

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE TO RED FLAG

By

GENERAL P. N. KRASSNOFF

*Translated from the Second Russian
Edition by Erik Law-Gisiko*

With an Introduction by

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Walter Bryant 1939



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CONTENTS

PART ONE	Page 3
PART TWO	Page 255
PART THREE	Page 377
PART FOUR	Page 469
PART FIVE	Page 655
PART SIX	Page 745

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE TO FOREIGN EDITION

BEFORE presenting the translation of General Krassnoff's book "From Double Eagle to Red Flag" to the English-speaking public, the translators would like to introduce the author and his work.

The well-known Russian writer Kouprin expresses his opinion of this book in the Paris newspaper "La Cause Commune" in the following terms:

"General Krassnoff has much to narrate. He has witnessed and himself taken part in many events during these terrible years, events so horrible and great, gruesome and heroic, that they would have sufficed for at least ten ordinary lives. And one must admit, judging by the first volume, that the author describes vividly and with real talent all the facts he is acquainted with and the events he has personally witnessed and experienced."

The author has had indeed exceptional opportunities for observation. A Don Cossack by birth, he began his military career as a Lieutenant in the Atamansky Guard Cossack regiment at St. Petersburg, and soon became known as a dashing cavalry officer and sportsman, and as a writer on military subjects. During the Japanese war he was at the front as a military correspondent. On his return he served in various parts of European Russia and in Siberia. The Great War found him in command of a Cossack cavalry regiment in Poland, at the head of which he won by a brilliant charge his St. George's cross. He successively commanded a cavalry brigade, a division and the famous 3rd Cavalry Corps.

When the Bolshevik revolution broke out, General Krassnoff left the North and reached the Don region after many adventures and narrow escapes. In the spring of 1918 the Don Cossacks rose against the Bolshevik rule, and the Don Parliament in its first session elected General Krassnoff Ataman of the Don. He filled this post during nine months. The situation he had

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

to face was an extremely difficult one. The Region had suffered greatly from the anarchical rule of the Bolsheviks, but in spite of this he organized a regular Don army and freed the whole of the Don Region. In the spring of 1919 he resigned under the pressure of influences foreign to the Cossacks and left South Russia. He lived for some time at Batoum, where he continued to work on the first volume of his book, which he had begun while living in seclusion in a distant Cossack village before his election as Ataman.

During his full and interesting life General Krassnoff has had the opportunity of coming into closest touch with the various classes of Russian society, and of meeting the most prominent and interesting personalities of the time. We believe that he has succeeded in giving an exact picture of the events which preceded and caused the Revolution, as well as of the chaos of ideas in Russia during the tragic reign of the Emperor Nicholas II, which was the chief cause of the terrible catastrophe.

"General Krassnoff tells us in his book many straight-forward and painful truths," writes Kouprin. "It is necessary to note, that because of this, his book has already provoked indignation in certain circles."

We would like to emphasize once more, that the chief interest of the book consists in its being a vivid picture of the mentality of various classes of society of the period, which led to the fall of one of the greatest Empires of the world.

It is most valuable as an historical chronicle of its time.

The book was originally published in Russia in four volumes, the first of which embraced the period from 1894 till the beginning of the Great War, the second described the war itself and the first months of the revolution up to the seizing of power by the Bolsheviks, the third, entitled "The Martyrs" dealt with the Civil war, and the fourth described life under the rule of the Bolsheviks.

We trust that the translation of this book into English will help many to gain a clearer insight into the events of the past few years in Russia.

INTRODUCTION

There is a notion abroad that a preface must needs be unservedly laudatory. An unhealthy delusion! A preface should, for the most part, be critical and explanative. Here is a book—a provocative document that cannot be launched into a complacent Anglo-Saxon world without some sort of an explanation. Then let me attempt one. "From Double Eagle to Red Flag" was born of the debris of Imperial Russia, conceived in the shadow of Leo Tolstoy's historical narrative, by a Russian General with exceptional opportunities, an expert on his subject (and that is what makes it so interesting), possessed of keen observation and uncommon literary skill. It is, in the nature of things, monumental; not unlike the London Albert Memorial. And withal the book has a stark, a naked, a terrible fascination. I confess I could not put it down.

What is its hold? Some will say it is art: the grandiose, leisurely novel dealing with Russian reality true to type: "War and Peace" brought up to date. Others will say it's photography. Others again, that it is Victor Hugo at his best. Never mind what they say—start at the beginning, read twenty pages, and you will not stop till you have come to the end. This, say what you will, is an achievement of which the author, the meditative Don Cossack General, Peter Krassnoff, may be justly proud. I venture to prophesy a large public for this epic historical novel covering a quarter of a century—our quarter. And who will deny historical magnitude to our days?

Oh, the great Russian soul! Oh, the colossal Russian mind! It is overwhelming. It is like some gigantic machine of marvellous design and construction—with a hitch that prevents it from working; like a born orator, with an impediment in his speech. Russia will not change. There will arise some new Peter the Great, who will conceive a new plan, let us say, for

INTRODUCTION

electrifying the whole of Russia, with a stroke of the pen. On the margin of the ministerial report he will write the words: "Electrify Russia at once." And the contractors will duly bribe the authorities and supply rotten material, get rich, and the scheme will be crippled at birth. In this lies the humor and genius of the race. It needed a Chehov to see it, a Chehov who seemed a little weary of people knocking at the window of his bedroom at about half past two in the morning, anxious for a "soul-to-soul" talk. A Chehov who walked a little outside and beside life. Here you get it all—the unashamed, frank, childish account of it, with a perfect absence of guile, by a nice, well-meaning military gentleman who indeed has never stepped outside it. An officer who is trying to tell you how different it would have been had the other officers of the Guards been a little different to the soldiers. I don't know. I have a sneaking feeling that it becomes so gross and low-brow a thing as an army to have low-brow ruffians to direct it. If the officers turned philosophers, poets, or scholars, they might find themselves questioning their objective and losing interest in their work. You may entirely disregard, as I do, the political implications of this book and still feel its relative truth, as I feel it. The General has been moderate and honest—to the full capacity of his own interpretation of these terms. And who can be more? There runs through his work a doleful note, a sense of frustration and melancholy at the emptiness of "la gloire"—together with a slight irritation at the constant delay of its coming. You read and feel sorry.

A new Tolstoy? A new Dostoevski? No, no; spare us that. It is rather the very personal, very vivid and graphic account by an eye-witness of the things which really did happen at the Imperial Court (even the names of most of the persons are real: nothing has been hidden), of the intimate life of the officers of the Guards, of the soldiers and people, of the coming Revolution; but chiefly of the glittering life in high quarters. The central figure is the leisured aristocrat, Sablin, the dashing young guardsman par Excellence, whose life is involved, from the time of his seduction by a demi-mondaine to the day of

INTRODUCTION

his death at the hand of his own son. The Emperor and Empress of Russia walk the pages again and again, looking, for all the world, thoroughly alive. The Russian Army stands before you in all its gregarious variety; the military manœuvres are painted to the life. Court functions, balls, grand dukes and foreign ambassadors, funerals, banquets, coronations, dissipations, all the resplendid regimental displays. What pomp! What descriptions! Well done, General! Moreover, there is Rasputin. There are intrigues, love of the sacred and profane variety. . . . It is as good as Zola; It is as good as Dumas—père and fils and all the lot of them put together.

—William Gerhardt.

London, February, 1926.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE TO RED FLAG

PART ONE

I

PAVEL IVANOVITCH GRITZENKO, the C. O. of the 2nd squadron, had arranged an evening in his bachelor apartments to which were invited the officers of his regiment, some of his friends from other units and two demimondaines, rising stars of the Petrograd horizon, Katerina Filipovna Fisher and Vladislava Ignatievna Pankratova—Kitty and Vladia. They were sisters, but had adopted different names for convenience. Both were young—Kitty twenty-two and Vladia only nineteen, both handsome, tall, elegantly dressed. They had begun as artists' models and then had somehow entered the Petersburg demi-monde where they had great success among the youthful guardsmen. They had finished at high school, could write a note correctly and spoke fluent French. They quickly learned to understand wine and horses and adorned by their presence many a merry meeting of bachelors.

The spring had just begun at Petersburg and the white nights were full of the fragrance of the opening buds.

Dawn was already breaking in the east lighting the whitish sky. The streets were deserted and quiet. From the Neva came the peculiar smell of water and coal and from time to time were heard the sirens of steamers.

Before the door of the officers' wing stood a closed carriage for Kitty and Vladia, and several night cabs had assembled before the lighted windows.

The rooms of Gritzenko were full of tobacco smoke. The

host had opened the windows and through them could be heard loud conversation, laughter and constantly interrupted singing and music. The supper was already finished and two orderlies were busy clearing the wine-stained table covered with old family plate. Some of the guests were still sitting at the table, some were settled near the windows, others were walking backwards and forwards.

Gritzenko, a young cavalry captain, was carelessly stretched on a sofa, twanging a guitar. He was a handsome dark man with black slightly curling hair, big gypsy eyes and a long drooping moustache. He was dressed in trousers, small patent leather shoes and unbuttoned tunic under which a red silk shirt was seen.

Kitty in a blue silk evening gown and Vladia in a similar pink one were reclining near him. Vladia had drunk too much that evening and felt ill, but Kitty who had just reached high spirits, sang in a low voice and her large blue eyes were greedily scanning the guests.

They were all officers and all more or less known to her. Conspicuous among them was Stepan Alexeievitch Vorobieff, a short middle aged colonel, permanent member of all bachelor meetings and a passionate card player. He had a brown unhealthy looking face, as if the smoke of countless cigars and cigarettes had coloured his skin. His hair was brown and thick and he had a long moustache. He was dressed in a long tunic buttoned up to the top, long blue trousers and old boots much worn.

He walked up and down the room and kept throwing longing glances through the opened doors into the study of the host where card tables with unsealed packets of cards on them were prepared.

Captain Ivan Sergeievitch Matzneff had thrown back the curtains and was dreamily looking on the deserted boulevard and the pale sky. He was about thirty years of age, bald, clean shaven and with the reputation of a cynic and philosopher.

Lieutenant Manotskoff of the Cossack Guards was engaged in a heated dispute about the merits of his horse. He was

sitting in a corner surrounded by young officers with glasses of champagne before them, and nervously smoked cigarette after cigarette.

In all there were about fourteen guests.

The moment had come when it was necessary either to go home or find something new to do. Vorobieff thought that it was time to proceed to the card tables—the chief reason for his presence. Drive the ladies home, entrusting them to some youngster, and then settle down to makao or chemin de fer.

But the youngsters wanted to talk and sing a little more. A considerable amount of wine had already been drunk but all were more or less sober. Less sober than any one was the host himself. He usually got merry quickly, but once having reached that state, could drink unlimited quantities and remain on the same level of loose turbulent happiness, noisy songs, violent gestures and universal amiability.

He threw aside the guitar, jumped up and shouted, his merry voice echoing through the flat.

“Zahar! Wine!”

Zahar, Gritzenko's orderly, a young, tall, handsome recruit, typically Russian, wearing a white shirt, dashed towards him with a bottle of red wine and a big glass.

A resounding smack made everyone start and turn round. Gritzenko had hit the soldier on the face.

“Animal! How long have you served me and yet you don't know the names of things!” shouted Gritzenko. “What did I ask for?”

“Wine, Your Honour,” perplexedly answered the soldier, his face growing pale.

“And you, animal, brought me pigwash! Wine means champagne, you idiot!”

“Pavel Ivanovitch,” a young voice full of sincere indignation rang from the other end of the room, “you should not hit a soldier. It is abominable, and conduct unworthy of a man of birth and an officer!”

A tall youth came forward. His ruddy face with a hardly noticeable moustache was ablaze with indignation. His large

dark eyes flashed angrily. His elegant figure was clad in a tunic buttoned to the very top and in tight fitting breeches. Coming up he stood before Gritzenko separating him from the completely disconcerted orderly.

"Lieutenant Sablin! You forget yourself! You are mad!" exclaimed Gritzenko stammering with anger. "How dare you criticize my conduct!" His face had become purple.

"What is it, gentlemen?" asked Colonel Vorobieff, swiftly and noiselessly approaching Sablin.

"Lieutenant Sablin!" he said "You are wrong! You have no right to make such remarks to your squadron commander. Captain Gritzenko, you acted hotheadedly when you hit your orderly. Yes, yes, but there is no reason for a quarrel. It is your own fault, Captain . . . And, gentlemen! . . . Peace . . . Well . . . peace in the name of the honour of our regiment. Shake hands . . . Well . . ."

"I cannot," said Sablin, quietly but firmly, "if he had offended me, it would have been different, but he has offended a soldier. It is himself he has offended."

But Gritzenko was resourceful.

"Zahar, come here," he said. "I hit you, I hit you lovingly, do you understand? I will kiss you,—lovingly kiss you."

And taking Zahar's cheeks in both hands he bent his head and kissed him on the lips. Then slightly pushing him away he shook his finger at him and reproachfully said:

"Ah, Zahar, Zahar. You are very trying! Remember: only champagne is called wine, everything else is pigwash. Have I not taught you this? Have I? What is tea?"

"Pigwash, Your Honour," quickly answered the soldier.

"Well, you know . . .," Gritzenko kissed the soldier again and said—"Go now."

But as soon as he turned round he shouted out.

"The singers, Zahar, and quick!" . . .

"Pavel Ivanovitch," said Vorobieff, "it is four o'clock now. The men are still sleeping and will soon have to rise for the morning work. Leave the singers alone!"

Gritzenko only smiled merrily.

TO RED FLAG

"I want! I wish—I want to show this jackanapes that the men love me and that it's nothing," he made a gesture with the hand, "they do not mind as long as they are loved and not ill-treated. That is so, dear Steepochka, and do not interfere with me. Two songs. You understand? Two songs. And he will sing to us," he laughed,—“Leo Tolstoi!”

Sablin shrugged his shoulders and strolled away. He could not be angry with Gritzenko.

II

WHILE everyone waited for the singers, Steepochka cast annoyed glances at the ladies. They had not decided to leave at the right moment, and now the card playing was disarranged. No one wanted to play in their presence.

"Sing something, Katerina Filipovna," he said, "what is the use of sitting like this."

"Good, I will accompany on the guitar," said Gritzenko sitting down by the ladies, "Well?"

Kitty shook herself. Young, well formed, with a blush on her cheeks, she appeared very beautiful.

"Shall I sing 'The letter?'" she said.

"Good," exclaimed Gritzenko and swaying from side to side with the guitar began to play.

Kitty sang the first verse and an improvised chorus picked up its last lines.

"Excellent, bravo, bravo," shouted Steepochka.

Gritzenko, flashing his gypsy eyes, sang falsetto but very musically and correctly the second verse.

Everyone laughed and Kitty and Vladia more than anyone.

"Now let Sablin sing the Cadet song," shouted Rotbek and pulled Sablin by the sleeve towards the piano in the corner of the room.

Sablin touched several chords and the officers gathered round the piano.

The merry song rang through the room and Kitty's clear voice was distinctly heard above the deep tones of the men where the words were most risqué and suggestive.

III

THE singers arrived. There were twenty-five of them and a stout decorated sergeant-major. The soldiers were dressed in clean white shirts with elk-skin belts, new breeches and highly polished top boots with spurs. The sergeant was in a tunic embroidered with gold and silver chevrons, medals were on his breast and neck and a silver chain of diminutive rifles for good marksmanship hung from one of the buttons of his tunic. They brought with them the aroma of lime-trees, morning, spring and a strong smell of boot polish.

Stepochka greeted them. The choir-leader, the squadron clerk, a short young soldier with a clever malicious face, stepped forward, put his hands behind his back and put one foot forward. He had a very good tenor voice, had received a musical education and knew what he was worth. He glanced malignantly round the dining room, at the wine and the women and began to sing in a clear ringing voice which seemed to grip at one's heart. Having finished the first verse he waved his hand, turned to the choir and the clear melody speaking of the gallant deeds of old days and the glory of the regiment in many a battle, softly rang through the room.

"Now," said Gritzenko when they had finished, growing softer from the proud consciousness that they were his singers, his squadron, "you must hear a duet that our fierce Sasha Sablin will sing with Lubovin. It is as good as an opera."

"Sing Sablin."

"Sasha, sing," voices were heard.

Sablin came forward. A good musician, accustomed as a Cadet to sing in a choir, Sablin was now greatly attracted by the choir leader, Lubovin, and hoped to arrange for him to enter the Conservatoire and go on the stage. Lubovin taught him new songs.

"Let us have yours, Lubovin."

"Yes, sir."

Two voices blended together and told the sad tale of the wretched life of a peasant.

TO RED FLAG

Kitty sitting next to Stepochka, languidly stretching herself and half closing her blue eyes, fixed them on Sablin entranced by his youth, beauty and strength.

"Stepochka, dear," she whispered to Vorobieff, "it can't be true that Sablin—never, not a single time?"

"Yes, it is," said Stepochka examining the rings on her soft burning fingers.

"No? How nice! He does not know at all. Has not seen?"

"I assure you."

"What rapture, Stepochka dear, arrange this. . . . Arrange that I . . . should be the first."

"Well, I will try."

"You darling!"

"Tss . . ." hissed someone.

Sablin and Lubovin were finishing their song.

Stepochka had enough of singing. It was already six o'clock. The rays of the sun were penetrating the drawn curtains and church bells were heard tolling.

"It is time to finish, Pavel Ivanovitch, and to send them to do the grooming," he said.

"One more yet. . . . My favourite!" said Gritzenko.

The sergeant gave an order and the choir picked up the wide ringing notes of a sentimental song describing the death of a Cavalry commander at the head of his charging men. Gritzenko loved it all the more when he was under the influence of wine. When his men finished the song he stood up and kissed them all one after another. Tears were shining in his eyes. At that moment he sincerely loved them all. He took out twenty-five rubles and gave them to the sergeant.

"Thank you, brothers," he said in a voice which rang with feeling.

"We are happy to try," automatically shouted the singers.

"Well, go home. I cancel the morning drill, sergeant," said Gritzenko.

The choir began to leave the room and the ladies also stood up.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Lieutenant Sablin," said Stepochka imperatively, "accompany the ladies home."

"But . . . colonel . . ." muttered Sablin taken aback.—"I . . ."

"No 'buts' my friend. You alone do not play cards and are quite sober. March!"

Sablin clumsily walked up to the ladies and said:—"I am at your disposal."

IV

THEY did not speak in the carriage. The air was close and smelt of perfume and wine. Vladia was very pale—the rocking of the carriage made her feel sick. Kitty felt intoxicated by the wine but even more by the vicinity of the young officer for whom she felt a sudden passion.

His noble action, his singing, youth and beauty, all this had turned her head and she passionately wished to experience his first awakened love. She could not speak, for fear of scaring him. He was evidently very shy where women were concerned and already she was thinking out a plan to make him hers.

They had not far to go and the carriage stopped in the Offiterskaya before a large house. A sleepy porter opened the wicket and they passed into the yard. Kitty rang the bell at the door of her lodging and a respectable even severe looking middle aged house maid in lace-trimmed cap and apron opened it.

Sablin wanted to take his leave.

"Where do you want to go, dear man," said Kitty, "no, come in for a moment, I have two words to write to Gritzenko. Do come."

Having taken off his coat Sablin entered the drawing room with his cap in his hands. Pale violet curtains were still drawn but behind them the sun shone brightly and spread a pleasant light through the room. A big mirror in a gilded frame was standing between the windows. On a small shelf under it stood a basket of hyacinths filling the room with a spicy scent. An-

other big basket with the same flowers stood in a gilded flower stand near the window.

Against one of the walls stood a grand piano covered with Japanese embroideries. Over the piano hung a portrait of Kitty unskillfully drawn, evidently a first effort by an unexperienced painter.

On the piano stood photographs of Cadets and very young officers.

On the opposite wall hung another mirror and shelves with various trifles. On a round table stood a shaded lamp and albums. A sofa and several arm chairs were scattered about the room.

The whole conveyed an impression of cheap luxury but showed a certain amount of taste in the hostess.

The curtains, embroideries and armchairs were all of the same tones—pale violet and gold. The colour scheme was followed in the rug and the lamp shade.

On the mantelshef stood big photographs of the Emperor and the Empress in large frames.

Three doors opened into the drawing room. One into the small antechamber, another into the room of Vladia and the last one into the room of Kitty. That last was half closed by a Japanese curtain made out of rushes and beads.

Vladia quickly entered her room and angrily slammed the door behind her. Kitty also went to her room but did not shut the door. Sablin stood in the middle of the drawing room and felt very uncomfortable. He wanted to go but felt ashamed to do so like a thief, without saying good bye.

Kitty did not even think of writing a letter. One could hear her walking about the room evidently undressing. She approached the door and through the rushes and beads Sablin saw in the semidarkness of the bedroom a graceful shape clad in seductive linen. The fragrance of the hyacinths made him feel giddy.

Fifteen minutes passed. In Kitty's room was heard the splashing of water.

At last noiselessly treading on the carpet she entered the drawing room.

Her golden hair was done in a fancy Greek style and was tightly wound round by blue ribbons. Her headdress reminded Sablin of some pictures of ancient Greek women he had seen.

Her face notwithstanding the sleepless night looked fresh and youthful and her eyes shone from under heavily painted lashes.

A Japanese lilac silk night gown was thrown over her shoulders and draped her graceful figure.

Catlike, with small steps she came up to the looking glass and stood proudly looking at her reflection over her shoulder in the coquettish pose of a model.

"Well, I have not been long," she said, but her eyes seemed to convey different things:—"look at me, I belong entirely to you. Take me! It is allowed," they seemed to say.

Sablin did not answer. He was breathing heavily. Blood first rushed to his face then left it quite pale. A kind of mist swam before his eyes. But more than anything else he felt confused and disconcerted. He did not know what to do with his hands and kept twitching his cap in them.

Suddenly the night gown, which was held only by a button, slipped from the shoulders of Kitty and fell round her feet. She appeared before him naked and beautiful. Slightly smiling she looked at him.

Sablin sighed but did not move. He realised Kitty's beauty, but at that moment he forgot who she was and stood admiring her perfect shape and colour as he would have admired the statue of an ancient goddess.

Kitty waited. A long minute passed. Suddenly she felt a sense of burning shame and hid her face with her hands. She looked through her fingers once more at Sablin and snatching up her night gown covered herself with it as best she could, rushed back to her room, slammed the door and twice turned the key in the lock.

Not passion but shame and discomfiture she read in the gaze of the beautiful youth, and in that moment she felt that she loved him, loved him too much to surrender so easily. If Sablin

TO RED FLAG

had now tried to enter her bed-room, had implored at her door, she would not have let him in. She was painfully ashamed and quietly sobbed in her bed, covering her head with the blanket.

Sablin stood still for a moment as if thinking something over. Everything was quiet. He entered the deserted ante-room, put on his overcoat, opened the door and quickly ran down the staircase.

V

THE blood throbbed in his temples. He felt strong, alert. All his sleepiness had vanished. He walked swiftly with long strides. The perfume of the hyacinths and the figure of the woman seemed to pursue him. Now in imagination he pictured a very different ending to the scene in which he had just taken part.

He wished to return but felt that he could not. He pictured to himself the dark antechamber, the maid with the solemn face, and felt that he would feel only shame in that quiet drawing room full of shaded morning light, lilac tones and the scent of the hyacinths.

He breathed deeply the fresh morning air and hurried on to the barracks. When he came out on to the canal he stopped short, so beautiful did Petersburg appear. The sky was blue and the morning sun gilded the river which rippled in the fresh breeze. The dirty water looked quite blue. The turret and the porch of the German school with its background of innumerable houses stood out severely.

The hoofs of a smart grey race-horse out on its morning exercise rapped out a distinct tune on the wooden pavement, which smelled of fresh tar. Policemen in long dark overcoats walked up and down the street.

The larch trees of St. Isaacs square seemed to be the emblem of the sadness of the north. The great golden dome of the Cathedral supported by slender columns and surrounded by huge angels with torches shone out brilliantly in the sunlight. From the left side scaffoldings were clumsily built up, but Sablin liked even them. They reminded him of the days of

his youth and without them St. Isaacs Cathedral would not seem half so dear to him.

The Alexandrovsky garden was covered by thin green needles of young fresh grass pushing their way out of the earth. From the Neva the wind seemed to bring a mighty breath of freshness, width and space. The pale sky shone through the trees of the garden and lighted the columns of the Senate, the broad building of the riding school, the Admiralty with its white facades intermixed with columns and arches.

All this was full of a peculiar fascination that morning and in a somewhat strange manner that fascination mixed itself in the mind of Sablin with the beauty of the golden haired Kitty. But by an effort of his will Sablin chased away the thought.

"Where shall I go," he asked himself. It was eight o'clock and time to go to the squadron. But the drill had been cancelled that morning. To go home, drink tea and spend the long morning till lunch time in his bachelor's den was too dreary. Sablin was passing before the door of Gritzenko. He stopped, thought for a moment and entered.

The doors were open and orderlies from the Mess were carrying out baskets with empty bottles, crockery and tablecloths.

In the dining room a samovar was boiling, throwing out clouds of smoke towards the ceiling. Zahar, who had not slept all night, was setting the table.

From the study, where, notwithstanding the broad daylight, candles were still burning and the curtains were lowered, hoarse exclamations were heard.

Gambling was proceeding at two tables. In the corner, where Gritzenko, Vorobieff and four other officers were sitting, a serious game was played and the stakes were high. A heap of gold and multi-coloured bank notes lay on the table. Manot-skoff in an unbuttoned tunic with a grey face and shining eyes was standing by and greedily looking on. From time to time he took a card.

Gritzenko with the sleeves of his red shirt rolled up over the elbows was nervously shuffling the cards.

TO RED FLAG

Stepochka in a closely buttoned tunic played apparently carelessly, whistling songs and arias at the same time, but his eyes had a sharp and attentive look.

At the other table the game was less serious and only notes with chalk were made. Matzneff was at the head of this party which was composed of Rotbek, comrade of Sablin, Fetisoff, his senior by a year, and three officers of another squadron who kept making efforts to leave and go to the morning drill, but could not do so. Matzneff raised his head, looked meaningly at Sablin and exclaimed, turning the general attention to him:

"Ah! I congratulate you! But why so soon, Sasha?"

Sablin was confused, feeling the scrutiny of several pairs of suggestively curious eyes. Even Stepochka let his attention wander from the cards for a moment and said:

"You have seen them home safely?"

"Yes," said Sablin.

"And then?" asked Matzneff.

"Nothing."

"Fairy tales!"

"Fairy tales whispered the flowers to her," Stepochka sang.

"Your bet," he said to Manotskoff.

"Ten."

"Twenty-five."

Sablin was forgotten. He went into the next room, which was Gritzenko's library, took a book from one of the shelves, stretched himself on the sofa and began to read.

He read but did not understand what he was reading. He felt again the enervating perfume of the hyacinths, saw the white body; and a feeling of mixed shame and lassitude crept over him. The excitement of the sleepless night began to tell; the book fell from his hands and he dozed.

He was awakened by a hand laid upon his shoulder.

"You sleep, Sasha," said a voice and somebody sat down near him.

Sablin opened his eyes—it was Matzneff.

"What do you want?" he said, angry at being waked up.

"Nothing or very little," answered Matzneff, "had no luck Sasha?"

"Leave me alone, Ivan Sergeievitch."

"Why? You had better follow the advice of a man experienced in these matters."

Matzneff took Sablin's hand in his.

"You don't know how to love yet," he said,—*"look here Sasha . . . What a pity that you have not read Anacreon. . . . do not know Ovid. Only in the world of ancient beauty can you forget the triviality of modern life. What a pity that you are not educated. . . . Do not be angry and do not protest, my friend. Your education is the education of a light-headed girl. Not more. A little history, a little geography, a lot of patriotism, unlimited loyalty to the Emperor. . . ."*

"Do not speak like this, Ivan Sergeievitch," said Sablin, freeing his hand from Matzneff's grasp.

"I know, Sasha. But remember that I can speak like this because I am myself loyal to the Monarchy and to the Monarch. Russia cannot be other than she is. But, Sasha, even I may be allowed to be melancholy and to feel other thoughts and longings. Have you read the history of the French Revolution, Sasha? Do you understand the great spirit of Napoleon? I have spent whole nights over memories of that great epoch and two worlds are comprehensible to me and seem equally worthy of imitation,—the world where the great principles of the rights of man were forged and the world of ancient beauty. Sasha, do you realise that with your great physical beauty you look like a statue of an ancient god and yet you are ignorant and understand no more of life and beauty than a young calf galloping in a field with its tail in the air?"

Sablin smiled indulgently, recalling that Matzneff had the reputation of the worst rider and officer in the regiment. No one was reprimanded so often for arriving late and being absent from drill and for lack of interest in his work.

Matzneff understood his smile.

"Ah, Sasha. Can it be that you also are only a lump of 'cannonfodder' without nerves and brains? Can it be that you

TO RED FLAG

will never be able to raise yourself in spirit and leave the world of reality for the world of dreams and reverie! Well carry on! Love anything that falls into your hands, hurry so as not to lose moments of so called happiness, moments when the heart leaps sensuously and when the world seems beautiful. When a Finnish maid appears to be a goddess of beauty and a ballet dancer an unattainable ideal. Catch these moments! You will never understand the deep meaning of life. Only do not seek purity in love, but only beauty."

"When your indignation burst out at the behaviour of Gritzenko everyone saw the nobleness of your soul. Good chap, Sasha! He deserved it. It is time to forget these relics of the days of serfdom. It is time to become men. But remember, Sasha, that you cannot become a man in the military service."

"But why," said Sablin. On the contrary. . . . It is just there in the military service, which means chivalry—which means the greatest possible renouncement of ones self; the realisation in life of the greatest of Christ's orders!"

"Sasha, you are a child! And what is more, uneducated child! You believe in this—'A Dieu mon ame, ma vie au roi, mon coeur aux dames, l'honneur pour moi.' You must be happy! You believe in this because you are a child. Well, be one! Only remember: take all that you can from life. Take and do not waver. Have you read Schopenhauer's 'The World as Will and Idea'? No, it was silly of me to suppose you had. You have read nothing. There must be nothing higher for you than the philosophy of de Maupassant, and even Zola must seem heavy. . . . Well, Sasha, carry on! You had no luck? You are disappointed? Never mind, we will find you another!"

"Leave me alone," said Sablin growing pale with anger,—
"you cannot help saying something unclean."

"Beautifully said."

"Ivan Sergeievitch, I've had enough of this," said Sablin; and shrugging his shoulders he walked out of the library.

One desire was dominating in him—to sleep, and to destroy by sleep all the impressions of the last twenty-four hours.

VI

THERE was no drill in the 2nd squadron. All the windows of the vast barrack with long rows of beds neatly covered by grey blankets were wide open.

Soldiers were idly standing by the windows and looking out on the wide courtyard. One part of it was separated by a high fence so as to form a narrow alley across which obstacles were arranged: a wall of earth, a ditch, a small fence, and a log wound round with straw.

Soldiers were teaching young horses to jump over them, letting them one by one into the alley and urging them on with long whips from behind.

At the other side of the yard recruits were taught swordsmanship. Reeds were planted in wooden holders and the soldiers had to gallop past cutting them down.

Near the guard house, before a hut painted in stripes, a sentry walked up and down. A brilliantly polished trumpet lay on a stand near him. Sunshine filled the yard and gave a happy and cheery look to the soldiers as they rode and drilled and to the officers standing in a separate group in the middle.

The men of the second squadron lolled on the window sills making remarks on the scene before them.

The singers, who had just finished their tea, stood in separate groups, some by the windows, others sitting and lazily lying on the beds.

"Look, look at the corporal in the fourth! He catches the hips of the men with his whip each time they make a mistake," remarked Artemieff, a young fair-haired fellow, pointing at the squad at swordsmanship drill.

"And good too," said a dark smart soldier in his last year of service,—"they will try to do better."

"Great God," said Artemieff, "I always try, even say a prayer sometimes, but either my hand slips or the horse jerks aside and there you are! And you mustn't even dare to complain. He will say he missed the horse. Missed! He does his best

TO RED FLAG

to catch you on the foot or on the neck where it will hurt you most."

"I had a scar for two weeks from his whip," said another.

"Well, that's nothing," condescendingly said Nedodai. "It's a lesson. You know the proverb: 'a beaten man is worth two who have not felt the lash.' In olden days they used to beat more. It isn't good to fuss about with us. But if you get hit and mocked at the same time, and by an officer too, that does hurt!"

"And did that happen to you?" asked Artemieff.

"Well, yes. . . . It was his own fault and he hit me. I was quite young then,—just beginning to master the regulations and was on duty in the stables. Matzneff entered, a cigarette between his teeth. A new consignment of hay and straw had been delivered and was lying about. The horses were munching their oats. I remembered the regulation, came up to him, saluted and reported: Your Honour, it is forbidden to smoke in the stables."

"You idiot," exclaimed an elderly soldier. "What impertinence!"

"You wait for what happened after. 'Bend down, scoundrel,' shouted Matzneff, quite white and shaking. 'Bend down!' I did as he ordered and he hit me again and again on the face. 'A soldier,' he said, 'must not dare to make a remark to an officer, and you, you d . . . d beast, forget my proper title.' And why? He was only a Lieutenant then."

"Why? He was doing as he wished and that is enough," said Makarenko,—"your business was to keep silent."

"He hit you on the face, you say," remarked Corporal Antonoff,—"never mind, your face is fat enough."

"What a rotter Matzneff is. No wonder no one likes him. A weakling, good for nothing. At the sword drill he either lets his sword fall or hits his horse on the ear while he jumps. I never saw him jump an obstacle properly!"

"That is only a trifle," grimly said Balinsky, "but he takes boys from the soldiers' sons squad to the baths with him. That is bad!"

An awkward silence followed.

