only knows what marvels of their own valor to their newly arrived comrades. On the part of the Cossacks, the most frequent utterance is their favorite expression — "an immense quantity."

I put on my coat and sword, and betake myself to Zherebkoff. He, as well as the other officers, begins to congratulate me and to overwhelm me with questions, and to inquire all the particulars of our engagement. I, on my side, learn that Colonel Zherebkoff has come to our assist-

ance with two squadrons and two cannon. In addition to this, he has in view the possibility of advancing further, and occupying the town of Lovtcha, situated about thirty versts from here. Lovtcha is united with Selvi by the same highway along which we galloped so many times while repelling the Bashi-buzuks.

Two days before the arrival of the Cossacks of the Guard, a company of the Thirtieth Don regiment, under the command of Esaul Afanasieff, had arrived to support us. He was wounded, in the first encounter with the Circassians, by a sword-cut in the forehead. Therefore, when we advanced on Lovtcha, Afanasieff and his troop remained to guard Selvi.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OCCUPATION OF LOVTCHA.

WE set out for Lovtcha, with songs, early in the morning. Twelve versts beyond the village of Akindzhelyar we encountered the first Bashi-buzuks, and galloped in pursuit. I remember galloping along on the right of the highway through a wooded region carpeted with a thick growth of grass. The Cossacks had all galloped off somewhere, and there was no one with me. At such moments you always feel rather awkward and uncomfortable; if there had been even one man behind me, I should have felt much better and more valiant. I look, and in front of me, behind the trees, dart several bent figures of the Don Cossacks. With lances in their hands, they were dashing along, rising in their stirrups.

“There they are, yonder, your Honor, the Bashi-buzuks,” shouts one of them to me, in a fury. His eyes are wide-open, his long locks are floating on the wind. I gallop after them, and suddenly come upon a Turk, sitting under a tree. The Don men have not seen him, and have dashed on. He is a man who is still young, very swarthy, with black moustaches, and eyes also as black as coals. He is utterly exhausted with fatigue, supporting himself by his left hand placed on the ground; in his right he holds a pistol, which he is aiming at me. His eyes, at the moment, expressed determination, and, at the same time, suffering.

On catching sight of the Turk, I was benumbed, as it were, for the first moment, with the unexpectedness of it, and forgot myself to such an extent that I began to shout like a madman: “Here, here, here he is!” At the same time, I brandished my whip at him, instead of my sword. Then, when I had recovered my senses, I drew my sword and dealt him a blow on the shoulder. And as it was the first time in my life that I had had occasion to cut a man

down, and as the boughs of the trees did not permit me to get full swing, my blow proved feeble, unskilled, and hardly pierced the enemy's thick blue jacket. The Turk continued to breathe heavily, and to aim his pistol, which had probably already been discharged.

I experienced a singular sensation when I dealt my blow. My conscience whispered to me: "Stop, stop, don't strike! Better take him prisoner! it's a shame to strike a man lying down." But another and harsher feeling strove to drown the first. While I was cutting down the Turk, I heard shouts behind me. "Your Honor, please ride ahead; we're already settling accounts with them there!" I looked, and the Don Cossacks whom I had seen flashing past me but a moment before were galloping up. I left them to finish the Turk and rode on.

We advanced slowly, cautiously, in fear of falling into an ambush. About four o'clock in the afternoon, we ascended a hill whence Lovtcha was visible. The artillery began to fire across the town at some retreating wagons, under the impression that they were military transports. A shell fell on one of them, and, as it was learned afterwards, killed a woman and her children who were riding in it.

Lovtcha was occupied without a battle. No troops presented themselves. Neither were there any Turkish inhabitants, as they had quitted the town earlier. Several hundred Bulgarian families, with their priests, or, as they are called among the Bulgarians, "popes," at their head, came out to meet us.

The town of Lovtcha is situated on the very bank of the river Osma, at the foot of the mountains. We entered the town, and pitched our camp at the opposite extremity. Here the priest held a service of thanksgiving; after which the inhabitants began to entertain us with everything in their power. The feasting lasted until long after midnight. On the morning of the following day, we took leave of our hospitable hosts, leaving Antonoff and his troop to guard Lovtcha.

Antonoff did not hold the town long. Although we repeatedly reported at headquarters that it was indispensable to occupy Lovtcha with a serious force, the forces did not arrive. So one fine morning, as an officer of Antonoff's company told me, a shell landed beside their tents, and exploded; it was followed by another. The Cossacks pre-

ferred not to wait for the third, mounted in haste, and beat a retreat. And what else was left for the troop to do? It could not contend against several battalions of infantry and against artillery.

The enemy occupied Lovtcha. They made the Bulgarian inhabitants dig entrenchments; those who had exhibited the greatest joy at our advent lost their lives; among the number, the pope paid with his for having conducted our service.

On the evening of the 7th of July we were again in Selvi.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EXECUTION OF THE MULLA.

ON the morning of the following day, the representatives of the town, the members of the "city council," among their number Ivantchu Angeloff, went in a body to Zhrebkoff with a complaint against the mulla and against several other influential Turkish residents. They all related such horrible things, and accused the Turks of such cruelties, that Zhrebkoff immediately decided to try these people by court-martial. It fell to my lot to go and fetch the mulla.

I set out, accompanied by several Bulgarians and Cossacks. We found the mulla strolling in his garden. He was an elderly man, of medium height, with a sparse black beard.

His eyes were also black, and their gaze was remarkably vivacious. His face was of a saffron hue, with soft, flabby cheeks. His hands were white and soft, and evidently unaccustomed to any rough work. He was dressed in something in the nature of a mantle, of the color of coffee; on his head was a white turban encircled with green muslin.

The mulla caught sight of us from a distance, and quietly retreated to his apartments. He saw that uninited guests were on their way to him. We followed him into the house, and mounted a small staircase. I entered alone into the first room, a very clean little apartment, its floor covered with red matting, and here I encountered the master of the house with his rosary in his hand. Not a sign of fear was perceptible either in his looks or movements; his face had undergone no change. The mulla invited me to sit down on the low divan covered with a rug; but I, in return, invited him to follow me. He did so without offering any objections. We went out. At that moment, the door into the rear portion of the house opened, and thence, with shrieks and wails, rushed five or

six women. Their faces were half covered with white veils. With tears and moans they flung themselves upon the mulla, and began to bid him farewell and to embrace his knees. Even then the mulla did not betray himself; quietly and majestically he took leave of his wives, and exhorted them to be calm.

As we left the house, one of my Bulgarian companions pointed out to me a cane with a bronze handle, which stood in the mulla's room. One end of the cane handle was in the form of a beak; the other, in the form of a hammer. According to the statements of the Bulgarian, this cane was familiar to the whole town, as the mulla always had it with him, and with it he beat the Bulgarians, both innocent and guilty. I took possession of the cane in order to show it to Zherebkoff. A vast throng of people joined us on the way to the camp. All shouted and rejoiced, and pointed, some at the cane, some at the mulla.

Zherebkoff and several officers, members of the temporary court-martial, were already awaiting us in a capacious tent, seated on their outspread felt cloaks. In front of them, at the entrance to the tent, sat a swarthy, elderly Turk, of very grave aspect, in a rich and variegated long gown. His manners and dignity showed that he belonged to the highest circles. He was also one of the accused.

The mulla is invited to take a seat nearer the officers, as being a more honored individual.

Ulyanoff, the interpreter, begins to explain to the mulla in what the accusation against him consists, and puts the questions to him. The mulla replies to them all in a dull, quiet, guttural voice, "No, Prince." At the same time he raises his eyes to heaven and says, "The will of Allah be done!" With his left hand he tells over his beads, and his right he lays upon his heart, by way of confirming his assertions. But his fate is already decided.

After a brief consultation with his officers, Zherebkoff orders the Cossack who is standing behind the mulla's back to carry the latter away. The Cossack touches the condemned man lightly on the shoulder, and says, roughly, "Come along!"

The mulla gazes helplessly around, but sees no one who will undertake his defence. The spark of hope which has flashed before his eyes begins to forsake him. His saffron-hued face becomes convulsively distorted. In spite of

all this, he does not lose his dignity, but rises proudly, follows the Cossack, and breathes a prayer by the way. The words, "Allah, Allah," can be plainly distinguished from the movement of his lips. They lead the mulla off to a distance of thirty paces from the camp, and place him against a telegraph-pole; they do not even bind his hands, but merely cover his head with a white towel. The lips of the condemned man continue to whisper a prayer. The officer gives the word of command to the platoon, "Fire!" A volley rings out; the mulla quivers for a moment, in every limb, and then his body sinks sideways, the knees bending helplessly, slides slowly along the telegraph-pole to the ground.

At that moment, from amid the throng of inhabitants who have been silent witnesses of the execution, an elderly Bulgarian rushes forward to me, plucks off his turban, and begins to proffer some entreaty, kissing my hands, the skirts of my coat, and dragging me towards the body.

I wondered, at first, whether he were not a relative of the dead man. But when he exclaimed, "He has a fine watch; pray, let me have it!" I understood that he was asking permission to take the mulla's bulbous watch, which was projecting from the latter's girdle, attached to a long, silver chain. This Bulgarian seemed to me inexpressibly repulsive.

I flourished my whip at him, but, although he covered his shaven head with his palms, he continued to pester me until the body of the mulla was buried.

After disposing of the mulla, they proceeded at once to the elderly Turk. His position was of the most alarming description. He was obliged to see and hear a man whom he revered shot a few paces away. Quite in contrast with the mulla, the Turk had lost every trace of self-possession. Whether it was that the execution of the mulla had thus affected him, or whether his nerves were chronically weak, the fact is that, when the Cossack began to call him, he was no longer in a condition to rise unaided, and he was led out, supported under his elbows. Good Heavens, how he entreated! how he begged for forgiveness — in vain! A second volley rang out, and a few moments later a second grave was dug beside the grave of the mulla. The Bulgarians stood there awhile, discussed matters, then scratched the backs of their heads and dispersed.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRIP TO OSTRETZ WITH THE COSSACKS.

ONE day I was sitting in my tent, after dinner, and turning over a pile of Turkish and Bulgarian odds and ends which my Larin had brought me on the previous evening. Heaven only knows where Larin had picked up these things. Among the worthless rags there were some very good bits, particularly some women's silk chemises, as fine as spiders' webs and embroidered with gold. Then came a quantity of towels with embroideries of every possible pattern. "Here," I said to myself, "how delighted my friend Vladimir Vasilyevitch Stasoff will be if I carry him some of these embroideries, and how he will begin to exclaim, 'Wonderful, very beautiful, splendid!' But whom shall I consult as to which are the most original, the most interesting? It's not worth while asking Antonoff: he takes no interest in embroideries; all he cares for is that the linen shall be good." While I am thus sitting and meditating, my Sergeant Pantchok comes in and halts by my side.

"What have you to say?" I inquire.

"This, your Honor; they say that there are horses not so very far away, not above thirty versts," he declares, and points to the mountains whence the Bashi-buzuks had made their appearance. It is instantly perceptible from Pantchok's countenance that he has scented out something good.

"Who told you?" I inquire.

"Dmitry (Kara Ivanoff) told me. 'There,' says he, 'are many Turks; they must be deprived of their weapons—they are intractable.'"

At these words, Pantchok's face is expressive of satisfaction. He liked nothing so much as taking trips to Turkish settlements and disarming them. To tell the truth, I was also very fond of this occupation, and for

nearly the same reasons. The Cossacks hoped, "at this favorable opportunity," to get possession of something valuable in the shape of money or ornaments, but I thirsted to obtain for myself a horse, a genuine Arabian, and, although I had about ten horses, of various colors and qualities, standing in the stalls at Selvi, my heart gave a leap at this new announcement and I began to question Pantchok as to where the horses were, who had them, whether the settlement was distant, and so forth. "The settlement is a large one. Only we must set out as early as possible in the morning; otherwise, we shall not succeed in getting back by daylight," he replies. I repeat this conversation to Zherebkoff, as my commander for the time being, adding that I have received special orders to disarm the Turkish settlements. Moreover, I add, before my departure from Tirnovo, I had been commissioned to send thither, if I could obtain them, a good mare and stallion. "Therefore," I remark to Zherebkoff, "it is my opinion that such an opportunity should not be neglected, but that we should make the most of it!"

Zherebkoff fully agrees, and my trip is appointed for the following morning. Ten of my men and ten Cossacks of the Guard accompany me as escort.

The next morning, the sun has but just begun to peep above the mountains, when we are already in our saddles, and on our way in a direction south-west of Selvi. At first we ride along the valley, then we ascend the wooded heights. The road grows constantly more picturesque. What magnificent sites are here! What a wealth of grass, and vegetables, and fruits! What forests, what pasture-lands! Really, if I had not beheld them with my own eyes, I should not have believed in them. Here runs a long gorge; along its bottom, white oxen roam over the rich herbage, like huge swans. The animals are evidently already satiated. On catching sight of us, they lazily turn their beautiful muzzles in our direction, prick their ears in alarm, snuff the air with their moist, black nostrils, and stare in amazement.

"What fine cattle," I say to myself, "I have never seen any in Russia equal to them. And how comfortable it is for them to roam — there are no gnats, no flies; there is as much shade as they can desire under every tree; and the water pours in abundance from every hill."

We ride for three hours without dismounting; it begins to grow warm. Our Bulgarian guides begin to say, "It's not far, brothers, only three hours more;" *i. e.*, eighteen versts, and we have already been three hours on the way. To Ostretz it is thirty-six versts, reckoning at six versts an hour, as the road is mountainous. "It is well that we set out so early," I say to myself.

After riding another hour and a half, we meet several mounted Bulgarian residents of Ostretz, on miserable little horses. They join us, and ride alongside of me. From them we learn that Ostretz is a very large settlement; that several hundred Turkish families live there, and that the Turks are wealthy.

"They have horses and arms and money; they have everything, they have everything," my fellow-travellers whisper to me, nodding their heads significantly, and making signs in the direction of their settlement. Although, of course, I was extremely anxious to obtain fine horses, still, at that moment, I began to have doubts. What if the Turks were to receive us with fire, or to arrange an ambush? There were but twenty men of us. It was not so very long since Gurbanoff's affair! . . . At this thought, I cast a covert glance upon my little force, and ask the Bulgarians, in a quiet voice:—

"Well, will the Turks surrender their arms to us, do you think?"

"We don't know, Captain, we don't know," they reply, timidly, removing their turbans, pressing them to their breasts, and making reverences to me, as profound as their saddles and the necks of their horses will permit. They are evidently afraid of vexing me with their answer. At that moment the Bulgarian horsemen in the vanguard exclaim joyously:—

"Eh-hey-hey, Ostretz!" They gallop forward a short distance, and, ascending a small mound, now point gayly at the village.

The country is quite sandy here. The settlement lies in a small basin-like valley, and is shielded from the winds on every side by mountains. From afar, we perceived a motley throng of inhabitants issuing forth to meet us. Illuminated by the brilliant sunlight, the crowd parts into two halves; on the right side of the road, one can instantly distinguish the Turks, on account of their characteristic tur-

bans, and also by their long robes, which are principally of a cinnamon-brown or yellow hue. It must be that all Turks do not wear these robes, since yonder, behind the throng, figures are visible, clad in short, colored jackets.

The Bulgarians are stationed on the left of the road. Their numbers are far smaller and more modest; no motley hues are visible here in the clothes. At their head stands the pope, in a long, black cassock and a tall, black hat. The Bulgarians stand with heads uncovered, out of respect; but their law does not permit the Turks to remove their turbans. Both await us in silence. Among the Turks, the first person to catch the attention is the mulla, owing to his bearing and to his dignified aspect; after him the eye is drawn to the old men, as the most respected residents.

We first approach the Bulgarians. "Dismount!" is the command which I give, and we begin to exchange greetings, first of all with the pope, of course. The Bulgarians salute in the Turkish manner, take our hands and press them to their hearts, then to their foreheads. From the Bulgarians we pass on to the Turks. The face of the mulla here, as in the case of the one at Selvi, impresses me very favorably; like the latter's, it is sensible and grave. His eyes are black, sunken, and expressive. His voice is somewhat guttural, but clear, calm, and calculated to inspire confidence. The mulla is small of stature, and thin; and his manners are quiet.

All the Turks held him noticeably in great respect.

"Here," I say to myself, "just see how the Turks regard their popes, and not as we do in Russia, where the parishioners are sometimes ready to come to fisticuffs with their pastors!"

The Turks are beyond comparison more numerous in Ostretz than the Bulgarians. "And that is the reason," I say to myself, "why they meet us so peaceably; but none the less, it will do no harm for us to be prudent, especially as we are thirty versts distant from our friends." The Turks step quietly to one side, and wait in silence to see what further will happen to them. The Cossacks surround them, and withdraw their rifles from their cases. These Turks were to serve as hostages, in case of any attack upon us.

I do not enter the settlement, but call up the interpreter Dmitry, and request him to translate to the mulla as fol-

lows: "All the inhabitants of Ostretz must immediately bring hither to me whatever arms they may have in their possession; if later I find so much as a single broken sword or pistol, the owner will be shot, and his house burnt."

The mulla listens quietly, then turns to the throng which has assembled, and repeats it word for word. The inhabitants quickly disperse, old men and little children, to their own dwellings.

They begin to draw forth their arms. Five carts, each harnessed to a pair of big buffaloes, are piled to the very top, with every possible sort of weapon. What manner of gun is there that is not here! Long, very long ones, with inlaid barrels, decorated with a golden net-work, and others so short that only the stocks, which are extremely thick, are visible, ornamented with gleaming mother-of-pearl. There is a mass of yataghans and sabres. There are some with silver hilts, and others with ivory, others adorned with turquoises and corals, jacinths, and various other ornaments. Besides these, there are numerous pistols, both good and bad.

The Bulgarians crowd around the weapons, and devour them with their eyes. Evidently, they would very much like to share all these spoils.

Not more than an hour has elapsed when the mulla announces that my orders have been obeyed.

In reply I order Dmitry to remind him that I am going in person to verify his statement.

The mulla despatches several tattered Turks to shout through the village that the inhabitants are to bring every weapon, and leave none behind. The criers run off, and begin to shout. Their cries resemble some sort of a howl, and, in the surrounding silence, and in a strange, unwonted place, where enemies may be concealed behind every little hillock, they produce a very unpleasant effect upon us.

The sun is sinking. It was time to depart long ago, but our business is not finished. The criers, standing on the flat roofs at the various extremities of the village, throw back their heads, and howl unmercifully. I already begin to repent of having ordered them to shout. We are far away, and things are not as with us, and it is impossible to make out whether they are summoning to the surrender of arms or preparing an ambush!

Finally, the mulla approaches me, and repeats that all the arms have been brought. I then proceed to the chief object of my trip, and request Dmitry to translate the following: —

“I require some fine horses, and I know that some one of the residents of this place has them; therefore, let that person bring them hither immediately.” The mulla immediately divines the person to whom I refer, turns to a tall, broad-shouldered, elderly Turk, with a round beard, and clad in a yellow robe with crimson stripes, and says something to him. The Turk lays his hand on his heart, and sets off towards the settlement. Pantchok and Gasiuk, who are like jackals scenting carrion, leap into their saddles and follow the old man. After them run the little children, skipping along, and chasing each other. They are dressed in jackets of many hues and voluminous trousers; on their heads are little fezes.

Ten minutes later, we see a procession emerging from the village. In front of all, a young Turkish boy, ruddy-faced and very handsome, with a small black moustache, dressed in a jacket of green flowered chintz, blue trousers, and large shoes on his bare feet, leads a dark gray mare by a short halter. The horse, which is small in size, and very wild, writhes about in all directions, like a snake; she pricks her ears in terror, snorts, and endeavors incessantly to tear herself free from the hands of the terrified little Turk. The old master follows the horse gloomily, and halts in front of us. The horse is a beauty! her muzzle is dry, every vein seems visible; her eyes are prominent, her legs well shaped and slender, her chest broad, her back straight; her hind-quarters are also broad and well rounded. Everything about her betokens blood, power, and swiftness. I immediately order my saddle to be placed upon her. After this horse, two others are led forth, one a sorrel mare, also very beautiful, but already old, and a dark bay stallion, which is young — three years old. Both these horses, though good, are not to be compared with my gray! Nevertheless, I order the Cossacks to take them also.

“Well, now,” I say to myself, “I can go home;” and I turn to my new steed. At that moment, several women, dressed in black cloaks, and with their faces enveloped in white veils, force their way through the throng. They

rush to the gray horse, cover with kisses her muzzle, her neck, her back, her hoofs, and continue their caresses until I shout to the men, "Mount!"

The sun is half-way towards setting when we set out on our return. I glance round, after traversing half a verst, and see the crowd still standing as though rooted to the spot, and watching our retreat. The women in the black cloaks and the white veils on their faces stand out sharply in front of all.

"What do all these people think of us?" I say to myself. "Robbers, probably, and that is all." — "They came, they stole, they went away." All this time I hear behind me the exclamations of the Cossacks: —

"Eh! that's a good mare!" they say in low tones, gazing at my new horse. And really she was worth looking at. The horse did not seem to feel her rider in the least, so lightly did she tread the earth. She had to be sat firmly; it was never possible to be otherwise than vigilant, or you would fly from the saddle. After my former horse it was not so easy to ride this one, or, to put the matter plainly, I felt a little cowardly, especially when I perceived that she positively did not know how to cross the little bridges and water-ways, but tried to leap them.

Yonder, ahead, is a bridge. I approach nearer; the horse diminishes her pace little by little, in spite of the fact that I touch her up gently with my foot. Then she begins to quiver, lays back her ears and gathers up her back.

"Sit firm, your Honor!" I hear the shout of Dmitry Kara Ivanoff. After this cry, the horse gives a leap, and of such a description that I come near flying over her head. "Ho, ho, ho!" laugh the Cossacks behind. In spite of this I pat the horse caressingly on the neck, and affectionately arrange her thin, delicate gray mane.

Directly behind me ride the mulla and the six Turkish hostages. I had made up my mind to release them only when we had crossed the mountains. The way back seems to us much longer and more tedious than the way thither. Nothing of all that which we had taken such interest in, and had admired so much by daylight, is now visible. We ride with precaution. About two hundred yards in advance ride four Cossacks, and as many more on each side. No talking is heard; the faces of all are less cheerful and care-free than by day. Through the stillness of the night nothing is heard save the trampling of the horses'

hoofs and the creaking of the carts. This monotonous sound is broken now and then by the shouts of the Turkish teamsters:—

“O-o-o!” they urge on their huge buffaloes, which seem even larger in the dark. The animals place one foot slowly after the other, as they stretch forward their muzzles, with their little eyes.

“O-o-o, i-i!” shouts the leading wagoner, with special wrath, and pokes his goad angrily into the ribs of the right-hand buffalo, because the creature has improperly drawn the cart upon the slope. The buffalo gets angry in his turn, lowers his head obstinately, twists his horns about, — they seem pressed close to his neck, — and at the same time charges with his broad chest against the smooth ox-bow. The left buffalo, for the sake of avoiding the unpleasant goads, amiably assists in dragging the cart into the right road. After this they both resume their former gait, and stride lazily along, contentedly swishing their long, muscular tails.

As soon as the mountains are passed we release the hostages.

We arrived in camp after midnight. Before lying down to sleep, I fussed over the horses for a long time, conducted the cart loaded with weapons to the town *konak* myself, stationed some Bulgarians over it as sentinels, and then only did I return to my tent and fall into a happy sleep.

In the morning, I proceed to the town police-office, to inspect the weapons, and what do I find? The Bulgarian sentinel is standing on the same spot where I had placed him on the night before, comically resting the butt of his flint-lock musket against his belly, and gazing at me with the utmost coolness. Of the arms which I had brought on the evening before, not a trace remains.

“What’s the meaning of this? Where are all the weapons?” I asked in amazement.

“I haven’t got them, Captain, I haven’t got them; I beseech you!” the fellow cries piteously, and shields his face with his hand, fearing that I am about to strike him. Then he proceeds to explain that the residents of the town, as soon as they heard about the weapons, rushed up in a throng, and seized upon everything in a moment, while he had not dared to prevent them. And so I got no good out of those arms.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE BRIDGE OF BULGARENI.

ABOUT mid-day, three officers from headquarters arrived in Selvi from Tirnovo — Lieutenant Nepokoitchitzky, Cavalry Captain Maximovitch, and Lieutenant Johnson. They had been sent so that I might take them with my half-company to the Caucasian brigade under Tutolmin.

On the evening of that same day, my company commander arrived from the brigade with the first half-company. We embraced and kissed very affectionately, although from his remarks it was evident that Pavel Ivanovitch envied my successful expedition.

“Well, did you get me a horse?” he said that evening, as he sat in my tent and drank his tea from a saucer.

“I got two, but I sent one to Tirnovo and presented the other to Zherebkoff,” I explain to him, although, as a matter of fact, I had three other horses and very good ones, only I strongly objected to parting with them.

“Eh, a pretty officer! he begrudges a horse to his company commander,” grumbled Pavel Ivanovitch, and from that day forth he began to look askance at me. From him I learned that our brigade was not far from the bridge of Bulgareni.

Early in the morning I set out, with my troop, by the nearest way across the heights, to escort the visitors from the headquarters. This road had been pointed out to me by the Bulgarians, and it shortened the way perceptibly. Zherebkoff and the Cossacks of the Guard set out on their return to Tirnovo at the same time. Pavel Ivanovitch remained with his half-troop to guard Selvi, and passed several days there until he was relieved by another company.

At eleven o'clock in the morning we halt at the deserted Turkish settlement of Yuru-Kler. This is a very large village. No sooner have we dismounted from our horses

to rest, than I see Lieutenant Nepokoitchitzky setting off with a Cossack to inspect the village. Then it flashes through my mind, "What call is there for him to go there? He'll come across some Bashi-buzuk, he'll get wounded and then some one will have to answer for him!" And, in fact, ten minutes had not elapsed when we heard a shot and an uproar. What did it mean? Nepokoitchitzky's Cossack had been wounded. It seems that the lieutenant had taken a notion to enter a cottage, and it would have been well enough if he had gone in first himself, but he sent his Cossack; he entered cautiously, carbine in hand, when all of a sudden the Turk fell upon him and wounded him in the hand with a sword. The Cossack did not lose his presence of mind, and shot the Turk.

We reached the brigade early in the morning. My comrades welcomed me with special joy, the more so as six crosses of the George had already been received from the Grand-duke for my troop, for the defence of Selvi. Here I learned that on the 8th of July our army had suffered defeat at Plevna.

As I was escorting the adjutant back to headquarters, it fell to my lot to enter Tirnovo again. The city had already undergone an important change. The whole square adjoining the garden where the Grand-duke lived had become covered with tents of the staff. Along the streets a multitude of restaurants and *cafés chantants* were visible; everywhere songs and martial music resounded.

That same day, towards evening, I am sitting in the tent of an acquaintance of mine, an officer of the general staff, to whom I had just before sold the dark bay stallion which I had obtained in Ostretz, and I am talking with him about the defeat under Plevna on the 8th of July.

"Well, we shall take it, nevertheless; two whole divisions are going there," the Captain says to me, with conviction.

"Why so few?" I inquire. "According to rumor, about forty thousand of the enemy have settled down in Plevna!"

"Where are we to get more? The Commander-in-chief has been left now with only the Cossacks of the Guard."

I had no suspicion that we had so few troops with us, and this conversation was graven in my memory.

Unless I am mistaken, it was on the 14th of July, at

sunrise, that I returned to the bridge of Bulgareni. On this last occasion, I had become so accustomed to long trips that it seemed to me a perfectly ordinary trip to ride back more than a hundred versts. It was only then that I learned what a splendid horse I had: strong, alert, she never stumbled, and she had a huge stride — an invaluable quality in a war horse. From Bulgarians whom I encountered, I learned that Tutolmin had moved forward with the brigade in the direction of Plevna.

Beyond the bridge of Bulgareni extends a wide plain. Far away, columns of dust make their appearance, — there march the divisions of which the captain on the general staff had told me. I begin to try to overtake them. My spirits seem to rise at the sight of this forest of bayonets glittering in the sun.

“Ehe, how many of ours are there?” the Cossacks say behind me. To the right of the highway, an infantry brigade is resting in a small meadow. The tents are not pitched, the men have lain down as chance directs, temporarily, and will, probably, soon proceed further. To the left of the highway, also, the shirts of soldiers are gleaming white in the sunlight.

We overtake the wagons; wagon after wagon drags slowly along, covered with a thick layer of dust. On one of them officers' equipments are piled mountain-high: travelling-bags, trunks of leather and canvas, chests, folding beds, basins, kettles, samovars; at the very summit, with legs bound, sit cocks and several hens. Behind the wagons follow the orderlies, some with coats unbuttoned, some without coats, in cotton shirts tucked into their black trousers. One of them, having grasped the edge of the cart with his right hand, is holding in the other a bunch of some sort of branches, with which he is fanning aside the flies. The heat begins to be oppressive, the sun exercises his rights, there is absolutely no breeze; the dust raised by thousands of feet seems unwilling to part from the troops, and follows them persistently in a heavy cloud.

Behind the officers' wagon I pass some rich man's coach, harnessed to four fine brown horses. A handsome coachman, in a shiny hat, and a blue sleeveless vest over a red cotton shirt, is lazily guiding the horses.

“Whose carriage is this?” I ask the coachman.

“General Puzanoff's,” he replies.

For a long time we continue to pass baggage wagons, artillery, and infantry. The cavalry are almost unseen here; they seem to have outstripped all.

A verst ahead, solitary soldiers are visible, stationed far apart from each other like the long links of a chain. The country hereabouts is so open that with the naked eye it is possible to see for five full versts beyond this chain. To the left of the highway, a group of horsemen presents itself to view. "Judging by their brilliant uniforms," I say to myself, "they must be the chief of division, with his staff." I salute and ride past. Just as I come opposite them, I hear a voice.

"Mr. Officer! Mr. Officer! please come hither." I see a General in aiglets, with a very swarthy face, smoothly shaved cheeks, and thick, black moustache, waving his hand at me. A young officer detaches himself from the staff, gallops up to me, and says courteously: "The General requests your presence!"

"What General?"

"General, commander ——"

I halt my troop and gallop to the summons.

"Where are you going?" the General inquires, while I am still at a distance, in a voice in which reproof is distinguishable.

I explain that I am in search of the Caucasian brigade, which should be ahead.

"A brigade, indeed! Don't you see that my advance posts are standing yonder?" he says, crossly, pointing to the advance chain. Then he adds, rather touchily: "However, go ahead, go ahead as you see fit!" And the General, with a look of displeasure, dismisses me.

We ride seven or eight versts further along the highway, turn off to the left, and, through a narrow pathway, reach a small settlement planted along a water-course, among lofty hillocks, where we halt to rest.

"Where is the brigade?" I say to myself, as I stretch out on my felt cloak. "Shall we find it soon?"

The Cossacks are exhausted, so are the horses; the heat is deadly. The Cossacks have caught a sheep, cooked and eaten it, have rested capitally, and we prepare, with renewed vigor, to continue our journey. But no sooner have we descended from the eminence, where the Cossack has stood on guard during our period of rest, than we perceive our brigade

scattered along the way, a verst ahead of us, with its many-hued company bannerets. The long picket ropes are pitched at regular intervals. No men are in sight. In such heat, of course, every one has tried to get into the shade. The horses, also, exhausted with the heat, are standing with drooping heads.

“Oho, there’s our brigade!” we exclaim, in amazement. And, in point of fact, there was cause for our surprise. Not one of us could explain to himself how it had been possible for us to rest and eat so long only a verst away from our men, without any one having perceived them. It arose from the circumstance that the brigade had been concealed from view by a little hillock; it had not been seen even by our sentry.

Here we remain several days; then we hear that we are ordered to march on Plevna.

Not long before this, Mikhail Dmitrievitch Skobelev had been appointed commander of division for the approaching assault upon Plevna. His division was composed of the Caucasian Cossack brigade, a battalion of the Kursk regiment, and one battery.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF PLEVNA, JULY 18.

THE day begins to dawn. The sun has not yet made his appearance, the air is fresh and damp. Our little detachment, infantry, artillery, and Cossacks, is ranged on both sides of the road. The faces of all are sleepy. Skobelev, the only cheerful one, in a paletot, put on with the sleeves, between whose unbuttoned red edges his white linen coat is visible, as well as the order of the George on his neck, gallops up to the troops and greets them, with a defect in his speech as usual: —

“Good-morning, brothers! I congratulate you on the battle! Remember that there will be no signal for retreat!” and he is already touching up his gray horse with the spur, to ride on to the next detachments, when he turns his head and adds: “And I request you, my good fellows, not to take the enemy prisoners.” Then he dashes on.

“Delighted to make the trial, your Excellency-y-y,” rings out behind him.

The sun has risen. The Vladikavkaz¹ regiment, marches on the right of the highway, now through maize, now through bushes, again through golden barley, fully ripe. It is distressing to see the horses trample down this magnificent grain. The third company marches in the rear line, covering the artillery, hence I cannot see when our vanguard begins to exchange fire with the enemy. Sharp, distant volleys were heard. The troop halts in the vicinity of a thickly wooded tract, and Pavel Ivanovitch issues the command: “Dismount.” I perceive that we shall be obliged to stay there for a long while, and see nothing of the fight either. I betake myself to the commander of the troop, and request permission to join the brigade.

“What do you want there? We haven’t got to our post yet! Stop where you belong!” he replies, roughly, being still angry with me.

¹ Trans-Caucasian.

"The brigade commander ordered me to keep with him during the battle," I say, not knowing myself how this idea has occurred to me.

Pavel Ivanovitch bellows something in reply, and stretches himself out under a tree, on his felt cloak. Some of the Cossacks quietly lead their horses about by their bridles, others smoke, others still seat themselves on the greenward, draw eatables from their saddle-bags, and chew and talk at once, conversing together in low tones about the impending encounter.

I ride off alone, without a Cossack, to seek Tutolmin, and find him on a rise of ground. Ivan Feodorovitch is mounted on a light-bay horse with gleams of gold. Behind him, two men of the Kuban (Tutolmin was fonder of the Kuban Cossacks than of the Vladikavkaz men) are respectfully awaiting the commands of their superior.

"What do you say, Verestchagin?" the commander of the brigade inquires, amiably, offering his hand.

"Colonel, allow me to stay with you during the engagement, as our troop will remain in the rear line and I shall see nothing."

"Pray, do so; very glad to have you," says he.

I remain. Tutolmin gazes intently ahead, but it is impossible to see very far, as the land rises in front of us and conceals the enemy's position.

"Well, Verestchagin, what measures would you take under the present circumstances?" asks Ivan Feodorovitch, jestingly, pointing ahead. "Come, sir, what would you do, sir?" But before I have succeeded in grasping his question, we both see a Kuban Cossack come galloping up, on a plump, brown horse, all dripping with perspiration; he halts a few paces from the brigade commander, raises his hand and his whip to his cap, and reports, in his Little Russian dialect: "Your Excellency, the General calls for another company of Vladikavkazians." Tutolmin turns to me and orders me to ride to Levis and repeat this message. No sooner have I started than I hear behind me:—

"Your brother has arrived; he is there in front, with the General."

"Which brother? Vasily?" I ask, in surprise, as I had just received word that my brother Vasily was lying in the hospital at Bukharest, and was not getting along well at all.

"No, the other, Sergyei!" I had not seen Sergyei for more than a year, and therefore I was greatly delighted, and I galloped merrily forward.

At that time the commander of the regiment was half a verst in advance, beside the highway, with several officers. Grasping between his fingers the bone cartridge pouches on the breast of his gray Cossack travelling-coat, he was strolling under the shade of the trees, with the commander of the second company. The other officers, among them Astakhoff, Timofyeff, Abessaloff, and Zhanaeff, were sitting not far away, engaged in conversation. Near by, through the bushes and the branches of the trees, Cossacks and horses are visible. I galloped up to Levis, and delivered my message. He turned to the officers, and inquired abruptly:—

"Where's Lyapin?" Shouts arise: "Where's Cornet Lyapin?—Where's Lyapin?" Some one says jestingly, in a bass voice: "Call hither Adjutant Lyapin!" While the uproar is going on, I quietly ride ahead, disappear from sight, and gallop at full speed in search of my brother.

After ascending and descending several eminences, I see, not far away, on the highway itself, on a rise of land, a group of horsemen, with a fluttering red pennon in their midst. Skobelev, in a white linen coat, mounted on a white horse, stood out sharply from the rest. An acquaintance of mine, a blond colonel, of short stature, thin, feeble, with a sandy, Mephistophelean beard, and moustache to match, is visible more to the left. Behind stands the escort, consisting of fifteen Vladikavkazians and Kubanians.

The nearer I approach, the more frequently do I hear the whistle of the balls. After the skirmish at Selvi, I had fancied that I could stand Heaven knows what amount of cannonading; but when it now fell to my lot to come under actual fire, I perceived that it was no Bashibuzuks who were firing here! My heart begins to contract violently and to die within me. But the hottest fire seems to be directed at the crest of the mound, near Skobelev. The enemy have probably noticed the cluster of persons, and have concentrated their fire.

My brother Sergyei is still further to the left than the blond Colonel. As a civilian and a volunteer, he wears a

black cloth jacket, and on his head a Cossack cap. He is mounted on a small, gray, Turkish horse. I approach him cautiously and greet him. Skobelev catches sight of me and cries: "Good-morning, Verestchagin! Here's your brother, who has joined us!" Then, unthinkingly as it were, he extends his left hand for me to press, and becomes absorbed in studying the situation.

What a singular picture presents itself to my eyes! A wide, green valley, with aged, isolated trees scattered here and there about it, and illuminated with brilliant sunlight. Its opposite side rises gradually, and changes into a mountainous region. Along this valley, far, far away, for perhaps fifteen versts, to the right, extends our semicircular line of cannon discharges, which flash forth alternately, now close at hand, now far away. They are followed by thick clouds of blue and white smoke. Rising higher and higher, these clouds halt at last, and merge into one general, impenetrable gray layer. The bronze guns glitter in the sun, like fire-flies on damp soil after sunset. All these form part of our line of battle. Its right flank runs far out in front. Some distance behind the guns, the indistinct dark masses of the artillery horses can be made out. The prolonged contours of the four and six spans, with the caissons and the limbers, now halt and stand still, then move forward from place to place. Parallel with our line of battle, and farther off, two versts or so, runs the Turkish line. It is somewhat shorter and with frequent gaps. The Turks have not so solid a line of artillery fire. The puffs of smoke from their cannon fly in our direction during the first moment, then rise heavenward. And the sky on that day, as though expressly for the occasion, is of a magnificent blue.

From where I stand, on the eminence, it is plainly visible that our Skobelev detachment constitutes the left flank of the principal forces, the nearest portions of which are so distant from us that they can hardly be made out by the naked eye, and then only when guided by the smoke from the discharges.

Yonder, four hundred yards in front of the line of cannon, a long, slender, whitish line flashes forth. Yonder, still further to the right, is another — that is a volley from rifles, and it means that the infantry has concealed itself there. Yonder, little heaps of our soldiers, in white shirts,

stand out indistinctly against the green, and immediately disappear again. Of the troops which should be there, far away at the extremity of the right flank, it is impossible to say anything, except that they are not in sight. Had it not been for the smoke of the cannons, I should, probably, not have been able to make out anything of this spectacle, to such a degree were our forces and those of the enemy buried in the deep green of gardens, meadows, and vineyards. Although, judging from the smoke, the cannonade must be very heavy, the roar is not especially loud, the position being too widely extended! On looking more intently, it is possible to distinguish that our line of fire is separated by great gaps between the two halves—Krüdner's distant corps is parted from Shakhovsky's, which is nearest us. These two corps seem to have prepared themselves to seize in their grasp and to strangle little Plevna. At first, I seek it with my eye, yonder on the right, where our forces came to an end, but it was directly opposite me, about four versts away. A compact mass of tiny white houses, with red-tiled roofs, and with tapering minarets rising on high here and there, and mosques, gives a rough sketch of the town. Illuminated by the sun, it stands out sharply against the surrounding green. But, although the sun shines brightly, not all of Plevna is visible to me, particularly some of its parts concealed by wooded heights, in spite of the fact that I rise on tiptoe in my stirrups, and gaze fixedly. Fires flash in spots from these hillocks, and are succeeded by puffs of bluish smoke.

"Yo-o-onder, beyond Plevna, you see a white streak—that is the highway to Sophia," Sergyei says to me, in a low voice, and points out the direction with his whip. "And what is glittering yonder, further to the left, is the river Vid."

The whole stretch of country lying before us becomes more and more thickly overspread with clouds of smoke. The view upon it was so interesting and magnificent that I could have continued to stare on and on, never quitting it with my eyes, had it only not been for those accursed bullets, which flew round about us like bees. Shells also frequently exploded in the neighborhood; I feel timidity gaining on my spirit. I cast a sly glance at Skobelev, to see what he is like, and if anything is to be discerned in his countenance. Not a thing! The General has stretched

out his neck, fastened his eyes to his field-glass, and become petrified in that attitude. Occasionally, he jerks at the reins of his horse, because the animal, changing from foot to foot, prevents his gazing quietly.

"O-o-oi, brothers!" resounds a groan behind me. I glance round; there is confusion among our Cossack escort. Several men have leaped from their horses, and are busying themselves over the wounded man. The General turns round for a moment, glances at them sternly, and shouts hoarsely: "Spread further apart!" Then he fixes his eyes to his field-glass once more.

"Is he made of stone, or has he a spell, that he fears nothing?" I say to myself, and I begin to upbraid myself for begging my way into this danger. At that moment I imagine to myself how my Pavel Ivanovitch is now lying quietly under the tree, on his felt cloak, and dozing sweetly. It's bad, bad! "Of course, I am a great coward if I cannot endure the whistle of the bullets," I continue to argue with myself, and I glance simultaneously at my brother. There is no more sign of fear visible in his face than in Skobelev's, nor of the gloom which I had remarked on the General's. I should like to know what is written on my face at this moment. I glance at my acquaintance, the blond Colonel. He seems to feel my glance, looks at me, and nods his head in a friendly way.

"Oho! my dear fellow, you must feel as uncomfortable as I do here," flashes through my mind. His face has grown pale, his sandy beard seems to have grown more pointed, his eyes have turned a light bay color and very dull.

"Sergeyi Vasilyevitch!" rings out, at this moment, the manly, pleasant, and, at the same time, courage-inspiring voice of Skobelev. Serozha quickly puts spurs to his horse and gallops up. The General says something to him; he turns his horse and rides down the hill.

"Your Excellency, permit me to go with my brother," I say to the General.

"Am I detaining you? Go your way," he says, smiling. I set out and speedily overtake Sergeyi.

"Where has the General despatched you?" I ask him. We are riding at a trot along the foot of a hillock; on its crest, among the trees, the chain of our outposts is located.

"I am ordered to inquire about the men of Kuban; they

are stationed here on the left," my brother replies, urging on his little Turkish nag. The bullets follow us even here, although, apparently, they ought not to fall here, since, according to my calculations, behind the hill should be a safe place, in spite of which they fly past now with a whiz, now close to us, and bury themselves in the earth, hissing like melted lead dropped in water.

"How do you feel? you're not at home here, brother?" Sergyei asks, laughing, and on his bold face, framed in a shaggy black beard, a caressing smile makes its appearance.

What is he laughing at? Is it a laughing matter? And why is he so eager to go here? It is another matter with me; I am in the service, but what is he? a civilian, a burnt place on the side of a pancake, that should be cut off. And, if he is killed, no one will thank him. And I grow vexed at my brother, and not because he has incurred danger, but because Sergyei is, evidently, braver than I am, and has seemed to jest at my faint-heartedness. Has he not already perceived it in my countenance? I summon up as much courage as possible, outstrip him and ride on in front of him.

"Where are you going? Not that way; follow me!" he shouts, and we ascend to the right, upon an outlying elevation, into a shady grove. Not far off, among the trees, flit the figures of hurrying Cossacks, holding their horses by their bridles.

"Wait here a bit," shouts Sergyei, and disappears among the shadows of the grove, whence resounds the reverberating crash of rifles.

I dismount, grasp my horse's bridle, and seat myself on the grass behind a tree, in such a way that no random shot shall reach me. "How is this?" I say to myself, "I am such a coward and yet I considered that I deserved the George at the battle of Selvi! Of course, they will give the cross of the George to those officers who do not mind the bullets, as, for instance, Skobeleff and my brother Vasily. I would give the George to Sergyei also,—he's a desperate fellow!" At that moment, Sergyei returns, and we ride quietly back, discussing our family affairs.

The hours pass on to mid-day. The sun glows fiercely with perpendicular rays. We approach the highway and

see Skobeleff with his escort descend from the hillock and ride along the right wing of the line. Here we frequently encounter wounded soldiers from the Kursk battalion. Clad in white shirts, girt with leather belts, they drag themselves wearily along to the ambulance corps.

We overtake the General. To the left of us runs a broad strip of dense forest. Through the crests of the trees, the blue sky peeps, but lower down lies the enemy's position, buried among the greenery. Through the interstices an incessant discharge of musketry resounds. The roar of the volleys reverberates far through the forest in a peculiar way; the smoke, on the contrary, lingers among the branches, filling the air with the acrid smell of powder. We have approached very near to our line.

Yonder, amid the grape-plants in the vineyard, soldiers' heads covered with kepis are visible. Yonder a daring little soldier rises a little, and, bending as low as possible, with his rifle in one hand, and a linen bag of hardtack in the other, runs forward, throws himself on the earth, and takes aim at some one. Here the bullets whistle more shrilly. It is evident that they fly from a shorter distance.

Yonder are two more soldiers, bent double and running along the line, now hiding and again showing themselves, and finally disappearing altogether. Further on, beyond the Kursk men, follows the chain of dismounted Vladikavkazians. With their long-skirted Cossack coats tucked up under their dagger-straps, their swarthy visages beneath their black caps, amid the fire and smoke of the rifles, remind me of those Caucasian heroes whom I had seen in ancient pictures representing Caucasian battles. At the same time, it strikes me that the Cossacks understand far more cleverly than the soldiers how to take advantage of the accidents of the locality; they concealed themselves hastily behind trees, or bushes, squatted down cautiously, peered out, fired, and again concealed themselves. We had met but few wounded Cossacks in comparison with soldiers, as yet.

From this point Skobeleff rides further along the line of artillery, which is not far away. But I was sent to the rear, I do not remember why.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, I am standing by the highway with my comrades, and we are discussing the point, whether we shall succeed in dining in Plevna, for

we shall certainly sup there. From the spot where we stand, a fine view of Plevna is to be had.

"Look, gentlemen, look! see-e-e what a line of carts is moving out of the town, along the road to Sophia. What's the meaning of that, hey? It means that they are clearing out," joyfully exclaims handsome Captain Shanaeff, and, removing his small cap from his sturdy, gray head (Shanaeff, in his quality of a native-born mountaineer, wears a small cap), he points out with it the direction which they are taking. We all gaze intently, and see that a long train of carts really does stretch out behind the city. As they are all departing in the same direction, they extend along the highway for several versts. At this moment, my brother Sergyei dashes past us, on his way back to the rear.

"Where are you going?" I shout to him. He halts and waves his hand to me. I look, and perceive that his arm is wrapped up in something white. . . . Eh, really, he is wounded! I gallop up to him.

"Bind it up, brother," he entreats me, in haste, and stretches out his arm. I undo the bandage, and below the elbow there appears a deep gash from a bullet, the wound being enveloped in a coarse Bulgarian towel with gold-embroidered ends, and that in such a manner that the embroidery falls directly upon the wound. Coax him as I would, he would not go to the ambulance tent, but returned immediately to the General.

In the meantime, the longer it went on, the more difficult did it become to defend our position. All our corps, hastening along one after the other, had passed into the line. As we had but one battalion of infantry, Skobelev ordered the Cossacks into the vanguard, enjoining them to make haste and to repulse the shock of the enemy with volleys of musketry. In this way the companies lost not a few men, and they were replaced by fresh ones as far as possible. The Kursk battalion remained in line without relief, and at the end of the day it had lost half its numbers.

The sun had set, the cannonade had ceased; only, far away, on the right flank, it must be in Krüdner's troops, occasional discharges from the guns still resound, though



SOTNIK SHANAEFF.

even they are becoming silent. Night, gradually, little by little, is taking Nature into her embrace, and fettering her, as it were. Yonder, in front, I can barely make out the dark silhouettes of the tapering minarets and mosques of Plevna. Their tips are faintly outlined against the crimson sky, ominously suggestive, where the sun has gone down, of a bloody day.

Everything around becomes more and more deeply plunged in darkness, as though in some gulf.

"Have you seen the fourth company?" Lyapin unexpectedly inquires, coming from behind the angle of the grove.

"I think they are stationed yonder on the left," I reply.

"No, the Kuban men are there." Lyapin, deeply pre-occupied, turns to the right and disappears into the darkness. Through the stillness of the night, discreet voices are incessantly to be heard inquiring: "Where's the Colonel?" . . . "Have you seen the second company?" . . . "Hey, who's there? Cossack, halt! where's the General?" and so on.

I dismount, descend the slope and approach the trees, where the horses of several officers are standing; the dew-soaked grass cleans off my dusty boots perfectly. I run across the commander of the regiment. He seems delighted to meet me, and orders me abruptly:—

"Verestchagin, go and ask the Osetini why they haven't yet joined the line?" I mount my horse again and ride off. "They all went away long ago, they had been left alone!" Levis shouts after me.

From the tone of his voice, it is evident that things are not going particularly well with us!

"Here's your supper in Plevna!" I say to myself, as I thread my way among the trees and bushes. I meet Shanaeff. "Where are you bound?" he shouts. — "To the Osetini." — "So am I; let's go together!" We advance cautiously through the darkness, now at a trot, again step by step, at times bending aside the branches of the trees in order not to lose our caps. We descend from the hill into the gorge, and ride through luxuriant grass which has already been trampled down in places, and finally reach the Osetini. Quietly, noiselessly, they stand in an open line, without dismounting, along a wooded eminence. This eminence is more elevated than the others, and therefore its

prolonged crest, together with the men and the trees, is still a little illuminated by the last reflections of the setting sun. Behind the Osetini, and also on horseback, is seen the impressive figure of their commander, old Esenoff. Seventy years of age, if not more, tall, gaunt, gray, with a long beard as white as flax, this old man always inspired me with special respect. What valor, what vigor, what powers of endurance he possessed, and at what an age! And now, for instance, when we rode up to him, how gallantly he sat there, though he certainly had not dismounted all day long! Esenoff was a little deaf, and therefore did not notice our approach.

"A-a-a! retreat! Good, good!" he says, in surprise, with a slight lisp, and in a low voice he communicates the order to his subordinates, in his mountain dialect.

"Let us ride along and see whether any wounded have been left here," cries Shanaeff to me, dashing a little way ahead, and turning to the right along the line. For half an hour we ride in this direction, among the trees; we emerge from the grove where the slope of the hill begins. Below, in the darkness, on the enemy's position, thick forms of trees are outlined indistinctly. I involuntarily draw rein and halt my horse before this gloomy spectacle. We enter the woods again and ride on; we halt and listen with trepidation, and finally come out on the highway. All at once, amid the general silence, the powerful, lisping voice of Skobelev rings out:—

"Bring up one cannon here!"

After this we can hear some one dashing noisily along the highway. After a short interval the rumble of wheels resounds, the sound of the cannon itself, and then the General's voice again:—

"Move forward, fire a few shots, and give the Turks to understand that we will have the last discharge!"

The gun is brought into position, and several shots are fired. These discharges reverberate in a lonely, melancholy, hopeless way, no one replies to them, and thus ends the day of July 18.

Midnight. The golden stars flash out brightly in the dark blue sky. Everything is quiet round about. The

fresh, healthful night air has calmed all and lulled them to sleep. The wounded alone do not sleep; prolonged groans, which rend the soul, are wafted from the spot where they have all been collected together.

The Cossack troops have disposed themselves not far from the wounded. My company, the third, is also stationed there; but, as I am now not on good terms with the commander, I do not go there to sleep, but lie down under a tree, beside one of my comrades. My Lamakin has lain down also, with the horses, not far away. The night is beautiful, breathing is easy; only the crunching of the unthreshed oats between the teeth of the horses, and the rustling of the ricks resound monotonously through the silence. For a long time I cannot get to sleep, but drowsiness finally conquers. Through my doze I hear a clamor, the rumble of wheels, the clatter of cannon, the squeaking of carts. I jump up and look, and the detachment is retiring. Company after company draws up in line, then disappears into the darkness.

I run to my horse; it is not there.

"Lamakin, Lamakin!" I shout to my Cossack. He is nowhere in sight. I run to the place where the third company had been, and it is not there, it has already withdrawn.

"Well, what a fool that Lamakin is! When I expressly ordered him to remain on that spot until I should call him!" I say, as I push my way along on foot in pursuit of my company. Behind stretch many wagons.

"What, Sotnik, on foot?" Esaul Skaritovsky cries, laughing, as he overtakes me with his troop. I explain the situation; I see the Cossacks begin to laugh. It is with difficulty that Skaritovsky consents to give me an extra horse in order to overtake Lamakin. Five minutes later I overtake the latter.

"What do you mean, you so-and-so, by going off alone?" I shout angrily to him.

"I searched for you, your Honor, but you were not under that tree," the Cossack says, in self-justification, "and so I rode on. I thought that you had gone on foot."

"You thought, you thought! You're always thinking!" I grumble, changing to my own horse, and at that moment I remember that I had risen in the night, and that on my return I had probably mistaken the tree and had lain down

under the wrong one. And it had not occurred to Lamakin to look about him.

We ride wearily, without any interchange of words, and feel disposed to sleep. But now the sun appears, warms us up, and gradually drives away the universal drowsiness. The bashliks, which envelop the necks of the Cosacks, are gradually cast aside, and, together with their felt cloaks, are fastened on behind the saddle with thin, strong straps. The sun enlivens every one. Conversations begin all around, on the subject of the battle of the preceding day, of course. Nearly all the chiefs and officers are riding in front, around Skobelev, and I join them. The country is open and level. Here and there, amid the greensward, isolated trees are seen. Ahead of us, and a little to the left, a small settlement can be seen surrounded by dark thorn hedges; further on, along the course of the winding, glittering rivulet, small fires seem to be smouldering; a little to the right lie some heaps.

"What are those?" the officers are to be heard inquiring: "knapsacks; no, great-coats." We approach and see, in reality, a pile of abandoned knapsacks, coats, kettles, tents, kepis, and all sorts of soldiers' appurtenances. The little fires which we had descried from a distance had, evidently, served to cook the food of troops who had but just passed by, as a quantity of oxen's insides are lying all about. Thin, bluish streams of smoke are borne from the dying embers by the gentle breeze.

Something disagreeable steals into my soul at the sight of this abandoned property of the soldiers. Of course, we had already heard, during the night, that orders had been received from Shakovsky to retreat, that our troops were in disorder: but to what an extent they were really disorganized had never entered my head any more, I think, than it had the heads of any one of my comrades. It was all the more difficult for us to conceive of anything terrible, because our detachment, under Skobelev, had not only fulfilled its appointed task, and had not been beaten back, but had even advanced.

We ride further along the same level plain. About three versts further on, we see something white and straggling. We draw near, and it turns out to be half a hundred stretchers containing our dying, covered with white sheets, scattered in disarray over a field. Some of the wounded were

already dead; others, as they died, emitted a white foam from between their set teeth. Myriads of flies had settled down upon the miserable men, and were rejoicing in the heat over such a festival. Only now did the horrible reality disclose itself to our eyes. There was no doubt but that our army had been beaten, and was fleeing, having abandoned everything, even its wounded. Such a horror we had never expected, and for a long while we ride about the stretchers, amazed and grieving. Finally, we recover our senses and take the matter in hand. We bury the dead, and load the living upon carts, and take them with us.

We proceed a little further, then halt to rest, near a small hamlet. Not far away we again behold a stock of articles pertaining to a military outfit — coats, caps, kettles, and, especially, a great many knapsacks. All this lies, not in a heap, but scattered about over the little square. Near by strides a sentinel, with a rifle. I approach the soldier, in company with some of my comrades, and inquire: —

“To what regiment do you belong?”

“To the Vologda regiment, your Honor.”

“What are you doing here?”

“I am in charge of these things.”

“Where are our men?”

“They have gone on ahead,” — and the soldier points to the Danube.

“And why did they leave you here?”

“I cannot tell.”

“Are you to wait here long?”

“I do not know, your Honor.”

At that moment several of our Cossacks come up and begin to rummage about among the things, precisely as though they belonged to them, pull out a boot, inspect it, fling it down, take up another, and shove the things aside with the sheaths of their sabres. The sentinel flings himself valiantly on the Cossacks, and a dispute begins. Shouts arise: —

“What do you want? Are these yours, pray?”

“Perhaps they are yours!” and so on. We order the Cossacks to take themselves off to their own place.

We have not advanced twenty versts when a new and even more melancholy spectacle presents itself. From

the summit of a slight eminence we can see our soldiers marching across the plain, as far as the eye can reach, here scattered abroad, singly, there in groups of five or six men, and in other places of forty or fifty. No officers are to be seen with them.

There it was, our army, our victorious army!

"Has it traversed so many thousands of versts," I said to myself, "in order to flee now in so disgraceful a manner?" The soldiers are walking along exactly as though they were disbanded, and of discipline there is not a trace. We overtake one party, consisting of about fifty men. Here are seen kepis with red bands, and white bands, and with blue; here are artillerymen and dismounted cavalrymen — in a word, troops of every description! One is walking along with his great-coat thrown over his shoulders, another has put his arms through his sleeves, a third has hung his carelessly rolled upon his gun, and is carrying it as a pilgrim carries his pouch.

"My God, my God, what is going on here!" involuntarily bursts from each one of us. "Can this be our army?"

"Good-day, my friends!" Skobelev shouts to them, drawing up his horse near the group.

"We wish your Excellency health," rings out discordantly from this motley body of troops.

"To what division do you belong?"

"To the Vologda, the Arkhangelogorod, the Shuisky," comes from all sides.

"Let some one person speak," cries the General, angrily; "come, you speak," he says, addressing a swarthy young soldier in a kepi with a blue band, and his great-coat flung loosely across his shoulders. "Do you belong to the Shuisky regiment?"

"Just so, your Excellency."

"Where are your comrades?" inquires the General, gazing sternly into the soldier's face.

"Nearly all of them are here," he replies, in a monotonous, somewhat nasal tone, and glances in surprise at his comrades.

"What, all? Then, where is the commander of the regiment, where are the battalion and company commanders?" says Skobelev, and his face grows darker and darker.

In reply to this, the soldier suddenly bursts into a torrent of words. "The regimental commander is killed, the bat-

talion commanders are killed, the company commanders are dead also, and nearly all the rest are here!" Thereupon the soldier again begins to glance about him at his comrades, with a sort of piteous gaze, as though he wished to say: "Come, brothers, don't betray me; if we must perish, let it be together!" The soldier is, evidently, conscious that something evil has befallen, and in the general flight he counts himself guilty.

"What do you talk such nonsense to me for?" shouts Skobelev. But the soldier is already excited, he feels no fear, and again bursts forth in the same monotonous tone.