"Yes," meditatively said Nedodai at last, "everything is possible for the gentle people."

"And why?" asked Artemieff.

"Why? because they are gentle people," answered Nedodai in a tone which allowed no contradiction.

"You saw what happened today at Gritzenko's. Wine, drunkenness, he himself as drunk as a lord. Let anyone of us try to bring in just a little vodka—he won't get off lightly! And the girls there! Before them, the Mess orderly told me, he smacked his own orderly on the face. Is that good?" quietly asked a grim unhealthy looking soldier, Volkonsky.

"Well," remarked Nedodai, "Gritzenko is a good cheery gentleman. He hit Avdeenko—that isn't such a great misfortune after all. They live together. Think of the amount of sugar and cigarettes Avdeenko steals from him. And Gritzenko never says a word. That is so—gentleman and servant. Special relations. But Gritzenko is a kind man at heart. With him it would be cheery even in battle."

"And Sasha defended the orderly," said corporal Artemieff. "He is the best of them all. A good gentleman. Sings with the soldiers, never says a word that will offend. I did not salute him once, simply did not notice. He stopped me and seemed at a loss what to say. 'You must be more attentive,' he remarked. Well I thought he would tell the squadron C. O. and I should be in for it. As a precaution I reported to the sergeant. He stuck me out before the guard house with rifle and in full equipment. Sablin saw me, asked for what I was being punished, let me go and even said: 'He deserves praise, another would have been silent about it and he reported himself.'"

"It's because he is young now. Afterwards he will be the same as the rest," said Nedodai.

"Who knows?" meditatively said Bondareff,—“it is true that the service makes people gruffer.

"It's not the hitting which upsets one," remarked Lenitzin who had a deep voice and sang in the choir,—“but that one does not see any truth anywhere.”

TO RED FLAG

"Where will you find it!" said Nedodai.

"Take for example last evening. All saw how much Gritzenko gave to the choir."

"Twenty-five rubles," said Artemieff, sighing.

"We were twenty-five men there. That makes a ruble per head. And we received?"

"Eighty copecks," said Balinsky.

"But where have the five rubles gone to?" asked Nedodai.

"Where? The sergeant has kept them. I should understand if the choir leader got more, he teaches the rest, his is the first job, but the sergeant—what has he to do with it?"

Lubovin was standing apart, his back against the wall, listening. From time to time his face twitched nervously. At last he could not restrain himself.

"And why don't you try to get at the truth?" he asked harshly.

"How can you?" asked Nedodai, looking sidewise in an unfriendly way at Lubovin.

"You have been hit by Matzneff when you were in the right. Why didn't you complain?"

"And to whom?"

"To whom," exclaimed Lubovin imitating him, "to the squadron C. O. of course!" His voice broke down.

"To Gritzenko! He won't joke with you! He would give you a double dose and stick you into a dark cell for a change."

"Well, complain higher, protest, seek for the truth."

"Where will you find it? Everywhere around are gentle people, they all help each other."

"Gentle-people! . . . And what does 'gentle-people' mean? Did you ever think why they are gentle people?"

"Rich, learned . . . and because of that they're gentle people."

"And what are you? Flat footed peasants? Serfs? There must be no gentle-people and masters nowadays. They are just like ourselves and some—take Matzneff for instance,—even worse than we. Why should they receive honours and respect? Because they have a lot of land? But the land is yours

in reality. They do not work on it themselves. They drink, lead a merry life and you bear the burden on your shoulders. The land belongs to God only, the same as the air, the water . . . And not to them."

"You must stop this," said Bondireff severely.

"Stop what? Why?" heatedly exclaimed Lubovin.

"What you are saying. I think you understand it yourself."

Lubovin looked round for support. But the singers who had been standing round were dispersing. Each found an excuse for doing so. One was seized by a terrible desire to have a smoke, the spur of another became loose, a third suddenly remembered that his bed was not tidied. They all went away, Bondireff alone remaining. He looked severely at Lubovin.

"You had better quit this, Lubovin," he said in a tone which had suddenly become very kind.

"But excuse me, Pavel Abramovitch, you are a peasant yourself. You must agree with me that there is no truth in these days."

"I am a peasant, and what is more, a landless one. I served as a hired workman, but nevertheless I wouldn't say anything like this and I advise you to let these arguments alone."

"And the truth?"

"You will not find the truth anywhere Lubovin. It has been settled so by God."

"By God?"

"Yes by God. Truth exists only in the Kingdom of God, but on the earth there is no truth."

"You believe in what you say?"

"I believe."

Bondireff turned round and walked away through the barracks. Lubovin stood for a moment in indecision then shrugged his shoulders and muttered bitterly:

"Ough! Stupid men! Slaves!"

He felt it hard to breathe in the cool barrack. The cracking of whips and the shouted orders outside irritated him. He cleaned his tunic, put on his new overcoat, cap and sword and went to ask for leave from the sergeant.

VII

THE sergeant had just finished drinking tea with soft fresh bread. He had given his wife the five rubles he had received the previous evening, then bathed his face in cold running water from the tap, smoothed his short red hair which was already thin in places, twirled his moustache, and having put on a clean shirt with a tight elk-skin belt, prepared himself to go and round up his men for the cleaning of the stables.

On the doorstep he ran into Lubovin.

"What are you doing on a working day in your Sunday uniform?" he asked.

"I wanted to ask leave to go and visit my father. Till eleven only."

"Nonsense!" said the sergeant, but by the tone of his voice Lubovin understood that he had succeeded.

"I swear, Ivan Karpovitch, my father urgently needs me."

"Good. Have you finished your work in the office?"

"Yes."

"Well, go and report to the orderly corporal."

"Thank you, sir."

Lubovin spun on his heels and went, but the sergeant stopped him by an angry "wait a minute." Lubovin turned to him and was surprised at the stern expression of his face.

"You can have your leave," he said in a whisper, "but remember Lubovin, that I see you through and through!" And the sergeant brought up his huge red hairy fists into Lubovin's very face.—"Just you try to disturb the minds of my men or carry on any propaganda—you won't get out of here alive. You have protection, I know. General Martoff asked for you, but I won't mind that. I remember only the duty of my service and of my oath. Yes . . . Things have happened here . . . Thefts, drunkenness . . . Once a man was murdered in the loft. I can pardon, overlook and cover up anything. But never, do you hear Lubovin, never has there been any socialism in these walls."

"And remember : if any silly idea appears in the head of any-

one—I will hold you responsible. You will answer with your head and no protection will save you: I will strangle you myself . . .” gurgled the sergeant.

“Now, go. I am not in earnest. I cannot even imagine that anyone could be found in our regiment who held unorthodox views about the Faith, the Emperor and the Motherland! Go!”

Lubovin turned abruptly and went.

“Did the sergeant suspect anything, or did he simply want to frighten me as a precaution because I am the son of a workman and have nearly finished high school?” he thought as he walked along the streets. “And if he knows, what does he know, exactly? My friendship with Korjikoff, my membership in the newly formed Labour Party, the fact that I have certain compromising books at home, or what I sometimes say to the soldiers?”

“It is not possible that he should know the first. I never brought those books to the barracks, and as to what I said sometimes . . . Who could denounce me? Who? But they are after all only—soldiers. For a kind word, for a lighter burden of fatigue, so as not to groom an extra horse or clean out an extra stable, they would be ready to whisper to the sergeant and repeat my words, utterly, changing them. Korjikoff says that the chief difficulty is the Army, that the workmen are prepared and ready, but are only afraid of the soldiers.

“But how can you succeed in converting them while there exist fat mercenary hides like Ivan Karpovitch’s, capable of anything and possessing huge scarlet fists!”

Lubovin went the whole length of the Nevsky Prospect, crossed the Znamenskaya square and a wooden bridge over the evil smelling Ligovka and took a tramway running to the Nevsky Barrier. He was the son of a factory foreman turner in one of the machine works and happened to be in the regiment quite accidentally, owing to special protection.

His father, a man respected by everyone, had begun as a plate layer, had then studied the metal-lathe trade and, owing to sober and moderate habits and careful work, had managed to save sufficient money to buy a small house in which he lived

TO RED FLAG

with his daughter and son. He early became a widower. Both his children had been sent to public schools and he dreamed of starting them along the intellectual road and of getting them into society.

But the son took an early interest in the labour question, slackened in his studies and was expelled from the school. Old Lubovin wanted to settle him in the factory but Victor proved himself incompetent and only spoiled materials. Three years passed in unsuccessful attempts to teach him some business, and the time came for him to be called up for military service. The father did not wish to be separated from his son, fearing that military life would spoil him and that he would definitely break off from work.

His daughter was just finishing her studies. Her best school friend was the daughter of General Martoff and through her Lubovin was enrolled in a Guards Regiment as squadron clerk. Both the son Victor and the daughter Marousia were gifted. Victor had a considerable amount of natural musical feeling and a beautiful soft tenor voice. Marousia was also musically inclined and dreamt of the conservatory and of the stage.

But old Lubovin looked down upon an artistic career and wished his daughter to attend the university and become a learned woman.

The father grew harder and harder, kept closer than ever at his work, spent all day at the factory and took extra work to do at home, but still was not happy. He had expected something different from his children, for whom he had done all that lay in his power.

After passing the glass works, Lubovin got out of the tram and walked for two hundred paces along a wooden side-walk up to his father's house.

It was a small one-storied, wooden building painted in brown with three large windows opening on the street, and a small stoop. There was a brass plate on the door. Lubovin rang the bell and heard quick light footsteps approaching from the other side. He recognised them immediately and his heart began to beat happily. He had a deep, tender and respectful love for his

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

sister. She was the only ideal he had and in his mind no one could be her superior intellectually or physically.

"Victor! How nice and unexpected!" exclaimed Marousia kissing her brother fondly.

Marousia was in her eighteenth year—three years younger than her brother. Hers was a real beauty. Her dark auburn hair was done in two long plaits which hung down on her back like two shining snakes. Her rosy face was a pretty oval with a slender nose and small well shaped lips. It was lit by a pair of beautiful eyes of a delicate blue. These clear eyes shaded by long eyelashes gazed from under slender arched brows without a single sinful thought dimming their clearness. A beautiful soul was seen through them. Every moment they changed their expression, even the colour of their blue. Each word, each movement of the soul, each thought which flashed like lightning in the brain behind her white, clear forehead, with two or three unruly locks of hair straying over it—was immediately reflected in her eyes. One moment they sparkled with the happiness and enthusiasm of success, the blue border round the shining pupil changing to different shades of sapphire—then they would suddenly stop, become sadder and paler as if they faded before one's eyes and the black pupil seemed to be surrounded by pale turquoise.

She was beautifully formed. Small hands and feet and slender waist. Her young breasts rose and fell nervously and impetuously, in response to her words and her feelings. Victor had an unhealthy appearance, surly and callous. But in her veins ran youth, health, muscular strength and a sense of the blood boiling.

"Andrei Alexeievitch read my composition before the whole class," said Marousia blushing with joy. I even felt uncomfortable! . . . But in his reading it seemed really good. Sometimes I wondered whether it was really myself who had written it. He read it so well. But what is the matter with you? You seem to be distressed by something. Well, come to my room. Is it because you cannot yet accustom yourself to routine?" They passed to Marousia's room through the dining room and

their father's study, where there stood a turning lathe and drills, and where many other instruments hung on the walls in special leather cases.

Her room was simply furnished. A plain writing table covered with a lot of exercise and reading books and a large crystal inkpot stood before the window, the lower part of which was shut off by a blue curtain. A book shelf hung on one wall, along which stood an iron bed with a white lace coverlet. By the other wall was a small chest of drawers on which stood some pussy-willows sprouting in a glass, an old album with flowers painted on its wooden lid, a small china hare and a big heap of music. Three straw chairs and a dark curtain to hide the clothes hanging in a corner completed the furnishings.

Over the bed, in a black frame hung an enlargement of a photograph of an elderly woman in simple clothes with a handkerchief on her head—the mother of Marousia.

Over the chest of drawers was pinned the photograph of a group of school friends and large lithograph portraits of Dostoevsky, Count Tolstoi and Shevtchenko.

"Sit down," said Marousia. "Fedor Fedorovitch will soon be here and we shall have some tea. There is plenty of time before dinner. . . . So you cannot accustom yourself to the work?"

"How can you get accustomed to it?" exclaimed Lubovin with despair. "Is this service, work? Is this a life, this mocking of one's personality. Today—we are waked up at four o'clock. What has happened? A fire? An alarm? No! Simply His Honour wishes to hear the singers! You have to get up, tidy yourself in a hurry and go to sing. And there everything is upside down. Wine, drunken half dressed officers, women from the street . . . Shame! This is called service to the Sovereign and Motherland."

"What can you do, Victor," Marousia said quietly,—“have patience. It is so all round. Life is one thing in thought and another in action."

"Yesterday Gritzenko hit his orderly because he gave him red wine instead of champagne. And Sasha, you remember I told

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

you about him,—the one who teaches me to sing,—suddenly interfered. The orderlies told me, they nearly had a quarrel. And with them a duel would follow immediately, a fight, murder! Beastly custom, Marousia!"

Canaries sang loudly from a cage hanging in the next room, the roar of the streets rushed in through an open window, the bells of the tramways, clashing of iron and rumble of heavy carts intermingling. Through that noise was heard the faint tinkling of a bell.

"This must be Fedor Fedorovitch," said Marousia—"I saw him at the gates of the factory talking with some workmen."

"Spends his time distributing pamphlets to them," irritably answered Victor, "and they use them for cigarettes."

"Tell him all about it," said Marousia and ran to open the door.

VIII

FEDOR FEDOROVITCH KORJIKOFF was an eternal student. He had not visited the university for so long that he had himself forgotten whether he was a student or not. He was writing a dissertation, but could not finish it. Other things attracted him. He was attracted by the propaganda among the workmen and activity in the social revolutionary party where he was known as a prominent and active worker. His age was about thirty. He made an unpleasant impression at first because of his appearance. He was short, stooping, all covered by red hair with a freckled face. He constantly twitched his small red beard between his fingers, putting its end into his mouth from time to time. A dark red costume in which he was attired was very untidy.

But he had a quick wit, sharp judgement, and could speak very well. His voice, just a trifle hoarse, as if tired, knew how to penetrate into one's soul and to instil any idea he wished. Patient and persevering he carried on his revolutionary work for the future without haste, for he held the opinion that if the revolution happened in a century's time—even that would be good.

"Aha, warrior," he said greeting Lubovin, "to what do we owe the pleasure of seeing you on a work-day? Some Imperial Clemency?"

"Yes, an act of clemency! The gentry revelled all night and we, the servants, are free for the day. And no drill. A holiday for a hundred men because one has drunk a glass more than he ought to!"

Lubovin told him all about what he had seen and heard the previous night at Gritzenko's flat.

"So, excellent," Korjikoff kept repeating as he listened.

"What is there excellent in it, Fedor Fedorovitch," exclaimed Lubovin angrily.

"They are helping us themselves, Victor Mihailovitch. The soldiers felt indignant, I should think. Add a drop more in one place, a stroke in another, underline the right point somewhere else and we won't be very far from a mutiny."

"Oh, Fedor Fedorovitch. You don't know our brother, the soldier. He is so dark, so submissive, so—devil knows what—hit him in the face and he will stretch out his other cheek. Quite a sort of walking scripture! . . ."

"Well, that's not quite the way it happens, really," said Fedor Fedorovitch,—“your Sasha for example was indignant.”

"Ah, what does Sasha matter," Lubovin waved his hand.

"He is just the man we want. After all it is all your own fault, Victor Mihailovitch. You are too fiery—you boil, make a noise, bluff . . . that is not good in our work. You must do as the Germans say—*langsam, ruhig*—then things will go all right. Did you speak with the soldiers afterwards? Did you take advantage of the psychological moment?"

"I did, and I spoke. Eh, Fedor Fedorovitch, you can persuade this table sooner than you can them. You hear only the unchanging cry—gentlemen! gentlemen! For that they are gentlemen! There is no truth in this world. The truth is only in God's kingdom. When I began to explain they all dispersed. They are afraid."

"Victor Mihailovitch," said Korjikoff, "you will only frighten the men away and will not bear your turbulent head on your

shoulders for long. The time has not yet come to shout in the squares and to preach aloud. The truth, Victor Mihailovitch, is concealing itself in cellars at the present moment and does not say what its name is. Why should we? They will betray—you are right in saying that they will betray. They are afraid of each other and will betray so that the others may not betray them. Men have become scoundrels, oh what scoundrels! But you cannot judge them severely. You have told me yourself what fists the sergeant possesses. And their souls are withered like old rags,—how can they resist? They fall in the end. You must deal with them, Victor Mihailovitch, one by one, and with kindness too. There is an excellent word:—comrade. Yes. . . approach the soldier with this word. And when there is no one else near. He does not know this word. He will wonder at it. It is like a sweet fragrance. It simply enters the soul. Prepare one in the spirit of rebellion—and you have already done some good work. Let one man become displeased with everything, criticise everything, let him find that everything is wrong all around, then start on another. We would need an officer. It is very difficult without one. You must convert an officer.”

“That’s impossible, Fedor Fedorovitch. How can you approach them when they are not even men, I say. They are full of their own ideas.”

“Don’t be too sure. Cases are known among them. Take: Postel, Rileieff. Leo Nikolaievitch Tolstoi himself was an officer once and see how he works now for the corruption of the Army.”

“That may happen in some other regiments, but in ours it is impossible. Our officers have more consideration for a horse than for a man. In the 3rd squadron a soldier killed himself while jumping over a barrier last week, and you know what the squadron C. O. said? ‘That the d . . . d scoundrel killed himself—well, he deserved it. But he spoilt the best horse in the squadron and I won’t forgive him in the next life for that!’ See for yourself what they are like!”

“But not all, surely?” said Fedor Fedorovitch.

"All," viciously snapped Lubovin.

"And Sasha?" quietly asked Marousia.

"And Sasha will become like the rest."

"Don't let him. Wake human feelings in him," said Marousia and took her brother's hand. Her touch seemed to soften Victor.

"I really don't know what to do," he said.

Fedor Fedorovitch began to speak about strikes as a measure of strife successfully employed abroad.

"Our comrades are insufficiently organised for that yet. But I think we shall succeed in the end. There are some sharp minds who understand that already. Only your father hinders us greatly"—Fedor Fedorovitch was saying, "and he is a foreman. A foreman in a factory is like an officer in a regiment."

"Why don't you convert him then," laughed Victor.

"Well, he is an old man. It is difficult to change his opinions. We want someone like your Sasha. The more you tell me about him, the more I begin to think that he represents material with which we could do something."

Fedor Fedorovitch rose and began to take leave. Marousia and Victor rose also.

"Again to your workmen?" said Marousia.

"Yes, I have a fellow here. Comrade Pavel. Clever brains. His appearance is unsightly but wrath simply boils in him," said Fedor Fedorovitch and looked at Marousia.

She stood with her back against a grey iron stove. Her arms were lowered and her fingers were spread out grasping the stove. Her head was tipped backwards, the nostrils were nervously throbbing, the mouth slightly opened and through it white teeth were shining like pearls. Her eyes were sparkling under lowered black eyelashes. Like Charlotte Corday before the murder of Marat, thought Fedor Fedorovitch. How unlike her brother she is. She would be capable of anything, of being burnt alive for an idea, for a word, for the work.

"And what," he said quietly and insinuatively, "if we should try Maria Mihailovna."

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Lubovin started and looked at Fedor Fedorovitch with surprise.

"Do you understand what you are saying," he said.

"Very well, Victor Mihailovitch. If a sacrifice is necessary we will have to make it. No one could resist Maria Mihailovna. And your Sasha will become an obedient slave of all her wishes."

An ominous silence followed. Marousia bent her head farther back to the stove and stood breathing nervously without looking at her brother or Fedor Fedorovitch. Lubovin turned to him with indignation. As if he did not know how limitless was the love of this uncouth Korjikoff for his sister.

"You are mad," he said angrily.

"So, so," calmly said Fedor Fedorovitch, "Maria Mihailovna, would you make this sacrifice if it should be necessary?"

Marousia only sighed heavily. Slowly she lowered her head and fixed her blue eyes on Korjikoff. He seemed to shrink, grasped his small beard in his fist and walked towards the door shrugging his shoulders.

"If the party considers it necessary,"—he said in a hoarse voice, "then, Maria Mihailovna, we will ask you."

And he disappeared behind the door

IX

DENSE dark clouds were rolling over the earth shutting off the whole of the horizon. Distant lightning played among them with mysterious lights. Something terrible was taking place in Nature and the earth bent low before the threatening and infuriated heavens. Not a single leaf fluttered on the tall birch trees. Wide marshy meadows seemed to swell with water. Behind them, mute and threatening, rose a forest. The distant gulf behind it resembled a streak of silver under the black clouds. A mysterious and dark night was approaching, promising storm and bad weather.

It was unbearably close in a small cottage on the outskirts of Krasnoie Selo in which Sablin and Rotbek occupied a room for the time of the manœuvres. Instead of air dense darkness

TO RED FLAG

full of marshy vapours entered through both opened windows. Rotbek had gone to bed at ten o'clock and was now loudly snoring. Sablin was sitting at the open window in the dark room. He felt lonely and uncomfortable in that small room. He went out and walked along the birch lane towards the fields.

It was so dark that it was with difficulty that he found a small bench under a birch tree and sat down.

The Camp had been living an exceptional life the last three days. Day and night, on the manœuvre grounds, at Duderhof, through the villages surrounding Krasnoie Selo, near the station and among the lines of the Camps, big men clad in blue tunics were riding about on grey horses. They were accompanied by picked N. C. O.'s of the Guard's Regiments. The officials of the villages were constantly in the chains—emblems of their office—and kept patrolling the houses. In Krasnoie Selo itself appeared men dressed in plain clothes but broad shouldered, powerful, and with a fine bearing. They rode about on bicycles, walked along the lanes and sat on benches. All were waiting—listening—watching for something. Plain Krasnoie Selo, with its dusty manœuvre field covered in some places by trampled grass suddenly became mysterious and uncomfortable.

All this was happening because the Emperor had arrived with his young beautiful wife and was staying at the palace in the centre of Krasnoie Selo.

Sablin deeply believed from his childhood that the Emperor was a Sovereign anointed by God and, comparing the state of Nature, the approaching storm and flashing lightnings with the earthly events, he felt afraid.

He sat on the bench leaning against the trunk of the birch tree. A man, dressed in a short overcoat and peasant's cap, suddenly seemed to detach himself from the surrounding darkness and approached the place where the white tunic of Sablin was dimly visible. He seemed to peer at him then stopped before the nearest telegraph pole with his back against it.

"Who is there?" shouted Sablin.

"A passer-by," dully answered the stranger. Saying this he drew backwards and completely effaced himself behind the pole.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The telegraph wires hummed, the stranger was silent and Sablin began to feel as if no one was present. Only a pale stain, where the face of the passer-by was, became slightly visible when the lightning flashed. What does he want? Who is he? thought Sablin.

Suddenly in an excited broken voice the stranger spoke.

"Well, comrade, he said, are you also oppressed by the weather?" The word "comrade" he pronounced somewhat uncertainly.

Sablin did not answer. The familiarity of this unknown man roused his indignation. Probably, he thought, he is some agent of the secret police, grown weary of his nightly watch, who wishes to distract himself by conversation. Sablin understood the necessity of the "Ohrana" * but had a feeling of aversion and mistrust for its agents.

"Queer weather, this! The witches have their sabbath on such nights, I should think. And what will it only be tomorrow! Tomorrow, comrade, is the parade. It's not good. Is it?"

"Yes," said Sablin, "it is bad for the parade."

"Yes, very bad even!" exclaimed the stranger as if glad to hear what Sablin had said. Sablin thought he had heard somewhere that hoarse tenor voice.

"Only think, comrade. The Emperor will appear tomorrow to the people. Yes. . . . The Sovereign anointed by God. . . . The earthly God. . . . Among the peasants—and one can say that all our soldiers are peasants—what belief there is on this subject. The Emperor—appears in all his glory, the sun shines, the angels blow their trumpets from the heavens, gold, purple and the magnificence of the parade all around, and suddenly there will be a downpour of rain tomorrow which will drench our Lord and instead of a God in a halo of golden rays, everyone will see simply an ordinary wet man shivering under streams of water and just as much a mortal as we all are."

"Ah, comrade, what will happen then! Won't the people

* Russian secret police.

say—what is the use of an Emperor if he is just like the rest of us? And what has the anointment by God to do with it?"

"But who are you?" exclaimed Sablin impatiently.

"I? Why do you want to know? I do not know you, you do not know me. The night is unutterably terrible, not a thing can be seen,—why shouldn't we talk freely? You will lighten your soul and I will throw off my burden. We will both feel easier after. Yes . . . I am a passer-by . . . not from this locality. I saw you come . . . well . . . and decided to have a chat with you."

"But how do you dare to speak so about the Emperor!"

"How do you mean? Excuse me, I don't quite understand you."

"So disrespectfully . . . and boldly."

"Ah, so. . . . You see, I do not suffer from this hypnosis. I do not believe that the Tsar is anointed by God and I do not believe in God. How can you believe in Him when you understand what an atom is or a bacillus, and how man was derived from a monkey? I should think it would be strange then to believe in God, the Creation of the world, and other fables. Perhaps this is not interesting to you?"

"It is not. With such men as you I neither wish to dispute or talk at all. Be off."

"But why should I go? No one will tell you the truth, your Honour. Listen to me, perhaps you may hear something useful. You must bear in mind, comrade, that all this is only hypnotism and deception of simple folk so as to hold them in slavery. Take the liberation movement. You have certainly heard how the Emperor Alexander II was murdered. How was it done? From behind a corner in a half deserted street. . . . The carriage was smashed, but a sledge was at hand. They put the Emperor in the sledge and drove him off to the palace, but blood remained on the snow. Sentries were posted. The blood is sacred, they said. Flowers were brought, ikons, gold, silver,—well, as a result nothing came of it all. The Tsar-Martyr! I was a boy then and visited the place. I also experienced a feeling somewhat akin to awe. Yes . . . and the peo-

ple, although grown up are not better than children. Ah, that is not the way to do it. One must show that all this is a fraud.

"Suppose for example that tomorrow at the parade when all the troops are presenting arms and not daring even to breathe, a soldier should start from the ranks. . . . A bold man. There have been many such fearless souls, who resolutely went to a certain death. Suppose he raises his rifle and fires at the Emperor. Let him be torn to pieces after that. The deed will be done. And then—amen—instead of the Sovereign anointed by God there will be a corpse in the dirt and dust, and before all the people, you understand, before all the people. You will not persuade others afterwards that it is impossible. It will be the end."

"Who are you and why are you speaking like this,"—asked Sablin, controlling his excitement. "Is it because you are afraid and tremble as we all do for the sacred person of the Emperor, or because you are one of these terrible men. You must then understand what risks you are running!"

"Ah, comrade. . . . Do as you like—arrest me. I am pouring out my soul to you because this night oppresses me, it draws me to frankness. . . . Do as you like. . . . Only I think that your earthly kingdom is built upon sand. A wind will blow, will sweep away the sands and everything will fall to pieces. Take tomorrow as an example again. . . . Yes. . . . All your perfectly aligned quadrangles of troops, your battalion and regimental columns will become disarranged, will move from their places, will murder their officers, will disperse over the whole field, and instead of a magnificent parade you will have a terrible armed crowd which no one will dare to approach. It is only a pretence that it cannot be done. Yes,—one alone cannot do it, but how about all? All acting together,—the strength lies in that,—when all shall wish it, nothing will frighten them. No one will believe that the Tsar is selected by God, that he is anointed by God. Is much necessary for that? If it will only rain tomorrow or some bold man appear. You will not be able to stop him. Do you know what is in the minds of your soldiers? They listen to what you say, they listen, but

both in number and individually in physical strength they are much stronger than you are. It is so, comrade. . . ."

Sablin rose.

"Who are you?" he gasped. "How dare you. . . . I will. . . ."

A dark form detached itself from the telegraph pole and bending over darted down the road.

"Stop!" shouted Sablin.

But at that moment a strong whirlwind rushed along the earth, the great birch tree shuddered with all its leaves, lightning split the sky and immediately a tremendous peal of thunder burst overhead. It seemed to Sablin that he recognised the stranger in the glare of the lightning.

"Lubovin!" he shouted.

But chaos reigned around. The heavens were ringing with peals of thunder and a torrent of cold rain suddenly poured from the sky. Sablin was drenched through to the last thread of his shirt, the wind seemed to catch at his feet and check his movements, the water rushed down the slope of the road, its bubbles foaming and shining in the gleam of the lightnings. Flash followed flash. Sometimes two at a time, three, in quick succession they split the black sky and then for a second appeared the whole street of Krasnoie Selo, the birch trees on both sides of the road, the ditches boiling with water, the barrack behind them and a sentry in an overcoat which seemed black with water under a multi-coloured mushroom. Terrible peals of thunder followed immediately, the sky seemed to rush down on the earth and darkness concealed everything. Only the water flashed with the large bubbles rising on its surface, and great streams of rain rushing in a furious whirlwind whipped the face, the breast, and the feet. It was impossible to pursue.

Sablin ran up to his cottage, stopped, thought for a moment, shook himself and went to his room, leaving big pools of water behind him. He lit a candle and without waking his orderly pulled off his drenched clothing and wrapped himself up in his blanket. Rotbek was quietly sleeping at the other end of the

room. Sablin looked at his watch. It was three o'clock. The storm was passing away in the direction of Gatchino, the lightning flashed less frequently, the thunder pealed farther and farther away, the wind abated and only an even methodical rain pattered on the roof, the leaves of the birch trees and the paths of the garden.

"How will the parade be tomorrow?" thought Sablin and the same second felt as if he were separated from the earth and rushed onwards in an unknown direction. Sleep embraced his youthful body refreshed by the rain. Scarcely having the time to blow out the candle he sank into sweet nothingness. The patter of the rain soothed his slumbers.

X

WHEN SABLIN woke it was already morning and rather late. Rotbek, already dressed in top boots with spurs, breeches and a tunic with shining belt and sword strap over his shoulder was drinking tea at the table near the window. His orderly was buttering slices of bread for him. Sablin's wet clothing had been cleared away as well as the pools of water on the floor and his orderly had prepared everything fresh for him to put on.

Sablin jumped out of bed and ran to the window. What kind of weather was it?

The rain had stopped but gray clouds moved low over the earth and in some places fog covered the fields and meadows. Soldiers were leading their horses out of the courtyard across the road and mounting them. A smart N. C. O., Stepanenko, neatly dressed, as if polished all over, was inspecting them and giving final instructions.

"Have you all taken bunches of straw, boys? Don't forget them or you will have nothing to wipe the feet of the horses down with. Vatroutschenko, run round to the section corporal with the pail. Put it in the wagon. We may have to wash the hoofs."

"The parade! The parade is not cancelled!" happily thought Sablin.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Rotbek munch-

ing his bread and butter. "Where on earth were you yesterday? You simply drenched the floor through with your tracks."

"Dear Pik, the parade . . . parade . . . today. Sherstobitoff! Quick! I've got to wash,—dress . . .!"

Sablin was ready in two minutes. He felt as if he could embrace the whole world from that sensation of youth, health, of the beauty of his regiment which was already lining up in the street. How good it was to realise that he was also an insignificant item in that dashing famous regiment.

How nice it would be to come up to his "Mirabeau," a well fed and well cared for charger whose coat shone like silk, and see him squint his beautiful black eye after a piece of sugar. It would be still nicer to ride up composedly to his squadron lined up in frozen immobility in the street, hear Rotbek order "attention," greet the men and hear them answer cheerily—"Good health to your Honour." And then to ride slowly and proudly down the ranks looking straight into the faces of the soldiers. The fairy tale of the previous night came to his mind. He remembered all that he had heard about a bold soldier, about a mutiny and bad weather. He felt uneasy now looking at the men. Could it be possible that Lubovin . . . ?

Here he is—in the rear ranks of the second section. His pale face is sombre, the eyes shine with hatred. But his head is turned towards Sablin and he slowly follows him with his eyes.

No, he will be all right. A trifle pale, but he is always like this—an unhealthy man. If only the weather does not play a bad trick!

Here is the sergeant, Ivan Karpovitch. His whole breast is aglow with medals and a silver chain of rifles hangs down from one of the buttons. What a handsome man he is. The best horseman in the regiment. Although he is long past thirty and old enough to be Sablin's father, how respectfully he looks at him and glances with his eyes at something on one side. Ah, it is Lieutenant Fetisoff who is riding up to the ranks.

With the same holiday enthusiasm Sablin moved towards

the flank of the squadron and shouted the command: "Attention! Eyes right Gentlemen Officers!"

The manœuvre field was teeming with unusual life. Long files of infantry wagons and peasants' carts filled with sand moved towards the Tsar's Mound so as to mend the havoc wrought by the storm.

Ladies and young girls in rose-coloured, blue, lilac or white dresses, in hats with ostrich feathers, flowers and ribbons, rode and drove in private carriages, or *izvostchiks*, or came on foot.

All belonging to the intimate military circle, regimental and battery ladies or their friends, the mothers, sisters and wives of officers were allowed to appear with special passes in the imperial enclosure.

Police in light blue with silver tunics mounted on grey horses were verifying the passes. The music of bands at the heads of dark columns of infantry rang over the field. The men walked heavily and slowly through the wet clay which stuck to their brightly polished boots and covered them higher and higher.

The units occupied their respective places which were marked by men posted since five o'clock in the morning with brightly coloured ensigns attached to their bayonets and ropes stretched from peg to peg. The soldiers were then allowed to break the grim order of their ranks and to begin to clear the clay off their boots, smartening their appearance as if they had only just come out of their tents.

The whole field was busily working. The infantry cleaned their boots; the cavalry, dismounting, washed the hoofs of the horses, brushed their tails hair by hair; and all cast anxious glances at the sky and the hills of Duderhof.

It was a sure sign of coming good weather if the dark cap of woods on Duderhof rose out of the mists. But Duderhof was screened by the fog and even below, along the Tartar restaurant, patches of mist could be seen. Nothing promised sunlight, but it ought to come, it ought to pour its rays on the crowned Tsar anointed by God.

Grey haired Generals with bright ribbons and decorations, commanding divisions, brigades and regiments, believed that it

must be so while they looked on frowning as their men tidied themselves. Young officers, old sergeants, soldiers of different ages believed, and even Lubovin believed. At least Sablin noticed that he looked anxiously at the grey cheerless sky and the smoking fogs of Duderhof.

In fairy-tale beauty and grandeur the Tsar must appear before his troops, covered by the rays of the sun, beautiful, magnificent and distant. Not of this world. Old folk said that it was always so—whatever the weather was previously, the sun always accompanied the Emperor. Some saw in it a token of the Grace of God, a sign to confirm to the people the fact that the Tsar was appointed not by men but by God. Others, sceptics and unbelievers considered it to be the result of excellent work on the part of the Petersburg Observatory which was always perfectly informed about the coming weather. The youngsters attributed it simply to coincidence.

Sablin firmly believed that the sun must appear, but he began to lose his confidence when he looked at the grey sky from which rain might begin to pour at any moment. Fear crept into his heart. What if it should not appear? All that the unknown passer-by had said on the previous evening, all that terror might become possible.

He approached Rotbek and spoke to him. . . .

"Pik, what about the sun?"

"The sun will shine," said Rotbek.

"But why, why?" Sablin asked with distress.

"Because the Emperor will be there, it has always been so," replied Rotbek with conviction.

"He believes," thought Sablin, "and I cannot. Oh, God! Help my belief!"

Lubovin was malignantly looking at the sky from the ranks of the 2nd section. It was he who had last night said so much to Sablin. He now saw the alarm of the young officer and saw that his words had had their effect and that if the sun should not appear—Sablin would waver and many others would waver with him. He anticipated how he would boast and rejoice over his audacity before Korjikoff. He was not afraid of Sablin.

He had heard how he had shouted out his name the previous night. It showed that he had recognised him but was not certain. If he was uncertain about it, he would not question him. He could deny everything and Sablin would only be glad that he would not be obliged to begin an affair where there was no third witness. All the advantages were on Lubovin's side. He could say what he pleased, tell any lie, and Sablin,—what could he say? That he heard him out without interrupting? No, Sablin would not question him. It would not be to his interest. And there will be no sun! There you are with your Sovereign anointed by God! Lubovin glanced 'round at his comrades with contempt.

"What are you knocking about here for, doing nothing, Lubovin, when everyone is washing his horse's hoofs?" he heard the powerful voice of the sergeant.—"Look out, or I will give you something that will make you remember your duties!"

"I am afraid it will rain," discreetly said Lubovin.

"Rain!" drawled the sergeant.—"Idiot! We shall have sunshine! The Emperor will be here!"

XI

THE whole field was covered by the dark squares of infantry flecked by the red spots of the epaulets and the dully shining silver and gold of the officers' uniforms. Behind the infantry was the artillery. The guns were lined up mouth to mouth, wheel to wheel. The Grand Duke * rode round the troops on a bay horse. The Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna drove up to the Mound in a troika with a smart driver dressed in a blue silk shirt, undervest of black velvet and a cap with peacock feathers. Three nice boys in sailor suits and a little girl with beautiful chestnut hair were with her.

Accompanied by her children she went up to the top of the Mound along a broad stairway with pots of flowers bordering it, passed through the brilliant group of the Staff and foreign

* The Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch, brother of the Emperor Alexander III, at that time commanded the Guard Corps.

TO RED FLAG

military attaches in their dress uniforms and looked round the field.

The sky was still grey and the fog continued to smoke over Duderhof, concealing its woods and houses. Behind the Mound in a long multicoloured line on the green grass stood the regiments of the Cavalry. A broad, white stripe of the division of cuirassiers, three bright spots—red, blue and crimson of the Cossacks,—and more to the left the dark 2nd division ending in the white and red of the hussars regiment. Farther on near the Laboratory Wood, sullen as if swollen by rain, could be seen the riders and guns of the horse batteries.

The field seemed to shudder, making final preparations and verifying for the last time the alignment of the toes with a rope. The infantry men, posted to mark the respective places of the regiments, ran to join their units and those of the cavalry mounted their horses. Mounted policemen drove away from the troops hawkers of lemonade and sandwiches. An aged man carrying a long tray, his head covered by a gay cloth, could be seen running away with bent body from a mounted policeman who chased him at a trot. Two dogs were playing about on the sandy space where the troops were to defile and a policeman was running after them, vainly attempting to drive them away.

Near the Mound spectators were standing and sitting on chairs and benches which orderlies had been bringing ever since early morning. They were mostly ladies and children, officers of different Staffs, and only rarely could an elegantly dressed civilian be seen.

All the faces were turned in the direction of Krasnoie Selo. The Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch was also looking in the same direction. He was sitting on his horse with an unsheathed sword in his hand and talked in a loud voice which could be heard all over the field with his Chief of Staff, a tall, stately, grey-haired General.

"Did you notice, Nicolai Ivanovitch," the Grand Duke was saying, "the dog in the Finland regiment?"

"Your Imperial Highness," the Chief of Staff respectfully interrupted him, glancing at Krasnoie Selo.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

A troika flew out and swiftly approached the brilliant group standing between the people and Krasnoie Selo. There was the retinue, the horse of the Emperor and the carriage of the Empress.

The Grand Duke frowned and looked at Duderhof. Its shaggy summit, covered by pines, hazel and fir trees appeared from the grey clouds. The wind was tearing to pieces the fog over it and the upper houses began to be visible. Below, the pavilions and galleries of the Tartar restaurant could be clearly seen. But still there was no sun.

The troika dashed up and stopped. The Grand Duke looked at his watch. It was two minutes to eleven.

"Punctual!" he said to the Chief of Staff, "as his father, grandfather and especially his great-grandfather always were."

By a hardly noticeable gesture he crossed himself.

"Parade! Attention!" he ordered. "Battalions, shoulder arms!" The whole wet field seemed to transform itself into a hedgehog,—the infantry bristled with bayonets.

"By regiments! Present arms!"

The Grand Duke brought his heavy horse to a gallop and moved swiftly forward to meet the Emperor.

The general silence was broken by the sharp sounds of the band of H. M. Own Cossack Body Guard playing the Guard's March. The Emperor greeted the Cossacks and the hurrah rose on the right flank. The Emperor then approached the regiment of the Military Schools. The regiment shouldered arms in two distinct movements: the Cadets presented arms, and a thousand young faces turned towards the Emperor.

At the head of the Staff, on a small grey Arab horse with dark head and intelligent black eyes, lightly and gracefully rode the Tsar. His red hussar's cap was slightly set on one side. His grey eyes looked affably from under the black peak, his crimson doloman was embroidered with golden strappings, rosettes shone on his brightly polished boots and his spurs tinkled faintly.

"Good morning!" was heard in a clear voice and a shout full

TO RED FLAG

of enthusiasm came from the very heart as an answer from a thousand young breasts.

And immediately the flowing majestic melody of the Russian National Anthem floated from the flank and melted together with the exulting, youthful hurrah.

At the same moment a bright ray of sun sparkled on the crimson cap and embraced in its light the Crowned horseman, the Staff and the carriage drawn by four white horses in which sat both Empresses.

Nature seemed to have waited for this powerful cheer, for this mighty hymn full of fervent prayer before beginning its work.

An unseen wind tore to pieces the mist, and the sun shone overhead in all its splendour as if purified by the previous rain. White fleecy clouds floated on the blue sky.

The miracle was accomplished.

The Sovereign anointed by God appeared in all his glory and beauty, beautiful as in a fairy tale on his grey Arab horse which stepped proudly and lightly under him.

A demi-god was before the people and earthly thoughts left them. Their hearts soared high and felt near the heavens.

Sablin rising in his stirrups looked in the direction where louder and louder rang the hurrah, where regiment after regiment presented arms and bristled with bayonets, where it seemed that the earth itself enthusiastically sang to the heavens the Russian Hymn. He glanced round at Lubovin.

Pale, with wide-open inflamed eyes Lubovin looked from the field to the sun and back, and doubt and perplexity replaced hatred in the expression of his face.

XII

THE hurrah became louder and mightier as fresh troops joined in it. The Emperor was reviewing the artillery. Everyone in the ranks of the cavalry straightened up.

A tall horseman mounted on a white horse with black spots commanded:

"Cavalry! Draw sabres! Carry lances!"

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Sablin had difficulty in breathing. Tears rose to his eyes.

From behind the band mounted on grey horses he could see the space between the regiments. The neighbouring regiments had already joined the cheering. The band by a quick simultaneous movement raised the instruments to their lips. The command "Gentlemen Officers" was heard and the joyful regimental march rang out. From behind the left flank of the regiment appeared the smart grey horse. Here he is!

It seemed to Sablin that the Emperor looked straight into his eyes alone. Sablin looked into the eyes of the Emperor and was saying in his thoughts:— "You see me? I am Lieutenant Sablin! Give the order—and I will die, will perish, will sink happily into the sea of death because to die for you—is happiness."

It seemed to Sablin that the Emperor heard and understood him.

How nobly kind is his face—how spiritually beautiful are his features!

The beautiful young Empress drove behind him in an open white and gold carriage drawn by four white horses with riders in tightly fitting elk-skin breeches and red gold-embroidered tunics. Then rode a brilliant Staff where each horseman personified beauty, where the grey beards and noble bearing of aged Grand Dukes and Generals were in harmony with youths beautiful as young gods—Sablin saw nothing of this. He saw only the one horseman in the crimson doloman and red cap, saw him and his horse lit by the rays of the sun, with the benevolence of the heavens resting on him.

The band lowered their instruments and stopped playing. The Emperor said only the words: "Good morning, bandsmen" but it seemed to Sablin that he had said something marvelously beautiful and magically entrancing. The trumpeters answered and the Emperor disappeared between them and the first squadron. Thence one could hear his greeting of their regiment, that touching and historically unchanging greeting. And the whole regiment shook with the answer and mightily and happily shouted hurrah.

TO RED FLAG

Sablin shouted in his young ringing voice that came from a full heart. The Emperor had ridden on long ago, but Sablin, continued to cheer, melting his voice with hundreds of other young voices. One moment he thought—"and Lubovin?" and turned round. But Lubovin was also cheering. Next to him Adamaitis shouted with a wide open mouth and large tears of happiness trickled down his cheeks. Both cheered without understanding what was happening in their souls.

Yesterday was a dream. "In our regiment nothing of that sort can take place," thought Sablin and happiness overflowed in his heart. "It is happiness to serve in our regiment."

After that, infantry marched past for a long time. One could see the sparkling of the bayonets, hear the sounds of music and the rumbling of Turkish drums. The cavalry suddenly turned by sections to the right and in section columns wheeled at a trot round the borders of the field. The smell of fresh grass was in the air, the horses trotted lightly on the sodden ground as if intoxicated by the shouts, the music, the sight of the man appointed by God. The spurs clanked, the mouth-pieces clinked, and the whole, together with the distant cheerful sounds of the Ceremonial March conveyed magic stirring feelings to the soul.

XIII

GRITZENKO talked to the Adjutant. What had been the impression produced by their regiment passing before the Emperor?

"Excellent. Best of all the alignment. The gentlemen did not keep quite perfect and that slightly spoiled the general impression, but I watched the whole division pass and our regiment was the best. The Baron told me that the Emperor was greatly pleased and said: "my own are excellent as usual."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes. He ordered the dismissal of General Bakaeff from his command in the 2nd infantry division. He couldn't manage his horse, flew into the Suite and almost knocked the Grand Duke out of his saddle."

"Oh!"

"Horrible. I wonder where on earth he could have got such a horse."

"And what was the general impression of the parade?"

"Wonderful. The French attaché told me that he had never seen anything like it. The Army Infantry surprised him most. Small men, but their average length of step was about three feet."

"Good fellows," Gritzenko said kindly.

"Personally I don't like the way they wave their right arms, they throw them back too far."

The Adjutant trotted away towards the head of the column.

The field was becoming deserted. Carriages were driving away and long snake-like columns of regiments were vanishing in the distance. The red snake of the Hussars wound through the golden corn fields near the Laboratory Wood, the blue one of the Lancers stretched further on and the black Horse Grenadiers were disappearing on their black horses behind the hills at the Shoungorovo farm.

XIV

AFTER dinner, hastily served at the Mess, Sablin fell asleep. He woke at five o'clock and lay on his back in sweet lassitude. Three days of rest were ahead and then Saturday and Sunday—five days in all which had to be filled somehow. In the next room Rotbek was asking his orderly in a loud whisper whether the cab had arrived.

"Where are you going, Pik?" Sablin shouted.

"To my mother at Pavlovsk," Rotbek answered and appeared in a snow-white tunic and long blue trousers.

"I will go with you and stay at the music garden of the station."

"Excellent."

Five minutes later they drove away in the ancient carriage of a Krasnoie Selo izvostchik. The end of the quiet summer day was approaching. They drove through the long village Nicolaievka where the Cossacks were leading their horses to the watering trough and barred the whole street, then through the

neat villages Solosi and Novaia and passed into the open fields which bordered the road.

From time to time they met carts with hay. The wheels creaked quietly, the fragrance of fresh hay filled the air mingling with a smell of pitch. They passed Sobolevo and drove down a road bordered by tall larch trees. The Tzarskoie Selo park loomed up like a dark wall on the left.

Sablin and Rotbek remained silent for a long while, thinking. Then:

"Our regiment is the best," Rotbek said with conviction as if answering his own thoughts.

"Certainly," said Sablin.

"What a pity that the officers did not keep their alignment," said Rotbek,—"I didn't either. I don't know what went wrong with my 'Mumm,' he pulled forward so that I couldn't do anything with my left hand alone to stop him and I had to hold my sword in the right."

"How did my 'Mirabeau' do?"

"Ah, splendidly! And you ride better than I do, Sasha. I hope to learn yet. . . . But tell me. . . . I haven't spoilt things too much? And what do you think, did He notice?"

"He thanked us!" said Sablin knowing about whom Rotbek spoke, because both of them were thinking the same thoughts.

"Ah, He always praises. He cannot do otherwise. What would happen if He did not praise us?"

"It would have been terrible. I would feel like committing suicide or leaving the service!"

"Did you see what eyes He has? He looked straight at me."

"And at me, Pik, . . . Pik, isn't He a most remarkable man . . .?"

"He is more than a man. . . ."

They remained silent for some time.

"Sasha, 'asked Rotbek, 'did you notice the dress the Empress wore?"

"No, I saw only Him. I believe she had something white on."

"Or pink," said Rotbek. "My sisters will want an account of these details and what shall I tell them? I saw only Him."
 "So did I."

And again they remained silent enjoying the happiness of their twenty years, of the quiet cool evening, the nice gardens and villas, and filled with the sacred feeling of love for their country.

"Stop, Pik, I will get out and walk to the station."

"Why, he shall drive you up. Or, better still, come to our house. Mother and my sisters will be very glad to see you."

Sablin thought of Rotbek's clumsy, shy and plain sisters, the eldest of whom was sixteen. They had white eyelashes, white eyebrows, always wore pink dresses just alike, did not know what to do with their sunburnt hands, answered everything by the same exclamation—"ah!" and hurried to introduce a visitor to an enervating game called "quick."

"No, dear Pik, I will call on you tomorrow, if you'll let me, but I think that today both of us would like to be alone and think it all over again."

"I understand," said Rotbek.

Sablin left the carriage and passed through the station to the great music hall. The orchestra was playing in the garden and the huge hall, with its long rows of benches before a white shell-shaped platform was almost deserted. A school boy and girl were whispering something in the shadows of the distant benches. A footman rushed up to Sablin with a programme. He took it absentmindedly and passed through the hall to the restaurant. It also was deserted. Sablin felt thirsty, sat down at a little round table and ordered tea and "éclairs," which were Pavlovsk's speciality.

He felt happy. His young, healthy body was enjoying the rest. The sounds of music, of the voices of the crowd and of footsteps on the sand floated up from the park. He listened abstractly to the music and without catching the tune felt that it dispelled thought and created a happy feeling of aloofness. Thoughts touched, vanished, and only the feeling of the joy of life remained.

TO RED FLAG

A corner of the park could be seen through the window and elegantly dressed people, officers, civilians and schoolboys walking with young ladies and girls. Sablin watched them and admired them. Two officers of the Guard Sharp-Shooters regiment, dressed in their picturesque Russian costume, passed with two young ladies, ballet dancers, and Sablin felt pleased at the thought that he also was an officer of the Guards. A cuirassier passed with a stout red-faced lady and exchanged salutes with Sablin. That was pleasant, too. He was alone at his table but he did not feel lonesome, rather as if he were at home in his own family. They were all his brothers and comrades.

Ladies and young girls passed near him and the soft fragrance of perfume reached Sablin and irritated him. He ordered another glass of tea and cakes and began to think.

He felt that something was lacking today, when his excited blood throbbed powerfully in his veins, and when with all the fibres of his soul he passionately loved the Tsar and Russia, and was in love with himself. He desired another kind of love. He longed for a woman's caresses.

He looked round. This one with a painted face and eyebrows was probably accessible. He reddened when he thought of Matzneff's advice: catch the moments of love!

Should he approach her? But how? He would burn with shame. What should he say, and how? What if she were not what he thought her to be? What a scandal then! How could he risk offending a woman so!

The women who passed him admired the handsome young officer. Some called him with their eyes. Blood boiled in him, but he did not dare approach them, grew more and more confused, and a slow fire of desire burned in him.

It seemed to him that his wishes and thoughts were evident to all around. He felt ashamed and reddened. He took off his cap and laid it on a chair, then put it on again. At moments he was full of decision and was ready to rise and approach the first woman he met. Then he would feel confused again and realized that he would never dare speak and that nothing would come of it all. He nervously sipped his cold tea, ate the cakes

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

without tasting them, looked into the distance and tried to listen to the music.

A soft voice suddenly called his name.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch, it's such a long time since I have seen you! . . ."

XV

HE raised his eyes. Kitty stood before him, leaning on the mother o'pearl handle of a pink sunshade. Her large pink hat was placed on one side and the brim was caught up by a bird with pink wings. She wore a dress of a light, half-transparent pink material which was cut out too low for a summer costume and through which the lines of her rather plump form could be clearly seen. Her silk skirts rustled at every movement. The neat waves of her golden hair showed under the brim of her hat. It shone, and so did her teeth and her face just touched with sunburn. She was not painted, was fresh and young and her profession could be guessed only by her too free manners and general attitude. The colour of pleasure and excitement rose to Sablin's face and Kitty saw this. He would not leave her this time as he had done before, he would be hers. Kitty blushed.

Sablin jumped up. She sat down immediately and he resumed his seat.

"How nice she is," he thought, and some inner voice seemed to whisper in his ear—"and accessible! Catch the moment!"

"Would you like some tea?" he asked.

She looked into his eyes and burst into such a happy, infectious laugh that he laughed also.

"Why are you laughing?" he said.

"And why are you, dear Alexander Nicolaievitch?"

"Why?" Sablin said suddenly becoming serious. "I am happy, Ekaterina Filippovna."

"Oh," she said, "Why so formal. Call me Kitty. Aren't we friends?"

Her hand in a silk transparent glove which covered her arm up to the elbow, touched his.

TO RED FLAG

"Tell me why you are so happy," she asked quietly and seriously.

"Ah. . . . Kitty. . . . Ekaterina Filipovna. . . . We have had the parade today."

"I know," she said.—You have seen the Emperor and he has praised your regiment."

She had lived among the officers, had often been at the barracks. Cynical and light headed, at the same time she was outwardly religious, loved the Monarch and Russia, revered the colours and had the same understanding of the honour of the uniform and of the regiment as the officers.

Sablin looked at Kitty with shining eyes.

"Do you understand," he said, "this feeling one has on seeing him. Do you love him?"

"I adore him," she said.

He looked into the very depth of her eyes, and felt a warmth rush towards his heart and make it beat happily. "How beautiful she is," he thought. He remembered an early morning in the spring and the beauty of her form lit by the quiet rays of the sun shining through the curtains. He trembled with passion.

"Would you like some tea?" he offered again.

"You have drunk a lot already. How many glasses have you had?"

"I don't remember. Four or five."

"And do you still want more?"

"No, I asked whether you would like some."

"I do not,"—she drawled,—"thank you,"

She smiled.

"Look here, dear boy," she said pressing his hand lightly with the tips of her fingers,—“Are you free today, yes? You haven't promised anyone? You don't have to be on duty to-morrow?"

"No, I am free all these three days and Saturday and Sunday as well."

"How delightful! . . . Well, listen. . . ."

She felt confused, but so was he. He did not come to her assistance.

"I have," she said quietly,—“a ‘datcha’ here. On the Friederitzinskaya street. You will notice it immediately on the left side. Several great willows grow along the garden fence. I am alone. Quite alone. Come to see me . . . and to supper.”

He felt troubled, realising that it was he who should have invited her to supper. She understood him.

“Don’t be angry, I want it to be so.”

Sablin thought for a moment and stammered:

“I love you, Ekaterina Filipovna.”

Her face coloured with pleasure and a look of softness came over it.

“Dear Alexander Nicolaievitch! If only you knew what happiness you give me by these words. You know what I am and yet you say this. You have said it from your heart, haven’t you?”

“Yes,” Sablin said with confusion.

“And you . . . to me! Oh! how delightful! Well, listen. But will you understand? Won’t you think something bad? All that I shall tell you will be the truth. I have never loved anyone. I loved life, its brilliancy and noise, drunken revelry, songs, dresses . . . I was cold, without passion. Yes! I was different from Vladia, who is in love every day. I loved money, power, luxury. . . . And . . . listen: never, anyone . . . I have been given a nickname,—probably you have heard it—Katia the philosopher. But I fell in love with you as soon as I set my eyes on you when you defended Gritzenko’s Zahar. You are a man, Alexander Nicolaievitch, not only a handsome officer. At first I didn’t look at it seriously and asked Steepochka to send you with me, but then, when you scorned my beauty,” Kitty dropped her voice to a whisper, “I realized how I loved you! How I waited for you! I almost went mad. I hoped you would come. But you didn’t . . . cruel boy! I watched you, I found out whether you had fallen in love with someone. But you . . . don’t even know women.”

Sablin reddened deeply.

"What rapture!" Kitty whispered. "But listen, listen— Do not despise and push me away. . . . We also have hearts, we lost women. . . . We love once and we perish in the flames of this love. . . . Some of us live in brilliant surroundings of luxury and diamonds, but they never love those who bring them these gifts. Each has a secret lover who not only gives her nothing, but takes from her and beats her sometimes. And she loves him still. . . . I know that it will be my misfortune that I have fallen in love with you. I know that you will leave me soon and that nothing can keep you back. Let it be so. One day at least—but it will be mine!"

"Why do you say such things, Ekaterina Filipovna,—I don't know myself . . . but I admire you and perhaps I already love you."

"Oh, don't . . . don't say this. But . . . it is wrong for us to talk here. There are too many people around. It is impossible for you in your uniform. It would not matter were we just to say a few words, but we cannot stay long together when so many people are around. . . . You will come then, yes . . .?"

"Ekaterina Filipovna! Let us go together!"

"No, no! That is quite out of the question!"

She stretched out her hand.

"In half an hour," she said, "on the Frideritzinskaya. Keep your word."

He pressed her hand warmly. She went out of the restaurant and Sablin could see her through the glass walls as she descended the steps into the garden and went away with bent head through the park.

It was just in time. Rotbek and his three sisters, all in pink, all ruddy, pimpled and with curiosity in their light eyes emerged from the crowd and went toward the restaurant. They were the last people whom Sablin wanted to see at that moment. He thought only of Kitty and longed only for her. He rose, paid for his tea and went towards the station platform. He sat down there under the big clock and nervously watched the slow

movement of the hands over the thirty minutes which separated him from the meeting with Kitty.

They seemed to last eternally. He waited for twenty minutes and then decided to go on foot so as to grow calmer and pull his nerves together.

From the park Kitty rushed to a shop and purchased zakouskas, fruit, sweets and wine so as to receive her guest properly.

XVI

It was already dark when Sablin entered the Frideritzinskaya street. He found the datcha without difficulty. The air was full of the fragrance of blossoming tobacco and stocks, sweet peas twined round the glass-paned balcony. The curtains were drawn, but through them came rosy light, the sounds of a piano and Kitty's voice full of pain and passion.

Sablin halted and listened. The whole scene seemed as if taken from an opera or a fairy tale. The great spreading willows of the deserted street were drowned in the darkness. No passers by were to be seen. The light shone brightly through the foliage and a soft voice sang of love and of passion.

Kitty felt Sablin's footsteps and opened the door before he had time to ring the bell.

"We are alone," she said, "quite alone. I have sent away my maid and there is no one in the house. Take off your overcoat and your sword."

The balcony was dimly lit by a red lamp. The open piano in a corner, the simple furniture and the wolf's skin on the floor,—all was commonplace but seemed beautiful to Sablin.

A samovar was humming in the dining room. Ham, cold chicken, sturgeon, various cakes and bottles of wine and cognac adorned the table.

Kitty wore the same pink dress but she had covered its deep cut by a shawl as if she were ashamed of it before Sablin. She felt pleasure in her role of hostess, in watching his beautiful eyes become dimmed by the wine. Passion was overwhelming her.

"How about some roast beef? It is in the ice-cellar. Will you carry the candle for me?"

He could not refuse. It seemed so amusing to pass through the yard with her and to watch her through a little door in the flickering light of the candle as she groped on the snow which covered the floor of the ice-cellar.

"Dear, here are some raspberries. Would you like some?"

They walked back together through the dark yard over which the stars shone high up in the sky and the willows whispered mysteriously; they passed up the creaking steps to the kitchen and into the dining room where it was so cosy in the light of the hanging lamp.

They picked over the berries, Kitty's fingers became pink, he kissed them and she laughed a nervous excited laugh. The whole day had been full of magic happiness and love and it must end in the same way.

The supper was finished. The clock struck half past eleven, everything had been talked over. Had he to get up and leave?

Kitty rose. She was overwhelmed by a burning sense of confusion. Sablin approached her, but words of farewell vanished from his lips. She stretched both her arms towards him and he seized them in his hands. They were soft, warm and slightly moist.

"Well!?" she said and drew nearer to him.

An unknown force pushed him towards her and they united in a long kiss.

He staggered as if drunk when they separated and he saw as if through a mist the happy blue eyes and the golden locks of hair on the forehead.

Silently Kitty left the dining room. He followed her and passed through the little dark drawing room to the bed room which was lit by a violet lantern hanging on gold chains from the ceiling.

Kitty leaned on Sablin's breast and remained motionless with half closed eyes. He clasped her tenderly in his arms.

She raised her head, her lips forming into a childish smile.

"Dear," she said, "call me your little mouse."

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Tears appeared in her eyes but he covered them with kisses. "Ah!" she said. "I am so happy, so happy!"

XVII

THESE days were full of an ecstasy of love and passion.

They would get up at four o'clock in the morning when the sun had not yet risen behind the dark woods, would dress hurriedly and walk down the quiet sleepy streets wet with dew. They would halt on the bridge with the statues of stags, would look at the water which rippled under the rays of the rising sun and enjoy the cool morning breeze as it caressed their burning cheeks. They would go farther on into the park where the grass had been mown and where stood long stacks of fragrant hay. Larks sang in the blue morning sky, quails called each other, grasshoppers trilled and they were the only human beings in the midst of Nature at that early hour when all slept.

They would sleep on the hay until the sun rose over the stack and looked into their happy faces. Then they would wake and look round with fright. Had anyone seen them?

Kitty would arrange her hair, pin her hat on and he had to perform the function of a mirror for her. She had hair pins between her lips with which she was lazily fixing her thick hair.

"Look," she said, her lips still tightly pressed together,— "is my hat on straight?"

"Yes," he said.

"Oh, you nasty boy, you don't even look!"

It was true, he did not. He was admiring her round white arms where the muscles moved under a silky skin after each movement of the fingers.

"Sasha, do look, I shall look a fright. Ah! I am so hungry!"

"So am I, my little mouse, let us go to the farm restaurant."

They went arm-in-arm, thoughtful and simple like children. Nature smiled on them. Long crimson fir apples laughed at them from the high firs, the park attracted them by its coolness.

"You can't come in with me to the farm, there are too many people there," Kitty said,— "I will enter alone and you shall

come some time after and sit down at my table as if by chance. We won't even talk, as if we weren't acquainted."

The farm was full of people. Princess Repnin sat with her children and an English governess in a little curtained pavilion. There were many children, students and young girls in the gallery. Maids in white aprons served milk, coffee and tea with black rye bread and biscuits; the place smelled of cows. A peacock shrieked piercingly.

Kitty entered trying to wear a most innocent and independent air. Her face was burning. Her hair was in disorder and her dress was crumpled. People looked at her sideways. Everyone knew her—Katia the philosopher.

She sat down trying to pay no attention to unfriendly glances and ordered coffee and a glass of cream.

A moment later Sablin entered. There were many free tables but he approached Kitty and ceremoniously asked for permission to sit down at her table. They tried to be silent but Kitty could not restrain herself and said, her lips hardly moving:

"I love you madly."

He lowered his eyes, reddened and answered in a whisper: "My dear little mouse!"

And both laughed.

Then, each having finished their coffee and cream and each having paid for it separately, they left. He went first and she followed soon after. Everyone saw their comedy and criticized them. They alone noticed nothing.

He waited for her under a fir tree with crimson fir apples. They went on arm-in-arm together.

At the house she let him alone until lunch. Then it was served with many courses and wines that he liked. She found them out by clever questioning. After lunch he reclined on the sofa and she sang. She sang like all the Petersburg young girls of the time. Neither well nor badly. She had much musical feeling, a badly pitched voice and liked unfinished fragments of songs speaking of passion, love and unsatisfied feeling. She began to sing in French or in Russian, stopped before finishing,

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

idly fingered the keys, played a melodious waltz and began something else.

Sablin dozed. Sometimes he opened his eyes and gazed at her happily. Her cheeks were glowing, the eyes seemed large between the darkened eyelids and shone softly. He closed his eyes again and listened in sweet lassitude.

The same tune was repeated for a second time. Deep pain was felt in it and Sablin opened his eyes.

"I want to love and to suffer again!" Kitty sang passionately the last line and burst out weeping. She knew why she wept. Her heart was being torn by the torture of knowing that she would love for so short a time, and suffer . . . the whole of her life.

Sablin rushed to soothe her, but she continued to weep on his breast and for a long time he could not calm her. To all his questions she answered:

"Don't ask, my dear. It's from happiness!"

XVIII

THEY hired horses at a riding school and rode towards Gatchino. The weather was hot. They stopped an ice hawker near the Orlovsky wood, dismounted, purchased ices, sat down on the sloping bank of the road and ate the ices with little wooden splinters from little pasteboard plates. The horses grazed near by and their heads almost touched Kitty's pretty face. The dark wood rustled behind them and the oaks whispered mysteriously. Their hearts were calm and quiet. When they returned home she lay wearily on a sofa and he read newspapers in an arm chair.

Every day brought new pleasures. He drove to the regiment on Saturday, passed four hours at scouting drill, learned that there would be none on Monday but that on Tuesday the regiment would start for the manœuvres. He returned towards dinner-time to Kitty refreshed by his visit to the regiment and desirous of new caresses, passion and kisses.

But little by little he grew weary of the passion. On Mon-

day he left without much regret and drove to Krasnoie Selo promising to return for dinner.

He arrived at his cottage towards one o'clock and learned that the Adjutant had sent for him three times in the morning and that a note from the office was waiting for him on his table. Unpleasant forebodings rose in his heart.

The note was official. "Your Honour should report to Colonel Prince Repnin immediately upon your return to the camp. Uniform to be worn—tunic, sword . . ." Such a tone promised nothing good. Sablin got ready and went to Repnin who lived in his own "datcha" built on the slope of the hill not far from the Officers' Mess. The datcha was large and built of wooden beams in an affected Russian style with carved figures of cocks over the front steps and balcony. An orderly, dressed in a blue livery with large flat buttons embossed with the insignia of the Prince, opened the door.

"His Excellency asks you to wait a little," he said, "they are lunching."

That also was a bad sign. How could the amiable and hospitable Repnin lunch, while an officer of his regiment, his comrade, waited for him.

The Prince would have invited him to lunch, would have offered him coffee, cigars, if something unusual had not happened—and of course unpleasant, Sablin began to think. He guessed the reason of the summons. The matter would have a relation to Kitty, and he frowned.

He passed to the drawing room, a large room, the walls covered with panels of polished wood, and hung with English lithographs of famous race horses. A massive table of heavy oak littered with newspapers and illustrated magazines stood in the middle of the room. Sablin walked about it and looked at the lithographs.

Prince Repnin, a veteran officer and A. D. C. of the Emperor, whose father and grandfather had served in the same regiment, was the President of the Officer's Court of Honour and a strict guardian of the regimental traditions and of the dignity of its uniform. No one knew as well as he did the history and the

traditions of the regiment. Stiff, always clad in a tight-fitting tunic cut by the best tailor, never getting drunk in any circumstances, he inspired terror in the young officers by his cold countenance alone. He did everything well but was never enthusiastic about anything. He rode well and had an excellent horse, but he was not a sportsman. He was an excellent marksman, was the member of an aristocratic hunting society, was often invited to the Imperial hunts, but he was not a hunter. He played coldly at whist and bezique but had never been seen at a game of chance.