"When we marched forward to the attack, your Excellency, when we made the attack . . . we took the first earthworks . . . we took the second earthworks . . . we took the third . . . and then, we look, and our artillery has retreated, . . . and we sit and sit, and then we retreat too. Then they begin to cut us up, to cut us up. . . . And they kill the regimental commander, and they kill the company commanders, and they kill the subalterns. . . ." All this the soldier said very fast, without taking breath, exactly like a schoolboy who, having hesitated over a word, and afterwards recalled it, proceeds with still greater vigor.

"Where are you going now?" asks Skobelev, gazing at the throng.

"Home!"

"To the Danube!"

"To Russia!" resound the varied answers. Thereupon some of them, by way of explanation, wave their hands, in a kind of desperation, towards the Danube.

We halt beside several other groups, and make inquiries. The answers which we received were almost identical; the only difference consisted in our hearing the Yaroslaf regiment instead of the Shuisky, the Rylsk instead of the Vologda, and the Penza instead of the Arkhangelogorod, and instead of the word "earthworks" they said "trenches." All, to a man, complained of the artillery — that it had retreated at the most critical moment, and had not sustained the attacking forces with its fire.

As we proceed, we hear on the left the discharges of cannon which are borne to us from the heights of Plevna. Skobelev takes several Cossacks and sets off at a gallop in the direction of the firing. On the following day I heard his account of this trip. Out of all the divisions, Mikhail

Dmitrievitch found at their post only General Gorshkoff with his brigade. Gorshkoff was seated on a drum. Before him were drawn up several battalions, whom he was preparing to flog. Near by, stood a whole heap of switches. He introduced himself to Skobelev as follows :—

“Let me present General Potier” (*i. e.* Gorshkoff, — a potter).

“Ha, ha, ha! Potier,” laughed Skobelev, repeating the word several times to Levis. “Then,” said Skobelev, “Gorshkoff turned to his soldiers and shouted to them: ‘You rascals! what did you mean by running — hey — running? I’ll give it to you, curse you! I have three houses in Petersburg, and a hundred thousand rubles in money, and I’m not afraid of anybody; and you have nothing but lice, and you are cowards! I’ll thrash you for that, I’ll thrash you all; lie down, you villains!’ The soldiers lie down. Gorshkoff calms down and shouts to them: ‘Come, now, get up; God forgives you!’”

After that, every time that the affair of the 18th of July before Plevna was under discussion, Skobelev mentioned Gorshkoff affectionately, and called him a fine fellow.

CHAPTER XII.

DMITRY IVANOVITCH SKOBELEFF.

I WAS soon obliged to ride once more to the headquarters at Tirnovo. One morning I had just dressed, and stepped out of my tent to admire the sun, when I beheld Skobelev not far off, washing himself beside his tent. Krukovsky, a young orderly in a black coat, was pouring water on his hands from a brazen ewer. The General was in undress. His red silk shirt was tucked into blue cavalry trousers with red stripes; his sleeves were rolled up above his elbows, his boots were polished, and he had on his spurs. With legs planted far apart and head thrown back, he was vigorously and noisily gargling his throat.

"Verestchagin!" he shouts, on catching sight of me.

I approach. The General proceeds with his ablutions; he soaps his hands and face, takes water in his mouth and sends it out in a stream through the nostrils of his huge nose, snorting and splashing like a duck. Krukovsky hands him a folded towel. As there is no occasion for haste, and the detachment is not to march anywhere, the General does all this in a very leisurely way; he unbuttons wide the slanting collar of his shirt; wipes his long, wet neck, seizes in the towel his thick, light whiskers, and his close-cropped hair, which is already growing very thin, and only after this does he turn to me with the question:—

"You have been in Tirnovo, it seems? You know the road?" He takes a step in the direction of the tent, and lifts from the table a small hand-mirror.

"Yes, your Excellency, I have been there."

"Then, please to go again and fetch me a cask of good wine, and see my father—he's there, with the Grand-duke. Bring as much money from him as you can, and ask whether he has not a white horse; say that two of mine were killed on the 18th of July. Do you hear?"

Then Mikhail Dmitriyevitch opens his mouth terribly

wide, and inspects his throat minutely in the mirror. Having finished his inspection, he binds on his black uniform tie, hangs on his order of the George, puts on a clean coat of unbleached linen, and sets to brushing his sandy whiskers vigorously with two brushes at once, right and left, extending his neck and making wild grimaces the while.

"So go when you like, only report yourself to General Tutolmin now," he says, and, dismissing me with a wave of his hand, he enters his tent. For some time longer, I can see him through the open flap, scenting himself from a scent bottle, pouring the scent down the collar of his linen coat, on his breast and on his handkerchief. Skobelev was remarkably fond of scenting himself. He always carried about with him a whole battery of assorted phials, scent bottles and eau de cologne.

An hour and a half later I was already on my way to Tirnovo, escorted by six Cossacks.

On this occasion the city struck me as very tiresome. The disaster to our army on July 18 had, evidently, produced an overwhelming impression on all here. The Grand-duke was not there, he had gone away to a hamlet called Byela, to the Emperor. The inhabitants had a demoralized look, there were but few troops, and neither music nor songs were to be heard. Depression reigned everywhere. Skobelev, Sr., seemed to brighten up somewhat on seeing me, and I conversed with him for a long time about his son and the affair of July 18.

"Well, come to me before you set out on your return; I will write a letter to Misha and send him something," he said though his nose, giving me but two fingers in parting.

I go to him in the evening. Dmitry Ivanovitch hands me a letter and a small pill-box, tied up with a slender cord. A few gold pieces were rattling about in the pill-box.

"Give these to Misha, and tell him that I have no more horses; I gave him two, and they have been killed, so now he must manage as best he can, — one can't keep him supplied."

The old gentleman was close-fisted, and not given to spoiling his son. His bronzed, sunburned face, with very large features, and its thick frame of reddish beard, was expressive of harshness and obstinacy.

"M-m-m, the old miser!" bellowed Mikhail Dmitriye-



DMITRI IVANOVITCH SKOBELEFF.

vitch, on receiving the packet from me. "And he has no horses?" he grumbles, untying the box and placing the ten half-imperials which it contains in his long silk purse with rings; he breaks the seal of his father's letter, reads it, and goes off to his tent in a very discontented frame of mind.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAMP BY THE VILLAGE OF DOIRAN.

WE remained in Paradim one day. On the 23d of July we advanced to the hamlet of Doïran, about six versts from the town of Lovtcha. This was a capital place; of all the places where we had been stationed, none had ever pleased me so much. The camp was pitched not far from the shore of the Osma; there was a watering-place there. Along the stream, on both sides, in the direction of Lovtcha, stretched farms, with magnificent fruit orchards. Some of them were surrounded by wattled fences and stone walls. Others stood unhedged, in the form of groves. August was approaching, the fruit was getting ripe. When you were on your way to bathe or to drive, you were certain to see somewhere in an orchard a Cossack on horseback, standing erect in his stirrups, and putting into his fodder-bag dark purple plums or huge green walnuts. There were also quantities of pears and grapes. Some fruits also grew here in the nature of plums, only perfectly round and of a yellowish color, very sweet, but particularly delicious. The Cossacks called them "lytcha." We all ate them with the greatest satisfaction.

To the left of the camp, looking towards Lovtcha, ran mountains, covered in places with forests, and in places bare and rocky. Our line of sentinels was two versts distant from the camp, and ran along the crest of hills, also covered with fruit trees: on their slopes grew grapes. From these hills the land slopes away and forms a valley covered with greenery, vines and fruit trees. To the left, along the valley, past the foot of the mountains, wound the river Osma. In places it glittered in the sunlight, and again it was lost between the tortuous banks. Four versts in front of the advance posts, Lovtcha, so familiar to me, gleamed whitely.

“Yonder,” I say to myself, as I stand on the crest of a hillock, “is where the Selvi road should run down the slope to the bridge; directly after it comes a long street, which runs the whole length of the town and terminates at the cemetery, on this side of the town. How came our men to let Lovtcha slip from their grasp? It can’t be taken again very soon; just see what earthworks are visible there, before you reach the town!”

Parallel to our line of sentries runs the highway to Plevna, like a white ribbon, and is lost behind the hills. Far away, parallel with the road, rise lofty, blue mountains.

It was delightful here in Doiran, especially towards evening, when the heat had decreased. I remember one of these evenings. The sun is on the point of setting; officers and Cossacks have crept out of their tents, to breathe the fresh air; the sounds of laughter and conversation are heard everywhere. I betake myself to my quarters, near where the horses are picketed; there the horses are being put in order. Some have already been watered, and are having their fodder-bags, full of barley, bound on; others are just setting out. Not far off, a swarthy young Cossack, mounted on a plump, brown horse, and arrayed only in his shirt and trousers, is leading two other horses by their bridles. The horses have just had their bath; their hair clings flat and shines, their tails are wet and pointed, and the water is trickling from them. The Cossack rides up to the picket station, drops the bridles, leaps briskly to the ground, places on his horse’s neck a feed-bag, which is in readiness, and, while the animal twitches its ears and munches its oats, he grooms it; he wipes off its neck, its back, under its belly and its legs with hay, rubs it with his hands and fondles it, as far as he understands how. All around, the snorting of horses and the munching of barley is heard; at times this noise is interrupted by the cries of the Cossacks, “Stand still, you imp!” — “Hey, deuce take you!” and so on.

On my return from the picketing spot, I see Levis come out of his tent and begin to stroll about in the cool air, in a black lasting vest; his gray, closely cropped head is

uncovered. With his plump white hands behind his back, he is walking back and forth along a narrow path, worn hard, past the guard of the standards. The latter fastens his eyes upon the "regimental commander," and meets and accompanies him with a movement of the head. From time to time, when the commander arrives opposite his tent, he dives into it, as it were, but comes again into the light, after a moment, wiping his long gray moustache with his plump hand.

I know why Oscar Alexandrovitch drops in there. He is sipping the red wine which stands on a little table beside his bed; this wine is the very same that I brought to Skobelev from Tirnovo. The General has given the Colonel the entire cask. Levis is very fond of good wine.

"Verestchagin!" shouts the commander, on catching sight of me.

I approach.

"Will you have some wine?" he asks, hospitably.

I thank him, take a glass and try it—it really is very fair.

"And, do you know," says Oscar Alexandrovitch, "I have sent in your name for the cross of the George, for the fight at Selvi. Are you pleased?"

"Very much obliged, Colonel; how could I fail to be pleased! But will it get through?"

"Why shouldn't it get through? Tutolmin signed it; Parentzoff himself takes with him to-day to Zotoff all the recommendations for the 11th, yours among the rest.

At that moment, Tutolmin approaches rapidly; his cap sits rather on the back of his neck, his left hand rests on his dagger, his right he flourishes after the Cossack fashion, and he, also, says to me:—

"Well, sir, you are recommended for the George. Colonel Parentzoff will take the recommendations to General Zotoff, and he will exert his personal influence in behalf of yours." And Ivan Feodorovitch looks at me as much as to say, "It seems as though you might be content."

I go to Parentzoff's tent. Nearly all the officers are congregated there; they are all seeing off the chief of staff, who bears with him their recommendations for rewards. Each man, of course, reminds him of his own, and entreats him not to forget.

The chief of staff, in an oil-cloth paletot with shoulder-



GENERAL LEVIS-OF-MENAR.

straps, and a leather travelling-bag slung across his shoulders, is bustling about, and, with a business-like air, making his preparations to depart to the corps staff. He bids farewell to all, to me among the rest, and promises that my presentation for reward shall be put through without fail, and that he will attend to it personally.

Three or four days later, as I am passing my brother Sergyei's tent, I look in, and he beckons to me. I enter.

"Do you think, brother, that you will get the George?" he says, with a serious face in which vexation is to be discerned.

"Really, I don't know. Levis has promised, so has Tutolmin, and Parentzoff himself carried the presentation," I reply.

"Well, give up thinking about it, brother. I have just come from Zotoff; and I heard, quite by accident, all your presentations reported to him. Of yours the remark was that it was good for nothing, and Zotoff threw it out. You may be sure that I should not lie about it." And my enraged brother pressed my hand. And, in point of fact, from that time forth, I never heard anything more about my George; so that was the end of that!

Towards evening on that same day, some one rides up on horseback to our tent, and shouts:—

"Gentlemen, let's go and have a bath!"

I step out and behold Indris Dudaritch (this was Shanaeff's name) sitting there on his brown Turkish steed, which he had already succeeded in fattening up like a sucking pig. Behind him is a Cossack, also mounted, holding under his arm a small rug, a towel, and other appurtenances of the bath. Pavel Ivanovitch also comes forth, but declines to go.

"No, I don't bathe; I'm afraid to; the fever torments me," he says, wrapping his striped ticking tunic about him. Several of our comrades assemble; we come to an understanding and set out.

At one spot, half a verst from the camp, the shore of the Osma had a long slope, covered with small pebbles; the bottom was firm and sandy, and the bathing very agreeable. I wore a small cross on a long, slender, gold chain—a gift from my mother before I set out for the wars. In order not to lose it, I took it off, laid it under a bush and forgot it. In the morning I went for it in haste—there

was no cross there. I ran to the river, but it was too late; there had been a shower in the course of the night, and the Osma had overflowed to such an extent that it had flooded everything far and wide, both shore and bush where I had bathed.

We bathe and ride back. From the camp resound the roar of the *talambas* and the voices of the singers. It is difficult to make out the subject of the song, but, as we approach, I hear that they are singing, "The Snowball Tree." The accent of the rhythm is borne distinctly to the ear.

"I planted me a snowball tree
 Upon the bank so steep;
 Grow, grow, my snowball tree,
 Grow and waver not.
 Grow, grow, my snowball tree,
 Grow and waver not.
 Live thou on, my sweetheart free,
 Live and do not weep."

"Oo-oo-oo," chimes in the *talambas*.

"That must be at Przhelensky's! What sort of a festival has he on hand?" My comrades discuss the matter on the way. "Festival, indeed! it's always a festival with him!"

"Grief will come and heart-break.
 Go, walk thy grief away.
 Go, meet with thy beloved one,
 And walk thy grief away."

The singers shout out the words, "Go, meet with thy beloved one," with peculiar ardor. The carouse lasts until long after midnight, and the hoarse voices of the singers resound through the silence of the night. It is late when I reach my tent. My tent-mate, Pavel Ivanovitch, is not there yet. He is drinking the dregs yonder. I lie down, but do not sleep — the singers prevent me. And here they are beginning for the tenth time, at least, their favorite: —

"Of snow we've had enough, upon the thawed earth ly-y-ying,
 And enough, ye little Cossacks, of weeping and of cry-y-ying."

I cover myself with my felt cloak, to deaden the sounds. I thrust my head under my folded tunic, which serves me as a pillow, but no — the *talambas* go on roaring as though in my very ears. But sleep is stronger than any *talambas*.

One day a throng of Cossacks congregated in the camp, amid the picketed horses; they are looking at something and laughing and making comments. I draw nearer and see a couple of Bashi-buzuks standing there under the guard of several Cossacks, with their hands tied behind their backs. One of them is a tall, gaunt old man, with a black beard, in a white turban, a variegated jacket and blue trousers, with bare feet. The other was a young man with a bare, shaven head, clad only in a coarse white linen shirt and similar trousers. The young man had the air of a bandit; small of stature and very broad across the shoulders, his face was beardless, and his eyes were small and vicious; a broad slash, which had healed over, ran down the entire length of his left cheek. The old man was making some good-natured reply to the Cossacks, and flourishing his hands; but the young man maintained an obstinate silence, and glanced about askance on all sides like a wolf.

"Look to it well, my men; that fellow will escape alive!" I heard an exclamation from the crowd as I came up.

That same night, when the whole camp was asleep, an uproar arose and shouts resounded, "Catch them, hold them! here, they ran this way; mount and gallop!" Then the sound of some one galloping off is heard, and after him another and another.

"Rascals! they released them!" growls my Pavel Ivanovitch, rising from his bed.

I understood that the sentries had released the prisoners. I flew out of my tent, buckling on my sword in haste. Lamakin had already had the wit to saddle my horse. I sprang into my saddle and dashed after the Cossacks. The latter, having spread out into a long line, were galloping in the direction of Lovtcha. It was beginning to dawn. Ten minutes had not elapsed before we were over three versts from the camp. Not finding the fugitives, we halted and began slowly to retire, carefully examining every bush and every ditch. The Bashi-buzuks must be behind us; in so short a time they could not have fled so far.

The sun had not yet made its appearance. The mist which had hung over us during the night had begun to disperse. The dark clumps of trees began to be separated from each other by small green meadows, covered with sil-

very dew. And yonder, on the height, our camp has made its appearance; and still nothing of the Bashi-buzuks, absolutely nothing. The Cossacks search and investigate on all sides, shout to each other, — in vain; the men have disappeared, and that is the end of it.

“Stop, here, by Heavens, here, comrades, come hither!” rings out a joyous voice. The Cossacks betake themselves at a trot to a tall, luxuriant walnut tree. One of them has already leaped from his horse and taken aim at the top of the tree. I gallop up and behold, amid the branches, almost at the very summit, a concealed human figure. Then ensues a regular hunt, only not after a wild beast but after a man. The first shot rings out, — it is not fatal; the Bashi-buzuk is violently agitated, clutches at a lower branch, and seems in a fainting condition. I want to see his face, but I cannot. Another shot resounds. The Turk leaps up bodily, slips downward, but again clutches with hands and feet, and continues to hang parallel to the earth. Two shots are fired simultaneously. The Turk drops his hands powerlessly, falls head downward, and stretches out heavily on the damp grass, having lost his white turban by the way. It was the old man. At the same moment, they shot the other Bashi-buzuk, the young fellow, on another tree near by. He had concealed himself so well that, had it not been for our hitting upon the old man, we should never have thought of looking for him there.

The river Osma had overflowed widely on account of the rain; the crossing was difficult, and meanwhile we learned that the nine-pounder battery of Colonel Gudema had arrived on the other shore, and that it was indispensable that it should be ferried across to our side. Cossacks were sent to his aid; this was on August 2. I mount my horse and go to take a look at the battery.

While I am still at a distance, I see the caisson, harnessed to four chestnut horses, descending the opposite bank. One such caisson has already been upset by the dark brown flood, and lies yonder a little to the left, in the middle of the channel; the turbid water pours on and washes over the green wheels projecting from the water, encircled by their tires, which gleam in the sun.

“Go-go-go-u-u-u,” gabbles the throng of artillerymen urging on the horses; on the caisson sits the whiskered driver, clad only in his shirt, which is rolled up to his very armpits. He brandishes his whip fiercely and shouts louder than all the rest. Thirty of our Cossacks, entirely naked, and on horseback, are also floundering about there; some of them have ridden into the water to their very saddles, and, having fastened one end of the rope to the pole and the other to their saddles, they urge forward their horses and in this way assist the artillerymen to drag out the caisson. They proceed in the same manner with the guns. Colonel Gudema had capital horses, such as I never beheld in any other battery during the whole course of the campaign, each one better than the other.

The artillery could not be brought over in a moment; I managed to dine in camp. On going back, I beheld coming to meet me, on a black horse, an officer of the general staff, still quite a young man, small of stature, thin, swarthy of complexion, with no beard, but only a moustache.

“Good-morning, Verestchagin,” he says, as we come opposite each other, and I make the salute. “You bear a strong resemblance to your brother Vasily Vasilievitch, and I made his acquaintance in Turkestan.” This was Captain Kuropatkin. He was on his way to Skobelev, in the capacity of chief of staff of the detachment, in the place of Parentzoff. Kuropatkin disposed one in his favor instantly; though rather stern of aspect, he had a pleasant voice, a pale face, and small, sunken, but very lively eyes. He talked little, but clearly and intelligently. Alexei Nikolaevitch pleased all of us. All were delighted with the new chief of staff.

On the 10th of August, I am at the outposts with my company. Pavel Ivanovitch remains in camp. Night is descending. I am sitting on a little hillock, beneath a lofty tree, and admiring the view of Lovtcha. A few paces from me, among the vine-stocks, stands a mounted Cossack, at his post, who is also gazing at Lovtcha.

“Well, nothing is to be seen?” I ask the Cossack.

“Nothing whatever, your Honor; nothing is visible,” the man replies, with a fleeting glance at me, and then resumes his intent gaze.

The Plevna highway stands out more distinctly than ever amid the universal green, under the afternoon sunlight. The Turkish carts, harnessed to white oxen, drag slowly along; we can even see the animals lazily swishing their tails. How many wagons! and all of them are going to Plevna, all laden with provisions, — the Turks are laying in all sorts of stores. And here we stand and allow the Turks to victual Plevna at their leisure! Why cannot we fall upon a transport train and capture it?

At that moment, some one gallops up from behind. I glance round. A Cossack from camp dismounts a few paces from me, and, leading his horse by the bridle, he hands me a note. The handwriting is Shanaeff's. He writes that the brigade commander requests me to report myself to him immediately. I call the sergeant, order him to be very watchful, mount my horse, and gallop, at full speed, to the camp. Colonel Tutolmin is in Skobelev's tent.

"You are appointed division adjutant," Skobelev says to me, and gazes inquiringly at me. I had by no means expected this news, and, as I have no knowledge of office service and forms, I feel that I am unfitted for this post.

"I fear, your Excellency, that it will not be in my power to fulfil this appointment. I am entirely unacquainted with office work," I answer the General.

"Why so? There's no difficulty about it. However, as you please. Give your answer to Kuropatkin to-day."

I betake myself to the latter and explain the matter. Alexei Nikolaevitch reassures me and says:—

"Never mind, remain; if there is anything that you don't know, I will help you."

I consent. On the following day, my comrades read in the division orders that, in addition to the Cossack brigade, the Kazan infantry regiment, the first battalion of the Shuisky regiment, and the nine-pounder battery enter into the complement of General Skobelev's detachment. Captain Kuropatkin is appointed chief of staff, and Sotnik Verestchagin, division adjutant.



GENERAL KUROPATKIN.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE SELVI-LOVTCHA HIGHWAY.

EARLY on the morning of August 11, our regiment got under way, in order to shift its quarters to the Selvi-Lovtcha road. Crossing the Osma, we passed through a narrow, mountainous gorge. How hot that day was! The division halted midway on its journey; all, both men and horses, were exhausted. The road was stony, uneven, and very laborious. The baggage-wagons come to a stand still, the horses had expended their last strength; the men dispersed, and, getting under the shade of the trees wherever they could, they lay like dead men. I, also, was worn out, and lay down under the shadow of a bush. A good-looking young captain of the Kuban regiment, Voeikoff, attached from the uhlans of the Guard, stretched himself out beside me; his little black moustaches and his side-whiskers, which had just sprouted, were drenched with perspiration; he breathed heavily. I looked at him and was afraid that he had had a sunstroke.

Across the road, on the slope of a hillock, in the shade, sit the commanding officers, eating. Among them is Skobelev, in a white linen coat with aiglets, and the George on his neck. By his side, in a worn-out canvas pea-jacket, sits the correspondent Maximoff. He is telling the General something, and it must be something very amusing, for Skobelev throws his head back and bursts into contagious laughter.

Little by little the figures of soldiers and officers; they begin to drive up the horses again, and to strike them wherever chance directs. The wagons move on a yard or two, halt, move on again, halt again, and so on.

Late at night the division reached the appointed locality, and came to a halt on the road itself, midway between Selvi and Lovtcha. The infantry halted half a verst in advance of the Cossack division, in a dense and shady grove.

There was a splendid view of the Balkans from here. It chanced that I had been admiring them for a long time, particularly in the afternoon, on the day of Suleiman's attack on Shipka, when the cannonade began. I take my field-glass and go to the edge of the grove, seat myself in the most comfortable place I can find, facing the Balkans, and listen to see whether there is any roaring in the mountains. Yonder, far, far away, and just in the direction of Shipka, claps of thunder are actually heard. "Oo-oo-oo!" the reverberations of the cannon shake the air. I gaze through my glass at the dentated peaks, illuminated by the setting sun, to see whether I can descry smoke anywhere? No, it is a great way to Shipka. The Bulgarians say that it is sixty versts. Here comes a second clap, which roars for a still longer time. My heart contracts; the thought flashes through my head: "What are our troops doing? Will they stand firm? There are but few of them there, while the enemy numbers nearly twenty thousand! Why is not assistance sent to our men? Where is the army?" This is what tortured me at such moments.

"Give me the whole correspondence, Verestchagin, the whole of our papers!" shouts Mikhail Dmitrievitch, one day, to me, from his tent. I take my portfolio and carry it to him.

"No, my good fellow, you're not fit to manage affairs. You'll lose all my papers if you do like that," grumbles Skobelev, emptying my portfolio. "They're neither fastened together nor numbered!"

"Is it possible?" — I stand as though scalded, having never had a suspicion that papers should be sewn together and numbered. The General had never said anything to me about it. He would receive a letter on the road, say, read it, turn to me and cry: — "Put it away!" — "Take it!" Well, and I would take it and put it with the other papers, and merely take care that it should not be lost.

"No, I'll take another officer; he'll conduct affairs better! Request Colonel Tebyakin to step here."

In utter confusion, I go to the Kazan regiment, which was stationed a few paces distant; their tents gleamed white amid the trees. Nearly all the officers were already

known to me; I had been the guest of nearly all; I had sat and drunk tea with them; they all knew me, and bore themselves towards me with proper respect, as detachment adjutant. And here, all of a sudden, is such a scandal! All this flew through my head like a flash, on the way. "However," I say to myself, "what's the use of grieving particularly! I warned the General that I knew nothing about the details of office work, and I told Kuropatkin frankly that I could not endure writing, that I knew neither the forms of documents nor methods of procedure!" And I begin, gradually, to calm down and to take courage, especially when I recall a certain little unpleasantness with Tutolmin, which was brought about solely because I wrote to him in the name of the General, "I order you," instead of, "I would suggest to you. . . ."¹

"Deuce take those papers! Well, if they order me off to the regiment, I'll go. Writing in such heat is simply a penance!" And, covered with perspiration from the heat and from thinking, I enter the glade of the grove, where stood the spacious tent of the regimental commander. The orderly announces me; the commander of the regiment runs out in person.

He was an elderly gentleman, of medium height, and strongly knit, with a thick neck and a reddish complexion; he shaved his beard and cheeks and wore only whiskers.

"Come in, Lieutenant; pray, come in," he invites me most affably to enter his tent, and he buttons up his linen coat. At that moment, there was in the Colonel's tent a gaunt major, about fifty years of age, who had charge of the commissary department. At the sight of me, the major's face assumes a disagreeably flattering expression, and he shakes my hand with both of his.

"The General requests you to come to him," I deliver my message to Tebyakin.

"Do you know what for?" he inquires, as though startled, his amiable expression changing instantly into one of anxiety. The Colonel hastens to dress himself, and shouts for his orderly, while I take leave and retire to my tent, throw myself on my bed and reflect that the General will probably immediately request Tebyakin to furnish him with an officer to take my place.

The figure of the regimental commander speedily makes

¹ *Predpisyvaiu*, instead of *Predlagaiu*.

its appearance from the grove, in uniform, white trousers, and with sword. He approaches the General's tent cautiously, on tiptoe, halts beside the Cossack on duty, and asks some question of the latter in a whisper. The Cossack answers in a whisper and points to the General's tent. The regimental commander takes off his cap, with its broad, golden galloon of a staff officer, draws from a rear pocket a dark blue silk handkerchief, mops his brow, his small bald spot, and his neck with it, grasps his collar at the spot where it is fastened and pulls at it as though his uniform were strangling him, and then, drawing his hand mechanically, as it were, along the edge of his uniform, as though to convince himself that all the buttons are fastened, he clears his throat, and, stepping out at the full extent of his stride, he takes his way to the entrance of the tent. The General's voice is heard.

"Who's there? Ah, Colonel! Pray, come in!" Ten minutes later the Colonel emerges from the tent again, and, holding his sword by the hilt, he disappears into the grove with the same troubled face and cautious step.

"Whom will he send to the General?" I say to myself, as I lie still on my felt cloak. Not more than half an hour later, a well built young officer makes his appearance. "Ah, it's Lisovsky! Well, he's a good fellow. I know him; I have met him several times, and I have always admired him as skilful and good-looking, and his manners are good."

Lisovsky approaches the Cossack on duty, and puts some question to him in a whisper. The Cossack points to my tent, and the officer comes in my direction. Lisovsky is dressed with exquisite neatness: his uniform is perfectly new; his trousers, like those of the regimental commander, are white, but how can one compare the regimental commander's with these? These are as white as snow. Where in the world did he get them? Probably, he had had them washed and ironed in Russia, then he had folded them up and wrapped them in paper (but not in a newspaper, for newspaper smooches), and had put them in his valise. His gloves also are snow-white. We greet each other like old acquaintances, and go together to the General. Tebyakin has probably told Skobelev whom he should send, for the latter, on hearing our footsteps, shouts from the tent, "Pray, come in, Lisovsky!" We enter.

"Please to take these papers from Sotnik Verestchagin. You will put them in the most accurate order, number them, and sew them together. Do you understand?"

"Yes, your Excellency," replies the officer, takes the papers from me, bows pleasantly, and retires to his quarters.

About one o'clock in the afternoon, Krukovsky, the General's servant, summons me to dinner as usual. A few paces from the General's tent stands the table, covered with a white cloth. The diners are the General, Kuropatkin, and myself. On one side, amid the trees, we can see the bent figure of the Cossack cook, who is pouring the cabbage soup from the kettle into the plates. Skobelev, fastening a napkin beneath his chin, like a little child, eats his soup; then he stops eating and says, turning to me, "And aren't you mortified? ha, ha, ha! You've been deprived of your office! If I were in your place, I should have got angry, ha, ha, ha! Do you know, Alexei Nikolavitch, he mixed all my papers up together, and now I'm going to have another detachment adjutant," says Mikhail Dmitrievitch, good-naturedly, as he laughs and rubs his huge nose with his hand. No vexation or anger towards me can be discovered in his blue eyes, and his laugh is kindly and frank.

"Never mind, your Excellency. Verestchagin will remain with us in the vanguard; he will be useful to us," says Kuropatkin, in a serious tone, to encourage me.

I think it was on the same day that I walked through the grove with the General; the cannonade from the Balkans roared out with peculiar sharpness at that moment. Mikhail Dmitrievitch, with his hands thrust into his pockets, is thoughtfully humming some song or other, in a frightfully false voice. Then he suddenly halts, seizes the skirt of my coat, and says, with a kind of despair:—

"Do you know what—go to Shipka, to Dragomiroff; tell Mikhail Ivanovitch that blood is flowing there, with him, while we are doing nothing here but stroll about; tell him that I am ready to aid him with my troops!" Then he adds, "And fetch me some good wine from Captain Masloff at Gabrovo. Do you hear? Make haste!"

I mount my horse and set out, accompanied by a Cossack.

It is fifteen versts to Selvi; from Selvi to Gabrovo is reckoned at thirty; from there to Shipka fifteen, — in all, about sixty versts, as I count it upon the way. The sun has set. Outside of Selvi, I overtake Molsky's infantry brigade. I ride on. I behold two artillery soldiers coming to meet me at a rapid trot. Something peculiar must have occurred!

"Hail, my good fellows!" I shout to them. "What's going on with you yonder?"

"General Dragomiroff is wounded, your Honor," replies one of them, reining in his horse.

"When? Dangerously?"

"Exactly so, your Honor; to-day, in the leg." The soldiers are, evidently, in haste. I do not detain them, but ride on. The artillerymen set out at the same full trot as before, and are speedily lost in the darkness. The sound of hoofs resounds yet a while longer through the silence of the night.

I reached Gabrovo late at night, and betook myself to the commander of the town, Captain Masloff, the same with whom I had become acquainted on the occasion of that first reconnoissance, which had not taken place, of Skobeleff's in Sistovo. Masloff informs me that Dragomiroff is wounded in the leg, but not very seriously, and that he is to be brought hither to Gabrovo.

Early in the morning I learn that Dragomiroff has been brought, and I betake myself hastily to the Gabrovo monastery, which has been prepared for the wounded. It is a low building, with a large yard. I enter at the same moment that Dragomiroff is being taken from an ambulance wagon, and borne in the arms of men to the inner apartments of the monastery. I run up and help to carry him. The General, with a feeble movement of the head, thanks us all for our sympathy.

"Are you sent by Mikhail Dmitrievitch?" he asks me, having heard from Masloff that I had been on my way to him at Shipka. "Then, tell him, yes," he says slowly, in a weak, melancholy voice, "tell him in what condition you beheld me. Remember me to Mikhail Dmitrievitch," and the General nods his head and closes his eyes. I cannot bring myself to trouble him with further questions about affairs, and I soon return.

During the period of our encampment on the Selvi-



GENERAL DRAGOMIROFF.

Lovtcha road, the General often asked me to despatch Bulgarian scouts to Lovtcha, to gain information concerning the enemy. Once we learn that the Turks were preparing to make a descent upon us. That day, towards evening, Skobeleff is walking in the grove, in a nervous mood, rubbing his hands. I pass him.

“Verestchagin!” he summons me to him, lightly grasping the sleeve of my coat, and forcing me to walk beside him. “We shall have a battle to-morrow,” he says; and his face assumes a triumphant expression. “I confide myself to your care. In case I am wounded, don’t you dare to remove me from the field of battle until the fight is over. Do you hear?”

“Yes, your Excellency!” I reply. But the report proved to be untrue; there was no battle on the following day.

CHAPTER XV.

BEFORE THE BATTLE OF LOVTCHA.

WE have already spent ten days in absolute inactivity, on the highway; the scouts bring tidings which contradict each other: now that the enemy is preparing to retreat, again that he is about to attack; now that he numbers four thousand, now, eight thousand. All this has irritated Skobelev not a little.

One day, after dinner, he orders half a company of Cossacks to be got ready, mounts his horse, and rides off at a foot pace towards Lovtcha. Kuropatkin is not with us; Lisovsky and I constitute his suite. The country through which we are obliged to pass is very much cut up, full of ditches, gorges, and hills, and covered with forests. It is twelve versts to the town; the hour is three o'clock in the afternoon. After riding five versts, the General turns to me and says:—

“Sotnik Verestehagin, you will take five Cossacks, and ride on in advance; proceed as far as the enemy's outposts, bring on an interchange of shots, and try to bring me, if possible, the ‘tongue’ of an infantry soldier. Station a few men from the escort along the way; in case of anything happening, they will inform me, and then I will appear and support you. Do you hear?”

“Yes, your Excellency.” I select five Cossacks and set out. Further and further we ride, nearer and nearer to the foe.

We are obliged to proceed with great caution; the gorge is so narrow that an ambush of two would suffice to prevent any of us ever getting out. I have already posted three of my escort: of the other two, one rides fifty paces ahead of me, the other behind me.

As I had already been to Lovtcha, I knew that the city lay yonder, behind the little eminence, as though in the palm of my hand. No posts were yet visible.

The enemy must be very near. I already begin to feel my cap rising on my head with terror, and cold chills running all over my skin. "Deuce take it!" I say to myself, "the General has set me a task in very truth, to catch a foot-soldier in broad daylight! And he a Turk to boot, who won't surrender into our hands alive! He'd better try to catch the man himself!"

At that moment, the Cossack in advance suddenly leaps from his horse, and sends a shot down a small valley, which runs out before us, on the left.

"At whom are you firing? what did you see?" we shout.

"Yonder is a Turk, your Honor! the Turk is running!" shouts the Cossack cautiously, and fires again, and yet a third time.

A tall Turk, with a black beard and a white turban, is running through the valley. As he flees from us, he flourishes his hands and shouts something, as though calling some one.

"Look on the mountains, your Honor!" says the Cossack who is following, in a low voice.

I look, and at that moment the forms of men make their appearance on the crests of the mountains; on catching sight of us, they speedily disappear.

"Where are we to go now, your Honor?" when, in spite of this, I continue to advance. "They are just yonder, across the ravine."

"Didn't you hear the General's orders?"

"We heard, of course, your Honor, but they'll knock us over if we ride any further."

It really has become imprudent to advance farther. I halt and reason thus with myself: "Fire has been opened, the shots have been heard, we have been descried, the enemy is only a few hundred yards off, while it is more than ten versts to our camp. To ride farther is equivalent to walking into the lion's mouth!" I turn back, although I am conscious in my own heart that my task has not been accomplished. "But how can it be accomplished? Am I to fling myself, with my two Cossacks, on an infantry post and take forcible possession of a soldier?"

The sun is on the point of setting behind the bluish mountains when we ride up to the General.

"Well, have you brought your 'tongue'?" is his first question.

"No, your Excellency, although we opened fire, we did not succeed in catching a soldier, although we advanced nearly to the town," I say, in self-justification.

"I knew that you could not be entrusted with anything serious," retorts the General, angrily, and angry he returns to camp.

A little later on, Skobelev arranges an expedition in the same style: one evening he invites Kuropatkin, Tutolmin, Colonel Tebyakin, the battalion commanders, the commanders of the batteries, and a few other officers; he takes a staff of trumpeters, and, accompanied by ten or fifteen Cossacks, we ride once more to Lovtcha. On the road, the General chats merrily, though in a low tone, now with this officer, now with that. Laughing and jesting, we advance even beyond the spot whence I had turned back. My companions begin to exchange uneasy glances and whispers. We advance still a little farther, and come out on a hillock. Lovtcha, on fire, as it were, in the rays of the setting sun, gleams red just before us. The minarets and mosques seem even taller and more symmetrical in the twilight. We gaze and admire. But all at once the sun has set, and darkness gathers around.

"Trumpeters, sound the tattoo!" orders the General, with a lisp, and reverently removes his cap. And there, in sight of the enemy, ring out the familiar sounds, "Ta, ta, ta, ti, ta, ti, ta . . ." and so on.

Good Heavens! what an uproar arises in the town! Signals are given, horns blown, drums beaten.

We all take off our caps, and stand looking at each other while the tattoo is being played. "How will all this end?" our glances say. Skobelev dismounts, and, after standing still a moment and crossing himself, he again mounts his horse and says:—

"Come, gentlemen, let us go; it is time!"

We mount without haste and ride back, softly, noiselessly. The only sound is that of the horses' shoes ringing on the hard road. The figure of the General, in his white coat, on his white horse, stands out sharply from the rest amid the darkness. Nervously and impatiently, he urges on his pacer, now jerking at the bit, then touching him up with his spurs. It grows cool; the damp, raw smell of the

maize and vines, mingled with dust, is diffused through the air. Spark-like fire-flies flutter about; it seems as though you could catch them in your hand. The moon rises slowly from behind the mountains, and rolls smoothly on. But here is the camp.

A week later, Prince Imeretinsky joins us with the principal forces. We had now assembled more than twenty thousand bayonets and ninety guns. Prince Imeretinsky assumes the chief command. Skobelev is appointed commander of the vanguard. Captain Kuropatkin remains with him as his chief of staff. The camp is immediately moved forward, and pitched four versts from Lovtcha, at a spring. On the following day, a reconnoitring expedition on a vast scale is organized on our side and carried to a successful conclusion. All the necessary positions and commanding eminences have been taken possession of by our forces. Our loss in this operation has been about one hundred men.

I remember following the General through the vineyards after dinner on that same day. There were only we two; our escort had taken itself off somewhere; the heat was intense.

"Verestchagin, my dear fellow, pluck me that bunch of grapes yonder," the General requests me.

"Which one, your Excellency?" I inquire, leaping from my horse. "This one?"

"Why, no; yonder, that one behind you," and he points impatiently to a juicy, white bunch with a rosy tint.

As I bend down to pluck it, several bullets strike the earth with a crash, at our very feet, and even shower us with sand. The General wheels his horse round abruptly, and retreats at a gallop. Of course, I follow him as speedily as possible, having pulled the bunch of grapes, however. It was no wonder that they had fired at us almost point-blank; it appeared that we had got far beyond our lines. This is the solitary occasion within my memory, during all the time that I remained with Skobelev, when the General turned his back so quickly on bullets.

That evening, Kuropatkin takes me and a lieutenant of the Kazan regiment, Kozello, to select positions for the

artillery. While ascending the hill, my horse begins to limp badly. What has happened? It seems that one shoe is half off, and the horse cannot set down his feet properly. There is nothing with which to remove it; we have no instruments.

"Cossack, give your horse to the Sotnik," Alexei Ivanovitch orders the Cossack who is riding behind us.

I mount and order my horse to be taken to camp. No sooner have we reached the crest of the hill, and begun to ride along the brink of a broad ravine, than a bullet wounds my horse severely in the knee. The unfortunate animal makes so violent a leap that I can hardly keep my seat, and then swings the wounded leg piteously and helplessly in the air. The white smoke from the volley fired by the Turks in ambush makes its appearance from behind the bushes on the other side of the gorge. I spring from the horse and lead him by the bridle. Kuropatkin does the same, and we proceed further to survey the positions.

The positions are chosen. Kuropatkin keeps impressing upon me by the way:—

"Observe, Verestchagin, here so many cannon, here so many more. Look! you will have to post them to-night, and all must be ready in the morning. It cannot be done to-morrow; all the horses will be killed."

Having surveyed and noted, we descend to the camp. I have no sooner entered my tent than a Cossack makes his appearance to summon me to the General. I go. The General and Kuropatkin are sitting under a wide-spreading tree, drinking tea. The Cossack whose horse has been wounded under me is complaining of me and demanding a new horse for his use.

"Verestchagin, please to give your horse to this Cossack. How is it his fault that his horse was wounded under you? The Cossack is a brave fellow and desires to be constantly in action. Do you hear?" orders Skobelev.

"Yes, your Excellency! I have already promised him a Turkish horse and fifty rubles in money."

"But what is the money to me, your Honor? And a Turkish horse isn't fit to ride," retorts the Cossack, roughly. "I am always in the escort of their Excellencies, so how am I to get along without a real horse?" he adds, cunningly.

I see that the Cossack is taking advantage of a favorable moment, in order to get possession of my Kabardinetz. The situation of things is becoming grave, when Kuropatkin, quite unexpectedly, comes to my rescue.

"For a horse that has been killed, your Excellency, the Cossacks are given a certificate, and afterwards they receive forty-one rubles from the treasury," explains Alexei Ivanovitch.

"If that is so, what do you mean by coming to me? Go, get your certificate!" shouts the General, and the Cossack, displeased with the result, goes his way. Although the Cossack ought to have been punished for this trick, still, I gave him the Turkish horse; but I did not give him the fifty rubles.

It is evening. It has grown dark. I go to Kuropatkin to read over the orders and disposition for the morrow. Having received orders to take two battalions of the Libaff regiment, and, with their assistance, to drag the guns into position, I betake myself to my task.

Like a vast serpent, the cannons wind along the road in a long, dark streak. Now and then, through the silence of the night, we can hear:—

"Where's the commander?"

"Whose cannon are these?"

"Halt! a trace has given way!"

"The deuce! where are you turning to?"

"What have you stopped in the road for?—hey, you!"

The work begins. The battalion commander and several officers remain below, under the hill, but the companies break up into groups around the guns. Some of the positions prove so steep that it is necessary to unhitch the horses, and drag the guns up by hand. It is particularly difficult to drag them up the hill which the soldiers afterwards named "The Lucky," because, from the very first discharge, the fire from it was extremely successful.

A little before reaching the crest of the hill, a great many men, for some reason, clustered round the leading gun. Cries were heard: "Halt, halt! hold on, my men! Put something under the wheel! Halt! it's all right so! Don't let it roll down!" The soldiers have exhausted their strength; they are weary and want to rest.

"What are you yelling about there, as though you were at the fair!" a serious sergeant-major admonishes them, jingling his slender, bent sword, which is drawn up almost to his breast. "Rest awhile!"

Then begin a coughing and spitting; some run off to the bushes. I descend the hill a few paces, on the side of the enemy. The moon peeps out from behind a cloud, and dimly illuminates human figures which are visible at the foot of the hill. I draw nearer; it is our escort.

"Where's the company commander?" I ask, in a low voice.

"Here; what are your orders?" And a tall, thin officer, with his overcoat thrown loosely over his shoulders, springs up from beneath a tree, under which he has been lying, and, grasping his sword, in order that it may not clatter, he comes towards me. I introduce myself. "Very glad to see you, sir," comes the answer, and the officer, glancing at my shoulder-straps, touches his cap.

"Well, Captain, is nothing to be seen?" I inquire.

"So far, nothing; all is quiet." And he gazes intently in the direction of the enemy.

"There, your Honor! some little fires just flashed up yonder," remarks, in an impressive whisper, the Sergeant-major, who is standing by, and points with his hand.

"That's nothing; that's all right. Fire-flies!" says the company commander, soothingly, in the same voice.

The soldiers have formed a chain, in a line with the foot of the mountain, near the vineyards. A discreet conversation is in progress among them.

"It seems that Seryeff will not live through it," declares one, who, lying on his stomach and supporting himself on his elbows, pulls the juicy grapes from a bunch. Beside him, on their outspread cloaks, lie several of his comrades, face upwards, gazing at the moon.

"What's that?" inquires another, and, adjusting his cloak beneath his head, he also rolls over on his stomach. From the voice with which he inquires, one may judge that this news affects him more than it does the rest.

"How can he, since it went clean through him, just below the spleen!"

Silence.

"The Lord God will send something to-morrow," whispers some one in another direction.

After standing there a few minutes, I take leave of the company commander, and betake myself at a run to my station, from the direction of which cries are again heard, "Pull, pull, my men!" I run up, seize hold of a wheel of a gun-carriage, and also shout, "Come, my good fellows, a little, just a little more! Only a little remains! To the right, turn to the right, the tail of the carriage to the right!"

"Do you merely help us to pull, Mr. Sotnik, and we'll place it ourselves where it is required," says the old artillery Captain, who is, evidently, not pleased to have a Cossack officer disposing of his guns and pointing out where the tail is to be turned.

"Fedoroff, you'll have to dig a little under the tail!" he shouts to an artillery soldier.

Several artillerymen hastily fling themselves towards the gun, dig under it, turn it round, and place it where it should be. Although there were about ninety cannon in action during the day of the battle, I placed only about twenty, so far as I recollect, at the point where I had been ordered.

It grows lighter and lighter. The crests of the mountains and the enemy's position become more distinctly outlined.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE OF LOVTCHA.

It is five o'clock in the morning of the 22d of August. The sun has risen and brilliantly illuminates the surrounding country, when I approach Kuropatkin's tent with my report.

Kuropatkin is not asleep, but, bending over a small folding table, he is engaged in writing something with care.

"The guns are in place, Captain," I announce, entering the tent.

"I knew that before. Whatever is entrusted to you will be accomplished," he replies, thanks me amiably, and presses my hand. "Now, go and rest. In case the General asks for you, I will explain that I have excused you. Go, sleep."

I betake myself to my tent alongside, quite content, and in the hope of getting a good sleep.

But how can a man sleep when caissons are rumbling beside him, cannons and wheels clattering, when orders are being issued and shouts and uproar are in progress! Through the looped-up flap of my tent, I can see the earnest faces of the passing foot-soldiers, who are not marching with the precision customary at drill, but with a certain trouble and anxiety, as though each man has been seized with doubts as to whether he shall come out of it alive. Such an expression is never met with on the face of a soldier in time of peace; it can be seen only immediately before the "action" itself, or during action. It cannot be called terrified; no, it expresses rather repressed rage, vexation at one's self and at all about one. This expression becomes especially perceptible when the first shout of "Stretchers!" rings out. All conversation, laughter, jesting, instantly cease; faces become stern; to every man the thought apparently occurs, "Oh, it will be my turn directly!"

Boo-o-om! reverberates the first cannon-shot — ours; tkha-a-a-a, explodes the shell somewhere in the distance, far away, and barely audible.

Then comes a second and a third — the fire runs along the whole line.

The battle begins. "The General will not be able to restrain himself. He will ride off directly," I say to myself.

And so he does. "My horse!" rings out the familiar, lisping voice. I lift the canvas of my tent a little, and peep out; the General is sitting in Prince Imeretinsky's tent, and discussing something with him. A few moments later, both leave the tent, mount their horses, and ride away. Skobelev is on the same gray horse, only without his white coat, as on the previous evening, but in his uniform and orders; it must be that the battle is to be a real one! My comrades, the Cossacks Gaitoff and Kharanoff, whom the General has taken for his orderly officers just previous to this, mount their steeds, and, exchanging a few words in their guttural Osetin dialect, they ride off in Cossack fashion, urge on their horses, and fly in pursuit with their peculiar cry.

Lieutenant Karandyeff, in the uniform of the mounted grenadier regiment, who has come to Skobelev from headquarters, for the period of the encounter, also gallops about on his "black," not without dignity, making the animal arch his neck. The Cossacks, the escort, the adjutants, the orderly officers, all hasten after their chiefs. A Kuban Cossack, with Skobelev's pennon, which has been shot into ribbons, cannot control his horse; she wheels about in one spot, he beats her with his whip, and punches her under the belly with his feet, and finally sets off after the rest at full speed.

"Shall I lie in bed? What a disgrace! And if the General asks for me, what will he think? I'll go. Hey, Lamakin, bring round my horse!"

"Will your Honor have some tea?" says a voice, and, following upon this question, the blue top of a cap makes its appearance in the door, and, after it, Lamakin's pimply, perspiring face.

"Is it ready?"

"Yes; the teapot will boil directly."

"Well, serve it quickly."

Having hastily drunk my tea, with rye crackers, I go out to my horse.

"Come! How now, my pet? are you well?" I say caressingly to my horse; I stroke him, arrange his mane and his forelock; I examine his hoofs, and, having inspected him all round, I mount.

"Look here! put everything in proper order; and, in case anything happens, don't leave the General's baggage-wagon," I enjoin upon my Cossack, for the hundredth time.

"And what do you order for dinner?" he asks, being aware in advance that he will have nothing to cook but *borstch* (beet and bacon soup), as there are no other materials.

"Why, make some *borstch*, and can't you have some buckwheat groats?"

"Buckwheat groats are not to be had anywhere; there are still a few white groats."

"Then, go to the quartermaster of the Kazan regiment—you know the Major who was with me last evening. He has promised everything that is required. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir." And off goes the Cossack, without waiting for my departure.

I ride off in search of the General, without haste. The first heat of my zeal has begun to pass off. I think, "I shall get there in time; I shall see everything, if only they don't kill me! And if they wound me, will it be in the knee?" And I mechanically cover my knee with the skirt of my Cossack coat. "Still, it won't go through."

My horse tosses his head and bears me lightly on. His thin, black ears, with the tips inclined towards each other, are in constant motion; his shoes clatter. The day is bright; the air is pure and delicious; a light breeze is blowing. Were it not for the battle, how light one's heart would feel; but there is that "affair!" it oppresses and burdens the heart, and will not allow one any peace.

Puffs of smoke rise, now here, now there, along the whole line of our batteries. One is not dissipated before it is followed and augmented by another, which seems to shout to it, "Stop, stop! let me catch up with you!"

The position of the enemy behind the mountains is not yet visible; somewhere to the right, and low down, behind

the hill, the brisk rattle of musketry is audible; but just where cannot be distinguished.

I advance still further; the position becomes clearer. Yonder, to the left of the road, the escorting squadron of his Highness is descending the mountain. The commander, thick, corpulent Captain Kulebyakin, issues the order in a bass voice, "Right, by threes!" A memory of the Empress's Field and a parade comes over me at the sight of these picked youths of the Guard in their blue Cossack coats adorned with gold braid. Their horses are all well fed and handsome; the saddles and bits shine. But one has only to glance at the faces of the men, to convince one's self that they are not on parade; there is none of that indifference and freedom from care; one feels that something unusual is in progress. Where is their former lack of constraint? where are their jokes, their songs?

"Ah, good-morning, Sotnik!" shouts Kulebyakin, on seeing me, and turns round; I also ride towards him, and we halt and chat.

"Where are you bound? — to the General? He rode by to the scene of action, not long ago, with the Prince," and he is perfectly well aware that he is not telling me any news, and he says it only because, after having once halted and come together, it is necessary to say something.

"Well, my dear fellow, what's the news? — where's our brigade?"

"Yonder, on the right flank," I answer, and point out the direction.

"Yes — yes, it is there, I know," he replies. After exchanging a few more words, we part thoughtfully, wishing each other a prosperous journey.

"Forward ma-a-arch!" roars his thickly uttered command on the breeze.

I overtake the cannons and caissons. Here, a little apart from the road, stands a hospital wagon; the horses have bent their heads down and are rummaging about with their noses in the dusty hay; the soldier driver, stretched out on his back, pushes together with his whip the scattered bunches of hay. In the shade, on the other side of the wagon, lie the ambulance men, covered with their great-coats. They peer out anxiously from beneath the wagon, on hearing the roar of the cannons, to see whether any one is making a descent upon them. A little further on, in a

small meadow to the left of the road, a battalion of the Shuisky regiment has taken up its station, and the soldiers have not undone their rolled-up coats. The officers have assembled in a cluster, and are eating and drinking.

"Sotnik, Sotnik, turn in here, come to us!" they shout, almost in one voice. At the same time, one of them waves a sardine over his head; another, a sausage; another, a flask. It is impossible to refuse, and I ride up.

"Take that horse!" several voices shout in concert to the nearest soldier, in a tone in which reproof and pity are heard at one and the same time: — why had it not occurred to him, without a hint, to take the horse of such a man!

The battalion commander, a tall gentleman, with a light moustache, rising a little from the drun, offers me something to eat, with a good deal of dignity, inviting me, with a wave of the hand, to take a place beside him on an outspread coat.

"Pray, sir, will you not share with us what God has sent?"

All vie with each other in entertaining me, and, at the same time, they besiege me with questions: "How are matters going, where is such and such a regiment, and where is such and such another, how many guns have we in all, and where has the General gone?" The faces of all express satisfaction at having captured a man who stands so near the chiefs. With pleasure I tell them all I know, but do not let them see that there are many things of which I know nothing myself.

"What are you doing here, Major?" I inquire, turning to the commander of the battalion.

"Why, sir, we're awaiting further orders, sir; and I haven't received them so far." The Major, evidently, does not like the tone with which I address him, and, in order to put a stop to further inquiries on my part, he calls the orderly to remove the remains of the meal.

Just then the breeze bears the thunder of cannon to us; another flood of feeling prompts me to move forward to the field of action as speedily as possible. I feel rather awkward and guilty there; is it possible to sit quietly, and chat, when blood is certainly flowing a few paces away? Go I must!

"Well, gentlemen, *au revoir!* thanks for your hospitality!"

"Sit awhile, you'll get there soon enough," advises the Major, seriously.

"Wait a little, just a minute," the subalterns entreat, with childishly joyous faces.

"Take another glass of red wine, as stirrup-cup on your journey," suggest the company commanders; they are more practical and do not urge me to stay.

On the right of the highway runs a hilly slope; it grows lower and lower, and forms a small place with several large, luxuriant trees.

In the shade beneath them the "field hospital" has taken up its position. In the meadow, among the white tents, blood-stained stretchers are already visible. At the open doors of the tents, the grave faces of the surgeons can be discerned. Yonder, from one of them, emerges a soldier-assistant, with a basin in his hands, throws out the bloody water, without haste, flourishes the bowl in order to splash out all to the very last drop, and, after blowing his nose in his hand, returns indifferently to his business.

My heart grows heavy; the familiar picture of the 18th of July before Plevna rises before my imagination. I make haste to ride past, without looking at it. After the "field hospital," the hilly slope continues once more.

I have not ridden two hundred yards when a stretcher makes its appearance, coming round a corner to meet me. Two soldiers are hastily bearing along a wounded man, and trying to keep in step; another follows them, skipping along and adjusting over the wounded man by fits and starts, in order not to detain them, a cloak which is incessantly slipping off. The face of the wounded man is not visible, it is covered by his cap; but his hand, pale and waxy, hangs helplessly from beneath the coat, and seems to entreat:—"Stop, stop, don't carry me there in vain; better lay me down somewhere under a tree, and let me die in peace, without the knife, without the surgeons."

"Is it dangerous?" I ask.

"It's hard to say, your Honor," they answer, dryly, evidently conscious of the difficult deed of brotherly love which they are performing, and which places them on a level, for the time being, with the chiefs in command.

Without either halting or hastening their pace, they disappear along the winding road.

"Fiu-u-u-oo-oo!" a random bullet whistles by. The slight, treacherous sound is a familiar one.

"Fiu-u-u-oo-oo!" whistles a second, but a little behind me.

"I've passed, my dear; you're too late!" I say maliciously to myself.

These bullets are evidently spent, and have been fired from a great distance, as the enemy is still far away.

Along the road lie broken wheels and overturned wagons. Yonder, on one side, lies a wounded horse, which from time to time makes an effort to rise. He lifts his head, gazes about, swallows mouthfuls of earth in his agony, and, with a long drawn groan, stretches himself out once more.

Great-coats, knapsacks, and kettles lie scattered about. There lies an officer's glazed belt, with his revolver—it was not discarded without cause, surely it must have been of no avail!

As soon as the ridge comes to an end, the bullets begin to whistle past with ever increasing frequency.

On the left of the road, across the gorge, sit several artillerymen, holding horses by their bridles.

"S-s-s-s-thchok!"—a bullet strikes somewhere in the vicinity, exactly as though something had been torn away. Judging by the concussion, one might assert with conviction that "it" had not taken its flight in vain; the horses dash aside, but one poor creature leaps on three legs, with the fourth hanging powerless. A thick drop of blood, on the front of the leg, just above the hoof, shows plainly "where it went to."

A gray-moustached artilleryman seems to spring out of the very earth—he has not been seen previously—and rushes furiously at his inferiors.

"You were told to go away from here; no, you didn't obey! March, take yourselves off, don't let me see a trace of you! Out of my sight!"—and he waves his hand angrily.

"Who knows where it's going to find you out; you can't guess," they mutter as they depart. The wounded horse does not wish to remain; without bit or halter, awkwardly, hastily, he leaps after his companions.

I ride out on the hillock; yonder is the scene of action, yonder is our army!

Skobelev and Imeretinsky ride to meet me with their escort. Gaitoff and Kharanoff are also riding with them, and are greatly delighted; they make signals to me, and smile from afar.

"Welcome, Verestchagin! Please to guide us, my dear fellow, to the heights where you placed the guns last night," the General says to me, and gives me his hand. Much pleased, I dash on ahead, turn off to the right of the highway and direct my course to the well known path. By day, the locality has become entirely different; near at hand, a field of maize, and some tiny house, a hut, are visible. I ascend the elevation: all follow me.

Just before reaching the summit, Skobelev overtakes us all at a gallop, and halts in an instant on the very crest, beside the guns. All dismount. The cannonade is in progress on the right and on the left.

"Second!" gallantly commands a flushed young officer in eye-glasses, with a field-glass in his hand, and he runs to one side to watch the flight of the shell. The sighter of the gun runs after him, as well as several of the gun's crew. A deafening sound, a roar, seems to pierce the drums of our ears. I touch my ear — have I grown deaf? No, it only tickles a little. The roaring sound gradually subsides. Officers and men are still standing as though rooted to the spot, and watching "where it is going to burst," gradually bending down and peering under the smoke, which veils the enemy's position more and more. The shell falls far short of the mark, and explodes.

Skobelev stands in front, beside Imeretinsky, and, resting on his sword, he scans the enemy's batteries with his glass.

From this point the mountainous stretch of country gradually descends. A couple of versts away, the river Osma winds like a blue ribbon. Immediately beyond it Lovtcha gleams white. To the right of the city, not more than a verst away, two powerful redoubts of the foe are visible on the plain.