He was married and had two daughters, young girls who were as stiff as he, and spoke English better than they did Russian. His wife, a grey haired Lady-in-Waiting of the Empress, was the full complement of her husband. She was quite mad on society customs, calls and conversations, guarded the traditions of the regiment even more strictly than did her husband and always took care that the officers behaved properly in society. It was rumoured that several years previously she had had an intrigue abroad with some Italian Prince, but that intrigue passed so secretly, was so stiffly correct, that even those who spoke about it were never certain in their hearts about the truth of their words. She watched the behaviour of the ladies of the regiment, pronounced undebatable verdicts as to which intrigue was decent and which stained the name of the husband and brought disgrace on the regiment. She saw to it that the officers did not walk arm-in-arm with artists, of whatever good family they might be. The officers feared her sharp tongue and imperious habits. She let everyone understand that she was descended in a straight line from the Ruriks, that her ancestors had held a high position at the court of the Tsar Alexei Mihailovitch and that she kept letters of the Tsar addressed to her great-grandfather.

She had only one weakness. She loved to see young officers married and to find suitable matches for them which in all respects would be favourable for the regiment.

Sablin thought of all this as he waited in the drawing room. Half an hour passed, but no one came.

TO RED FLAG

Sablin grew more and more irritated against Repnin and frowned more and more deeply.

"I shall tell him all that I think of him," he decided at the moment when the door was opened and the orderly in livery said:

"Please, Your Honour, His Excellency asks you to come to his study."

Sablin hated the orderly too. It seemed to him that the livery made the soldier impertinent and that he looked contemptuously at him—a Lieutenant!

XIX

PRINCE REPNIN stood behind his massive writing table clad in his tightly buttoned tunic. He did not ask Sablin to sit down and did not shake hands with him. His cold steel gaze pierced the young man and made him stop and involuntarily stand to attention.

"Lieutenant Sablin," Prince Repnin began in a cold official tone,—*"I have invited you here because . . . I personally knew and deeply respected your father. I believe . . . I want to believe that our regiment is sacred to you. I am therefore surprised at the light-headed way in which you have treated the honour of your uniform. You have stained it, Lieutenant Sablin. . . . I do not convoke the Officer's Court of Honour only because I am certain that my words will suffice to make you put an end to your pernicious intrigue."*

"Prince," Sablin began, *"Your Excellency. . . ."*

Repnin commanded silence by a cold glance of his shining grey eyes.

"I haven't finished speaking, Lieutenant Sablin," he said coldly,—*"I have not called you for the purpose of listening to your explanations or excuses. You can have none. Only a definite promise to give up your pernicious passion for this girl of the streets. . . ."*

"Your Excellency . . . I won't allow. . . ." Sablin began, pale and breathing heavily; but the cold piercing gaze of Repnin again brought him to silence.

"I do not interfere with your physical needs, Lieutenant Sablin, but no one displays them publicly as you have allowed yourself to do. How could you venture to walk arm-in-arm with a girl of the streets at the Pavlovsk concert?! You have ridden with her, you have visited with her the farm and other places where our families meet! Lieutenant Sablin,—strictly speaking,—you ought to leave our regiment because you don't know how to wear its uniform with honour. Yes! Leave the regiment. This is no laughing matter, Lieutenant Sablin! But I take into consideration your youth and will leave the matter without any consequences. I have conferred with other senior officers and we have decided to close our eyes to these events under the condition that you will immediately, today, put an end to this intrigue."

"Your Excellency," Sablin said gasping.—"I . . ."

"Lieutenant Sablin, I repeat that I haven't called you for explanations. You have heard what I have said and I hope that you have understood me. You can go!"

One—two, Sablin turned, distinctly clanking his spurs, and walked out of Prince Reprin's study, his eyes dimmed by tears of indignation.

He did not realise how he reached his cottage.

The slippery boards of the side-walk rising up the slope were under his feet, the autumn sun was shining dully and clouds shut it out of sight from time to time. Sablin noticed nothing of this. He was shaking all over with anger and excitement.

He had been insulted and so had she. She, who was his first love. She, who had given herself to him with such limitless passion!

What was he to do? Revenge himself! Challenge Colonel Reprin to a duel! He would make him understand that the woman he loved was no girl of the streets and that he, Lieutenant Sablin, would not allow him to speak of his sacred love so cynically and impertinently as he had done. He would marry Kitty! That was all. And let . . . let Princess Reprin receive her and shake her hand afterwards. Yes, he would marry her. And why not? At heart she was purer than many

other young girls. At any rate she would be faithful to him. Everyone in the regiment knew that Manotskoff visited Mrs. Matzneff and spent the night at her flat when Matzneff was on guard, everyone knew that Petristcheva lived with Lieutenant Speransky . . . and all were silent. . . . And what was Kitty? . . . He would marry her . . . Just to make them angry. . . .

He tried to think of Kitty as his wife. Every day would bring her caresses, her sweet conversation and the scent of perfume, hyacinths, and powder. Sablin shook his head. He had had enough of them during these five days and wanted a rest from them. And if he married her he would have them every day. . . . Every day he would hear the badly played piano and the unfinished songs of love and passion.

The regimental holiday would come. The Empress, the Grand Duchess and Kitty with her simple kind smile and round white arms would sit in a large box at the riding school decorated by flowers and by the colours of the regiment. Sablin bent his head. He realised that it was impossible. Repnin was right. She was not a lady of the regiment. The regiment demanded other women and other relations with them.

His satisfied passion did not wake and cold reason began to dominate in him. He had to choose: she or the regiment. Our regiment—so beautiful, mighty and great. Our regiment, closely bound to Russia and to the Tsar.

Sablin understood more and more clearly that his relations with Kitty should have been different and that he could have loved her then. But was that so?

Dusk was creeping into the little room. Faint light penetrated through the small window, clouds crept over the sky and rain was coming. Sablin paced about the room, muttered curses, angrily clenched his fists and his face reddened. Then he grew silent and thoughtful.

He remembered the luxurious lunches, dinners and suppers that Kitty had arranged for him. Wine, cognac, liqueurs. She had purchased everything herself. But on what money? Where did she get the money to arrange all this for him?

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

He stopped before the window, buried his hands in his pockets and even whistled.

"Lieutenant Sablin," he told himself,—what a fool you are and what a . . . scoundrel. . . ."

He called his orderly and sent him to tell the izvostchik to get ready to return to Pavlovsk with a letter and sat down to write.

"Dear Kitty," he began, "circumstances have taken such a turn that it is impossible for me to come today. Tomorrow the manœuvres begin and we shall thus be separated for a fortnight. Farewell, dear little mouse, wish me a good journey and don't think badly of me. I kiss your sweet lips a thousand times. We shall see each other after the manœuvres. Wait for me and don't grieve. Good-bye. Your Sasha."

Sablin put five hundred rubles into the envelope, but when he had sealed it he realized that money would offend her. She had loved and given herself to him in such a way that it was not necessary or possible to pay for it.

Sablin unsealed the letter, took out the money and began to think. "What about the dinners, the suppers, the wine." He added: "P.S. Little mouse, I am your debtor. Let me know how much the entertainment has cost you and I will settle it. I don't want you to spend money on me. A. S."

He sealed it and sent it off.

XX

KITTY burst into tears when she received the letter. She knew that he would leave her. But so soon! She had not expected it. In five days, in five happy days the whole of her life had been burnt and nothing remained. She did not even have his photograph. She had not thought of asking for it then and she realized that now he would not give it. This short "P.S." about the money, this business-like tone made her understand everything. She realized that Sasha and his little mouse existed no longer and that only the Lieutenant of our regiment Sablin and Katia the philosopher remained. A portrait of Sasha could have adorned the table of his little mouse, but Katia the philosopher could not have a portrait of Lieutenant Sablin.

Kitty wept, rolling on her bed and burying her face in the pillows.

She would have committed suicide had she had poison at hand. But she decided otherwise when the thought came to her. She had to see him once more, she had to say good-bye properly and then let happen what may! She would not mind whatever it was. She would live in the past, should she continue to live. It had all been—the walks through the park, the morning coffee at the farm and the rides on horseback to the Orlovsky wood near Gatchino. It had all been. . . . She would come to that bench when she would feel sick at heart and would dream there of him. She would die with his name on her lips if life became too unbearable.

“Eh! It doesn’t matter!” she exclaimed in despair. “Miserable . . . that I am! I deserve it!”

Kitty jumped up, rushed to the mirror and began to wipe away the traces of tears and to arrange her hair. She tried on several hats and chose one that was most becoming and elegant, forgetting about the rain which had begun to patter, thin and persistent, promising to continue for the rest of the day.

She drove to a shop and purchased his favourite sweets and zakouskas to present him for the manœuvres. Not only would she take nothing from him, but she would shower presents on him at their parting. This was her pride and this comforted her. She drove up to his house at Krasnoie Selo about nine o’clock in the evening. Her face was covered by a fine mist of rain, but she had only one thought—to find him alone. Quite alone.

Rotbek was not home. Sablin was packing his things for the manœuvres assisted by his orderly. The sergeant had sent a message that the wagon with the officers’ luggage would start at five o’clock in the morning.

Sablin was surprised and pleased when she entered but he was also greatly confused. He sent his orderly to prepare the samovar and fidgeted about on one spot not knowing where to ask her to sit down.

"Kitty, dear! How is it that you have come? It is nice of you. You are wet through, my poor little mouse!"

He tried to warm her cold hands in his. She was chilled by the drive through the cold wind and the rain.

"You will catch a cold, you mad girl! We'll have some hot tea immediately."

She was looking attentively at him, as if she wanted to drink his features and to carry them away with her forever. Her lips quivered, her teeth chattered from cold but even more from inner feverish excitement.

"You start for the manœuvres tomorrow," she said.

"Yes, for about a fortnight. And then . . . I will come to you. If you allow?"

"You are packing," she said bending down so as to conceal the tears that dimmed her eyes.

"What have you put here? Have you got two pairs of greased boots?"

"One," he answered.

"And you have packed it. You must be quite mad. What will you wear?"

"My patent leather ones," Sablin said.

"In such weather! You will only spoil them and will catch cold. . . . No, no, that is no good. . . . Why have you so many starched shirts? You have put them in with the boots,—they will get crumpled. Now,—sir,—take off your patent leather boots and put on these, I will pack everything differently."

Kitty had pulled herself together and had regained control of herself. She wanted to be useful and to replace a mother to him. He had none, the poor orphan. Who would think of him?

"Sasha, see, here I put woolen socks, you must wear them when the weather is such as it is now. Here is the underclothing, here are the boots wrapped in paper and here on the top I put a clean night-shirt, your book, and with them a small present from myself: your favourite klukva marmelade and some 'polendvitza.' You may not want to go to the Mess some

damp day and will drink tea at your tent. You will think of me then."

The packing case was transformed. Sablin and the orderly could not manage to get everything in and had been thinking of an additional basket. Kitty had packed everything and still there was room left. The orderly brought the samovar and carried the packing case away to the squadron. They remained alone. Rain poured stubbornly outside and fell with a metallic sound on the pools of water; a lamp was burning brightly in the room and the fragrance of perfume was strong. They sat and drank tea in silence. They had nothing to speak about. All the words of love had been said during those five days of insane passion and they could find no new ones. Suffering had left traces on her face and it had lost its attractiveness. Rotbek or the orderly might return at any moment and they had to hurry.

"My dear, my darling, will you remember me!?" she asked.

"Kitty, we are not parting forever, why are you so queer to-day?"

She began to cry.

He tried to comfort her.

"Don't, . . . don't, dear," she said as he kissed her.

Time was passing. He began to hurry her. It did not occur to him that it was a dark rainy night, that she might be afraid to drive alone along the deserted road. In after years he always reddened painfully at the thought of these moments. He would never have let his wife, sister or the wife of a friend leave alone in such weather. She felt that she was in the way and began to get ready to leave. She hastily put on her hat and did not think of arranging her hair,—what did it matter now. She felt hurt and ashamed. She realised that beauty had gone out of their love. She was no longer the faithful loving companion of Sasha, but a girl who had come to visit a Guards officer. Afterwards Kitty wondered why she had not killed herself then and there.

"Farewell," she said.

He stood with his back turned. He had again produced his

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

five hundred rubles and was clumsily folding them with the purpose of placing them behind the bodice of her gown. "I believe that is the way it is done," he thought feeling greatly confused.

She saw the money and understood.

"Sasha," she exclaimed growing pale,—"you won't do this, you won't insult me! My love for you was too sacred!"

She fell on her knees before him, clasped his feet in her arms and kissed them.

"Farewell," she said faintly, rose and went out of the door. He ran to help her into the cab. The driver was asleep inside and for some time could not understand what was wanted of him. Meanwhile she waited shivering in her light silk mantilla. She did not even have an umbrella. A transparent glove covered one of her hands, the other she had forgotten in the cottage and did not want to return for it. That was a bad sign. Let it remain there and remind him of her. Both felt ill at ease and wished that the last moments of the parting would come more quickly. At last she got into the carriage and it moved out of the yard. Kitty huddled up in a corner and wept shivering in spasmodic convulsions.

"Poor girl!" thought the izvostchik, "she must have suffered much."

He was an old Krasnoie Selo izvostchik. He had lived all his life there and knew what had happened. In the past he had seen many similar dramas, many feminine tears and hysterics. Afterwards many poisoned, shot or drowned themselves.

"They mostly drowned themselves," he concluded his rumination with philosophical calm.

"Yes, pretty things have happened. This one is done for too, I should think. She won't get over it. She's had a good time and now—well, the road is the same for them all!"

XXI

THE band rode round the village and played the "General March" as a signal that it was time to saddle the horses. But the careful sergeants had seen to that long ago and the section

TO RED FLAG

corporals were now inspecting the men in the yards to see that all was in order.

The rain promised to last for several days. It was thin, drizzling, cold, penetrating and methodical. The men shivered in their shirts and gathered in groups in the shelter of the barns as they waited for the order to lead out their horses. Patches of fog floated over the earth and everything looked sad and dejected. The leaves of the birch trees had begun to grow yellow in that one night. Everything bore signs of the coming autumn. The music had a hoarse sound in the damp air.

Sablin slept soundly. Rotbek, who had just returned from Pavlovsk and was quite ready to start, took energetic measures to wake him.

"Get up, you beggar. You'll have to miss your tea again. That's all women's work," he said, looking at the glove which had been forgotten on the table and noticing the fragrance of perfume in the air.—"Eh, Sasha! Sasha!"

"What is it?" growled Sablin.

"You'll sleep through the manoeuvres."

"What time is it?"

"Quarter past seven and we have to be lined up by half past."

"I shan't be late," and with the assistance of his smart orderly Sablin managed not only to dress but also to have some tea.

The squadrons were slowly moving along the road. The officers rode in groups in front. All were in summer tunics, except Matzneff who was wrapped in a rain coat and used bad language when he referred to the order of the Regimental Commander that the officers should be in summer tunics as an example for their men.

"Every Baron has his own fancies," he growled. "He just won't understand that one can't deceive the soldiers by this. Every officer has a warm jersey or a leather vest underneath while the soldiers have nothing. What is the use of it then? He won't take into consideration that the soldiers are under twenty-three years of age while I am thirty. I have rheu-

matism and I will suffer if I get drenched. It's all right for fellows like Sasha or Pik, they don't mind."

"We don't," Sablin answered.—"But, Pavel Ivanovitch, why haven't the men been allowed to put on their overcoats?"

"Eh, you youngsters!" Gritzenko exclaimed, "think a little. In the army nothing is done without purpose."

"Baron's fancies," growled Matzneff.

"Funny person, you are!" said Gritzenko with a sparkle in his gypsy eyes. "The soldier must have something dry to cover himself with when the day's march is ended. His great coat takes the place of a blanket and everything else for him. What shall he cover and warm himself with if he gets drenched? The Baron is a soldier. He knows his job, well—I think it must be the twentieth year that he has watched manœuvres round Krasnoie Selo. He has had time to study the climate."

The regiment was nearing Gatchino. The high fence of the palace park appeared on the right. Weeping willows bent low over transparent ponds. Fog rolled over the groups of trees in the park and the sadness of the North filled the misty air. The spirit of the quaint, whimsical Emperor Paul haunted the place and everything reminded one of him.

The band played the regimental march.

"Won't you call forward the singers?" said Lieutenant Fetisoff,—“perhaps the Dowager Empress may come to the window.”

"You're right," said Gritzenko and shouted:—"Singers! To the front!"

"What Empress," growled Matzneff, "no good man would send his dog outdoors in such weather and he hopes that the Empress will come out to marvel at him!"

"Don't you hear the band?" Fetisoff remarked.

"Well, let them play," Matzneff said,—“they've no pity on the men!” The singers had felt warmer in the ranks and now rode out unwillingly. Lubovin did not leave his place at all. The sergeant saw from the rear of the squadron and dashed out with a riding whip in his hands.

TO RED FLAG

"Why are you playing the aristocrat here Lubovin? Haven't you heard the order for the singers?" he shouted sternly.

"I've a sore throat, Ivan Karpovitch," Lubovin answered hoarsely.

"I'll show you how to have sore throats! Forward, scoundrel!" and the sergeant hit the croup of Lubovin's horse with his stick. It reared and Lubovin galloped to the front of the squadron which was approaching the palace.

The singers of the second squadron sang hoarsely a song relating to the campaign of 1812, in front the band played a waltz "The Gitana" and from behind, where the third squadron was came the sounds of a tambourine, sharp whistling and separate fragments of a merry song floating through the general uproar.

The squadrons were ascending the slope towards a square with a tall grey obelisk, and winding round it approached the gates of Gatchino. Grey withered fields lay before them, a dark wood loomed in the distance through patches of rolling fog. The cold rain continued to pour, white steam from the horses rose over the regiment. . . .

The songs quieted down. . . .

XXII

THEY had been marching for two days and for two days the rain had poured. The sergeant's face assumed an anxious expression. The horses were growing thin and ate their oats unwillingly and did not lie down on the damp earth at the bivouacs. The rifles needed to be cleaned and the saddle cloths dried. Two of the horses had already got sore backs because the saddle cloths had been wet the first day and the soldiers who had been guilty of the neglect now followed the squadron on foot. The third day was to be a day of rest near the manor of Baron Wolff "The White House." The officers looked forward with great expectations to that day. A dinner at the manor was expected, fireworks, music, dancing, singers. . . . The whole division was to assemble there by that time and was to encamp in a huge bivouac on the fields of Baron Wolff's estate which were covered by stacks of reaped corn.

The regiment arrived at the bivouac about three o'clock in the evening of the day of rest. Men had been detailed beforehand for the disposal of Divisional Headquarters. They had already marked the corners of the bivouac and the squadrons now began to strike the picket lines. From every direction came the noise of voices, whinnying of horses and the tapping of hammers on poles. The rain had ceased. Thick fog was descending lower and lower and some experienced meteorologists asserted that it was a sign of coming hot, sunny weather; others, pessimists, did not believe that was possible and said that the movement of the fog was a sign of new rains coming.

The soldier bivouacs were stretched out in straight lines. Everything had been measured out, the saddles had been laid along the picket lines, the intervals had been verified. A large tent had been pitched behind each squadron and the squadron aristocrats—the sergeant major, the Quartermaster sergeant, the clerk and the forager,—settled in it. Forage was being stowed away nearby and heavy scales were hung up on a tripod. Farther on field kitchens were smoking. The orderly officer had seen to their being lined up so that their chimneys formed one straight line. Only the officers' tents were out of harmony with the beauty of the bivouacs' perfect alignment. They were of various sizes and patterns. Gritzenko and Fetisoff had a round Turkish tent, Matzneff a green Indian tent with a white roof and Sablin and Rotbek had a Danish one. A coloured ensign flew over each tent. The ensigns were of various sizes, shapes and colours. Each officer had his tent pitched in the place he chose. Lovers of Nature settled among the bushes which bordered a brook, more delicate persons who feared humidity moved to the summit of a hillock, others, desirous of calm and privacy, removed their tents half a verst from the bivouac. The whole field round the bivouac was dotted by the multi-coloured spots of these tents, which gave to the whole the appearance of a gypsy encampment.

On the morning of the day of rest the weather was beautiful. The sun swam out into the sky, shining warmly and happily after the three days of its absence. The dark clouds disappeared

TO RED FLAG

and a huge pink cloud remained motionless on the horizon. The sergeants roused their men at five o'clock in the morning. There was so much work to be done that they feared it would not be finished that day. Apart from the usual but thorough grooming of the horses it was necessary to wash the shirts, trousers, underwear and saddle cloths, and to have time to dry them, to clean and oil the rifles, pipeclay and polish the belts and straps and to clean the stirrups and bits. From early morning the bivouac bustled like an ant-hill. Horse-blankets were spread out on the ground and half-naked men sat on them and cleaned their rifles with frenzy while their underwear and shirts, which they had washed in the river were being dried. Section corporals in coloured under-shirts walked up and down the lines, their hands in their pockets, and watched keenly that no one should lose time or be idle.

Cossacks bathed their horses in the river near by and rode naked along the banks. Their shirts had also been washed and were being dried on the bushes. Shouts and yells came from the river.

The tumult and the noise which reigned all around did not prevent the officers from sleeping. It was eleven o'clock in the morning but most of the tents were closed on all sides. They slept because they had nothing else to do.

Gritzenko was sitting undressed on his bed and twanged his guitar with melancholy, Fetisoff lay with his head covered by a blanket. Matzneff also sat undressed in his tent and read a French book—"Mademoiselle Girot—ma femme." Sablin and Rotbek slept the sound sleep that is only possible on a delightful sunny morning at the age of twenty. The orderlies waited near the tents of their officers with jugs of water, soap and towels, and with tea and coffee pots ready for serving.

Cooks in white caps and aprons bustled round the tents of the Officer's Mess. Some of the senior officers drank tea or coffee there or read newspapers just brought from the station.

For the officers the manœuvres were a holiday, a merry, noisy picnic. They had no worries and no work to do. The soldiers and the officers lived far apart from each other. All the hard-

ships of the manœuvres had to be borne by the soldiers. After long and weary marches they had to groom their horses, to fetch the forage and carry it on their backs, clean their rifles, saddles and boots. The officers had orderlies for that purpose. When the regiment did not stop in a village the soldiers of the cavalry had to sleep on the ground, wrapping themselves in their overcoats because the cavalry had no tents. Many caught cold and were sick afterwards. Cases of dysentery and of typhus were recorded in many regiments after the manœuvres. The officers had their own tents and in bad weather were quartered in peasant cottages or in the houses of landowners.

Notwithstanding all this, most of the officers disliked the manœuvres. Many tried to obtain leave for this period. On the contrary the soldiers liked the manœuvres in spite of all the hardships and difficulties. Life at that time reminded them of their native villages, they came in touch with peasants, saw the fields and the woods, often drank milk and ate not only government bread but also peasant bread. Manœuvres resembled war, the service took on meaning and became understandable. They pursued enemy patrols, took prisoners, came in contact with other regiments at large bivouacs, met their fellow villagers whom they had not seen for some time and learned the news from home. The difficulties of the work and the weariness were forgotten and the soldiers felt freer.

Songs, jests and laughter were heard here and there in the bivouac which was warmed by the rays of the sun. The soldiers paid no attention to the fact that the gentlemen slept. What else could they do? They would have only been in the way.

They were gentlemen. They belonged to two different worlds. The officers and the soldiers. Two worlds that were living side by side and yet were inaccessible to each other.

Sablin felt that, as he watched the bivouac from his tent. It seemed to him that he ought to go to the soldiers, do something, speak about something to them. Gritzenko was twanging his guitar in the next tent and Sablin went to him.

TO RED FLAG

"Pavel Ivanovitch, should I go to the squadron? Perhaps I ought to do something," he asked.

Gritzenko stopped playing, raised his large dark eyes, looked at him with surprise and said: "Why? You will only be in the way. The sergeants and the corporals will manage better without you."

XXIII

At five o'clock they went to dine at the house of the proprietor of the estate. As they approached the gates of the park, officers of the Cossack regiment rode in with their Commander at their head. Sablin stepped aside to let them pass. A stout red-faced General with long grey moustache—a typical Taras Boulba*—rode at their head on a bay stallion. A silver nagaika hung over his shoulder; broad "sharovari," soft-leather boots, a long tunic and a cap set far back gave him a smart Asiatic appearance. The horses of the Cossacks were of a lighter build and smarter looking than those of Sablin's regiment. Lightly and freely, unhindered by curbs, they passed with long strides through the gates with highly raised heads and quivering nostrils. There was something particularly light in their movement. Involuntarily Sablin thought: "That is real cavalry!"

The host, Baron Constantine von Wolff, stood at the top of a stone terrace and met his guests. He was dressed in a black coat, a white waistcoat and summer checked trousers. In his button-hole he wore the ribbon of the Prussian Iron Cross which he had received in the last war with the French. His wife, a beautiful fair-haired woman of about forty, stood at his side in a lilac dress with white lace trimmings. She was a Maid of Honour of both Empresses.

The tables for dinner were set in a meadow under old lime trees which had been planted by Peter the Great, according to a local legend, after his conquest of Ingermanland.† Two bands

* A legendary Cossack hero.

† Ingermandland is the ancient name of the country surrounding Petrograd.

and two choirs of singers—of the Cossacks and of Sablin's regiment,—stood under the lime trees. Rotbek, Speransky and two daughters of the Baron, the twenty-year-old Sofia and seventeen-year-old Vera, played tennis on a tennis court near by. A nephew of the host, a young Baron Korff, who was going to join Sablin's regiment that year from the Corps of Pages was handing them the balls. Both young girls were beautiful. Supple and well developed by gymnastics and riding Vera served skillfully and her clear, happy voice rang with animation. The officers stood in a group near the players and admired them.

The Cossack officers dismounted, leaving their horses to smart orderlies and crowded behind their Commander towards their host.

Besides the officers there arrived the wife of Colonel Reprin with two daughters, two Barons Wolff with their wives—one was a Wolff of Kourtenhof, who had a coat of arms with a black wolf on a gold field and the other a Wolff of Drosten, who had a gold wolf on a black field,—and a neighbouring landowner Muller with three ruddy fair haired daughters, Elsa, Ida and Clara, awkward-looking young country girls who were confused before the officers. Matzneff swore that they smelled of milk. They wore home-made dresses with tight-fitting black velvet bodices and they reminded the officers of Tirolian singers. Several other German landowners were present, and were introduced by the Baron under a general name—"my friends!"

Although the Baron had been born in Russia and had lived there almost all his life, he could hardly speak Russian. Baron Drevenitz soon joined him and they began to speak German.

The band played a march and the gentlemen, some with ladies on their arms, others alone, walked towards the tables. Either by chance or purposely Princess Reprin introduced Sablin at that moment to Vera and he had to accompany her to the table. His heart jumped when he felt the thin girlish hand on his arm. He looked at the face of the young girl. Her pure eyes were looking at him with sincere admiration and Sablin felt ashamed under that pure gaze.

The Cossack General was the partner of the hostess. He was

TO RED FLAG

the senior guest, and had long been acquainted with the Baroness.

"What a beautiful pair Vera makes with that young Lieutenant," he said. "Who is he?"

"I don't know," said the Baroness squinting her short-sighted eyes and raising her lorgnette.

"He has been introduced by Princess Repnin. That is a sufficient recommendation."

"Has Vera finished her school?" asked the Cossack General.

"Yes, this year," answered the Baroness.

"Both of them are quite mad. They rush about the woods like boys. But just now she will stay at Petersburg. I should like to introduce her at Court and take her with me to the coronation."

"Ivan Karpovitch," Steepochka Vorobieff's hoarse voice was heard as he addressed the Cossack General across the table,—
"We are having a discussion here with your Colonel about the 'djigitovka.' Please give us your opinion: has the djigitovka any military importance?"

"Senseless somersaults on a horse," Baron Drevenitz said in broken Russian,—
"Cossack nonsense. Break arms and feet and spoil horses."

The eyes of the Cossack Commander flashed and he answered in a loud voice.

"Of course! It teaches the Cossack to despise danger and it makes him bold and agile when on horseback."

"What is djigitovka?" Baron Wolff asked.

"Haven't you ever seen it?" said the Cossack General.

"No, I haven't."

"And you haven't seen it, Baroness?"

"No."

"And your nice daughters?"

"Where could they have seen it?"

"Well, then I will show you my men. I will also try to remember my younger days and will djigit before our charming hostess," and the Cossack General gallantly kissed the hand of the Baroness.

"Platonitch!" he called his Adjutant from the other end of the table.

The Adjutant, a stout man with eye-glasses, a red moustache and partially bald head, approached.

"Send one of the bandsmen to the bivouac and give the order for about twenty of our regimental djigits to gallop up here. And let my orderly lead my 'Explosion' up here."

"Good Heavens," said the Baroness, "are you also going to take part General?"

"And why not, dear lady," said the General,— "please give me your handkerchief. I will place it on the grass and I will pick it up from horseback as a souvenir of a beautiful lady."

And the General, who had become animated, went to collect the handkerchiefs from the ladies and the young girls.

XXIV

TWENTY COSSACKS rode up and dismounted at the other end of the meadow. A smart red-bearded sergeant, a powerful giant, dashed up to the General and checked his horse before him so that it sat back on its haunches straining forward its front legs.

"I have the honour to report," said the sergeant raising his hand to his cap in salute,— "I have brought the djigits."

"Gentlemen officers!" shouted the General, "to your horses and djigit! Lieutenant Konkoff, take command of the djigits."

A tall slim officer with thick hair curling from under his cap ran up.

"Place the handkerchiefs, Konkoff," the General said kindly, — "I will place this one myself apart from the others. Vera Constantinovna, where is your handkerchief?"

"It isn't easy to pick up such a tiny thing," said the General. "Well, Konkoff,—it is yours, you see that you get it."

"I will do my best, Your Excellency," answered the young officer.

The tables at which coffee had been served were moved aside; the bandsmen and the singers formed a living wall on the other side, and the ladies and the guests prepared to watch. A Cossack orderly ran up to the General leading his bay horse. The

TO RED FLAG

General tested the saddle girdle, the "shashovka," * grasped in Kalmuch fashion the front cantle with his right hand, and lightly jumped into the saddle.

The officers began the djigitovka. The General galloped past first and, notwithstanding his grey hair and noticeable stoutness, lightly bent down at a full gallop, picked up the handkerchief of the hostess with the tips of his fingers and kissed it. A sun-burnt officer jumped off and into his saddle at full speed, Konkoff galloping on a bright sorrel stallion, lightly bent down, picked Vera Constantinovna's handkerchief out of ten others which were scattered on the grass and flourished it over his head.

The Cossacks dashed by in a group standing on their saddles and discharged their rifles into the air. Then they began the djigitovka, one by one.

A young Cossack with a black moustache galloped past on a bay horse. As soon as he approached the spectators he quickly threw his left foot over the front saddle cantle, jumped off, touched the earth with his feet and the next moment was sitting backwards on the neck of his horse. He immediately jumped off on the right side of the horse, jumped back straight into the saddle and repeated that several times.

A second Cossack galloped by head downwards, his shoulders resting on the cushion of the saddle and his legs slightly bent up in the air. A third jumped off his horse, gave a mighty spring from the earth and flew over the saddle, made another spring and flew over the saddle again to the other side of his horse. He seemed to flutter over it without touching leather.

"One must be born to it to do it as they do!" said Prince Repnin.

"Our native steppe trains them in it. It is the favourite sport in our stanitzas and villages," said the Cossack General.—"Destroy the djigitovka and you will destroy the Cossacks!"

One Cossack tried to do something but evidently did not suc-

* The "shashovka" is a strap in a Cossack saddle which joins the stirrup straps under the belly of the horse and thus allows the Cossack to bend down and to touch the earth with his hands at full speed.

ceed. He fell from his horse, turned head over heels and remained motionless on the grass.

The ladies gasped. The officers wanted to run to help him but the General stopped them.

"Stay here," he said,— "he is only shamming. There is a game like that. Another will immediately gallop up, make his horse lie down, and will then carry away the supposed wounded."

But he was mistaken. Several men ran out of the group of Cossack singers and carried away the fallen man.

"Platonitch," said the General,— "find out what is the matter."

The Adjutant ran to the singers and returned immediately.

"Nothing serious," he said loudly,— "he is already mounting his horse."

Taking the General aside he added:—"His leg is badly broken."

The djigitovka was carried on now in groups. Two Cossacks galloped on the same horse facing each other. One was sitting on the neck, the other on the croup behind the saddle and both pretended to play cards. Two others galloped side by side and on their shoulders stood Lieutenant Konkoff. Each group meant a risk of smashing oneself to death should the horse stumble, each necessitated great strength of arms and legs and confidence in the muscles, each was peculiarly beautiful. But now the guests looked on not so much with admiration as with anxiety. They had realized what a risk it meant.

When the last group had cantered past, the Cossack General thanked the djigits and allowed them to return to the bivouac.

"May I have something served for them," said Baron Wolff,—"some beer, vodka and sausages?"

"Please!"—said the General. "Thank you. Only don't give them much vodka. They have to start for the manoeuvres at two o'clock at night."

"Oh, just one glass," said Baron Wolff.

The guests returned to their interrupted coffee and the singers of the Cossack regiment approached the tables. Lubovin, who was with his singers, came nearer. He wanted to watch the

TO RED FLAG

Cossacks and try to understand them. The Cossacks differed greatly from the soldiers. Their long hair, which showed in becoming locks under their caps gave them a wild unsoldierly appearance. Many were bearded, with broad beards falling in waves. The Cossacks were broader in the shoulders, more powerful looking and freer than the soldiers and were less stiff when talking to the officers. Their faces were more expressive and had a bright keen look.

Lubovin watched the Cossack singers. They had typically Russian faces quite as in pictures representing the Moscow period. "Quite like Moscow boyars, rinds and striltzi-faces of old days as well as their songs. There is no such music nowadays. It would be impossible to accompany it on a violin or a piano, only a shepherd's flute might perhaps follow these variations," thought Lubovin.

The Cossack singers sang a song relating an episode in an inn in Poland where three young troopers, a Prussian, a Pole and a Cossack were drinking together. The Prussian paid in silver, the Pole paid in gold and the Cossack paid nothing.

"Fine!" thought Lubovin,— "Lieutenant Sablin always tells us that a song should have educational value for the soldiers. This is educational!"

The song continued to relate how the Cossack made love to the innkeeper's daughter, how he took her away to the Don, but growing tired of her on the way hung her on a tree in a dark forest. Neither the tune nor the faces of the Cossacks expressed sorrow or indignation at such a crime. Everything was as simple as the song itself.

"Fine morals!" thought Lubovin. He looked at the officers and the ladies. They were gazing at the Cossacks with admiration. Lubovin began to realise vaguely that even in the age of humanitarian ideas a murderer and a smart bandit would always find a place in a feminine heart.

Sablin approached him.

"Lubovin," he told him, "assemble our men. We will sing after the Cossacks."

"That is impossible, Your Honour,"—Lubovin replied bitterly

—"how would our songs be received after theirs? They would seem rather flat. Only whistling and a lot of noise are wanted here. Excuse me, Your Honour."

Lubovin turned away and left Sablin, who was not angry about it. He understood him. "The pride of an artist," he thought.

The Cossacks sang another song and it was then decided to dance. Esthonian workwomen of the estate had been standing for some time near the meadow. They were dressed in their Sunday-clothes and looked at the soldiers and the Cossacks and the soldiers looked at them.

The band played a waltz and the officers went to invite the ladies. But the young Wolffs refused to dance, fearing to spoil their white shoes and stockings with dew in the grass, which was growing damp in the evening and only the three Mullers began, but seeing that they were alone, also stopped. The meadow grew deserted. The workwomen were shy and the dances were apparently a failure.

"Could we have a 'Polka,'" said the Baron,— "here they dance that chiefly."

The band played a 'Polka.' The old Baron chose the nicest-looking Esthonian girl in a blue dress with green and yellow ribbons and began to dance with her, to the general amusement. Several workmen followed his example, soldiers and Cossacks, urged by their officers, began to come out and soon the whole meadow was covered with dancers. The bands took turns, playing unceasingly and hundreds of boots beat the measure: one, two, three; one, two, three.

Distant lightnings flashed in the dark sky. The regimental armourer, assisted by soldiers of the baggage-train was finishing setting up fire-works on the edge of the park. A rocket was lighted and flew hissing up into the air, where it burst in a shining star, others of various colour followed it; an artificial fountain threw jets of flame, and the initials of the Emperor appeared, lit by coloured fires.

The dancing quieted down for a moment but immediately began again. The Cossacks and the soldiers became more ani-

TO RED FLAG

mated after they had had some vodka and beer, the Esthonian girls laughed merrily. Some of the officers drank tea at the tables, others wandered about the park; the young Mullers had gone with Konkoff, the Cossack Adjutant and Fetisoff, and shrieked every time a frog leapt from under their feet.

Barrels of tar flamed on the edges of the meadow where couples were dancing, music was playing and where little shoes and spurred boots beat the merry measure:—one, two, three; one, two, three. . . .

XXV

LUBOVIN entered a dark pathway in search of solitude.

Someone followed him. He stopped, and Korjikoff appeared dressed in a torn coat put on over a red shirt and carrying a large leather bag with newspapers.

"What are you doing here?" asked Lubovin.

"I am selling newspapers, as you can see. I have decided to do your part of the work, Victor Mihailovitch and to help you, I am going to study the question on the spot."

"Look out that the 'blue archangels'* don't lay hands on you. Apart from them there are many disgusting creatures around here. Take these Cossacks, for instance. Have you seen them?"

"I have. I am careful, Victor Mihailovitch. Langsam—ruhig. Search me and you will find nothing except the 'Russky Invalid,' the 'Novoie Vremia' and the 'Petersburgsky Gazeta.' I haven't even got the 'Birjeffka.' I am a most well intentioned man, Victor Mihailovitch. I passed the whole of yesterday at Iamburg in the Army infantry. What morals! The officers got drunk and in the night tried to storm with the assistance of the soldiers a villa where some young girls were living. . . . Yes . . . I ran to call assistance. It was a lucky chance that the hussars were not far off and they drove away the infantry. The matter almost ended in a fight!"

* Nickname for the gendarmes.

"But where did you get the documents. I suppose the 'Oh-rana' must have had all your particulars long ago?"

"Of course, I even have a nickname there,—'The red bug,' . . . The party prepared the documents for me. The 'brown overcoats'* looked at them and never smelt a rat. If you ever need any document . . . we are at your service. The work is done wonderfully. Kamensky's signature is a chef d'oeuvre."

"I envy you, Fedor Fedorovitch. You have grit. Perhaps you still continue to believe in the Russian revolution?"

"I do, but now we must work on the Army."

Lubovin stopped and asked angrily:

"Did you see the djigitovka?"

"I was watching it," Korjikoff said calmly.

"What can you expect when a man breaks his leg for fifty copecks and becomes a cripple perhaps for the rest of his life. I saw him and his comrades. Do you think that they were angry or indignant? Nothing of the kind. His comrades laughed at him: 'It's your own fault, Zelenkoff,' they said, 'why did you jump off sideways, of course it kicked you. That's the horse.' And he answered: 'I don't know myself why my hand slipped. God punished me.' One won't be able to do much with them as long as they hold God and the devil responsible for everything. After that they began to praise their General and the way he picked up the handkerchief. D. . . .! Did you see the shout of their sergeant? Our Ivan Karpovitch seems a cherub beside him."

"You have observed well, Victor Mihailovitch, but you haven't been able to draw correct conclusions."

"What conclusions? In their songs they openly praise highway robbery and murder and at the same time break their legs for the recreation of the gentry. The savages! In their minds God is somewhere overhead, the devil beneath and the Tsar and the gentry dominate everything."

"Well, destroy God. Make the devil your servant and everything will slip down hill as if on sledges."

* Nickname for the secret police.

"I don't know how to start it," said Lubovin sighing.

"You can't manage without an officer. I have made the acquaintance of your Sasha. A good gentleman and handsome."

"When did you do that?"

"I came up to him with a newspaper when you refused to sing and walked away in such rude fashion. A good gentleman. He gave me twenty copecks for the 'Novoie Vremia' and did not ask for the change. I am a good reader of faces and I have looked at him well. He is a pliable fellow. And, Victor Mihailovitch, be angry or not, just as you like, but we can't manage without Maria Mihailovna."

"Fedor Fedorovitch!" Lubovin exclaimed with indignation. "I forgive you your words only because you don't understand yourself what it is that you ask. I have lived for a year in the barracks and I know what all these cigarette sellers and washerwomen are who visit the flats of the officers. And Marousia—understand that well, Fedor Fedorovitch,—will never appear in such a rôle."

"I understand that better than you do," Korjikoff said calmly. "My love for Maria Mihailovna is probably not inferior to yours, but I have other plans and other ways to attain them."

"What are they?"

"Let me think it all over and prepare everything. Let me prepare Maria Mihailovna herself for this doubly dangerous work."

"Why doubly?"

"Suppose that Maria Mihailovna herself should fall in love," Korjikoff said quietly.

"With an officer? Marousia? What nonsense! You must be mad!"

"Let us hope so."

"Only violence could threaten her."

"We won't let that happen."

They were approaching the bivouacs.

"Well, good-bye, Victor Mihailovitch, carry on your work, but be careful. They can't stop their dancing yet, the beggars! But tomorrow we shall have rain."

XXVI

THE big manoeuvres were to begin by a cavalry encounter. The scouting was to start at two o'clock at night.

Dancing was still proceeding on the meadow near the manor and the servants were serving a late supper for the guests when the Adjutant called Sablin and told him that the Commander of the regiment had given orders to send him with the scouting party, because Lieutenant Fetisoff had drunk too much and was not in a fit state to lead the party. Sablin went to the bivouac, woke his orderly and told him to saddle his horse and bring it with the scouting party to the house of the manager of the estate, which was situated on the main road. Meantime he went with a Cossack officer, who had a lantern, to the Headquarters of the Division to receive his instructions.

After the pleasant evening, the music, the songs, dancing and the sounds of feminine laughter, Sablin was surprised to see the pale, stern faces of the Senior Adjutant of the Divisional Headquarters, a Captain of the General Staff, and a young Army Captain, attached to the Academy, as they bent over a large many-coloured map. They were as serious as if they were dealing with real warfare.

The Cossack officer carefully took notes in his field notebook. Sablin trusted to his memory.

When he came out of the brightly lit room everything seemed so dark on the road that he could not see his horse.

"Here, Your Honour, I am here,"—said his orderly, took his hand and led him up to the horse.

"And the party?"

"Here, Your Honour,"—he heard the deep tones of his section corporal Balatueff.

Sablin was at a loss as to what direction to take. In the room brightly lit by a petroleum lamp he had understood quite well on the map that he had to follow a large road which by a thin purple line cut the green spaces of the woods, that after covering sixteen versts they would reach a glade with a Finnish village called something like Neppelevo or Leppolevo, that more

TO RED FLAG

woods, another glade, hillocks and a large village Kolosovo would follow, and that they could expect to find enemy scouting parties beyond this village. The first report had to be sent from there. But now in the dark he felt at a loss. The house of the manager was standing in the forest and the main road passed it. But what direction would he have to take? To the right or to the left?

The section corporal brought him out of his indecision.

"To the right, Your Honour," he said and sent out scouts without waiting for the order.

The clatter of the hoofs on the road began to grow faint in the distance when Balatueff respectfully told Sablin: "We can start."

Sablin gave the order and they moved forward.

Nothing could be seen. A thick forest of fir trees stretched out on both sides of the road. The air was filled with the smell of firs, juniper and damp moss. The straight road covered with pools from the rain of the previous day was hardly to be seen ahead. Sablin could not see it at all at first and was surprised at the confident movements of his "Mirabeau."

After half an hour Sablin halted and gave the order to dismount and inspect the saddling and the packs, as it was recommended in the regulations.

"You may smoke," he said, feeling an intense longing for a cigarette.

Matches flashed in red points and for a second lit the motionless horses which looked gigantic in the dark.

Everything was quiet in the forest. Only the water murmured in the ditch and a drop would sometimes fall into it from a branch with a quiet ringing sound.

They mounted again. They should have advanced at an alternately changing gait but Sablin did not risk trotting in the dark and continued to move slowly forward.

The hoofs clattered rhythmically on the road and the night ebbed away. Grey dawn was approaching. One could already see separate trees in the wood and the telephone poles which

hummed dejectedly on both sides of the road. The fog was rising and clouded the forest.

According to Sablin's calculations of time he ought to be already approaching the glade. It was already quite light. A thin penetrating rain was beginning to patter. The forest ended abruptly and sandy hillocks covered by heather and stumps were seen behind it. Little dark houses appeared through the curtain of rain.

"Your Honour," he heard Balatueffs anxious voice,—*"the hussars!"*

The troopers were seized by a sudden panic and galloped back down the road. Sablin, following them, looked back. On the right and on the left hussars in white shirts and red caps galloped straight over the stumps with the evident purpose of cutting off their retreat.

Unaccountable, and as Sablin realised later, stupid and unreasonable fright and excitement seized him. He spurred his "Mirabeau" and galloped down the road without glancing backwards. A grey horse's head suddenly appeared on his left, a little thin sunburnt hand powerfully seized his own which was clad in a wet white glove, and checked his horse.

"Don't waste your energy, my friend. We are your superiors in numbers and you're a prisoner," he heard a calm voice say.

A young Lieutenant with a little bushy moustache was galloping at his side on a fine lean horse. Sablin immediately recognised him. It was Lambin, a well-known sportsman and member of the turf.

They stopped. Eighteen smart-looking hussars in wet shirts surrounded Sablin's men and talked to them with animation. Sablin's party in wet, stiff great coats had a confused and far from smart appearance.

"Where were your flanking scouts?" asked Lambin.

Sablin felt a burning shame before his men. Why had he not thought of sending the flanking scouts. Usually they did not do that in their regiment so as not to trample the crops but he did not have that excuse now. The field was covered with sand and heather and yet he had not sent the scouts. Why?

TO RED FLAG

Because he had never thought of the manoeuvre. Manœuvres had meant for him a dinner at Baron Wolff's manor, an acquaintance with a charming young girl Vera Constantinovna, the music of the band, singing, the djigitovka of the Cossacks, dancing, fire-works, but not work in the field and the writing of reports. He had no idea of what work in the military service could mean. Sablin looked at his "Mirabeau." Thick white foam had appeared from under the straps, he breathed heavily and snorted. He was not used to galloping. Lambin's elegant grey horse walked lightly at his side and breathed as if he had just left the stables. He had been trained for manoeuvres, for battles and for war. Sablin looked at Lambin. He was approaching a Finnish cottage before which stood a hussar sentry waiting for the returning party.

Lambin called out two of his men and ordered them to wait for the report he would write.

"Corporal Svetozaroff, see that the men get tea and milk. Twenty minutes of rest," he said.

"He is keen on the manoeuvres," thought Sablin, "he lives for the interests of his men, probably thinks of the war and prepares them for it. They look exceptionally smart. They seem to know themselves just what they have to do." Sablin's troopers rode in a crowd into the yard and did not know whether to dismount or not. Lambin again gave the orders.

"Dismount!" he shouted to them. "You will stay here till the end of the manoeuvre. You can sleep, you must be tired. My boys will give you tea. Your name, Lieutenant?" he addressed Sablin.

He dismounted, patted the neck of his horse and there was something soft and womanly about his movement. The horse understood his caress and watched him like a dog with its dark clever eyes.

Lambin entered the cottage, said several words in Finnish to the peasant and sat down to write a report about the encounter of the scouting parties. Having sent it off, Lambin looked at Sablin seriously.

"Well, Lieutenant, had it been war-time, I would have dis-

armed you and your men, would have taken away your horses and would have sent you towards the rear under the escort of four hussars. You would thus have been lost to your detachment, but of course we won't do that at the manœuvres. I will leave you here, but you will give me your word that you won't approach your regiment until the end of today's manœuvre and won't enter into any communication with it. Do you give your word?"

"Of course,"—muttered Sablin.

A hussar brought a pot with tea and the owner of the cottage brought out a glass and a brown cup with red flowers painted on it.

"How well everything is organised in your party," Sablin remarked,—“your men seem to be exceptional.”

"The men are the same everywhere," Lambin said seriously, "only their training is different."

"I would very much like to learn how to train good soldiers better."

"You would then have to think less of picnics. Owing to your fire-works we knew the exact place of your bivouac to-night. As a result, we sent only three scouting parties instead of six and could take the right direction. We also know that the encounter of the main cavalry forces will happen here. If you like, we can continue our acquaintance. Visit our regiment and call on me at the fourth squadron. I am always there. But good-bye for the moment."

Lambin hurriedly drank down his cup of tea and went out into the yard. Sablin went to see him off. In the distance ahead he could see the hussar scouts who at a sign from Lambin advanced and entered the forest.

The rain was continuing to fall, the cottage was damp and smelt unpleasantly, water unceasingly trickled down the window panes. An old Finn was sitting in a corner where hung portraits of the Emperor and Empress, a lithographed picture "The Degrees of Human Life" and a portrait of the French president, Faure. He silently sucked at his pipe.

The wet, heavy overcoat was depressing. Sablin took off

TO RED FLAG

his equipment, put his overcoat on a bench in place of a pillow and lay down.

The Finn sat motionless in his corner and his pipe hissed monotonously. The rain was dully beating against the window panes. Sablin stretched himself, yawned and fell asleep.

XXVII

"YOUR HONOUR, get up, they're coming!" Balatueff said quietly, entering the cottage on tip-toe. He was still wearing his wet overcoat.

"Who is coming?" asked Sablin.

"The enemy!"

The rhythmic clatter of many hundreds of horses' hoofs was heard outside. Sablin went out. Lancers were passing him at a brisk trot along both sides of the road. Their wet shirts were bespattered with dirt. Birch twigs were stuck behind the badges on their caps, their faces were wet from the rain, the horses had a dark colour. Squadron after squadron passed and behind them could be seen the grey columns and the red caps of the hussars which had grown dark from the rain.

A bugle call was heard in front, several voices shouted in different places and Sablin saw the squadrons leave the road, leap over a ditch and dash forward towards the border of the forest, where the field was covered with the galloping horsemen of the division to which Sablin's own regiment belonged.

Long lines of Cossacks deployed on the left but the dragoons and part of the hussar squadrons dashed against them. A horse battery clattered over the ditch and hastened to occupy a position on the flank. Someone fell; someone's horse, covered with dirt and riderless followed its squadron whinnying anxiously, and the fallen man remained motionless among the stumps. A large field ambulance with a red cross rolled towards him, bouncing over the uneven ground.

The fringes of this panorama were constantly hidden by the rain and Sablin could not discern what had happened in the place where the Cossacks had met the hussars and the dragoons.

The whole thing resembled a painting and therefore seemed quite unreal to Sablin.

"Can it be like this in real war?" he thought.

"Your Honour," Balatueff interrupted his meditation, "can we start now?"

He assisted Sablin to put on his great coat and Sablin rode towards his regiment, past the Lancers who had attacked Gritzenko's squadron and who had now dismounted.

"Ah, Sasha!" Gritzenko addressed him kindly. He was standing before the squadron with a Captain of the Lancers. "You must be wet, cold and tired. They are going to send us on still further. D . . . them. I've had enough of it and feel awfully hungry. My head is bursting from the Baron's pigwash of yesterday."

"Our canteen man has probably rolled up by this time," said the Lancer. "Let us go and warm ourselves."

"All right," said Gritzenko and went with the Lancer.

Sablin went with them. No one said a word about his having been taken a prisoner and the fact that he had not sent a single report. As if it were all perfectly natural. A glass of starka and sandwiches helped them to forget the manoeuvre.

Meanwhile an umpire in a group of regimental Commanders was pointing out that in many squadrons the alignment had been far from perfect and that most of them had attacked without choosing a definite point for the attack. Not a word was said about scouting.

"In your regiment, Baron," a stout Lancer General told Drevenitz, "only one squadron attacked properly. I am glad that the Emperor wasn't present. There was not sufficient spirit about the charge. Some attacked at a trot."

"But the ground was horrible," an officer standing near Drevenitz replied,— "as it is one of my men was killed."

"The ground? . . . Yes, it wasn't good, but, gentlemen, you know the views of the Grand Duke?"

XXVIII

THE principal manœuvres of that year had been well conceived and planned. They had a leading idea. They intended to prove the impossibility of the Germans' forcing their way through the marshy passes and taking Petersburg even should they succeed in making a landing. The Commander of the Army Corps which was defending Petersburg and his Chief of Staff had decided to close the passes through the woods, to prevent the Guards from deploying, to place them under the fire of batteries and to let the important German guests who were to be present at the manœuvre see that the Russian Commanders understood their work and that Petersburg could not be taken. By two long and wearisome night marches the Army Corps of the Northern force reached the Kolosovo heights and at day-break was to continue its march so as to close definitely all the approaches to Petersburg. The cavalry was sent sixty versts aside so as to accomplish an enveloping movement and cut the enemy's lines of communication with his fleet which was supposed to be in the Finnish Gulf.

The idea of the manœuvre had been made known to every officer and soldier through clearly written orders and through officers of the General Staff who were sent round the units. All tried to forget weariness and to comply in detail with the orders.

The moment of the decisive encounter was approaching. At ten o'clock in the evening the regimental adjutants of all the units of the northern force were assembled in the little house of a forest guard which was lost deep in the woods. An officer from Headquarters was dictating to them the orders for the battle.

The Commander of the Corps, vigorous in spite of his sixty years was wearily sipping tea in the neighbouring room from a glass which was placed on a large map spread over the table. His Chief of Staff was reading over additional explanations. A dark quiet night was outside. The rain which had been pour-

ing during the past few days had now stopped, the sky was growing clearer and the stars were coming out.

The bells of two troikas were suddenly heard on the road from the side of the enemy. The clatter of hoofs and the noise of the wheels grew distant. The troikas stopped before the house and a tall stately old man in the cap of the Imperial Suite and a buckskin overcoat entered the room of the Corps Commander. He was accompanied by a tall elegantly dressed General of the General Staff in a black tunic girded with a silver sash. A gendarme corporal in a light-blue tunic followed them. He assisted in removing the overcoat and left the room. The new arrival was the senior umpire and a member of the State Council, an Adjutant General.

"What a wild place you have chosen for your residence, Your Excellency,"—he said, stretching out a large hand in a white glove to the Commander of the Northern Army. "We have found you with difficulty. Could I ask for a glass of tea. . . . Well, what about tomorrow?"

The Chief of Staff took a neat copy of the orders and began to read. The Commander gave explanations on the map. The Adjutant General interrupted them.

"One moment, Your Excellency, have you sent this order to the regiments?"

"It is being dictated and is going to be sent off immediately."

"Stop the dictation. Entirely different orders will have to be drafted."

"But, Your Excellency," said the Commander of the Northern Army rising from his chair.

"What are you trying to do? To close all the passes, to have an action of artillery, to prevent the Guards from coming out of the woods and deploying? You send a division of cavalry aside Heaven knows where, thirty versts along horrible roads."

"Your Excellency,—by such measures we defend Petersburg," put in the Chief of Staff.

"Ah, leave this academical craftiness for other occasions. You forget that the manœuvres are in the Imperial presence. The Imperial train will arrive at nine o'clock at the station

Voloskovitzi. From there the Emperor and his August guest will ride to the Kolosovo farm where they are to watch the manoeuvre from a hill. The Empress will look on from the balcony. Dinner for six hundred persons has been ordered and will be served in the field near the farm. The Cadets will be promoted officers on that field. Do you realise what all this means?"

"What do you want then?" asked the Commander.

"Manœuvres, beautiful attacks of cavalry and of infantry on the Kolosovo field which seems to have been specially created for that purpose."

"Your Excellency, the manoeuvre will then lose all its instructive value. Then what was the purpose of making the men tramp through the dirt? The 37th Division had made a march of forty-five versts and already occupies excellent positions. How can I now recall them to Kolosovo?"

"You must do so, Your Excellency," the old man said obstinately. "The men ought to see their beloved Monarch and the Emperor his unequalled Army. You must not forget the principal educational importance of the manoeuvres. Give the orders that all must tidy themselves, put on clean shirts and occupy positions so that the Guards can calmly emerge from the forest and deploy for an attack on the field. Concentrate the cavalry behind the forest and make them attack towards ten o'clock."

"That would be a parade and not manoeuvres!"

"Manœuvres in Imperial presence," the Adjutant General said with emphasis. "You have yourself served in the Guards and you ought to understand this. You must obey. I give you the order. And believe me," he added with meaning, "that the consequences won't be unpleasant for you."

The Corps Commander sighed heavily. He realized that the Adjutant General was right. It was impossible to have manoeuvres in the Imperial presence in such a way that the Emperor could see nothing.

"Write the dispositions," he told his Chief of Staff and began to dictate new orders.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The Adjutants joined their units on the march towards dawn. The regiments were stopped. The cavalry wheeled round and returned at a trot. When approaching Kolosovo the regiments halted and began to clean themselves and wash off in the river the mud of three days marching. It became evident to all—today they were to see the Emperor.

No one was surprised or indignant. Everyone realized that it was impossible to appear before the Emperor in an untidy state.

Besides, they were all glad to see the Emperor, and rejoiced that the end of the manœuvres had come and that the time of discharge from the service and of returning to their villages was drawing near.

XXIX

THE morning of the manœuvre was clear and calm. The sun shone quietly from the pale blue autumn sky. Cobwebs of cloud rose and floated in the motionless air. Drops of dew sparkled like diamonds on the leaves of the bushes and on the grass.

Sablin's regiment halted in an alder grove where the soldiers found mushrooms. The whole division was formed in order for attack. Guns often boomed from the direction of the enemy and white smoke rose quietly in thick clouds near the forest. The rattle of the rifles was becoming fiercer and fiercer. One could see long lines of soldiers in white shirts running over the field and lying behind corn stacks. The Division Commander and his Staff stood on an open place on the field. He was excited. He feared to miss the right moment for the attack and was anxious about the gallop over the field which was furrowed by many ditches. It was bad for his heavy form and weak heart. The men had dismounted, some were wiping down the feet of their horses, others leaned on their saddles and meditatively gazed in the direction of the wood where the booming of guns gained in intensity.

Finally the Commander of the Division decided that it was

time to attack. Orderlies galloped away from him. The men mounted their horses.

Several minutes passed and out of the forest dashed half squadrons spread out in a line, and behind them in close order galloped the half squadrons of the reserve. The gallop over the field and reaped corn pleased the soldiers. A frightened hare dashed from under a corn stack and rushed to the left and to the right almost knocking against the feet of the horses. The infantry, standing with rifles at "order arms" seemed to be coming nearer and nearer. When the cavalry passed it they prepared to dismount, but bugles sounded the "return" from behind. Orderlies dashed up and brought the orders to go back. The charge had been brilliantly performed but the Emperor had not seen it. They were ordered to repeat it when His Majesty had arrived at the farm. Now everyone looked, not at the infantry, which was lying in long lines over the field, but at the hill, on which stood a two-story white house.

The answer of a small unit to a greeting floated down from the hill. The Emperor had greeted the scouts of the Eggersky regiment who held the hill. A multi-coloured retinue now covered the mound. The cavalry attacked again, but without the same animation.

The manœuvres, the scouting, the marches, the bivouacs,—all were now forgotten. The minds of all were concentrated on the same thought,—"the Emperor is here. In a moment we shall see the Emperor."

The Line Infantry, little, dark, sunburnt men, wearied by the march through the night, now ran down the hill and washed their faces and their boots in the river. They brushed each other and quickly formed into columns. Sablin, who stood opposite, could see that the faces of all wore a happy expression. He also had the same happy feeling and understood them well.

A shrill call was heard near the farm and the buglers and the trumpeters repeated it from every side of the field, in the forest and behind. The firing quieted down. Waves of white gunpowder smoke floated like fog over the reaped fields on which the regiments were now lining up. The infantry bands—

men ran towards their regiments, their instruments sparkling in the sun. There was something magical in this animated scene as it gradually quieted down. The presence of a Demi-God was felt. The sun shone brightly, the quiet sky was cloudless, the woods were charming in their autumn colouring. Sablin again felt a wave of enchantment sweep over his heart. He felt that the proper surroundings for the magical Tsar had been created by nature and that the simple hearts would not be able to withstand them. It did not matter that the manoeuvres had been meaningless, that the Guards had been compelled to win against all reason and that everything had been muddled in the end,—it had all been beautiful. It had again created the proper setting for majesty without which the appearance of the Emperor before his troops was impossible.

The Emperor, accompanied by a large and brilliant suite, was slowly descending the hill towards the field. His guest mounted on a large horse, rode at his side. The Emperor was clad in the uniform of the Preobrajensky regiment* and wore a silver sash. He rode quietly down the field. The first enthusiastic answer to his greeting was heard and was immediately drowned in cheers and in the music of the National Anthem. Sablin was deeply moved. In the roar of human voices, in the moving tune of the Anthem he saw the whole of Russia with her steppes and forests, mountains covered by white glaciers, blue lakes, little dark villages and churches, touching simple faith—and her great Tsar. He did not know which he loved most—his motherland or its emblem—the Tsar. He would not have believed anyone who told him at that moment that the Tsar was an ordinary being with all the human weaknesses, that he drank vodka, smoked cigarettes and was simply a twenty-five-year-old Colonel. Everything was covered by the mist of his isolation from humanity, all was lit by the rays of the sun and in them he appeared like a Sovereign anointed by God.

Sablin stood in the front ranks. The regiment was formed in a long line and Sablin felt the kind keen eyes of the Emperor

* The oldest regiment of the Russian Guard.

TO RED FLAG

on him. He was rigid from entrancement and saw nothing except those large, grey eyes. The uniform of the Emperor, his horse, everything else vanished in the fascination of his gaze. Sablin knew that his men felt as he did. He understood that by the tones of their answer and by the moving intensity of their cheering. The same thing was repeated as at the parade near the Tsar's Mound—happiness was shed on them from the crowned horseman.

XXX

DULL days came for the regiment. There was no drill. All the senior officers were on leave. All the posts were filled by youngsters who preferred to do nothing so as not to muddle anything and assured everyone that it was because they were "Caliphs for an hour." A Captain was in temporary command of the regiment and everywhere else there were Lieutenants who appeared for half an hour at their squadron office to hear the sergeants report that everything was going well and to sign requisitions and vouchers.

Only the Quartermaster and the Veterinary were busy. The first was hastily completing, out of regimental funds, repairs on the buildings, the second was curing sick horses and correcting the havoc wrought by the manœuvres. The veterinary hospital was filled from early morning by horses with blistered backs and injured feet. Sprains and wounds were attended to, washed, massaged and the four-legged patients were prepared for new work.

The windows in the barracks were bespattered with paint; the air smelled of oil, varnish, freshly planed wood and lime. The soldiers were dressed in old shirts and trousers which consisted mostly of patches and holes. They climbed about the roofs and the scaffolding, painted, planed wood and completed the various repairs. Others, who were finishing their service that year, took leave and went to the town in parties to get their presents for the village.

The large regimental yard was deserted and covered with grass. The barriers and the hurdles were lying in a corner.

Rags of some kind were being dried upon them and the sergeant's hens and ducks walked about.

Sablin remained at Petersburg. He was disgusted with the appearance of the yard and of the barracks and kept away. He felt lonely in his flat. Sometimes he spent a whole day lying on a sofa in his study with a book in his hands. He even had dinner brought to him from the Mess. It was so lonesome there in the great halls which echoed his steps, where the mirrors and portraits were still covered in summer fashion by muslin and where the officer of the day alone was present at the table.

Sablin ruminated and balanced the accounts of his achievements during the past year. What had he gained? He knew now how to dress correctly. He knew that one could not wear top boots with a tunic with epaulettes, that it was necessary to be in epaulettes in a theatre box and to bring sweets for the ladies. He learned that clubs could be decent or not and that some of them were considered impossible. He had learned more than that. He knew now that he could love whomever he chose,—but that it had to be kept secret. Kitty could come to Gritzenko's flat and it was possible to kiss her in the presence of the soldier singers and servants but it was scandalous to walk arm-in-arm with her through the Pavlovsk park which the soldiers were forbidden to enter.

He decided to visit Kitty again, but he did not find her at Pavlovsk. At her Petersburg flat he found only Vladia who told him that Kitty had left for the country. She had perhaps married someone there. Vladia laughed in his face. It was strange to see the resemblance between her and Kitty. Sablin felt excited in her presence.

"Come in, I am alone," said Vladia.

The drawing room was full of recollections. Only the hyacinths were replaced by chrysanthemums.

"Well, take off your overcoat," said Vladia.

Sablin obeyed. He afterwards wondered why he had been thinking of Kitty and had yet stayed with Vladia. Everything was very simple this time and Sablin had to acknowledge that it

was most convenient, did not stain the honour of the regiment and scandalised no one. But he felt even more depressed after that and desired still more strongly to give up the platitudes of life and to find a leading idea for it.

"A leading idea," Sablin repeated in his thoughts, "voila le mot!"

He thought of Lambin and decided to become like him. He would seriously study the military art. He would become more intimate with the soldiers, would learn to understand their souls and would then train them in limitless fidelity to the Emperor. This feeling of love for the Emperor remained unchangingly beautiful in his heart and sacred in his thoughts.

The idea came to him of going to the Academy. This was not the fashion in his regiment. Artillery men, engineers, Army Infantry men went to the Academy. They went because of necessity, but Sablin would go out of conviction, and in order to enlarge the horizon of his knowledge and to become an educated officer.

He got a programme and books and began to look them through. For the entrance examinations he would have to study the history of the world, starting from that of the ancients, and to repeat all the fables about Pericles, Aquilaus and Alcibiades. Then he would have to extract square and cube roots, renew his acquaintance with the tables of logarithms and solve many problems. He would have to guess the names of Russian rivers on a map with no inscriptions, and name towns and districts. All this seemed dull and useless for what he desired to know and he gave up his plans for the Academy. "I will learn from Lambin and from life," thought Sablin. "I will become intimate with the soldiers, study them in the squadron, be friendly with them and make them open their souls to me."

Sablin thought of the respectful corporal Balatueff who always answered everything by: "Yes, Your Honour,"—"No, Your Honour,"—"I don't know, Your Honour." He thought of the soldier Artemoff, who only perspired when he talked to His Honour and torture was reflected on his face.

And Lubovin? Lubovin is a soldier, and he has had some

education. Lubovin should become the bridge over which Sablin would cross into the hearts of the soldiers and become their friend. They had already spoken about songs and Lubovin had proved to be clever. Sablin had taught him written music and many written songs. With Lubovin's assistance he would now become more closely acquainted with his section, would understand his men and would learn how to influence them. Matzneff would not laugh at his expense any longer when he had become a real officer. He would make new discoveries in this domain which no one had yet studied.

Sablin threw down his book over which he had been meditating, drank his cold tea, jumped up from his sofa and went to the squadron.

XXXI

THE squadron barracks were deserted. The windows were wide open. The mattresses, blankets and pillows had been carried out into the yard. The bedsteads had a gloomy look with their bare boards. The orderly sergeant reported smartly to Sablin and his words echoed in the empty hall. Twelve soldiers who were washing the floor rose to attention with wet rags in their hands from which dirty water trickled.

"Where is Lubovin?" Sablin asked.

"In the squadron office," answered the orderly.