"The-e-ere it is — two at once," exclaim the artillerists. A tiny flame, like lightning, flashes up in the nearest redoubt, then another; two white columns of smoke fly forth after them, and rise upward slowly, thoughtfully, as though wondering what has become of the shells. Before the smoke has cleared away, the shells fall somewhere on one side of us, and dull explosions ensue.

The fire of the artillery increases in force. The enemy seem to have but few guns, for some reason or other; they evidently cannot manage us.

"What have you fixed upon as the distance, Mr. Officer?" Skobelev inquires of the officer in eye-glasses.

"We take it as twenty-four hundred yards, now, your Excellency," the latter replies, growing confused, and straightening himself up into position.

"For canister cartridge?"

"For the ordinary sort, your Excellency."

"Can't you use canister!" The General is fond of canister shells.

"Canister shell!" shouts the officer, and rushes headlong to the cannon, happy to be able to fulfil the General's desire.

But the sighter is already there, astride of the tail of the gun-carriage, exerting every effort to make no mistake in the presence of his chiefs. Perspiring, with eyes riveted on the sights, he moves only the rear portion of his body, now a little to the right, then a trifle to the left, turns his wrist in the direction where the tail is to be placed, and at last springs aside with decision.

The officer runs up for a moment, verifies it, and also leaps back.

"Third—fire! Bu-u-u. . . ." The gun rolls rattling backwards, and emits a roar. All run out from beneath the smoke, to see where the shell will burst.

"That's clever! it's important; it has struck in the very middle! eh, what an explosion!" cry the artillerymen, cheerfully, and run joyfully back to their gun.

Skobelev mounts his horse, returns to the highway by the same course, and rides to the foremost position. Imeretinsky remains there a while longer.

We encounter more and more wounded. Yonder, on one side, is an infantryman, with two rifles over his shoulder, giving his arm to a wounded comrade. The latter drags himself along with difficulty, sobbing like a child. "O-i, o-i!" he groans, and, supporting with his sound arm his wounded one, which is thickly wrapped about with various rags, he rocks it as a mother rocks her babe.

"Hail, brave fellows! What now? have they wounded your arm?" inquires the General, slightly reining in his horse.

"Ju-ust so-o, your Excellency," replies the wounded man, sadly, in a quivering voice, and moistens his parched lips with his tongue.

"Here! they have smashed it in this place, your Excellency," adds his companion, hastily, and points to his own arm above the wrist; but the General is no longer listening to him; a battalion has made its appearance in the distance, and he has not yet greeted it.

The battalion, as it crosses the road, is much spread out, and marches languidly and in disorder.

"Good-day, my men! I thank you for your service!" shouts the General, riding up to them at a gallop. The soldiers, at the sight of the commander, run up, jostle each other, and hastily form in line, out of habit.

"Glad to try, your Excellency-y-y!" rings out their answer.

"What gallant fellows you are! it's a pleasure to serve with you," continues Skobelev, and then, dismissing them, he says to Kuropatkin, in a low voice, "And what a rabble! How they have scattered! They're not a bit like the men in Turkestan."

We turn to the left and ride along the batteries. The fire is directed against the "Red Mountain," which is visible two versts away. The mountain has received that appellation from the reddish sand with which its summit is covered.

Behind the batteries, in the vineyards, lie the infantry, concealed, quiet and indulging in no conversations; they seem to be afraid of drawing the fire on themselves by a superfluous word. Shells fall, now here, now there, every moment, with a crash, and with a still greater crash they burst and shower the cowering soldiers with earth and splinters.

We halt on a hillock, in front of an open ravine, beyond which, at a distance of half a verst, our last half-battery is visible. Being nearest to the enemy, it suffers more than the others, although it is vigilant on its side.

"Verestchagin, do you see that little white house yonder, near the cannon?" the General says to me, dismounting and gazing through his field-glass. "Order it to be broken up at once."

I hastily dismount and set out.

The nearer to the guns, the thicker fall the shells.

Here flies one, nearer, nearer, "sh-sh-sh," it hisses; my heart is ready to stop beating altogether; it inclines me to squat down, to lie close, in order not to be killed. But at that moment the thought flashes across my mind, "But if the General were to see, what would he say? That I had got frightened, that I had turned coward! My comrades also are certainly watching to see how I walk, and whether I bend low or not." Another shell bursts a few paces away. I halt involuntarily, and prepare for death; "f-r-r," whizzes a splinter past my ear, like a young snipe which has risen up close by from his nest.

"Run, run!" whispers some one in my ear. "Eh, they will see you; don't dare to run!" whispers some one else, simultaneously. I feel a weakness in my legs; I begin to stumble over the most insignificant obstacles.

Controlling myself, with all my strength, in order that I may walk straight, and without ducking, I proceed, with the same gait, to the infantry covers.

Behind them, on an eminence, through a column of smoke, the smoke-begrimed faces of the artillerymen are visible. Their command is borne to us: "Load! Fire!" and so forth.

I pass through the infantry. Pressed close each to each, with their canvas pouches over their shoulders and guns in their hands, the soldiers sit in anxiety, and as though reflecting: which of them will it strike now, if it falls among their company?

"Where's the company commander?" I inquire, in a low tone, in order not to break the general silence.

"Here!" And the commander, a sandy-complexioned staff-captain, tall, sunburned, with a moustache, rises unwillingly and takes several steps to meet me. After listening to me, he calls, in a low voice, "Sergeant-major!" "Sergeant-major, Sergeant-major!" is cautiously passed on behind him from soldier to soldier. The brisk Sergeant-major springs up gallantly, and, bending slightly, as though fearing to hit his head against something, hastens to the commander, holding up his sword on the way.

"Look alive, now; detail ten men, with axes, to break down that hut," orders the staff-captain, gloomily, and, having "touched" to me, he imperceptibly withdraws to his particular spot, where he has been sitting safely from early morning, and where, as it seems to me, he is con-

vinced that he is in much less danger than here. As his post is not shielded in any way, and is subjected to the same conditions as the other places, his conviction is, in reality, nothing more nor less than superstition. This may be compared with the case of the gambler, who, having won several times on the same card, sticks to it until the end of the game.

"Come, you, Timofeeff, Bobroff, Anisimoff!" The Sergeant-major picks out the nearest soldiers, and touches them lightly and hastily on the shoulder. "March quickly with your axes and chop down that hut. His Honor will go with you."

The Sergeant-major is in a hurry; evidently, he also wants to get back to his place as speedily as possible. It must be that he, like his commander, considers himself less in danger there. The soldiers leap up and dash forward in a body, brandishing their axes.

The little house proves to be of wood, on piles. It is plastered over on the outside with lime. It shines brilliantly in the sun, and furnishes an admirable point of sight for the enemy's guns; if the shells do not land on it, they fall on the battery alongside.

The axes beat resonantly against the beams, the hut begins to lean. Just at the moment when it is ready to fall, a shell lands upon it and bursts. A thick, tall column of smoke, mingled with sand and earth, rises in front of us; at the same time a piercing cry rings out:—

"Stretcher! Alexyeff is struck! . . ."

The house is demolished. The soldiers make haste to return to their company, leaping over furrows and bushes. I return. Alexyeff is borne along behind me, almost at a run. Getting back is even worse than going; shells follow us and explode every moment. Only the sight of the General, still standing with his suite on the same elevation, prevents my falling into a run. The shells become less frequent — we are getting out of range of the fire.

"The house is demolished, your Excellency," I report, and summon up my courage, being desirous to appear as calm as possible. "Only one soldier has been wounded," and I point to the stretcher.

"Why do you worry me about trifles?" he breaks out, suddenly. "Order the wounded man to be taken further from the troops, in order not to produce a bad impression."

Then, when I am already mounting my horse, he shouts after me, capriciously: —

“Why didn’t it occur to you to do that yourself!”

“That’s the gratitude you get, and that’s all that can be said,” I think as I go. “What a fool I am! Why do I put myself out? I try and try, and nearly get myself killed, and still he finds fault. It would have been much more peaceful in the regiment; nobody would have scolded me, and I should certainly have won the same rewards.” And I make up my mind to hand in a petition to be struck off the list, immediately after the battle, and I picture to myself in advance the General’s astonished face when he asks Kuropatkin: “Why is Verestchagin requesting to be sent back to his regiment? Nonsense! he must remain.” But, at the same time, still another turn presents itself; how, on reading the report, he shouts to Kuropatkin: “Verestchagin is petitioning to return to his regiment. Well, deuce take him! let him take himself off, I’m tired of him!”

“Go to the right, further from the road!” I shout, as I overtake the stretcher. “The General has ordered you to carry him in such a manner that he shall not be seen by the troops.”

“Where are we to carry him?” grumble the soldiers, discontentedly. From their countenances, one can assume that their thought at the moment is: “And they won’t even let him die in peace!”

They bear the wounded man by a circuitous, uncomfortable course, across gullies and ruts; I can hardly follow them on horseback. We halt to rest.

“Well, is he alive?” I inquire, and I bend over the wounded man and take a look; the deathly pallor of his face is sharply set off by his black hair; frothy spittle forces its way through his blue, tightly compressed lips, and the flies are already thronging greedily about it; his eyelids are closed, but not fully, and his dull pupils are visible; his breast rises rarely and convulsively.

“It seems as though he were on the point of death,” I say to the soldiers.

“He still breathes,” they answer, glancing at the face of the dying man.

“Can we go out on the road now, your Honor?”

“Very well, go,” I say, assenting, and I quietly follow them, leading my horse by the bridle.



MIKHÁÏL DMITRYÉVITCH SKOBELEFF.
"The White General."

We emerge on the road. In a few minutes, Skobelev overtakes us with his suite.

"Verestchagin! forgive me, my dear fellow, for being somewhat irritated. You're a brave fellow, thank you!" he cries, and presses my hand warmly.

Although I do not thoroughly believe in the sincerity of his words, still, my anger gradually vanishes, escapes my memory, and, enraptured with the General, I continue to follow the wounded man. I go, not by orders, but because I consider myself as involuntarily responsible for the wound, and desire to alleviate his sufferings as speedily as possible.

We arrive at the hospital camp: we set down the stretcher beside the tent.

"Look at him, for Heaven's sake!" I entreat the doctor, who, bending over another stretcher, is examining a man who has been wounded in the head.

"Fetch some warm water," shouts the doctor, and he moistens a sponge, and squeezes out the water upon the inflamed wound. The man's hair is plastered down, and does not allow him to see. "Scissors!" he cries.

A thin, enervated assistant surgeon, with a freckled face, thick lips, and a flat nose, phlegmatically hands him the scissors.

"Look at my man for a moment," I continue to importune him.

"Impossible to quit this man, sir," he replies, cutting away the clinging hair. "Where is your patient?"

"Here, here he lies."

"Zakharoff, cut the hair away from this wound and wash it; I'll be back directly. Now, sir, let's go quickly. Where? This man?" and he takes the hand of my Alexyeff.

"Why do you bother yourself with dead men, my dear fellow?"

"Is he dead?"

"Feel for yourself," and he proposes that I shall feel the man's pulse; I cannot make up my mind to it; through the open uniform, a deep wound is seen in his side. Something white rises from the middle of it. Chills run all over me.

"Well, are you convinced? are you satisfied?" and with a nod the doctor walks hastily away.

The soldiers stand still for a while, in indecision; then, after discussing the matter between themselves, they take off their caps, cross themselves, scratch their heads, put on their caps again, and, wishing me "all happiness," they go off to their comrades. I ride to the rear. I reach the place where our staff had stood; there is no longer anything there, everything is packed up. My Lamakin, without his coat, and in his tunic only, is busy over the horses; the tent is struck and lies on the wagon in company with the others.

"What, now! were you ordered to strike the tents?"

"Just so, your Honor; orders came from the General, that we were to hold ourselves in readiness in case we should be commanded to move forward."

"Change my saddle to the black," I say, springing from my horse; "of course, you haven't cooked any dinner?"

"How could I cook any? They packed up everything," he growls, takes off the saddle, and rubs down the perspiring back of the horse with a wisp of hay.

All about lie scattered bits of paper, seltzer-water bottles, corks, cigarette boxes, and lemon skins. This must be where the General's tent stood, as there are a good many champagne bottles.

"Krukovsky, did the General's tent stand here?" I shout to Skobelev's orderly. Krukovsky is engaged at the moment in tossing a bag full of something on top of the wagon, and he cannot make out whether the bag is going to fall back, or to land on the other side.

"Exactly so; come there, deuce take it, stick!" he curses.

"Well, Lamakin, have you changed the saddles?"

"In a mo-o-oment." I ride to the baggage-train, to use my wits to get a dinner. Near the road stands the train of the Kazan regiment. The Major who has charge of the commissary department has stretched himself out under the shadow of a small cart, in company with some gentleman, not exactly a civilian nor yet exactly a military man, in a black coat without shoulder-straps, a cap with a red band, a revolver in his lacquered belt, and a sword slung across his shoulder.

In front of them, on a soldier's overcoat, stands a kettle, from which project the legs of some animal. The manager is treating his guest to vodka, and pouring it from a

leather flask into the tin cover, which takes the place of a glass.

“Good-day, Lieutenant!” (The Major always called me Lieutenant instead of *sotnik*.) “Sit down with us; take his horse, there, somebody!” shouts the Major.

“Fetch another plate and spoon — hey, you lubberly fools!” he says, raising his voice, when he hears no answer from his servants. Two of the baggage-train men hasten up, without uniforms, in dirty shirts tucked into black trousers. One of them hands an iron plate and a wooden spoon, the other takes my horse by the bridle and begins to lead him round the tent. I seat myself beside the kettle.

“Pray eat, Lieutenant; don’t stand on ceremony,” says my host, hospitably, and then he proceeds to question me. “Well, and how are matters going for us, and how about the General?”

“All right, matters are going well; it looks as though their guns would soon be silenced, as they are beginning to weaken on their side.”

“Thank God, it’s time to retrieve ourselves; we’ve had nothing but disaster after disaster. No, just wait, that’s not the style of our General; this is no Plevna for you!” says the Major, boastfully, crushing some buckwheat groats on his plate and pouring the soup over them.

Having speedily eaten my fill, I take leave of the Major, and ride back.

The time is noon: it is hot.

The General has thrown himself down in the shadow of a tree, close to the hill, in a circle of officers of the Kazan regiment. The regimental band is playing a few paces away. Now and then the enemy’s shells fall close at hand, and shower the musicians with earth. One of the players lets his instrument fall, in his alarm; he glances timidly in the direction of the commanding officers, and picks it up.

“What o’clock is it, gentlemen?” cries Skobelev. All who have watches involuntarily pull them out, look at them, and each man attempts to convince the General that his is the most accurate. It is half-past twelve.

“Well, gentlemen, if Dobrovolsky does not arrive with his brigade within the next half-hour, I’ll lead you myself to the attack on Red Mountain,” and thereupon he rubs his

hands in satisfaction at the pleasure which awaits him, after which, with the same ardor, he adjusts his thick, blond whiskers, exactly as though preparing to tear them in two.

The half-hour has elapsed. Dobrovolsky has not arrived.

"Well, gentlemen, God speed us! Colonel Tebyakin! order the men to be drawn up; singles in front," commands Skobelev; "unfold the standards!" The battalion and company commanders hasten to carry out his orders.

The soldiers, who, up to this time, have been lying not far away, start into motion: they spring up, cross themselves hastily, take leave of each other, and fall into their ranks. The company commanders also draw up in position, take up their posts by their divisions, and draw their swords.

"Flags to the third battalion," shouts Skobelev. "Musicians in front!"

The regiment draws up in line without noise or talk.

Surrounded by his suite, the General nervously scans the Red Mountain through his glass. He has already despatched several orderlies to command the artillery to concentrate their fire upon that point. I wait in the expectation of being sent off immediately. And, in fact, the General glances round, in search of some one to send with the same orders, and shouts to me:—

"Ride quickly along the line of batteries, order them to increase their fire on Red Mountain as much as possible, and say that we are about to attack it."

I ride off very unwillingly. My hope of being beside Skobelev, and seeing how he will lead the regiment to the attack, has been annihilated.

"Shoulder arms!" resounds faintly from the companies in front. I glance round: the leading divisions are descending the hill, and are disappearing among the greenery. Several soldiers have delayed and have been left behind. They hastily gather themselves together, throw their guns over their shoulders, and, crossing themselves, set out in pursuit of their comrades.

"Increase your fire on Red Mountain," I shout to the officers, as I gallop past the batteries.

"We've heard, we've heard!" they shout, and show by signs that they already know it. In the meantime, the

regiment advances. From the position of the batteries there is a good view of the first battalion breaking into a run, and after it the second and third. "Hurrah, hurrah!" is wafted faintly to me; it is impossible to distinguish the Turkish infantry. The Kazan men are running up the hill. Our shells fall close beside them.

"Alas! we shall kill our own men!" I say to myself on the way.

"Those are our men, our own men!" I shout to the battery commander, urging on my horse as fast as possible. "Stop your fire; those men on the mountain are ours!"

"I thought myself that they were ours," replies the officer, "but what is one to do? You can't have bread without having a crust."

At that moment, a fresh shell lodges in the very centre of our battalion, and bursts; we cannot see whether it has killed any one.

Kuropatkin dashes up after me:—

"Stop firing! Our troops are on Red Mountain. Verestchagin! ride on and tell the rest of the batteries!"

But the firing has already ceased. The attack is over—the mountain is taken. Our loss is trifling, apparently.

I emerge upon the road; I encounter wounded men. Not far away, on one side, under a tree, on a stretcher, lies an officer, in all probability: several men are busying themselves around him.

"Good-morning, Sotnik!" a company commander of my acquaintance greets me, in a weak voice, and nods his head slightly.

"What's the matter with you? Where are you wounded?—slightly?" I inquire.

"Well, here, some place about here! . . ." and he points with difficulty to the neighborhood of his shoulder, and turns his head away gloomily.

"Well, you mustn't stand still! You must carry him along! God be with you, move on!" the officer, a comrade of the wounded man, urges.

After riding a verst, and before reaching the place where the highway descends towards Lovtcha, I ascend the mountain. The side turned to us is all furrowed with lodgements, trenches, and ditches. From the very foot it is strewn with the corpses of the enemy. They are particularly numerous on the summit where the guns stood.

"Eh, just see how that one's face is split; his whole cheek-bone is torn away," say the soldiers, surveying the bodies. A bearded, black-visaged Turk, with his face thrust into the sand, lies with outstretched arms. One of the speakers turns his head over with the toe of his boot; all look at it and make remarks, spit in disgust, and proceed further.

There is a capital view of the town from this spot. And there are redoubts behind it. It is four o'clock. The fire from rifles increases. The general assault begins.

Along the shore on this side of the Osma, the soldiers have congregated and are seeking a ford. Yonder, further on, are more of our troops. Still further on are our men: ugh, ugh! how many of us have thronged together here!

"Your Honor, the General is angry because there is no one with him, they have all scattered," a Little Russian Cossack announces to me, riding up the hill at a trot.

"And where is the General?"

"He has gone yonder, to the town."

I ride on. The road runs in a broad strip at the very foot of the hill, and descends to the town. On the right opens out a view of the enemy's redoubts. Eight guns are already playing obdurately upon them. Every moment first one gun, then another, rolls backwards with a roar of thunder; smoke spreads around.

"Have you seen the General?" I inquire of an artillery soldier.

"He has just ridden down hill with the Cossacks,—he must be in the town."

"And is the town taken?"

"A good many infantry have already gone there."

I dash off in pursuit.

Below, just under the hill, the highway rests on the bridge. At the sides of the bridge stand half-ruined shops, the town is completely deserted: the houses have been pillaged, the glass is broken, the doors are ajar. A variety of utensils are scattered about everywhere — brass, wood, clay; pillows, coverlets, garments, chests, books, and whole mountains of tobacco.

Having traversed the principal street, I enter the cemetery: the town extends a little way beyond it. In the middle of the cemetery I find Skobelev and Kuropatkin engaged in conversation. Alexei Ivanovitch rides off some-

where at a gallop; his sword jerks awkwardly from side to side, and occasionally strikes the horse's haunches: a Cossack of the Don, minus his lance, in a white coat, rises in his stirrups, bends forwards, and tries to catch up with him at a trot. The General rides up to me and shouts irritably:—

“Ride instantly to Prince Imeretinsky, and bring me reinforcements at any cost, and not less than two battalions. Come, march, be quick!”

“Whither am I to conduct them, your Excellency? where shall I find you?”

“Here, to this cemetery.”

“I obey, sir!” and off I gallop at full speed. By this time the musketry fire has attained a frightful pitch, and has melted into one universal, unbroken roar. Such a roar I never heard before or since; it was incredible, and arose from the circumstance that at that moment eight thousand of the enemy had come in collision, at the very redoubt, with twenty thousand of our soldiers, hastening onward to the assault. The cannonading has come to an end, the fire of the musketry alone thunders out and shouts of “Allah!” and “Hurrah!” All this has come together and is roaring within the space of one verst square.

I find Imeretinsky and all his staff, on Red Mountain. He is looking down from the summit on the progress of the attack.

“Your Serene Highness, General Skobelev requests reinforcements,” I report.

“Colonel Parentzoff, what have we still in the reserves?” The Prince appeals to the chief of his staff.

“The E. regiment is still there, your Highness.”

“Well, then, give him a battalion.”

“Your Highness, the General ordered me to bring not less than two battalions.” I repeat my orders with persistence.

“Come, what's that? Well, take two,” and the Prince glances inquiringly at Parentzoff.

“Colonel G——, order two battalions to be drawn up. Sotnik Verestchagin will lead you,” the chief of staff says, addressing the commander of the regiment, a short, bearded colonel, with a very kindly expression of countenance.

“First and second battalions, to arms!” shouts the commander, and directs his course towards his horse. A few

moments later, after taking leave of Imeretinsky, we move down the mountain.

They have caught sight of us from the redoubts, and, although the distance is not less than three versts, the bullets begin to whistle about us pretty frequently.

The commander of the regiment and the officers ride gravely beside me. Now and then they ask a question: whither I am leading them, where the General is. We pass the bridge, defile into the street, and are just approaching the appointed spot. But something has occurred which no one has suspected. While traversing the street, all goes well, the enemy does not descry us; stray bullets whiz by now and then. The cemetery is in sight. But where is Skobelev? He is not there. The head of our column has no sooner made its appearance on the square than the enemy opens upon us such a deadly fire that our progress is immediately arrested. Whoever has entered the square is either dead or wounded. The bullets rattle against the clay walls of the gardens and houses, exactly like the roll of the sticks on a drum. The foremost ranks of soldiers wheel round and come in collision with the rear ranks, while the latter press forward. A complete hurly-burly ensues. The Colonel and battalion commanders leap from their horses and hasten to take shelter behind the first corner; I — follow them. The dead lie directly in the middle of the road, and bar further progress. The wounded crawl along on their knees and seek safety.

At that moment, Skobelev makes his appearance from the street on the other side of the cemetery, proceeding leisurely and quite calmly at a foot pace. He has not yet perceived our disorder.

I instantly spring upon my horse and gallop to him — whither has my timidity fled!

“Your Excellency, I have brought the battalions,” I make my report.

“Why have you brought them here?” he shouts, and suddenly sees what has happened to us. He nearly goes into a fit of frenzy.

“What’s this! Order! order! I’ll cut you down, you villains,” he shouts, drawing his sword, and galloping at the soldiers. “Where are the officers? where are the commanders of the battalion? Right wheel, lead them back!”

Two minutes had not elapsed when all has regained its

original aspect: the battalions, in fine order and perfect step, are marching along the same street, and, having made a circuit, they emerge from the town upon the level plain. A verst away rise the enemy's redoubts.

We have not succeeded in traversing two hundred yards, when Lieutenant Karandyeff gallops up, and reports to the General:—

“Your Excellency, the Turks are in flight. The Cossacks are dashing in pursuit!”

The battle ended at six o'clock in the evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE BATTLE OF LOVTCHA.

THE battalions return to the town. The General rides to the redoubts. The nearer we approach, the more numerous do the corpses become. It is strange! Are not the Turks also men? — yet these swarthy figures, in blue jackets and red fezes, with tightly set and grinning teeth, with clenched hands, produce a repulsive impression, while, looking on our dead, one involuntarily feels inclined to weep; they seem like little children and to be pitied, in comparison with the Turks.

We enter the first redoubt; The atmosphere is permeated with the smell of decomposing bodies. I pull out my handkerchief as quickly as possible and stop up my nose, in order that my stomach may not be turned. Skobeleff notices this.

“What nonsense, what daintiness! There’s no such bad smell as that!” he shouts, as he mounts the breastwork on horseback.

The following picture presents itself to the eye. The interior of the redoubt is literally filled with Turks; some are so disfigured that it is impossible to make out their faces. The place is strewn with broken gun-carriages, rifles, swords, pistols, torn tents, fezes, fascines, and cartridge cases. Everywhere about lie splinters of shells, and unexploded bombs. There also a dozen sheep, bound together by the feet, lie kicking. The gorge beyond the breastworks is also filled with corpses.

A throng of soldiers are carousing with shouts and uproar round the redoubt, and singing songs. Many have already succeeded in becoming intoxicated. Yonder are two disputing over some rag.

“So you saw it first, did you?”

“It wasn’t you, was it?”

“Even if it wasn’t I, I won’t give it to you!”

"Yes, you will!"

"No, I won't!"

Then ensues a tugging, from side to side, of the article in dispute. The matter ends in a sound drubbing.

"Hurra-a-ah, hurrah, hurra-ah!" reaches our ears from behind the corner of the redoubt.

A company has collected together and is tossing its commander: high aloft flies the old Captain, executing very ungraceful evolutions in the air with his arms and legs. Triumphant and with unfeigned joy thunders out the soldiers' "Hurrah!" This "Hurrah!" does not in the least resemble the one which is shouted at regimental festivals or in barracks; here it plainly proceeds from the heart, and expresses, simultaneously, gratitude for the victory and for the happy deliverance from danger.

Six versts away to the west, close to the mountains, runs a plain covered with maize fields and vineyards, and intersected in places by ravines and gullies. It was across this plain that our Caucasian brigade had dashed in pursuit of the flying enemy.

Having inspected one redoubt, Skobeleff descends, and, according to his custom, rides to another at a gallop. My Turkish horse is exhausted and cannot keep up with him, and, besides, it is repulsive to me to gaze upon the corpses. I turn about and ride after the Cossacks at a walk. Far and near, not a living soul is to be seen. Here and there the bodies of the enemy are to be seen like forgotten grain stacks in a field. And how many guns there are, and what fine ones they all are, with walnut-wood stocks, and what a mass of cartridges! It is a pity that there is no "bratushek"¹ present. What an abundance there would be here for him.

But what is this down below in the hollow? It is exactly as though our regimental ambulance wagon were standing there. So it is, and Assistant Surgeon Babitch is here, and deaf old Doctor Ivan Yakovlevitch. Over whom are they busying themselves? Some one is sitting on the ground, in a Cossack cap, without his coat, and with the sleeves of his shirt hanging free. I approach — it is Astakhoff.

¹ Bulgarian — "brother."

“What’s the matter with you?” I cry, and jump from my horse. With his face turned aside and crimson with pain, he is bearing up with wonderful patience, while they perform an operation on him.

“Ask them, my dear fellow, to get through as quickly as possible,” he entreats me, closing his mouth tightly with his left hand, in order not to shriek with pain. Three fingers of his right hand prove to have been cut off by a bullet: in their stead hang bloody strips only. Ivan Yakovlevitch, who, owing to his deafness, does not hear the groans of the wounded man, is operating on him with imperturbable coolness, and, as it seems to me, in a primitive way.

“It would be well if you were to give him chloroform, Ivan Yakovlevitch,” I suggest. He does not hear. Astakhoff makes a sign with his hand that it is not necessary.

“Yes, yes, of course, it is impossible to do it any other way,” mutters the respected Æsculapius, apparently desirous of proving that he hears everything that is said to him.

The wounded man has his bandages put on, and is laid in the wagon.

This Astakhoff was a remarkably healthy fellow. As I was afterwards told, he mounts his gray Dzhemala early on the morning of the following day, and rides to Gorny-Studen, where the temporary hospital was then located. Having ridden fifty versts without dismounting, as though they were nothing, he springs from his horse and sets out in search of the doctor: he meets a Sister of Mercy; she walks along with him, without a suspicion that her companion’s hand will be amputated immediately.

They reach the doctor, and the bandages are removed: it appears that gangrene has set in all over the wrist. They amputate it. After a few days they see that they have not cut off enough; they amputate it again to the very elbow, —and he never minded it, but bore it, only, on this occasion, he was seized with lockjaw to such a degree that, in order to sustain his strength, they were obliged to inject beef-tea through his nostrils, because it was impossible to get his mouth open.

It was already completely dark when I returned to Lovtcha. The troops had established themselves down all over

the town. Shouts and songs were still in progress, in spite of the lateness of the hour. The crowds of carousing soldiers descend into the cellars of the houses, roll out vast casks of wine, drink as much as they can, and, not being in a condition to finish them, they knock in the bottom and let the remainder run out upon the ground.

Adjoining the cemetery, almost at the very spot where the battalions of the E. regiments had been thrown into confusion, the bivouac of the V. regiment has been pitched. The commander of the regiment amiably proposes that I shall pass the night with them. I remain. In the morning I wake up, and, with a glass of tea in my hand, I step out of the tent to breathe the fresh air. The weather is as beautiful as on all these days, and the sun shines cheerfully around.

After a victory, one experiences an inexpressibly cheery, self-satisfied sensation; one feels: "Even I, insignificant as I am, was a sharer in this conquest." One recalls that on the day before, at this same time, it had not occurred to a single one of us as possible that we should get here, and to-day one is strolling about as though things were just as they should be. But how is it that the Turks have not dropped down upon us again? It was said even yesterday that reënforcements had marched out to them from Plevna. I cast an involuntary glance at the Plevna highway, and also at the mountains on the left, over which they might come. Some unpleasant, uncomfortable feeling steals into my heart; it is not terror lest the enemy should capture Lovtcha from us, — we were too powerful for that, — but an involuntary dread lest the conflict should begin again, and that with it should again arise the danger of being wounded or killed. But this is only a momentary sensation, and it passes off immediately.

The infantry, who are encamped on the square, are chatting cheerfully and cleaning up their equipments. Some of them are sorting over Turkish property which they have found. Throngs of Bulgarians, red, perspiring, breathless, hurry from house to house, plunder, quarrel among themselves, and heap up their asses and their little horses, from their tails to their very ears, with the stolen booty.

At that moment, a group of soldiers forms not far from me. I step up and look: in their midst, on the ground, lies an old, gray-haired Turk, as dried up as a mummy. Lean-

ing on his elbow, he gazes confidently at the good-natured soldiers, dips some honey out of the basket that lies beside him, with his finger, licks it, and is, apparently, perfectly happy; at all events, his face is expressive of a certain naïve, childlike joy.

The soldiers look on and make their comments.

“The idea of his undertaking to fight!” remarks one, smiling, as he leans against his comrade’s shoulder from behind.

“How in the world could he fight, as he is simply one of the *inhabitants*,” returns the other.

After looking at the Turk, and inwardly commending the soldiers for having shown hospitality to their enemy, although not with their own honey, I go back. I have not yet reached my tent when I hear behind me a piercing cry, like the wail of a child. I glance back: those same soldiers are dragging the Turk by the feet, at a run, across the road to the fence.

The poor old man clutches at the earth, with all his feeble power, and digs his fingers into the dusty road. While I am trying to overtake them, they have made an end of the Turk: his shaved and aged skull, covered with sparse white hairs, presents a formless mass, and his eyes have leaped from their sockets.

“Why have you killed him?” I shout to the soldiers.

“He was a Bashi-buzuk, your Honor! And we found cartridges in his girdle.” And in proof of their assertion they hand me several cartridges.

To explain to the soldiers at such a moment the senselessness of their proceeding would be too late, and wasted labor on my part.

Turning back, I decide to set out immediately to make inquiries after my comrades, the Vladikavkazians — whether they are all well, or whether there are any wounded among them. At the same moment the thought flashes through my mind that perhaps some had even been killed.

But, while I am getting ready, a scene takes place, as though expressly, which delays me for a good half-hour. I must state that early in the morning I had observed, on the left side of the cemetery, where there were no soldiers, a mass of mounted and unmounted Bulgarians, loading up their stolen goods. They could pass from this square into

the town only through the soldiers' camp ; and, as the Bulgarians feared lest the soldiers should begin to inspect their property on the road, they hit upon the following trick, in order to divert the attention of the latter.

A frightful cry, uttered by several hundred voices, rings out: "The Turks! the Turks! the Turks!" Every one is thrown into confusion. One of the first to spring forth from his tent, minus his coat, is my amiable host, the regimental commander, who howls in a terrified voice: "To ar-r-rms!" The piercing commands of the battalion and company commanders and of the sergeant-majors follow. A regular mess ensues. The men fall upon the stacks of rifles and seize whatever comes to hand ; officers and soldiers rush about and jostle each other like madmen. Yonder, one man runs out upon the square, he must be a company commander, in a scarlet silk shirt, pulling on his uniform as he goes, and for a long time unable to find one of the sleeves with his hand. After him flies his servant, flourishing his cap, and crying: "Your Honor, please, please, put on your cap!"

While all this hurly-burly is in progress, the Bulgarians, under cover of the tumult, run past us incessantly in a dense throng, dragging their sacks after them, and continuing to yell as they go: "The Turks, the Turks!" Their little asses, loaded beyond all bounds, balk, stand still and will not proceed. And one, notwithstanding the blows of the cudgel with which his rider showers him, sits down on his hind-quarters, exactly like a dog, and bars the way for the rest.

Nothing could be more ridiculous than such a figure. Pinned fast by his possessions, and in no condition to free himself, the rider urges on the exhausted animal, with his bare, red feet. Of the Bulgarian nothing is to be seen, at the present moment, but his shaven, terrified face, with black moustache and perspiring brow, covered with a dirty white turban. In vain does the master cudgel his ass ; the beast cannot rise, and it only twitches its long, defenceless ears. It was only when the Bulgarians had fled past, and no Turks had made their appearance, that our men comprehended the real state of the case, and they cursed the Bulgarians from their very souls.

At length I got out of the town and rode off to my company. Just beyond the redoubt, beside the road, was pitched the camp of the Caucasian brigade. The tents were heaped together, the picket ropes were not yet unpacked, but several horses were hitched to one peg. There was no regularity or order. An experienced eye would have instantly perceived that all these men and horses had been engaged in hot work but a short time previously. The men are busy grooming the horses. Yonder, one Cossack, my acquaintance, Artemenko, a tall, swarthy fellow, in a wretched brown tunic, all unfastened, is tying a nose-bag of barley on the head of his black horse. The animal has laid back her ears, neighs faintly, and, thrusting her muzzle into the bag, eagerly seizes the grain, as though desirous of swallowing the whole of it at once.

"Eh, you hungry creature!" says her master, adjusting her mane, and drawing a caressing hand along her back. On catching sight of me, the Cossack draws himself up in salute, and makes haste to fasten his tunic.

"Good-morning, Artemenko. Did you have plenty of work yesterday?" I inquire.

"Just so, your Honor; we all had enough of it," he replies, showing his teeth.

I advance to the centre of the camp. Several of my comrades perceive me and come forward to meet me. Shouts arise from various quarters: "Hey, Sashenka, welcome! How are you, Alexander Vasilitch, my dear fellow? Where do you come from? . . ."

On hearing the commotion, old Esaul Golikhovsky makes his appearance from a neighboring tent, in a gray ticking tunic, and with a short pipe in his mouth. He approaches me with dignity, congratulates me on my arrival, and inquires after my health. One would suppose, from his voice and his tranquil countenance, that Golikhovsky had, probably, not taken part in the attack of the previous day.

My dearest Andrei Pavlovitch Lyapin has also caught sight of me. With a joyous smile, he runs up, in his tunic only, holding fast to his dagger, and exclaiming, while still at a distance, "What, my dear fellow! are you alive and well?" Lyapin has already prepared his lips for a kiss, but, on perceiving that I am not disposed to kiss, and only want to shake hands, he comes to a stand-still, with his lips

still pursed up. It vexes me even now to think that I did not embrace and kiss him then; his wish was most sincere, and wholly without after-thought. But I was afraid that the rest of my comrades would call me "a woman" for it.

All of them, merry and joyous, thrust their arms through mine and drag me to Pavel Ivanovitch's tent. A score of questions shower down on my head at once. We find Pavel Ivanovitch at his favorite occupation. On his knees before his trunk, he is packing away his things, or, to put it in other words, he is putting his capital as far away as possible. The "affair" of yesterday was so successful that even he meets me with considerable cheerfulness. But the smile is so little in accord with his harsh face that it bears more resemblance to a grimace.

"Well, how did you find it there with Skobelev? We managed our affairs cleverly there," he says to me, with self-satisfaction. "Here, see how they transfixed me with a bayonet," he says, pointing at his coat.

"And his horse was wounded with a bayonet," adds Lyapin, seriously.

"Well," I say to myself, "Pavel Ivanovitch isn't just the kind of a man, apparently, to run against a bayonet, and no one is going to put faith in that at a moment's notice."

"And they have shot off Astakhoff's hand," cries some one.

"Not his hand, but three fingers," corrects another, in a voice as though he were explaining to us. "Well, and what of that? he has seven left."

"Then, why must he needs seize hold of the bayonet?" retorts Pavel Ivanovitch, viciously, and, at these words, his face assumes once more its former harsh, forbidding expression.

"The Turk was firing point-blank, and he grabbed the bayonet," Pavel Ivanovitch continues to mutter.

At this moment, Sergeant-major Semyon Kikot comes to us, and, as usual, he does not enter the tent, on account of his vast height, but only peeps in, seeking the commander with his eyes.

"What is it, Semyon?" says the commander's voice.

"With regard to the hay, your Honor, what do you command?" he begins.

"Do you know, Sasha, that your Kikot cut down

twelve?" says handsome Sotnik Shanaeff, who is sitting on the bed behind me, in a low voice. "Whenever he flourished his sabre over any one, off went the head. True, isn't it, Kikot?" he says, turning to the Sergeant-major.

"Cut it off at a blow, indeed!" says the latter, smiling all over his broad, bearded face. "The Turks have thick necks, and you can't cut much with our swords! Whenever you try to do anything with them, they all crumple up and bend together," and Kikot, as though in proof of his words, draws from its sheath a thoroughly bent scrap of sword. A general laugh rings out; each one takes it, looks at it, laughs, and passes it on to the next.

"Our Levtschenko, your Honor, cut down seventeen," declares Semyon, as though proud that there are in his hundred heroes of even purer worth than himself.

"Pray, tell me whether it is easy to cut off a head?" I inquire.

"How can it be easy, your Honor? You are on horseback, you know, and you are galloping along, and the Turk is on foot, and he can't run away; and so you overtake him, and hit him on the neck."

"Well, and that settles the matter?"

"Settles it, indeed! he seizes your stirrup, and kisses your foot; 'Aman, aman!' he shrieks; well, and you cut him down, you strike him fifteen times, and he keeps shrieking, 'Aman, aman.' Of course, it keeps getting fainter and weaker all the time until his head tumbles off." And thereupon, the narrator illustrates, after his own fashion, how the Turk's head drops over on one side before death.

"Our mountain artillery worked well, your Honor; Colonel Kostin is a gallant man; wherever he galloped into the crowd, he whirled the guns and limbers round instantly, and the shells, when he discharges them, make a street, a perfect street!"

The Sergeant-major is evidently getting excited, and there is no longer any need of questioning him; the narrative flows forth of its own accord.

"And it was a wonderful fact, your Honor; it seems those Turks ran up slowly, panting so that they could hardly move, as though unwillingly, but still they kept their guns on their shoulders, and wouldn't throw them



ASTAKHOFF.

away, he, he!" giggles Kikot, and, as he laughs, he shows us how the weary Turk ran away from him.

As I gaze, meanwhile, on the heroic stature and shoulders of the narrator, I cannot readily believe that he found it indispensable to deal fifteen blows. It seems as though at every flourish of his sabre a head must inevitably fly from its trunk. Semyon seemed to have grown taller and broader in the shoulders since I had seen him; he had grown thicker and handsomer, his reddish beard had grown longer, his face had become sunburnt and swollen, so had his hands, and he seemed to have increased in size and strength.

"Very good! now, go to your quarters and rest," comes the customary phrase of the commander of the company, at the conclusion of a conversation with the Sergeant-major.

The latter strides off in gallant form, treading cautiously upon the earth, as though afraid that it will give way beneath his weight.

In chatting with my comrades, I learn that about twenty-five hundred men had been killed by the Cossacks in their pursuit of the Turks; but on our side the loss was of the most insignificant description—a few men killed and wounded, among the latter, Esaul Astakhoff.

About mid-day, from the heights whence we had expected the Turks, discharges of cannon thundered out. The enemy turned out to be not very strong; two battalions of infantry and five or six guns. The Turks were, evidently, now firing in order to satisfy their consciences, knowing well that Lovtcha would not become theirs again.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Skobelev and Kuropatkin ascend a little hillock, not far from the redoubts, and discuss some plan. I lie a few paces behind them and watch the Turks discharge their guns.

The weather is magnificent. The crests of the mountains, covered with forests, are clearly outlined against the dark blue sky. White puffs of smoke fly rapidly from the muzzles of the guns, and plainly indicate the spot where the enemy has halted. They are three versts distant from me. I have already become so experienced in watching

cannonading that I can readily distinguish the flight of shells. And yonder a discharge resounds from the mountain; the smoke veils the adjacent wood; yonder flies the shell, like a black ball, and, attaining the zenith, seems to pause. "Sh-sh-sh," pours forth its hiss. I watch calmly to see where it will fall, as I am fully convinced that they are not firing at us; three men cannot serve as a target for cannon at a distance of several versts. Ah, there's what it is aimed at!

Two of our battalions are slowly withdrawing to the town, one after the other, in thick columns.

The shell falls behind them and bursts. Again earth flies into the air. Several young soldiers, who have lagged behind, rush to their comrades, as though seeking protection in the throng. Several other men glance round timidly and exchange some remarks; it seems to me as though they would like to augment their pace, in order the sooner to get out of range of the cannons. The Turks turn this fine target to excellent advantage, and redouble their fire. Two more shells fall, one after the other, in the space between the two battalions, and again, happily, they do not strike any one. At that moment, I hear the General's voice behind me:—

"What's the meaning of this? — My horse!"

I glance in the direction of Plevna. Our soldiers are running back in frightful disorder along the foot of the mountains. Skobelev mounts his horse, and gallops thither in hot haste. I afterwards learned that this disorder was caused by our soldiers incautiously approaching the heights occupied by the enemy; the Turkish foot-soldiers, concealed in the vineyards, permitted them to come very close, and then greeted them with such well aimed fire that they incontinently retreated. It was with difficulty that Skobelev brought the troops to a stand, and, as eye-witnesses assured us, he gave them there, on the spot, under fire, a little drill.

Early in the morning, on the 24th of August, our troops prepared to leave Lovtcha for Plevna; a brigade of infantry remained as garrison.

I had passed the night in town, and I go in search of the

General. On the way I meditate where to go to drink my tea—to my own Vladikavkazians, or to some member of the Kazan regiment? I am convinced that they will be glad of my company at either place. Emerging from the town, I come out on the plain which leads to the redoubts. A hundred paces ahead, on the very road, I see a priest in a mourning cassock, intoning a mass for the slain. It had been impossible to collect and bury them all on the preceding day. Close by, a new-made grave is noticeable.

Good Heavens, what a grave! Such a huge one I have never yet beheld. Ten arshins long, four arshins broad. On the sides of the grave heaps of fresh, reddish sand, mixed with tiny pebbles, stand out sharply from the remainder of the dry and dusty soil. I draw nearer, and stop; soldiers and priest are so absorbed in their business that they hardly notice me. The priest chants mournfully. With a sinking heart, I look into the deep grave, and see that its bottom is already thickly covered with the dead. Clad in their black uniforms, they are arranged close to each other, so that it does not seem as though one could crowd one's hand between them. And how strange! all the bodies are placed, not with their faces up, but down. It must be that they have been packed thus, like some sort of wares, in order to get more in. The second layer will probably lie face upwards, the third, again, face downwards, and so on.

I could not stand there longer, and inquire minutely how many they placed in one grave, and in how many rows, because the stench was intolerable.

I ride on; for several yards I behold our dead also lying one after another along the road. They are being brought in from the neighborhood, from the scene of the battle, where they are found singly, and laid in one place. Heavens, what a pitiful sight are these speechless victims! And it seems as though I should weep like a child, and find relief for my soul in tears! . . .

Why did they perish? In what way were they more to blame than the rest? Why am I not lying beside them? or those two yonder, who, with their sun-tarnished coats unbuttoned, are scattering sand from their iron shovels, with such an apathetic look, upon the backs of their dead comrades? . . .

There lie the dead; one all drawn up, another with legs

outstretched. The uniforms of some of them are torn and streaked with mire; their boots, too, are dirty, especially the toes and heels. Their faces are cold and yellow, like wax. Their heads are all uncovered, their hair chiefly black, and closely cropped.

Many a time now had it been my fate, during the war, to see masses of the slain; and on every occasion I endeavored to pass by as quickly as possible. If I paused even for a moment, and looked at one, it seemed exactly as though an unseen power drew me on to look at the rest. Then I would stand for a long while, and gaze into their faces, and seek for an expression of pain and suffering.

With a heavy heart I ride farther. But is not man strangely constituted? After traversing a few paces, the corpses disappeared; everything around became so beautiful, the air blew so pure and fresh, that I became lighter and more at ease in my mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM LOVTCHA TO PLEVNA.

OUR troops are drawn up on the plain, not far from Lovtcha. Some divisions are already prepared to set out. On the right of the road, at the foot of the mountains, in a small meadow, stands the Kazan regiment. The shadow of the mountains falls far in front, and does not allow the dew, which is glistening on the green round about, to dry. The officers, assembled in little groups near their battalions, chat and jest and laugh. Past them, with a preoccupied mien, on a brisk chestnut pacer, rides my acquaintance Battalion Adjutant Tcherkasoff. "What a splendid horse he has!" I say to myself. "Why not buy it?"—"Lieutenant, Lieutenant!" I shout to him, "stop a bit;" and I approach and exchange greetings with him. "Sell me your horse!"

"Why not," he answers, stopping his horse; "certainly, I have another. What will you give?"

"First ride up and down, well in front of me." He makes a wide circuit on his mettlesome ambler, and returns. We conclude the bargain for one hundred and twenty-five rubles. The horse is mine. I pay down a hundred rubles on the spot, and write a note for the remaining twenty-five rubles, as I have no more money by me. Although Tcherkasoff does not wish to take it, I insist, saying: "If I am killed, the money may be lost."

"They won't kill you. God is merciful," he replies with a smile, folding the note in four, and thrusting it and the money into a side pocket of his uniform. Tcherkasoff was still a very young officer, well built, and very pleasing.

Four days later, our detachment stood near Plevna. I went to the Kazan regiment for some purpose or other, and learned that Tcherkasoff had been killed the day before in an engagement with the Turks.

From Lovtcha our forces direct their course to the village of Bogot, and there halt. On arriving there, Skobe-

leff, accompanied by several companies of Cossacks, and without entering Bogot, proceeds straight along the road to Plevna, in order to take a look at the enemy's redoubts. With us ride Tutolmin, several officers, the Bulgarian interpreter, Alexander Ivanoff, the escort of two hundred Cossacks, and Kulebyakin's squadron of the Guard. The weather has changed, become overcast, and threatens rain. We advance rapidly, and, crossing a small stream, begin to ascend a mountain. The angular outline of the Plevna redoubt is visible against the cloudy horizon. Near it, several trees are to be seen. All is silent in the redoubt, no one is visible anywhere. It is exactly as though everything round about were dead. "And may not the Turks have really taken their departure, and abandoned their fortifications?" we discuss among ourselves; such a report was actually current at the time, and I will not conceal the fact that my heart rejoiced and beat more lightly at this thought. "That means," I said to myself, "that Plevna might be captured without a battle."

We advance a little further, and our doubts are instantly dispelled. From the crest of the redoubt, a flame flashes up, a white column of smoke curls forth, and a dull, distant roar—a familiar, overwhelming roar—resounds in our ears. Following this roar, a shell falls a hundred yards in front of us, and plunges into the earth. Skobelev halts, and orders the companies not to crowd close together, but to spread far apart; the escort also separates more widely. The General takes his field-glass from his orderly, and scans the fortification, without dismounting. They continue to fire from the redoubt, the aim of each succeeding shell being more precise than that of the last. Here whizzes one shell quite close, closer, still closer. The Bulgarian interpreter, whom Skobelev has been continually laughing at before this, begins to duck lower and lower, until finally he rolls clean off his horse with terror. The shell flies past without striking any one. Skobelev bursts into a Homeric laugh, throws his head back, and laughs until he nearly cries. All of us involuntarily join in the laugh, in spite of the danger of the situation, so comical is the figure of the interpreter at this moment. It is possible that the General might have kept us there a good while longer, had not a shower begun to patter down; and so we turned back.

We were all drenched through when we entered Bogot. After that, fine weather set in.

To the little house where Skobelev stopped, there was attached a tolerably clean and spacious yard. Here two tents were pitched, one for Prince Imeretinsky, the other for Skobelev. The staff and suite were quartered in board cottages close at hand.

While my comrades and I were settling ourselves as comfortably as possible, a couple of English correspondents, in tall, white linen helmets, were walking up and down close to the Generals' tents. One of them was tall and thin; the other, on the contrary, was short and fat. They were discussing something in an animated way, when Skobelev came up to them, and, rubbing his hands, joined in the conversation; after talking about a quarter of an hour, the small correspondent seats himself on a camp-stool in the middle of the yard, and begins to write something. When I laughingly point him out to my brother Sergyei, the latter responds: "Don't laugh too much over him, brother, he is a well known and gallant English colonel; he distinguished himself in India!" His name I have forgotten.

It is on the night from the 28th to the 29th of August. The hour is about midnight; darkness reigns all around; the mire and mud are impassable. The light in Skobelev's tent shines brightly amid the surrounding gloom. The General is seated beside a small table with Kuropatkin, and they are holding a consultation about something. Gaitoff and I, covered with our felt cloaks, are lying near by in the damp tent, resting. We had been subjected to peculiarly great fatigue on that day: our horses could hardly drag one foot after another. In spite of the lateness of the hour, volleys of musketry resound incessantly, with a dry, monotonous crash, which produces an extremely unpleasant effect on our weary nerves in the midst of the nocturnal silence. There, to the right of us, from behind the small wood, comes a volley, then a second and a third, one after another, almost without intermission. The heart beats more violently, it is oppressed and aches. The thought involuntarily occurs to one—how many men are at this moment surrendering their souls to God? We lie there and console ourselves

with the hope: "Perhaps the General will not send us anywhere, but will let us rest." In addition to this, I make a vow to myself that, if Skobelev takes it into his head to send me anywhere, I will say that I am ill, although, of course, the General will not like it. But what am I to do, when I am as tired as a dog? Just as I have thought this, I hear Skobelev's voice: —

"Send Sotnik Verestchagin to me!" There you have it! I rise and quietly enter the tent.

"Verestchagin, please to go and hunt up the NN. regiment, and say to the commander of the regiment . . ."

I interrupt him, and announce: "Your Excellency, I have a frightful pain in my stomach —" and thereupon I rub my stomach with my hand. The General looks glum and says:

"I don't like men on service to excuse themselves on the score of illness! Send Sotnik Gaïtoff to me."

I did not have to send Gaïtoff, as the latter had overheard our conversation, and met me on the way. Again I lie down in the tent and roll myself up in my felt cloak, and, although I am conscious that I have behaved badly — I have betrayed my comrade, still, when I glance at the darkness round about me, and picture to myself the labor which I should have had in hunting up the detachment through that mire, I sleep the sleep of the just.

In the morning the baggage-train and ambulance wagons of the sixteenth division arrive. Kuropatkin charges me with the duty of installing them along the brook, near our tents.

This duty I briskly fulfil, after which I take a fancy to have a look at the position of our artillery. What particularly strikes me, as I look at our guns, is the angle of elevation given to them. The enemy's position is so distant that our nine-pounders can hardly throw their shells to it, even at that angle, and there is no use of thinking of four-pound cannons, as they are absolutely good for nothing.

About four o'clock that afternoon, Gaïtoff and I are sitting near Imeretinsky's tent. Skobelev is not there, having ridden off to the position in the morning and not having yet returned. The Prince is pacing back and forth near a

tall nut-tree, and nervously listening to the crash of the musketry, which is borne to our ears on the breeze, now dully, now more clearly. Imeretinsky is dressed in the uniform of the general staff, with aiglets. None of his orderlies is about, as he has sent them all in search of Skobelev.

"Please to hunt up General Skobelev for me, I depend upon you—you will find him promptly," the Prince says, with a touch of flattery. I mount my horse and ride off; Gaïtoff rides after me for company. But where am I to look for Skobelev? In what direction is he to be found? Before our eyes spreads an open stretch. Far ahead it is hemmed in by a prolonged elevation. Puffs of smoke on its crest show that the artillery is in action there. To the left, where the ridge comes to an end, a little hamlet of white houses with red roofs is visible. We have not ridden half a verst when we come upon a magnificent vineyard. The bunches of grapes are so huge and ripe that the juice drips down when one takes them in one's hand. There is nothing else to do, we spring from our horses and begin to eat. While we are thus engaged, two colonels of the suite unexpectedly ride down upon us. They have been despatched by the Emperor to learn how matters are going on the left flank with Prince Imeretinsky. At the sight of these gentlemen we feel horribly mortified. What will they think? Cowards who have hidden among the vine-stocks! Both colonels request us to guide them to Imeretinsky. We agree, and ride back.

Almost simultaneously with us, Skobelev came to Imeretinsky, in a soiled and torn white linen coat. They all betook themselves to the Prince's tent, and I set off to Kuropatkin to ask leave to go to Paradim to see my brother Vasily.

In order to reach Paradim, where the Grand-duke and the headquarters were at that moment, it was necessary to ride fifteen versts. My brother was not there when I arrived: he had gone out to the lines with the commander-in-chief. In order not to waste time, it occurred to me that I would go to our brigade baggage-train and see Kukharenko, by the way; he had fallen ill shortly before this, and had withdrawn to the train.

The Cossack tents made their appearance immediately behind Paradim. They were divided by the regimental

transports and the baggage-train into two parts : the Vladikavkaz and the Kuban.

It is worthy of note how well our Cossacks understand the art of establishing themselves tranquilly wherever chance may direct. Here, for instance, though this is only the baggage-train. Fifteen versts away a battle is in progress, the cannonade is distinctly audible, the roar is incessant, the reverberations of the artillery are like thunder; hundreds of men are dying every hour, close at hand, and here one involuntarily forgets all about it. Here one does not even wish to think of war. So simply, so quietly have the Cossacks disposed themselves, each being engrossed in his own affairs.

Gazing upon their peaceful life, one would suppose that he was somewhere in the vicinity of Stavropol or Vladikavkaz, but never before Plevna.

Take a look, for instance, at this tall, black-bearded, Little Russian Cossack. Beneath his half-unbuttoned, ragged red tunic, a dirty shirt of coarse linen is visible; lasting trousers, originally black, now thoroughly sunburnt and rusty; on his feet very wretched *tchevyaki*, and almost worn through. With what a tranquil and, at the same time, business-like air he busies himself with his work. Having attached a broad strap of dressed leather to a high trestle, he has fastened a heavy stone to the lower end; twisting the strap, the Cossack kneads it until it becomes soft. All this time, not a shadow of anxiety as to the war is to be perceived. Now the stone stops twirling; the workman feels of the leather with a practised hand, mutters something to himself with a discontented aspect, and twists it again. Thus he toils on from morning till night. And still the cannonade roars on and on.

Hearty laughter and conversation are heard from a low tent in the rear of this Cossack. Through the up-turned tent-flap project bare feet. Several Cossacks have cast aside their tunics, and are lying on their stomachs, playing at *noski*.¹ The one on the right, a small, young Cossack, without beard or moustache, must have won, for he rises quickly, with a merry countenance, tucks his legs under him, and, placing together some incredibly dirty cards, prepares to tap some one on the nose. I go on to Kukharenko's tent. It is different from all the rest. My

¹ A game where the winner has the privilege described.

brother Vasily had ordered it from Paris. This tent is extremely elegant, commodious, with a little window and a small awning. On one side, before reaching it, the regimental tailor, a thin man of short stature, with a yellow, feverish face and a scanty beard, has taken refuge in the shadow of a baggage-wagon. He is fitting a *tcherkeska* (Cossack coat), probably for some one of the officers, perhaps even for the "commander of the regiment" himself. He has put the coat on one of his Cossack comrades. The left sleeve is not yet sewn in. The tailor draws his broad palm attentively down the back, and marks it slightly here and there with chalk, then he puts the chalk in his mouth, and, carefully taking off his work, he bends down and creeps with it into his lair.

I find Kukharenko attired foppishly, as usual, in a stylish red tunic, girt with the same rich belt and dagger; his cap rests on the nape of his neck. Only, he looks somewhat fatigued, and his back, which is too much curved, indicates that the commander of the regiment is not thoroughly well. At the moment of my entrance, Kukharenko is scolding, with all his might, two Cossacks, who are standing drawn up in position, in very much patched coats, and silently listening to their chief's curses.

"G-g-good-morning, V-v-verestchagin, p-p-please to see here! admire t-t-these r-r-ruffians!" he stammers, pointing to the culprits. "You must know that you are the p-p-pariahs of the human race! Sergeant-major, put them at a separate kettle, so that they may not pollute the food of their comrades. Surely, you have neither shame nor conscience nor sense of honor, since you could bring yourselves to rob your comrades, your brothers!"

Kukharenko was fond of expressing himself grandiloquently, and of employing utterly incomprehensible words, like "pariahs." I did not at once comprehend the point of the matter, but, in the course of a few minutes, Kukharenko, having finished with the Cossacks, explained to me that they had sold two of the oxen belonging to the baggage-train to a sutler.

When we entered the tent, Kukharenko struck me as still weaker and more sickly. His voice had become nearly inaudible, his back was bent more than ever, his eyes had grown dim.

"S-s-see, I can't straighten my back! I have been

tortured with piles. Pray, sit down. Orderly!" cries the sick man, in a trembling voice, "order tea to be served."

"Well, and how are you? What's Skobelev doing? how is he fighting?" he pursues his inquiries in the same voice, adjusting himself so as to sit in the most comfortable way on the bed, covered with a shining black felt cloak.

I remained about an hour with him. Then I set out in search of my brother. He was living not far from the baggage-train, in the same cottage with Colonel Strukoff. At the moment of my arrival, they were both going off to dine at headquarters, and I joined them.

In the middle of dinner, his Highness suddenly turns to us and says: "Verestchagin brothers, tell your rankless brother (Sergei had no rank) that the Emperor has conferred on him the military order of St. George."

Of course, we rise and thank his Highness.

At night, as we are going to bed, my brother Vasily begins to dispute with Strukoff about the assault on the morrow. As I now recall it, my brother said: "But you know what the mud is like—up to your knees! Can they march to the assault through such mud?"

"They will, at all events."

"And how many?—with what forces?"

"Fifty-five thousand of ours, and fifteen thousand Rumanians, so his Highness has decided. The order has been issued, there will be no recall," replied Strukoff.

"Do you know what?" I say to Vasily,— "for some reason I don't at all want to be in the fight to-morrow; I have a presentiment that I shall be killed."