Sablin passed to the end of the hall and opened a large door which led into a little room. Lubovin was alone. He was toiling over some accounts. He rose rather unwillingly and quietly answered the greeting, swallowing the words "Your Honour." Sablin sat down on Lubovin's warm stool and dismissed the orderly. Alone with Lubovin, he felt ill at ease under the soldier's keen curious gaze.

Lubovin was standing at attention and was apparently bored by the fact.

"Lubovin, I have come to you," Sablin began unexpectedly to himself saying "you," instead of the "thou" usual when addressing soldiers,— "to ask your advice."

An expression of surprise appeared in Lubovin's eyes. He

stood at ease and folded his hands behind his back. Sablin disliked this, but he said nothing. He had come for a free conversation and formalities would have been out of place here. He would have even made Lubovin sit down, but there was only one stool in the little office.

Lubovin kept silent and this increased Sablin's difficulties.

"Yes," he said, "to ask your advice. You lead the same life as the soldiers of the squadron and you know them well. I am an officer. We shall have to die together."—Sablin said that without knowing why, and felt that the sentence was out of place,—“but we are far apart from each other. The soldiers do not know me and I don't know the soldiers. And we are brothers. We are brothers not only in Christ, as all men are, but we are brothers in our regiment because we have sworn the oath of allegiance under the same sacred colours, and because we serve the same Emperor. I would like you to help me to assume such relations to the soldiers that we should grow near to each other. Like brothers. And so that I may know all that happens in their souls.”

Lubovin regarded Sablin with hostility. The idea came to him that Sablin had simply come to spy and wanted to use him as a tool. But he looked at Sablin's open honest face, at his clear eyes which could not lie, and he realised that Sablin had the best intentions.

"That is impossible, Your Honour," he said.

"But why? When on service, in the ranks, we would have the relations of officers and soldiers and those of comrades at other times."

"That's just what is impossible," Lubovin repeated. "You are a gentleman, a 'barin,' and they are dark, ignorant people. They are afraid of you."

"But they are no longer serfs now and all the people are free," said Sablin:

"You are too different from them. You would have to become equals before you could become comrades, so that you could fully understand the soldier and the soldier could fully

understand you. Either you would have to descend to the level of the soldiers or they would have to rise to yours."

"I don't understand you, Lubovin," said Sablin.

"I can explain. It all begins with formalities, Your Honour. You come to the squadron, Lieutenant Rotbek gives the order 'attention.' You immediately shake hands with Lieutenant Rotbek and begin to talk of the way you spent the previous evening, of the opera or of some girl acquaintance. And to the soldiers you say 'good morning, boys' and you see to it that the answer is loud and that all their heads are turned towards you. The soldiers feel this. It would be different if you shook hands with them and inquired how they had slept. Then they would feel that there was no barrier between you. But let us take other examples. What conversations do you have with the soldiers?—'Of what government?'—'Of the Viatsky, Your Honour,'—'And of what district?' 'Are your parents alive?' 'What is your trade?' As if you were a coroner or a police officer. The soldiers dislike that. You ought to tell them about your own life."

Lubovin remained silent for a moment and looked at Sablin questioningly. Sablin felt more and more ill at ease.

"But you can't tell them that," said Lubovin quietly, almost in a whisper.

"Why?" Sablin asked more quietly still and felt that his feet seemed to be filled with lead.

"Your life is different from theirs. Apply to it the standard by which you measure soldiers. Would you praise them for such a life? There is one measure for you and another for the soldiers. A soldier also cannot tell you the truth about himself. How could he tell you that he stole twenty copecks at a shop or that he sold his horse's ration of oats to a baker? You wouldn't praise him for that. You wouldn't laugh together over it; you would arrest him and have him court-martialed. And there you are, there is a barrier between you. And you can't avoid it. You cannot tell the truth to a soldier and neither can he tell it to you. The barrier arises as soon as there is no truth between you, and you can't get over it."

TO RED FLAG

"But suppose I should read to the soldiers," Sablin said meditatively.

"Well, Your Honour, it would be a good thing. The soldiers like that. Only it would be useless. What would you read to them? Lieutenant Fetisoff read 'Taras Boulba' this winter to the soldiers. They listened with real pleasure, but what was the use of it? No use at all. The soldiers listened, and at the same time thought: 'What fables, how well they have been invented.' They are like small children in such matters. Bring them a serious newspaper, read it and explain it to them, that would be quite a different matter. A soldier is interested in his work. And it relates—to the land, if he is a peasant and to capital if he is a workman. He wouldn't listen to you and you wouldn't be able to tell him how to improve his conditions of life. He will listen to men who can teach him this. In their eyes you will always remain a landowner and a capitalist, and a barrier will separate you."

"Then, Lubovin, you put social relations at the basis of everything?"

"Yes, Your Honour. First equality and then brotherhood. What equality have you here? None, even before the law. There is one law for the soldiers and another for the officers. A soldier may hit another on the face—that is all right, but if it happens in your midst, a duel has to be fought! Nothing happens if an officer sleeps too late and doesn't come to drill. A soldier gets arrested for that. Destroy this barrier and the souls of the soldiers will then be opened to you."

"What you say is impossible, Lubovin. . . . I don't know whether you realise it . . . but this is socialism. . . ."

Lubovin remained silent.

"Lubovin," Sablin said, fixing his keen gaze on the eyes of the soldier,—“then, that night on the eve of the parade at Krasnoie Selo, it *was* you who spoke to me. It was thou!” exclaimed Sablin rising.

Lubovin returned his gaze calmly.

"I don't know what you are talking about, Your Honour," he drawled, slowing coming to attention.

Disgusted and uncomfortable, Sablin rose and left the office.

XXXII

"WELL, aren't they fine?" Steepochka asked as he inspected for a hundredth time the inner Guard for the Winter Palace which was lined up at the Chief Guard House. The regimental tailor Panteleieff, accompanied by two assistants with brushes, passed down the ranks, bending his grey head and trimming the skirts of the tunics to the same length with a huge pair of scissors.

"Panteleieff! Take off that speck of dust. . . . Not there. . . . On the second from the right flank. . . . Don't you see it? . . . On the shoulder near the strap. So you say they look fine?" Steepochka addressed the orderly adjutant who had come to lead the relief.

"Splendid, Colonel. And do you know what I like best? It is their South-Russian type of beauty. You have a wonderful selection. All have the same little black moustache, the same slightly sunburnt faces. Last week the Chevalier Guards sent Baron Morenheim here in command of a guard. You must know him, a tall, clean-shaven ruddy fellow; and all his men were like him. All were fair-haired giants. But you know, I didn't like them. There was something un-Russian about them. They reminded me either of Germans or Finns. But your fellows are typically Russian in spite of their uniform. They are just splendid. Your officer also is extremely handsome."

"Yes, he is!"

Stepochka once more inspected the Guard with the air of an artist who had finished a painting, sighed and asked: "Is it time?"

The orderly adjutant looked at his watch and answered:

"No, we have another minute and a half. The Commandant will be present at the relief and perhaps the Grand Duke. Yesterday the Cossack Commander of the guard was sent for three days to the guard-house. He was leading his men past the palace on the Nevsky and on the left flank one of the Cossacks was out of step. It's so hard with these men."

"They don't understand beauty."

"One has to be born in its surroundings, Colonel."

The orderly adjutant looked at his watch and said solemnly: "Lead them."

Stepochka sighed once more. He was loath to be separated from the men whom he had so lovingly selected from the whole regiment, whom he had trained for the palace guard service and whom he had just seen clad in new tunics specially cut for the occasion.

"Lead them, Lieutenant Sablin," he said in a tired voice.

According to the regulations Sablin came out before the guard and commanded in an even voice:

"Guard! Draw sabres! Right face! Forward march!"

Stepochka made the sign of the cross over the guard and gazed with loving admiration at each soldier as he passed. The high shining top-boots creaked, the spurs clanked and the guard moved with drawn sabres at "carry," rhythmically swinging their arms. They passed the group of infantry soldiers of the outer guard, their own tunics and great-coats, in which they had come and which now lay in a heap on the floor, went up a narrow staircase, and there extended. The right flank slowed down as they entered a gallery with many battle pictures hanging on its walls; the men took the right distance and entered the great Nicolaieffsky hall with a rhythmic creaking of their boots, trying to step on tip-toe. The guard of the Chevalier Guards was already lined up, and a young officer gave the order:—"Draw sabres!"

Sablin wheeled his guard. Count Adlerberg, the Commandant, a specialist on such matters, and the Grand Duke stood near the doors and watched the proceedings. Sablin felt nervous. Everything was simple, simpler than any figure of the quadrille and yet he feared that something would go wrong. The two guards were lined up opposite each other. Sablin's men seemed to have been taken from a painting.

The men presented arms and remained motionless. Only the yellow-red sabre knots swung quietly under the white gloved fists. Sablin raised his sabre to his chin and walked out before the centre of his guard. The little Chevalier Guard officer came

out to meet him. They halted before each other and lowered their swords to their feet.

"Lieutenant Sablin, Parole Warsaw," Sablin said in a half whisper.

"Lieutenant Shostak," the other replied as quietly.

Simultaneously they raised their swords to their chins, turned round, softly clanking their spurs, and returned to their guards. They were performing it all with a feeling of religious sanctity. The shining inlaid floor, the portrait of the Emperor Nicholas I on horseback, painted so that wherever the onlooker might stand in the hall, it would always seem that the Emperor galloped and looked straight at him, the great space of the hall, the bronze chandeliers with crystal hangings,—all this created an unusual magical atmosphere. The men of the guard seemed especially important in their duty of defending the Emperor's sacred person.

Sablin's men relieved the Chevalier Guards, who left the hall. Double sentries stood at the doors. The Grand Duke and the Commandant left the hall content with what they had seen. The soldiers sat down in special oak arm chairs which were extremely uncomfortable. They sat like statues, their helmets dully shining in the shadows thrown by the wall. A footman in a red coat bordered by a gold braid with black eagles brought a large red arm chair with gold legs and arms, and a small table which he covered with a clean cloth and told Sablin in a respectful whisper: "I will serve lunch at once."

Sablin did not want to eat. The presence of his men was embarrassing. They sat behind and watched attentively what was being served and what their officer ate at the Emperor's palace. Red wine was brought in a crystal decanter, but Sablin did not touch it. He was ashamed to do so before his men. He ate a soup, "creme d'asperge," cutlets "de volaille" partly wrapped in frilled papers, and a sweet rice cake. A bowl with an apple, a pear and grapes was placed before him.

Again he felt the difference between himself and his soldiers. Involuntarily he thought of his conversation with Lubovin in the autumn after the *manceuvres* and felt that he could never

TO RED FLAG

enter on friendly, brotherly relations with his men. He was a guest of the Emperor and the Emperor had dishes served to him from his own table. They were servants, hirelings. For them not dinner, but "hot food" was brought from the regiment in a cauldron wrapped in cloth. They went by turns to eat it at the Chief Guard House.

Everything was quiet in the hall. Footmen sat dozing near the doors and sentries stood motionless. Cold came from the Neva, frozen and covered by snow. The clatter of horses' hoofs could be heard on the wooden pavement outside. The capital was leading its usual life, but here life had been frozen long ago, and the hall seemed filled with phantoms of the past.

Sablin could not leave his guard. A trumpeter had to follow him wherever he went. He was guarding the Emperor. He knew that the Imperial lodging, called "The Inner Apartments" was behind the hall where the Cossacks were standing, that then came a corridor with large doors before which stood the infantry and the Cossack sentries; farther on sat men of the palace police, and the Cossacks of the Emperor's bodyguard quietly walked to and fro in their soft top-boots without heels. The huge palace was full of men standing at their posts but at the same time it seemed to be gloomily deserted. A hall could be seen through the doors, a second hall behind it and another farther on. Footmen were seen everywhere near the doors, double sentries in some places, but no one who lived in the palace. One felt awe in the silence of the dead walls which was broken only by stealthy footsteps or by a frightened cough. A messenger would pass swiftly by, but he did not resemble a human being. A round hat with white, yellow and black ostrich feathers, a black coat embroidered with gold lace, tightly fitting white knee-breeches, long stockings and black shoes made him look more like a phantom of the past or a servant from a fairy tale.

It was four o'clock, but gloom was already gathering in the high corners of the white and gold marble hall, the walls of which were covered with silver and gold plate. Each was a model of embossing and engraving art, each had its own story

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

of love and devotion to the Monarch. Towns and governments, zemstvos and peasants, nobles and merchants presented "bread and salt" to their Emperor on these plates. Whole pictures of towns, emblems and scenes were skillfully engraved or embossed upon them. . . .

They were dully shining in the twilight and were suddenly drowned in it. Electric lamps were lit in some parts of the hall and in the central chandelier, but they did not dispel the gloom. The great hall became cold and uncomfortable.

A petroleum lamp with a blue shade was placed on Sablin's table. Dinner was served. . . . The day was fading away. Night was approaching the silent palace. . . .

XXXIII

THE night was full of phantoms. Sablin remembered an old officer who had told him how the ghost of the Empress Elisabeth appeared in the palace some time before the death of one of the Emperors. She came out of the doors of the closed part of the palace and quietly and majestically crossed the hall. She was seen so clearly, it was so evident that it was the Empress who was coming that the officer of the guard lined up his men and presented arms. The Empress passed them, looked attentively at the sentries who were shivering from fright and bowed her head to the officer. That incident was entered in the history of the regiment to which the guard belonged. All the men of the guard swore to the fact that they had seen the Empress, who had died long ago.

What was there surprising about it? It would have been more surprising if such things did not happen here in the palace, where everything was so unlike ordinary life. Here lived the Monarchs, and from this place Russia was governed!

Here died the Empress Catherine II who had corresponded with Voltaire, who had entertained here all the great men of her epoch, the legendary Tsaritsa sung by Derjavin. Here men had worn powdered wigs, and the rough nobles of the Russian steppes had received French polish. Here the insane Emperor Paul united the coffins of the Emperor Peter III and of Cath-

TO RED FLAG

erine II and the two hostile dead met before the eyes of numerous subjects. Here Paul arrived with Araktcheeff from Gatchino and began to introduce his innovations. Here Alexander I the mystic, wrote his letters to Napoleon, and Nicolas I called Rileieff and sent him hence to the gallows. Here the Tsar-Martyr died with broken legs in a pool of blood, having paid with his life for giving freedom to millions of serfs. . . .

Blood . . . blood . . . blood was everywhere. Blood of terrible wars declared here, the blood of scaffolds and gallows, of death warrants issued from this place.

Sablin sat in his arm chair but he could not doze. He felt awed. Here the explosion had occurred which had transformed the whole guard of the Finliandsky regiment into a heap of corpses and groaning, mutilated men, bleeding and covered with fragments of stones and bricks.

Every minute, every hour, danger threatened the Emperor. Why? Only because he was an Emperor. Only because he had the misfortune to be born of crowned parents, and of accepting the burden of power. Hundreds of men were hunting him, secret societies were formed to destroy him.

How terrible!

There, behind these mahogany doors, inlaid with bronze the Emperor and the young Empress quietly sleep in a richly furnished bedroom. How cold and awed she must feel in this foreign country with foreign people and language.

Sablin thought of her, tall, cold, with golden hair, beautiful with her soft cheeks and large grey eyes.

Is she asleep now in this strange palace, surrounded by the intense cold of the Northern winter? What is she thinking of, if she is not sleeping? Is she worried by terrible phantoms and thoughts of constant danger, of the untiring pursuit of wild, strange people? Or has she forgotten this and is she sleeping soundly not thinking of this strange, new life?

What if the palace should suddenly be filled with noise and shouts, running men, and sentries' shots, and a terrible fight for the Emperor should begin here?

He, Sablin, would know how to die for the Emperor, he would consider it happiness for himself. And would they?

Sablin rose and walked past his men.

They sat like statues and dozed, their hands in white gloves resting on their knees. He wanted to ask them and did not know how to do it, nor whether they would understand him.

He approached a big window. The Neva was deserted. The moon shone from a sky of brocade. The spire of the Petro-pavlovsk cathedral and the Angel which crowned it sparkled under its rays. The wind blew the snow in a thin mist over the surface of the Neva and it seemed as if it were the shadows of the past speeding from the fortress to the palace. How queer was the idea of placing side by side the sepulchres of the Tsars and the prison for state criminals.

Did the embalmed Monarchs who slept there hear the volleys which ended the lives of victims and the last whispers of the men who were led to the gallows? Did they hear the rolling of drums?

The clock bells rang on the cathedral. The Empress must hear them in her bedroom and what a heavy impression their sad sounds must make on her solitary soul.

Shades left the Ioannovsky gates and sped towards the palace. Ghosts of the Emperors hurried thither pursued by the shades of those who had given their lives to destroy them—the poet Rileieff, the traitor officers Pestel and Muravieff-Jeljaboff, Risakoff and hundreds of others. Could his guard resist the onslaught of the phantoms?

The Neva was deserted. Not a single izvostchik or passerby could be seen. A group of strangely dressed people who seemed to be returning from a masquerade were moving across the snow. A tall man in a three-cornered hat, high top boots and with a heavy stick in his hand walked at their head, ladies in powdered wigs followed him. Further on came men in tunics with high collars embroidered with gold. Four footmen in red coats were carrying a handsome general with grey side whiskers. All the faces were pale. When they came nearer and began to ascend the granite steps leading to the quay, Sablin saw that

the eyes of all were closed. They entered the palace and he heard the sound of their hurrying footsteps approaching the doors of the Nicolaieffsky hall. He was seized with excitement. He wanted to shout an order to his men but could not. His whole body seemed to be filled with lead. But the multitude of Tsars and Tsaritzas was already rushing into the hall. The doors cracked loudly, swung open and . . . Sablin awoke.

He had been sitting on a chair near the window, sleeping in a most uncomfortable attitude. One of the soldiers' helmets had fallen and the noise had wakened his officer. Twilight reigned in the hall, several electric lights burned dimly in the corners of the ceiling and in the chandeliers, the men of the guard sat motionless and sighed heavily, a smothered cough was heard in the next hall. Sablin looked out of the window. The moon was still in the same place. The spire of the Petropavlovsky cathedral shone dimly. The wind blew the snow into mist over the Neva. A light burned in a distant window in a tall house on the other side of the Neva.

A man passed once or twice up and down the quay peeping into the windows and looking 'round anxiously. In spite of the cold he was dressed in an open coat under which a dark shirt could be seen and wore a soft black hat. A large Finnish knife hung from his belt and two revolvers were stuck behind it. The man resolutely approached the window where Sablin was standing, threw off his coat and quickly climbed up the water pipe with the agility of a monkey, catching at the projections of the ornaments on the walls. Sablin stood perfectly still and waited. A strange feeling of numbness overpowered him. The man climbed up to the window and his eyes rose to the level of Sablin's face. He looked at Sablin with hatred and said something. Sablin did not move. The man took a diamond glass cutter from his pocket and began to cut the glass, carefully pressing it with his fingers and keeping his fiery eyes fixed on Sablin. Only the pane of glass separated them. Suddenly he staggered, lost his balance, waved his hand with the diamond and plunged downwards. Sablin heard the dull thud of his body on the granite slabs of the side walk, and awoke. He real-

ized that his dream had been continued and that he had not wakened the first time but had only dreamed it.

His head was heavy. He was sitting in an arm chair near the window. Dawn was breaking. Two Cossacks, their heads wrapped in "bashliks" rode past and the hoofs of their horses thudded dully on the snow covered wooden pavement. The palace was guarded from all sides. The Cossacks were verifying the infantry posts. A quiet rustle was heard in the corridor near the doors of the Emperor's apartments. Sentries were being relieved there. Cossacks stood there, infantry and the police. All watched each other.

Sablin felt anxious. Anxious for the Emperor who was guarded so carefully, who could trust no one and who never knew who would betray him and when.

XXXIV

It was quite light outside. Dvorniks in grey coats of a uniform Russian pattern were scraping the sidewalks and collecting the snow into heaps. The frost was bitter. Steam rose from the bodies of the workmen and their faces were red. Sledges came to carry away the snow. White streamlets of steam blew out of the horses' nostrils as they breathed. It was cold in the hall. The sentries were shivering at their posts near the doors, Sablin's hands were numb. The lamps had gone out, white light penetrated the hall, lighting up the dishes and the inlaid floor and making them shine.

The hall was suddenly filled with men in red shirts and blue trousers. They began to polish the floor. Could Sablin guarantee that the man with the pale face and grey eyes burning with hatred whom he had seen in his dream was not there among them?

The men were silently doing their work. They passed in a line over the hall and disappeared.

Two messengers passed. One was carrying a red hot pan and the second was pouring aromatic vinegar over it. The vinegar hissed, rose in vapour and a sweet fragrance was noticed in the air. The same contrivance had been used in the

days of Alexander, Nicolas, Alexander the Blessed, Paul, Catherine . . . maybe the same method of perfuming had been used in the palaces of the Tsars of Moscow.

The hall was waking up. Tea was served to Sablin. Four simply dressed men preceded by a footman carried past great baskets of blossoming hyacinths. The footman looked at Sablin and said in an important whisper: "To the apartments of Her Majesty."

Sablin would have liked to follow these men and to penetrate to the bedroom where she, whom he revered, had rested. Was it like the bedroom of an ordinary woman?

Sablin dismissed these thoughts as sinful and incompatible with the sanctity of the surroundings.

At five minutes to eleven an old footman in a red coat almost ran through the hall and told Sablin in a respectfully frightened whisper: "His Majesty the Emperor!"

Sablin's heart beat faster from excitement like that which he had experienced at the parade.

The distinct answer to a greeting of the Cossack guard was heard two halls away.

The Emperor came out from under the arch near the portrait. He was dressed in a long infantry tunic with a sword at his side, broad trousers and top-boots. A cap, set slightly on one side, was on his head. He was going out for a walk alone.

Sablin gave the order "present sabres" in an uneven, excited voice to his guard, which was already lined up. Simultaneously he lowered his sword and stood in frozen immobility. "If the Emperor stops," thought Sablin, "I must immediately report." And he repeated in his mind the words of the formula: "In the guard and on the posts of Your Imperial Majesty from. . ."

But the Emperor did not stop. He looked kindly at Sablin and said as he passed the men: "Good morning, guard. . . ." The men answered in restrained voices, as they had been taught to answer at the palace. The echo of their voices had not yet died out as the Emperor disappeared behind the doors leading to the Malachite hall.

The fact that the Emperor was going for a walk dressed in a

simple tunic and alone seemed somehow commonplace and unfitting for His Majesty, but there was also something touching in seeing him. It would have been so dreary to remember afterwards the strain of the guard and the night full of shadows and phantoms had he not passed. It was now all lost in the recollection of those kind, grey eyes and of the calm even voice.

The relief arrived at noon. Sablin again acted as if he were performing a religious rite, but now no one watched the proceedings except the orderly adjutant. The Grand Duke was absent from the palace and the Commandant was at the relief of the infantry guard. A stout Chevalier Guards Captain was carelessly giving the orders. He swallowed his name when presenting himself and for some time he could not remember the parole.

"The parole," he was saying, "the parole, ah, hang it. . . . I had a note of it somewhere. . . . The parole—Helsingfors."

All the solemnity was lost because of this, the colours faded away and everything seemed ordinary and not nearly so important.

At one o'clock the men were once more dressed in their old clothing and were returning to their barracks with Sablin. They were hungry and hastened to their dinner. The sun shone but the cold was intense. The snow creaked under the feet of the soldiers and the spurs clanked to the rhythm of their step.

Of all the splendour and the phantoms of the great hall, and of keeping the guard near the apartments of the Tsar there remained only a great desire to throw off one's helmet, to take off the tight fitting tunic, to throw oneself on a bed and to sleep, sleep!

XXXV

ABOUT a fortnight after the day when Sablin had been on guard, he received a letter from Mrs. Martoff. She reminded him that she had been a friend of his late mother, informed him that young people were accustomed to gather at her house, that they intended to stage an opera and that she, knowing the musical talents of Monsieur Sablin, invited him to participate in it and

TO RED FLAG

to come at eight o'clock sharp on Thursday to talk over the details.

Sablin was not surprised by this letter. That winter he had often received similar invitations. An excellent dancer, a society man who knew how to entertain, of good family, rich, handsome,—he was always a desired guest wherever young girls and young men met who danced and played at “petits jeux.”

He showed the letter to the officers of his squadron. It appeared that Mrs. Martoff was the widow of a General and that Gritzenko and Matzneff knew her.

“You will be bored to death,” said Gritzenko, “there won’t be any opera there. I believe she’s writing it herself but hasn’t yet ventured to reveal it to the world. You will only hear plenty of chatter, get mint cakes, nuts, ‘pastilla’ and marmelade. She always has a crowd of guests, mostly youngsters, the kind that take whole handfuls on their plates. You will be disappointed if you hoped to have supper there, and can consider yourself lucky if you get a slice of ham. It will be frightfully dull, and just one endless lot of chatter.”

Matzneff had a different opinion.

“Go, Sasha, you will become acquainted there with our democrats and ‘intelligentzia,’—Matzneff underlined the last word with open contempt.—Ekaterina Alexeievna has a passion for assembling home-made Robespierres and Marats at her house and listening to their talk. But sometimes you meet a most beautiful Charlotte Corday there. It is nice once in a while to pass a little time among these turbulent youths with their green speeches, yellow beaks and their yelping about freedom. It does you good.”

“Will you be there, Ivan Sergeievitch?”

“No, I never go there now.”

“He got kicked out,” laughed Gritzenko,—“for preaching Anacreon. It isn’t the fashion there. Their heroes are the moujiks, Leo Tolstoi and the latest is Chekhoff. . . . You will hear them condemn Pushkin and bring him down to the level of Lomonosoff as a poet of bygone days. But I would go, if

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

I were you. Only follow my advice: drink some vodka at home before starting. They are all tee-totalers there. . . ."

An hour later according to Petersburg fashion, at nine o'clock Sablin drove up to a large house in the Nicolaieffsky street and went up to the third story. A small coat rack was covered with overcoats padded with wadding or lined with cheap fur, and by students' and schoolboys' uniform overcoats and caps. The sounds of many young voices came from the flat. A maid-servant led Sablin to the dining room through a simply furnished drawing room lit by petroleum lamps where stood a piano and music stands for violinists. About twenty guests sat 'round a large table. Mrs. Martoff, a stout, good-natured, grey-haired lady, was sitting behind a huge samovar. Sablin introduced himself. He had called before but had not found her at home. All were silent when Sablin entered in his well-cut tunic, fresh looking and scented.

"Don't shake hands," said Martova, "it isn't the custom here. You will only cause a great rumbling of chairs. You will gradually become acquainted during the conversation, it isn't necessary to introduce you. All are our good friends here: Sasha, Grisha, Kostia, Valia, Lena, I simply couldn't call them otherwise than by their pet names. They have grown up before my eyes. This is my daughter—Varia."

Martova nodded in the direction of a young girl of about twenty, simply dressed, with neatly arranged hair and a round good-natured face. It looked rounder still because of large spectacles which rested on her little nose and covered short-sighted eyes.

Varia slightly nodded her head and held out to Sablin her large moist hand.

"We are very glad that you have come," she said. "It shows that you are not a proud and empty aristocrat. This,"—she pointed to a brunette who was sitting at her side, "is my best friend, Marousia Lubovina."

Sablin saw a beautiful face in a frame of dark auburn hair with blue admiring eyes. He did not pay much attention to her at first. There were too many people around who all began to

TO RED FLAG

talk with noisy, youthful impetuosity and ardour. Some one moved a chair towards him, some one else made room for him and Sablin found himself in the centre of a large table among many young men and girls. A steaming glass of tea with lemon and a slice of thickly-buttered Swedish bread were placed before him.

"Well," he heard a clear voice,—at last we see in our midst a representative of power and oppression and we can now discuss the question of what our future army should be like."

"One moment, comrade,—I think that there must not be any army at all,"—some one interrupted him from the other end of the table.

Sablin looked at the speakers.

The first was a student dressed with intentional carelessness in a blue Russian shirt with an embroidered collar, over which he wore an old black student uniform tunic with brass buttons. His opponent was a thin, pale schoolboy with a young curly beard most of which grew near his neck. He was dressed in a blue schoolboy uniform tunic with white buttons, the plating of which was so worn off that most of them appeared like brass-red spots.

"How can you say that there must not be any army," exclaimed quite a young, long-haired schoolboy with red cheeks, hazel eyes and long eyelashes. He was dressed in a clean new black tunic and seemed to be the youngest of all present. Ever since Sablin had entered, he had kept his admiring gaze fixed on his uniform. "The Germans will come and conquer us then!"

"What nonsense!" exclaimed a technology student in an old, tightly buttoned tunic,—“a war of conquest on the threshold of the twentieth century! That is impossible!"

"And why?"

"The people won't agree to fight. They have realised what war means and wars have now become impossible," the student said in a tone of conviction.

"All right! An order will be given and we'll have war," said

the schoolboy, stuffing such a huge piece of bread into his mouth that Sablin wondered why he didn't choke.

"Why should everyone arm themselves then," said another schoolboy, pale and unhealthy looking. "Armed peace is costing Europe too much and Europe is on the eve of bankruptcy."

"Comrades!" Varia Martova said in an imploring tone,—“we are all out of order again. We're all talking at once and everybody is expressing his opinion without listening to the others. We have all decided to invite a representative of the army here so as to put him some questions concerning his speciality. We wanted to listen to the opinion of a specialist and to judge of the whole afterwards. Let us begin then.”

"Are wars possible now?" A schoolboy put the question.

"No, No," a student dressed in a well-cut tunic with gold embroidery on the collar shouted from a corner of the table. He had a little moustache and wore a pince-nez. "I insist on my way of formulating the question: Is the army created for war, or are wars created for the army?"

"Comrades," Varia shouted over the voices of the rest,—“please wait for your turn to put the questions, Monsieur Sablin. . . .”

"Why do you call him 'monsieur' . . ." growled the grim looking technology student.

"Should ranks exist?" asked a small middle-aged girl with a thin, bird-like nose and angry eyes.

"They are ridiculous!"

"And useless."

"Gresha, stop this!" Varia shouted at the top of her voice. Comrade Pavel Ivanovitch, you will state your opinion later. Monsieur Sablin, tell us why the army exists and what is its purpose. We ought to formulate our questions and answers exactly."

"The defense of the throne and of the motherland is the duty of a soldier and of the army," Sablin quoted the words of the regulations.

A terrific noise was raised all around.

"One moment," a student shouted from the other end of

the table,—“the defense? But from whom? It is necessary to have some one attacking, so as to defend, but defense isn’t needed at all if no one attacks. This is as clear as day.”

“Comrade Pavel,” Varia Martova addressed him,—“just wait a moment. We will put the question: defense from whom?”

“From foes from within and from without,” Sablin answered, again in the words of the regulations. He was taken aback by the rapid cross questioning and exchange of opinions. For the first time these questions—so clear, simple and evident, were put to him by people who did not consider the answers either clear, simple, or evident.

XXXVI

SABLIN looked round the society. He had already divided it in his mind into people who for some reason or other were sympathising with him and people who were irreconcilable, who had begun to hate him from the very moment that they saw his uniform. He understood that he would not succeed in changing the opinion of the latter.

The daughter of the hostess belonged to the first group. She seemed to be an embodiment of non-resistance to evil and had taken his side only because she saw that the majority had attacked him and that he was not prepared for the defense. Marousia Lubovina, who had not yet said a word, was apparently also on his side. Such a beautiful girl certainly had to be kind. Harmony demanded that. Beauty was attracted by beauty and Sablin knew that he was handsome. He had accepted the challenge because of her presence. He had been feeling the gaze of Marousia’s dark blue eyes fixed on him and wanted to show her that he was clever. He felt that although she kept silent, she nevertheless urged on the young people by her gaze and that they engaged in a tournament of opinions for her sake.

Several persons displayed no interest in the proceedings. Three young girls were sitting together, whispering, and their thoughts were apparently very far from the topic of the discussion. Here, as everywhere in Russia, the young girls were

all sitting at the end of the table which was nearer to the samovar and to the hostess, while the young men were crowded at the other. Most of them smoked without having asked the permission of the hostess.

The talk went on and on, and Sablin with Lubovina's eyes upon him did his share.

"Well, children, enough of this," said the hostess at last. "Come and sing now."

All rose and left the table. No one except Sablin approached the hostess to thank her. Sablin wanted to kiss her hand but she pulled it away and did not let him do so. It was not the fashion here.

A student made a megaphone with his hands and shouted in a wild voice as he would have done from the top gallery of a theatre: "Lubovina-a! Lubovina-a-a!" It appeared she was the singer.

XXXVII

SABLIN approached her when she finished her song. She was standing near the piano quite pale from excitement. The fingers of her hands with which she held the edge of the black piano board seemed quite white. The young girl who had been accompanying her continued to play a melody.

"What talent you have," said Sablin. Marousia raised her deep sapphire blue eyes and looked at him.

"You think so? . . ." she said and blushed.

"With such a voice and such features you ought to go on the stage. You will conquer the whole of Europe and the whole world will be at your feet."

"Oh,—Please don't—," she said.

"Are you at the conservatoire?"

"No, my father wants me to become a learned woman. I am studying mathematics."

"No! You and logarithms? You and integrals and differentials? This can't be!"

"And why not?"

She looked at him more boldly. She saw brains and a strong

will reflected in his eyes. A light sparkled in the depths of her dark pupils and Sablin understood its meaning. "We shall fight," that light told him, "and we shall see who will be the winner." A warm current ran through his veins and his slim figure became slimmer still.

"Why did you choose such sad songs? Is there only sorrow on the earth?"

"Much sorrow, a great deal of it," said Marousia and tightened her lips so that her face took an older and sadder expression. Her animation disappeared. "Her power of expression is wonderful," thought Sablin,— "she must be an artist but is concealing the fact."

"But much happiness too," he said, excited at the thought of being acquainted with a rising star of the theatrical world.