"Nonsense! you won't get killed, don't be alarmed. There is a chance of your being wounded; but that's nothing we'll cure you," replied my brother, and with that our conversation ended.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATTLE OF PLEVNA OF THE THIRTIETH OF AUGUST.

ON the 30th of August, the day of my guardian angel, I take leave of my brother, as soon as it is light, and set off alone for the camp.

The weather is gloomy, a fine rain sprinkles down as through a sieve; clouds obscure the sky to such a degree that no hope of sun is to be entertained. My white Caucasian bashlik is soaked through and through; my cap is also saturated with water, and weighs heavily on my head. The fine drops of rain, trickling down my felt cloak, have united with each other and fall to the earth in large drops. My horse stamps noisily through the mire, and the splashes from his feet fly far and wide in all directions.

"Oh, good Heavens, what mud!" I say to myself, holding back my horse on the slope, as he slides on his hind feet as though upon snow-shoes. "Now, how can our troops march to the assault to-day?"

Skobelev has already long been at the position when I pass his tent, stop at my own, and dismount.

"Take my horse, Lamakin, and give me some tea, quick!" I shout, as I throw aside my wet, heavy felt cloak, and crawl into my tent.

I feel uneasy and uncomfortable in my mind. I realize the fact that I am alone here, that there is no one around, that they are all yonder, at the place whence the roar of cannon proceeds, and where men are being killed!

"Is it possible," I say to myself, "that I am the most cowardly, the most faint-hearted of all? Why should all the others be about their business, while I am here, like some deserter?" And at that moment a familiar question flashes through my mind: "Well, and what will Skobelev think of me?" After that I shout irritably: "Where's that tea?"

Lamakin's pale, fever-stricken face appears at the door of the tent. He has been shaking with fever during all

these days. He places before me a brass teapot filled with hot water, and sugar in a sardine-box, and then says, in piteous tones:—

“Your Honor, you ought to take one of us with you;¹ for if you are wounded, or anything, in an unlucky hour, we are your men, all the same.”

Attachment and kindness are manifest in his voice. I thank him and say that it will be more agreeable to me to find my bed ready on my return from the engagement, than to drag a superfluous Cossack round after me. “And now, give me your horse, if you please, for my Kabarda steed is completely exhausted! Yours, it seems, has not been anywhere for a long time.”

“Just so, your Honor; mine has got into perfect condition,” he says, and goes off to change the saddles.

In the meantime, I have drunk my tea, and hastily mount Lamakin’s horse. It is time to go. It is already nine o’clock. The weather has become still more threatening; leaden clouds have spread low, and slowly, as though reluctantly, over the sky. The tents of the General, the officers, and all the rest have grown dark and dirty, as though they were shrinking together and frowning at the foul weather. Surrounding objects can be discerned only with difficulty. The thunder of the guns is not so clearly heard now as on the preceding evening. I ride out to the highway. Whole rolls of tangled telegraph-wires cut from the poles by our Cossacks, lie in the gullies beside the road. In some places it is so strewn about that there is nowhere for a horse to step. Heavy rains have soaked the road badly, and my horse slips incessantly. The damp, black mould on both sides of the highway has been ploughed up in many places by explosions of shells.

A little further on, isolated, wide-spreading trees, covered with dense green, are visible. Still further on, the ground rises and forms a sort of elongated, wooded ridge, which closes in the horizon. From behind this ridge, puffs of smoke rise slowly here and there. In the present damp weather and fog, this smoke mingles with the low-lying clouds, and does not stand out as distinctly as on the preceding days.

And now I have ascended this little ridge. Far ahead—five versts away, perhaps—white puffs of smoke from

¹ I had another Cossack, Danilo, who prepared my food.

cannon are visible here and there, against the dirty blue horizon, but they are probably the enemy's, not ours; this conclusion may be drawn from the fire which flashes forth with every discharge, and from the direction of the puffs of smoke.

Look where you will, everywhere it is gray, and damp, and disagreeable; and you long to go somewhere and get warm. However, it is necessary to go on, and in precisely that direction, too, whence the thunder of guns proceeds.

This thunder I begin to hear more and more clearly. Some of the discharges are wafted to me as distinctly as though they were on the spot. A cannonade was in progress just now on the left, and immediately afterwards it has become inaudible. The troops are not yet in sight. I begin to get into a more and more nervous state; the question involuntarily occurs to me: "Shall I soon come within the line of fire?" This question disturbs me deeply because I have become convinced, from previous engagements, that being near the firing point and directly under fire are two quite different things. I do not know how it may affect others, but it was very disagreeable for me on each occasion to take those last few steps. As long as there are no bullets, it matters not; everything is well and tranquil, although not wholly so, for you know that you will infallibly and speedily hear their ominous whistle. But now one has flown past, — only one bullet, — and already you are conscious of a change in yourself. Your heart begins to gnaw, as it were; a slight nausea manifests itself in your stomach; weakness and apathy diffuse themselves all over your body. It is a ridiculous thing to say, but I had already experienced the same sensation before the proposition of questions in the Latin examination. On such occasions, the same nausea appeared, the same weakness of the whole body, with cold perspiration on the forehead. This nervous state is produced, of course, by the consciousness that one may be wounded or even killed at any moment. All thoughts, all sensations are peculiarly concentrated, and one involuntarily awaits the fatal bit of lead or iron, which will put an end to one's existence.

Behind the little ridge, to the right of the road, several trees are visible; near them, Cossacks in black felt cloaks,

some in white, some in dark bashliks, are holding saddled horses by their bridles. Skobelev's red pennon can also be seen there, thrust into the earth. Does that signify that Skobelev is also in the vicinity? But he is not yet visible. I turn the hillock and behold, a hundred paces in front of me, Skobelev walking back and forth on the road with Prince Imeretinsky, rubbing his hands, as usual, and discussing something with him, with a troubled countenance. They are both dressed in the uniform of the general staff. No sooner do I catch sight of my chiefs than every thought of danger vanishes, although the bullets are whistling about here pretty frequently.

Like a school-boy who is tardy at his class, and has arrived later than his teacher, I creep softly from my horse and try to lead him off to the other horses, and attract as little attention as possible. Then I join my brother officers. They, seven or eight in number, have seated themselves with their backs to the ridge in such a way that the bullets flying over their heads cannot strike any of them. The horses who stand on one side quiver now and then, twitch their ears uneasily, and, puffing out their nostrils noisily, inhale the air.

And now a bullet flies close past them with a whiz, slanting into the maize. The horses throw themselves aside, and snort. Skobelev notices this.

"What's the meaning of that disorder! Lead the horses further off!" and then he once more becomes engrossed in his interrupted conversation with Imeretinsky. I greet my comrades, and seat myself beside them, of course, with the same calculation, so that a stray bullet may not hit me.

Wrapping myself up as comfortably as possible in my felt cloak, I begin to watch the commanders walk, to see whether I can detect in the General even a sign of timidity, or in Imeretinsky either. But the Prince keeps step to-day with Skobelev with perfect coolness, exactly as though he were in a hall, apparently paying no heed to the balls.

At that moment, there impressed itself upon my sight the figure of one of our dead soldiers. Strong and vigorous, with long side-whiskers, and his face thrust into the miry road, he lay with his arms spread out, just beside the spot where the Generals were walking. His cap had fallen off and laid bare his closely cropped, black head. It was strange to see how, as the chiefs walked, it never occurred

to them to order the brave fellow to be taken away. They were thinking of other things than dead men.

A considerable time has elapsed. The cannonade increases in violence, the bullets whistle thicker and thicker. But Skobelev still paces to and fro with Prince Imeretinsky, and rubs his hands. The corpse still lies there, and seems to sink deeper in thought and to be wondering "am I to stay forever here in the rain."

From the conversations of my comrades I learn that the general attack is ordered for three o'clock in the afternoon. It is only twelve o'clock now. At this moment, an officer steps up and reports to Skobelev. "Your Honor, the third brigade of sharpshooters has advanced." The General flies into a violent rage.

"Who gave them orders? Don't they know that the general attack is only to come off at three o'clock? Well, let them die, then, if they didn't know enough to wait!" he cries angrily. Then he enters into conversation with the Prince once more.

So, about an hour later, Skobelev orders his horse to be brought round; we also make a dash for our horses, in order to follow the General. At that moment my brother Sergyei rides up to me, in a short black jacket, on a small Turkish horse, which I had given to him a couple of days previously.

"Seroóha," I shout to him, "Vasily Vasilitch asked me to tell you that you must give back his things, his wagon and colors, for otherwise he cannot work at all!"

"This is no time to talk about such things, brother!" he answers, curtly, as he returns my greeting, then lashes his horse under the belly with his whip, and disappears at full speed in the direction of the lines.

I never saw him afterwards.

Imeretinsky remains on the same spot, but we all follow Skobelev. Kuropatkin, who has been somewhere on the position, speedily follows us. Skobelev enters into conversation with him, without reducing the speed of his horse.

This day was a memorable one to me; it is hardly likely that I shall ever forget it. We ride for half a verst directly ahead on the road. Shells burst incessantly over our heads. We reach the elongated, wooded ridge which has been visible to us from afar. Amid the vineyards at its base, our

troops can be seen, here a company, there a battalion, and there again a whole regiment. Shrouded in the foliage, they seemed few in numbers, though there were thousands of them here. They were all silently awaiting the word of command in order to advance, — and whether they were fated to return from that spot, God only knew.

We pass through the troops, and, without ascending the ridge, we turn to the left and ride along its base. The very summit, covered with dark, branching trees and thick foliage, is almost completely enveloped in the smoke of gunpowder. Only a breeze blows it away here and there for a moment, when fresh clouds of smoke, even thicker and more impenetrable, again envelop and conceal the distant view. Here the fire is converted into a veritable hell. Heavens, what moments those were! The bullets whistled and groaned with piteous voices. Some, which must have proceeded from rifles, miauw exactly like cats.

Compressing his lips a little, Skobelev rides along on his gray horse, with a gloomy face, now and then addressing a question to Kuropatkin. The latter, as though desirous of shielding his chief from the bullets, rides, contrary to custom, on his right side; and I ride still further to the right than Kuropatkin. One ball strikes directly behind me. The thud is dull, and *disagreeable*. "That surely must have hit some one," I say to myself. I glance round — I am not mistaken: a Cossack of the Don, a brave fellow, judging from his face, swarthy, and with long black mustache, is sinking slowly, and without a moan, from his horse. With weak and trembling hand he has clutched at the horse's rein; grasping his pike with the other, he strives to hold himself upright in his saddle. But in vain! Heavens! how frightful was his face at that moment! — it rises before my eyes now. His mouth was distorted and half open, his eyes fixed and staring. Death had, suddenly, laid its grasp upon him. The bullet had struck him in the right side.

At such terrible moments, there is developed in each one of us, and to such a degree, the sentiment of self-preservation, egotism, self-love, — each one of us so fears to present himself, even for a superfluous second, as a target for the bullets, that no one, even of the escort, of the comrades of the wounded man, halts in order to render assistance to the unfortunate fellow. All merely exchange significant looks,

urge on their horses, and ride past the fatal spot as speedily as possible.

After the Cossack is killed, I mechanically rein in my horse and try to cross more to the left than Skobelev, calculating that, in such a position, the bullets, before reaching me, will have first to pierce Kuropatkin, then Skobelev and only then come to me. And is it not singular?—no sooner had I changed than another ball strikes, and so close to me that I involuntarily look about me to see whether “I” am not wounded. At this moment, I feel a sort of awkwardness in my left leg. I look, and on my boot, close to the ankle, there is blood. I felt no pain at the time, but my terror and my imagination depicted to me God knows what; my bones are already splintered, and my leg will be cut off, and so forth. In consequence of this, I begin to shriek: “Stop, stop, somebody, help!” and, to my horror, I perceive that no one stops, and that all are riding onward. At length I observe that Kuropatkin says something to Skobelev. The latter turns round, casts a fleeting glance at me, and rides on. During this time, I did not even perceive that my horse was wounded. Thanks to Kuropatkin, he sent me an orderly, and the latter gave up his horse to me. This orderly was an unlucky wight, —no sooner had I ridden off than he was killed.

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE FIELD HOSPITAL.

I RIDE back to the field hospital. The wound makes itself felt; the leg is painful to the touch. The principal point which troubles me is the uncertainty as to the nature of the wound, as to whether the bone has been splintered or not. I was obliged to let my leg hang; it was utterly impossible to rest it in the stirrup. During these moments I felt how unpleasant it was to retreat from under a heavy fire. You felt, every moment, that you were on the point of being struck in the back. I bent myself over my horse as much as possible.

I wandered from the road, and rode at hap-hazard. — “It’s all the same,” I thought, “if I only fall in with our men and not with the Turks.” I cross ditches, gullies, trenches, and all are full of corpses, naked and blue.¹

Near a small grove, I was overtaken by a party of our soldiers, I do not recollect to what regiment they belonged. They were flying back like madmen, in the most disorderly style. I observed no officers with them; they were utterly without control.

The fine rain never stopped drizzling, and water dripped from the trees. The black, greasy earth was soaked, and the horse stumbled and clung as he picked his way among the vine-stocks. And now he has halted on the brink of a deep, narrow trench, and will not leap it. I look round, in alarm, for the end of the trench, and turn to the left; here it seems as though one might leap across, it is smaller here. At the bottom of the trench lies one of our dead soldiers, shirtless, clad only in his trousers. At that moment a bullet whistles past my ears, as though expressly with the aim of increasing my sufferings. My leg begins to pain me so terribly that I become convinced, that the bone is fract-

¹ These were the Kalugans, whose attack on the Green Mountains, on August 28, had been repulsed by the Turks, with great loss on our side.

ured. A feverish chill burns over my body. In some way or other, I make my way out of the woods. — Here I meet Prince Tcherkassky on horseback. Dressed in a military frock-coat and a cap with a red band, the Prince presented a very fine and engaging appearance. His large, elderly face was cleanly shaved, his gray hair was brushed forward on his temples, his thick moustache was trimmed close. The Prince was there looking up wounded men, in order to conduct them to the ambulance, which was visible not far off. With what genuine feeling did he inquire of me, on the way, where I was wounded, how our affairs were progressing, how Mikhail Dmitryevitch was, whether he was alive or wounded?

But here we are at the field hospital, on the highway itself. Bullets fly past at rare intervals. There are neither tents nor pavilions. Two doctors and a few Sisters of Mercy are rendering the first aid to the wounded; without it the latter would not be in a condition to proceed as far as the temporary hospital, which lay five versts away. The troubled look of the doctors, with their sleeves rolled up, is extremely disagreeable. I am assisted to alight from my horse, and am placed on a stretcher. The doctors and Sisters of Mercy examine my leg, which is so swollen that the boot has to be cut open. I feel ill. The leg proves to have been pierced clean through by the bullet; whether the bone is affected, the doctor is unable to say, as he has applied only an external bandage, in order to stay the flow of blood. Through the kindness of Prince Tcherkassky, I am placed in the wagon of the Red Cross and carried alone to the division hospital.

Every jolt, every awkward turn of the wagon, is forcibly communicated to the injured leg. But, painful as it is, I grow calm; there are no bullets whistling here, no shells exploding; only a distant, continuous roar is thundering somewhere, without a break. I overtake many wounded. They are dragging themselves wearily along on foot, on the road and alongside it. One has his head bound up, another his arm. Yonder limps one supporting himself on his gun, his right leg is wrapped up in something and thrust forward. The soldier halts to take breath, glances sadly about him, to see whether he has gone far, and hobbles on.

“I ought,” I think, “to take that man with me, to seat

him in the wagon." But at that moment the thought flashes through my mind that I shall have to move, and if the leg is disturbed it will suffer. "He'll get there as it is."

The wagon descends into a small valley, and turns to the left of the road, along the stream. Here the locality is well known to me. Yonder is the tree where Prince Imerevsky waited yesterday evening, when he sent me to hunt up Skobelev. Yonder are our tents; there is mine. Lamakin is not visible. Further on run the division kitchens, and yonder are the hospital pavilions; "Ai! how many wounded are congregated there, ai, ai!" I exclaim, raise myself a little, and make an effort to take a good look about me. The white tents have been soaked with rain, have turned gray and in some way melted into the mass of soldiers' figures in their coarse, gray great-coats, covered with hideous caps. The wagon comes to a stand-still; farther on, the road is blocked with hospital transports and carts. Some of them are filled with wounded; others are empty, and will in all probability be immediately despatched in quest of fresh victims. The faces of many of the wounded express such agony that, at the mere sight of them, I involuntarily calm down and bear my own pain with more patience.

They take me out of the wagon, and carry me on a stretcher, straight to the officers' department, where they place me on a long table. Doctor Miram, a blond and very pleasing young man, examines my leg. After him comes another doctor, tall and gray; it is evident from his shoulder-straps that this man is of higher rank. They discuss something between themselves, after which Miram takes from the assistant a sort of small white bag, lays it on my face and says, "Count, one, two!" I begin to count, "One, two, three, four," and lose consciousness. The bag had chloroform in it.

I do not know how long I slept, but when I open my eyes I am lying on a stretcher in the corner of the pavilion. I instantly recall what has happened to me. And how about my leg?—is it intact? I am afraid to move it. I look, and the leg is wrapped in muslin and bandaged. That means that it is not amputated! Thank God!

A press of work is in progress around me. Wounded men are constantly being carried in and out. The pavilion is full of officers. Some, who must be slightly wounded,

lie in silence and watch, like myself, what is going on about them. But others have closed their eyes, and are uttering stifled groans. Behind me lies a very long infantry lieutenant; closely covered with his soiled and tattered great-coat, he gives no signs of life. I try not to look at what is going on at the table, on that place of torture where they are engaged in amputation. Thence proceed now and then abrupt and, as it were, frightened exclamations, "Oh! oh!" One's heart breaks at the sound of them.

"Your Honor!" suddenly rings out above my head, in a familiar plaintive voice. I look round; Lamakin. He had been shaking with fever all the time recently, hence his face was now yellow and sunken. It was particularly pleasant to me to see that familiar form in the faded blue tunic, with its ragged elbows, fastened by a strap holding a dagger.

"Welcome, Lamakin!" I say. Lamakin makes no reply, but continues to whimper in a peculiar way: "Your Honor, your Honor!" Then, after some faltering, he informs me: "The Circassians have cut your brother's throat."

"How cut his throat?" I cry, springing from the bed.

"Exactly that," he continues. "The Osetini saw it. Here they have brought back his dagger and his field-glass." And thereupon Lamakin lays the things on my stretcher.

Sharp grief takes possession of me. Tears begin to stifle me. I picture to myself Sergyei as they are torturing him, cutting him down . . . he begs for help, and help there is none . . . he is deserted, alone, in the midst of the enemy.

For a quarter of an hour I mourn, and then I order them to carry me to my tent. Two infantrymen take up the stretcher, and bear me thither. The rain has ceased. Lamakin walks beside me and from time to time adjusts my pillow under my head. Perceiving that I have calmed down somewhat, he begins again with his plaintive whine: "Your Honor, they have killed my horse!"

"Well, what is to be done?" I say; "we will buy another."

"And where did they put the saddle, your Honor? I found the horse, but not the saddle! Nor the felt cloak!"

"I left both saddle and burka on the horse," I reply, with vexation.

Our camp makes its appearance. The soldiers bear me

to the centre of my tent and set the stretcher down on the ground. I give them a ruble note, and, highly pleased, they retire with elastic strides. Two officers are lying in the tent; the first, Gaitoff; the second, further on, in the extreme corner, is the cornet of the Kuban regiment; I know from his figure that it is B——

“Well, how are you? They say that you are wounded in the leg. Is it bad?” asks Gaitoff, sympathetically, approaching me.

“Is it true that they have killed my brother?” I inquire of him, in my turn, in such an irritable tone that Gaitoff makes haste to soothe me, and says:—

“No, he is not dead, only wounded.” At that moment, I glance up. B raises himself a little from the bed, adjusts his cap on his head, wipes away the gathering moisture from his lips with his hand, as well as from his highly colored face, which is slightly blue from intoxication, and, without looking at me, he shouts to Gaitoff in Little Russian style and a shrill, dissatisfied tone: “What are you jabbering there? don’t you know that the Circassians cut his brother’s throat?”—and, rolling himself up in his felt cloak, he turns over to sleep again.

After these words, Gaitoff could affirm nothing more, to soothe me.

“For Heaven’s sake, go and learn where my brother is, and whether they have even rescued his body!” I entreat.

Gaitoff leaves the tent and mounts his horse. The crack of his whip resounds like the discharge of a pistol; it is plain to me that his weary horse breaks into a trot only with great difficulty; the mire splashes under his hoofs, and spatters, and some clods fly into my tent. In another moment, Gaitoff’s figure, in his voluminous black felt cloak, disappears from view.

My wound begins to bleed again, either from emotion or because I do not lie quiet. I order Lamakin to summon some soldiers, and have myself carried back to the hospital.

Night has already closed in fully. Around the hospital tents, the moans are constant: the doctors and Sisters of Mercy are exhausted; thousands of wounded still lie unbandaged, under the open sky, directly on the ground, amid the mud and slime, and fresh thousands are streaming thither. I am also obliged to pass the night in the



SERGYĚĪ VASILYEVITCH VERESTCHAGIN.
(Author's Brother.)

open air, among the wounded. The pavilions are all full to overflowing with subjects for amputation.

I retain an especially distinct remembrance of one soldier among my neighbors. He was lying three paces from me, on his back, without his uniform, and curled up like a beetle that has been turned on its back. A broad spot of blood on his shirt, in the middle of his back, shows where the unfortunate man is wounded. All night long they did not dress his wound, and in the morning, when I woke up, he was already dead. And not he alone, but many, many of my neighbors had died before the morning came. The soldiers' sanitary corps took them, one after the other, by their feet, and under the arms, and carried them off somewhere on one side, behind the tent.

In the morning the sun came up and gave promise of a fine day. It lighted up a melancholy spectacle. A long line of carts, harnessed to oxen, stood along the road in front of the bandaging spot. The carts were filled with wounded, for transport to the rear. I recall the figure of another wounded man at the moment when they laid me in the wagon. A swarthy soldier lay upon the earth in an outspread great-coat, and shrieked so that he overpowered all the other moans far and near. He screamed without cessation, and always with the same vigor; he would stop for an instant, raise himself on his elbow, gaze wildly about him, and begin to shriek again. I remember turning to the doctor who was approaching, and saying to him: —

“Is it impossible, doctor, to relieve that unfortunate man? Why does he yell so?”

“Nothing can be done for him,” replies the doctor, pausing beside me for a moment. “They have performed an amputation on him here,” and he points to his knee; “they have not applied the final bandages yet, but have put on a metallic bandage, which causes him pain, but if it is removed, the patient will immediately bleed to death.” With a slight bow the doctor hastily passes on.

I go to Paradim, to see my brother Vasily.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRANKOVANSKY HOSPITAL. — WITH THE DETACHMENT AGAIN. — SKOBELEFF.

MY brother Vasily advised me to go, for my cure, to the Brankovansky hospital in Bukharest, where he had just recovered from his wound. By chance I managed to hire a covered half-calash, and set out very comfortably on my journey.

Five versts from Paradim, I encounter the Emperor, in a calash with four horses. The Emperor was hastening to the heights of Plevna, in order to inspect the results of the battle of the preceding day. Behind him, in another calash, followed the court physician, Botkin.

I was obliged to pass endless trains of carts loaded with our wounded men. The carts, attached to oxen, dragged, with deadly slowness, along the dusty road, filling the air, far and wide, with the squeaking of their ungreased wheels. The wounded, with their heads thrust through the sides of the carts, bore it with wonderful patience, for, in consequence of the dust and heat, their undressed wounds had become covered with gangrene.

I went to Zimnitza to pass the night, and on the next day, towards evening, I reached the railway station of Frateshti, that famous rallying-point of our sick and wounded soldiers, as they streamed thither from the whole seat of the war. Leaving Frateshti, I was in Bukharest within a few hours, and in the Brankovansky hospital, which was wholly given up to sick and wounded Russian officers; about seventy men were lying there.

The hospital life, with its doctors, pulverizers, carbolic acid, bandages, and plaster of Paris jackets, ran its course. The most torturing thing was the drain-pipe, which they placed in my wound. This is a short gutta-percha tube,

which serves to carry off the pus. The drain-pipe positively did not allow me to move my leg, particularly when the coverlet accidentally touched it. From lying thus motionless, bed-sores soon made their appearance.

At twelve o'clock they served our breakfast; at four, dinner; at nine, evening tea. Acquaintances and relatives were allowed to visit the patients all day long, from morning till night.

I think it was about a month after my arrival in Bukharest that a celebrated surgeon visited the Brankovansky hospital. It happened in this wise: about noon, the door to our tent opened half-way, and a thin, grayish, little old man, in an old-fashioned, long-tailed coat, and with his neck bound up in a small, white scarf, entered with a brisk step. This was Pirogoff. Immediately behind him came the head of the hospital, the Rumanian Colonel Bibesco. Behind followed a whole train of professors and assistants. Last of all came the superintendent, who now and then cautiously nudged his assistant, at anything which seemed to him negligent. All the hospital authorities followed Pirogoff with great respect. Pirogoff paused beside each wounded man, and, the more serious and dangerous the wound, the longer did he stand, and the more attentively did he listen to the assistant who explained to him, in French, the course of the illness. Every word, every remark, every nod of our surgeon's head, was taken into consideration by the doctors, and did not remain unnoted. Pirogoff was evidently also in Rumania the great patriarch of surgery. I waited impatiently for him to reach my bed.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" I hear his voice. I frown, and try to seem as badly wounded as possible, and throw the coverlet from my leg. Professor Pattzel, who is attending me, quickly undoes the bandage, explains something to Pirogoff, in Latin, and shows the wound.

"Lucky fellow!" says the latter, with a fleeting glance at my face, and makes a motion with his hand to signify that the bandage is to be put on again, and walks on. The whole mass of doctors hasten after the celebrity, and the men who have been inspected bind up their wounds themselves. I also set about applying a long flannel bandage to my leg, greatly displeased with Pirogoff, because he had paid so little attention to my wound, although, in reality,

I should only have rejoiced, because it proved that the danger was past.

In addition to Pirogoff, we were visited by the Servian Princess Natalya, a very sympathetic young woman, and Adjutant-general Prince Baryatinsky. This last asked every wounded man whether he had any petition to present to his Majesty.

Side by side with the tent for the wounded, in which I lay, was pitched the tent for the sick. There, among other officers, lay our old Vladikavkazian Esaul, who had charge of the transports. He was suffering from rheumatism in the feet.

I remember that I was lying on my bed, one day, when he suddenly entered our tent, with a slow, weak gait, dressed in an invalid's long, dark blue dressing-gown, and slippers, with a number of the *Invalid* in his hand, and shouted gayly to me:—

“Come, send for your champagne!”—“What does this mean?” I say to myself. The Esaul seats himself on a stool beside me, puts on his spectacles in a leisurely way, and, being far-sighted, holds the paper at a distance, seeks out the marked passage with his finger, and reads in triumphant tones: “To Sotnik Verestchagin, of the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment, of Teretz, for the engagement with the Turks from the 1st to the 12th of July, a golden sword, with the inscription, ‘For bravery.’”

“Hurrah!” I shout with joy, and leap from my bed, quite forgetting my lame leg; then I snatch the paper from the old man, and read the order about myself half a score of times, as though desirous of convincing myself that there is no mistake. “A golden sword! a golden sword!” I repeat, not trusting my own eyes. Not one of my comrades and fellow-soldiers had ever been so dear and agreeable to me as that old Esaul, at that moment. And his closely cropped gray head, and bony hands, and all his aged body were dear to me, and I was ready to embrace and kiss him repeatedly.

“A golden sword, that's a thing worth having, my dear fellow!” repeats the Esaul, with a significant air, and in a drawling tone. “Come, there's no use in being stingy; send for a bottle,” he adds, wagging his head.

There is nothing to be done, and I send.

"Where," I say to myself, "am I to get the sword-knot of the George? Of course it is not to be found in the shops here!" I send my servant to search for it, and, to my great satisfaction, he brings me the sword-knot. I immediately attach it to my sword, hang it over my head, and cannot gaze enough at it. Simultaneously boastful thoughts begin to wander through my head, as to which one of my comrades in the regiment has a like reward. I ask the Esaul: he informs me that, so far, with the exception of Regimental Commander Levis, no one has, although many have been presented.

But my bliss in hospital did not terminate with this. I do not recollect how long afterwards it was that the same gaunt old Esaul came to me again, in the same dark blue gown and slippers, and shouted in the same proud tone, as he flourished a copy of the newspaper:—

"I congratulate you! You are promoted to Esaul!"

I do not believe him, snatch the paper from his hands, and read: "Sotnik Verestchagin, for the capture of the town of Lovtcha, on the 22d of August, is promoted from Sotnik to Esaul." My delight knows no bounds.

In the meantime, my leg had healed sufficiently to allow of my walking about with the aid of a cane.

On the 29th of November it became known in the hospital that Plevna had fallen. My blood involuntarily boiled. "Forward! forward!" I say to myself. "I must get to the Danube. We will cross the Balkans to Adrianople, to Constantinople!" I immediately strike myself off the hospital list, and, although the doctors advise me to remain a few days longer, I do not heed them, but return to the army, to seek out General Skobelev's division.

I reach Frateshti quietly by rail; but the interval between there and Zimnitza is not so easily crossed. I emerge from the railway station, leaning on my stick, and take my way to a small restaurant in the neighborhood. The little room is crowded with officers of every description. The tobacco smoke is so strong that one cannot breathe. Perfect freedom and variety reign in the costumes. Officers' shoulder-straps are to be seen on short fur coats, on leather paletots, on felt cloaks, and on those made from soldiers' cloth. Some are smoking, others are playing cards. Two infantry officers, who must have arrived

from somewhere, are sleeping soundly, stretched out upon the floor on their outspread great-coats. Frieze coverlets, made into a roll, are under their heads. Their tall boots are well bespattered with mud.

I set out in search of an equipage to convey me to Zimnitza. Not far from the restaurant stand conveyances of various descriptions. There are single horses, and pairs, and beautiful four-horse calashes, with bells; narrow red ribbons are braided into the horses' manes. They are beautiful, they are good, but the prices — the prices are impossible! For the sixty versts to Zimnitza, with a pair of old hacks, in a miserable cart, they demand four half-imperials a person; and the driver will not take one passenger, but three at the least. For one person in a calash they demand fifteen half-imperials; and, if they take three or four, then seven half-imperials for each man; sum total, of course, for a trip one way from fifteen to thirty half-imperials, which makes, in our money, from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty rubles — which is simply fabulous!

I found two fellow-travellers, two hussar officers of Kieff. With great difficulty we succeeded in hiring a wretched turn-out with a pair of horses, for ten half-imperials. We took our departure that same day. Good Heavens, what roads! Mud up to the hubs. We pass thousands of conveyances of all sorts, with every possible variety of load — artillery, commissary, army supplies, and so on. A fresh breeze blew about us, and made its way through our cold gray coats, with only a lasting lining. Thanks to my felt cloak, it had not betrayed me so far, and it proved useful here also. We reached Zimnitza in the evening, passed the night there, and on the following morning betook ourselves to Sistovo. Here my fellow-travellers, the hussars, left me, and I remained alone, and learned, by accident, that, in the course of a few hours, an empty transport train of the Red Cross Society was to set out for Plevna, for the sick and wounded. The commander of the transport was a certain count, still a young man, a tall, light-haired fellow, and a great talker. He wore a short fur coat, with twisted shoulder-straps. He very readily agreed to carry me to Paradim, where headquarters were situated at that time.

We left Sistovo about noon. The transport train con-

sisted of fifty wagons. In some of them there were a few poods¹ of freight, consisting of tea, sugar, various biscuits, cases of wine, preserves, and so forth. The transport train was accompanied, in addition to the Count, by a doctor, an assistant, and four Sisters of Mercy, two of whom were very pretty; the drivers and grooms were principally drunken Rumanians and Wallachians. They urged their horses on, and thrashed them to death; at the halting-places they did not feed them, but sold the oats for drink. The Count, in his character of a great gentleman, paid very little attention to all this, and did not even enter into any details of management whatever.

I remember our arriving for the night in a small hamlet, and bestowing ourselves in a commodious cottage to rest. We are drinking tea.

"Feodor!" shouts the Count to his lackey.

The servant enters. He was a very presentable young man, with black side-whiskers, a smooth-shaven chin, was foppishly dressed in a very neat gray frock-coat, which must have come from the Count's shoulders, and with a watch attached to a nickel chain; his cloth trousers were tucked into tall, polished boots.

"Sugar!" and the Count hands him the tin box.

"There is no more sugar, your Illustrious Highness," the man replies, courteously; "do you order a fresh box to be opened?"

"Of course!" ejaculates the Count, with an impatient grimace.

The servant goes off to the wagons, gets a case, and returns in a few moments with a tin box full of sugar; of that same sugar which had come from Heaven knows what distant place, for the use of the sick and wounded soldiers. The tea is flavored with cognac, rum, and other aromatic liquors. There is no lack of anything. The next day, at the first halting-place, the same scene takes place.

"Your Excellency, all the sugar is gone. Do you order a new case to be opened?" says Feodor's courteous voice.

"Of course!" follows the reply. And there is a pood of sugar in a case. What Feodor did with the sugar, and whether many cases reached their destination, God only knows.

The road continues to be as muddy and sticky as ever.

¹ Pood, about thirty-six pounds.

The ruts and hollows have been rendered frightful by the multitude of carts, and the horses are completely exhausted.

The day is gray, the time towards evening, when we enter Paradim. After passing several narrow streets, we reach the heart of the settlement. Here, on the square, the headquarters are pitched. Good Heavens, what a situation! The Grand-duke's spacious felt tent stands on an island in the midst of a sea of black, half-frozen mud. Only a narrow strip of yellowish sand connects it with the dining-tent and with the warm felt tent of the chief of staff. Iron stove-pipes projecting from the roofs of these tents show that they are heated. Near by stand a few more warm felt tents, belonging to the assistant of the chief of staff and other nearly connected personages. Great activity is visible round about; the figures of officers, soldiers, and Cossacks flit hither and thither. Near at hand, Bulgarian cottages are visible, roofed with straw, and seeming half sunk in the earth. In the yards stand horses, both with and without blankets.

Yonder, from the central plastered hut, emerges the plump figure of the Adjutant-colonel, a man of medium height, with his reddish beard trimmed close in a circle, and wearing a cap with a red band and a white piping. Stepping down from the low perch, the Colonel seems to be engrossed in thought for a moment; then he stoops quickly, adjusts the long legs of his well blacked boots adorned with spurs, catches his dangling aiglets in his left hand, and hurries across the liquid mud to the Grand-duke's tent, with long leaps, making an effort to land on the boards thrown across the way here and there. He raises his right hand and a book high above his head, and uses it to preserve his balance. The Colonel's leaps are very agile, and he disappears into the tent of the commander-in-chief.

Having traversed the square, I order the driver to halt almost at the exit from the village, at a restaurant, erected under a canvas roof, and I enter. The restaurant is filled with officers. I meet several acquaintances. From one of them I learn that the younger Skobelev, with the sixteenth division of infantry, is in Plevna itself, twenty versts from Paradim; on the morning of the following day, I go thither.

What a change the road to Plevna has undergone! Of

course, there is not a trace of anything green. Snow lies everywhere about. I approach the hill up which I had so frequently ridden, both on the 18th of July and the 30th of August. How many men had been killed, wounded, and crippled there! Our trenches stretch out in long lines like huge boa-constrictors, crushing the brave defenders of Plevna. I ascend the last elevation before Plevna. On the right of the highway rises a huge Turkish redoubt; what a strong fortification! What a wide, deep moat! How many unexploded shells lie scattered about, and how big they are! Just at my horse's feet there projects from the earth an arm as pale as alabaster, belonging to some corpse buried under a thin layer of soil.

The redoubt begins to lose its first threatening aspect. The wall and angles have fallen in, the moat is filled with all sorts of rubbish. I ride further; Plevna comes in sight. It is not as beautiful now as it seemed to me on the 18th of July. It is small and dirty, its buildings are low and falling into ruins. To the left of Plevna, low down, on the snow-covered plain, the bridge across the Vid stands out blackly.

I ride into the town. It is already late, and no one can be seen through the darkness. The long rows of ruined fences are, to some extent, replaced by tiny houses. Fires begin to glimmer here and there on both sides. And now some one meets me — it is a Bulgarian.

"Where has the General stopped?" I ask him. The Bulgarian waves his hand along the street, and says, "There, Captain!" I ride on. Russian voices and reproaches ring out from somewhere. Explosions of cartridges, which are scattered over the ground and have caught fire, resound; fires, as from conflagrations, flash up on the outskirts of the town, in various directions.

I meet a soldier, and ask him where General Skobeleff has halted.

"Please, follow me, your Honor," he replies, turns round, and leads me along a tolerably wide, crooked street. I pass the bazaar. Round about burn bonfires. The soldiers are clustered about them, warming themselves, jostling each other, chatting and joking. The obliging Bulgarians slip among them and bustle about solicitously. The nearer I come to the centre of the town, the more suffocating and infectious does the air become. The stench of decaying

bodies completely surrounds me. Finally I enter a narrow alley. My guide halts near a gate, and says: "Here, your Honor, is where General Skobelev is stopping."

Directly opposite the gate, a pretty little white house is visible. The entrance is lighted by two lanterns. Lights gleam through the windows. To the right of the gate extends a low wing, also white, and in it lights are also burning. I hand my horse over to a Cossack, who comes forward, and direct my course to the wing on the right. Tumult and loud conversation are heard through the half-open door. It seems that I have come upon them at dinner time.

Dinner is in progress in two spacious rooms. I peep through the door and take a look. In the first, — the nearest room, — at a long table covered with a white cloth, sit the officers of lower rank; subalterns, lieutenants, staff-captains, captains, up to and inclusive of majors. In the second the commanders are dining. The elder Skobelev, in his blue *tcherkeska* (Cossack coat) of the Guards, is presiding at the head of the table. His red tunic, adorned with silver galloon, peeps out ornamentally from beneath his bushy red beard. On his right hand sits his son, Mikhail Dmitryevitch; on his left the General in command of the brigade. Further down come the commanders of regiments and batteries. Not far from the General sits my brother Vasily, in a black rough cloth pea-jacket, with the George in his button-hole, and beside him Kuropatkin, also with the George in his button-hole.

The dinner is in full swing. Mikhail Dmitryevitch is very gay, apparently. His hearty voice and laughter drown all the other voices. With a napkin hanging under his whiskers, as usual, he bends forward and eats something, then throws himself back and laughs. It is very pleasant to me to see him so well and cheerful. While I am thus engaged in gazing, I hear a familiar voice behind me, "Welcome, your Honor!" I look round, and find that it is the General's servant, Krukovsky, crowding past me with a platter of roast beef, who is joyously welcoming me.

"How are you, Krukovsky?" I say to him; "it seems that the General is yonder in that room?"

"Just so; please, come in. They have just finished the roast," he replies, and passes into the first room. Leaning

on my stick, I enter the apartment where the generals are sitting.

"A-a-a-a, Verestchagin, welcome, my dear fellow!" lisps Mikhail Dmitryevitch. "Very glad to see you!" he exclaims, cheerfully, on catching sight of me, takes me by the hand, and greets me in friendly wise. "Well, and how is your health, my dear fellow? How is your leg?" he inquires, and looks me up and down. I press the General's hand, then salute his father. The latter turns half round, looks at me, bellows something in the shape of a greeting, and gives me two fingers. Then I go to greet my brother and Kuropatkin, and my other acquaintances.

Mikhail Dmitryevitch seats me beside himself, at the corner of the table, orders them to serve me afresh with the whole dinner, pours out champagne, bottles of which stand all over the table, and caresses and treats me. He is evidently delighted at my return.

"Do you remember, Alexei Nikolaitch, how he began to squeak when they wounded him?" says Mikhail Dmitryevitch, turning to Kuropatkin, and nodding his head towards me. During the entire conversation, the General is kneading a pellet of bread between his white, thin, slender fingers, rolling it into a ball, then squeezing it up, being unable to keep his hands quiet in general.

Skobelev is in a fine humor.

"Imagine how you squeaked; come, just imagine it," he persists, and pulls the sleeve of my coat lightly in jest.

Skobelev laughs, then shows how I squeaked when I was wounded, and, in his merry humor, nods to his father that it is time to rise from the table. The old man rises heavily, with a sigh. All follow his example.

The Skobelevs betake themselves to their quarters, which lie across the court-yard, in the first house. My brother and I follow them. We pass into a warm and spacious chamber. The elder Skobelev immediately unbuttons his coat, seats himself on the broad divan, covered with a Persian rug, tucks his feet under him, and assumes his favorite after-dinner, reposeful attitude; Dmitry Ivanovitch, as I afterwards learned, had been sent to Plevna by the commander-in-chief, in order to obtain *accurate* information as to how many Turkish cannons, guns, and so on, there were in Plevna.

I always enjoyed watching the elder Skobelev. His rich

blue *tcherkeska* adorned with silver, his scarlet tunic, his very wide trousers with silver stripes, his fiery beard, all went so well with his characteristic and showy though gloomy figure. It cannot be said that Dmitry Ivanovitch was always stern; on the contrary, he frequently convulsed his auditors with his stories; but his face had, on the whole, something harsh and cold about it.

Mikhail Dmitriyevitch presented a complete contrast to his father. He did not lie down on the divan, after his hearty dinner, and did not grow drowsy beneath the weight in his stomach. He merely threw off his uniform, put on a short leather jacket, with a red flannel lining, and, pulling his cross of the George out of his necktie, he began to pace back and forth in the chamber, with his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Well, how now, my dear fellow? are you going ahead with us?" says Mikhail Dmitriyevitch, addressing me.

"I don't know, your Excellency, whether my leg will permit me. It is still very hard for me to ride on horse-back," I say, hesitating to give a decided answer. My brother Vasily, wishing to help me out of my dilemma, replies: "His wound is not healed over yet, and it will be difficult for him to follow us."

"Then, let him ride in my calash; eh, my good fellow, will it suit you to cross the Balkans again? If I were in your place, I'd crawl on all fours, but I'd crawl there." And the General makes a decided gesture with his hand, becomes animated, and begins to walk about the room with more energetic strides. It ends in his approaching his dozing father, and beginning to play pranks with him, to tease him and pull him about. The old gentleman wards off his son with all his might, pokes him with his feet, and cries in nasal tones:—

"Misha, sto-o-op! Mi-i-isha, leave off your pranks!"

Then Mikhail Dmitriyevitch goes off to his own quarters, in a small room, and returns with his photograph and signature, which he gives to me.

Skobelev's staff was quite comfortably lodged in an adjoining house, but the smell from dead bodies was terrible. Kuropatkin told me afterwards that, on the first evening of their arrival, he ordered a *mangal* (a chafing-dish with coals) to be lighted in his room, in order to warm him, and sat down to read some papers,—but it was impossible!

Such a stench was borne in from somewhere that it utterly exhausted him. He sent his men to find out the cause, but they could not. Finally, in a cellar adjoining the house, they found the bodies of twelve Turks, which were entirely decomposed. And such was the state of things in nearly every house, cellar, and mosque.

In the course of a day or two, I am obliged to go to headquarters for something. I approach Mikhail Dmitryevitch, and report this to him. The elder Skobelev, who chances to be there at the moment, listens to our conversation, and says to me, in his snuffing voice:—

“Come with me in my calash, if you like. I am going to his Highness, and I can take you, and that’s better than dragging along on horseback with a lame leg!”

This proposition gives me great delight, and within an hour I am seated in the calash, side by side with the old General. Coachman Mishka, as Dmitry Ivanovitch called him, a retired soldier and a chevalier of the George, drives the four black horses.

Turning cautiously from one dirty, ill-smelling street into another, we gradually get out of Plevna. Buildings grow rarer and rarer. We emerge from the town. The smell of burning and the stench are replaced by clear, cool, healthy air. The day is clear, though not sunny.

Again the locality which is so familiar to me spreads before our eyes. During these last few days, it has become still further covered with snow. We ride along very quietly. The springs rock us gently. The horses trot in unison, piercing through the thin layer of snow to the ground with the sharp barbs on their shoes. Old Skobelev wraps himself up still more closely in his sheepskin coat, and now and then adjusts his shining, black felt cloak with a movement of the shoulders. From time to time he glances at me, as though with the intention of entering into conversation.

“Stop, Misha!” the nasal tones of his elderly voice ring out, and, simultaneously with this shout, Dmitry Ivanovitch gives the coachman a dig in the spine with his fist. The equipage comes to a stand-still.

“For some reason, I . . . yes . . . I didn’t count how many cannon there are there,” he drawls with anxiety, and, somewhat confused, he casts an inquiring glance at me.

“Drive back, Misha; stop near the commandant’s office.”

Misha turns his horses round, muttering something beneath his breath, and drives back at a full trot. Ten minutes later, we again enter the town, and draw up at the porch of a large, two-story house.

"Get out, please, go upstairs, ask the commandant to give you a summary of how many cannons were found there in all . . . and guns . . . and pistols . . . and everything of that sort. . . . Do you understand?" the old man explains, and sketches with his finger, on his palm, that I am to bring it to him in writing, on paper.

I mount the dirty, muddy little staircase to the second floor. In the first room, a very spacious one, at a table heaped with divers documents, a young officer sits engaged in writing. A few paces from him, at another table, sits a scribe, also engaged in writing. On the left, in a small room, sit several officers, drinking, smoking, and eating.

I had already learned, from conversations with the staff officers, that Colonel Paniutin, commander of the Uglitz regiment, had been temporarily appointed commandant in Plevna, by Skobelev. I immediately recognize him by his mien and figure, but chiefly by his shoulder-straps. He is a tall, stout man, with a bass voice. His full, red face is surrounded, as by a forest, with a growth of reddish beard.

I introduce myself to the commandant, and explain matters to him. He goes out, and, returning a few minutes later, hands me the list. I thank the commandant, and return to Skobelev.

"Well, there, thank you! very good, now we proceed further. Drive on, Misha!" and Dmitry Ivanovitch, unbuttoning his fur coat, with a pleased expression, tucks the list of Turkish cannon and guns in the side-pocket of his *tcherkeska*.

We emerge a second time from the city, and drive without conversation for a quarter of an hour. Although the General breaks the silence, and, in gratitude, as it were, for the service rendered him, asks me, in a monotonous, drawling tone, when we have already passed the redoubts and are approaching the trenches: —

"Do you know the spot where your brother Sergyei was killed?" At that moment we are ascending to the crest of a ridge, covered with sparse trees, denuded of leaves. On the right, two hundred yards distant, at the foot of the hill, runs a deep trench, covered with snow. In places, the

black embankment stands out sharply amid the universal whiteness.

"Yes, somewhere hereabouts, it seems, your Excellency," I say, pointing at the trench.

"Yonder, near that tree on the summit, do you see — m-m-m?" roars the General, pointing with his thumb, on which is the big diamond, and turning his head slowly round as the carriage drives on.

"Misha showed me," he adds, significantly, after which he arranges himself more comfortably in the carriage, wraps himself in his fur coat, twitches his shoulders again to adjust his felt cloak, and retires into himself.

I continue to gaze at the cold, snow-covered spot where my brother was killed. The carriage rolls on briskly; the trenches become more and more smoothed out and level with the surrounding soil, and are finally lost to sight altogether. Only a small tree, standing on the crest of the hill, the tree so dear to me, continues to rivet my attention, but even it disappears at last.

"Your father is still alive, is he not?" — the General's drawling voice makes itself heard, and rouses me from my reverie.

"Yes, your Excellency."

A pause ensues.

"He has a good property, probably?" — the old man continues his catechism in a searching tone.

"So so, your Excellency; very good," I make haste to reply, observing at the same time that Dmitry Ivanovitch is extremely inquisitive, and preparing my reply in case he shall inquire just what my father's income is.

Another pause.

"And how many serfs had he?"

"About a thousand, your Excellency," I reply, clapping on a good five hundred, I know not why.

Pause.

"He seems to have stopped," I say to myself. Not a bit of it. Dmitry Ivanovitch proves to be more inquisitive than I had supposed at first.

"Well, and how much land?"

"A great deal of land; seven thousand desyatius."

"Hm-m-m-m. — And Sergyei left something?"

"Yes, a little."

"Hm-m-m-m," ejaculates the General, in reply, and quiets down, this time, until we reach Paradim.

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM PLEVNA TO KAZANLYK.

ON returning from Paradim to Plevna, twenty-four hours later, I had to go to the Caucasian brigade, to see the commander of the regiment, Levis, to inquire after my comrades, and to receive my pay, which had been accumulating for nearly half a year. The brigade, consisting at that time of the detachment of General Gurko, was stationed, according to rumor, at the foot of the Balkans, on the highway to Sophia, near the hamlet of Pravitzza. A horseman, the Osetin Abadzieff, ordered to the escort of General Skobelev from our Osetin division, offered to accompany me. He was a young fellow, of twenty-two or three, tall, well built, and very handsome, and swarthy.

It is already dark when we ride out of Plevna. The cold is tolerably severe — eight to nine degrees. Far ahead of us, the valley of the river is indistinctly outlined. We cross the bridge and ride along the highway. Close by the road lie Turkish weapons, piled up exactly like stacks of firewood. They are already strewn with snow and sand; and it is a pity, for the Turkish guns were capital, incomparably better than our “Kruinka.” Riding farther, we see, on both sides of the road, looming blackly, just like haystacks — what? I attempt to ride nearer to one of them; my horse resists, snorts and will not proceed. Abadzieff, being a dashing horseman, overtakes me, and gallops rapidly up to the pile. Then I begin to distinguish, projecting from the heap, arms, legs, and heads. These were Turkish prisoners who had frozen on the road and been stacked up there. I could not see, in the darkness, the approximate number of bodies contained in each heap, — about fifty, I think. A few versts further on, we see, on the left of the road, what appears to be a flock of sheep resting on a snowy plain. Close by burns a fire, and human figures, who must be shepherds, are warming themselves at it. A sort of strange roar — “O-o-o-o-o,” —

exactly like thousands of voices groaning, is wafted to us from the flock. We draw nearer, and what do we find? — It is not shepherds who are warming themselves at the camp-fire, but about ten of our soldiers. What we had taken for a flock of sheep was nothing else than a huge squad of Turkish prisoners, several thousand in number. Huddled as close to each other as possible, tattered, hungry, with their arms and legs swathed in various rags, they lay unprotected on the snow, all bent up, and groaning. Some of them had their heads covered with bashliks and hoods. Although their groaning was stifled, yet, coming from such a mass, it was truly terrible, and laid hold upon the very soul of every one who heard it. What made it all the harder for me to gaze upon these unfortunate men was the consciousness of my inability to help them.

About midnight we reached the hamlet of Gorny Dubnyak, where was posted the grenadier brigade of my cousin, General Gadon. I passed the night with him, warmed myself, rested, and pursued my journey. The nearer I approached to the Balkans, the more picturesque did the country become. As I gazed at the snowy heights, I could not believe my eyes, and that I was in the warm Promised Land of Turkey, of whose heat and fruitfulness I had read and heard so much when a child. I had never suspected that the winter could be so cold here.

We overtake our infantry. It is the third division on the march.

They stretch out along the winding road, a long, endless line of wagons, baggage-trains, guns, and caissons. In one place, about two hundred yards from the road, something black is lying among the bushes, on the freshly trodden snow. My Abadzieff gallops forward and calls me. I ride up and behold lying there a young soldier of our own, and not a common soldier either, but a corporal, in his uniform, without a coat, with his face buried in the snow, and without a sign of life. We spring from our horses, lift up the soldier, and begin to rub his ears with all our might. In the course of a few minutes, he begins to roar, then to groan, and finally he thrusts us aside; it must have been very painful. We are greatly delighted at having restored the man to consciousness, for if Abadzieff had not discovered him he would certainly have frozen. We carry him to the wagons and hand him over to the men there.

Meanwhile the road has been growing worse and worse. As I am mounted and ride on the best side of the road, I am subjected to none of those hardships which our artillerymen and guns had to undergo. Ice-covered stones, projecting in the middle of the road, pits, and hollows, render the road impassable for heavy weights. I overtake a nine-pounder gun. Six black horses, gaunt, exhausted, and half unshod, are striving with all their might to drag out the gun, which has dropped one wheel into a deep, frozen rut. The first postilion soldier is evidently commanding a second. His cap, bound about with a bashlik, has fallen on the nape of his neck; his full, ruddy face is red with cold; his small, red beard is covered with ice. He is chilled and exhausted, and appears to have lost all hope of getting out of the rut this time.

"Stop, stop! why urge on at random! Stop, brothers! let's have a smoke!" he cries, slips off of his horse, pats him caressingly on the neck, adjusts his forelock, and exclaims, "Oh, you darling, you good beast!" after which he feels in his pocket for his pipe. Resting thus every fifty or one hundred yards, smoking, slapping their black cloth sleeves, and kicking foot against foot with their icy boots, they contrive, so the artillerymen themselves told me, to traverse two or three versts a day, — to such a degree was the road ruined; but, according to the statements of the Bulgarians, it had been magnificent up to the time of the war.

The Balkans are very near. Their gleaming, snowy crests, illuminated by the sun, mingle with the silvery clouds. A little while before reaching the hamlet of Pravitz, a small brook pours noisily down from the mountains. Its current is so swift that it has not frozen over, even in the extremely violent cold. Beyond it, in a basin-like hollow, lies scattered the Bulgarian village, where the Caucasian brigade is stationed. The tiny huts, drifted in with huge piles of snow, seem smaller and lower than usual. They loom like small black specks amid the universal whiteness. It is about mid-day when I enter the settlement.

"Halt, Major, halt! whither are you bound? Come to us!" shouts a familiar voice.

I look, and on the porch of a little cottage stands old Esenoff, clad in a white calico shirt, and with a cigarette

between his teeth. His gray head is entirely unprotected, his trousers are for summer, and short, his *tchevyaki* are thin and without legs, so that his thin calves are visible. The old man waves his hand at me and summons me to him. I ride up. "You've been lost this long while. Where've you been?" he says, descending from the porch to shake hands with me. As I had been surprised on the 18th of July, before Plevna, at his strength and endurance, so Esenoff now amazes me by his health. The thermometer is twelve degrees out-of-doors. I am cold in my warm tunic, coat, and felt cloak, and the old man is warm in his calico tunic. I perceive no change in Esenoff, except that his gray beard and bristling moustache seem to be more smoked and stained, in some places, with tobacco juice.

"How are you? How is Genelar¹ Skobelev? how's his health?" he inquires, warming my benumbed hands in his warm, broad palms. At that moment, Abadzieff rides up, and enters into conversation with Esenoff in their native tongue. No sooner do I ride on than another of my friends espies me from an adjoining hut — Captain Abessaloff² — and also waves and beckons me to him. Abessaloff was a splendid old fellow, and I do not know whether he is still alive. He was very old even then. At the time of the Crimean campaign, under Kars, he had commanded a hundred, and now, five and twenty years later, he was with the hundred as a subaltern, that is to say, he had gone backwards, not forwards, in the service. Abessaloff was much shorter than Esenoff, but broader in the shoulders and more stoutly built. He was the perfect type of a mountaineer. In spite of his age, there was not a single gray hair in either his hair or his beard, although he had long ago parted with many of his teeth. His hair was "coal-black," as the expression goes. Abessaloff wore his cap very low. He spoke very quietly, making expressive grimaces the while, and raising his thick black brows until they seemed to be a part of the fur of his cap. I found a great change in Abessaloff; he had grown prouder, more unapproachable, as though he had grown a full arshin taller. This probably arose from the fact that on his neck

¹ The Osetini often said "Genelar" instead of General.

² Abessaloff served in the militia; the grades count there as in the cavalry. Hence he was *rotmistr*.

glowed redly, and huge in size, the order of Saint Stanislaus of the second class, surmounted by swords, which he had received not long before. This order, according to the statements of his nephew, old Abessaloff never parted with even for a moment, not even removing it when he slept, but clasping it reverently in his hand, in order not to injure it.

Thence I ride in search of the authorities. They live near by, in a small, two-story house. In the spacious yard several Cossacks are engaged in grooming horses. I dismount, give my horse in charge of one of the Cossacks, and ascend the narrow staircase to the second story. The chilly wooden stairs sway and creak under the foot, as in our village cottages. Colonel Levis is promenading in a covered gallery, in company with the new brigade commander, Colonel Tcherevin, aide-de-camp to the Emperor, who had taken Tutolmin's place. I had already made acquaintance with Tcherevin, in St. Petersburg, before the campaign began. He was then in command of his Majesty's body-guard. It was only by his courtesy that I had been able to despatch the horse which I had purchased in the body-guard, to the acting army, in company with the whole escort, which was setting out for the Danube.

The new brigade commander was a man forty years of age, short of stature, and thin, with an aquiline nose and smoothly shaven cheeks, but he wore his moustache. His quick eyes glanced askance. Both Levis and Tcherevin were dressed in tunics of black lasting, but not fitted to the form, lined with black lambskin. Collar and cuffs were of the same fur. Such tunics the Cossacks call *shubi*. Levis wore a small cap, with a black top; Tcherevin, a tall one, with a red top. The commanders greeted me very cordially. Food and drink were immediately served. The conversation turned on the movements of our army in the Balkans.

While I was eating, the two Colonels paced the gallery side by side. Levis had his hands behind his back; Tcherevin had his in front, with sleeve thrust into sleeve. From time to time, they stepped up to the table, poured red wine from the bottles, clinked glasses, drank, and again set to walking to and fro and discussing, the names of Gurko, Rauch, Velyaminoff, Shuvaloff, being incessantly heard meanwhile.



COLONEL TCHERÉVIN.

(Now General, and Commander of the Emperor's
Personal Body Guard.)

In the evening, we went for some chops to a certain commander of a hundred. We listened to the singers. Among the new songs, the one which particularly pleased us was, "Parting." This song was a favorite of Tchernin's, and was sung in his body-guard. He had taught our Cossacks to sing it too.

The carouse presented a somewhat different character now from what it had presented in summer. There was none of that rakishness or dissoluteness. Both officers and Cossacks seemed, in some way, to press closer to each other. Yonder, in the group of singers, illuminated by the light of the camp-fire, I see the thin, serious face of the Cossack chorister. Swarthy of hue, with a thick, short beard, he flourishes his hands lightly before him, now to this side, now to that, and sings in a hoarse, tenor voice:—

"Motionless, pale,
On the cliff she stands,
Like a lonely wraith
Of the tempest's creation."

All the officers present and the commanders join in the refrain:—

"Pa-arting, pa-a-arting from the loved one is pain."

The couplet being finished, drinking and the proposition of toasts begin, as usual, and, after them, endless "Hurrahs!" and "Long life!"

On the following day, I took leave of the brigade, which was to follow over the Balkans to Sophia, and returned to Plevna. Skobelev, with the sixteenth division, had already taken his departure for Gabrovo, along the road between Lovtcha and Selvi. The weather was cold, winter was in full force, and the snow glittered in the sun. As I rode up to Lovtcha, I perceived from afar the redoubts which had caused us so much trouble during the assault. I cannot explain to myself the feeling which I experienced on my entrance into the town. The circumstances were entirely different from what they had been on the 22d of August. I seemed to behold all this peaceful commotion, all these unshaven, bearded Bulgarian faces, peering quietly out from

their tiny booths. What had become of the thunder of rifles and artillery, of the shouts, "Hurrah!" and "Allah!" And is it not singular? Surely, it seems as though one ought to rejoice that all these horrors have passed away, that one can ride in peace through the streets, without any fear of being killed by a stray bullet, but, nevertheless, I gazed with regret on every little spot which was familiar to me, on every tiny house which recalled to me the battle that had taken place.

In Selvi, I overtook Skobelev, and with him my brother Vasily. Here we passed three days, after which, on the 16th of December, we moved on to Gabrovo, where my brother and I lodged in a little house near the church. I remember how he and I once watched from the little window of our quarters two soldiers bringing the bodies of their comrades thither on peasants' sledges. These were the men who had been frozen at Shipka, soldiers belonging to the twenty-fourth division, which had been commanded by General Herschelman. They unloaded them exactly like the carcasses of animals; they grasped the body by the neck and feet, first swung it a little, then laid it in the porch, after which it was carried into the church.

On December 24, Skobelev moved forward to the Balkans; but I could not make up my mind to accompany him, as I was still afraid for my leg. Remaining behind in Gabrovo, I rambled about and inspected the town. It lies at the very foot of the Balkans. A swift mountain stream flows down with a roar, and divides the town into two halves. On clear days, the peak of Mt. Saint Nicholas is distinctly visible from here.

While I was strolling about Gabrovo, Skobelev was having hot work; on the 26th of December he descended from the mountains, passed the night in the valley, and on the following day had a battle by the village of Imetli, where Kuropatkin was wounded. I met him on the 28th of December. I remember going to the Gabrovo monastery, where they were taking wounded officers, and watching four soldiers removing some one from a wagon; I ran up and recognized Kuropatkin. His right arm was bound up with a white kerchief. He was pale and evidently in pain. I seized hold of him, and, through carelessness, grasped him under the right shoulder, that is, under the shoulder-blade; and that was where he was wounded.

“My dear fellow, what are you doing?” groaned Alexei Nikolaevitch.

We carried him into the monastery as best we might, and laid him in the same room where, four months previously, Dragomiroff had lain.

On the night of the 29th to the 30th of December, when I am already asleep, some one suddenly wakes me: I look — it is my brother Vasily, in his cap and a white Bulgarian furred short coat, and with a whip under his arm.

“Get up quick! Do you know that Skobelev has beaten Vessely-Pasha before Sheinova, has taken prisoner forty battalions, captured all their guns and the whole camp. He has asked me to go to the Grand-duke to tell him all about it, and how the affair took place.

My brother was in haste. I gave him my horse, and he galloped off to Selvi, where he expected to find the commander-in-chief; but my brother met him on the way, and returned with him that same morning to Gabrovo.

The Grand-duke was highly delighted by the Sheinova victory. It had finally untied his hands, and rendered it possible for him to advance on Adrianople.

About mid-day, on the 30th of December, I set out for Skobelev's division, accompanied by my Cossack Lamakin. The day was cloudy. Beyond Gabrovo, the road rises constantly for about nine or ten versts. At first, at the base of the Balkans, it was tolerably warm, but as we ascended higher it grew colder and colder. My horse slipped. Trains of wagons blocked the road. Night was preparing to close in when, at some distance from me, the snowy heights of the highway and all the curves and crests of the road were covered, as far as the eye could reach, with a dense, black mass, as though a vast army were on the march. I ride on, and become convinced that this was really an army, only not ours, but a disarmed Turkish army, those same battalions of Vessely-Pasha, who had surrendered before Sheinova. Good Heavens, how many there were of them! Gloomy, exhausted, the Turks marched, some with their benumbed hands thrust into their pockets, others with sleeve in sleeve. Neither noise nor conversation was to be heard. Thousands upon thousands, they passed me, in the

stillness of the night, like manikins. Their dark faces, wrapped in their gray bashliks, produced an unpleasant, painful impression—especially the eyes of the Turks, which gazed very angrily askance. This seemed all the more strange because only here and there, at rare intervals, along this endless column of captives, were the voices of our soldiers to be heard.

The end of the column has made its appearance. The Turks have passed by. Having proceeded half a verst, I hear a tumult ahead of me, as though some one were cursing. I ride up and look, and in the middle of the road lies a Turkish prisoner, and one of the soldiers of the escort is bustling about him, and shouting and scolding.

“Get along! what have you laid down for? Curse you! what am I to do with you here?” and he pokes him in the back with the butt-end of his gun.

“M-m-mui,”—the man bellows, with cold and fatigue.

“Why have you lagged behind?” I inquire.

“Why, he won’t go on, he’s starved. I’m ordered not to abandon him, and it’s not right to linger behind any further, either,” exclaims the soldier, and, as though with the idea of clearing his conscience before his commanders, he again begins to poke the dying Turk.

I ride on, and encounter several other similar laggards in the road. Late at night, I succeed in reaching the very crest of the Balkans, and pass the night with an infantry officer. In the morning, when, after taking leave of my hospitable host, I emerge from the mud hut and mount my horse to pursue my journey, a magnificent picture is displayed before my eyes. The sun has but just made its appearance from behind the mountains, and gilded the innumerable snowy peaks, which rear themselves on all sides. The air is dense and cold, white clouds seem to cut the mountains in twain, in some places, causing the peaks to hang suspended in space. Deep, bottomless precipices and valleys, here and there filled with clouds and vapors, overgrown on their slopes with huge, century-old trees, seem to me, on the heights, to be still deeper and more mysterious. Millions of frozen sparks glitter around like multicolored fires. Over all this, like a gigantic cup, hangs the bright blue sky dotted with small white clouds.

Near the highway itself, on the slope of the mountain, I have to pass mud huts scooped out by our defenders of

Shipka. The huts were covered with thick beams, with earth and snow heaped above. The higher I ride, the colder it grows. A piercing wind is blowing, which penetrates through and through me, and seems to petrify all my limbs. In one place, by the roadside, rises a heap of our frozen soldiers. I touch the face of one of them with my finger — it is as hard and cold as marble. All about, the soil is so hard and stony that it had been impossible to bury the bodies, and they had been collected in piles. Here it became comprehensible to me why our mettlesome soldiers, standing at their posts in the lines, without warm shoes and clothing, perished by thousands.

Beyond the crest of the Balkans, the descent to the southern side begins immediately. From this point the celebrated valley of the river Tundzhi, or the "Vale of Roses," is visible. It is so called because in summer this valley, extending from the very base of the Balkans to Kazanlyk and even further, is covered with rose-bushes, and the inhabitants of the valley occupy themselves exclusively with the preparation of attar of roses. At the time when I saw it, the valley was covered with snow. The descent from the mountains was so steep and slippery in places that I was forced to dismount and lead my horse by the bridle. About mid-day, I was overtaken by the commander-in-chief, mounted on a fine, dark bay horse. He was followed by a large suite. The Grand-duke halted several times on the road, and watched the artillerymen letting their cannon down with ropes. It had been found absolutely necessary to unharness the horses, as otherwise the guns might have crushed men and animals, and gone down the precipice themselves. I joined the suite of the Grand-duke, and began the descent with them. In the valley, the climate was wholly different. There was not a hint of cold and frost, but moderate warmth; only two or three degrees below zero.¹ Beneath a thin layer of snow could be seen last year's yellow grass and the prickly rose-bushes. The air was pure, and breathing was easy.

Several versts from the foot of the Balkans, near the village of Sheinova, General Skobelev's detachment was drawn up to receive the commander-in-chief. Here, for the first time, I saw and admired the Bulgarian troop which had joined the division.

¹ Réaumur.

The Grand-duke rode swiftly up to the division, thanked Skobelev, the officers and the lower ranks, and then went off to Kazanlyk, in order to spend the New Year there.

As I passed the Sheinova redoubts, I was struck with the sight of slaughtered Turks. They lay here, in front of the trenches, in long, even lines, as though they had lain down in drill. Whether our volleys had reached them thus lying, or standing in ranks, I cannot say; but such even files of corpses, exactly as though they had been mowed down, I never beheld anywhere else.

Skobelev, accompanied by his staff and many of his officers, rides as escort to the Grand-duke. I ride with them and follow the elder Skobelev, who, attired in a black tanned fur jacket with shoulder-straps, is riding a light bay horse, a few paces distant from the Grand-duke. At that moment, a young Cossack officer, an Osetin, begins to gallop round us on a very beautiful brown Arabian steed. The Grand-duke takes note of his horse and asks the officer:—

“Where did you get that horse?”

“I captured him, your Imperial Highness, from a pasha at the storming of the Sheinova redoubt,” answers the latter, with his Osetin accent.

Then the Grand-duke says to Skobelev, Sr.:—

“Bargain for the horse with him.”

“Sotnik, come hither,” shouts Dmitry Ivanovitch, in his nasal voice.

The officer rides up.

“Will you sell your horse?” he asks, gazing curiously at the animal.

“Yes, certainly, your Excellency.”

“How much do you want for him?”

“Eighty half-imperials, your Excellency.”

“Captain,” shouts the General, to a handsome, well built artillery officer, “pay him eighty half-imperials!”

The captain draws from his travelling-bag a large canvas pouch, filled with gold, and pays down the money on the spot.

The Osetin officer takes the gold, immediately changes to his old horse, which is being led by his Cossack, and follows us perfectly happy.

We ride into Kazanlyk. The town is half in ruins. In some handsome and sumptuous houses, the tile roofs have

fallen in, and through the broken windows and doors the brilliantly painted inner walls are seen, in connection with which I observe that the prevailing hues are blue and yellow. The objects depicted are principally pashas with nargiles in their hands, bewitching houris, fruits, flowers, and so on. The wood carving in Turkish houses pleased us particularly. All these little columns and lattices at the windows, and exterior and interior cages, and tables and jambs were so turned, and carved, and chased, and the wood itself was so hard, that hardly a line was to be perceived when you drew your nail over it — it was exactly like bone. The arrangement of the rooms was also very convenient, and well adapted to the hot climate of the place.

On the 3d of January, Skobeleff also entered Kazanlyk with his detachment. I remember that it was already quite dark when his infantry marched past the commander-in-chief, who, leaning on his cane, stood by the door of his little house, clad in a long, warm frock-coat, and joyously thanked each company separately. But, merrily as the troops marched past, with gay songs and whistling, still, the very small number of files in the platoons produced a feeling of sadness, on the commander-in-chief as well as on those present. And certainly there was sufficient cause for the thin ranks. The passage of the Balkans alone, over paths where, according to the words of the Bulgarians, only hunters passed, and that with difficulty, cost the division something, not to mention the fierce battle, lasting two days, which it had been obliged to sustain against the enemy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PHILIPPOLIS.

EARLY on the morning of January 4, Skobeleff and his division moved out of Kazanlyk on Adrianople; in the vanguard rode Strukoff with the cavalry brigade. I was ordered for a time to the headquarters of the Grand-duke. My brother Vasily, who went to the front with Strukoff, requested his friend, Colonel Skalon, not to let me sit still, and to send me on at the first convenient opportunity with some commission. Such an opportunity speedily presented itself, and I was despatched by the commander-in-chief with a letter to General Gurko, at Philippopolis, which the latter had captured on the previous day, in battle. On handing me the letter, Colonel Skalon warned me that another orderly officer was starting simultaneously with me from the Grand-duke to General Gurko, and that the latter was not going to the vanguard, like myself, but to the rear; and that for that reason I must make haste. My road was much more dangerous. Having taken leave of the commander-in-chief, I go to the assistant of the chief of staff, receive from him orders to write down all that I meet with on my journey, *i. e.*, what parts of the troops, in what numbers, what bridges, ferries, and so on. About six o'clock in the evening, I mount my invaluable steed of Kabardei, and, accompanied by two Cossacks of the Guard, I set out on my journey. The weather is splendid. The sun shines with a calm, rayless light. The snow has already thawed in many places, and the earth lies bare; far away, the Little Balkans, which I must cross in a couple of hours, loom darkly.

The Little Balkans are incomparably lower than the Great Balkans, but the transit across them seemed to me much harder and more fatiguing; here were incessant ascents and descents over narrow, stony, and uneven passes, while at Shipka the road was beaten hard, and broad, and in the warm summer season the passage there must be very easy

and agreeable. At eleven o'clock at night, I entered Eski-Zagra, rested a little, and rode on again through the moonlight, in the direction of Tchirpan.

Here I was overtaken by an officer who was also bound for Philippopolis, and we rode along together. Yes, and it tortured him to ride with me. My horse had a very long stride, his had a very short one, and, in order to keep up with me, my fellow-traveller was obliged to go at a trot. After jolting along for ten versts, the officer loses patience, flies into a rage, jerks at his horse, beats him, and, for the sake of not riding with me, gallops on a verst ahead. In the course of a few minutes my fellow-traveller looks round, and I am again beside him, he again gallops on, and so it continues clear to Tchirpan, where we arrive about mid-day. General Kartzeff had but just arrived in Tchirpan, with a brigade of infantry. Three hours later, I set off again for Philippopolis, with some companion or other. But this last march was not so lucky for us.

The Bulgarians reckon the ride from Tchirpan to Philippopolis at ten hours; allowing six versts for an hour, this would make sixty versts. During the night we lost our way. And, having forded the Maritza, which was already higher than usual, though it was not yet at flood, we landed in some rice-fields. It is terribly tiresome to ride through rice-fields. We were obliged to cross small canals incessantly, and then to proceed again through liquid, swampy mud. Towards morning, not having reached Philippopolis by ten versts, we chanced upon some isolated Turkish soldiers, with guns in their hands. Near one stone shed sat about fifteen Turks. They stared gloomily at us from beneath their eyebrows, but did not move so much as a finger.

Philippopolis stands on a mountain, and is visible at a distance. We were obliged to cross the Maritza on a temporary wooden bridge, set up by Gurko's troops, as the permanent bridge had been torn away by Suleiman. It was only at six o'clock in the morning that I entered the town, having strayed ever since four o'clock in the afternoon. General Gurko was still asleep, so I first presented myself to his chief of staff, General Naglovsky, and half an hour later to Gurko himself.

"Well, how is his Highness' health?" was the General's first question as he took the letter.

I replied that he was in good health, thank God.

"When did you set out?"

I was so fatigued from my journey that I could not even calculate, and at first I said "yesterday," then remembered that it was the day before yesterday evening, and corrected myself.

"Thank you. Pray, come and dine with me to-day," said Gurko, as he took leave of me.

After dinner, I went to take a look at the town. Philipopolis is extensive compared with other Turkish towns, and on the arrival of our troops it was swarming with people. I shall never forget the comical scene which took place here, before my eyes, during the course of this stroll. As I entered the principal street, six or eight yards wide at the most, I began to admire the various different people who were bustling about in it. There were Bulgarians, and Armenians, and Turks, and Jews, who had arrived with the commissary transports, but, more than all the rest, soldiers of our guards. They were all chaffering and disputing and scolding. I rode in full swing. Here I meet my comrades of the Vladikavkaz, and exchange greetings with them.

At this moment up come some more officers of my acquaintance. We are standing in the middle of the street, and talking, when, all of a sudden, something unusual occurs. Cries arise. Everybody who is in the street makes haste to hide himself wherever he can. The infantry General, with a small gray beard, who is standing beside me, crawls through the nearest window. I quite involuntarily crawl after him, and over me tumbles an enormous soldier of the Preobrazhensky regiment — and almost crushes me. In an instant, the narrow street is deserted. "What does all this mean? what has happened?" I say to myself, glancing at the window. At that moment, I behold a huge, mad bull, of a dusty hue, come leaping slowly up the hill at a weary gallop, and bellowing dully. His shaggy head is held low, his eyes are bloodshot, from his gaping mouth drips foam, his long sharp horns are ready to pierce any one who shall dare to cross his path.

But what is it that he is dragging behind him? I gaze intently, — it is a robust Bulgarian, all dripping with perspiration, who has lost the hat from his shaven poll,

and, with his hand wound firmly in the tail of the bull, and planting his bare feet with all his might, is trying to stop the enraged beast. The bull dashes past us, exactly as though he were not conscious that any one was clinging to him. Everything quiets down, the street fills with people once more; discussions arise — “To whom does the bull belong? has he killed any one? what a brave fellow the Bulgarian is!” and so on. Ten minutes have not elapsed when the same bull once more makes his appearance, but from the opposite quarter. Again there ensues a crushing and a crowding towards doors and windows. The raging animal, with dimmed eyes, once more dashes past me up the hill, with the same weary gallop, dragging behind him by his tail the same perspiring and obstinate Bulgarian.

On the following day, that is to say, on the 8th of January, about five o'clock in the afternoon, General Gurko summoned me to him and announced: “You will return to his Highness, and give him this letter. I have just received information that our cavalry, under Lieutenant-general Dmitry Ivanitch Skobelev, has captured sixty cannons from Suleiman. It is absolutely necessary that this letter should be delivered to-morrow morning, as pashas with peaceful proposals have arrived in Kazanlyk from Constantinople, and nothing can be more to the point than such news.”

I made my salute to the General and went off to get ready. On my way I encountered an artillery general, who was also going to Kazanlyk. We agreed to ride together, and at six o'clock in the evening we emerged on the Adrianople highway. To the right of us, the snow-covered Rhodope Mountains, whither the remnant of Suleiman Pasha's vanquished army had fled, were visible. We rode at a very swift gait. “But,” I said to myself, “hasten as we will, it is impossible to reach Kazanlyk to-morrow morning on this same horse.” From Kazanlyk to Philippopolis I had ridden thirty-eight hours; allow that I had miscalculated five or six hours, that still left more than thirty hours to ride.

It was eleven o'clock at night when we entered the small hamlet of Papasli, where was stationed our first infantry division of the Guards, under the command of General Rauch. Just before reaching Papasli, I learned from a Bulgarian that the river Maritza, which we should soon be

obliged to cross, was at high flood, and that there were no ferries. What was to be done? I decided to apply for aid to the commander of the Preobrazhensky regiment, the Prince of Oldenburg. The Prince had not yet gone to bed, and was conversing with General Rauch.

"What do you wish?" asked General Rauch, when I was announced.

"I am the bearer of very urgent despatches to his Imperial Highness, the commander-in-chief, but it is impossible to cross the Maritza, and therefore I decided to apply to your Excellency for help in passing it."

"What assistance can I render you?" asked Rauch and the Prince, in one breath: "we have neither Cossacks nor dragoons." There was nothing to be done; I made my excuses for having disturbed them, went back, mounted my horse and rode on.

Five or six versts from Papasli, on the very brink of the Maritza, stands a small village, in which our battery was stationed. No sooner had I descended the steep bank to the river than my heart died within me. Heavens! what had the Maritza become! — one would not have recognized it! Two days previously we had forded it, a small and narrow stream, but now it had overflowed to such an extent that the dark figures of our soldiers on the opposite shore, warming themselves around a blazing camp-fire, were hardly to be distinguished. It was that same brigade of General Kartzeff which I had overtaken at Tehirpan.

Their conversation was borne to us through the nocturnal stillness. The gloomy surface of the river, covered with a thick layer of broken ice, rushed swiftly on, whirling and crashing its fragments, and chilling my very soul. The night was dark and dreadful, but ride on I must. My companion, the General, was the first to break the silence and exclaim: —

"Well, my dear fellow, you must do as you see fit, but I shall not swim over. I have children, and I prefer to turn back and cross by the bridge," — then he takes leave of me and rides along the shore to pass the night with the battery. "What am I to do?" I say to myself. Turning back and crossing on the bridge meant riding ninety extra versts, and then how should I arrive in time with the message? I decide to cross at any cost. I send my Cossacks to the hamlet to inquire among the artillerymen whether

any one has crossed the stream by daylight. Luckily for me, they found the orderly of the battery commander. He had crossed the river on his master's horse. I could not get a good look at his face by night, and I only know that he was a brave fellow, who at once offered to show me the way. We cross ourselves and set out. In front of all, of course, goes the servant, after him one of the Cossacks, then I, and after me the second Cossack.

At first it is quite shallow; only now and then do splashes fly in my face; then it grows deeper. I draw my feet up as high as possible. And now the water rises to the saddle, and wets my felt cloak, which is strapped on behind, and yet we have not reached the middle. The silvery ice whirls and roars before my eyes in the darkness, and makes me giddy.

"Don't look down, your Honor; your head will whirl," shouts the orderly, bravely cutting the icy current with his horse's breast. His shout rang out just in time, for I had begun to feel ill. I collect my strength, take courage, and, without looking down, I begin to urge on my horse. At that moment I look ahead, and the orderly quickly plunges into the water, and the Cossack plunges after him. I feel that my horse is also losing the ground under his feet, and beginning to take vigorous leaps. "Good Heavens! I shall drown!" flashes through my mind, and at the same time the recollection recurs to me of how Skobelev had swum across the Danube, and how my horse had refused to follow him. But that was on a warm, summer day, and many people were standing on the shore and watching us; but now it was night, there was no one about, and, thinking momentarily of this, I plunge to my very neck in the icy water.

The servant, accurately acquainted with my desperate condition, again shouts to me:—

"Don't be afraid, your Honor; it grows shallower just here, only follow straight after me. There are some carts sunk here—see yonder where the poles stand out; the infantry tried to build a crossing here in daylight, but the current prevented them!"

And, in fact, after sinking to my neck five times, I beheld the shafts of the carts projecting from the water, and immediately felt that my horse was beginning to step firmly once more. My joy at reaching the other shore

can only be understood by a person who has tried the same adventure. I gave the servant three rubles, and, in order to warm myself as quickly as possible, I set out at a brisk trot for Tchirpan, to reach which I had still seven or eight versts to ride. Before reaching the town, I saw at one side of the road whole trains of wagons laden with families and goods of various sorts. These were Turks assembling here from the neighboring settlements. They had directed their course to Adrianople, but, on learning that our troops had gone there, they had halted in dismay, not knowing what to do. They feared lest the Russians might fall upon them, unarmed as they were, and kill them. In Tchirpan, I allowed my horse some rest, and slept a little myself. Then, in the morning, I rode on, and reached Kazanlyk again at eleven o'clock at night. At the entrance to the commander-in-chief's quarters, I met Colonel Skalon.

"Come, come, I will take you to the Grand-duke," cries Dmitry Antonovitch, joyously, on learning what cheering news I bear.

"What Verestchagin? — Vasily Vasilitch?" I hear the voice of the Grand-duke inquiring.

"No, his brother, the Cossack."

"Call him in!"

I enter the room. The Grand-duke is already in bed, and engaged in reading some papers.

"I have the honor to congratulate your Imperial Highness on a victory! General Skobelev has captured sixty cannon from Suleiman," I say, handing the commander-in-chief the despatch.

"What Skobelev? — the pasha?" exclaims the Grand-duke, joyfully (he called the elder Skobelev 'the pasha'), and, springing from his bed, he embraces and kisses me.

So ended this ride, which cost me my invaluable steed of Kabardei. He was ruined in the fore legs from that time forth, and could not recover. Nevertheless, I consoled myself with the thought that I had made the return trip of from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty versts on icy ground, including the crossing of the Maritza, in eight and twenty hours.

There actually were pashas from Constantinople in Kazanlyk at that time. They were continually wandering about the streets in a group, with gloomy faces, now from the chief of staff to the commander-in-chief, now from the



THE GRAND-DUKE NIKOLAÏ NIKOLAEVITCH.

commander-in-chief to the assistant of the chief of staff, and so on, all day long. At first I thought that the Turkish emissaries were very sumptuously dressed, in costly silken robes, in turbans of fine shawls, and all at once I saw them clad in simple civilian's single-breasted coats, and trousers, likewise black. Only their red fezes, with silk tassels, distinguished them from Europeans.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE Grand-duke soon moved on to Adrianople with his headquarters. There, for the first time, it was my lot to follow among the number of the remaining suite. After us came a multitude of wagons with utensils and servants, and what reckless people these servants were!

By way of illustration I will relate an instance which happened under my own eyes. I do not recollect what little hamlet we had entered. The Grand-duke had ridden on ahead. An orderly officer of the commander-in-chief, Lieutenant of the Preobrazhensky regiment, and myself are riding side by side, engaged in conversation. The day is sunny. Behind us stretches an interminable line of wagons, vans, equipages with lackeys, cooks, grooms, orderlies, and so forth. At this moment the Lieutenant rides ahead, and directs his course at a trot towards a little bridge which lies in front of us, and just in the centre of it his horse falls with his fore feet in a hole, and, being unable to extricate himself, he rolls over on his side, dragging with him his rider.

All this had taken place so quickly that before I had time to spring to his assistance he lay crushed under his steed and with his head stretched along the ground. At that same moment I look, and see the first wagon with the kitchen servants drive upon the bridge at a trot instead of halting. The groom gazes attentively, so that he may not strike the fallen man, and then, all but touching the latter's hair, he drives on at the same pace. After this come a second wagon and a third, until I rush forward and stop them. I shall never forget the Lieutenant's face; it was pale and just like a log of wood. And, in point of fact, he could not free himself, and at the same time he ran the risk of being crushed every moment.

And that reminds me of another incident at the time of my ride with the headquarters. We had left the camp

rather earlier than usual. The morning was cloudy; I overtake wagon after wagon, officer after officer, greet those with whom I am acquainted, salute those whom I do not know, and pursue my onward way, being desirous of catching up with the cavalry which should be in front. It seems as though I must have already passed them all; no one else appears, I am riding alone when, all at once, I behold ahead of me, athwart a light mist, some wagon looming darkly. I approach and see that it is the Grand-duke's calash standing there. The pair of black horses has been unharnessed. General Nepokoitchitzky is holding one of them by the bridle, while the Grand-duke himself is holding the other, and the coachman, having driven by mistake through a ruined fence, is trying with all his might to roll the equipage out again by hand. There is not a soul there, and no one to lend assistance.

"My dear fellow, do send some one here!" the Grand-duke shouts to me.

I gallop on half a verst in advance, and behold several squadrons drawn up on a plain to the right of the road. They are evidently awaiting the arrival of the commander-in-chief.

"Colonel, please to send some men back at once; his Highness's horses have been taken out of the carriage, and the Grand-duke himself is holding them by the bridle," I shout, breathlessly, galloping up to the nearest commander.

"It's not my turn to-day; go ask the Major yonder," he replies, in a bass voice.

I rush to the next commander and shout the same thing.

"Why should I spoil my front? His Highness will be along directly!" says the latter, with a look of displeasure.

"But how can he come, if his horses have been taken out of his carriage?" I say, persuasively. And it was with difficulty that I managed to have a few men sent.

On the 14th of January, the Grand-duke entered Adrianople. Throngs of the inhabitants came to meet us, even before our entrance into the town. Little Armenian children, clad in white garments, sang songs, and the women and young girls gave us flowers.

The commander-in-chief established himself in the *konak*, or police station, which was situated in the centre of the town.

Adrianople is a large and populous town, but, like all Turkish towns, it is very dirty.

It contains noteworthy buildings, as, for instance, the mosque of Sultan Selim, the most sumptuous mosque that I have ever seen. Its minaret is very tall, and is visible for many versts. The mosque itself is very handsome: its interior is strikingly light in form and rich in tone; all the carved and moulded work could be examined in the closest detail. In addition to this mosque there are others here, much more ancient and original, but they are dark and gloomy. But, in my opinion, the most remarkable things in Adrianople are the bridges across the Maritza. They are constructed of huge stones, and are very old. One of them is said to be more than five hundred years old, and it now stands precisely as when it was built.

On the arrival of the Russian army in Adrianople, songs, in every tongue, began to resound, sign-boards began to hang out in divers colors on the restaurants, the narrow streets were filled with phaetons and various equipages. The Greek, Armenian, and Jew dealers again opened their tiny money-changing shops, and rejoiced in their profits. I remember how swiftly the price current of our ruble altered here. On my arrival in Adrianople I exchanged a hundred-ruble note for three hundred francs, and on my departure I barely succeeded in getting two hundred and forty for it. This resulted, as the money-changers explained to me, from the fact that, on our arrival, no one among them entertained any doubt that we should take Constantinople, and afterwards they were all disenchanted, and the price of our currency fell.

In Adrianople I perceived for the first time the following peculiarity of Turkish houses. I am looking for a General: I approach a small house, of very insignificant exterior, open the gate, in order to enter the court-yard, and a perfectly strange picture is presented to my eyes. A small but beautiful court is paved with white flag-stones; arbors and kiosks are adorned with various plants, the balconies and railings are hung with high-colored rugs. Crystal-clear water streams in abundance from a marble fountain. The fruit-trees are beginning to be covered with

a delicate thick green foliage. In a word, I have fallen at one bound upon a little paradise. And I encountered many such contrasts in Turkish houses afterwards: an exterior ugly and dirty, an interior that was a perfect delight. Afterwards I became convinced that the Turks pay but little attention to the outside of their houses in general, and only trouble themselves as to their interior adornment. Hence, they carry into the street every sort of filth and carrion, leaving it to be cleared up by the dogs, who roam the streets by the hundred.

The remainder of our troops soon arrived in Adrianople. But in what a condition! On the feet of some of our officers of the Foot Guards, I observed, instead of boots, Bulgarian sandals, bound about with ropes.

The preliminary peace treaty with Turkey was signed at Adrianople, on the 19th of January, and on the 10th of February the Grand-duke set out with his staff, by rail, for San Stefano, which is situated on the shore of the Sea of Marmora, seventeen versts from Constantinople.

Never, while life lasts, shall I be able to forget those moments when I was approaching Constantinople—never. "Here," I said to myself, as I stood at the door of the freight car (owing to the lack of passenger carriages, the Grand-duke's suite rode in freight wagons) and gazed about me, "the war is at an end. But why should we stop at San Stefano? why should we not enter Constantinople? Nonsense! it cannot be, it is only a rumor; we shall probably only wait while the troops are being drawn up in line, and then, with music and with flying colors, we shall take possession of that long coveted city." And it is singular what a remarkable sensation I experienced at the mere thought; my heart began to beat as violently as though it were about to leap from my bosom.

We pass through the town of Tchataldza; here Mikhail Dmitryevitch Skobelev had already been stationed for some time with the vanguard. Lofty elevations with strong redoubts are visible, owing to the nearness of the railway line. The Turks had left in them even their huge twenty-four pound bronze cannon. The redoubts were connected with each other by telegraph-wires.

Only one station remains before San Stefano. The excitement in the car reaches the highest pitch. All the officers crowd around the doors. I cling firmly to my place, and will not give it up to any one. Exclamations are heard.

“Yo-o-o-nder, behind that rise of ground, San Stefano will come in sight.”

“And Constantinople?”

“Wait a bit, it lies further down the bay.” The faces of all are rapturous; no one wants to sleep.

On the right of the railway runs a ravine covered with tall reeds; on the left extend small hillocks, which slope down to the road-bed of the railway.

Up one of these elevations two companies of Turkish infantry are climbing, dressed in blue jackets bound with red braid, and blue trousers to correspond; on their feet they wear something in the nature of our bast shoes; on their heads are red fezes. The soldiers have dispersed. To my amazement, I see among the Turks several of our soldiers, lounging along with their great-coat tails tucked up, and their guns carried at ease; they are very calmly smoking Turkish tobacco, and have evidently forgotten that they are walking among the men who have been their enemies so short a time before. Our train goes very slowly. In this spot, and not very long before, a Turkish train had been wrecked. The shattered locomotive and carriages are strewn on both sides of the road.

At last, far ahead, a ray of sunlight sparkles like a diamond on our long expected blue Sea of Marmora. We all begin to shout, “Hurrah! hurrah! the sea! the sea!”

But it is not the sea, but merely a small inlet, very narrow, and penetrating far inland. What a wondrous hue of water, what transparency! Some Greek or other is floating on the inlet, in a small boat, as though with the express intention of irritating us. I admire the boat; it is built quite differently from ours. It is very handsomely painted and glides easily through the water.

We pass the inlet; the road curves to the left, runs between hills, and then we emerge once more on the open plain. On our right, ten versts away, gleams the Sea of Marmora, and on the shore a little cluster of houses shines white; this is San Stefano. Further on we pass through some one's luxuriant garden and a grove, and imperceptibly

ascend a little, and far away, on the horizon, Constantinople comes in view, with its innumerable tapering mosques and minarets. We all stand and gaze and admire, and hold our breath, and for a long time we cannot tear our eyes from the city.

"Nevertheless," I say to myself, "I am lucky compared with many of my comrades in the war. How many of them perished in the crossing of the Danube, before Lovtcha, before Plevna, on the Balkans! And yet, one such minute, one look at Constantinople, not in the character of a traveller, but of a conquering Russian soldier, is full reward for all the toils and privations that I have undergone."

We entered San Stefano at sundown on the 12th of February. The town is small and snug. A square serves as its centre, around which stand the best buildings, among the number the house of Dadiani, where the Grand-duke was quartered. Adjoining this house lay a spacious and shady garden. The view from San Stefano on the sea is very beautiful. Far away, as though shrouded in a mist, lie the Prince's Islands. Steamers were constantly passing. No sooner had the headquarters been transferred to San Stefano, than restaurant signs made their appearance on the place, with the inscriptions: "Smuroff," "Eliseeff," "Odintzoff," and others, all the names of Petersburg trading-houses. Around the steamboat wharves thronged a multitude of boats from Constantinople, with oysters, huge lobsters, fish, and various fruits.

At first the officers were forbidden to enter Constantinople, but afterwards permission was given to them, but only in civilian's dress; and all the officers flocked there in a body, with the gold that had accumulated, in order to reward themselves for "the labors undergone," as my Cossack friend Tzvyetkoff expressed it. Hundreds of Greek and Armenian merchants, who had come from Constantinople, loaned our officers citizen's dress, at fabulous prices. I remember paying thirty francs for the privilege of wearing, for the space of five days, a terribly bad suit of coarse cloth, which could, probably, have been purchased for that price in Constantinople.

Some officers, in order not to spend the money, hired

only their upper garment and a hat, retaining their military trousers; and others even wore their spurs. Dressed up in this fashion, an officer thought that he was perfectly unrecognizable, and was greatly surprised when a crowd of small boys rushed up to him in Constantinople, and thrust out their hands, shouting: "Captain, give me a couple of coins?" (The little Turks had already learned how to beg money from the Russians.) And how could any one fail to recognize an officer when he not only did not change his trousers, but even wore his travelling-shirt of red cotton, which was seen under his vest?

Although it was a little shorter to go to Constantinople by the railway, I preferred to make the trip on the steamer, in order to get a view of the city from the sea. The suburbs of the city begin after a journey of a quarter of an hour. Our little steamer halted almost every five minutes, at a wharf, to land passengers or to take on fresh ones. In the course of an hour, we turned into the little harbor. On our left, on the lofty shore, I beheld the celebrated castle of the Seven Towers, where the Turks were formerly in the habit of confining our ambassadors before declaring war. On the right, on the slope of the Asia Minor shore, the town of Scutari could be seen.

A few minutes later, we entered the Golden Horn, as the Turks call the magnificent harbor. Even the water here possesses a peculiar transparency, and an extremely beautiful blue color.

A multitude of vessels, from all nations of the world, lie at anchor here, beginning with the huge, clumsy monitors, and ending with the Greek sail-boats, as light as butterflies.

The town is disposed in a semicircle on the slope of the mountains. A person who sees this city for the first time can gaze for hours together upon it, and yet not have looked his fill. Constantinople reminded me somewhat of our mother Moscow, in this respect, that by the side of vast, stone palaces you could see tiny, dirty huts. The longer you gazed, the more you admired. And it is not necessary to go far; for as soon as you enter the Golden Horn you can stop and look, and you will behold nothing better.

The most striking thing of all was the Sultan's palace, dazzling in its whiteness, situated on the shore itself, and so near the water that it seemed as though the waves

would reach the building with the slightest breeze. Beyond the Golden Horn, farther along the Dardanelles, towards the Black Sea, the cliffs on the shore are also covered with buildings in the nature of our summer villas. But what villas, what charms, what lightness, all fitted with various awnings, balconies, and small towers, and all descending from the crest of the mountain, exactly as though hanging one from the other, so that there is barely room for the last on the very brink of the gulf. The water here, as I heard from the inhabitants, is remarkably tranquil, and, even when there is rough weather and tempest in the sea close by, it here remains as calm as though in a platter.

On quitting the steamer at the wharf, I had to fight with the dirty, tattered, hungry porters. They flung themselves upon every new-comer in a regular horde, and with such fury that, had I not been forewarned, I should have certainly thought that I had been attacked by a band of robbers. They endured all the blows, from canes and umbrellas, which the passengers bestowed upon them, with amazing coolness and persistence; but, in spite of this, while skilfully shielding their faces with one hand, they contrived, nevertheless, with the other to seize a trunk or a box, and then, having possessed themselves of your effects, they flung themselves upon their comrades in turn with the same fury, brandishing their hands and shouting, and in this manner clearing a road for you to the city. The first thing on shore that surprised me was the multitude and variety of the crowds. Thousands of people, black, white, and half white, filled the street. During the war, they had collected here from every part of Turkey.

No Europeans were to be seen, only various turbans and fezes met the eye. My three companions and I took a miserable little phaeton, and ordered the man to drive us to a hotel. For twenty francs we got a very good apartment of two rooms, well furnished. Having taken a little something to eat, we sent for a barouche; and, accompanied by an interpreter, or, as they are called here, a cicerone, of what nation I do not recollect, we set out to see the city.

There are very few broad streets in Constantinople, and carriages can only drive comfortably in the European quarter of the town, or in Pera. Elsewhere it is more convenient to go on horseback. We met our fellow-officers in

nearly every street, driving about like ourselves, in very dignified fashion, in barouches, with a cicerone on the box. Besides these, great numbers of our officers were riding about the town on horseback; and it was very amusing to see their guides, who followed them on foot, seize hold of the horses' tails, when obliged to climb a hill, and in this manner render their road easier.

I remained five days in Constantinople, and prowled about the town from morning until night. What interested me most of all was the Turkish bazaar, a huge, covered building, and with fewer goods than merchants, who were principally Armenians. Peering out of their tiny shops in a very droll manner, they disputed and chattered incessantly with their neighbors, and seemed to be far more interested in their gossip than in their trading. Some of the proprietors, with their feet tucked under them like a bow-knot, sat with great dignity in their long gowns of variegated silk, patiently waiting for a customer to come to them of himself, and desire to look at their riches.

Here I met a great many Turkish women dressed in black woollen mantles, and others, probably richer, in silk. All their faces were covered half-way down the nose with white muslin veils. They jostled through the bazaar for a long time together, in groups of five or six; they would enter a shop, get the price of a material, whisper together, and gaze curiously about them, during which operation the beautiful black eyes of some of them peered out very coquettishly from behind the white muslin. In some shops there was a great deal of merchandise, but in others, as our expression runs, there was not a kopek's worth; there would be some battered nargiles projecting, or a small carved table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and, as an indispensable adjunct to every shop, a small cup of ancient coins,—and that was all. But it was sport, and nothing else, to look at the master of all this wealth, and to see with what a haughty look he surveyed you from head to foot!

The noise and uproar in the bazaar were terrible. And no wonder, since it is here that the public sale of the various property of insolvent debtors takes place. I remember going through a narrow passage between the shops, when, all at once, I met a Turk leading a horse by the bridle; after him came a soldier drummer beating away deafeningly on his instrument, to inform the bazaar of the sale.

After the drummer came an official, and he was followed by a throng of people. They were all pushing and crowding one another, and running up to the horse and inspecting him.

Finally, I went to the famous mosque of Sophia, but I could not inspect it because it was full of sick people. Typhus fever was raging in the city at the time, the hospitals were full to overflowing, and the sick people had been placed in the mosques. One handsome *soft* (as the students of the ecclesiastical schools are called here), in a gray caftan and a green turban, on my exit from the mosque, gave me, as a souvenir, a handful of small, square pebbles. This was mosaic from the ancient images of the former temple of Saint Sophia. These images are painted over at the present day, and the *softs* do nothing but pick out the mosaic and sell them to visitors by the handful.

I also visited the Sultan's famous stables. They are situated near the marble palace which stands on the shore of the Golden Horn. Before obtaining entrance to the stables, it was requisite to ask permission of a pasha. He was so amiable as to send an official with me, who showed me everything of interest. The building itself, stone of course, although not especially magnificent, is very conveniently arranged for the horses. As the horses were mostly Arabians, they were arranged in the stable according to the provinces of Arabia: thus in one line stood all with the inscription Yemen, in another, those with Hedjaz, and so on.

The horses were not tall, only five feet and a half high, but of very fine blood, with large, thin nostrils, and eyes also large and prominent. In color they were principally gray and black. Their manes and tails were short and thin. In one compartment stood two stallions, separated from each other by a stout partition. One was black without a fleck, the other wholly white. They were fastened by rings (which were screwed to the floor) on their left fore feet. As the official explained to me, these were horses belonging to the late Sultan, and no one had a right to mount them after him.

We had been in San Stefano for a month, and were thoroughly bored. We all wanted to get home as speedily

as possible. At last we hear: "To-morrow, on the 19th of February, there will be a parade; — the peace is signed."

The 19th of February arrives. It is a beautiful, sunny day. All our troops that were in the neighborhood were drawn up on the plain outside San Stefano, and ranged facing Constantinople.

Three o'clock in the afternoon. The Grand-duke has arrived, and after him come all his suite and all the staff. The service of prayer is about to begin. The priest has donned his vestments, the deacon has lighted the censer, and still the service does not begin. What are they waiting for? What is there to hinder? "The peace is not yet signed! Ignatieff has not arrived with the document!" the whisper runs round. And now five o'clock has passed, and six, and seven has just struck, and still our messenger comes not, still he tarries. But yonder, at last, he has made his appearance, mounted on a brown horse, with the paper in his hands.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" shouts the commander-in-chief enthusiastically, pulling his cap from his head.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" the army takes up the cry.

And long, long it thunders, running from one flank to the other, until, at length, the call "to prayer" resounds.

The sun has already set. Lights are flashing in San Stefano, when our banners bow slowly to the earth, in the sight of Constantinople, and the troops fall upon their knees.

I soon got leave of absence for Russia, and, perfectly happy, took passage at Constantinople, in the steamer bound for Odessa. I was all the more delighted at going home because, not long before, I had received the order of St. Vladimir of the fourth class, and the rank of Major, for the storming of Plevna on the 30th of August. The rank gave me particular pleasure. I received it in the fourteenth month of my actual service.

On the morning of the sixth day I was in Petersburg, and standing at the door of our apartments. Before ringing, I adjusted the ribbon of my "Vladimir," put on a certain air of dignity, collected my forces against emotion, and finally rang.

My father himself chances to open the door. On behold-

ing me, he does not cry out with surprise and joy, but gives a kind of sob. Encircling my neck with arms which are as warm but not as soft as of yore, and pressing his face to mine, he cannot tear himself away for a long time. Now and then he throws back his head and gazes upon me with rapture, as though desirous of making up for all the time that has passed.

“Manma went off to the country yesterday; she is still ill,” says my father, with a sigh, altering the happy expression of his face into an anxious one; but a moment later he exclaims, in a tone of pride, as though this were no time for grieving:—

“Come, show your ‘Vladimir!’ We have read about it, my dear fellow, we have read about it!” and he begins to examine the order affectionately, and to turn it on all sides.

“Well, and where’s your golden sword?—let us see that too!”

“I have no golden sword, they have not given it to me yet, and, in the meantime, here is the sword knot of the George in its stead,” I tell him. My father looks at it, and is dissatisfied.

“Well, what’s the meaning of this! If the Tzar has conferred a golden sword on you, then put on a gold one,” he exclaims cheerily.

And long did we rejoice on that happy day. I related about the various battles, and engagements; when we stopped talking for a moment, we embraced and kissed each other, and then began again to talk of the war that was over.



PART III.

REMINISCENCES OF AN EYE-WITNESS OF THE
TEKKE EXPEDITION.

1880-1881.

THE
TEKKE EXPEDITION.

CHAPTER I.

FROM PETERSBURG TO TCHIKISHLYAR.

IN the month of October, 1879, I occupied the posts on the military Georgian road from Vladikavkaz to the station of Kobi with my third company of the Vladikavkaz Cossack regiment (which I had commanded in the Turkish campaign). The staff of the company¹ was located in the small and ancient fortress of Jerakh, about ten versts from the famous Daryalskoe pass. It chanced that, for lack of something to do, I gazed for hours together from the windows of the fortress upon the wonderful peaks of the mountains, and watched them as they now shrouded themselves in clouds and again revealed themselves in the light. The wretched huts of the natives appeared like small white spots, clinging, here and there, to the slope of the mountains. Along the highway past the fortress there passed every day a multitude of wagons with goods, and various vehicles carrying passengers.

Once, in the evening, I entrusted the posts to an elderly officer and went off myself to the Club in Vladikavkaz. There I heard some painful news; our army in the Trans-Caspian territory had suffered a great defeat at the storming of the Tekke fortress of Geok-Tepe. Officers who had arrived from there, sharers in the assault, had told this, and one of them, whose arm was swathed in a black kerchief, accompanied his story with such sad details as made one ashamed for the commanders of the army there.

¹ *Sotnya*, hundred. *Sotnik*, now a lieutenant of Cossacks, formerly captain of a *Sotnya*, the captain now being called an *Esaul*.

“They say that there will be a fresh expedition. They will invite Skobelev to take the command,” added the officers, at the conclusion of their tale. On learning all this, I immediately wrote to my brother Vasily, in Paris, that he must ask Skobelev to take me with him on the campaign.

I soon receive a reply from my brother to the effect that he will be in Petersburg for the New Year, and that I must be there by that time.

And I did so. At that time discussion was still in progress as to who would be the commander of the expedition. Many were named, but most people believed that Skobelev would receive the appointment. My brother Vasily complied with my request. As soon as General Skobelev was appointed, he attached me to his staff, subject to his orders.

Of course, three years before, I had set out on the Turkish campaign with feelings entirely different. Then I was all on fire with a desire to see Bulgaria as soon as possible, to view the Bulgarian people and how they lived, and to convince myself of their distress, to fight with the Turks, and to avenge the wrongs of the Bulgarians. Our army was then concentrated on the Danube; the Emperor was there, and the thoughts and looks of all Russia were directed thither. But the Tekke expedition could offer no such interest. And even its object was too insignificant to render it possible to fly with such ardor to its fulfilment. To subjugate, to punish a petty, unknown people, the Tekke tribe! Before my departure I was overwhelmed with questions: “Where is the Tekke oasis? Don’t you know? can’t you show me on the map where its boundaries are? Here you are going off on the Tekke expedition; pray, explain what we are fighting them for?” And, to tell the truth, I was not able to answer very well.

I was desirous of sharing in this expedition only because Skobelev was the leader. I knew him well from the last campaign, and respected him highly, as a dashing General, and therefore I wished to serve with him. I was convinced that Skobelev would not make those mistakes which had been committed in the preceding expedition, but would conduct matters wisely and energetically and soon conquer the country. Besides this, I was well aware that all who took part in the expedition would receive large pay, not to mention the rewards of service.

I had no doubt that I should receive for the campaign the next rank, and rewards in their due order, that I should not win in ten years by remaining in the Caucasus. I do not know why, but I dreamed very little of rewards before the Turkish campaign, and I remember that, when I received the first order of St. Stanislaus of the third class, I fancied that I was almost a general. And, notwithstanding the fact that eye-witnesses of the former expeditions had depicted the Tekke campaign in the most gloomy colors, I set out willingly on the road, imagining myself as galloping over the boundless Tekke waste on a spirited Turkoman steed.

The 30th of April, 1880, was a sunny day. A large crowd was assembled on the wharf in the town of Petrovsk, on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Among them were to be seen common people, officials, military men, ladies with parasols spread, and children. They had all come thither to see off General Skobelev, who was setting out for the Trans-Caspian region to reduce the Tekke Turkomans to submission. The General himself was not there; he had gone on board the steamer, which was hissing slightly and letting off steam. Soldiers, sailors, porters, Cossacks, Osetini, now run hastily from the steamer, now mount the gangways. Officers, with anxious faces, hasten from the town with luggage of various sorts in their hands, and, well content that they have arrived in time, they descend from the shore to the wharf with a leap.

A great many officials of the commissary department and board of control are to be seen here. A great difference is manifest in their movements. The former bustle, run about, and fuss. The latter, on the contrary, owing to the loftiness of their duties, behave exactly as though they do not perceive what is going on about them, but stroll quietly along the wharf with their travelling-bags slung over their shoulders. And how many engineers there are here! Why are they here? They are to build a railway to the Tekke oasis. The constructor of the road, General Annenkoff, a small, gray, very alert man, is also going with us. He has gone off, in company with Skobelev and all the staff, to inspect the cabins.

They have inspected the cabins. The commander, for the time being, of the troops in the Trans-Caspian territory, General Skobelev, is the first to make his appearance.

He wears a white cap, a rough linen coat; at his neck hangs the cross of the George, as usual. His face has grown a little fuller since the time of the Turkish campaign; his reddish whiskers have grown thicker and longer. He looks alert and satisfied. Coming up on deck, Mikhail Dmitrievitch mounts the narrow, winding stairs to the broad bridge; he is followed by his staff-officers in a body, most of them wearing white coats.

And here is our chief of staff of the army, Colonel Gudina-Levkovitch, a man still young, of lofty stature, and with a thin, smooth-shaven face. Beside him mounts another colonel of the general staff, Grodekoff; he is of short stature, quite bald, and wears spectacles. From his manners, gait, and ways it is evident that he is a man of experience. After him, with a waddling gait, comes Cavalry Captain Erdeli, in an adjutant's cap. Beside him walks Captain Baranok, the only one of the surrounding officers who is dressed not in a linen coat, but in a thick cloth adjutant's uniform, with aiglets.

Baranok is serious and self-contained. Behind come all the rest who are under Skobelev's orders: I, wearing a light, gray woollen *tcherkeska*; my friend of the Horse-Guard regiment, Ushakoff, a youth of twenty, a very good, amiable fellow; Captain of the General Staff Melnitzky; Lieutenant of Artillery of the Guard Kaufman; and several others.

The steamer whistles. The sailors bustle about. They raise the anchor at the bow, with noise and clanking; they cast off the ropes. The steamer begins to quiver gently; the wheels strike the water lightly with their paddles, now on this side, now on that. Skobelev removes his cap, and bows to the public. We, also, wave our handkerchiefs and caps, to acquaintances and strangers. Those on shore respond in the same fashion. The steamer turns a little, and starts off, and, beating swiftly with its wheels, dashes smoothly along over the blue, mirror-like surface of the sea.

And now we are on our way to the land of glowing sands, phalanges, and scorpions, to a land where the inhabitants, free as birds, swoop down on every stranger, and rob and slay him with perfect impunity.

Our first stop is at the foot of Novo-Alexandrovsk, the next at the town of Krasnovodsk, and it is only on the 7th

of May, towards evening, that we reach Tchikishlyar. Having provided myself, in Petersburg, with a capital field glass, I had seen the shore a long way off. But where is Tchikishlyar? I cannot discern it anywhere. I had imagined it to be a town, but it proves to be a tiny hamlet, with a few wretched huts, built on a low, sandy, utterly barren shore.

Here the sky alone fixes the attention of the new-comer. The sky is wonderful — dark blue and cloudless. It melts imperceptibly into the boundless distance with its glowing sands of a reddish hue.

I now recall with what speechless ecstasy I gazed at every bush and tree, and could not gaze my fill, when I first set foot on Turkish soil. But what is there here? A glowing desert, nothing more. And we have still to ride over it, — and how far? — and to fight besides! Assuming that it is all easy for the horsemen, what will it be for the unfortunate infantry? How are they to tramp through this sand, in this fearful heat, without water, with their knapsacks on their backs, and heavy guns on their shoulders? But to what does man not become accustomed! A week had not elapsed when I, like my comrades, am running about sandy, dusty Tchikishlyar, carrying out Skobelev's orders, verifying stores, re-weighing commissariat loads, and paying no heed to that which had so impressed me on my arrival — to that cloudless blue sky, mingling with the boundless stretch of burning sands, and to the scorching heat of the sun.

It is difficult to imagine anything more cheerless than Tchikishlyar. The sun had burned up everything in the vicinity.

“So this is the Trans-Caspian territory, the Akhal-Tekke land! Well, it's not Turkey,” I say to myself, as I betake myself to the little chamber allotted to me beside that of Colonel Grodekoff, and remove my handkerchief, which is completely soaked with the perspiration from my neck and chest. “How can people exist here in such heat! No water, no plants, not even a shadow anywhere!”

And I will not conceal the fact that my first view of the Trans-Caspian region disturbed me greatly; something in the nature of repentance flashed through my mind, that ever I had come to this accursed country.

We have been living for a week in Tchikishlyar. Skobe-

leff is on the move all day long, from morning till night, inspecting the troops, the hospital, and the commissariat stores. He verifies the provisions left on hand from the campaign of last year, and also the fresh ones which have arrived from Russia. The camels which have been purchased all over the Mangyshlaksy peninsula, by Skobeleff's orders before the beginning of the campaign, are soon driven to Tchikishlyar.

The chief problem consisted in carrying forward into the depths of the oasis, with all possible speed, and in the largest possible quantities, various supplies and artillery stores. Therefore, before drawing up the army, the General busied himself with removing their anxiety on this score.

Camel-trains were organized to transport the freight. Every camel was loaded with from six to eight poods of goods: there was one Turkoman driver to every six camels. Several hundred or even thousand camels constituted the transport train confided to a single officer. The train was furnished with an escort of one or two companies of foot-soldiers and of Cossacks, according to the number of camels.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF YAGLY-OLUM.

ON the 15th of May, I was appointed to the command of a flying battalion, with Yagly-Olum as base of operations. "The temporary commander of the forces has appointed you, Right Honorable Sir, to the command of a flying battalion, consisting of one company of the Taman Cossack regiment, a detachment of the Poltava Cossack regiment, two companies of the eighty-third Samursky regiment, and a company of Dzhigiti. This battalion will concentrate at Yagly-Olum by the night of May 17. The aim of this battalion is to protect, in the most effective manner, the camel-trains on their way from Tchikishlyar to the fortress of Tchat.

"Special attention must be paid, both in camp and on the march, to the protection of all the crossings on the river above Yagly-Olum: Atrek, Kizil-Olum, Khodzha-Olum, Domtzakh-Olum, Baïram-Olum, and others. The country below Atrek must be watched by scouts. In case of the enemy showing themselves, the flying battalion must act against them in the most decisive manner, 'in which case, however' (was added in Skobelev's own hand), 'an attack with cold steel is to be resorted to only when the excess of strength on the enemy's side is small, or under other especially favorable circumstances.'

"They are chiefly to be proceeded against, however, by fire and dismounted Cossacks. The temporary commander of the army has ordered it to be enjoined on all officials to hold themselves aloof from the camel-trains, to conduct themselves with the greatest courtesy towards the camel-drivers, and under no circumstances to permit themselves to indulge in ridicule or blows, under penalty of personal responsibility to the chief of the detachment."

At this time our stores had been collected in the fortress of Duz-Olum, situated one hundred and forty versts from

Tchikishlyar. From Tchikishlyar to Yagly-Olum was about sixty versts.

That same day, at evening, I mount my black horse which I had purchased at Vladikavkaz, load my effects on two camels, and, accompanied by a company of Cossacks, I ride through the waterless, sandy wilderness to Yagly-Olum. This little place is situated on the banks of the Atrek,¹ a narrow stream, from fifteen to twenty feet wide. It flows between high, steep banks, overgrown with small bushes of saksaul, the only vegetation to be met with in the whole of this oasis. The fortress of Yagly-Olum stands on a small square, where were pitched a score or so of felt tents, or, as they are called here, *yulameiki*, in which the garrison was quartered. Near by stood more *yulameiki*, belonging to the telegraph, hospital, and to the company commanders.

I established myself quite comfortably in a spacious yulameik. The transport trains passed directly in front of me. Laden camels streamed along, stretching out their necks and chewing the cud. They were fastened to each other by short ropes, one end of which was threaded through the cartilage of the nose, while the other was tied to the tail of the animal in front. Their long legs stepped noiselessly, with their soft soles, over the sandy road. Their small, misshapen heads, with their short, spreading ears, waved about on their arch-like necks. The Turkoman drivers, with their long, rusty gowns and their tall, shaggy caps, stepped along with measured tread, holding the bridles in their hands; some had mounted the humped backs of the camels, and, as they swayed to and fro like pendulums, they droned to themselves interminable, melancholy songs, which were intelligible only to the natives. Step by step the weary camels passed, raising clouds of dust behind them.

¹ It is necessary to add that up to the time of this expedition the river Atrek had been but little explored, and Skobeleff had been assured that small steam-cutters could navigate the Atrek, and this was very important, in view of the difficulty of ferrying over loads. Several steam-launches, a detail of sailors, under the command of two officers, and four mitrailleuses were placed at the disposal of the commander of the expedition. But the Atrek turned out to be so shallow and insignificant that the launches had to be dragged several scores of versts by hand, and afterwards dragged back to Tchikishlyar in the same manner. But the detachment with mitrailleuses advanced. It did not work at the storming of Geok-Tepe.

“And the sand here has grown rusty with the heat of the sun, and the camels are rusty, and the robes of the drivers are rusty. The sun has turned everything here to one color,” I said to myself, gazing at the transport train.

On the 20th of May, I receive a telegram from the chief of staff at Tchikishlyar, Gudema-Levkovitch. He writes: “In view of rumors that a hostile band is on the way from the Tekke oasis to Dash-Verdy, you must increase your caution and vigilance.”

I send out scouts several times a day, and ride out myself, but can discover nothing. Two or three days later, I receive a fresh telegram from Colonel Grodekoff, in which he says: “Don’t forget Dash-Verdy.” Shortly afterwards, I receive still another telegram from the chief of staff. He writes: “News just received that a band of Tekintzi has made its appearance near the wells of Dash-Verdy, under the command of Tykhma-Sardar himself,¹ to the number of five hundred. Increase scouts, and guard the transports.”

I exert all my powers, but cannot get sight of the enemy.

The wells of Dash-Verdy are situated about seventeen versts to the north-west of Yagly-Olum, and, as the weather was hot, if there were bands anywhere, then, of course, they must be near these wells. I was very desirous of ascertaining and informing the General whether there really were any there or not. Moreover, I was much interested in the tales of one of the Dzhigiti² who were under my command, about the ancient ruined walls of Dash-Verdy, which were situated directly beside the wells. I determined to go there.

In the evening I order a detachment of Cossacks to make ready, and in the morning, before sunrise, having provided ourselves with wooden vessels of water, we direct our course to the wells.

My Cossacks had ridden in this direction several times with the Dzhigiti, and therefore knew the way. The country round about was perfectly flat. Wherever you cast your eye, everywhere there was a road, everywhere

¹ Tykhma-Sardar was the commander-in-chief of the Tekke Turkomans.

² Hired Turkoman horsemen who served with our troops.

sand. Here and there, at rare intervals, rose a small shrub of saksaul, burned brown by the sun. Sometimes, as a result of mirage, such shrubs appeared to us as trees, and in places where there were many such shrubs, like dense, shady gardens.

Light antelopes were also visible here and there in the distance, but as we approached they elevated their small snouts, pricked up their ears, and flew like birds across the steppe, with their white bellies twinkling. Afterwards I saw a great many antelopes; an especially good look at them was to be had when they betook themselves, morning and evening, to the Atrek, to their watering-place.