"Happiness for some; but sorrow for others," said Marousia. "If you only knew the awful poverty of the Russian peasants. They have little to eat, their 'izbas' * are cold and empty. . . . The children cry. . . . O—oh!" Marousia shuddered and covered her face with her hands. "How can one be rich! I would have given everything away to the poor if I only had means. . . ."

"According to Scripture?"

"No, according to my sense of duty. What importance has Scripture! People have known it for almost twenty centuries but has the world become better for that? A different teaching is needed, stronger and more powerful."

The gaze of her clear eyes seemed to penetrate Sablin's very soul.

Who was she, after all?

XXXVIII

PERHAPS SABLIN would have forgotten Marousia among the pleasures of the Petersburg winter season, perhaps he would not have gone to the regular Thursdays at the Martoff's house with

* "Izba" is the Russian name for a peasant's cottage.

their discussions of callow youngsters and Marousia's singing, had she not reminded him of her existence.

He was, of course, ignorant of the fact that Marousia wrote to him at Korjikoff's request and partially under his dictation, and therefore the letter touched and surprised him. "What a nice girl she is," he thought. "Probably she belongs to our circle of society. She must be the daughter of a general or at least an officer. She loves the army, she sees the defects of our life and she suffers from them!"

Marousia wrote him her thoughts about the army, the state and the people on eight sheets of good linen paper.

"Most honoured Alexander Nicolaievitch," she began her letter,—“excuse me for troubling you with my thoughts and questions on so short an acquaintance. Last week during the discussion at the home of Ekaterina Alexeievna I felt with pain that all the people were divided into two worlds which misunderstood each other and which, I fear, mutually hate each other. I felt afraid. Afraid, not for Russia, but for the whole world, because this is not a merely Russian phenomenon but a world wide one. The world has out-grown feudalism, the lower classes have freed themselves from the tutelage of the upper classes and want to live.

"You asked me why I chose such songs and why my voice was so full of sadness? I will answer your question now. You have to be waked up, you who stand at the top of the ladder. I certainly do not mean you personally, Alexander Nicolaievitch, I don't even know you yet. I am ready, I would like to believe that you are different from the rest, I would like to grow to care for you; but your circle of society, the ruling class, does not see and does not want to see what happens beneath them. You spoke with animation that night about the valour of the military service, you spoke of the honour of being a soldier and a defender of the motherland. Do you yourself believe in what you said? Because how can one reconcile your words with a notice which I by chance read yesterday at the entrance to the Tavrichesky gardens: 'Entrance forbidden to privates and dogs.' How can you place soldiers on the same level with dogs if the

name 'soldier' is an honorable one? How can one do such a thing? And isn't it your duty to express your indignation about it?

"I have many, many questions. They will be put to you next Thursday and I should very much like you to answer them well."

It was the first time that Sablin had ever received a letter of this kind. Marousia raised questions which he had passed over. He wanted to reply and to justify himself, the army and the Emperor. Sablin felt that the accusations also touched the Emperor because he was the source of everything. Sablin visited Lambin with Marousia's letter and together they went to see Lieutenant Dalgren, a friend of Lambin who was finishing the Academy. As a result Sablin was prepared to give the answers and had much historical material and many quotations at his disposal.

He was met in a friendly manner and as an old acquaintance at the Martoffs. They all seemed to have grown used to him. The long-haired schoolboy dogged his movements trying to render him services, Marousia firmly pressed his hand in comradely fashion when they shook hands, comrade Pavel looked at him through his spectacles and said condescendingly: "Let's listen to the army."

Sablin was listened to attentively. He spoke well and although everyone attacked him again after his speech and he realized that he had convinced no one, he nevertheless felt himself to be the centre of the group and noticed that he had produced a certain impression. Marousia thanked him and looked at him with an air which seemed to say: "We are accomplices."

After that Thursday Marousia and Sablin began to exchange letters. The topics discussed in the correspondence were serious ones. Sablin was compelled to read many books on political economy, socialism and on the labour question. It developed Sablin mentally and his letters began to interest Marousia. At first she had not thought much of him.

"A handsome 'barin,'" "a little cherub," was the way she classified him. She thought him empty, stupid and uneducated.

She simplified sentences and avoided special terminology when Korjikoff dictated the letters to her. Sablin's answers showed that the "little cherub" had read much and had thought a great deal. Little by little during the winter they grew to esteem each other. They found a coquettish pleasure in adorning their letters with unusual paradoxes, beautifully composed sentences and striking comparisons. From time to time Marousia would put in a long French sentence, which she never did when writing to others, and which she had considered always to be indecent. Or she would write an English word in English and thus underline her education. Sometimes Sablin would finish a serious letter with verses of Apouhtin or Fet, selected to suit the occasion and the stiff tone of the letter dealing with a serious political question would vanish. They seldom had the chance to talk alone at the Martoffs. Marousia always kept silent. She sang only after the discussions, sang well and with animation, but she always chose serious songs in which nothing was said of love and of passion.

"Who is she?" Sablin racked his brain and enveloped her in mystery in his thoughts, and prophesied a great future for her as an artist. He desired to see her alone so as to tell her openly that he liked her very much, that she charmed him, and to put her a straight question: "Was she a friend or an enemy?"

He saw her at the Alexandrinsky theatre when Kommisarjevskaya was playing. Two acts were over. He listened to the voice of the great artist and wondered of whose voice that of Kommisarjevskaya reminded him. "Yes, of course, Marousia's."

During the entracte he stood leaning against the barrier of the orchestra carelessly holding his coloured cap in his white gloved left hand. His eyes were wandering about the boxes looking for acquaintances. By chance he raised his eyes to the third balcony and saw Marousia. She was sitting in the first row of the balcony and she smiled at him when she saw that he was looking at her. Unconscious pleasure was reflected in that smile. Sablin immediately went towards the entrance. Marousia understood the purpose of his movement and met him

on the staircase. They entered the foyer. Only a few people were there, and when they passed the tall sentries of the Guard infantry who stood before the doors leading to the Imperial box, the soldiers presented arms and turned their heads towards Sablin in one smart movement. Marousia started and then laughed.

"Is that for you?" she asked. "Can it be that you like it?"

She immediately grew confused, looked naïvely into his face to ascertain that he was not angry and noticing that his face had grown sad she said:

"Don't be angry, please. I don't know,—perhaps you are right, perhaps it is all necessary."

Sablin began to speak of Kommissarjevskaya. They walked down the corridor and Sablin could not fail to notice how beautiful Marousia was. In the mirrors she could see his handsome features near hers and a subtle smile flickered over her lips. "The sister of a soldier, the daughter of a workman," she thought, "walks at the side of the aristocrat. Beauty has made us equal."

They did not remember afterwards the thread of their conversation. He felt so pleased when Marousia raised her blue eyes to him and said:

"You also find that. . . . You have noticed it too? And did you notice how she said: 'I pity you' and began to speak, accompanied by the music? Ah! It was so beautiful! She is a genius, Alexander Nicolaievitch! What happiness it must mean to be such an artist! Thousands of people listen to her and enjoy her words and the music of her voice."

"You will surpass her, if only you wish it."

"You think so? . . . No, Alexander Nicolaievitch, tell me frankly, do you think that I have talent? No, you are not serious about it. It is cruel of you if you are laughing at me and telling me untruths on purpose. I would like to. . . . I don't know myself what I would like. . . . You probably think: What a stupid girl she must be if she doesn't know herself what she wants. . . ."

"And studies mathematics."

"Don't, please. I do nothing of the kind. Perhaps I shall leave it all . . . perhaps I told you a lie. . . . I will go on the stage. . . . You don't know at all who I am."

"A pretty girl . . .," the words escaped Sablin.

She lowered her eyes and looked sad.

"Don't speak like this," . . . she said quietly, "don't . . . we must never speak of such things. It isn't good, and it isn't becoming to you. Let us be friends."

Their conversation was interrupted by the bell which announced the beginning of a new act.

"When shall we meet again?" he asked her.

"Will you be there on Thursday?"

"I would like very much to meet you again as I have done today: so as to talk to you freely and to feel that you had come only for me."

"If you wish, we could go to the Hermitage on Sunday. Do you like paintings? I will show you the Murillo's 'Madonna' which I worship.

On Sunday they passed four hours walking from hall to hall, stood in silence before the paintings and enjoyed being together.

Warm air came through the brass inlaid openings in the floor, the winter evening gloom filled the corners of the hall and the upper paintings could no longer be seen. A painter who had been copying the "Madonna," was wiping his brushes and getting ready to leave. Bright paint shone on the canvas and the Madonna appeared to be refreshed and renewed in the copy. Marousia looked fixedly at the painting. Her eyes were wide open and an ecstasy of admiration was reflected in them.

"One must believe and love to paint so . . ." she whispered.

Sablin did not look at the painting but his admiring eyes were resting on Marousia. She turned to him and laughed a short confused laugh.

"Why do you look at me so queerly?" she said and blushed under his gaze.

"You resemble so. . . ."

"Whom?"

Marousia guessed and lowered her eyes.

"Don't . . .," she said,—“you ought to be ashamed to tell me such things.”

“For me you mean . . . heaven itself. You make my soul rise to the clouds. You have aroused in me the best part of my nature, which till now has been sound asleep.”

Marousia looked at him severely, said nothing and walked quickly away. Her footsteps rang clearly on the marble floor of the gallery of sculpture and she descended the little steps of the wide staircase without looking back, her arms hanging limply at her sides. She stopped once or twice as if she were dizzy. A footman held her coat for her. They were the last to leave.

It was quite light outside. The clear March day was slowly fading away. The red rays of the setting sun were burning with colours of gold on the large windows of District Headquarters building. The Alexandrovsky column threw a long dark blue shadow. A sledge, drawn by a pair of fine black horses covered by a white net, drove out from under the arch. A horse car rattled under the trees on the right.

“Maria Mihailovna,” said Sablin, “let us go for a drive. The day is so fine. It must be wonderfully nice now at the islands.”

Marousia looked at Sablin. She was striving against a strong desire to enjoy the charm of the clear day, the sun, the beauty of the sky and of driving with him in a fast sleigh towards the wide spaces of the gulf. The strife lasted for a second.

Then her dark eyelashes lowered themselves half covering her eyes and shutting away her thoughts and desires. Her face became calm and proud.

“Thank you, Alexander Nicolaievitch, but we must reach an agreement on one thing. Never ask me about it again. It is both unnecessary and impossible. I go to the right, and you go to the left.”

“And if I also have to go to the right?”

“Then I will go to the left.”

Sablin sighed. He had already learned that it was useless to argue with Marousia. She shook his hand, descended the steps of the Hermitage and walked away.

Sablin watched her go, watched her little feet step over the

granite slabs covered with yellow sand and saw her turn the corner of the Moika without even once looking back.

"What is it then?" thought Sablin, "is it fascination, passion, love, or sympathy?"

He felt happier than ever before.

XXXIX

THE coronation of the Emperor and Empress was to take place at Moscow in the spring. The first squadron and the band were sent from the regiment. Sablin was in the second squadron but the Commander of the regiment gave the order for him to be attached to the first and to leave with it for Moscow. He was sent to the coronation not because he was a smart officer who was doing his work thoroughly and who knew the soldiers better than the other officers, but because he was physically handsome and "in the style" of the men of the first squadron. This offended him. Matzneff said, with his usual cynicism.

"Yes, dear Sasha, don't be born clever, but be born handsome, don't be born wealthy, don't even be born lucky—although that's what the proverb says: 'Beauty is everything' and for a man it means as much as it does for a woman. Remember my words, Sasha, some day you will be the Emperor's A.D.C., you will command a regiment—you will have everything that you may desire and only because you are handsome. Everyone who looks at you wishes to do something to please you. A woman longs to gratify you and a man also tries to be nice to you."

The service at Moscow consisted only in guard-work and in forming living barriers in the streets and the squares. This did not have to be done every day and the officers did not know how to fill their time. Sablin walked through the streets where the Emperor's passage was expected, and which were filled by crowds of people. He watched them, listened to what they said and tried to understand their feelings.

He soon felt that for the people, as for himself, the Tsar was a wonderful being, a Demi-God. In their minds the Tsar could only be gracious and a source of happiness. Everything that

came from the Tsar was considered sacred. Simple women and ladies of society tried to pick up flowers on which his foot had trodden. The people pushed and crowded to see him, and saw not the reality but what they wanted to see in its place. The Tsar and the Tsaritzza appeared to them as wonderfully beautiful and perfect creatures, the Emperor seemed to be very tall and to have a charming smile always on his lips.

Many things exasperated and displeased the people but they laid the blame for them all on the nobles, who in their minds separated the Tsar from the people and systematically robbed and oppressed them. Here, among the Moscow coronation crowds, Sablin for the first time realised what a deep gulf existed in the minds of the people between themselves and the nobles. To the people the Tsar was a divinity, and the nobles were the dark powers which tried to separate them from this divinity, because of their own personal and material interest.

Moscow was illuminated. The Kremlin and the tower of Ivan the Great appeared on the background of the dark sky like a lace work of electric lights. It was a marvel of luxury and beauty. Searchlights threw their rays along the streets, fire-works were burned in many places. Life seemed to be transformed into a magic dream and the people moving about the streets and the squares, expressed their wonder, but were discontented and grim.

"A much finer illumination was ordered to be arranged," a workman said not far from Sablin. "The Emperor made a grant of ten millions for the illumination and only five have been spent."

"Where did the rest go to?" a peasant asked him.

The workman looked round in a scared manner and said with conviction:

"The nobles stole it!"

"Oh, what doings!" sighed the peasant—"even here!"

Something else Sablin noticed in the crowd. The people feared that some evil might be done to the Tsar and they did not trust each other. But what disgusted Sablin most of all, their fear was not for the Tsar, but rather that they themselves

might suffer. It would seem that the people who loved the Emperor so deeply and who feared that something might happen to him, ought to form a compact wall around him and render criminal attempts impossible. But in reality things were quite different. The people were attracted by the Emperor, they wanted to see him, but at the same time they were afraid because it was dangerous to be near him. During the illumination the roar of an explosion was heard in one of the side streets where Sablin knew for certain the Emperor could not pass. Sablin was in the midst of a great crowd and they all rushed away in the opposite direction from the explosion. Only Sablin and a few others ran to find out what was the matter. Gas had exploded in a cellar, which was happily empty at the time. Several windows were smashed and a fire broke out which was immediately put out by local means. The people who had come to help were pleased that all had ended so well but they seemed to be disappointed too.

Near the Emperor himself, in the Kremlin and elsewhere, the same faces could always be seen crowding round him. They tried not to let others approach the Emperor. They spoke little, had a worried appearance and looked suspiciously at everyone,—even at Sablin. Sablin knew that these men, women and even children were agents of the secret police, and not the people. The people wanted to see the Emperor but they could not get near him. For that reason the Emperor could not see the real people and the real people could not see the Emperor. This aroused Sablin's indignation. He believed in the people and loved the Emperor and it seemed queer and ridiculous to him that the people were not allowed to approach the Tsar.

He decided to go to the Hodinsky field where entertainments for the people had been arranged and where the Tsar was to appear among his subjects and feast in their midst, as in bygone days the legendary Tsar Vladimir, the Red Sun, and his "bogatirs" had done. Sablin knew that platforms had been erected on the Hodinsky field, tables set and beer, honey, cakes and sweets prepared for the people. He knew that the real people—peasants from neighbouring villages, workmen of the great

Moscow factories, and town servants had been assembling there not only from early morning but even from the eve of the appointed day so as to be sure of receiving the Tsar's present. Sablin was staying at the house of distant relatives and their servants were also going to the Hodinsky field. He was touched by the feeling of sanctity which these servants attached to the Tsar's present, for he knew that the whole thing consisted of a tin cup roughly painted and filled with poor, stale sweets. It was worth not more than fifty copecks and it could be purchased at that price but everyone went to receive it for nothing from the Tsar.

"I will bring it home and put it before the ikons," said the old cook. "When I pray I shall think of our father the Tsar and of our mother the Tsaritzza."

Sablin decided to rise before dawn and go, not for the present, but to see the display of the pure feelings of the people's love for the Tsar.

XL

Notwithstanding the early hour the streets were filled with people. Sablin did not have to ask the way. They were all going in the same direction and hastened so as not to be late. Everyone knew that many presents had been prepared, that there would be enough for all, but nevertheless they all hurried, pushed, and looked angrily at each other. Greed moved the people. Not emotion at the fact that they were going to see the Tsar feasting with his people, not admiration of this symbol of unity, but the greed of getting for nothing something that could not be purchased made these men and women hurry towards the Hodinsky field. People of the most different professions and positions were going there. Rich and poor could be seen in the crowd but all were dressed in their holiday clothes. There were many children, schoolboys and schoolgirls, and even women with babies in their arms.

Sablin noticed several times that he also hurried in this hurrying, bustling crowd. He slackened his pace but the crowd pushed him along and he had to walk quickly again.

After passing the Tversky gates, the Siou factory and several other houses Sablin saw that a large field which stretched to the left of the road was covered by a black multitude of people. The beginning of the distribution of the presents was fixed for the afternoon, it was only six o'clock in the morning and yet the field was already covered by a crowd. As Sablin approached the field, he felt that he was penned up in the crowd and that he could not get back. The crowds which were coming behind him had already formed a compact human wall. He looked round. At his side were a stout merchant in a long skirted coat, a very tall official with a decoration on his breast, a young girl with a student, and a workman.

"How is it that God bears our sins," said the merchant wiping his perspiring brow,—“such crowds of people and not a single policeman in sight.”

"So you're sad not to see the 'pharaos'?" * said the workman.

The merchant glanced at him sideways and did not answer.

"There has been an order from above," the official said, respectfully looking at Sablin,—“that there should be no police and that complete freedom should be given to the people. I have heard that the Emperor was greatly pleased by the perfect order which has been kept during the illumination and has ordered the police to be removed for today.”

"Well, let's go forward," said the merchant and carefully pushing Sablin aside with his elbow began to press forward.

"Where are you going to without permission. See how you have pushed the officer."

"I am going where everybody else is going."

And indeed the crowd was pressing from behind and slowly moved forward.

"Don't push, don't you see that there is a child here," the frightened voice of a woman was heard in the crowd.

"How can we see him."

Flushed and perplexed men were pushing their way back

* Nickname for the police.

TO RED FLAG

through the crowd. They carried handkerchiefs with the presents.

"Has the distribution begun?" they were asked.

They wiped their foreheads, looked round in perplexity and said gruffly:

"Several fellows have got over the fence there and threw them into the crowd."

"How disorderly!"

"One can't stay there long, brothers. It is nice here, plenty of space. . . . But there . . . a girl has been crushed to death and she is standing dead in the crowd. One can't get her out."

"How horrible!"

"It is horrible. Several beggars of the Prohorovsky factory got over the fence there. They saw a great barrel of beer placed upon posts and decided to make it fall so as to get at the beer. Well, they began to shake the posts."

"Did they make it fall?"

"They did. Eighteen or twenty men were crushed to death by the barrel."

"And what did the people do?"

"The people? The people drank the beer. Everyone wanted to taste the Tsar's beer."

"So you say that men have been killed?"

"Why, yes. They lie there quite white."

"And you say the people are drinking beer?"

"Why, yes. They aren't human, they're like animals now. It doesn't matter to them."

"Well, boys, what about it? The distribution is going on over there and we wait here? We have as much right to it as they have. Come on forward!"

The crowd swayed and moved forward. Sablin did not want to go, he knew that it was madness, but the crowd swept him along with it.

An open space appeared ahead. It seemed odd that there was no one there and the crowd swarmed towards it so as to come nearer to the coveted fence. The back rows pressed hard, the front ones almost ran and could not stop. But when they came

to the open they tried to stop, to throw themselves aside, but could not. The crowd pushed them on. The earth vanished from under their feet. The open space was covered by ditches and remains of the foundations of the buildings for the exhibition which had been held here some time before. Stones and bricks were scattered about. The front ranks, their eyes wide open with horror, stumbled and fell to the bottom, tried to rise, shouted something but already other people were falling on top of them and the ditches were filled with bodies. The crowd tried to stop, to let these people get out, but that was impossible; the pressure from behind was too great. The crowd pushed the front ranks down and made them walk over the bodies.

"Stop! You can't go here! People are lying here!"

"Don't push! We shall have to walk on bodies!"

"Are they alive?"

"Who knows? Only don't push!"

"Go on, go on! Why do you stop!"

"The distribution! Hoorah!"

"Come on, boys!"

"Don't push so!"

"I'm being pushed myself."

"Oh! Great God!"

People were still moving and attempting to crawl in the ditch, but it was impossible not to walk on them. With horror and disgust one's foot was placed on someone's back, on a child's arm or on a face. Attempts to step lightly so as not to feel living flesh beneath were unsuccessful. The pressure from behind was too great and it was necessary to step firmly so as not to fall.

"Oh! Heavens!"

"They don't move, the poor things!"

"That's a fine present!"

"Where have the police disappeared to!?"

"Sablin stopped when he came to that place. The merchant, the student and several other persons stopped simultaneously. They formed a barrier forcing the crowd to flow past them. They began to pull the corpses out of the ditch as soon as the crowd became less compact.

"Oh, Great God!" groaned the merchant, "what a day this is! Look at the number of them!"

There were hundreds of them. To the right and to the left the ditch was filled with bodies. Some might still be alive. Other volunteers joined Sablin. The police were notified and appeared, looking ashamed and guilty. Military engineers were summoned to dig out the men who had been trampled into the earth, firemen were called out with barrels of water and wagons. The hour for the Emperor's arrival was approaching, and it was necessary to restore order in the field. Shouts and coarse yells were heard on the other side of the fence where drunken revelry was going on. Here, on the trampled dusty field white faced corpses were laid out in long rows. Children with pale-green thin faces distorted by suffering, schoolboys, schoolgirls . . . Sablin was going around with a pail of water which had been brought by the student who had run for at least a mile to fetch it. Sablin tried to find men in whom there was yet a breath of life.

"Here," a girl shouted to him kneeling near the massive body of a bearded dvornik,—*"I believe he breathes."*

Some, most of them men, came back to life. They looked 'round stupidly and their heads trembled. They did not understand what had happened.

People who had got their presents were passing by on their return. They chatted merrily, pleased with their booty. Two simply dressed young girls were passing and each carried three presents.

"I got hold of mine, my dear, and shouted to that fellow with the curly hair—'give me some more.' He was so gallant—threw me two!"

"I had luck too. My dress got torn but I also got three."

They noticed the long rows of those who had not reached the presents.

"Oh, God! What is it? Are they quite dead?"

"What dreadful things people can do!"

"What beasts! Look at this girl, she's beautiful. Probably someone loved her."

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"It may be, but he'd leave her all the same. That's always the way with us, we're loved until the first misfortune comes."

"There must be more than a thousand of them!"

They passed on.

XLI

It was impossible to conceal the tragedy which had happened on the Hodinsky field. Its extent was greatly diminished, when reported to the Emperor and an attempt was made to persuade him not to visit the field and to cancel the festivities. The Emperor considered that this would leave a bad impression among the people and also the foreigners. He ordered the program to begin as arranged and drove to the Hodinsky field with the Empress in an open carriage.

Hose wagons were slowly returning from the field along the left side of the Petersburg road. Corpses filled them to the top. At the edges, under the tarpaulins, feet could be seen, swaying quietly. Peasant top-boots, transparent stockings, someone's old worn shoes, the lace trimming of a skirt and the tiny feet of a child lay side by side. All of them, rich and poor, old and young, had become equal in death. Ordinary wagons with the same terrible load were slowly following the fire teams. The Emperor drove along the right side of the road. It was impossible for him not to hear the sad quiet sounds of the wagon bells and not to see the long files of loaded wagons. He understood that the extent of the calamity had been concealed from him and that it was a catastrophe. The Empress was pale. Sadly, with mountains of corpses, the Russian people met her, the crowned Tsaritsa.

A vast sea of human heads could be seen from the wooden pavilion which the Emperor entered.

Musicians were placed on a platform before the pavilion. They played the National Anthem.

The crowd howled and roared below. Most of the tables had been swept away, wine and beer barrels were overturned, the sacks with the presents were carried away. But the crowd was seized with enthusiasm at the sight of the Emperor, caps

flew in a black cloud into the air and the wild "hurrah" of the crowd swept over the field.

The Empress, pale and with red spots on her cheeks, looked with horror at the people. The natives of Kamerun would probably have seemed less wild to her. She had just seen piles of dead bodies crushed to death by these very people and she expected to find them repentant and reverently silent.

A moujik with a dishevelled beard, in an unbuttoned vest which showed his hairy black chest, with a bottle of beer in his outstretched hand looked at her with wild eyes and roared "hurrah," heavily stamping his feet, clad in top boots. A grey bearded old man in a white shirt and a long "kaftan," knelt before the pavilion and bowed, touching the earth with his bald, perspiring head. A young fellow with one arm clasped round the waist of a flushed, handsome young girl, waved a cap over his head with the other and sang something.

These were separate spots against the general background of the roaring and swaying crowd, but they remained fixed in the memory of the Empress for the rest of her life. And when she was spoken to about the people she always remembered the kneeling, aged man with a patriarchal beard, the drunken dishevelled moujik and the young fellow with the girl, against the background of the black, wildly roaring crowd. She remembered the quiet sad bells of the wagons laden with something terrible at which one must not look and which nevertheless attracted the eyes.

The Grand Dukes and Princesses who accompanied the Emperor threw into the crowd presents which they had prepared beforehand and the crowd threw itself upon them and fought for them tearing them to pieces. And over all this scene rose the mighty, beautiful sounds of the Russian National Anthem. Everything was lit by the rays of the hot sun which never once betrayed the Emperor during the days of his sacred coronation.

The concert began. Fragments of Russian operas were played and their airs floated over the noisy field but it seemed that the sad bells of the wagons with their terrible load could be heard through the melody of the violins.

The Emperor stayed for half an hour at the Hodinsky field and drove back. The pair of fine grey horses which drew his carriage overtook in the town the wagons with the corpses and passed them, snorting with fright. Women's and children's feet could be seen quietly swaying under the edges of the tarpaulins.

The crowd swarmed behind them in an even current, trying to overtake them. Sablin was walking in the crowd.

"The Emperor has passed."

"Then he must have seen what has happened."

"The Emperor isn't responsible for it. It's the fault of the police. They ought to have seen to the order. The Emperor does not know what the crowds are like but the police do. They're experienced."

"It isn't the fault of the police but of the builders."

"Well, my dear, whosever fault it may be, remember my words: that's a bad omen. Such a lot of people perished for nothing on the very day of the feast! It'll be a hard reign. . . . A bloody one."

It was the general opinion that it was a bad augury. Mystical horror hung over Moscow. It was intended to cancel the rest of the festivities—the ball, the parade and the races but the Emperor stood the test and remained at Moscow till the end.

The same evening he appeared with the Empress at a ball given by the French ambassador. Both were pale and their smiles seemed feigned and constrained. Dancing began but neither the Emperor nor the Empress took part in it. They looked on for several minutes from a corner of the hall and then left.

They felt heavy at heart. They were accomplishing a difficult duty before the people, but the latter thought otherwise and said: "Numbers of people have perished because of them and they don't seem to mind a bit! . . . They continue to amuse themselves!"

The Emperor ordered a strict inquest, the punishment of the guilty, the funeral of the victims to be at his expense and the issue of a liberal grant to the families. Rumours raised the size

of that grant to huge dimensions, and some people even envied their neighbours whose eight-year-old girl had been trampled to death. But when just a few hundred rubles had been issued, gossip again began about the nobles who had stolen the gifts of the Emperor which had not reached the true sufferers.

People sighed in the dark parts of Moscow and said: "Yes, God is high up, the Tsar is far away, so how can you get at the truth?" Anger and spite were concealed and accumulated until the hour of vengeance.

XLII

ON the evening of that day Sablin was invited to a party at the house of a relative of Princess Repnin where all the officers of the regiment who were at Moscow were to be present. He went there and spoke almost with tears in his eyes about what he had seen at Hodinka, but his narrative was received coldly.

"There is nothing unusual about such events," remarked the adjutant puffing at his cigar,—“at the coronation festivities of Queen Victoria even more people perished. But the English are cultured people, they managed to conceal the fact and did not make something dramatic out of it.”

"They ought to have called out the Cossacks and let the horsemen keep the crowd away from the entrances. That wasn't done."

"Did you hear, gentlemen, that Vlassoffsky, the Chief of Police, has shot himself. It affected him so deeply."

"He has done right," said Count Pensky, the Commander of the first squadron.

"There was nothing else left for him if he was an honest man," said Prince Repnin.

"But, Prince," Sablin said passionately, "what had Vlassoffsky to do with it, when he received an order from the Emperor not to detail police to the festivities? All had gone off so well during the illumination."

A chill which ran through the group made him feel that he had said something out of place.

"Don't forget, Lieutenant," the adjutant told him coldly,

"that not all the orders of the Emperor have to be executed to the letter. One must use one's own discretion. The noble wish of the Emperor, his touching belief in the common sense of the Russian people ought to have been made widely known, but Vlassoffsky ought to have taken on himself the responsibility for not complying with the order. The people would have cursed him, the Emperor would probably have feigned not to notice it or, at the worst, he would have dismissed Vlassoffsky from his post and forgiven him afterwards. But we would not have had all these disgusting events which they haven't even managed to conceal from the Emperor and the foreigners."

"Three days ago I spoke privately with his Majesty," said Prince Reprnin and all present listened with respectful alertness. "The Emperor confided to me that he felt the Divine blessing descend on him during the ceremony of the anointment. He told me that he hopes to make war impossible and to have all quarrels between nations decided at conferences by arbitration. He hopes to unite France, England and Germany through Russia. He is equally benevolent towards all of these States. The late Emperor knew what he was doing when he chose a German Princess as wife for his son, and especially one of a modest House."

"She will be a new Catherine the Great," said the stout Lieutenant Metelin, who had a reputation for making awkward remarks.

"How majestically beautiful the young Empress was in her attire of a Russian Tsaritzza," said the adjutant,— "the beauty of a woman was harmonised in her with the majesty of a goddess."

Sablin listened, was silent, and wondered.

"What about the beautiful girl," he thought. "who was lying in the dust with the marks of a heel on her temple? She was well-dressed, apparently was of good family and was now needlessly stretched on the slope of the ditch. What about that little schoolboy with a green face on which the eyebrows appeared as dark lines? His mother had carefully fitted him out in the morning, and now he was thrown on a car and driven away. What was it? An accident, a lack of administrative talent on

the part of Vlassoffsky, or a great bloody sacrifice of human beings made to some terrible non-Christian God for the purpose of making the new reign happy? Whatever it was, Sablin felt that it was terrible. It was not to the Emperor's advantage. His heart wavered for the first time. . . . Oh! He never for a moment ceased to love and idolise the Emperor, but why, why did it all happen? Why did the Emperor and the Empress see all this horror and how could they bear it? Sablin felt as if ever hereafter he would hear that sad tinkling of the wagon bells and would be haunted by the sight of those human feet quietly swaying under the tarpaulins!

He did not try to find fault with men. But in his heart he questioned God. How could He, the Almighty, allow this to happen? Why did He not prevent this terrible execution of innocent people? And if He did allow it, what did he want to communicate to the Tsar and the people by this terrible sign and why, why did the benign Jesus, who loved human beings so dearly, why did He allow this?

Why?!!

XLIII

ON his return from Moscow Sablin wrote a long letter to Marousia. He sincerely and minutely described to her not only what he had seen at Hodinka, but also his feelings and his doubt of God. He begged her to meet him. He wrote that only Marousia's kind young heart would understand him and might perhaps dispel the horrible nightmare which was haunting him. Marousia instantly answered him. She fixed the place for their meeting at a rather unusual spot at Lahta, on the shore of the Finnish gulf.

Sablin saw Marousia on the sandy beach when he emerged from the wide Morskaya street bordered by tall birch trees. She was sitting on a stone with her back turned towards him. She was dressed in a simple straw hat, white blouse and blue skirt. A cloak lay on her knees and she was drawing something on the sand with her umbrella. The waves were running up

to her feet with a quiet murmur. A light wind played with her dark curls and caressed her cheeks with them.

She was thinking of something and gazing at the sea. The yellow waves were rising and quietly sparkling in the evening sun, foaming at their crests and scattering at Marousia's feet. Farther on the sea had a leaden colour and the crests of the waves showed white upon it. A black, clumsy looking steamer with a low funnel from which poured dense black smoke which stretched far back over the sea, heavily pulled three low, black barges. A large sailing boat was coming from another direction. Farther on could be seen the low opposite shore of the gulf bordered by dark forests over which rose in the distance the hardly noticeable mounts of Kirchhof and Duderhof. The buildings and the churches of the Sergievsky monastery appeared as white spots against the dark background.

The quiet sadness of the north was over everything. The sea did not charm, did not threaten or attract. It seemed quietly to caress the level shores and the wide spaces of Russia's lowlands. Behind the sand of the beach came a green meadow, rising not more than three feet above it.

The slim, quietly dressed young girl was in harmony with the simple scenery of the Northern sea and seemed so beautiful on the background of the yellow waves that Sablin stopped and gazed at her.

Marousia looked 'round, saw him and rose to meet him. Sablin looked at his watch.

"No, no, Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Marousia, "you aren't late. I purposely came earlier to enjoy this view. I know of no lovelier one."

Sablin looked at Marousia. She seemed to have grown much more beautiful since he had last seen her.

"Yes," she said, waiting for an answer and not receiving any. "It is a very simple view. There are no violet hills here, no dark blue sky, no green waves full of mystical depth. There is nothing of what the painters love so much, but there is no view that I love better, perhaps because it is one of my native land."

TO RED FLAG

She spoke the word "native" with much warmth and softness.

"But, Maria Mihailovna, what about the opinion you held that the idea of the native land is merely relative, and that men should not recognize that word because they should feel that the whole earth is their native land and all humanity their brothers?"