In size and build the *dzheran* resembles our goat; its wool is short, its back and legs reddish brown, and its belly, as I have already stated, white. It sometimes chanced that the Dzhigiti, who accompanied me in my rides on their fine Turkoman horses, tried to chase them when they caught sight of them. But in vain! Although the Turkoman horse gallops swiftly, the *dzheran* rolls away from him like a ball, as though borne on the wind, farther and farther, and finally disappears from sight in the boundless, waterless steppe.

About mid-day, we rested a little, and then rode on at the same swift pace. Our water was already exhausted. At five o'clock in the afternoon, we ascended a small elevation, and from that point caught sight of the wells. The land beyond was so remarkably flat that I dismounted, laid my head on the ground, and looked attentively about, to see whether I could descry even the smallest unevenness. Nothing met my sight; for many versts ahead there was neither a stone, pebble, nor a bush, nowhere so much as a blade of grass. It was precisely like a vast threshing-floor, artistically smeared with clay, and sprinkled with the finest white sand. I had never suspected that there could be on this earthly globe such vast level stretches. No *Tzaritzin Lug* (Empress' Field), no place can be compared for smoothness with the natural place here. And the soil was so hard that we left no footprints behind us.

We draw nearer to the wells, and halt in amazement; by the wells we behold several large parties of Tekintzi men. All are on horseback, all dressed in shaggy black caps and long gowns; some of them have pennons in their hands. I rub the glasses of my field-glass thoroughly, and take



TYKHMA-SARDAR.



another look — no, I have made no mistake, they are actually Tekke Turkomans. Several of the leaders are galloping along the line, halting, waving their pennons, and evidently making preparations to attack us.

On leaving Yagly-Olum, I had by no means expected to fall in with the enemy, as no traces of them were to be found in the neighborhood. I had simply gone because I had grown bored with sitting still in one place, and, besides, I wanted to brag to the General that I had been to Dash-Verdy with a detachment. And then, too, I wanted to see the ruins. But now, when I beheld before me such a mass of the enemy, I felt afraid. "Well," I say to myself, "if the Tekintzi fall upon us they will slay us. And if they do not slay us they will take some of us prisoners, and that will be still worse, apparently. And then how shall I answer to Skobelev? 'Why did you go so far?' he will say." I had been in a perspiration before, but these thoughts rendered the perspiration more profuse than ever.

"Halt!" I give the command. "Dismount, prepare for battle."

"Never mind," I say to myself, "we have no water, we cannot return sixty versts. We must cut our way to the wells at any cost."

Quietly leading our horses by their bridles, we move nearer and nearer. The Cossacks have already taken their rifles from the cases, and loaded them. All at once, one of them shouts to me: —

"Your Honor, whose Cossack is that standing yonder on the hill?"

"Whereabouts on the hill?" I ask him.

"Yonder, near the well;" and he points with his whip.

I look, and, in point of fact, on the summit of a small hillock, about seven hundred feet from the wells at the right, stands one of our Cossacks, gun over his shoulder, evidently gazing in our direction.

"What does this mean?" I say to myself. I look again, and it appears that it was a mirage! The throng of Tekintzi began to disperse like a cloud, and in a few moments they had disappeared. Beside the wells we behold the same sort of a stronghold as at Yagly-Olum. In it was stationed a company of soldiers who had just arrived from Tehikishlyar. The chiefs galloping about were only Dzhigiti, belonging to the regiment. They, in their turn,

had taken us for men of Tekke, and had fallen into such trepidation that, as the commander of the company, Captain Podvysotsky told me afterwards, he had been on the point of giving the order to open fire on us.

After drinking tea with hospitable Captain Podvysotsky, I proposed to him to come with me and take a look at the ruins. We had the company cart harnessed with three horses, and set out, escorted by four Dzhigiti. The ruins lay four versts to the west of the wells. They formed a quadrangle, a verst and a half long and one verst broad, surrounded by a deep, dry moat. Water had probably flowed into this moat, from some source, in ancient times. The interior of the quadrangle was thickly covered with brick ruins. The bricks, as I observed, were small, thick, and very strong.

In the midst of the ruins rose a sort of triumphal arch, decorated with enamels of various colors. It was falling in below, but the top remained intact, and the splendid blue glaze, with designs in gold, shines brilliantly in the sun to this day, as though but just moulded. It is remarkable how beautifully and solidly they worked in olden times! There was no one for me to question thoroughly as to when and by whom the town of Dash-Verdy had been built, whether it had been long in existence, and the cause of its destruction. Some of the remains of buildings here were very large. They were all overgrown with grass. The abundance of green growth proved that there must be water in the vicinity.

I strolled for a long time around the ruins, gazing at the bricks and tiles. My companion called to me several times, proposing that we should go, but I did not wish to leave this place, which had formerly been so full of life, and which was now doomed to be levelled with the surrounding plain, and never more to recall to any one its past.

And thus there proved to be no foes in Dash-Verdy. But, on the other hand, traces of them were discovered two versts from Yagly-Olum.

During one of our scouting parties, I descend into a deep trench, and there find perfectly fresh horse-dung; and in some places scattered barley. On conferring with the Cossacks, I come to the conclusion that a party of Tekke Turkomans have passed the preceding night there. "It would not be a bad thing to send there for the night an

ambush party of twenty men, and have them fire a volley upon them, after letting them get quite close." Meditating thus, I pictured to myself in advance with what delight I would send a report to Skobelev, to the effect that my scouting party had left ten corpses behind them on the field.

No sooner said than done. That very evening I despatched a party, but to no purpose. The soldiers stayed on watch all night long, and never closed an eye; but the Tekke men did not make their appearance.

I reported this to the chief of staff, but with what result? On the 25th of May, the commander of the troops marches past me with his entire staff, on his way to Duz-Olum. Of course, I go out to meet him. Skobelev greets me very amiably, and, at the same time, says to me, in a half-angry tone, "It is evident, my dear fellow, that you have not been in Asia, and do not know the Asiatics! How could you send an ambush away off here, several versts? If any calamity had happened to them, I should have brought you before a court-martial the first thing, as a warning to others." And, with an amiable smile, he brings his horse to a stop in front of the tent which has been prepared for him, dismounts, and enters it to rest.

CHAPTER III.

IN BAMI.

A WEEK later, I receive orders to hand over the Yagly-Olum detachment to the senior commander of the company, and to report myself to the temporary commander of the troops, who was at that time in the hamlet of Khadzham-Kala seventy-five versts from Duz-Olum. I set out with the first convenient transport train. As I pass through Duz-Olum, I see an officer of the general staff, accompanied by two Cossacks, coming to meet me. I look, and recognize Colonel Gudema-Levkovitch. I am greatly delighted to see him, and call out:—

“How do you do, Colonel?—Where are you bound?”

“Back to Russia; I am no longer chief of staff,” he replies, returning my greeting. I look at him, and perceive that the Colonel’s face is pale, his air fatigued, his eyes sunken.

“What is the matter with you? why are you going back? who has taken your place?” I inquire.

“Grodekoff is now your chief of staff, and I am going to Petersburg; I am not well;” and, after a little further conversation with me, Gudema-Levkovitch takes leave of me sadly, and we part.

Early on the morning of the 10th of June, the detachment marched out to Bami on the crest of the Kodzhin hills. I remember that it was after mid-day when we crossed the mountains. The weather was frightfully hot. Far away, athwart the heated, quivering air, clay towers and *kali* are visible; this is the appellation here for cattle enclosures, surrounded by high clay walls.

Skobelev is mounted on a handsome gray mare, with a very swift stride. I ride a little way behind him.

“Well, my dear fellow, is it hot?” he says to me; “and if I present any one for decoration, they will say: ‘What for? for what action?’ Is not this heat here equivalent to a battle?”



MAJOR-GENERAL GRODEKOFF.

(Now Military Governor of the Syr-Darya Territory and
the Amu-Darya Division.)

On our arrival at Bami, masses of provisions and artillery stores began to collect there. Tall piles of bales, covered with tarpaulin, formed mountains, as it were, in the centre of the camp. Bami was the last base of operations, where Skobelev had decided to concentrate the greatest possible quantity of stores, and, after having assembled there all his forces, to make his final advance to capture the oasis of Akhal-Tekke.

The hamlet of Bami was important for Skobelev in this respect, that two roads came together there. One ran from the Mikhailoff Bay, along which it was proposed to construct a railway and along it moved the camel-trains with supplies. The other was the Tchikishlyar road, along which moved the stores prepared for the base of supplies during the time of the previous expeditions. In order to reach Bami from the Tchikishlyar road, it was necessary to cross the Kopet-Dag Mountains by the pass of Bendeseni, four versts from Bami.

In Bami we were very comfortably situated. The camp was pitched on both sides of the little stream. The tent of the commander of the army was set up beneath the shade of two trees. Beside it they scooped out a pond, which was filled by the overflow of the brook, and sheltered with a rough fence, so that the General could take his bath at any time. In addition to this pond, two others were dug in the centre of the camp, one for the officers, the other for the soldiers.

Early in the morning of the 20th of June, I come from my tent, and behold Doctor Studitzky standing beside Skobelev, and preparing to ride off somewhere. Drawn up close by stands an escort of twelve Cossacks. The doctor was still a young man, and very pleasing. I was on very good terms with him. He had spent the whole of the preceding evening with me, telling me of his life in Moscow, and had shown me a picture of his wife; he had married just before the beginning of the campaign.

"Where are you going, doctor?" I inquire, stepping up to him.

"Why, I am off for Bendeseni; I must examine the body

of a Cossack there, who was killed last night by the Tekintzi." And then he added, privately, in a whisper: "The General thinks that our Dzhigiti may have betrayed and murdered him. So we must dig him up and try to find the bullet." We took leave of each other, and the doctor set out.

On the following day, as I set out to take a bath in the morning, I happen to look up, and see the General step out of his tent, with a paper in his hand, and all flushed with weeping. On catching sight of me, he calls me to him, and says sorrowfully and complainingly:—

"Do you know, they have killed Studitzky! Ah! . . . What villains those Tekintzi are! A whole band fell upon him," he continues, his voice choked with tears. Then he adds: "Nevertheless, I am very glad that he had an escort of twelve men; that will remove the moral responsibility from my shoulders. But what is one to do? an accident may happen to any one in time of war. The Cossacks fought all day long; they killed twenty men. And are they not heroes, and why should they not receive the cross of the George?"—And Skobelev began to pace excitedly back and forth beside his tent, and to blow his nose tearfully, in a scented pocket handkerchief.

That same day, I had occasion to see the place where Studitzky had been killed. It happened in this wise. An hour after my conversation with Skobelev, I was again summoned to him. The General was seated beside a small table in his tent, and was drawing something with a pencil on a sheet of paper.

"You, my good fellow, are to set off to-day for Bendeseni, with a company of infantry, one cannon, and half a company of Cossacks, to meet the baggage-train which is coming from Khadzham-Kala. It is a large train, consisting of over two thousand camels. I am afraid that the Turkomans may attack it. It is commanded by Major Dyakoff. Direct your chief attention at Bendeseni to the commanding heights."

With these words, the General takes from the table pencils of various colors, and draws me a rapid sketch of the position of Bendeseni. He explains, down to the most minute details, how to bear myself against the enemy, on what ground, how to accompany the transport train, that I am under no circumstances to draw out in line, and so on.

Then the General orders me to get my instructions from Grodekoff, and to set out.

The Bendeseni ridge is a dangerous place. Hundreds of precipitous mountainous crests and peaks extend on both sides of the road through a narrow defile. Among them wind countless, almost invisible paths, known to the people of Tekke alone. Here and there, the cliffs are covered with sparse, sickly trees, similar to our juniper trees. I afterwards heard, from our volunteer squad, who wandered about here to protect the road, that in the depths of the gorges there were great groves of forest trees, but I did not see them myself.

It was evening when we reached the Bendeseni valley. It was a vast wide, and carpeted with thick, green grass. Beyond the valley stretched ramifications of these same Kopet-Dag Mountains.

At the entrance of the pass, I perceived a small cavern on the slope of the mountain. A narrow path wound up to it. On coming closer, I espied in the cliff a deep cavity, screened on the outer side by a small clay wall, in which were constructed loop-holes for rifles. It was necessary to dismount in order to reach the cave. Its floor was covered with fresh horse-dung and barley. The robbers had, evidently, been here not long before. "Was it not from this nest that the Cossack was killed?" I say to myself. The loop-holes in the walls looked directly down upon that spot in the road where he had been killed.

Below the gorge we saw the transport train, which had stopped to rest. The leader of the Cossack troops, Dyakoff, and the officers, were sitting in a tent and drinking tea. I presented myself to them, drank a cup of tea, and then inquired whether some one could not show me the place where Studitzky was killed. Several officers volunteered their services, and we went to look. The scene of the skirmish lay directly opposite the place where the transport train had stopped, about two hundred yards distant.

"Here, your Honor, is where they killed the doctor, and here is his blood, where he fell," explains a short, young Cossack, with reddish moustache, who, on learning why we have come, has run on in advance, and, ascending the steep hill for about forty yards, has halted beside two large rocks.

“How do you know? were you with the doctor?” I inquired.

“Just so,” replies the Cossack. “Nothing would have happened to him, most honorable sir,—he would have been alive to-day, because the Tekintzi here, behind the rocks, would have nothing to do with us, only he began to use evil words to them, and to shout, ‘Thrash them, the villains,’ and so on! and he took a fancy to go out from behind these rocks, where our men were sitting, and to get behind that big one, yonder, where the rest of us were stationed. No sooner had he stood up than they overpowered him and killed him. He only managed to cry out: ‘Brothers, remember me to my wife!’ then clutched at his side and fell. They say that he left a young wife,” adds the Cossack, gloomily, evidently displeased with Studitzky for having cursed, and for having, in his opinion, brought down misfortune on his own head.

The summit of the rocks where our men had been concealed was covered with the furrows of the enemy’s bullets. It was plain that the Tekintzi had planted themselves quite close, and had aimed directly at the heads of our Cossacks when they were thrust up to fire. But, however desperately the Cossacks might have defended themselves, they would have perished, nevertheless, of fatigue and lack of water, had not a company of soldiers, who were returning from Bami to Khadzham-Kala, come along to their assistance at that very moment. The men of Tekke no sooner caught sight of the company than they immediately disappeared.

The Cossack also told me that one of his comrades, just at the moment when things were going very badly, descended the hill cautiously, leading his horse by the bridle, leaped into his saddle, and galloped off down the valley to Khadzham-Kala, to bear the tidings of what was going on. Before the men of Tekke had recovered from their surprise, the Cossack was far away. They dashed in pursuit, and chased him for a long time, but the man succeeded in making his escape. I should not like to find myself in such a position: if the horse should stumble, if one moment were wasted, one would be lost, and no mercy need be expected.

I made a complete circuit of the scene of this skirmish. On the crest of the hill, just at the beginning of the slope,



DR. STUDITZKY.

on the hard, yellowish soil, strewn with little pebbles, lay the dead body of a Tekinetz; much blood had flowed from under his shaven head, and it had clotted on the ground in a dark spot. His shaggy, white cap lay near by. The Cossack pushed the corpse with his foot, and it slowly, and unwillingly, as it seemed, rolled down hill, brandishing its widespread and stiffened arms, now displaying its swarthy, bearded face, then turning it aside.

On my return, I went to look at the transport train. It was already encamped for the night, the camels were unloaded, the Turkoman drivers were seated around the blazing camp-fires and engaged in cooking their rice. Soon it was entirely dark, and we lay down to rest.

I could not sleep long on an expedition, and generally woke early. So it was on this occasion. I do not know how much time had elapsed when I woke up and looked through the open door of the damp tent, and it was already beginning to grow light. Dyakoff and the other officers were still asleep. I left the tent quietly. Dyakoff, in alarm, pulled from his gray head the coverlet with which he had thoroughly enveloped himself, leaped up briskly, and followed me out. The fresh morning air seemed to pierce directly through our thin tunics.

"It is time to rise," says Dyakoff, in a low voice, scratching his head, and yawning, after which he plants his arms akimbo against his sturdy, full figure, exactly as though he could not issue an order without assuming this pose, and shouts in his Little Russian accent: —

"Bugler, bugler!"

A soldier rises from behind the gun-stacks, not far away, with his back towards us; his overcoat, which he has thrown over his shoulders, has slipped to one side. He re-adjusts it, puts on his kepi, takes up his brass "strument," and comes to the tent of the commander of the transport.

"Play the call to the wagons," shouts Dyakoff.

The bugler halts, spits to one side, places his instrument to his mouth, and in a few seconds there resounds through the universal stillness the long-drawn first note of this call: "Ti-i-i-i . . . ti . . . ti-ti-ti" — and so forth.

That first, prolonged note always produced a melancholy impression on me during a campaign. Everything is asleep, everything is resting in tranquil repose; but the bugler is exerting himself; and begins to play. And now he has

finished; shivering with cold, he twitches his coat over his shoulders and speedily disappears behind the guns. Dyakoff and I again lie down in our places, and wait, for the camp will begin to move directly now. But a good half-hour elapses, and no movement is heard anywhere. We do not care to rise ourselves, and it is sweet to doze. But at last Dyakoff springs out of his tent and shouts once more:—

“Bugler, bugler!”

“What is your wish, your Honor?”

“Did you sound the call?” inquires the commander, although he had heard it distinctly.

“Yes!”

“Then, you played badly; play again.”

And the commander of the transport train goes back to his tent. In another minute the call rings out again: “Ti-i-i . . . ti-ti-ti,” and so on.

Half an hour later, Dyakoff and I are sitting with our legs tucked up in Turkish fashion, drinking tea; the rest of the officers join us, and sit down to warm themselves with a cup. The rays of the sun are already falling into the valley, and will soon reach us. All about us resounds the deafening roar of the camels; they are being loaded. The animals are lying down, with their legs doubled under them, and turning their misshapen heads now to this side, now to that, and roaring desperately, as though to show how much the loading process displeases them.

“Bugler, sound the attack!” shouts Dyakoff once more.

He is already mounted on a fat horse, nearly as old as himself, and is riding round the train, accompanied by several officers and Cossacks, and the bugler. The laden camels have risen to their feet, and, collected in one great herd, with their muzzles extended wherever chance ordains, they stand quietly chewing the cud. Some of them lie without loads, and, as the drivers prod them in the ribs, they do not rise, but merely roar piteously. These camels have become weak, and are no longer in service; they lie still for several days, without stirring from the spot, and so get rested.

The Turkoman drivers, assembled in groups, squat on their heels, and eagerly smoke their nargiles of the most primitive construction. With the opening of the nargile placed to their bearded mouths, the Turkomans draw the smoke into themselves with an ardor and power which

cannot but excite admiration for the strength of their lungs. The signal for the attack rings out:—

“Ta-ti ta-ta,
Ta-ti ta-ta,
Ta-ti ta-ta . . .”

I send a portion of my Cossacks to the vanguard, the rest for scouting parties on the sides, and remain myself with Dyakoff, until the whole train has started. The infantry has not yet quite got into order, and makes haste to draw up in line. The cannons start with a clang, and a thunder of wheels. The drivers, in their shaggy black caps, and their cinnamon-brown gowns, step along noiselessly, one behind the other, in their hooked boots, holding the bridles of the camels in their hands. There are many, many camels! “How am I to draw them up in one battalion if the enemy should attack us?” I say to myself, as I gaze at that endless line of transport train. The camels at the head must have already reached the watershed, while the half-company constituting the rear-guard, thirty men in all, are dragging themselves slowly after the train.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIXTH OF JULY. — BEFORE GEOK-TEPE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE Akhal-Tekke oasis extends from the north-west to the south-east, in a long, narrow strip, for more than twenty versts, if reckoned from Kizil-Arbat to Askhabad. Its width varies from five to ten versts. Villages are scattered over it, according to the location of water. Wherever even so much as a rivulet trickles from the mountains through the oasis, there, if you look, somewhere you will invariably find a little field of wheat shining white, and a cluster of fruit-trees looming darkly; among the trees rise gray clay huts with little towers, connected by a whole chain of clay walls and trenches. The walls rise, here an arshin high, there two arshins, and elsewhere over two yards. At first it seemed strange to me that corn could grow here in such heat and drought; but I afterwards learned that the inhabitants surround their little plots with a trench, and, having converted the field into a vessel, as it were, they let in water from the stream. The water stands for a long time, soaks the soil, and, when it begins to dry away, the seeds are cast into the wet earth, and the crop is remarkably fine. And the farther we proceeded to the south, the more I became convinced that it was not without reason that this narrow strip of land was called an oasis.

On the first of July, at sunset, near the Bami camp, our little detachment was drawn up, consisting of three companies of infantry, four companies of Cossacks, four nine-pound, long-range cannon, four mitrailleuses, a mounted light gun detachment, and a rocket company, in all about eight hundred men.

The division sets out, under the personal command of Skobelev, in the direction of Geok-Tepe, in order to view the locality, and, if possible, to burn the standing grain, to capture the cattle, and, in general, to do the enemy as much

damage as possible. But the principal thing is to inspire them with fear, as the enemy, according to Skobelev's expression, have become "audacious," and, according to rumor, are preparing to attack us.

We set out on the march late in the evening. All night long we proceeded at a rapid gait, and at dawn our vanguard, consisting of Cossacks and Dzhigiti, before we had come within ten versts of the *aul*¹ of Artchman, caught sight of the enemy, and gave chase. The General, in his gray summer coat, worn with the sleeves, surrounded by his officers and his guard of Osetini, rode after the vanguard at a brisk amble, on his white war stallion Sheinoff.² My horse, although he could go very swiftly at a trot, now broke incessantly into a gallop. Clouds of dust rose around us. We have already been riding for half an hour at this swift pace. No conversation is heard; nothing but the sound of hoofs on the dry clayey soil, and the snorting of the sweating horses break the silence. The farther we go, the faster we ride. Neither ditches nor clayey trenches stop us. Contriving, in some way, to make my way through the officers, with a repeating rifle over my shoulder, I try not to get separated from Skobelev. But the General constantly spurs on his horse, which, all dark with sweat and dust, has laid back his ears, sways rapidly from side to side, and plants his feet so swiftly that they are hardly visible. The General has thrown his thin body somewhat backward, and, swaying slightly as though in a cradle, looks serious, and, as always is the case at such moments, he has compressed his lips somewhat.

Firing is heard in front, from time to time. And now, through the thinning cloud of dust, we see scattered clay buildings, and among them little green gardens. This is the village of Artchman. Beyond it, against the horizon, we can descry several horsemen, fleeing at full gallop. The village is deserted. The General reins in his horse, and approaches the gardens at a walk. The escort and officers, who have become somewhat scattered, draw into a little better order. I ride behind the General. At this moment, a Turkoman Dzhigit gallops toward us in a dirty, greasy robe, flapping his elbows, and triumphantly holding over his

¹ *Aul*, the designation of a Turkoman village.

² Skobelev rode this horse in the Turkish war, at the time of the battle of Sheinova, whence he received his name.

head a sort of sack; he unties it, and, with a radiant face, draws forth the severed head of a Tekinetz. The General turns aside in disgust, and shouts to Lieutenant Ushakoff, who is riding beside me: "Give the Dzhigit three rubles." Ushakoff immediately takes three silver rubles from his pouch, and hands them to the Tekinetz Turkoman. The latter takes the money as though nothing had happened, hides his trophy once more in its sack, and gallops off perfectly happy.

The detachment halts in Artechman for a day's rest. Mid-day arrives, and with it the heat. In the sun, it must certainly be more than fifty degrees.¹ We are all dripping with perspiration. As neither officers nor soldiers had been allowed to take tents, for the sake of lightness, every one, of course, tries to get into the shade. But I have succeeded in bringing from Bami one breadth of my tent, and now I stretch it out on a stick, take off my *tcherkeska*, place it under my head, and lie down very calmly. After a while, I take my field-glass, and begin to scrutinize the Kopet-Dag Mountains, which extend along the oasis a verst from us. There, on one flat peak, sit two human figures, calmly watching us.

"Those are certainly Tekintzi! But what is to be done? — we cannot chase them in the mountains?"

While I am gazing at them, I suddenly hear a familiar voice behind me: —

"Pray, tell me what cunning fellow this is; he has even some shade!" I look up, and Skobelev is running towards me, minus his coat, and with a small pillow under his arm; he drives me from my place, and stretches himself out contentedly. The General had at first lain down in the shade, under a tree, but after a while the shadow disappeared, and the sun began to scorch him. Much pleased, I join my companions, and lie down beside them under the tree.

We passed the whole day here. The infantry and artillery were allowed to rest. We spent the night here also, but moved on in the morning.

I do not remember in what village it was that I saw, as we passed, several Cossacks make their appearance from behind the walls of a garden: they were eating grapes. I take a bunch from one of them and try them; the grapes

¹ Réaumur, say 113° F.

are fairly good, but rather sour. I send my Cossack to pluck some, and wait in the road. The vanguard has all gone on, and we have been left alone.

I glance about on all sides uneasily, as I hear some one approaching at a brisk trot. I look; it is a Cossack. Behind him, crouching down on the saddle, sits some one clad only in his shirt, with a shaven head and a coffee-colored face, who is clutching the Cossack in his arms, and groaning piteously.

“Whom are you dragging along there?” I inquire.

“A Persian, most honorable sir; he has been a prisoner of the Tekintzi. He was fettered, and could not escape; and as I was riding past the hut he groaned.” So saying, the Cossack sets out at a gallop to overtake his comrades. He has only proceeded a few paces when the Persian rolls off the horse and begins to groan more piteously than ever. I ride up to him, and see that his feet are fastened together above the instep, with thick chains, a couple of fingers wide. The rings are united by a thick, immovable iron bar. With such fetters a man could take only the smallest of steps. The skin was flayed from the Persian's feet, and blood was oozing from the wounds. I help him to climb into the saddle once more, and the Cossack gallops on.

That day we reach the village of Durun. On arriving at the village, the General orders the Cossacks and Dzhitigi to burn and destroy everything. Before the expiration of five minutes, the village blazes up simultaneously in various places. The Cossacks have ridden into the village like spirits, set the fires, kindled them, blown them into life, and then galloped on. The same process was applied to the wheat-fields. Soon nothing remained of the big village except a heap of ashes and coals.

Although it was stated in the detachment that we were only going on a reconnoitring expedition, and it was not supposed that we could move on Geok-Tepe with such insignificant forces, still, every one who was acquainted with Skobelev's character, and had been in battle with him, could prophesy that he would not confine himself to a mere peaceful ride, and that he would infallibly desire to come into conflict with the enemy, or, as Mikhail Dmitryevitch was fond of putting it, “draw fire.”

But the enemy kept retreating and retreating, and aban-

doning their villages. We drew nearer and nearer to Geok-Tepe.

Skobelev, as was to have been expected, decided to engage the enemy. At that time we were one hundred and ten versts from Bami.

The morning of the 5th of July. The weather is as hot as ever. The sun floods us with scorching rays, and shines so fiercely that our eyes ache. The heated air quivers and flutters. We mount a hillock. Before us stretches an open valley. Four versts below, the fortress of Yagin-Batyr is visible. Around it loom, darkly, thick, shady gardens, intersected by a multitude of clay walls. The General halts, dismounts, and looks through his field-glass.

The detachment, in the meantime, closes up its ranks. It has straggled a little, but from this point onward it is necessary to advance in a solid column; the enemy is close at hand.

It is four versts to Yagin-Batyr-kala, and from there not more than ten versts in all to Geok-Tepe itself, where the whole population of the oasis has congregated—forty thousand Tekintzi, according to rumor. Here is material for Skobelev's consideration; are we to advance further or not? We have in all three companies of infantry and three hundreds of Cossacks. It is true that we have cannon, but it must not be forgotten that eight months previously three thousand of our men and twenty cannon tried to storm Geok-Tepe, and were repulsed with disgrace, losing many in dead and wounded. And now, all at once, after such a defeat, to appear under the same walls, with such a mere handful of soldiers, before enemies already self-confident, and haughty with conquest! Was not this audacious mockery of the foe?

The General continues to gaze into the valley. I also take my glass and look. Beyond Yagin-Batyr fortress the valley gradually rises, and forms an elongated ridge. Behind this ridge, at one spot on the horizon, the crest of a dark mound is faintly defined. This mound is situated in the fortress of Geok-Tepe, or, as the Tekintzi call it, Dengil-Tepe itself.

The enemy is invisible as yet. All about is still and

quiet. The officers have collected in a throng behind the General, and are conversing quietly; but one of them, Lieutenant Kaufman, has caught somewhere a repulsive yellow insect, resembling a huge ant, has fastened it to a stick, and carries it to show to the General. I did not hear what the General said to Kaufman, as I was not attending to that; I knew what the insect was — the *phalanga*; I had seen a great many of them in Yagly-Olum. Their bite is sometimes deadly, and generally results in the bitten spot swelling up, and remaining sore for two months.

An hour later we move on. I remember that the following incident occurred at that time. We had moved from the hill, and had already proceeded quite a distance, when we looked back and saw our military topographer, Safonoff, lingering on the elevation, and proceeding with his sketch of the locality; behind him stood a Cossack holding his horse by the bridle. The General, on seeing this, was very angry, and shouted: "What lack of discipline is this! Send and tell him that this is not Russia, and that he must not separate from the detachment by a single step."

We ride into Yagin-Batyr-kala. It proves to be deserted. The detachment occupies it and encamps in the gardens.

I hand over my horse to my Cossack as speedily as possible, throw off everything superfluous, my rifle, my coat, my sabre, seize my field-glass, and set off at a run for the wall in front, clamber upon it, and gaze eagerly ahead.

The whole valley is covered with sparse saksaul, burned brown by the sun. On the right, two versts away, run the same mountains, the Kopet-Dag; on the left, the same interminable reddish sands.

At this moment a tolerably large crowd of officers and soldiers and Cossacks collect near me. They have all come to the wall in order to see whether the Tekintzi are visible.

"Yo-on-der are the Tekintzi!" I exclaim, continuing to gaze through my glass. "Yonder are more, and still more of them; ai, ai, what a number of them are crawling out there!"

"And see, Major, further to the left, what a throng of them are making their appearance from behind the fortress," says the bass voice of handsome, dashing young Captain Polkovnikoff, with his big whiskers, his white coat, and his sabre slung over his shoulder. He has climbed

upon the wall, beside me, and is also looking through a glass. The Tekintzi, all mounted, begin to swarm like ants from behind the crest of the hill. They descend a little in our direction, in long, dark files, come to a halt five versts away, dismount, and gather in groups, probably to discuss our audacity. Two, bolder than the rest, ride quite close and draw rein. I rivet my eyes upon them. The nearest one sits a splendid buckskin horse. The black beard framing his swarthy face contrasts sharply with his shaggy white cap; his robe is light brown, across his shoulder hangs a sabre, at his back swings a rifle with rests.

He surveys the camp with a proud, attentive gaze. But now, some one in the outposts has fired on them. Both Tekintzi dart aside, as though scalded, then halt, and once more gaze at the camp, then return to their comrades, at a long, swinging gallop, flourishing their elbows like wings, exactly as our peasants do.

Exclamations arise behind me, as the Tekintzi crawl out of their rookery:—

“Eh, comrades, how many of them are pouring out! I never saw such forces! They are just like ants, they fairly swarm!”

“And do you see yonder on the mound?” says the Cossack Sergeant-major to his comrade.

“On what mound?”

“Yonder, beside the hill, yonder to the right.” And he points with his whip. I also look in the direction indicated, and behold a low mound. Its flat summit is entirely covered with Tekintzi, both on horseback and on foot.

“And how are we to deal with them!” the cry makes itself heard. “There are so few of us—none to speak of, and what a force they have! Thousands!”

At this moment, two young officers pass me, one a tall, good-looking, dark-complexioned fellow, the other short, with thick lips, and spectacles. They are conversing:—

“Are three companies sufficient? . . . What do three companies amount to? . . . The Tekintzi are not afraid of the Cossacks. If they separate from the infantry, they’ll be cut down instantly.”

“Yes, of course,” assents the other; “our only hope lies in the cannons and the infantry.”

A knot of foot-soldiers, in white shirts, girt with straps, stand on one side, also engaged in discussion. One of

them yawns, crosses himself, and says, gently, in a low tone:—

“May the Lord help our General to get out of this safe and sound! They are so strong, and they throng and throng until there is no end to them.”

Another soldier, short, swarthy, bearded, places his palm to his visor, in order the better to screen his eyes from the sun, gazes at the mass of the enemy, and, after standing thus awhile, he goes off with a discontented face, grumbling something to himself. All that I catch of his mutterings are the words, “The leaders before him were clever, but the Tekintzi got the better of them all the same.”

The Tekintzi, seeing no movement on our side, sit there quietly discussing matters. The wall where I am standing becomes empty; the crowd disperses. I also take my way to the garden, and find my comrades under a tree. They have all lain down to rest.

Under another tree, a short distance away, walks Skobeleff, without a cap, and with his linen coat unbuttoned; the cross of the George stands out in relief from his black necktie. He is dictating something to Colonel Grodekoff, gesticulating with his hands the while.

Grodekoff writes industriously, adjusting his spectacles from time to time; now and then, he stops work, pulls off his cap, lays his finger on his bald spot, and, pressing it firmly, makes the perspiration trickle to the ground, after which he resumes his labors.

“Verestchagin!” I hear the General’s voice; I spring up hastily, draw on my coat, put on my sabre, and run to him.

“Of course, you are aware that to-morrow we undertake the reconnoissance of Geok-Tepe. You will remain here, shut yourself up in this cattle fold with your command, and, in case of attack, you must defend it at any cost. I rely upon you. Do not forget that the kala serves as our base. Here are your orders. Go, busy yourself with fortifying it and clearing off an esplanade.”

I go off under my tree and read my instructions. It appears that half a company of the Krasnovodsk battalion have been told off under my command, together with the grooms, orderlies, servants, the sick, and the weak, and, as they were all armed, it made seventy rifles. The clay

walls of the fold, about an arshin thick, afforded a capital defence against bullets, but they were too high — five or six arshins — so that it became necessary to construct scaffoldings, from which it was possible to fire over the walls. All night long my command and I bustled and built. We dragged the wagons to the walls, piled boards, beams, and trees upon them, and made various preparations; we cleared off an esplanade one hundred yards in extent, that is to say, we demolished the nearest walls, and cut down the trees, so that the enemy could not creep up to us unseen. We stopped up the gates with whatever came to hand, and made such haste that, at the time when the division marched out, the fold was fully ready to meet the enemy. On one corner of the wall, on the side towards the sands, I stationed a mitrailleuse, commanded by Gardemarine Mayer.¹ Water was provided for several days, and it stood in the company kettles, in the middle of the kala, protected from the sun by dirty, smoked felts, which we had found in the kala itself.

The night passed away unnoticed, in work. At four o'clock in the morning I was already seated on the wall that faced the mountains, and watching our division march out of the gardens. Everything that could possibly impede it was left behind in the kala, all the extra horses, carts, and wagons. In short, the detachment was so arranged that it could be turned in any desired direction at any instant.

The detachment was drawn up in a compact column, and quietly, noiselessly, it approached the mound situated three versts distant from us. A few score of Cossacks, with Nefes-Mergen² at their head, gallop on in front. I gaze through my field-glass and see that in the shadow, behind the mound, and quite out of sight from the detachment, a large party of Tekintzi have concealed themselves. I am afraid that they will suddenly spring out on our men and create a panic. My alarm is uncalled for; our Dzhigiti

¹ Gardemarine, the title held by the cadets of the eldest class in the naval school.

² Nefes-Mergen, a Turkoman, very dashing and brave. He afterwards accompanied Skobelev on his Turkestan campaigns.

are fine fellows. Like very blood-hounds, they have fallen upon the scent of the hidden foe, and have routed him out.

The Tekintzi dash out from the cover of the mound with extraordinary impetuosity. At them flies a small, black rocket shell, leaving behind it in the air a white, arching train, after it another shell, and then a third, and the enemy turn round and gallop back.

As soon as our division moves out of Yagin-Batyr-kala, a dull, reverberating cannon-shot rings out from the mound of Dengil-Tepe,¹ a white puff of smoke, like a cloud, rises from the mound. This shot was an alarm-gun; it served as a signal of warning, and all the inhabitants of Geok-Tepe were bound to hasten to meet the foe, and, in point of fact, not an hour had passed when the entire valley in front of me was covered with the horsemen, and what wonderful, handsome horsemen! I turn my attention from our detachment for a moment, and glance to the left, along the desert, and there are Tekintzi; I look to the left, towards the mountains, and there also are Tekintzi. I look for our detachment, and cannot descry it; it is lost, like a shallop amid the waves of the sea. Yo-on-der it is, — that must be it. And I see the fires of cannon flashing in all directions, and puffs of smoke rising from a dark spot, surrounded by scattered horsemen. I had a wonderfully good view of this spectacle from the heights. No battle during the Turkish campaign ever produced such an impression upon me.

The air is pure, clear, and so cool that a shiver runs over my frame. The golden sun, which has but just made its appearance above the tawny sands, sharply outlines before me, against the dark blue sky, the dentated peaks of the precipitous mountains. All is still about me. The garrison, assembled on the front wall, look on and listen with sinking hearts. A few versts in front of them the Tekintzi, the very same men who had lately cut down hundreds of our soldiers, are swooping about like madmen around the division, yelling and shouting, now collecting in groups, again dispersing. They seem to be assured in advance of an easy victory, and are, evidently, wild with joy; what a splendid prey is walking straight into their hands!

¹ The Tekintzi had one cannon in their fortress, which they had captured from the Persians, and which was placed in the centre of the fortress, on the mound. They fired stone cannon-balls from it.

I must add here that, up to that day, from all the tales that I had heard about the Tekke horsemen, of the marvellous lightness and endurance of their horses, I had formed an idea that they constituted a terrible, invincible force. The recent engagement of our troops before Geok-Tepe had powerfully excited the imagination of our detachment. It was plain that not only the soldiers, but some of the officers, were not in sympathy with this reconnoissance, and did not expect anything good from it.

But Skobelev had not served in Turkestan for nothing. He had studied the Asiatics thoroughly, and was convinced that a strong, compact detachment, even though small, but directed by an experienced leader, was not to be conquered by the Tekintzi. They were too light and fickle, did not act sufficiently in concert to be able, without regard to the volleys of musketry and the discharges of cannon, to hurl themselves in an attack on the infantry and hew their way through it. In addition to personal fear for themselves, the Tekintzi were very much afraid of losing their wonderful and precious horses.

Now, on the left flank of our detachment, a whole throng of Tekintzi have congregated, more, more, more still, and they are ready to hurl themselves on the division, ready to crush it utterly. My heart dies within me, my blood freezes in my veins! The division halts for an instant, the cannons wheel round abruptly, the horses step aside, flames flash forth, clouds of smoke arise, and through the clear, transparent morning air, which has not yet become heated, I distinctly see the explosion of the shrapnel.

But hardly has the flame flashed forth from the first cannon, hardly has the smoke made its appearance, and before the shrapnel has even thought of bursting, when the entire attacking force wheels round with a howl and dashes off. The shrapnel has exploded in the air in a white puff, and the smoke from the cannon has ceased to curl along the ground, and the artillerymen have already set the gun on the limbers once more, and still the Tekintzi continue to gallop madly on, glancing round in terror, and expecting the splinters of the shell to descend over their heads.

The artillerymen have no sooner succeeded in repulsing this horde than another, still more dark and threatening, assembles from the direction of the mountains. Their knives are in their teeth, their sabres bared and gleam-

ing in the sun. "Allah! Allah!" roar the Tekintzi, and are all ready to fall upon and annihilate the handful of heroes. But the flames again flash forth, and once more in the air over the heads of the Tekintzi appear pretty white puffs from the exploding shrapnel. Back fly the Tekke cavalry, as though caught by the breeze, with the same swiftness as before, but not with the same good-luck; several horses, who have lost their riders, fly in all directions, entangling themselves in their long bridles. After them rush isolated Tekintzi, who, being unable to catch them, brandish their arms and drive the horses away from our detachment.

I was so carried away with this spectacle that I quite forgot that I was not in the theatre, that I was not gazing at a panorama, but at an actual field of battle; and it was only the cry of Gardemarine Mayer, ringing out behind me, "Major, there seem to be Tekintzi in this direction also," that made me glance round. I descend from the scaffolding, run to the other side of the kala, where the mitrailleuse stood, and look through my field-glass. Even with the naked eye, it can be plainly seen that two huge parties of Tekintzi, at a considerable distance from each other, are making their way across the desert. Each of them occupies a space greater than that required for our entire detachment. I see plainly that these parties are proceeding with perfect regularity: in front ride the commanders, distinguishable from the other horsemen by their proud bearing, and at their sides ride scouting parties.

"What wonderful horses they have!" I exclaim. Each one is better than the other. Yonder is that gray one, and that bay; how their coats shine! And how light they are! They are just like English horses, handsome and thin. How can our Cossacks chase them? It is the same thing as trying to catch the wind in the plain. All these Tekintzi must have been on some expedition, and now, on being informed of the arrival of the Russians, they hasten to the succor of their countrymen. They ride now at a walk, now at a trot, then dash off in a gallop. The sun, rising in that direction, illuminates both parties brilliantly, like two huge black spots on the yellowish sands. Their shadows fall towards us, and prevent our distinguishing the separate horsemen. At first, the Tekintzi are far away

from us, but afterwards they approach so close that the color of their horses can be discerned.

"Shall we not make an effort to hit them, Major?" says Gardemarine Mayer to me, seizing the handle of the mitrailleuse, just as the Tekintzi, passing the kala, advance still closer to us.

"Try if you like," I answer, although I am convinced beforehand that the balls will fall short.

Mayer gives the handle a half-turn, and the quick, dry rattle resounds through the kala. The nearest horsemen halt, gaze with amazement in our direction, as though listening; then, becoming convinced that bullets are flying towards them, they dash off at a gallop without paying any further heed to us.

And thus we had no luck in that quarter either. I return to my former place, and busy myself with following the movements of the division. It has already almost reached that crest of hill behind which Geok-Tepe lies hidden. I can with difficulty distinguish it. Encompassed by the enemy, the division slowly makes its way towards the right side of the oasis, near the mountains; only the white puffs of smoke from the cannon show where our troops are. And now they advance a little, descend behind the hill, and are lost to sight. As long as I was watching the detachment I was perfectly calm, but as soon as it had disappeared a disagreeable feeling took possession of my heart; it was not grief, nor yet exactly anxiety that our men might not return safely. My principal fear was that they might kill Skobelev. "As long as he is alive," I say to myself, "the Tekintzi will not be able to do anything with the division, but if they kill him things will go badly." My whole garrison, as well as myself, continued to gaze intently at the spot where the detachment had disappeared, and to listen to discover whether cannon-shots were still resounding. As long as they were roaring, we might feel at our ease. At that moment vivacious shouts arise beside me:—

"Here, here, good heavens! here coming toward us! Look, look!"

All, even the weak and the sick, rush to the wall to see what has happened.

I look, and there, as though they had sprung out of the very earth, five Tekintzi are galloping towards us. I turn

and shout to my men, to remove their guns from the wall, so that the bayonets shall not gleam in the sun. "Perhaps," I say to myself, "the Tekintzi will approach so near that we shall be able to pick them off of their horses." All five of them are riding at a very quiet gallop, evidently not suspecting that they are on the point of coming in contact with us here. A hundred yards or more from the kala runs a brook. "The Tekintzi will certainly not pass it to water their horses," I say to myself. And I am not mistaken. They advance with the same tranquil gallop, the waving of their elbows becomes more and more plainly visible; some of their gowns are yellow, others light brown; their caps are white. The leader, on a tall, handsome, dappled gray horse, holds a small whip in his right hand, and swishes it through the air, as though in sport. He is the first to halt at the brook, leaps off, and begins to water his horse, holding the bridle, meanwhile, in his hand, and, kneeling down, he himself drinks. These Tekintzi have evidently been despatched by their comrades to discover whether the Russian detachment is followed by an army.

As the road ran past our very fortress, I order my people not to fire until the Tekintzi should ride by us. "Then," I said to myself, "we will shoot them all at one volley."

Having given this order in a whisper, I rush down for my repeating rifle. But while I am running I hear over my head the sound of a bullet; one of the soldiers has not been able to restrain his impatience, has fired, and has missed, of course. After him the others begin to fire, each one worse than the other. When I ran back to my place, the Tekintzi had already galloped off in various directions; the one on the gray horse dashed past the kala at full speed, crouching down over his saddle. I thrust myself over the wall, aim at his back and fire; the Tekinetz falls over a little on one side, but afterwards recovers his seat in the saddle to some extent, and, casting a terrified glance in our direction, continues to gallop on in the same fashion, until he disappears behind the trees of the garden. I can see the face of that Tekinetz now before me; bronze in hue, with a black beard and flashing eyes. I remember very well that, when I saw the approaching Tekintzi, and especially when they rode to the brook and began to water their horses, my heart leaped so violently, it beat so with

joy, that I involuntarily clutched at my side, fearing that it was about to leap out; but when they had galloped off from under our noses, I was seized with such distress and apathy that I went off to my hut, constructed under a baggage-wagon, lay down and fell asleep with grief.

I did not sleep long — an hour and a half. The heat began to overcome me. The water in the kettles had become heated and offensive, and I was afraid to send for fresh, lest the Tekintzi might fall upon us. At the same time, the firing of the cannon had ceased, and our troops must be far away. No Tekintzi were visible; all had disappeared.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, the roar of the cannon was heard once more; then from behind the hill appeared the detachment itself. Around it, with howls, swooped and galloped the wild Tekintzi, like infuriated dogs around an exhausted victim. The division marched in the same compact dense line, and, as before, firing in all directions. The enemy were not nearly as numerous as they had been in the morning. They no longer massed themselves in huge, dense throngs, but remained widely dispersed. The larger part of them had apparently preferred to return home to Geok-Tepe, having relinquished for this occasion their hope of conquering the steadfastness of the little Russian detachment.

The nearer the detachment came to the kala, the more did the enemy desert it. The sun was already low. Long dark shadows fell from the dentated crests of the mountains in our direction, when I rode out of the gardens of Yagin-Batyr-kala, to meet Skobeleff. The General, in a dusty and dirty linen coat, sunburnt and perspiring, was no longer mounted on his gray mare, on which he had ridden in the morning, — she had been wounded, — but on his white Sheinoff. The chief of staff, the escort, and the officers, all rode behind him, weary and dusty, but happy and content. The detachment had got safely back. Several hundred of the most persistent Tekintzi could still be seen afar off.

“Well, my dear fellow, how are things with you? — all right?” the General calls to me while still at a distance, in his lisping, pleasant voice. “I was anxious about you; I thought that they had fallen on you and cut all your throats.” I can tell by the tone of the General’s voice that he is pleased with the outcome of the reconnoissance.

“The enemy is dangerous, my dear fellow, dangerous; but they had not the courage to fling themselves upon us, sabre in hand, and carry the attack to a conclusion,” adds Skobelev; springing from his horse, and stretching all his joints, he goes off through the gardens to his own hut. Colonel Grodekoff makes haste to dismount, and follows the General, stumbling incessantly by the way, over the roots of trees and shrubs, and adjusting his spectacles.

I run after him and cry: “Welcome, Colonel!”

“Ah, how are you, Verestchagin! Do you know what the General said to me just now on the road?” cries Grodekoff, gayly, as he returns my greeting. — “‘Well, now, if Verestchagin has any killed or wounded, he must instantly be presented for the cross of the George.’” Imparting an inquiring look to his face, he smiles, and, stumbling once more over something, he disappears behind the trees.

When I heard that, I was still more vexed at those five Tekintzi, who had ridden away from under our very noses. “There,” I said to myself, “if they were lying now near our kala, there would be something to brag about.”

During the reconnoissance, two of our men had been killed and several wounded.

I must state that on the preceding evening, at the same time that he gave me my orders with regard to defending the kala, he had called up Captain Baranok, and had said to him:—

“You must sleep to-night on nothing (*i. e.*, not sleep at all). The Tekintzi will infallibly attack us. I intrust you with the night posts and the ambushes.” Then the General had gone the rounds of the gardens with Baranok, pointing out the places where the line of night sentinels must be posted, and where to station the reserves. And, as the gardens were too extensive, and we could not occupy them all, therefore, in order not to give the enemy a chance to creep upon us unawares, a part of the trees had to be cut down, thereby forming an open space at the rear, which saved us. Ushakoff, Kaufman, Captain Lange, and Erdeli were appointed to assist Baranok in visiting the sentinels. The first night, as the reader already knows, passed off uneventfully. The second came.

Captain Baranok went to set the night watch, and Ushakoff, Kaufman, Erdeli, and I lay down to rest on a little bare glade, a few yards from the General. The camp was silent.

Just at midnight, through my half-dreams, I hear distant shouts and yells, "E-e-e-i-i-i!" like shepherds driving their flocks.

I open my eyes and look. The moon is shining; that means that it is still night, and that I may sleep some more. And, in the full conviction that these are really shepherds driving their sheep, I do not know how long afterwards, I wake up again; the howls and shouts ring out more loudly, and the moon still shines on with its calm, silvery light. I cast a glance around me: Ushakoff is sitting beside me under the tree, wrapped in his felt cloak, and appears to be listening to something; beside him sits Kaufman, also with the same anxious countenance. At that moment, something whizzes by me to the ground.

"Why, that must be a bullet!" and instantly I am wide-awake. A minute later, another whizzes past.

"The Tekintzi are firing!" Ushakoff says to me, in a whisper, and without altering his position.

"Where is the General? He must be roused."

"Yes; I think that Baranok has already gone to him."

At that moment, across the open space, illuminated by the moon, leaps a figure on its heels, like a kangaroo, in an endeavor to reach the opposite wall.

"Who can that be?" I say to myself, and take a good look.

By his cap and garment I recognize the Armenian interpreter attached to the General's service. Pale, terrified, afraid to rise upright, he reaches the wall, and hides behind it. At the same time, the shouts and howls grow louder and more violent. They are already resolving themselves into voices.

"Here's driving cattle for you! It is simply those Tekintzi who have crawled up under cover of the darkness," I say to myself.

In the meantime, all is quiet in the camp. I go in search of Grodekoff. He is lying not far from the General's tent, and is not asleep, but merely listening:—

"What's this, what's this! Good Heavens!" he exclaims disjointedly, on learning from me what has happened. He jumps up and runs in search of the General.

But Skobelev has left his tent long ago. He and Baranok have already run along the line, encouraged the troops, and prepared everything for the reception of the enemy. Bullets begin to fly more frequently over our heads. Perfect silence is preserved on our part. Around the gardens ring horrible howls and calling back and forth of voices.

The moon disappears imperceptibly, and with her vanishes the audacity of the Tekintzi. On our left, the rolling sands begin to be covered with the golden rays of dawn. An hour more and the sun will make his appearance.

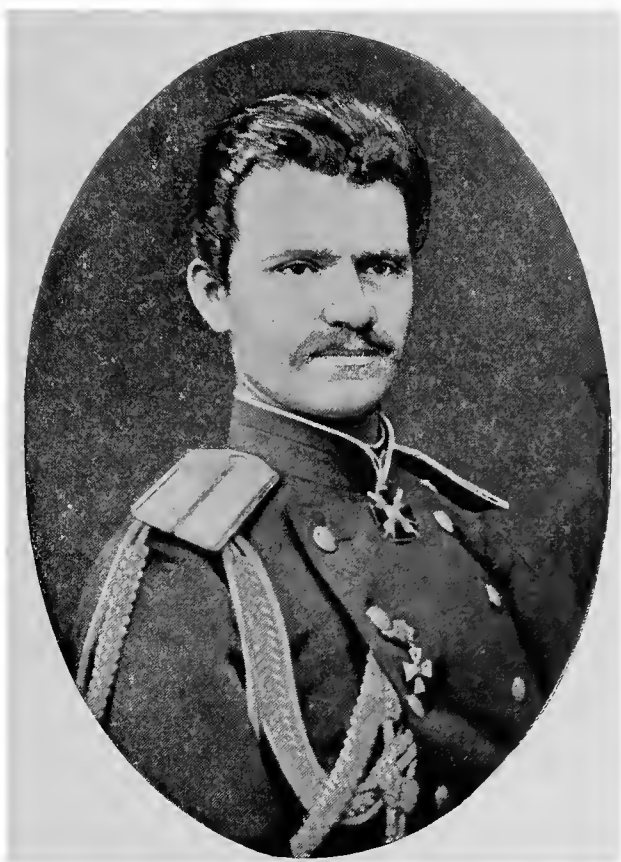
The Tekintzi, who had, it appears, collected about us in large masses and very close during the night, some being even on the place which Baranok had cleared of trees, could not make up their minds to dash across it. On being received here with volleys of musketry, they retreated. With the dawn the other throngs retired, and, drawing back a verst, they halted and stared at the camp. I force my way through the grape-vines, and branches of the trees, still abundantly covered with dew, and emerge on the clay wall, looking towards the desert. The company of soldiers, stationed in a line of sentinels, had laid their rifles on the wall and were firing volleys, now and then, at the word from the company commander, a tall, sunburned lieutenant, with a reddish, blotched, and sleepy face. The enemy had scattered so that, at the first glance, there seemed to be a great many of them — and it was impossible to fire at any one. The battle of the day before had, evidently, taught them how they must behave under fire. From the garden behind me rings out a cannon-shot. From the powerful roar I divine that the long-range gun has been discharged. I involuntarily rejoice on hearing how the shrapnel, buzzing slightly at first, and whistling through the air, suddenly seems to go into splinters over the heads of the enemy and shower them with lead.

Yonder, one Tekinetz, on a white horse, covered from neck to tail with a thin, white felt blanket, rides up nearer to us than the rest, dismounts, and, without letting go of the bridle, takes his gun with props from his back, squats down on his heels, and takes a long aim in our direction. At last his powder flashes; a small, white puff of smoke, curling up, veils him for a moment. The weak, dry sound of the discharge barely reaches my ear, but the Tekinetz still

squats on, and, as though astounded, gazes intently, to see whether his shot has told or not.

Look where you will, everywhere you perceive isolated horsemen. Some gallop about with shrill cries and shouts, brandishing their whips; others discharge their guns, squatting on their heels, beside their horses; others still place their dismounted comrades behind them on the haunches of their horses, and in this fashion dash off somewhere or other. It was a ridiculous sight when such a pair galloped past us: the Tekinetz in the rear, gripping his protector tightly, flourished his elbows to the time of the gallop in company with the former, and with the same gloomy countenance, so that you would think that they were toiling at Heaven knows what work.

As soon as the sun rises, our detachment sets out on the way back. The enemy perceive this, and their zeal is doubled. We direct our course, at first, not along the road, but directly across the oasis to the sands, in order the sooner to get free from the gardens, and not to afford the enemy an opportunity to fire on us from under cover. I keep a watchful eye on the fold where I had been sitting on the previous night. The Tekintzi could not, for a long time, make up their minds to take possession of it, fearing some ambush. But now two daring fellows approach cautiously, inspect it, ride up to it from one side, then from the other, — and in the meanwhile the rest keep a sharp eye on their movements. The dare-devils decide to venture inside the kala. The rest dash after them with a shout, and a minute has not elapsed when a thousand bullets rain down upon us from behind the wall. But the Tekintzi do not divert themselves very long. We soon get out of range of fire, and march quietly along the desert, on the old Bami road.



CAPTAIN BARANOK.

CHAPTER V.

BACK FROM GEOK-TEPE TO BAMI.

THE Tekintzi did not trouble us further, and only a small party followed us for about ten versts. We moved very slowly. By evening we had accomplished twenty versts at the most, and we halted for the night at the "Bitter Waters."

I remember that night had closed in, and I had lain down to sleep, when they bore past me for burial two soldiers who had been killed during the reconnoissance. The bodies, in default of anything else, were wrapped in grass and the branches of trees.

Regarding these two funerals, Baranok afterwards related to me the following: Skobelev and several officers were present at the ceremony, which took place with the greatest silence. They smoothed down the graves so that no traces might be visible, as Skobelev feared that the enemy, being in the vicinity, might pull out the bodies after our departure, and utter curses over them. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the priest, who had been greatly excited during the time of the reconnoissance, and who was now in a cheerful frame of mind after its happy ending, suddenly took it into his head to deliver a funeral oration. At the conclusion of his speech, pointing to the smooth, sand-covered grave, he exclaimed loudly and plaintively:—

"And the glory of man is as a smoke which vanisheth!"

"As we return from the burial," Baranok continued his story, "Skobelev rides beside me and says:—

"See here, Alexei Nikititch, that pope was tipsy, but he told the truth when he said: 'The glory of man is as a smoke that vanisheth.'"

Two years later, the General was dining in Duzzeau's hotel, at Moscow, and, turning to Baranok, he said:—

"Do you remember, Alexei Nikititch: 'And the glory of man is as a smoke that vanisheth'?" Four hours later, Skobelev was no longer among the living.

But I will return to my tale.

Having crossed the Durun once more, I for the first time behold a very tall pillar of dust and sand raised by the wind. The sand on a clayey strip close by me begins to whirl, at first almost imperceptibly, and in one and the same spot. The whirlwind is already developing in a small, slender, perfectly dark pillar. I cannot understand why this column should assume such a dark hue. Then the column grows taller and taller, the whirlwind whirls ever more and more violently, and is evidently desirous of resting against the sky. Ugh, ugh, how tall it has grown! I have already proceeded a considerable distance, but the pillar still stands on the same spot. From a distance it resembles a prop between heaven and earth. In addition to this pillar, several others are visible in other directions. Some of them, after attaining their greatest height, move quietly along, leaving behind them in the air streaks exactly like that from the funnel of a gigantic steamer. As it moves onward, the pillar grows gradually lower and lower, and finally disappears. But no sooner has one disappeared than, lo and behold, another rises near by.

On reaching Durun, on the following day, at ten o'clock in the morning, Skobelev entrusted the detachment to the senior officer and rode himself, accompanied by a company of Cossacks and several staff officers, in light order to Bami. We were very badly off, on account of lack of water, during these movements of ours. In one place, the General, with a view to shortening the journey, struck straight out without a road. The day turned out to be hotter than usual, as though expressly. No one had any water. Beurma, where the nearest streams were situated, was thirty versts away; the distance back was the same. The horses were exhausted and refused to proceed. On this march, I, for the first time, realized what it means to be without water in the burning steppes. The General sent all the Dzhigiti on in advance, to search for water. Grodekoff, Erdeli, I, Baranok, Kaufman, and Ushakoff, all rode after the General, completely exhausted. We have already ceased to converse, and each of us has but one thought in his head: shall we reach water soon? I confess that it seems as though, if two or three hours more are required, I shall not be in a condition to ride. But ten hours certainly elapsed. And now a Dzhigit makes his ap-

pearance in the distance. He gallops towards us. I gaze intently to see whether he holds a vessel of water in his hands. No, his hands are empty, but he beckons to us and shouts something. — “Su — Su — Su!” I hear; that is, “Water! water!” The General breaks into a gallop. My horse seems to comprehend the matter, and also starts up. I glance back; out of the whole company of Cossacks who set out with us in the morning, only twenty men in all now follow us, the rest have scattered along the road and are hardly visible.

Turning off a verst to the left, we catch sight of the water-courses. All spring from their horses and rush eagerly to drink, as though afraid that the rills will dry up. I remember well that we feasted on that water for a long time, and drank and drank, without end, and only reached Bami at sunset.

We lived quietly and peacefully in Bami. There was nothing to do. Although the heat was terrible by day, the nights were cool. At night we sometimes heard a shot, fired by a solitary Tekinetz, who had crawled to the camp in order to procure himself a gun from a slumbering sentinel.

Morning. I wake up; although it is still early, the sun's rays already begin to heat the tent.

“Pogoryeloff!” I shout to my Cossack.

The man makes his appearance in a light brown tunic, which I had given him.

“Throw a felt cloak on the tent, on this side, and raise it at the bottom so that the air may blow through!” A minute later, it grows darker in the tent, the sun does not make its way through the felt cloak, and a light breeze blows beneath the uplifted canvas.

I look out-of-doors: a brook flows purling past the very tent. On both of its banks stand the tents of staff officers. Alongside live the engineers, Colonel Rutkovsky, and Captain Yablotchkoff. It is very quiet in their quarters, they must be still asleep; but yonder, from the following tent, some one shouts piercingly: “Rasteryaeff! Rasteryaeff!” — This cry is repeated half a score of times; at length there appears from the tent the sunburned form of its

master, minus his linen coat, clad in his white shirt, and blue riding-trousers tucked into his campaign boots. His head is closely cropped.

"Where have you been? I've called you a hundred times," he shouts, hastily and angrily, to his orderly, who at that moment makes his appearance from behind the tent.

"Serve tea!" and, twisting his sleepy, unshaven face into a grimace, he strides off to one side.

A little farther on, still on this bank of the brook, a captain of my acquaintance makes his appearance, from another tent, clad only in his underlinen and slippers. He too, evidently, has but just waked up, and has come out for a breath of fresh air. Yawning sweetly with the whole of his large face, rimmed in grayish whiskers, and moustache, the captain squints his eyes to screen them from the dazzling sun, gazes first in the direction of the General's tent, then gradually sends his glance around the whole camp, taps his capacious belly in a contented way, meditates on something, and retires again to his quarters.

"Give me my washing utensils!" I shout to my servant, and step out. Everything is quiet round about. Here and there soldiers are seen in white shirts girt with straps, and black trousers. Several of them go off somewhere behind the camp, and disappear from view. Others spring up, as from the earth itself, to take their places, and advance to the camp. The General must also have waked up; behind his tent, under a thick and shady tree, red-headed Petroff, of the Guards, with freckles on his face, and dressed in a linen coat, is busying himself about a wash-basin and ewer. The lackey, Lei, who must be from the Baltic provinces, a light-haired fellow in a black frock-coat, is carrying in a glass of tea on a silver salver. Simultaneously with this, the hussar Brazhnikoff leads up to Skobelev's tent his stallion Sheinoff, already saddled and bridled. That signifies that the General is going for a ride. "I must have a ride too," I say to myself; "otherwise, he will notice it."

"Saddle quickly!" I shout to my Cossack. A quarter of an hour has not elapsed when the escort of Osetini and several officers ride up to Skobelev's tent. Skobelev comes out in a white linen coat, first cries to the Osetini, "Good-morning, my fine fellows!" to which they reply in their own fashion, "Bereket bersen," *i. e.*, "I thank you hum-

bly," then he shakes hands with each of the officers, mounts his horse, and rides off at a foot pace along the road to the village of Beurma.

At the end of July, the General went to the Gulf of Mikhailoff, to see how the railway was progressing there; and Colonel Grodekoff went to Tchikishlyar, to examine and inspect the bases of operation. I accompanied the latter on this trip.

Grodekoff was an indefatigable horseman. He had a capital horse, which he had purchased at Vladikavkaz from my comrade Shanaeff. Like mine, she was a very fast traveller, so that we made certainly eight versts an hour. Grodekoff would ride twenty or thirty versts, dismount, stretch himself, chase the perspiration from his bald spot with his finger, adjust his spectacles, mount again, and dash onward as though nothing had gone before.

If I were to reckon up how much country we covered that first day, in a heat of over fifty degrees, on the same horses, it would be difficult to believe the statement now. From Bami to Bendeseni sixteen versts, from Bendeseni to Khadzham-Kala thirty versts. From Khadzham-Kala to Tersakan forty-five versts, thence thirty to Duz-Olum, and it seems that between four o'clock in the morning and eleven o'clock at night we made one hundred and twenty-one versts. The riding was particularly hard between Khadzham-Kala and Tersakan. The road here runs between mountains, and makes a sort of red-hot basin. The summits of the bare, gray cliffs seem fairly to glow with heat. The sun had heated everything around to such a point, and poured down so hotly, that even breathing was difficult. The road was sandy and heavy, there was not a drop of water anywhere, and the place was certainly accursed. That was a hard ride.

When we rode out of Duz-Olum to Tchat, Grodekoff told me that he wanted to send some one to Russia, to purchase various instruments for the detachment—harmonicas, tambourines, and so forth, so that the men could make merry in their leisure moments, and he proposed to me that I should go. Of course, I consented, and rejoiced beforehand at arriving in Astrakhan, then voyaging to

Nizhni, having a look at the fair and buying everything that I was commissioned to, and returning. And so it was decided that I was to go to Russia.

We reach Tchat. The commandant meets us, and, having reported to the chief of staff the "satisfactory" condition of things, he begins to explain something to him in a low tone. We dismount; the chief of staff enters the commandant's barracks, and, half an hour later, brings out to me instructions to inspect and weigh the commissariat stores. The commandant had entered a complaint against the supervisor, alleging a deficiency in his stores, and various shortcomings. The inspection of stores is no easy matter. I was obliged to weigh over about twenty thousand poods of provisions. "Here," I say to myself, "is Russia and the Nizhni-Novgorod fair for you!" There was no help for it; I had to set to work.

An hour later, Grodekoff rode on his way, and I took a company of soldiers from the garrison, from the commandant, and set to measuring and weighing sacks and bags. Five days in succession did I toil over this business, in that violent heat, from early in the morning until late at night. There really proved to be some inaccuracies. I was preparing to return to Bami when, late one evening, Skobeleff arrived at Tchat, on his way back from the Mikhailoff Bay through Tchikishlyar. With him came Grodekoff and Ushakoff. After resting an hour, they seated themselves in a company wagon, harnessed to three horses, placed me beside them, and we galloped off.

We left Tchat late at night. We were escorted by a company of Cossacks. On arriving at the most dangerous place, Khorolum, where the Tekintzi made the most frequent attacks on our baggage-trains, our company should have been replaced by another, despatched from Duz-Olum. But, through some one's mistake, that company had not marched out. Luckily, we were here met by a company of soldiers. The General dismissed the Cossacks, placed two soldiers with their rifles in the wagon, and with this escort we proceeded.

The night was very dark. The soldiers, in their gray overcoats, sit at the sides, back to back, with their legs dangling outside, and rifles in hand, and with bayonets fixed. The rumble of the wheels resounds dully through the stillness of the night. The Khorolum pass draws

nearer and nearer. And now we enter it and it grows still darker. Ushakoff and I hold our peace; Grodekoff lies down on his side, and casts an occasional glance at us. The General has stretched himself out on the bottom of the wagon, thrust some hay under his head, covered himself with his great-coat, and seems to be asleep.

"Well," I say to myself, "if the Tekintzi fall upon us now, they will kill us all. And then the expedition is lost."

At that moment, I see the General rise a little, and, adjusting his crumpled cap on his head, he exclaims:—

"A-a-a, the moon! Did you observe, gentlemen, from what side it made its appearance?"

I glance round, and behind me, from behind the hill, the pale sickle of the new moon is making its appearance, and dimly illuminating the surrounding country.

"From the right, your Excellency," I answer him.

"From the right? well, that is a good thing," he roars, in a loud tone, and grows calm again.

I had never heard that such a token existed in connection with the moon, that if, during a journey, the moon makes her appearance on the right side, it is a good sign, but if on the left, a catastrophe is impending.

On the following day we arrived at Bami.

CHAPTER VI.

BENDESENI. — THE HUNTERS' CORPS.

WHEN the General took his departure for the Mikhailoff Bay, the camp at Bami remained under the charge of gray-headed Artillery Colonel Verzhbitzky. About that time, a hunters' corps was formed from different bodies of tooops, for the protection of the Bendeseni pass. Volunteers joined it, principally because they were not appointed to any labor, and they knew only their own business — to search out the traces of the Tekintzi, and to give warning of attacks by them. It would happen that they would climb the mountains for a day, two days or three days in succession, and then they would lounge in their earth huts for an equal space of time. All that they captured accrued to their own benefit, of course, except cattle; and for weapons they received a recompense in money.

On the 18th of August, I received instructions to go to Bendeseni, to the chief of the detachment. On the following morning I set out with a baggage-train that was going thither. The day, as usual, began with great heat. We entered the gorge, and had travelled four versts when, all of a sudden, a Cossack of the vanguard galloped up to us and reported to me, in a breathless voice, that a dead man lay ahead of us, and that he must be one of the hunters.

I and several officers who were with the train galloped ahead along the gorge, and beheld a naked corpse lying in the very road; by his face and his closely cropped head, we were able to identify him as one of our soldiers. His skin, which had turned yellow in the sun, was scored in many places with deep sabre-gashes; his head had been pierced with a bullet, and blood had flowed from the wound upon the ground. The blood had coagulated on the edges of the sabre-wounds, from which we might draw the conclusion

that the Tekintzi had tested the quality of their sabres on the soldier after his death.

While we were standing and gazing sorrowfully at the murdered man, shouts suddenly rang out in front, "And here lies another," and then we heard, "And yet a third!" A little apart from the road, I see two more bodies lying, both naked and slashed; the head of one of them hardly hung by the skin at the nape of the neck. At the sight of these corpses, we became uneasy. "Why should the Tekintzi not fall on us!" we said to ourselves. We bore the dead men to one side as hastily as possible, covered them with sand and stones, took note of the locality, in order to be able to send for the bodies from Bendeseni, and began to advance cautiously. The enemy did not make his appearance, and we reached our destination safely.

It appeared that on the previous evening sixteen company horses had been despatched from Bendeseni to Bami, in charge of four soldiers, and among the number the General's horse, Sheinoff, which had been at pasture there, had been sent with a Cossack. As soon as the soldiers had descended from the crest of the mountains, they had been showered with bullets from behind the hillocks on the right, and the leading soldier had been killed. The remaining three and the Cossack had galloped on ahead, but had beheld the throng of Tekintzi, who flung themselves upon them and seized the horses. The soldiers were killed, but the Cossack only saved himself by leaping from his horse, throwing him across the road, then, profiting by the confusion which arose among the enemy, slipped away into the mountains. I talked with this Cossack on several occasions afterward, and inquired all the details of this affair. He saw the Tekintzi fling themselves on Sheinoff in a pack, with shrill yells and howls; he saw one of them, a tall, broad-shouldered, gray-haired old man (it turned out afterwards that this was the chief of the Tekintzi, Tykhma-Sardar), boldly seize the horse by the bit. At this sight, the Cossack's heart died within him, and, hardly alive with grief and terror, he dragged himself to Bendeseni. But how many men there had been in the horde, for instance, what they had looked like, what they had shouted, and how he himself had contrived to spring from his horse and make his escape, the Cossack could never recall. After running

home, he lay for a whole day speechless, neither eating nor drinking.

As soon as I arrived at Bendeseni, I sent for the bodies of the slain. They were brought in on the following morning, and buried with honors beside the hillock where Dr. Studitzky was interred.

The fortress of Bendeseni is situated directly on the crest of that cliff, at the exit from the pass into the valley, where I had descried the robbers' nest or cavern, on the occasion of my first ride.

On the top of the mountain, the third and fourth companies of the Samursky regiment were stationed in felt tents, with two cannon; below, at the very foot of the mountain, was stationed the fourteenth company of the Apsheron regiment, a company of Cossacks of the Taman regiment, and the hunters' detachment, so that the entire Bendeseni garrison, which was under my command, amounted to five hundred men.

Bendeseni, as Skobelev expressed it, is situated in the very "throat" of the Tekintzi. This spot offered the very best base for their incursions. The water in the springs was very fine; the broad valley, stretching from north to south, was covered with juicy grass. Our soldiers made hay here, in consequence of which I had occasion to go into the valley several times. While they were preparing it, the sentinels, stationed on lofty, commanding eminences, kept a sharp watch, lest the enemy should appear, but, in spite of all their wariness, the Tekintzi once succeeded in creeping up and killing a sentinel.

It was already autumn; a gloomy day arrived, the encircling hills and valleys were covered with mist. Although the sentinel had sighted the enemy, and succeeded in firing one shot, it was too late. The Tekintzi flung themselves upon him and cut him down. But the shot had done its work; the rest of the soldiers succeeded in collecting together in a cluster around their carts. I was then in the camp, at the foot of the mountain, with the commander of the Apsheron regiment, Lieutenant Tchikareff, when, all at once, I heard the drummer beating the alarm. "Tr-r-r," rolls out the call. What does this mean? I look, and a mounted sentinel is galloping from the mountain into the valley, shouting: —

"Alarm! alarm! They have attacked our men! They have killed a sentinel!"

A hubbub ensues.

"Company, fall in!" shouts the acting company commander, rushes out of his felt tent, and hastily buckles on his sword and revolver.

A moment later the company draws up in line. I run to it, say in what direction it must go, and the soldiers set out through the valley for the mountains at a brisk pace, some of them even with little leaps, and half a hundred of Cossacks are already so far ahead as to be nearly out of sight, with their commander, who, on learning the state of the case, has flung himself upon the enemy. The weather adds to the effect of this agitated scene. The sky, generally of a light blue, is overcast with thick, gray clouds. The sun has disappeared. It has grown dark. The mountains, also, are covered with mist almost to their bases. The entire detachment was on sentinel duty. The soldiers who had been making hay soon returned with the wagons, and announced that the Tekintzi had not ventured to attack them. Only one sentinel had been killed. Towards evening, the company and the Cossacks returned; they had not even had a sight of the enemy.

The hunting corps lived below in earthen barracks. Their commander, Cornet Usatcheff, still quite a youth of twenty, dark of complexion, with a small black moustache, and rather plump, established himself beneath the projection of the cliff, in a hut. However, there was but little occasion for the hunters living in camp. All day long, they were galloping about the mountains, like wild beasts. I must confess that their boldness amazed me.

If they had gone about in large parties, of twenty or thirty men, it would have been nothing, but just look at what they did: a couple of soldiers would creep out from under the mountain, with their great-coats put on with the sleeves so that their white shirts might not be visible, and their kapis without any havelocks, and with stout canvas pouches slung across their shoulders.

"What are you going for?" I ask them.

"For grain, your Honor."

"And your comrades, — where are they?"

"The commander and the corps have gone yonder, to

Nukhur,¹ and six of us have been left on the crest of the mountain.”

On some other occasion, you will be riding through the pass with your Cossacks, and you will espy, somewhere on the crest of the hills, one of our soldiers standing quite alone, and gazing about him. But the Tekintzi were not to be trifled with! Once, a party of ten men seated themselves on the summit itself to rest. Having stacked their guns, they went off to drink at the spring, situated a few yards away. All at once, the Tekintzi fell upon them. Five soldiers were killed, and the rest ran away.

Out of all the hunting detachment, the Sergeant-major pleased me the most. Unfortunately, I have forgotten his name. He was a fine young fellow, and desperately brave. He was of medium stature, thin and swarthy, with lively black eyes.

I remember once waking up very early, stepping out of my felt tent, and looking towards the valley. The sun had but just made its appearance in the direction of Bami, from behind the precipitous mountains.

I see the Sergeant-major of the hunters' command and two hunters coming from the pass at a rapid pace. Their coats were worn with the sleeves on, their rifles were over their shoulders, — which signified that they had been to some place in the mountains. I call to the Sergeant-major, and question him.

“Where have you been so early?”

“Why, the boys ran in and reported that the Tekintzi had shown themselves. I took all the men who were at home and rushed off. There, yo-o-onder!” he says, and points to the road on the summit, “and on the left of the road we caught sight of three Tekintzi running along a path. We dashed after them; I was in front, and did not notice that the rest had dropped behind. I look, and behold! they are firing at me, at quite short range, so that the bullets fall about my legs. And, as soon as I took aim at one of them, they didn't feel like remaining, and they were utterly exhausted, so that I overtook them and shot them.”

At these words, the Sergeant-major smiles in a very satisfied way, thrusts his hand into the right pocket of his great-coat, and draws out the severed ear of a Tekinetz. It

¹ The settlement of Nukhur, in the mountains, thirty versts from Bendeseni. Its inhabitants acknowledged our authority.

was still quite soft, but already pallid and cold. I had never expected such a visible proof; I took the ear in my hand, examined it, gave it back, praised the sergeant, and promised to speak to the General about him on the occasion of our first meeting. The sergeant, highly delighted, returned to his earth hut.

A few days later I ride to Bami and, among other things, I seek out a friend of mine, the captain-commander of the heliographers,¹ regarding the hunters' command and the ears of the Tekintzi.

"That's all nonsense," said he. "This is what I saw a few days ago: on the 4th of September, I think it was, there arrived here in Bami a certain commander of a Cossack company, a tall, healthy, light-haired man — you know him! However, that is not the point. Behind him rode several Cossacks. I see sacks hanging to their saddles, with something round in them. I approach nearer, and the Cossacks dismount, and shake out of their sacks the severed heads of Tekintzi. They had come into collision with the Tekintzi somewhere or other, had conquered them, cut off their heads, and brought them to the staff as proofs of their victory. And later on they were allowed to cut off the ears only, as being easier to carry."

"But — pray, tell me — what do they want with these ears and heads?" I inquire.

"What? Why, the staff pays money for them! — don't you know that? I can't say exactly how much; three rubles, I imagine. And then, not long ago," the Captain continued his tale, "I saw several volunteers arrive from Bendeseni. While I was looking at them, one dived into the leg of his boot, pulled forth an ear wrapped in paper, and set off for the staff quarters to get the money for it."

On hearing this, I comprehended why the Sergeant-major of the hunters had chased the Tekintzi so perseveringly, and, disregarding the bullets that had whizzed around his legs and head, had overtaken his man, shot him, and cut off his ears.

¹ The heliograph is an optical instrument by the aid of which, by means of slight inclinations of a mirror on a horizontal axis, flashes are produced in accordance with a preconcerted system, by which signs and the letters of the alphabet are represented. The average distance of our heliographing, with our apparatus, is twenty-five versts.

A camel hospital was soon set up in Bendeseni; that is to say, all the sick camels who arrived in Bami were sent there for pasture, and a special veterinary surgeon was detailed. But the pasturage there, though very good for horses, proved utterly unfit for camels, and they began to die by scores every day. A foul odor began to spread through the camp. The garrison were utterly exhausted with the labor of interring the dead animals. Hundreds of jackals made their appearance in the night, and devoured the bodies. And, while so doing, the jackals raised such a howling and fighting that I left my tent more than once to see where they were yelping so near at hand. Some of the officers asked leave of me to go out by night and waylay the jackals; but they sat out a whole night in vain, beside a dead camel, and returned with empty hands: the jackals did not make their appearance. And the desperate way in which they howled every night, it is impossible to describe in words. Their howls lasted a quarter of an hour or more, and then died away.

During my stay in Bendeseni, I was called upon to carry the telegraph to Bami and Khadzham-Kala. Wood was cut in the mountains, and brought down on the sick camels. Although it was a pitiful sight to see the weak, wretched animals dragging green poles behind them at the end of long ropes, there was nothing else to be done; my orders were to build the telegraph at any cost, so I had to build it! There proved to be very little wood that was fit for poles, and it was difficult to get it out of the gorge.

Once, having despatched an officer and a detail of camels for telegraph-poles, I rode out with them. We directed our course along the valley towards the south. I had never penetrated so far into the mountains as on this occasion. The valley, which was wide in the vicinity of Bendeseni, grew narrower and narrower, and then branched off, among the mountains and hills, into a multitude of small valleys, covered with magnificent, thick grass. It was probable, in consequence of the fact that there was very little green all through the Akhal-Tekke oasis, that these places pleased me particularly, especially when compared with Bendeseni, tainted with dead camels. The air was so pure, the herbage so fresh, that I should have liked to remain here.

At the end of a short valley, beneath the shade of a tall and well grown grove of trees, resembling our silver

poplars, we found the grave of some Tekke saint, covered with a large stone. We were greatly delighted with this grove, as it furnished us at once with about twenty fine telegraph-poles. I admit that I was sorry to cut down this place which was sacred to the Tekintzi; but how was it possible to act otherwise, and leave them standing, when every tree was incalculably precious to us, and when the soldiers were forced to climb Heaven knows what mountains in search of them? There was nothing to be done, so we hewed away, and tree after tree began to bow its thick and leafy crest, and then to fall to the earth with a crash. Soon not a trace was left of the refreshing shade around the holy man's grave, and only fresh stumps gleamed white and bore witness to our hard-heartedness.

A little later on, General Skobelev forbade his soldiers to make hay, as, in spite of the fact that the men earned money in this manner, it resulted in their beginning to consider that they ought to receive stipulated payment for other work also: as, for instance, for burying the camels, cutting telegraph-poles, and so on. For this reason, a Persian contractor was hired.

At the end of October, the summits of the mountains around Bendeseni were covered with snow. The road to Khadzham-Kala grew muddy. The stream overflowed its banks, and flooded the valley. In short, the winter of that region set in. Baggage-train after baggage-train passed me, escorted by troops newly arrived from the Caucasus. Many cannons and caissons were moved, and all these were massed at Bami, in order that they might all march thence together on Geok-Tepe.

One evening there arrived at Bendeseni a very large train with stores; with it came troops of nearly every description, cannons and infantry and artillery and Cosacks. The train established itself for the night at the base of the mountain, at the entrance to the pass. Some of the officers, among them my company commander, went up the hill to drink tea with a comrade. His tent stood a few paces from mine. After tea, they had a second entertainment, consisting of cognac and various wines; it began with wishing Skobelev long life. The company commander summoned the singers. Instead of the silence which usually reigned after tattoo, the camp rang with songs and the roar of drums.

I despatch my orderly with a request that the officers cease their songs. The man returns and announces that the officers urgently desire permission to continue the singing. What is to be done? If I go there myself, it may result in unpleasantness. I step out of my tent, and see that the night is perfectly dark. The sentinel posted beside the cannons near by is hardly visible. All about is quiet, and only from the tent where the company is assembled ring out merry voices and songs. "It's a bad business," I say to myself. "I have not set about it cleverly! I ought to have suggested to them earlier that they should disperse; but now, when will this disorder come to an end? But the principal thing is that if the enemy should attack us now, what am I to do?" As I am meditating thus, the subaltern on duty comes up and says to me, in a whisper:—

"Your Honor, let one of the sentinels fire — taf-taf!"

"What do you mean?" I ask, not understanding what he wishes to convey.

"I mean, fire along the line, as though at the Tekintzi," he explains, with a smile.

I guessed what the matter was, and was highly delighted at the idea. In fact, only an alarm could sober the carousing officers.

"See to it," I say to the subaltern. "Be prudent; don't babble."

I go to my tent and lie down on my bed, that I may not seem to be expecting anything. Five minutes later, from some place far away in the line of sentinels, rings out a dull discharge. It is echoed by another near by, followed by a third and a fourth. Shouts are heard, "Ala-a-arm!" The drummer springs out of the neighboring tent, and beats the alarm.

The songs cease in an instant. Cries and exclamations ring out, "Where's my cap? . . . Good Heavens! where's my sword? . . . There it is, yonder! give it here! . . . We must run down as quickly as possible."

The shots become more frequent. The drummer continues to beat with increasing vigor. The garrison rush from their tents, and take up their places along the earthwork. . . . Soon everything quiets down. I make the rounds of the fortifications. The officers are at their posts.

I inquire what is the matter. They say that horsemen

have ridden up at the base of the hill, and then disappeared. One soldier declares that he saw the white caps on the Tekintzi. For a quarter of an hour we stood in expectation of an attack, then I dismissed the company to their places, and the camp returned to silence. Only one commander of a company suffered; in his haste, instead of descending by the path, he rolled down the slope, and it was lucky for him that he tumbled into a trench full of water, for otherwise he might have injured himself, although, as it was, he complained of his shoulder for two days. However, it was not likely that anything would have happened to him. He was an infant not over three arshins in height. His fat, round face was encircled with a broad, red beard. Such a superb-looking hero I have rarely met with.

CHAPTER VII.

YAGIN-BATYR-KALA. — THE FORTRESS OF SAMURSKOE.

By the end of November a sufficient amount of troops and stores had been collected at Bami. Skobelev decided to advance on Geok-Tepe.

On the night of the 29th to the 30th of December, our vanguard assembled at the village of Kelet, thirty-five versts from Geok-Tepe. From that point, the General intended to occupy Yagin-Batyr-kala, or, as it was afterwards called, the fortress of Samurskoe, in honor of the first battalion of the Samursky regiment, which was always in the vanguard.

The troops were divided into four columns. During the course of this expedition, I was in the cavalry column with Skobelev.

I remember that, at the time when the Cossacks were forming in line, and all was still, with the sound of trampling of thousands of hoofs the only sound heard, how, all of a sudden, there rang out the command of the Major, Count Orloff-Denisoff, at the full strength of his lungs:—

“Regiment! re-e-egi-ment, form in line!” . . . Skobelev gallops up to him angrily, and says:—

“Why are you issuing orders exactly as though you were on parade? Don’t you see that this is a night advance? Silence must be preserved!”

The column stretched out like a long, black, gigantic serpent, and marched over the sands in the direction of Geok-Tepe. It was obliged to make a *détour* of twenty versts. The horses trod noiselessly on the shifting sands. In spite of the fact that there were nearly a thousand horsemen in the column, our movement was almost noiseless; no one smoked or talked; each one understood, without explanation, that this was no time to occupy himself in that way. We have already been marching for the space of two hours. Somewhere, far in front, a small light flashes up. The Dzhigiti explain that it comes from shep-

herds, who are guarding their flocks in the vicinity of Geok-Tepe. For a long time, we ride in the direction of this flame, and still it seems as distant as ever. The weather is cold. There is no moon; the darkness is complete; one can hardly discern the horseman next to him.

“Come, Nefes-Mergen, ride ahead! what are you and your Dzhigiti loitering along here for?” shouts Skobelev, in a half-angry tone, to his friend, the Turkoman, who is riding in silence beside the “sardar,” as he called the General. Nefes-Mergen rides swiftly ahead, says something in Turkoman to his Dzhigiti, and disappears with them into the darkness.

“If the enemy attack, cut them all down!” shouts the General after him.

To our left, the dawn is breaking, and the waste around us gradually grows lighter. At that moment, several Dzhigiti gallop up to the General and say something to him. Skobelev spurs into a trot, and after him the whole column proceeds more and more rapidly. We gallop from the sands upon a hillock, and discern in the darkling bottom-lands of the oasis the naked trees and gardens of Yagin-Batyr-kala. Nefes-Mergen and his Dzhigiti were already roaming about there. The fortress appeared to be deserted. Grodekoff, several officers, and I gallop thither. But the column marches with Skobelev across the desert to the mountains, and, uniting with the column of Captain Baranok, seizes a vast flock of sheep.

Our appearance was so utterly unexpected by the enemy that they had not even succeeded in driving off their flocks.

The Tekintzi soon galloped out of Geok-Tepe and came to a halt at a respectful distance. For a long time that day did they stare at us; they attempted to fire a few balls in our direction, but in the evening they retired again to their fortress. On this occasion, no attack was to be feared on the part of the Tekintzi. We had now assembled two thousand men and twenty cannons.

Immediately on our arrival in Samurskoe, we began to fortify it. On the side towards the hills we constructed redoubts, united the clay walls in one line, and, at the corners, built barbets for the guns, so that it was now possible to determine where the bounds of the camp lay. This was of especial importance at night, when the sentinels

were posted. In the kala a depot was arranged for the artillery stores, and behind the kala the provision depot was organized. The General pitched his felt tent on almost the very spot where it had stood on the 6th of July, in the same garden, although the garden was no longer green. The staff tents were placed near the General's, in two rows.

In spite of the fact that a far larger number of troops was now assembled in Samurskoe than at the time of the reconnoissance of the 6th of July, I cannot say that I slept very quietly during the first night. "The enemy may creep up, all the same," I say to myself, "and attack us with their entire force. Suppose there are outposts, — are they stationed far from the outskirts of the camp? At the most, one hundred yards, and the camp will not be able to get under arms while the Tekintzi traverse that distance."

On the following day after the occupation of Samurskoe I woke very early. Through the open door of my tent the valley of Geok-Tepe was visible. It was veiled in a light morning mist, so that neither the mound in Geok-Tepe nor the peaks behind which the fortress was concealed were visible. The sun is still low, its rays pierce the damp air feebly. I stretch myself with pleasure, and am gazing on this picture, when, all of a sudden, the dull sounds of musketry ring out in the distance, and begin to reverberate with ever increasing frequency. I look more attentively, — a verst distance from the camp, I behold dark figures of isolated Tekke horsemen darting through the mist. One of them halts, dismounts, and fires. The puff of blue smoke quickly mingles with the mist, and momentarily veils both him and his horse. The Tekinetz springs into his saddle, and disappears.

Yonder, still closer, a compact line of horsemen have made their appearance, — they are the Cossacks. While I gaze, the trampling of several horses resounds from behind my tent, and the voice of Skobelev is heard: —

"Order the cannon to go forward at once!"

"Yes, sir!" shouts some one in reply.

"Well, he must want badly to chase after every horde of Tekintzi," I say to myself, and jump angrily from my bed. "If a party shows itself, let him despatch to meet it a company of infantry, and a couple of hundreds of Cossacks, and make an end of it. But he always wants to see for

himself, and to go everywhere himself. Now there is a mist, and danger lurks near by, he may fall in with the enemy close at hand; they will shoot him or cut his throat, and that's the end of our campaign."

Five minutes later I am galloping after Skobelev. The General is almost out of sight. He is surrounded by an escort of Osetini, with the division standard in their midst. This standard was not the same which he had used in Turkey; the General had given that one to my brother Vasily. In exchange for the old one, which was riddled with shot, and which had already been in Turkestan in seventy-six battles, my brother had sent Skobelev a new standard from Paris, made from a magnificent Indian material, red and blue in color.

The mist dispersed. I overtook the General by the mound. Mounted on his gray mare (she had long ago recovered from her wounds of the 6th of July), Skobelev was laughing heartily at the spectacle of Nefes-Mergen and his Dzhigiti exchanging shots with the Tekintzi. The Tekintzi were a verst distant from us. Nefes-Mergen had a worthless old gun, and, therefore, it was clearly to be seen that his bullets fell to the ground at some distance, without having reached the enemy, raising small clouds of dust. "Ha-ha-ha! . . . Nefes-Mergen is a gallant fellow," laughs Skobelev, throwing back his head.

The officers and the escort stand a little in the rear of their commander, admiring also, and whisper remarks to each other concerning the enemy, who are collecting in various quarters, in ever increasing parties.

The bullets begin to whistle over our heads. Nefes-Mergen continues to fire from his position. He glances round towards his Sardar from time to time with a satisfied look, being quite convinced, evidently, that he, Nefes-Mergen, is preventing the enemy from attacking us, although he sees very well that on his right, and two hundred yards in front, stands a company of infantry delivering volleys at the Tekintzi.

"Here, here, straight to the mound! Now, can you hit them with shrapnel?" shouts Skobelev to a young artillery officer in spectacles, with thick lips, who has arrived on the mound, with his gun, at a gallop.

"Immediately, your Excellency," replies the officer, leaps from his horse, and hurries the artillerymen off from their horses.

They step aside, turn the cannon round, and a moment later the command rings out, "Fire!"—and the familiar roar reverberates afar through the valley and among the hills.

Nearly five months have passed since the reconnoissance on the 6th of July. The Tekintzi have already had time to forget the roar which is so terrifying to them, and now, all of a sudden, it rings out again, beneath the walls of their national fortress, and close to their wives and children!

The enemy began to retreat with the very first discharge, and we returned to Samurskoe.

Colonel Gaïdaroff was appointed commandant of the Samurskoe fortress,—an old man, of short stature, broad-shouldered, lively, indefatigable. I never caught Gaïdaroff asleep. After our arrival at Samurskoe, transport trains and troops marched in almost every day. I was amazed at Gaïdaroff's patience and coolness. He was up to his throat in business. He was besieged night and day with questions: now as to where stores were to be placed, then to assign a place for such and such a division, then to establish the kitchens, then to give orders to deliver stores, then to serve out tents. And all these things must be done at once, handed out on the instant; there must be no delay.

Our camp was constantly increasing in size. In the course of a few days it had extended further than the outposts. The outermost kala, which stretched more than two hundred yards beyond the camp, was occupied by the hunters. For that reason it afterwards received the designation of "the hunters' kala." On the left of the General's tent were stationed the Shirvan men; on the right, those of Samurskoe; still further on the right, last of all, the Stavropol troops and the Turkestan division. In the first line, facing Geok-Tepe, was stationed the fourth long-range battery of Captain Polkovnikoff. The other detachments were encamped in the vicinity.

All day long there was a great deal of work for the troops. Now it was reloading stores, again it was digging fortifications, again it was standing on guard or burying camels, which, with the arrival of the baggage-trains, began to die in multitudes round about. Several companies went

out to work every day, and toiled from morning until evening. It often happened that the same men who had worked the whole day had to stand guard at night.

“Do you order the sentinels to be posted, Major?” inquires an officer of me in the evening, thrusting his head into my tent. (Skobelev had entrusted me with placing all night posts and sentinels.)

“Has retreat sounded?” I ask him.

“No, sir, but it will sound directly.”

I buckle on my sabre, and follow the officer. The sun has already set. The crash of the drums is already beginning to deafen the camp. It is growing cool. The short fur coat, which I recently purchased from Grodekoff, I now find particularly seasonable. Round about flash campfires, from which sparks rise on high towards the darkening heavens. In another half-hour it will be completely dark, and I must make haste.

“From what detachment are the sentinels to be taken?” I ask the officer as we direct our steps toward the outposts of the camp.

“From the first Shirvan company and the second Taman Cossack troop.” (The cavalry held the posts at night, on foot.)

Three hundred and fifty feet from the camp stands a group of soldiers in great-coats, worn with the sleeves, and Cossacks in felt cloaks, with their guns on their shoulders. I lead them quietly. The posting of the sentinels begins. Through the profound silence, only the half-whisper of the subaltern orderly officer is audible. “Three of you here; Nekhfedoff, you are to be the leader.” Then we proceed on—again the same voice is heard: “Three of you here; Ivanoff, you are the head.” “Yes, sir,” answers the latter. While we are setting the posts, it has become perfectly dark. Ten Cossacks are still left on the sergeant’s hands; I lead them two hundred yards in advance, and station them in a small narrow valley, in ambush. The principal point in ambushes is that the enemy shall not see them, while the sentinel on his post is wholly visible, and the enemy might very easily crawl up to him, unperceived, among the bushes or along a ditch. Besides this, the con-

cealed sentinel, on catching sight of the enemy, can very comfortably allow him to approach close, and then greet him with a volley. The disadvantage of the ambush, on the other hand, is that the men, having lain down in a ditch or in the thick grass, are sometimes inclined to fall asleep easily, especially if they have been at work during the daytime, and are fatigued. Then the enemy, when he happens upon such an ambush, can easily cut the throats of all.

But, dangerous as it was to set an ambush, I nevertheless placed my greatest reliance on them, since the sentry on post rarely succeeded in shooting any one. And how my heart rejoiced when, as I was passing through the camp during the night, a volley rang out. From this one knew at once that they had been catching it from our ambush! And one runs thither instantly to inquire what sort of game has fallen into the trap? If at such moments I happened to be in the vicinity of the General's tent, I heard his voice: —

“Who's there? Orderly officer! Find out where that firing is!”

CHAPTER VIII.

GEOK-TEPE. — THE FOURTH OF DECEMBER.

THE sun had barely shown itself above the sands, on the 4th of December, when a detachment consisting of nine companies of infantry, three companies of Cossacks, and sixteen cannon drew up beside the hunters' kala. Skobeleff is to make a reconnoissance to-day on Geok-Tepe. The division moves in the same direction as on the 6th of July, *i. e.*, through the right side of the valley, along the mountains, to the village of Yangi-kala.

It is a splendid morning. The mountains are covered with snow in places. The air is perfectly pure and fresh. I glance back and see in Samurskoe the empty tents and felt huts gleaming white. The soldiers who have been left behind are creeping along the clay walls in their short yellow coats, and watching us march away. The detachment marches in an open column, at a quick pace. On the left flank is the fourth battalion of the Apsheron regiment. There I behold the fourth company, with which I was familiar in Bendeseni. That was a splendid company! And what a serjeant-major it had — a tall, stout man, with thick, light whiskers. And it was impossible for this regiment to be negligent. Its commander, Lieutenant Tchikareff, was always at work. Go to him when you would, he was always with his company, always looking after the welfare of his soldiers. But, strange to say, every time that I talked to him, he expressed his sad foreboding that he should never return home.

"They will kill me, Major, they will kill me! you will see, remember what I say!" he said, with a smile, half closing his narrow eyes.

Tchikareff was still a young man, lively, brave, of a reddish complexion, without a beard, and all covered with freckles.

The detachment continues its march with the same quick

step, in a broadly deployed front. The General, having ridden on a little in advance with his escort, perceives that he has outstripped the troops, reins in his gray horse, and waits. At first resounds the rumble of wheels, of the caissons, and the clang of the cannon; then, by listening, it is possible to distinguish the measured tread of the foot-soldiers. In the middle of the front, on the left, shine the red cap-bands of the Apsheron men in a long, narrow streak; from the centre on the right, the Shirvan men present a black line.

We marched so fast that it was only when we approached the crest of the hill behind which Geok-Tepe was hidden that the Tekintzi caught sight of us. From the fortress mound a cannon shot rang out, announcing our appearance. For the first time I beheld Geok-Tepe so close at hand. The fortress lay about four versts from us, to the south-east. But directly in front of us, two versts away, stretched the gardens of the settlement of Yangi-kala, stripped of their leaves. They ran from the fortress straight across the oasis to the hills, but stopped short a verst distant from them.

We descend the hill, approach the stream, which flows from the mountains into Yangi-kala, and halt. Skobelev and all the officers gaze at the gardens towards which the foe is hastening from Geok-Tepe in dense masses, especially foot-soldiers. The mounted Tekintzi gallop up to our left flank from the rear, as though in an endeavor to cut off our retreat to Samurskoe. From every hut, from every wall spring up hundreds of hostile heads, in shaggy black caps. The bullets begin to fly among us like bees. Some one in the reserve cries out: "A-ai, a-ai!" The General stands on a low elevation, and continues to gaze through his field-glass. Groups of soldiers detach themselves from the infantry, and, having run two or three hundred yards, they throw themselves on the ground as a covering squad. The cannons mount the hillock and begin to fire on the gardens. The Tekintzi espy the group of officers in which Skobelev is standing, and the bullets begin to whistle thicker and thicker. The General suddenly turns to us and cries:—"Please to separate, gentlemen!"

I ride to one side. Samurskoe lies behind the hill and is not visible from here. The mounted Tekintzi stand at our rear, in a huge regiment, of one file. On looking about,

I behold, not very far in front of me, a small hillock, behind which our sharp-shooters have lain down.

"I'll join them and have a shot," I say to myself; "it's better than standing here and serving as a target. The General will probably not ask for me."

I go to the soldiers, lie down among them, take a Berdan rifle from one of them, and begin to take aim at the enemy. The gardens are intersected in all directions by thousands of clay walls. A multitude of varied towers and little houses are visible behind these walls. Over them rise the shaggy caps of the Tekintzi.

In those places where our shells fall more rarely, and where the line of sharp-shooters acts with less efficiency, the Tekintzi take courage, become bolder, and, one after the other, double themselves up, and, hugging the walls closely, run up closer to us. And, on the other hand, where the shrapnel explodes most frequently, there the enemy grow timid and abandon their retreat.

After a while, both our troops and the enemy became invisible. Both parties have become more wary. Only the artillery, enveloped in clouds of blue and white smoke, continues to send the enemy its iron missiles, accurately, without haste, one by one. And now one shell must have fallen with particular effect. From behind a little tower, a thick, black pillar of sand and smoke arises, and following it—a mass of Tekintzi rush backward with shouts and yells! Their motley gowns flit among the bare trees and bushes. I continue to lie and look on. Yo-onder, six or eight hundred yards in front of me, the figure of a Tekinetz, in a shaggy black cap and a black beard to match, cautiously makes its appearance from behind the fragment of wall. Kneeling and resting his left hand on the ground, he gazes intently at me, apparently, although I am lying in such a position that it is not probable that he can see me. I place the gun carefully to my shoulder, set the sight at twelve hundred paces, and take aim. It is very convenient for me to shoot in a reclining posture, and I do not hasten. The soldier from whom I have taken the gun, whispers in my ear:—

"Aim at his belt your Honor; otherwise, it will not settle him."

I press the trigger. The shot rings out, the Tekinetz quickly disappears behind the wall.

"It seems that you didn't hit him," the soldier says to me, with a smile.

Somewhat abashed, I open the chamber, whereupon the empty case flies over my head, and put in a fresh cartridge. At that moment I look up and behold my Tekinetz thrusting himself above the wall again, with still greater caution, and taking aim with his gun. I instantly shorten the sight to one hundred paces, again shoulder the gun, in the most convenient manner, and fire. The Tekinetz immediately disappeared and did not show himself at that spot again.

While the artillery and infantry were firing, the topographers attached to the detachment were taking a sketch of the locality of Yangi-kala and its vicinity; this constituted the principal aim of the reconnoissance.

At about mid-day we remove from our position, first, a little to the left, towards Samurskoe, after which we march directly across the oasis, parallel with the gardens of Yangi-kala, to Geok-Tepe. The Tekintzi, on perceiving our movement, hasten back to their fortress in dense throngs. Two versts distant from Geok-Tepe stands a kala, which is called Opornaya. After marching a little way past it, the detachment halts. Here is repeated the same thing which happened before Yangi-kala: the artillery opens fire on the fortress, the infantry sends out lines of sharpshooters, the topographers take their plans, and the Tekke cannon now begins to fire on us. I remember standing beside Topographer Safanoff, and watching him work. All at once, something crashes into the sand behind us; I glance round—it is a quantity of stone shot, the size of oranges. Of course, there was no great probability that such missiles would reach their mark; nevertheless, the discharges of the Tekintzi, from such a commanding position, produced a moral impression even on the defenders themselves, and kept up within them the spirit of valor.

It was after mid-day when Skobelev ordered the commander of the first Shirvan battalion, Colonel Gogoberidze, to deliver a volley from the whole battalion at the fortress. A few minutes later, all four companies are drawn up in two long lines. The company commanders and subalterns, knowing that the General's eye is gazing upon them with curiosity, run zealously along the front and verify the

sights, which are raised completely up, and the men, holding their guns ready to fire, aim at the very top of the sights. Then the forward file drops on one knee; the officers desert the front; Gogoberidze, standing behind the forward rank, gives the command, loudly and slowly: "Bat-talion!" then he seems to break off—"Fire!" Six hundred bullets fly like one against the fortress. The General and all the rest of us watch. The bullets cannot have reached their mark; the long, gray walls of the fortress had been covered with the figures of our foes, and so they remain.

"Give them another volley, Colonel Gogoberidze, but at three thousand paces," says Skobelev.

A few minutes later a second volley rings out; the Tekintzi seem to have been swept away from the walls. All have disappeared; only isolated sentinels continue to be visible here and there.

But Geok-Tepe is a big fortress. Awa-ay yonder, its end reaches the very desert, two versts long, according to my calculation, as I gaze through my field-glass at the lofty clay walls. And how thick they must be! A horseman is riding along them yonder; now he descends, and, a moment later, rises into sight in another place. The Tekintzi make their appearance from behind the walls—now here, now there, in crowds. Through the glass it is possible to get a good look at their faces, garments, and weapons. There is a multitude of Tekintzi. Long poles with iron points are in the hands of some of them, in the place of guns. Some of them have black caps, some white; their robes are of every possible hue.

Now and then they discharge the falconets (a large, old-fashioned cannon) at us from the walls. The soldiers picked up several such balls; they were of iron, the size of a walnut. The Tekintzi were said to be great adepts in the art of firing from falconets.

The sun was already far lower than the zenith when we began our retreat to Samurskoe. The enemy had, evidently, only been waiting for this. A frightful howl and shout arose. Thousands dashed out of the fortress, both horsemen and foot-soldiers, and encircled the detachment on all sides.

Two hundred Cossacks dispersed in a semi-circular chain in the rear-guard, and on the flanks, and exchanged shots

with the enemy, without dismounting. In addition to this, a company of infantry marched in the rear-guard, halting continually, and delivering volleys. Both the Cossack companies and the infantry formed a sort of line, beyond which the enemy could not penetrate nearer to the detachment.

The sun has disappeared, darkness is descending. But now the moon rises out of the desert, and beams with a silvery, greenish light. The Tekintzi pursue us more obstinately, more boldly than ever.

Our flank ascends a sandy hillock, which is much higher than the rest. I have a feeling that we shall no sooner have left the hillock than the enemy will occupy it, and fire upon us almost point-blank. I glance back and see that a throng of horsemen have halted close by, have drawn into a compact knot, and are keeping a sharp watch on our movements. I involuntarily spur on my horse, and ride nearer to my comrades. We have not succeeded in getting two hundred yards away when the hostile bullets begin to whistle over our heads.

Beside me in the line ride several Osetini; one of them rolls off his horse: his companions gallop up to the wounded man, and pick him up (this Osetin died on the following day). The Tekintzi, perceiving their success, grow more fierce, howl more vigorously, and increase the frequency of their fire. The General despatches Cossacks to the line with frequent orders: now, not to lag behind, but to keep closer to the detachment; again, on the contrary, to hold the enemy back more vigorously. The detachment marches very slowly. It is obliged to halt every moment and fire. The picture of our retreat was remarkably effective, beneath the brilliant moonlight. In front, the compact mass of the detachment was dimly visible; on the sides the rear-guard, in the line of sentinels the Cossacks, and the flashes running along like a fiery serpent. In the extreme rear of the company, long streaks of fire flash up every moment. Volleys thunder through the silence of the night, "Tra-a, tra-a!" Off in the distance they are echoed by the piercing yells of the Tekintzi, "*Ghi-i-ghi!*" Through the fire and smoke, I see Skobeleff wheel round sharply on his gray horse, ride round his soldiers, and encourage them; they can be heard to answer him: "Glad to fight, your Excellency," — when,

all of a sudden, in the midst of this all, utter darkness sets in; the moon disappears — an eclipse of the moon is taking place. The Tekintzi, being Mussulmans, take this as a bad sign, and, stupefied by this ominous phenomenon against them, cease to fire. Our discharges cease also, and, amid profound silence, in a darkness that can almost be felt, we reach Samurskoe, without firing a shot. It proved that we had four soldiers killed, and nineteen wounded, among the number two officers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAMURSKOE FORTRESS. — NIGHT POSTS.

THE reconnoissance of the 4th of December had convinced Skobeleff more fully than ever that the enemy was numerous and valiant, that the fortress of Geok-Tepe was not to be taken easily, and that a siege was no light matter.

Our forces were constantly increasing, fresh troops kept arriving, the camp kept growing. Now, when one went out in the evening to post the sentinels, so many blazing camp-fires were burning over such a wide expanse that one's heart rejoiced.

I am lying, fully dressed, in my felt tent, now dozing, now waking. It is impossible to go into a sound sleep, for I must go and inspect the posts. The air in the tent is almost down to freezing. The heavy felts have become damp on the inside, and have frozen on the outside, so that it makes one shudder to touch them with the bare hand. I light a match and look at my watch; it is twelve o'clock; time to set out. Although I do not wish to, it must be done: the General has said that he depends upon me to see that the posts are inspected. And how warmly I am lying under my felt cloak and my short fur jacket! I spring hastily from my bed, buckle on my sabre, take my revolver, and go to the kala, to the Crimean company, for a relief guard. The air is cold. There is no moon, the darkness is complete. The walking is bad, I stumble incessantly; the sun has warmed the soil during the day, and now it is frozen in uneven clods. The camp-fires have almost all died out, and only in the baggage-train which arrived to-day from Bami burns a small fire, around which the Turkoman guides have assembled. I draw nearer to them. I hear a strange singing, somewhat resembling the bleating of a sheep. It interests me, and, in order not to frighten the singer, I approach the fire cautiously, halt, and gaze. The faces of the drivers, in their shaggy black caps, are

illuminated from time to time by the flashes of the fire. An aged singer, with a small, gray beard, and an instrument resembling a balalaïka¹ in his hands, is thrumming away quickly with his finger, and, throwing back his head, he draws, in a trembling voice, at first loudly, then more and more feebly, one and the self-same note, — “e-e-e-e.” His throat seems to be full of something; the singer sways gently, his eyes retreat under his brow, and in such an attitude the sound dies away. His comrades, seated in a circle, listen with rapture, holding their breath the while. Their faces are expressive of ecstasy. They shake their heads now and then, in sign of approbation, and, almost in a whisper, exclaim hoarsely: “Good, good!” This song, though extremely peculiar, pleased me; there was something attractive about it, just as there is in some wild dance where the male or female dancer begins to whirl madly in one spot, and then more and more slowly, until, at last, he slackens and comes to a stand-still. One of the Turkomans, who understood a little Russian, explained to me that in this song their ancient “batyr” (*bogatyr*)² was praised for his valor and strength, and that a similar song was in use, which celebrated our Nefes-Mergen. “Just see,” I say to myself, “how soon Nefes-Mergen has won glory; he has even got into a song of the people!”

After looking awhile at the Turkomans, I go my way and come across some Kirghiz drivers. In the darkness, with their monstrous, shaggy caps, which are similar to our ancient fur hoods for women, they were cutting up a camel which lay outstretched upon the ground. This camel was dead, and I had already seen him lying there by daylight. The Kirghizi had not dared to touch him then, but now, when all had lain down to sleep, they had fallen upon him, on the sly, like hyænas, and satiated themselves. For the sake of appearances, they had cut his throat; one of the Kirghizi was kindling a fire, in order to cook bits of the camel over it. It is disgusting to watch the Kirghizi eating. Instead of eating, they devour; they seize the bloody meat directly in their hands, and chew and swallow so voraciously that one begins to fear lest they should choke themselves. Their narrow, slanting eyes come still closer together at such moments; hideous gri-

¹ A kind of three-stringed guitar.

² *Bogatyr*, hero, in the epic songs of Russia.

maces, expressive of satisfaction, make their appearance on their bronzed faces, with their sparse beards. The Turkomans, especially the Tekintzi, stand much higher than the Kirghizi, in the point of eating food. They never can make up their minds to eat carrion, while it is nothing to the Kirghizi. I asked them, "How can you eat a camel that has died?" To this one of them replied, with the greatest calmness, as he cut off a piece of the raw meat with his knife, quite close to his mouth, "He has only just died, sir."

Instead of seeking out the orderly officer, I walk alone past the Samursky troops, through a broken wall, and approach a sentinel. The sentry challenges me, in a low tone:—

"Who goes there?"

"A friend," I answer, and inquire, quietly:—

"Well, how goes it? is all well?"

"Just so."

"Nothing to be seen?"

"Nothing at all."

The other two soldiers are lying in the background, with their heads wrapped up in their bashliks. Our conversation has waked them, and they have seated themselves beside the sentinel.

"Where is the other post?" I inquire.

"It's on the left, most honorable sir. He was in sight a little while ago, but now it seems to have grown dark!" and the soldier bends down and gazes intently through the gloom. I advance a few paces, in the direction indicated, halt, and, bending down, I gaze (the lower one bends at the night, the further one can see), but the night is so dark that I can see nothing either before or behind me.

"Who goes there?" I hear a voice once more. I answer the call, advance a little further, and behold before me a solitary sentinel. The same conversation takes place between us: "Nothing in sight?" — "Nothing whatever," and so forth.

Passing the Samursky troops, I make the round of the posts, which have been occupied by the Tver dragoons. The sentinels are standing correctly, changing from foot to foot, and the jingling of their spurs is the only sound that breaks the universal silence. Thence I return to the camp along the left flank. Here the walking is even worse; all

about lie trampled vineyards; the roots of the vines are remarkably given to catching hold of one, and I stumble at every step, which produces upon me, in the darkness, an extremely unpleasant effect. I blame myself for having gone alone, without the orderly.

I am just beginning to make out the next sentinel, through the gloom, when a little flame flashes from him, and a shot rings out. I run up to him and look; all three soldiers stand whispering together.

"At what were you firing?" I ask them, in a low and stern voice.

"A Tekinetz, your Honor," replies the sentry, in a timid whisper; and, pointing ahead, he looks at his comrades. His shot has, evidently, frightened the man himself. His comrades, roused from their slumbers, shiver in every joint, and wrap themselves in their great-coats. I arrive at the conviction that they have been dreaming of a Tekinetz, as they answer my questions unsatisfactorily. And it would be very easy for a sentinel to imagine things in the dark; he stands on guard at midnight, and stands and stands, and it seems as though there would be no end to it. His comrades are snoring sweetly at his feet, enveloped in their great-coats. He has passed the day in toil; he is weary; his eyes are becoming glued together, and now, look out lest a Tekinetz should creep up and fire at you. He has no sooner fallen into a doze than he imagines a Tekinetz; he opens his eyes — it is dark; a gentle breeze inclines a bush, at that moment, which represents, to the strained fancy of the soldier, the cap of a Tekinetz. The sentinel rouses his comrades quietly, for the sake of supporting his courage; the latter spring up from their dreams, look, and whisper, "A Tekinetz!" So the sentinel blesses himself and fires.

Although such shots were of frequent occurrence, a night rarely passed that one of the enemy was not shot by our men, somewhere on the line of sentinels, or in the ambush. I remember the first one who was shot from the hunters' *kala*. As it was a long distance to run by night to make inquiries, I went at dawn. Fifty paces from the camp lies the dead Tekinetz, on his side, — a man already well on in years, with a small, black beard, — exactly as though asleep. His hands surprised me most of all; they were small, delicate, and thoroughly feminine. As the Turko-

man Dzhigiti explained to me, the dead man must have been the descendant of an illustrious race of "batyrei" (heroes), and therefore had never engaged in any hard work.

Leaving the Shirvan troops, I proceed on. I pass the posts of the Kazan Cossack regiment, the Labin, the Orenburg, the Daghestan infantry, and the Crimean, and return to the hills; here extends the Stavropol battalion. This was a dashing regiment. It was only necessary to glance at their commander, Colonel Kozelkoff, in order instantly to understand that his soldiers would never dream at their posts, and that no officer would yawn.

I do not know why, but Kozelkoff always represented for me the type of the regimental commander of the olden days of Nicholas. He was above the middle height, stout, and had a face with a double chin.

It was on the second day after this, I think, when the Stavropol troops arrived in Samurskoe, that I go to one of the battalions, and ask the orderly, referring to the posts, "Why was it that they had not men enough?" when, all at once, the bass voice of Kozelkoff rings out, from the tent:—

"Captain Babaeff!" A tall, elderly captain leaps from the neighboring tent, as though scalded, and, buttoning up his coat and buckling on his sword-belt by the way, betakes himself to the commander of the regiment.

"Why didn't you have men enough?" . . .

Silence.

"Were *you* on duty yesterday?"

"Yes, Colonel," answers the Captain, in a hoarse voice.

"You will be on duty to-morrow. You may go," replies the Colonel, dryly; and the old, gray-haired Captain, the commander of a company, goes off to his tent, exactly like a school-boy, on tiptoe and with drooping head.

No sooner have I made the rounds of the sentinels, and set out for my tent, than a volley resounds from the ambush, in the direction of the Shirvan men. I run to see. I approach the ambush, and sit down among the soldiers, in order that we may not be seen, and ask them, in a whisper:—

"At whom were you firing?"

"The Tekintzi, most honorable sir; twenty of them rode past us," replies the leader.

“Did you kill any one?”

“Apparently not; they were a good way off. No sooner had they heard the shot than they set up some song or other, after their fashion, at the top of their lungs, and galloped off into the desert.”

I charge them to be more cautious, to allow the enemy to come nearer before firing, not to hurry; and I return past the General's tent, for I know that the General has heard the firing, and that he will want to hear what is the matter. Just before reaching the camp, I see some one approaching in a felt cloak. I challenge him. It is Ushakoff.

“The General has sent to inquire at whom they have been firing,” says the latter, hastily.

I tell him, and we return together.

“Well, what's the matter?” asks Skobelev, from his tent, on hearing our footsteps.

“The Tekintzi approached, twenty strong, but at a considerable distance, so that the volley did not strike anybody,” I explain to him, thrusting my head through the door of his tent.

“What blockheads those fellows in the ambush are! they can't let the enemy get within actual range,” growls Skobelev, in a sleepy, dissatisfied tone, turning over in bed.

“Pray, look after this carefully,” he says to me, and dismisses me. It had begun to dawn when I reached my tent.

On the 11th and 12th of December, we again made reconnoissances of Geok-Tepe. I do not remember on just which one of them it was that one of the military officials of the detachment asked Skobelev's permission to accompany the General. Skobelev consented with pleasure. The official thought, no doubt, that it would be a very agreeable and interesting ride, and that, in case he should wish to return, he could do so at any time. But it turned out otherwise. When we had approached quite close to the fortress and the bullets began to whistle round our ears, the official changed countenance, and glanced back at Samurskoe; but the Tekintzi had already galloped up in that direction, and return was impossible, of course. He was obliged to await the conclusion of the reconnois-

sance. And, behold! the unhappy amateur, of violent emotions, was obliged, willy-nilly, to sit on his saddle all day long, as though on needles, in the expectation that a stray bullet might hit him, at any moment.

When the detachment returned to Samurskoe in the evening, the official was attacked with a sort of nervous fever. He gave us no peace all night long, and shrieked so that the whole camp heard him. No sooner would he get half asleep, and quiet down, than he would begin to yell again in a terrible voice: "Aï-aï-aï-aï . . ." He was placed in the hospital, where he remained for nearly two weeks.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th of December, we were all dining in the same tent with the General, when, all of a sudden, in walked Colonel Kuropatkin into our midst, with his swinging gait, stretching himself from prolonged riding on horseback, dressed in a long, black frock-coat.

"Ah, Alexei Nikolaitch, my friend!" exclaims Skobelev, embracing him.

Then Kuropatkin makes the round of all those who are seated at the table, greeting them, and making their acquaintance: on seeing me, he also embraces me in friendly fashion, and exclaims: "Hah, old comrade, welcome!"

I was greatly delighted at Kuropatkin's arrival. We had not seen each other for four years, and now we had suddenly met on a campaign.

Since I had seen him last, he had, in my opinion, greatly improved, had filled out and become more dashing.

Kuropatkin had brought a detachment of a thousand men from General Kaufman, in Turkestan, to the assistance of General Skobelev.

In all, from the Amu-Darya to the Akhal-Tekke oasis, the detachment had traversed nine hundred versts, five hundred versts of this distance being through a sandy, stony wilderness, waterless to such a degree that the nine hundred camels belonging to the detachment were only watered twice during the whole of this distance — at the wells of Ortakuï and at the wells of Igdy. The average length of the fourteen marches through the desert had been thirty-six versts each. They travelled day and night. Only two

men fell ill on the way, and they were handed over to the Bami hospital. The rest arrived, quite fresh, at Samurskoe.

On meeting the Turkestan contingent, Skobelev praised them heartily for their brisk, healthy looks, and their good condition, judging from which it was hard to believe that the detachment had reached Samurskoe by forced marches extending over nearly nine hundred versts.

After dinner, we all went to greet the Turkestan contingent. The Ural Cossacks pleased me the most. Where in the world had Kuropatkin picked up such men: one brave fellow after another, all tall, all with black beards, in huge, shaggy caps. In short, a most inspiring race. When it afterwards became my duty to post them as night sentinels, I felt rather ashamed to give them instructions as to how they must behave on guard, where they must look, whence they must expect an attack, and where the most danger lay. The Ural men seemed so experienced, so well versed, that they might have given lessons to any officer how to lie in ambush.

Nearly all the forces of which Skobelev could dispose for the storming of Geok-Tepe were now assembled in Samurskoe. About this time, there arrived in Samurskoe General Annenkoff, the builder of the railway, and General Petrusevitch, commander of the Trans-Caspian military department. Petrusevitch was extremely pleasing, of an honorable, upright character. His exterior was imposing. Tall and commanding, his face, framed in a long, light beard, expressed sense and energy. Skobelev himself afterwards said of Petrusevitch that he was an invaluable aid to him. And, in fact, having lived many years in the Trans-Caspian region, Petrusevitch, besides being a perfect master of the Turkoman language, was thoroughly familiar with the country, as well as the customs and morals of the inhabitants. By all this knowledge he could assist Skobelev in the preliminary labors of the expedition.

On the 8th of December, what we called a "general reconnoissance" was effected before Geok-Tepe. It had received this nickname because not only did all the commanders of the different corps take part in it, but the four Generals as well — Skobelev, Annenkoff, Petrusevitch, and Grodekoff, who had been promoted just before this to Major-general, for the action of the 6th of July. I did not take part in this reconnoissance, but I remember well that

General Annenkoff returned from it earlier than the others, with his right arm bound up. As his comrades informed me, he had been wounded at the very moment when the detachment reached the village of Yangi-kala, and Grodekoff had begun to read to the commanders the disposition of the troops on the 20th of December, for the attack of Yangi-kala. The bullet pierced his coat and his Swedish jacket, and entered his arm. General Annenkoff remained in Samurskoe to recover from his wound.



GENERAL PETRUSÉVITCH.

CHAPTER X.

DURING THE SIEGE OF GEOK-TEPE.

ON the 19th of December, Skobeleff, dressed like his soldiers, in a tanned short coat, only with the shoulder-straps of the general staff, rides through the camp. He meets me, and says:—

“Well, sir, we are going to Geok-Tepe to-morrow, and you will remain here as commandant. Do you hear?” And he looked at me somewhat ironically, as though desirous of learning what impression his words produced upon me.

I certainly had not expected such news. “What,” I said to myself, “all my comrades are going to the front? they are to take part in the assault, of course, they will take the fortress, and they will rejoice, and receive rewards, and I, exactly like a waif, must stay in the rear, and merely envy them!” All this flashes through my head in a moment, I feel pained and vexed; I feel that tears are welling up into my eyes. I address the General in a piteous tone, and say:—

“Your Excellency, why do you wish to leave me here, and that for the second time?”

“There is no arguing permissible in war. What you are ordered to do, that you must do!” he exclaims, sternly. Then, taking pity on me, he says with a smile: “However, you may rest at ease, I will summon you to myself before the assault takes place!” and, pressing my hand, the General rides off through the camp.

“Well, never mind,” I say to myself, by way of consolation; “he certainly has some confidence in me, if he will entrust me with such an important post as Samurskoe. All the artillery and commissariat stores are here, everything on which the success of the expedition depends;” and, on taking all these facts into consideration, I go to Gaïdaroff, quite contented, to receive from him the fortress.

The morning of the 20th of December is splendid. Gen-

eral Annenkoff, myself, and nearly the entire garrison of the Samurskoe fortress stand on the front clay wall, and watch our army, consisting of more than five thousand men, divided in front by the hunters' kala into three columns, setting out for Geok-Tepe. The first column, that of Colonel Kuropatkin, consisting of sixteen hundred men and ten guns, is already pursuing the familiar road to Yangi-kala, on the right side of the oasis, along the hills. It is hardly perceptible, and soon disappears behind a rise of ground.

No sooner has it disappeared from view than Colonel Kozelkoff moves forward with his column, straight for Yangi-kala. The forces of Kozelkoff are somewhat smaller than the forces of Kuropatkin; he has about fifteen hundred men and ten guns.

Simultaneously with Kozelkoff, Skobelev marches with the principal forces. This column is very impressive: it consists in all of two thousand bayonets, thirty-two guns with their crews, and caissons, and seven squadrons of cavalry. They give it a formidable aspect. Both Kozelkoff and Skobelev march in such dense, black masses that it is a pleasure to look at them. The principal forces direct their course somewhat to the left of Samurskoe, to the Opornaya-kala, in the interval between the fortress of Geok-Tepe and the gardens of Yangi-kala.

The defenders of the fortress must have had an inkling that something peculiar was in preparation for them to-day; hardly had the army got drawn up in line when cannon shots began to crash from their mound, sounding the alarm.

"Well, my dear fellow, just wait a bit," I say to myself, as I look at the thousands of bayonets gleaming brightly in the sun. "We offered to let you surrender,—but you did not wish to, so don't be angry now. Skobelev is not in jest!"

Kuropatkin's cannon on the right flank have already begun to thunder; my garrison has dispersed to their tents. General Annenkoff has also gone off to his own quarters, but I still continue to admire how our army, cleft, as it were, into two vast iron blocks with gigantic hammers, moved slowly, menacingly, along the valley on the enemy, and finally disappeared behind the hill.

I have seen the troops off, and now I run hastily back into the fortress. I have a multitude of matters to attend

to. The situation is serious. I am fully persuaded that the Tekintzi, having observed the departure of the troops, will rush to occupy Samurskoe. I must prepare to repulse them; but with what? Only two regiments and two companies of Cossacks, in all, have been left in the fortress. Supposing that there will be plenty of cannon for this night, — it had been impossible to take them all together to-day, for lack of camels, — but to-morrow they will be removed, and there will remain six in all, and those without crews. The thought of the day did not terrify me, — it was the night which disturbed me; where was I to get sentinels? The camp was extensive, the army had gone off in light marching order, leaving behind it here all weighty equipments, hospitals, and all the stores, and there was more than half a million of money alone in the treasury; all this must be guarded. Thus I meditated, as I hurried through the fortress, giving all the men orders to betake themselves to the kala, where the artillery stores were kept. Skobelev had charged me to guard them more carefully than my own eyes. But, concentrate as I would, shorten the line of sentinels as I might, all the men were not enough for me; and it was useless to talk of the reserve; all they had left me were the sick and the weak.

Let me reckon over and portion out my garrison once more. First of all, the interior sentinels: for the artillery stores, six men are necessary; for the provisions, six; for the post-box, three; for the treasury, three; and so on. That makes thirty men. Then for the sentinels and the ambush. . . . And if only the most indispensable posts are occupied, then, in case of an attack in force, there is nothing wherewith to repel them. What is to be done? Something must be done! I restrict the circumference of the camp still further: I station one man at the post-box, and at the treasury a guard of three men; I add sentinels here and there, and finally I get things in order. The officials come up to me incessantly, one after the other, and inquire: —

“Well, Major, we shall manage in some way; there’s no danger, is there?”

“Not the least, don’t be alarmed, everything is capital,” I reply, but claws are clutching my own heart.

After mid-day, I run to the barbette, to the cannon which stood on the left flank of the front line, for the purpose of

looking out and seeing where our men are. In the immediate vicinity of the barbette, the tent of General Annenkoff had been pitched; the General himself is standing on the barbette, in his overcoat, with his right arm bound up in a white kerchief, looking through his field-glass. I take up my position beside him, and see that from behind the crest of the hill, in the space between the fortress and Yangi-kala, the points of our felt tents are already in sight.

“Thank God! that signifies that our troops have occupied Yangi-kala, and have pitched their camp before Geok-Tepe!” And I betake myself joyfully to my duty. The sun is already low, the time remaining before night is very brief, and the work is not half done. The principal thing that troubled me was that when the camp had been pitched all the clay walls around had been left untouched, and it was now necessary either to demolish them or to occupy them with sentinels; if this were not done, the enemy, when they made their attack, would be able to put them to capital service, and to open a point-blank fire upon us. I made an attempt to break them down, but they proved so strong that I had to give up in despair. Let come what must.

Night drew on,—I set my posts; I ordered the cannon to be loaded with grape-shot, in case of emergencies. One hour passes, then a second, a third, and I go from post to post, from cannon to cannon. Everything is peaceful, all around is quiet, only, yonder, in our rear, a volley rings out. I run to investigate. It appears that several Tekintzi have crept up, probably to discover whether the garrison were on the alert, but, on being received with a vigorous volley, they had turned back. Contrary to my expectations, the night passed off safely.

On the following day, the 21st of December, the garrison woke to new life; our baggage-train made its appearance in the direction of Geok-Tepe. I went out to meet it. The train was under the leadership of Petrusévitch. I seem to see him before me now, as, mounted on his small, gray Kirghiz horse, he greets me courteously while still afar off. His kindly blue eyes beam amiably through his spectacles. One can draw the conclusion from his face that our affairs are prospering, and that we may feel at ease.

Several of my comrades also arrived with the transport train. Stories began, as though we had not seen each other for an age. I learned, as might have been expected, that

the enemy was fighting desperately, and that a peaceful settlement was not to be thought of. At that time, several wounded men were brought to us. On the following morning, Petrusévitch collected the commissariat stores, the cannons, and a mass of artillery stores, and went back. From the time when the army arrived in front of the fortress, baggage-trains arrived in Samurskoe almost every day, under cover of a small detachment; they brought in the wounded, passed the night here, and on the following morning, having collected all that was required, they returned to the camp before the fortress. This was convenient for me; availing myself of the escort which arrived, I took men from it and strengthened my posts for the night.

Two days had not passed from the time when Petrusévitch had conducted the train to us, when the report spread abroad that he had been killed before Geok-Tepe. I ran to the heliographic station, which was located on the front wall of the kala, consulted with the detachment, and requested them to ask the commander of the heliographers, Captain Maximovitch, how correct the rumor was. At the end of a quarter of an hour I receive the reply from Maximovitch:—

“General Petrusévitch is dead and buried. Send some more felt tents for my command.”

“Our affairs are going badly, badly! What further will the Lord send?” I say to myself, sadly, as I return to my quarters.

On the 28th of December, in the evening, when it was already perfectly dark, I had but just posted the sentinels and returned to the fortress, when, all of a sudden, I heard afar off the thunder of cannon reverberating over the fortress, and frequent, irregular volleys of musketry. Our whole garrison sprang out of their tents to look. Through the gloom we see bright bombs from mortars rising over the fortress, with fiery trains, hanging for a moment in the zenith of their flight, and then darting swiftly down. Some of the explosions echoed near us, in the nocturnal stillness, with such plainness, with such distinct hisses and shrieks, that we could not help being amazed. I do not know how this is to be explained, whether by the purity of the air, or the silence of the night. My heart throbbed violently when I heard that crash. We all knew that it

had not rung out for nothing, the Tekintzi had assuredly attacked our troops. "May the Lord aid ours to hold out!" whispered the soldiers, crossing themselves, and continued to listen in anxiety. A quarter of an hour later, all had relapsed into silence.

On the following day I learned that the Tekintzi had made a sortie, and had flung themselves on our men in the trenches, where the fourth Apsheron battalion was stationed. They had caught it unawares, cut it down, seized the battalion flag and one mountain gun, and had returned to the fortress. In this engagement, my well known fourteenth company had the hardest fate of all; its commander, Tchikareff, was killed, — his presentiment had not deceived him. I afterwards questioned several soldiers of the Apsheron regiment about this affair, and how it had happened. One answered me: "Why, this way, most honorable sir. It was so dark that you couldn't see your hand before you, but you could hear something flowing up like a wave and surging, but you couldn't see to fire. Then they gave a yell at us and the affair began." It turned out afterwards that the Tekintzi, taking advantage of the darkness, had crept up to our trenches without firing, with sabres bared, and had then flung themselves upon our troops with a yell. One of the first killed was the commander of the Apsheron battalion, Colonel Magaloff, next Company Commander Tchikareff, his subaltern, Gotto, a pensive, swarthy young fellow, who was in the habit, as I remember, of coming to my tent at Bendeseni, seating himself on a cannon which stood close by, and gazing for hours together into the far distance, without once removing his eyes.

On the 30th of December, the Tekintzi repeated their sortie. In the evening, after sunset, I hear the reverberations of cannon and volleys of musketry ring out once more. I run to the barbette and find General Annenkoff already there. In front of us spreads the same picture as on the 28th of December; through the gloom of night we behold rising before us, above the fortress, something precisely like fiery apples, which then fly swiftly downwards. All around us, the soldiers who have emerged from their tents are conversing with each other in low tones, and exclaiming: "What will be the result this time? will the Lord God help us?" and so forth. The second sortie was much less successful for the enemy, but, nevertheless, they

succeeded in capturing one mountain gun and in carrying it off with them.

In spite of these sorties, Skobelev proceeded with his earthworks, and moved his trenches nearer and nearer the fortress. By the New Year our camp was not more than fourteen hundred yards distant from the walls.

I shall never forget New Year's Eve, 1881. I remember that I was lying in my tent about midnight. Before this I had inspected the posts, had become fatigued, and had now lain down to sleep. All at once the earth thundered; a frightful explosion rang out. I almost rolled out of my bed, and ran to see what had happened. It seemed as though, with such an explosion, the whole fortress of Geok-Tepe must have flown into the air. Nothing was in sight; all was quiet round about. Then I remembered that General Skobelev had promised to fire a volley at the fortress, from all the cannon, in honor of the New Year. And this he had done!

All this time the weather had been delightful; such as we have in the north at the beginning of April; by day the sun and warmth, with frost at night. Evidently, the winter was already past here, and there was not a hint of snow. But, on the other hand, such a strong, cold wind arose at times, bearing sand and dust, that it stopped up our nostrils, eyes, and ears, and we did not know whither to flee, that we might escape from it. Such a tempest once came up during the early days of January, just at midnight. I was afraid that the enemy might attack us at this time. "If the Tekintzi could annihilate a whole battalion from the detachment," I said to myself, "what would happen to our fortress, where all the sentinels are posted two hundred yards apart?" I rush out of my tent, in order to hasten to the posts—but whither!—it was not to be thought of, for the wind carried me off my feet. The darkness had become such that one could literally see nothing. And after getting a couple of paces from the tent I was glad enough to feel my way back to it. The hurricane lasted for a quarter of an hour. In my tent everything was covered with sand. The fine dust had penetrated everywhere; into my clothes, my travelling-bag, under my pillow, among my underclothes.

By the New Year, nearly all the field utensils and artillery and commissariat stores had been transferred to

the troops in action. In Samurskoe there remained one hospital, which was constantly enlarging its dimensions. The inner walls of the kala had been converted into pavilions, where the wounded were lodged. Among others, there arrived in Samurskoe some officers of my acquaintance — Lieutenant-colonel Gogoberidze and a naval officer, Captain Zuboff, both wounded in the leg. I visited them every day, and spent whole hours with them. Zuboff pleased me particularly; a knight of the order of St. George, with a very stern visage, taciturn, of extremely lofty stature and thin; when he was seated, his knees reached almost to his breast. In spite of his height, there was something peculiarly attractive about Zuboff. When I indirectly learned his position in the service, how, in consequence of unfortunate circumstances, he had been degraded to the ranks in the army, and had been compelled to pass for the second time through all the grades up to the rank of Captain, and win his cross of the George over again, Zuboff stood still higher in my eyes. I gazed at his stern, calm figure, at his swarthy, sunburned face, with its thick black moustache, and he seemed to me to be the ideal of a ship's Captain, who could coolly and without a change of countenance, take his measures and issue his orders with his powerful bass voice, in the midst of the most violent gale, at the most critical moment, when the whole crew were within a hair's breadth of destruction.

It was sometimes my lot to see strange things during the war, among the wounded; one man would apparently be so slightly wounded that no attention need be paid to the matter, and behold, in a little while, the man died. Thus, I remember, during the Turkish campaign, a Cossack of my company, Andreeff, was wounded before Plevna, and such a healthy, ruddy fellow he was! When I looked at his wound, it struck me as strange that he should need to go to the hospital for such a trifle; a bullet had barely grazed the upper part of his ankle, along his instep, and made a slight gash. And what came of it! two weeks afterwards, they amputated Andreeff's leg, and he died on the following day. Nearly the same thing happened with poor Zuboff; when I went to bid him farewell, on leaving Samurskoe for Geok-Tepe, he could already walk with the aid of a crutch. I was convinced that he would soon recover completely, and be able to return to the assault.

What was my amazement when, ten days later, I heard that Zuboff was dead; blood-poisoning had set in, as the result of an imperfect operation.

All the severely wounded were transferred from the Samurskoe hospital to Bami. Once, as I am making the rounds of a train of wagons laden with the wounded, I espy the face of an under-officer of the Shirvan regiment, with which I seem to be acquainted.

“Where have I seen you?” I ask him.

“In Bendeseni, most honorable sir; I was Sergeant-major of the hunters’ corps,” replies the man, cheerfully, raising his body from the cart as though he were not wounded. I was very glad to see him and to talk with him. A bullet had carried away his big toe, — not a very serious wound, apparently, though painful. The sergeant, on his side, was delighted to see me, and, although a thrill of pain crossed his poor face now and then, he continued, nevertheless, to converse cheerfully with me, and to tell me how and where he had been wounded. I do not know whether he recovered, or whether he suffered the fate of Captain Zuboff, and many others. But if he died it was too bad — he was a gallant fellow!

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE THE ASSAULT.

Just at New Year's, I received a telegram from Prince Shakhovsky, the commander of the Red Cross brigade, from Geok-Tepe: "A train of wounded, a hundred in all, among them three officers, is setting out. Order lodgings and food to be prepared."

"How many troops will be left for the assault, if now, during the construction of intrenchments, we are losing at the rate of nearly a hundred men every day?" I said to myself, as I went from doctor to doctor to make arrangements for the reception of the wounded.

On the 3d of January, I received instructions from Grodekoff to prepare as great a quantity as possible of gabions and fascines, and also to cut down all trees in the neighborhood, for the construction of scaling-ladders. I immediately gave orders for the felling of all the gardens about Samurskoe, sent a copy of my instructions to the nearest commander of rallying-points, and in a few days all had been prepared and despatched to the division.

No sooner had I received these instructions than I received the following heliogram: "The commander of the troops, being desirous of having you with him at the assault, has given orders that you are to report at the camp, before Geok-Tepe, on the 9th of January." Thus I did: I handed over the fortress to the company commander of the Orenburg Cossack brigade, Major Kazantzeff, and set out, with a small escorting column, to the camp before Geok-Tepe.

We rode very quietly along the beaten road formed by our transport trains. Only in one spot, near the Opornaya-kala, did a small body of Tekintzi attempt to spring out upon us, but they soon disappeared.

I had already learned, in tolerable detail, from the accounts of the wounded officers, where our troops were established before Geok-Tepe, and how they had arranged

themselves. I knew that our trenches were gradually advancing on the fortress, that the whole camp lay under the direct fire of the foe. Although our troops battered away at the fortress with their cannons, they had no peace night or day themselves. But, well as I knew all this, it was extremely interesting to me to see it for myself; to observe how and where the detachment had taken up its station, how they had constructed their intrenchments. But the principal thing that I wanted to know was whether there was a feeling in the detachment that the assault would be successful. "Of course," I say to myself, "it would be much less dangerous for me to remain in the fortress, but how could I look Skobelev and my comrades in the face afterwards! They would all have taken part in the assault, while I was sitting ten versts away, and seeing nothing!" Moreover, at Samurskoe, I was much oppressed with the responsibility in case of a nocturnal attack, while in the detachment I had nothing to answer for. Taking all things into consideration, I was very glad that I should soon see my comrades, and I did not observe that the train was approaching the fortress.

The long, gray walls of Geok-Tepe were now sixteen hundred yards from me. Not a living being was anywhere visible upon them. It was not the same now as during the previous reconnoissances, when the walls had been covered with shaggy caps, like a huge fur collar. It was plain that the enemy could not come out from behind the wall with impunity. The wall was so long that its farther extremity melted imperceptibly into the sandy horizon.

But here is our camp. It was not more than a verst from the fortress, and struck one by the way in which it was huddled together. The gray felt tents, sunk in the earth, in order to present as little aim as possible for the foe, stood so close to each other that it was difficult to distinguish them at a distance. Across the whole front line of the camp stretched a long trench. Felt tents covered nearly the whole of its crest.

The transport train takes its way across the camp to the commissariat stores, while I spring from my horse, hand him over to my Cossack, and set off myself in search of Skobelev. In order to reach him, it is necessary to traverse the entire camp. For some reason, the men are not visible. They must all be in their tents. Now and then a

soldier runs out here and there, on some errand, and then goes leaping back.

“What is the meaning of such a dearth of men?” I say to myself. At that moment, a bullet whizzes by, and strikes near some horses hitched behind one of the tents. This is what it means! We are not in Samurskoe here. And I hastily descend into the trench, and pass along it in search of the commander of the troops. On the way I very much wanted to get a good look at the walls of Geok-Tepe, but the sides of the trench hid them, and in order to see them it was necessary to seek places where the crest of the trench had fallen in. And now I have come to such a place, and I look. All is gray and gloomy. The walls are much more plainly visible now. From them rise, now here, now there, bluish puffs of smoke, and the dry, sharp sounds of cannon shots ring out. To the right and left of me extends the gray, clayey plain, intersected in various directions by our trenches. Their crests stretch out like interminable grayish serpents. All around is lifeless, only through the crumbling ridges can glimpses be caught of soldiers’ kepis.

I had already proceeded for quite a distance along the trench, leading away from the camp. The soldier who had pointed out the path to me had not forewarned me that the General was established so far away, and had merely said: “Here, your Honor, please go along this trench, and you will see the General’s kikitka; he lives there, alongside the chief of staff.”

Having gone a little farther, I saw a company of soldiers stationed in a small hollow beside the trench; a little farther on, the spacious kikitka of the commander of the troops was visible, encircled on the side towards the enemy with sacks of provisions.

A little farther on, the Osetini of the body-guard were to be seen. Both soldiers and Osetini had evidently become accustomed to their surroundings, and felt themselves quite at home here. The pennon was thrust into the ground near the General’s tent. The door of the kikitka was open, and I entered. The General sat writing, with his arms through the sleeves of his coat.

“A-a-a, welcome, Verestchagin! Well, did you expect to find us in so melancholy a situation?” he exclaims, in greeting. Skobelev was still suffering from the impression

of the sorties of the Tekintzi, which had been so disastrous to us.

"But we shall take the fortress, all the same!" I say to the General, with a desire to cheer him up as much as possible. At that moment, several officers who have ridden from Samurskoe with me come in. Skobelev enters into conversation with them, but I make my bow and return to the camp.

On the 11th of January, that is to say, on the eve of the assault, the whole camp was visibly in a feverish condition. Skobelev was constantly passing our tents. Bodies of soldiers, quite invisible to the enemy, flew to and fro in the trenches with gabions, fascines, scaling-ladders, and stretchers. As I arrived before Geok-Tepe only two days before the assault, I had had no opportunity to get a good look, either at the camp or the fortifications. Once I went to visit my wounded comrade Yablotchkoff, who lay in one of the tents of the Red Cross.

The little place on which stood the Red Cross was defended from the fire of the enemy by a tolerably high wall constructed of provision sacks. I go in to see Yablotchkoff. He is lying in bed, in a dressing-gown, and groaning feebly. By his side sits a young Sister of Mercy. Yablotchkoff has grown so thin that I am on the point of uttering an exclamation. And it is only three weeks since he was wounded. It was immediately evident that he was not long for this world. The bullet had injured his lung, and he was spitting blood. (He soon died.)

Yablotchkoff looks at me in a dreadful, lifeless way, and extends his thin, yellow hand to me in a sort of despair. It had always seemed to me, during the war, that egoism was developed in a dying man, for it always seemed to irritate him to look upon every well man.

"Water!" whispers Yablotchkoff, heavily, and raises himself with difficulty. I look at him, and his long, reddish beard is the only thing that is not changed, but is as handsome as ever. His kindly blue eyes seem to have retreated far back in their orbits, and to have lost their vivacity. The aspect of the wounded man is terrible. The Sister of Mercy bends over him with a glass. Yablokoff clutches it with his bony fingers, and, begins a long, dry cough, endeavoring, meanwhile, not to glance at either of us. Much as I desire to remain with him, it is beyond my

power. I go out softly, and with a heavy heart I take my way to my tent, meditating on the thought whether it may not be my turn to-morrow to lie in the same position.

But the walls of Geok-Tepe still gaze forth from the gloomy horizon as threateningly as ever, and seem to wish to say to the Russian army around them, "Try, try, we shall see whose side will win!"

CHAPTER XII.

JANUARY TWELFTH. — THE ASSAULT.

It was past midnight when our little detachment, consisting of one battalion of the Samurskoe regiment, a body of hunters, five guns, and a company of Cossacks, under the command of Lieutenant-colonel Gaïdaroff, marched out of camp by a circuitous route. The task assigned to this detachment was to occupy a small kala, situated half a verst from the north-western corner of the fortress.

But the principal object was by this movement to attract the enemy's attention and forces as far as possible. In a word, to deceive them. I was a member of this detachment, and was to take command of it in case Gaïdaroff was killed. While we were marching out, our principal forces were to be concentrated — unseen by the enemy, as far as practicable — opposite the south-west corner of the fortress, beneath which our engineers had constructed a mine during the last two weeks, with great difficulty, and where they had finally placed a hundred poods of powder.

We marched in perfect silence. The moon dimly illuminated our path. Having proceeded about three versts to the north-west, we halted to await the daylight.

Morning dawns hot and cloudy. A sort of fog prevents our scrutinizing the long walls of Geok-Tepe, which loom black on the horizon. Our detachment moves from its halting-place, and marches swiftly and straight towards the tiny kala.

In spite of the hazy weather, the enemy have caught sight of us, and we see plainly how they are thronging, in dense, dark masses, to the walls, to the corner of the fortress jutting out in the direction of the mill kala. We still advance a little, in spite of their heavy musketry fire, and halt nine hundred yards away, on the unprotected, sandy plain. The cannons draw up in line and open fire upon the mill kala, behind which the corner of the fortress is plainly visible, thickly sown with dark figures of the Tekintzi, holding various clubs in their hands. At that time, no

movement whatever is to be noticed on the part of our principal forces. The fog has enveloped even that corner of the fortress where our troops were to have rallied. I stand with Count Ushakoff (Skobelev had placed him also under the orders of Gaïdaroff, during the assault), and watch the shooting. Now one shell lands cleverly on the thin wall of the kala, pierces it, and makes a sort of small window in it. The light begins to shine through it from the horizon.

The infantry look grayish that day, and harmonize with the color of nature round about. They stand drawn up in line, near by, with grounded arms. The soldiers converse together quietly, and shift from foot to foot. Short, thick-set, swarthy Gaïdaroff, with his arms through his coat-sleeves, his revolver strap tightly drawn, his sabre hanging from his shoulder, his heavy revolver cord dangling from his neck, stands gazing tranquilly, now at the fortress, now at the guns. He glances round at his soldiers, then looks again to see how the cannons are firing. At length, he turns to me and says: "Conduct the artillery yonder, under the left side of the kala, for I am going," and, so saying, he presses my hand warmly and strides off with decision to his companies. The men, on seeing their commander, draw up quickly in position, and the officers run to their places. Gaïdaroff issues some command, draws his sword, wheels round, and leads them at a quickstep to the mill kala. The officers also unsheathe their sabres, turn round to their men now and then on the way, and beat step.

At that moment, the Tekintzi open a very heavy fire upon us. I had never yet beheld such a moment as that when our troops rushed to the assault, and I mounted my horse to ride and communicate Gaïdaroff's orders to the commander of the battery. I only remember that, as I set out at a gallop, I saw Ushakoff, who was not far away, fall wounded. They ran up with stretchers and carried him to the rear of the detachment. I was dreadfully sorry for Ushakoff, and I came near crying. When I rode up to the mill, Gaïdaroff and his companies were already in that kala which our battery had just been trying so hard to demolish. At the present moment, the kala was of great service. The soldiers were standing calmly under the shelter of the walls, and firing. I dismount, place myself also beside a wall, and gaze with curiosity through a tiny crevice, at

Geok-Tepe. The fortress is now very close to me — a little over four hundred yards away. At that moment, our artillery begins to thunder against the walls of the fortress. The discharges of artillery make the air fairly quiver. The enemy sees that it is a bad business. Yonder, along the moat which stretches beneath the very walls of the fortress, isolated Tekintzi creep in whole files.

All at once the earth shakes, and a terrible roar resounds. A huge black pillar of sand and smoke rises heavenward. Shouts of "Hurrah!" are borne to our ears. The mine is exploded. A portion of the wall has flown into the air. Skobelev and five thousand of our soldiers must be already on the walls of Geok-Tepe. Our little squad acquires a remarkable access of courage, and, screened by the walls of the *kala*, it repeats vociferously the distant "Hurrah!"

"Company, fire!" in a hoarse voice and with all his might, close beside me, orders the long, lank company commander, with face pitted with small-pox. A line of soldiers, wearing their coats with the sleeves, thrust themselves for an instant from behind the walls, deliver a volley at the fortress, and immediately disappear again, whereupon they yell with all their might, "Hur-ra-a-ah!"

"Company, fire! . . . Company, fire! . . . Company, fire!" . . . is all that can be heard of the orders from the hoarse company commanders behind me. At that moment, I see that groups of Tekintzi are beginning to congregate in the moat, under the walls of the fortress. Their bent backs, light brown gowns, and shaggy caps can now be distinctly seen. Gun in hand, they cast terrified glances in all directions, and disappear in some crevice. Then another throng makes its appearance. It is even larger than the other. The Tekintzi no longer creep, but run from the fortress, having thrown away their weapons.

"Eh, if we had only a mountain gun here, we might cut down half a hundred at a time!" I exclaim, in vexation. Some one of the officers behind catches my exclamation, and sends to tell Gaïdaroff. The cannon is brought, is pointed towards the breach in the wall, and fired along the moat, where the Tekintzi are congregating in ever greater numbers. It is evident that a panic has already seized upon the fortress, and the inhabitants have abandoned their stronghold in terror.

"Ah, indeed, the carrion is small; but how it burst out!"

mutters one soldier, who, supposing that so small a cannon could not make so much noise, has not guarded himself. — “It has deafened me, the wretch!” — And, covering his ear with his palm, he forces his way among the soldiers seated on the ground as far as possible from the cannon.

At last our detachment runs out of the kala and betakes itself across the shifting sands to the fortress. And there, on the walls, the Russian standards are already floating. And now we have reached the moat. It is an arshin and a half¹ in depth, but tolerably wide. Along its bottom, corpses lie scattered, all Tekintzi, in various attitudes. Yonder lies a gray-bearded one on his back, with his arms outspread. His knees are bent. His yellow gown has unfastened itself, and his coarse linen shirt is visible. The nearer the wall, the thicker lie the bodies. The corps of hunters are the first to apply to the walls the ladders which the soldiers have dragged after them, and we all mount briskly. The battalion standard, thrust into the clay wall, is flapping in the breeze.

“Hur-ra-a-ah, hur-ra-ah!” we shout, beside ourselves with joy.

The walls are more than twenty feet high and as many broad. I gaze eagerly into the interior of the fortress.

Heavens, what is going on there!

The first thing that strikes me is the absence of all buildings, whereas I had imagined that we should find here various houses, fortifications, earthworks, redoubts, and so on. The whole fortress presents an open place about three square versts in extent. It is black with a multitude of smoke-stained, felt kibitkas, placed close together. Look where you will, the corpses of men, horses, camels, asses, dogs, and cows lie strewn about. Throngs of women, wrapped in black veils, are flying in terror from one kibitka to another, dragging their helpless children behind them. Our soldiers are pursuing the foe on every side. The groans of the enemy, the whimpering and shrieks of women, the wailing of children, the roar of animals, shouts of, “Hurrah!” “Allah!” the thunder of cannon, have all mingled in one indistinct, horrible roar. It seemed to me that I was looking upon a picture of the Last Judgment. Only the Imperial standard, floating from the top of the mound, reminded me of the true state of the case.

¹ Three and a half feet.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER THE ASSAULT.

"Just see what an immense affair! Our army has captured it, and our campaign is finished!" I say to myself with a joyous, tranquil spirit, and I gaze with increased interest on this wonderfully interesting, though terrible picture. I see before me the most complete destruction of a wild race, which for many years has inspired all Asia with terror. It flees, flinging away all and everything.

While I am standing and gazing, I glance round and see that not one of the men with whom I had come hither is left. They had taken their departure. Where am I to look for them? At that moment, an acquaintance hastens past me, a handsome young cornet of the Apsheron regiment. In his left hand I see a naked sword, in his right a revolver. In company with a throng of soldiers, he is hastening, merry, happy, and all flushed, in pursuit of the Tekintzi. His cap, with its red band, has been pierced by a bullet, just above the cockade. The cornet is evidently proud of so visible a mark of distinction, and has arranged his cap purposely so that the bullet-hole may be seen at a distance.

"Let's go together, Major!" he shouts to me. "Why stay here alone?" I say to myself. "Some Tekinetz is likely to shoot me from round a corner. I had better go with the rest. Gaïdaroff has probably rushed to the mound." And I descend from the wall at a run, leap across pits, overturned tents, sacks of wheat, millet, and maize, and finally overtake the Apsheron men. They are walking in a chain, exactly as though engaged in stalking wild animals. On their way, they peer into the tents and mud huts. They turn over the huge sacks filled with various kinds of provisions, bread, and grain, and seek for living beings everywhere.

On one side, behind a large, perfectly new, white kibitka, the figures of two soldiers, with blue cap-bands, are seen.

They are quarrelling over a Tekinetz lad, four years of age. One wishes to transfix the child; the other will not permit it, grasps the bayonet, and cries: —

“Drop it! What are you touching that boy for? — it’s a sin!”

“Why should he be spared? The whole race must be exterminated; haven’t they killed enough of us!” exclaims the soldier, and brandishes his bayonet. On catching sight of us, they both hide among the kibitkas, and the little boy crawls into some hole in the earth. Of such openings or lairs I afterwards found a multitude all over the fortress. Towards the end of the siege, the Tekintzi had begun to take refuge from our bombardiers in earth huts, like those which moles build.

Soldiers are seen everywhere, right and left. They are all scattered into groups of three or four, running from kibitka to kibitka, from earth hut to earth hut, and rummaging in them, not, of course, without taking some precautions. First, one would crawl into an earth hut, while the rest stood on top and kept watch, in order that the enemy might not fall upon them unawares. Bullets still continued to whistle over the abandoned fortress from time to time.

Yonder is a party of five or six soldiers approaching an earth hut. It forms a sort of a den, and is placed below the surface of the earth; only the round opening or entrance into it shows black in the distance. The sound of some one weeping in the earth hut comes to their ears. The soldiers halt, bend down, listen, discuss it among themselves, thrust their guns into the opening and fire into the darkness at the voice. At first the cries die away, but afterwards they increase in violence. The soldiers laugh, discharge a few more shots, and then march on, apparently with perfect satisfaction.

A long line of Kuban Cossacks comes to meet them, quietly threading their way among overturned kibitkas, ruined earth huts, abandoned household utensils, and rubbish. Each man carries a child in his arms, sometimes two. The babes, wearing tiny flat caps on their heads, nestle in terror close to their stern protectors.

At a distance of two hundred yards from the mounds, I see several women, in black hoods, sitting among the kibitkas. They are gazing about in all directions, as though

out of their senses. Among them are two or three who are very pretty, although much rouged; all the rest are old, and very ugly. This is probably the remnant of some harem. The commanding officers removed them from the fortress that same day, in company with others, and placed them under special supervision.

But now we have reached the mound itself, at which I had gazed so often through my field-glass. It is conical in form, and seventy feet high. Its slopes are all covered with the bodies of Tekintzi. I make my way to the summit and approach the celebrated cannon from which the Tekintzi, in spite of our most terrible cannonading from seventy cannon, kept up an obstinate fire to the very end of the assault. The cannon is bronze, of about four-pound calibre, and mounted on the clumsiest of wooden limbers.

From the top of the mound one could see for a very long distance. In the east, over the desert, the entire population of Geok-Tepe has dispersed, like a vast ant-hill. They are fleeing, abandoning in their flight not only their goods but their little children also. But Skobelev is no dawdler; with a detachment of dragoons and a few companies of Cossacks, he is already galloping close on the heels of the fugitives. He pursues them for about twelve versts: the Cossacks stab, and hew, and shoot. No mercy is shown to any one. Hundreds of corpses sharply indicate the road which the foe has taken across the sandy, yellow plain. As on the mound, so also around it, in the fortress, look where you will, everywhere a multitude of different bodies are to be seen. Some of them have evidently lain here a long time, and have already begun to decompose. The air is so impregnated with the odor of decaying bodies, and with a peculiar stifling smell of burning, that it turns one's stomach. For some reason, I do not yet see our dead. However, yonder lies one, on the very slope of the mound, covered, after a fashion, with a bit of linen.

I take my field-glass and scrutinize the fortress. The weather has cleared up a little. Beyond the walls of Geok-Tepe, to the south, stunted trees and clay kali are visible.

Inside the fortress, at the foot of the mound, a sort of barter is in progress. Throngs of soldiers are dragging thither all sorts of articles. In their hands can be seen rugs, pouches, garments, utensils, and weapons. I descend. It proves to be a perfect fair. Yonder goes a soldier with

a black band to his cap. On one shoulder is his gun, on the other a splendid Tekke rug. Bending a little beneath the weight of the rug, the soldier offers it to any one who desires to buy.

"Don't you want it, your Honor?" he says to his officer.

"What do you ask for it?" inquires the handsome, young officer, with a budding moustache. He steps up to the soldier in some confusion, examines the rug, and feels of the quality.

"Five rubles, your Honor."

The officer feels for his purse, takes out a five-ruble note, and hands it to the soldier. The latter, greatly pleased, flings the splendid rug directly upon the sand, puts away the money, and, having shifted his gun from his left shoulder to his right, goes off in search of new spoils.

Then only did I learn that Skobelev had given the fortress over to the good pleasure of his soldiery for the space of three days. A throng of purchasers congregate, and a still greater number of sellers.

Another soldier, an artilleryman, has hung upon his hand a magnificent Tekke bit, adorned with silver and cornelian. He shoves among his comrades and seeks a customer. The Cossacks, one after the other, try to purchase it. But its owner, perceiving that the article is fine, must be demanding too much. One after another, the Cossacks step up to him, curse, and walk away.

"What do you ask, hey, artilleryman?" I shout, beckoning to him.

"Fifteen rubles, most honorable sir!"

"Ten!"

"Pray, take it."

I give him the money and take the bit. The workmanship of the bit is a masterpiece. All the straps are ornamented with tiny decorations of figures, and with so much taste that one contemplates it with admiration.

There was nothing that could not be bought that day on the mound; rugs, and garments, and weapons, and horse-trappings, and so forth.

I purchased a considerable quantity of different objects. I give them all to an Osetin of my acquaintance, to carry to my tent, while I betake myself once more to the mound. I look through my field-glass and see, standing quite close

at hand, among the kibitkas, a Tekke race-horse. He is a beauty, light bay in color, and completely saddled: all one has to do is to mount and ride! "Well," I say to myself, "I won't let him slip. I must have him. His master is probably killed, and if I don't take the horse, some one else will." I take note of the direction, descend from the mound, pass several kibitkas, and halt.

No pen can describe the scene that presented itself to me there. Heaps of dead and dying men were mingled with animals, and barred my way. Throngs of women and children were calling for assistance. My heart stood still at the sight, and I turned back quite overwhelmed, entirely forgetting the horse.

All at once, before my very eyes, five soldiers rush into a large, smoke-blackened kibitka, wound around with a sort of woollen braid. An aged Tekinetz, of lofty stature, with a small grayish beard, springs out of the tent to meet them. Beneath his unfastened yellow gown a dirty shirt is seen. The old man, armed with a naked sabre, flings himself so fiercely upon the soldiers that they disperse in all directions, and stand in amazement for some time. But one, who must be the most daring, rushes forward and pricks the old man in the side with a sharp bayonet attached to a heavy gun. Pain and terror for an instant make their appearance on the old man's pale face. His mouth opens convulsively and displays a row of white teeth. The old man whimpers, stammers something in his own tongue, and flourishes his sabre as fiercely as ever. At that moment the rest of the soldiers fling themselves upon him and transfix him with their bayonets in any spot that chance offers.

The Tekinetz falls back dead. His heavy, white cap rolls from his head and lands near by.

This picture, I must confess, revolted me. With a shudder, I walked past the brave old man, who had defended his native nest, and returned to the mound. Here I met my Cossack with my horse. I mounted and rode along the fortress to the camp.

In the centre of Geok-Tepe there was a small square, formed, probably, in consequence of the fact that all the kibitkas had been moved away from it and nearer to the walls, as being a place where our shells most frequently fell. Here Skobleff overtakes me at a gallop, in company

with Grodekoff, and his Osetin body-guard. He reins in his horse, and shouts to me:—

“Verestchagin, you are appointed commandant of this fortress. Please to take charge of it, and see that no unbecoming deeds are committed!” Then he touches up his horse with the spur, and rides on at the same gallop. He has no sooner disappeared from view than I meet a Kirghiz belonging to the General’s escort. He is holding something on his saddle, under the skirt of his caftan.

“What have you there?” I inquire.

“Buy it, Major,” he lisps.

I look at it. It was in the nature of our feminine *kokoshnik*,¹ only much higher and broader. On the outside it was all embroidered with various silks, and decorated with various figured patterns in silver and gold, and with coins.

“How much do you want?” I ask him, all excited with the desire to obtain so interesting an article.

“Thirty rubles, Major!”

“Too much, my good fellow; twenty is sufficient.”

The Kirghiz agrees; I hand over the money, and ride to my tent perfectly happy.

In the meanwhile, the camp had been moved to another spot, on the western side of the fortress, and pitched about half a verst from the walls. When I entered the camp, there were very few men in it. All were still in the fortress, inspecting it, though it was not wholly safe to walk about it: discharges of rifles were incessantly ringing out there. In some of the earth huts, Tekintzi were still sitting, armed and defending themselves from our soldiery.

The entire fortress was set off in two sections, with a view to the preservation of order. The eastern section was under the charge of Captain Masloff; he established himself on the mound. I ruled over the western division. My garrison consisted at first of a few companies of infantry and hundreds of Cossacks, and four cannons. That same evening, I removed my effects from the camp, mounted my horse, and, accompanied by my Cossack, set out to take command in Geok-Tepe. I sought out for myself among the Tekke tents a very fine one, and ordered it to be

¹ A coronet-like head-dress. All these articles from the Akhal-Tekke oasis, Colonel Verestchagin gave to a museum in Kieff.—*Trans.*

placed on the square, between the infantry and the artillery, not far from the spot where the wall was demolished.

Night drew on. For a long time I could not get to sleep. It seemed to me every minute that the Tekintzi were returning from the desert, uniting with those who were sitting in their earth huts, and hurling themselves upon us.

At midnight, I step out to see what is going on around. The night is not especially dark. Here and there, through the whitish clouds, the starry sky peeps through. The weather is warm. The sentinel paces back and forth beside my tent, with as indifferent a look as though it were all the same to him where he walks: here, in Geok-Tepe, or at home in the Caucasus, in some Temikhran-Shur. Around me burn many camp-fires. Clouds of sparks rise heavenward. The soldiers are burning the bodies and all sorts of uncleanness. While I am thus gazing, the Cossack patrol marches up. It is making the rounds of the fortress to preserve order.

"Is all well?" I ask the orderly officer.

"Yes, most honorable sir. It is only possible to ride through the centre, and then almost on one side, among the tents. It's such a den that one can neither walk nor ride through it! All pits and earth huts, all heaped with corpses, — a perfect horror!"

"And have you seen the foot-sentinels?"

"Yes, they stand along that wall, and there," he says, in a soothing tone, and pointing. A quarter of an hour later a fresh Cossack patrol assembles in the vicinity of my tent, and sets out to make the rounds of the fortress.

I retire to my tent and lie down on a Tekke rug, which I had purchased just before of a soldier for three rubles. One end of this rug proves to be all covered with blood. In order to escape from the odor of corpses, which makes its way into my tent from the outside, I wrap my head in my coverlet — my felt cloak — and fall asleep at last.

Between six and seven o'clock in the morning, I step out of my tent and look about me: a few paces distant from me, on the hard, trampled square, some artillery soldiers are spreading out magnificent Tekke rugs, each finer than the other. The battery commander, a small, thin, cross-eyed man, dressed in a Swedish jacket, is walking from rug to rug, with a stern, business-like face, inspecting them and feeling them; some he orders to be held up to the light, in

order to prove whether they have been riddled by bullets ; then he orders them to be cleared away. I step up to the commander, greet him, and say : —

“Splendid rugs those, Colonel! Where did you get such fine ones?”

“Oh, they’re nothing in particular, the rugs are fair enough!” replies the commander, dryly, and shouts angrily to his men, exactly as though he were afraid that I should ask him for some of them :—

“Well, what are you loitering there for? I told you to take them away! And fold them smoothly!” And he gives one soldier a dig in the ribs, because the man has not turned out the corner of one of the rugs. The soldiers fold them carefully, and carry them off for safe-keeping in a caisson which stands open.

At that moment, an elderly, still vigorous officer, one of the commanders, rides past me from the camp, hand on hip, mounted on a dashing, sorrel pacer. His long, gray moustache floats in the breeze. His shaggy, bristling brows have drooped completely over his vivacious gray eyes. The officer is all bent out of position, sits sideways, draws his hand frequently over his moustache, and is evidently striving to produce an effect. Five men and six Cossacks, his escort, gallop after him at full speed.

“Eh — what is this!” I hear the cry of the elderly commander. “Stealing! Do you know what the like of you get for that! — Apply the whip to him!” he shouts to the Cossacks of his escort. They dash up to a soldier and flourish their whips.

“Lay the whole down here this instant!” The soldier lays at his feet a sack, filled with something.

“Cossack! Dismount! Place yourself here! And guard this sack for me more tenderly than the apple of your eye, until I send for it from camp!” So saying, the commander casts yet another menacing glance at the soldier, places his hand over his moustache, and dashes along the fortress to the mound with the swiftness of a bullet. The soldier gazes after him, scratches his head, and quietly retraces his steps — to rummage some more Tekintzi tents.

I approach the Cossack to learn what the sack contains. It seems that the contents consist of various feminine adornments in silver, bracelets, necklaces, ear-rings, divers coins, and the like.

No sooner have I reached my tent than I behold the moustached old officer flying back. He is all contorted like a fiend. His pacer seems all stretched out beneath him. His cap rests on the nape of his neck. His escort barely contrive to keep up with him at full gallop. And now he is quite near.

"Cossack! take the sack! Follow me!" his shout rings out — and the old commander gallop on. All at once he reins in his horse, and stands as though rooted to the spot. What has happened?

"Touch your cap, my dear sir! Touch your cap!" he shouts in an aged, quavering voice, and trembling in every limb with indignation. His countenance again assumes a menacing expression.

I approach, and see a young doctor standing in front of him. The doctor had passed him, buried in thought, quite without a suspicion of his presence, and had paid no attention to the officer, who had, evidently, expected to impress every one with his bearing and figure.

"I, Mr. Officer, am not bound to give the salute! I am not a military man. I am a doctor!" says the latter, in self-defence, and raises his hand to his cap in confusion.

"Not bound, indeed! You are bound, sir, you are bound! You are in the service!" shouts the old man, boiling more and more with wrath, and almost ready to cry. "Take your whips to him." At this moment I approach him.

"A-a-a, my dear fellow, how are you?" he exclaims, in quite a different voice. His wrath vanishes in an instant. He begins to embrace me, and then exclaims, pathetically: —

"Ah! what a man Mikhail Dmitryevitch is! A man of ge-e-nius!" And, as though in proof of his vast reverence for Skobelev, he droops his head somewhat on one side and shakes it.

Then he straightens himself up, and, pointing to the thousands of tents, he says, triumphantly, with pauses: —

"Only he, Mikhail Dmitryevitch Skobelev, could have taken them! He's a great magician and sorcerer!" I understood very well that this gentleman was uttering these words in the hope that I would repeat them to the General.

"Come to me, and drink a cup of tea!" I suggest to him.

"I ca-a-n't, my dear fellow, I ca-a-n't! I am buried in business up to my throat!" he exclaims, and touches with his finger the order that hangs at his neck. All at once, as though recalling something of especial importance, the old warrior presses my hand with a careworn countenance, knits his thick brows, wheels his horse about, and, flourishing his whip over his head, dashes off like a whirlwind out of the fortress, followed by his escort.

"Is he crazy, or what's the matter with him?" growls the young doctor.

The doctor had been standing beside us, not daring to move, ever since the old man had swooped down upon him.

"I don't know; he always seems like that," is my reply.

The doctor takes leave of me, and thoughtfully pursues his way.

On the following day after the taking of the fortress by storm, the neighboring inhabitants, the Kurds, flocked thither in throngs. I have never encountered a more repulsive and insolent race. On learning that the Tekintzi were conquered, they came to steal their goods. If the Russians had been vanquished, the Kurds would have rushed, with the same fury, in pursuit of them. They were real jackals in human semblance. All day long, from morning till night, they rushed through the fortress, from tent to tent, from earth hut to earth hut, with huge sacks on their backs. They stole and pillaged everything that fell under their hands. At first, the Kurds were permitted to enter the fortress. But they were caught exercising various brutalities and violence upon the Tekintzi; they tore the ear-rings with the flesh from the women's ears, and hewed off their hands at the wrists in order to get their bracelets. Then Skobeleff strictly prohibited their admission into the fortress of Geok-Tepe. But, in spite of the watchfulness of the Cossacks on guard, it seemed as though you could not walk through the fortress without meeting, somewhere among the tents, the ruffianly figure of a Kurd, bent double beneath a huge sack.

A bazaar was soon established beneath the walls of the fortress, whither flocked Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Persians, Kurds, and various other races, to purchase the goods of the Tekintzi.

A week had not elapsed when I had become quite accustomed to my position, and, in spite of the stifling atmosphere of decomposing bodies, I felt myself as comfortable as possible in the fortress.

The time is about mid-day. The weather is beautiful, sunny, and so warm that I am sitting outside my tent in nothing but my summer tunic. A throng of Tekintzi approach me, consisting of men only. Their wives have remained somewhat in the rear, with the camels, near the tents.

Such a handsome race as the Tekintzi are! What beautiful, regular features they have! All are clad in long gowns, and wear no arms. One of them is so tall that I am obliged to turn my head quite far back in order to look up at him. "Here," I say to myself, "when such a fellow brandishes a sabre, he will cut his man in two!" The Tekintzi halt opposite me with a good deal of pride, and begin to say something in their own language, pointing the while at the tents. They have come for their property.

"Hey, orderly officer!" I shout. A Cossack orderly runs from the adjoining tent, and comes towards me.

"Give them what is needed!" The Tekintzi follow the orderly in a group, talking together in guttural tones.

Once, in the evening, I am sitting in my tent. In front of me, along the wall, with their feet tucked under them, sit Tekke Khans and leaders, in bright blue and red gowns, given to them by Skobelev, as soon as they presented themselves in submission after the assault. On the breasts of some of them hang medals "for zeal." I treat my guests to coffee and tobacco. Just previous to this, they have all been looking up their property throughout the fortress, and then they have come to me to discuss matters. They often came to me in this manner afterwards. I was very glad to converse with them, although, of course, through an interpreter. The Tekintzi appeared to be such intelligent and sagacious people that I listened to their interesting stories with pleasure.

One swarthy old man, of low stature, somewhat bent, very broad in the shoulders, clad in a bright blue gown, with a medal on his breast, evidently enjoyed the special respect of the other Tekintzi. His long, black beard, mixed with gray, was twisted in two long rolls. They

called the old man Ekhti-Kuli-Khan. I converse with him through a young Armenian interpreter, dressed in a Cossack coat. I learn from their remarks, among other things, that all the tribes in the vicinity of the Tekintzi had divided for purposes of pillage. When one Khan made an incursion, no other thrust himself in with his horde, but kept his own place.

I questioned them about various things, and, among other points, I inquired what had done them the most harm during the siege. It appeared that it was our old-fashioned mortar bombs. As we knew, during the last part of the time, the Tekintzi had hidden themselves in holes or earth huts. And all at once a bomb would fall into such a pit, where a whole family — sometimes several families — were sitting. Before bursting, it began to hiss, to twist, and, finally, exploded with a crash. Of course, not many were left alive in the pit.

In the course of this conversation, it occurred to me to inquire whether these “alamantschiki,” as they were called (*alaman* signifies incursion), could not show me where to find the Tekke race-horse.

“Hey, listen there!” I say to the interpreter, who is sitting beside the old man, and, instead of entertaining his guest, borrowing tobacco from him and rolling himself a cigarette.

“What is your wish, your Honor?” he says, with his Armenian accent.

“Tell them that I wish to obtain a horse, and such a horse that the Shah of Persia shall have no better. Do you understand?”

“I understand, your Honor, I understand!” And he talks for a long time with my guests, flourishing his arms and frequently uttering the exclamation, “Tchok yashki!” (That is to say, “very good.”)

While this long explanation is in progress, the Tekintzi frequently glance at me, as though desirous of convincing themselves whether I desire this seriously, or whether I am jesting. But, seeing that I remain grave, and am awaiting their answer, they shake their heads thoughtfully, and glance askance at each other.

But now the interpreter has finished. The old men and all the rest begin a vivacious discussion among themselves. The names of divers “ogly” and “sardar” are

incessantly heard, and so on. At length, old Ekhti-Kuli-Khan, having conferred with his neighbor, also an old man like himself, touches the knee of the interpreter lightly with his fingers, as though desirous of attracting the latter's attention, and begins to explain something to him with remarkable vivacity. In the meanwhile, the old man frequently draws his palm along the twists of his shaggy beard. Ekhti-Kuli-Khan spoke with such a desire to oblige me, so evidently exerted himself and gesticulated, that, having finished his explanation, he seemed surprised that I could not hear the interpreter instantly, and understand his tale on the spot.

"Your Honor," begins the interpreter, "they say that if a certain man has not already gone off to Merv, his horse is the very best in all the oasis. It is a brown horse, and its left hind leg, here, just above the hoof, is white," and the interpreter points to his own leg, just above the ankle.

"Ask them why that particular horse is the best!" I say to my interpreter. The latter addresses my guests once more, and talks for a long time with them, whereupon Ekhti-Kuli-Khan again explains something with warmth, and finally turns to me and says:—

"They say, your Honor, that formerly, before the arrival of the Russians, they used to have races from Kizil-Arvat to Geok-Tepe. Twenty or thirty horses took part in such a race at once. They set out from Kizil-Arvat at sunrise, and the one who reached Geok-Tepe on the same day, before sunset, received a prize of five or six, sometimes of ten, camels. This horse, of which they speak, came in first on three occasions, and received the prize." While the interpreter is imparting this to me, old Ekhti-Kuli-Khan has been trying to divine from the expression of my face how his tale of the horse pleases me, and, when the interpreter has finished, he spreads out three of his fingers, and says: "Yutch, yutch," that is to say, "He took the prize three times."

"Really," I say to myself, "a horse must be good, to gallop from Kizil-Arvat to Geok-Tepe, one hundred and sixty versts, in one day."

"What may such a horse be worth?" I ask the old men.

"We do not know, we do not know!" they answer, and then they say that with them a good horse is worth three, four, or five hundred *tumani*, which makes, in our money,

reckoning a *tuman* at four rubles, from twelve hundred to two thousand rubles, but that there are horses which cost much more. I entreat my guests, with much earnestness, to fetch such a horse for my inspection. They all promise, bow low, thank me for my sympathy, go off, and that is the last I ever see of them. So it was not my fate to behold the famous brown Tekke horse.

I remained in the fortress until nearly the middle of February, and then went forward with Skobelev. Properly speaking, our Tekke campaign closed with the storming of Geok-Tepe. After that, there were no more military actions. The pacification of the territory and the establishment of boundaries was begun. Kuropatkin went in pursuit of the Tekintzi. He overtook them, disarmed them, and despatched representatives to Skobelev, bearing their surrender. After this, Kuropatkin and his detachment departed once more to Turkestan.

The farthest point which we reached during this expedition was the little Persian town of Luft-Abad. It cuts into the oasis like a wedge. Here we halted and remained for a long time. Here also we received the sad news of the death of the Emperor Alexander Nikolaevitch. We were all terribly affected by this news, especially Skobelev. From that day forth, I never saw him cheerful in Luft-Abad. He would forget himself for a moment in the course of conversation, and smile, but immediately become gloomy again. At the end of April, Skobelev and his staff returned to Russia.

The day is gloomy and very warm. Between Bami and Kizil-Arvat, on the open, clayey plain, which looks exactly as though sprinkled with white sand, crawls a huge regimental baggage-wagon, drawn by four lank horses of different colors. On hay, in the bottom of the wagon, covered with a dark red Tekke rug, lie two infantry officers, and between them myself. Behind the wagon rides my Cossack, Pogoryeloff, leading my horse.

"Yes, sir, that is true," exclaims, after a prolonged silence, one of my companions, a fat captain, with a round,

smooth-shaven chin, and on his head a cap with a blue band. "A year ago, we could not have ridden thus here. The Tekintzi would speedily have placed fetters on our feet. But now, really, it is as it is with us at home, in the Caucasus. It is even quieter."

"You couldn't have marched there with a regiment without hindrances, in earlier days," asserts my other fellow-traveller, in a sleepy voice, and without lifting his head from the rug, an elderly staff-captain, with thick red whiskers, who also wears a cap with a blue band. He has taken off his shoes, and is lying barefooted, as his feet are perspiring heavily. Our wagon is very large. The rear part of it is laden with bales and divers Tekke goods, rugs, garments, various silver ornaments, weapons, and so forth.

We drag along, step by step. The horses are weary, they will not go. The shouts of the soldier driver alone break the silence. It is tiresome to ride thus. More than half an hour has already elapsed, and not one of us has uttered a word. We have become tired of talking. I glance at one of my companions — he is sleeping, and even snoring. I look at the other, and he too is dozing. I also place myself in the most comfortable position possible, to see whether I cannot fall asleep:—

"The ma-ma said to her dau-au-aughter,
Be-ware, Ma-asha, of pranks!
Crafty are Me-en. . . ."

sings some one behind the wagon, in a thin, unfamiliar voice. Can it be that my Pogoryeloff is exerting himself to this extent? I glance round. I am not mistaken. Pogoryeloff seems to have decreased his stature with his exertions, his chin has sunk completely into the collar of his tunic. I listened to that song for a long time. And what things he did not recapitulate in it, and what delightful things did he present in that song!—"Wife, give me tea with sugar biscuits," and "Wife, give me a pipe of tobacco," and so on. Finally, he finished, coughed, spit to one side, and began again to purr through his moustache in the same womanish voice, only more cheerfully:—

"Oï, along the shore I strolled,
Plucked the artemisia-a-a. . . ."

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