She grew confused and did not answer. She could not lie. She felt now that she loved with all her heart the dull looking sea and the flat land over which spread a pale clouded sky. She loved it because it was her native land. Why should she deceive others and herself? She loved the whole world, yes, but she had a particular love for her Russia, with its beautiful language, simple views and rough people. And out of the whole of boundless Russia she loved most of all this quiet sad view which had once inspired Peter the Great to found a city. In spite of the names of the Robespierres, Marats, Risakoffs, Peehanoffs and of Marx which were thrust upon her, out of all the heroes of the history of the world she valued most of all and loved, yes loved, although she concealed it, the mighty Peter who beheaded the "Streltzi,"* cut the beards of the boyars, drank and revelled and in the meantime accomplished great deeds and created the Russian Empire. And out of all the Russian people she for some reason liked best this trim youth who now stood before her in a fresh white tunic, blue trousers and top-boots with spurs. For some reason she preferred him to comrades Pavel and Korjikoff who at every moment were in danger of arrest.

"Tell me about the coronation. How did this tragedy happen? How could it be so horrible, was it really arranged on purpose?" she asked.

They sat down on a large flat stone. It was comfortable but narrow and Sablin for the first time felt her young body near him and saw her blue eyes looking closely at him. She used

* The Guard of the Moscow Tsars. They offered resistance to the reforms of Peter the Great and were disbanded by him.

no perfume but the fragrance of youth and of her hair made him nervous.

His voice shook when he answered.

"Of course it couldn't have been arranged on purpose. The stupidity of the builders caused it. They hadn't thought that such a great crowd would be present and didn't realise its terrible power. The Emperor overestimated the good qualities of the people and of the crowd. He thought that they were sensible, had noble instincts and were full of brotherly love. He did not want to restrain them by police, he did not want to curtail their freedom."

Gradually his voice grew firmer. He described the Emperor as an ideal Monarch who would create a golden age of Russian history. There would be no gruff police, no troops, and all the questions would be decided at conferences. Such were Sablin's ideas about the Emperor. This first failure made such a deep impression on him, and showed him that although the Tsar might be prepared to start with these far-reaching reforms, the people were not ready for them.

But Sablin did not blame the people. He picked out of the great rough crowd the merchant, the student who ran for a verst to fetch water, the young girl who knelt near a fainting moujik and bathed his head. He idealised them. In his description the calamity only served to emphasize the beautiful qualities of the Russian people and gave an opportunity to the Monarch to reveal the nobility of his heart. The Emperor could not be comforted, the Empress wept, they visited the families of the victims and distributed money. Why had Sablin invented all this? He did not know himself. He would have acted in this way and he attributed to the Emperor such actions as he would have liked to see him accomplish.

The blue eyes changed their colour, sometimes a smile would reveal white moist teeth, at others her lips would be tightly pressed together in suffering for the people, but her eyes were constantly fixed on Sablin's.

She questioned. He answered. The description of the coronation was ended, all the Moscow topics had been dis-

TO RED FLAG

cussed but their conversation did not stop. The day was quietly burning away before them, the sun was setting and on the golden sky appeared the misty silhouettes of the funnels, forts and churches of Kronstadt. A chill dampness came from the sea. The dusk of the white night was falling over the waves which were quieting down. White crests no longer appeared in the middle of the Gulf, the sea murmured softly and rolled up its transparent waves to their feet. Marousia rose and put on her cloak.

"It is time to go," she said straightening her slim form, silhouetted on the background of the clear sky.

He closed his eyes. A passionate desire rose in him.

He looked 'round like a thief. His face became red. Blood throbbed in his temples. He was disgusted with himself at the moment. But he could not resist the temptation. She was too beautiful and he felt that she was attracted by him. Sablin threw down the coat which he had carried and tried to embrace her.

She started aside. Her face had a frightened expression. Her cheeks grew pale and her eyes were lowered.

"Oh, forgive me," he exclaimed. "Forgive me. I am mad. I am a fool and a scoundrel. Don't be angry with me."

"I am not angry," she said quietly and walked away from the sea.

He followed her and felt that he ought to speak but could not find the necessary words. He kept awkwardly silent and did not dare to walk at her side.

She walked more rapidly, almost ran, but he followed at her heels. They came at last to the bridge over the Bobilsky channel where boats could be hired.

"Forgive me. I am so guilty . . ." he whispered and she felt tears in his voice.

"It is my fault," said Marousia. "I ought not to have come here."

She descended towards the boats.

"May I come with you?" Sablin asked.

She did not answer but silently made place for him on the

bench. He sat at her side. She was nervously wrapping herself in her cloak. The boatsman rowed calmly with short even strokes.

At Staraia Derevnia she went towards the horse car. Sablin followed her.

"No, for Heavens sake. I can't stand it any longer," Marousia whispered in an imploring voice, stretching out to him her cold hand. He bent over it and respectfully kissed it. Her hand shivered in his but she did not take it away.

"Farewell," Marousia said quietly.

"Good-bye," Sablin said looking fixedly into her eyes.

Marousia did not answer and jumped into the car, which was already moving.

Sablin went on foot. For some time he could see through the pale dusk of the white night her straw hat with a red ribbon and her bent head.

She never once looked back towards him.

XLIV

THAT year the camp training was difficult and dull. New cavalry regulations had just been introduced. They were simple. All the vocal commands of the section commanders were cancelled and replaced by signals, the ranks grew quiet and silent. Baron Drevenitz had been brought up in entirely different traditions. He did not understand the new regulations and grew nervous. He drove the squadron commanders, practised with them with matches which he laid about the table and repeated the same cavalry manœuvres during drill on foot.

The summer was rainy. The Krasnoie Selo manœuvre field grew muddy and was trampled into a jelly of clay. The squadrons splashed at a gallop through the mud, men were worried by incessant practise and everyone swore and bustled about fearing the Grand Duke.

Old Generals were seized with awe when he appeared on the manœuvre field on his big white and black Irish horse. He was usually accompanied by the cold pedantic General Palitzin, four orderly trumpeters and an Ural Cossack with a huge

orange flag. Rapidly he crossed the field and halted near the Tsar's Mound from which he watched the drill of the cavalry. Sometimes an orderly officer would detach himself from his escort and would gallop towards some regiment. The heart would sink in the breast of the regimental Commander as he galloped towards the Grand Duke and halted before his rigid form with features which seemed to be carved out of stone.

Rotbek counted that during one exercise he turned about with his section seventy-six times to the left. The horses, the men, the officers,—all grew listless and waited with impatience for the day of the regimental inspection after which the brigade and division manœuvres would begin.

Sablin felt depressed. He heard nothing from Marousia. His letters were left unanswered. The Martoffs had left for the country, the young people who met there were nowhere to be seen, and Sablin did not even know where Marousia was. He hoped to meet her by chance in town. Sablin spent two Sundays driving to the Lahta and strolling about the Summer Gardens. For half an hour he walked about the Nicolaievskaya street before the house of the Martoffs,—but he did not meet Marousia anywhere. This irritated him. Sablin returned to the camp and found everyone getting ready for regimental inspection. Rotbek was studying the program of events which had been sent from the regimental office. Soldiers of the section were polishing straps in the yard, saddles were hung on the fence and their stirrups sparkled in the sun. The day was fresh and clouds shut the sun out of sight from time to time. The bandsmen were practising signalling in a yard several cottages away. Rotbek listened to them and hummed the words of the bugle calls. Then he and Sablin practised the signals.

XLV

THE inspection came off very well. "With the highest possible number of points," as the Division Commander said. The Grand Duke, who stood near the Tsar's Mound, twice sent an officer to convey his thanks. No one fell, the alignment was perfect, the intervals were well kept. The pace of the gallop

was normal and everything was done well, as it should be done in "our" regiment. Lunch was served at the Mess after the inspection. The Division Commander was present and the band played.

The Division Commander with his Staff had just left and the officers who had been seeing him off returned to finish their ices and wine. The Baron, pleased and happy over the success of the regiment now felt certain that he would receive the command of a brigade in the spring and would then be able to rest. He unbuttoned his tunic, puffed at his cigar and said in broken Russian, with a smile on his round red face, to Repnin:

"That was an excellent invention of this little spitzbube. He placed poles. I came and saw a pole here, a pole there, it was excellent to keep direction. "Gentlemen," he said addressing the officers who sat 'round the large table,—“you can follow my example and unbutton your tunics and smoke. A fine regiment, fine young men!” he said, addressing Repnin.

The table hummed with voices like a bee hive. In the next room the band played a medley of Italian songs in which the voices were drowned.

The sun shone more rarely outside, great white clouds covering it. The leaves of an aspen tree quivered tremulously before the window. A cold wind was blowing from the sea and promising rain.

Rotbek was sitting at the far corner of the table surrounded by a group of youngsters and was saying seriously:

"I drink General Pouff's health for the first time. I rise once, I tap once with a finger of the right hand, then once with a finger of the left, I stamp the right foot once then the left and drink down one glass of champagne. Is that it, Petristcheff?"

"Yes, only you begin by tapping your fingers and you rise in the end," Petristcheff said equally seriously.

"All right. I'll begin then. God help me not to mix it all up. I drink General Pouff's health for the first time. . . ."

At the other end of the table Matzneff, Gritzenko and Fetissoff were discussing the origin of philosophy.

"Own up, Ivan Sergeievitch, that philosophy is nonsense," Gritzenko, who had drunk too much wine, was saying,— "it comes from indigestion, your philosophy."

"Perhaps mine does," Matzneff replied calmly, "but you can't deny Socrates and Plato, you can't close your eyes on Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Then, my dear friend, a new teaching is growing up before our eyes which may overturn the world and Christianity. It is the teaching of Marx."

"Have you read him?" Gritzenko asked. Matzneff hesitated for a moment.

"I haven't read all his works, my dear friend. I hadn't the time, and then he's difficult to read. But the things he preaches are horrible. I really don't know what may happen once it affects our heavy Russian brains with our great inclination for brigandage and mutiny."

"We have lived through Razin, Boulavin and Pugatcheff,* and with God's help we will crush Marx."

"Yes, but they were simple illiterate Cossacks and here you have a German philosopher . . . a scientist."

"Hang it! We're still alive!"

"I drink General Pouff's health for the second time," Rotbek's voice solemnly rang through the dining hall,— "I tap two fingers twice on the table, I stamp my foot twice, I rise twice and I drink two glasses of champagne! So!"

"He will get tight!" Matzneff said nodding at Rotbek.

"Let him. He's a fine fellow and a smart officer," said Gritzenko. "We need men like him. He wouldn't hesitate to charge and to die without a complaint or a groan. You watch him,— his section is in order, he isn't slack in discipline with his soldiers but drives them skillfully. He does everything willingly and well."

"Yes, he also is a philosopher," said Matzneff,— "such men as he, men who do not question things deeply, must be happy. The sun smiled on them at their birth and this sunny smile has re-

* All three were notorious leaders of rebellions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

mained with them forever. They have been blinded by the sun. They don't see anything that is terrible."

"But what do you see? Why do you speak of unpleasant things? Our life flows on without worries. You remember, you once compared it to a brilliant feast where many excellent dishes were served on the table. You can take, eat and everything is yours."

"I am seized with fear, Pavel Ivanovitch, when the doubt comes to me, whether it is really mine? What if someone else comes, pushes me away and says—enough! I also want to have some!"

"Eh, my dear friend, there will be enough for all."

"But think of the numbers of hungry who crave only for crumbs falling from the table. What if they are seized by hatred?"

"The hungry are weak and submissive. They have no power even in hatred. Only the well-fed are to be feared."

"That is bad philosophy, Pavel Ivanovitch. You know, I sometimes feel afraid in the service. The horses are animals, the men are no better. Both are ignorant, foreign to us and strong. What if they wage war upon us?"

"What if the horses start kicking you?" Gritzenko said laughing. "Drink, Ivan Sergeievitch, it will help you."

"The horses may throw me and the men may laugh at my orders, turn away and disperse."

"Hit them on the snout and nothing will happen," Gritzenko said, pouring champagne into Matzneff's glass.

The band played an air from Carmen and a cornet poured forth passionate sounds.

Rotbek, pale, with bulging eyes was enunciating with difficulty:

"I drink the health of General Pouff-pouff-pouff-pouff-pouff for the fifth time. . . . It's a fine invention of the d . . . d cuirassiers. An elephant couldn't stand it. And neither can I!"

He rose. His face became deathly pale. A soldier servant ran up to him and led him away.

At that moment the orderly officer Lieutenant Kisloff en-

TO RED FLAG

tered the room. It was strange to see him in his tightly fitting tunic with his sword and revolver, among these half drunken men with their unbuttoned tunics. He approached the regimental Commander and reported.

"Your Excellency, an event has happened in the regiment. Lieutenant Baron Korff has shot himself."

"When?" Baron Drevenitz asked, rising and buttoning his tunic.

"This very moment, in his cottage."

"Gentlemen," the regimental Commander said, raising his voice,—*"I ask you to go home. . . . Our comrade, Baron Korff is no more. . . ."*

The band continued to play a melody from *Carmen*. Rotbek entered the dining room looking fresh and said:

"He must have been a strong fellow this General Pouff if so many people drink in his honour. Petristcheff, the first time doesn't count. I'll begin again. . . ."

XLVI

LIEUTENANT BARON KORFF was lying stretched on his bed. He was already dead. His features bore an expression of cold rest and surprise. He was in a shirt, breeches and top-boots. The shirt was covered with blood on the left side of his breast and a pool of blood, red and still warm was on the floor. The squadron medical assistant, a soldier, sat on the bed at his side and continued to hold the hand of the Baron. He rose and stood at attention when the regimental Commander with the Adjutant and Prince Repnin entered the cottage.

"Is he dead?" Baron Drevenitz asked him.

"He died half a minute ago, Your Excellency," answered the surgeon.

"Mad child!" Drevenitz muttered. He was greatly displeased. The suicide, apart from being a stain on the reputation of the regiment, prevented him from spending two days in the country with his family as he had intended. He would have to write reports and be present at the *Te-Deums* and at the

funeral. No, it would be impossible for him now to leave the camp!

"Did he suffer long?" Prince Repnin asked.

"Yes, Your Excellency," the soldier answered,— "he was still living when I ran in. He kept calling his mother and saying:

'Ah, why! Why did I do it! Save me! I will give you all I have! Save me!' But what could I do? The bullet had very nearly touched the heart. Then he grew quieter and only called his mother."

The Baron frowned.

"Did he leave a note?" he asked.

"Yes, there is one," the Adjutant answered. He had the valuable capacity of immediately becoming sober when matters touched the service, however much he might have drunk previously. "A most banal note."

He picked up from the table and read a note written on a fragment of paper in a large childish handwriting: "I ask that no one be blamed for my death. I have had enough of life. It is too dull."

"He has had enough of life at nineteen," said Drevenitz,— "I don't undersand the young people of today. Did he have some unfortunate love affair or was he ill?"

"No," the Adjutant said coldly, "he had nothing of that kind. He simply must have been drunk."

"They are weak, these youngsters. We must send a wire to his mother."

"I think, Baron," said Prince Repnin, "that it would be better if I went personally. She lives not far from here. She is a lonely widow, he was her only son. . . . What a blow for the mother! The news must be broken gently. I will see that rooms are made ready for her at our house. She will feel better with the Princess in our family circle."

"Yes, thank you, Prince," Drevenitz said and addressed the Adjutant: "Well, Vladimir Stanislavovitch, I suppose that I shall have to stay here?"

The Adjutant guessed the thoughts of his Commander.

"No, Your Excellency, it is Saturday, and the funeral can't

take place before Monday. The reports are already being prepared, you can sign them in an hour's time and then leave. Lieutenant Kisloff will take down the evidence, but it will be a mere formality. The case is quite clear. I am sending for a wreath from the regiment, the priest has been notified and a wagon has been dispatched for the coffin. It's an ordinary matter. There is no necessity for you to stay here."

Drevenitz became reassured. The matter was really an ordinary one. Not a single year passed without cases of suicide in the army. The reasons differed. It was either a large loss of money at cards, or the lack of means for the expensive life in the regiment, illness, an unfortunate love affair, a quarrel with comrades, or simply the dullness of the life. Everyone knew what had to be done in such cases. The suicide of officers formed part of the army life, the measures to be taken were laid down in the regulations.

Drevenitz left the cottage. Prince Repnin and the Adjutant followed him. Steepochka Vorobieff was bustling about on the stoop and was giving instructions.

"Can it really be that there was no reason at all? Alexander Vassilievitch, go and get ribbons of the regimental colours for the wreath. What was his father's name? We always called him Vasia and I have forgotten his patrimonial name?"

"Karlovitch," said Sablin who was standing in the group of officers.

"Was he Orthodox or Lutheran?" Steepochka asked.

"Orthodox."

"See that N.C.O. sentries are posted. As soon as Kisloff finishes taking down the evidence it will be necessary to wipe away the blood and to open the windows. His mother may arrive soon. He must be dressed."

Sablin passed the officers who were standing outside and entered the cottage. There was a smell of gunpowder mixed with a disagreeable odour of human blood. The only man in the cottage except the deceased was his orderly, the soldier Bardsky. He stood in a corner and wiped with his dirty fists the large tears that trickled down his cheeks.

Sablin looked at the white, calm and indifferent features of the dead, then at the orderly and asked:

"Pavel, how did it happen? Were you here?"

"Yes," the orderly exclaimed with despair. "Almost before my eyes, Your Honour. If I had only known what he meant to do, but the idea never entered my head. What shall I tell the old lady now? She spoke to me so kindly about His Honour. 'Have you a son?' she asked me. I have a tiny one, he was six months old when I left for the service. 'He is also my only one,' she told me,—'take care of him.' And I haven't!"

"Was he depressed lately?"

"No, Your Honour. He was quite merry looking lately. To-day he returned, as I could see, slightly drunk. He began to write something and took off his tunic. When he finished.—'Pavel,' he said, 'give me my revolver.' Could I know why he wanted it? I thought he was going to practise shooting at a card pinned to the ceiling as he often did when he had drunk a little. I gave it to him. 'Now,' he said,—'go away.' Somehow I felt queer. I obeyed but stopped in the next room and listened. I heard a dull thud. It didn't even seem like a revolver report. But then I heard him groaning and ran into the room. He sat on the bed and blood poured from his breast on his breeches and the floor. He looked at me quietly and said: 'Save me. I didn't want to. It was so dull, all . . . so dull.' I wanted to support him but he fell on the pillow. I ran for the medical assistant and on the way told a soldier to report to the orderly officer. He was still breathing when we ran in with Sentzoff. Sentzoff took his hand. His Honour lay with closed eyes and said quietly: 'Ah, how dull it all is! Save me! I didn't want to!' Then—'it is dull. . . .' He called his mother's name twice and died."

Tears trickled down the orderly's face. Sablin looked at Baron Korff's calm features and strange thoughts suddenly came to him. He turned and left the cottage. A gust of cold wind with rain met him outside. The prints of horses' hoofs on the earthen road were already filled with water.

Rotbek lay undressed and wrapped in a blanket in the cot-

tage where Sablin lived. He was sleeping soundly. A bottle of soda water and a glass of strong tea stood on a chair near the bed. Rotbek's orderly knew what His Honour needed on such occasions.

The cottage was dark and damp. Sablin approached the window and sat down on a chair. In front of the window a wet willow tree was swaying in the wind. Large drops of rain pattered on the pools of water and raised bubbles which burst immediately. No one was to be seen on the road and the whole street seemed deserted and uninhabited. Suddenly Sablin was seized by the same anguishing, unbearable feeling of depression which had brought Baron Korff to his sad end. He understood Korff.

He must have returned in the same way to his cottage, looked at the muddy street, the grey sky, the rain, the bubbles on the pools, thought of a grey muddy field, of long rows of soldiers' backs, wet horses' croups bespattered with mud and far ahead the raised sword of the regimental Commander. He must have realized that this would go on forever. This field, these rows of men and the form with the raised sword would always exist. And whatever might happen in the world, however happy, sad or full of love his heart might be, a sign of the Commander's sword would continue to throw him from one end of the manœuvre ground to the other. Today and tomorrow, and in one, ten, twenty years of time.

For the first time Sablin felt how dull the life in the regiment was. The interests of all were concentrated either on the details of drill or on society gossip. He had met a young girl who had new and different ideas of life, with whom it was so nice to talk. But he had not managed to keep her. He had offended her because he was accustomed to the idea that all women were accessible, and as a result she had left him. What remained? Regimental interests, drill and poles for keeping direction on the manœuvre ground.

How dull!

Perhaps Baron Korff was right? His face was so serenely calm. As if during the last moments of his life he had heard

something important and encouraging. Life had existed and it had been blown out. Quite simply. A shot, so quiet that the orderly hardly heard it in the next room. The body still suffers, implores one to save it and calls for its mother, while the soul already knows something great and important which leaves a stamp of serene calm on the features.

Why shouldn't he, Sasha Sablin, also attempt to step over the line which separates this world from the unseen?

He felt chilled in the silent cottage. Rotbek snored, lying in an uncomfortable position on his back. The willow swayed in the wind. Dusk had fallen and a clear long northern night was approaching.

"I can come to Heaven knows what conclusions in this manner," thought Sablin. He put on his wet cap and raincoat and walked towards the Officers' Mess.

XLVII

THE traces of the preceding revelry had been removed from the dining hall of the Mess. The wet table cloths had been replaced by fresh ones, the glasses, plates and bottles stood in the usual order. Only the strong odour of spilt champagne and tobacco smoke still remained. Candles burned in a candle-stick on one end of the table and a hanging lamp lit the other corner. Gritzenko, Matzneff and Kisloff, who had just finished the inquiry, were sitting there. Gritzenko had become quite sober and hungry and was eating a large beefsteak and drinking red wine. Matzneff was dipping strawberries in a large glass of white wine and sucking them with a melancholy look on his face. Sablin wanted company and sat down near them.

They talked about the suicide.

"In my opinion," Gritzenko was saying, "suicide is a sign of cowardice and of lack of will. It is an act which is unworthy of a man and all the more so of an officer. I have a deep contempt for suicides."

"But you have to admit, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Kisloff, "that there may be circumstances when you have to put an end to your existence. When 'l'honneur oblige.'"

TO RED FLÄG

"There can be no such reasons," said Gritzenko.

"Supposing you were hit on the face and were unable to wipe away the offense by blood."

Gritzenko stared at him.

"I would like to see the fellow who would hit me and get away alive or without being compelled to answer for it in a duel."

"Well, supposing a soldier hit you."

"I don't even admit the thought of such a possibility. I would shoot such a scoundrel."

"Someone hit you in a crowd and ran away."

"Well that . . . it's like being bitten by a mad dog. It isn't insulting."

"All right. Supposing you lost at cards and couldn't pay your debt."

"I would leave the regiment and go and work until I could pay the money back."

"Would it be worth while leading such a galley-slave's life?"

"Ah, my dear! That's just the very point. Life is harder than death and for that reason a manly individual will never shoot himself. Only a coward commits suicide."

"Well . . . all right . . . but love?" asked Kisloff.

"Less than anything else. This illness is cured more easily than any other. Only a madman can love and shoot himself for this reason. Only the Germans who have beer instead of blood in their veins are capable of it."

"But there must have been some reason for Korff's action," said Sablin.

"That's what we are talking about. He did it just because he was drunk and was a coward," said Gritzenko.

"How can you talk in such a way about a dead man who lies not far from here," said Sablin indignantly.

"He lies there and hears nothing. He doesn't exist any longer. Or you think that he may enter the room and ask me to account for my words? Ah! It's all nonsense. He only made a mess with his blood on the floor, filled the room with smoke and made a lot of noise. Just because he felt dull! Because he

found life difficult. As if he wanted us to mess about with him, bury him and take down evidence. Stupid boy!"

"Pavel Ivanovitch!" exclaimed Sablin.

"No, Sasha, he is right,"—said Matzneff. "There was nothing beautiful in his action. No esthetic feeling, no pose. He came home drunk. Everybody saw the amount of vodka he had absorbed. Well, he got a headache, went home and then—shot himself! Sasha, why?"

"He felt dull," said Sablin.

"And don't we feel dull? A man has been created an intelligent animal for the purpose of making his life interesting. But why should it be dull? The feast of life is in full swing and the place we have at its table really isn't a bad one. He was nineteen. Dear Sasha, it would have been worth while living just for that reason alone. Think of all the pleasures of life! Women, flowers, poetry, painting, dancing, books, philosophy. . . . You just have to take what you want. I partly agree with Pavel Ivanovitch that a suicide is a man who has no will and isn't bold enough to look straight into the eyes of life."

"And looks into the eyes of death,"—said Sablin.—"He looks into the eyes of death, which he doesn't know and fears life which he knows. Which is more terrible then?"

"Life," Matzneff and Gritzenko answered simultaneously.

"You, who see so many pleasures in life and yet hold such an opinion . . ." said Sablin.

"Yes, dear Sasha," said Matzneff.

"I say this, I—an Epicurean and a cynic. I fear diseases and yet I live. I fear scandals, insults, and I live. You know Sasha, I fear and I hate riding, I am fed up with the drill and yet I live and move about at a sign from our Baron. Days and weeks pass thus while the pleasures of the feast of life are measured only by moments. Old age is ahead. Many dull days. I don't speak of family life. I have been unlucky in it. Think of the many years of suffering that are in store for me whereas I could hope to make a discovery in a single moment."

"What if you should be met by hell and horned and tailed

demons, and by cauldrons in which sinners are boiled," laughed Gritzenko.

"No, it is impossible to invent anything worse than life," Matzneff said, sucking a strawberry,—“but at the same time there is nothing better. For instance how beautiful are these strawberries in Rhine wine! How beautiful and poetical is the wine itself! Ah! Damn it! What's the use of thinking about it at all! This Korff is a fool and a beast. If ever you feel sad and get such thoughts, Sasha, you come to me. We will read together ‘Ars Amandi.’ But you, little idiot, don't even know Latin. Well, I will translate. They knew how to live, those Romans.”

Sablin listened to their conversation and wondered at the way their thoughts leapt from topic to topic, approaching the very edge of the precipice and jumping away from it, either by a coarse jest of Gritzenko or a philosophical conclusion of Matzneff.

But he felt better with them. They were living men. Their eyes shone, they drank wine, they held death in contempt and they did not fear it.

They left the Mess about midnight and Sablin went home. He had to pass the cottage where Korff was lying. Light shone through the drawn curtains of the windows. Sablin felt a desire to look once more at the dead man. He entered the cottage. Baron Korff, important and majestic looking, lay in a white coffin. He was clad in his parade uniform and his white hands were folded on his breast. High candles burned dimly. Flowers lay near the coffin. Two tall N.C.O. sentries with rifles slung behind their backs and with drawn sabres stood motionless on either side of the coffin. A little, grey-haired lady in a black dress sat on the bed on which he had shot himself. Her head was shaking. She was weeping.

She was Korff's mother.

Everything was quiet in the cottage. Why hadn't Korff thought of this old lady when he had asked for his revolver? Why?

Again, as after Hodinka, Sablin's soul felt indignant against

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

God. Why should this old solitary being have to endure such sufferings?

Sablin quietly left the room.

At home he found Rotbek who had just waked up. He was drinking tea, looked at Sablin with dazed eyes and said:

"You know, Sasha, I'll beat that General Pouff yet! Not now but another time!"

He knew nothing about Korff's suicide. He had understood nothing at the Mess and had slept continuously since.

XLVIII

MAROUSIA wrote a letter to Sablin: "I have heard," write Marousia, "that the public will be admitted by special tickets to the Ceremonial Last Post and the concert that will follow it. Please get me a ticket and leave it at the Martoffs' house if that won't mean too much trouble for you. I shall feel most grateful. Afterwards we can exchange impressions and talk them over."

"She has forgiven me!" Sablin exclaimed as he read the note. He would meet her after the Ceremonial Last Post and make everything clear. It wasn't difficult for him to obtain a ticket and Sablin passed in a state of happy expectation the fortnight which separated him from the day appointed for the Imperial Inspection of the Camps and for the Ceremonial Last Post.

The morning of that day was a foggy one, but already at ten o'clock the sun shone brightly and the clay of the muddy roads quickly began to dry. The evening promised to be magnificent.

Where the Tzarskoie Selo road crosses the main line of the camps, near the church on the left flank of the Semenovskiy regiment, a wooden platform had been erected for the musicians and next to it a smaller one for the public. A large tent had been pitched near the edge of the birch grove on a mound which had been covered with sod and flowers. Near by was a small enclosure surrounded by a rope fence and intended for a select public. Only persons in the possession of special crimson tickets were admitted here. Sablin had obtained one for Marousia.

Towards six o'clock in the evening the platforms were already covered with spectators. The guests were arriving in troikas, in private carriages, in cabs and on foot. The light colours of the sunshades and the dresses of the ladies gave a cheerful appearance to the platform and concealed the rough boards and the earth on which the chairs and benches were placed. The pathways had been swept and covered with red sand. At the doors of the tent stood two slim, tall Cadets, sentries of the Pavlovsky Military School, handsome as cherubs. The musicians and bandsmen of all the regiments of the camp, more than a thousand men in all, were occupying their platform. Their brightly polished brass instrument sparkled in the sun. An army of drummers and buglers were lining up in front headed by an aged drummer of the Guard Grenadiers,—a broad shouldered, middle sized soldier with a black beard tinged with grey,—a typical Russian peasant.

The officers of the Guard regiments arrived as the Emperor finished the inspection of their units and placed themselves in the order of their regiments before the Emperor's tent.

Marousia looked at the sky with the clouds moving towards the sunset, at the wide spaces of the fields and the dark Strelina and Ligovo woods and at the sparkling stripe of the Finnish Gulf into which the purple sun was slowly descending.

Next to Marousia sat the popular Russian artist Varlamoff who never missed this Ceremony.

"It is splendid—splendid!" he was repeating, wiping his bald head with a handkerchief. "How beautiful is our mother Russia! I wouldn't change our Krasnoie Selo for any Nice or Switzerland. See, how pure the air is, Kronstadt can be seen quite distinctly. The roof of the Peterhof palace is shining. . . . One feels the presence of magic water works there. . . . Do you hear? . . . Listen! . . . The Emperor is coming."

Marousia listened. A distant roar could be heard on the left and the earth seemed to tremble there. Thousands of men were shouting "hurrah" and the distant sounds aroused in Marousia feelings which she had never yet experienced. Her brother had told her that a mass hypnosis seemed to overpower all the

men when the Emperor approached and that all united in a feeling of adoration for the Tsar. She, Marousia, would never let herself be hypnotised. What did the Emperor mean to her? But her heart gave a leap when she heard the approaching roar of voices and realised its meaning.

The noise came nearer. One could already distinguish the tunes of the Anthem and of the marches, the sharp answers to the greetings of the Emperor and the mighty Russian "hurrah." It started in the Egorsky regiment, rose in the Izmailovsky and in the artillery. . . . The Emperor appeared, mounted on a powerful bay horse and crossed the road. He wore the uniform of a Colonel of the Semenovskiy regiment. A blue St. Andrew's ribbon was slung over his shoulder. At his side in a carriage drawn by four horses drove both Empresses followed by a huge escort of officers, Generals and foreign Military Attaches.

Marousia wanted to concentrate all her attention on the Emperor but was involuntarily distracted. The beautiful steeds, the parade attires of the horsemen, the red dolomans of the hussars, a stout grey haired Cossack General in a blue cap who seemed to have been taken from a picture of Repnin, a youthful page, Guard Cossacks in dark blue "tcherkesskas," all looked to her like a fragment from the Arabian Nights or like the apotheosis of a magic ballet. It didn't seem to be part of real life, because simple life, the green fields and hills of Krasnoie Selo formed a contrast with this brilliant procession and this roar of voices which drowned the music of the band. It seemed to be an event coming from another sphere, from a different world.

The Emperor rode to the end of the Camps and returned at a gallop, the escort following him. He dismounted, looked 'round the spectators, bowed to the acclamations of the crowd, turned 'round and greeted the musicians. He then ascended the steps leading to his tent and talked, smiling, to the persons of his Suite who met him there. He lit a cigarette and entered the tent. Marousia could see him distinctly. Not more than twenty feet separated her from the Emperor. She could see the simple

face with the slightly upturned nose, the long moustache, the little beard and round white hands. The Empress stood near the tent holding with one hand the back of a chair and with the other nervously drawing something, with a sunshade, on the sand. Marousia noted with interest every human gesture of the Emperor and of the Empress, the way he threw the cigarette stump into the flowers, how he took the chin of the little Grand Duchess and talked to her and the way he spoke to his sister Olga Alexandrovna.

"It is all quite ordinary and human, almost banal," she thought but her heart beat more quickly when she looked at the surroundings of the tent. Slim Cossacks in long blue tcherkesskas with silver embroidery silently, with catlike movements, paced to and fro in their soft, heelless boots. The two Cadets stood like motionless statues before the tent. Their features were so alike that they appeared to be brothers. Flushed, sunburnt, with just the shadow of an appearing moustache, they stood rigidly motionless, presenting arms, and it seemed as if they did not even breathe.

The orchestra played piece after piece but the Cadets never moved and strain and emotion were reflected on their features. The Suite stood around, brilliant officers stood in a quadrangle before the tent and Sablin was in their midst. Marousia knew that, but she felt that Sablin, the Cadets and everything else were obliterated by the Emperor's presence. In olden days the Moscow Tsars must have appeared in the same way surrounded by their boyars and rinds. This ceremonial beauty had come from the east, from Byzantium, it had separated the Tsar from the people, had made him mysterious and created the legend that the Tsar was chosen by God himself. Should the Cadets move, should they let fall their rifles, the legend would vanish and no one would believe the Tsar a superior creature—that he came from God.

The musicians continue to play; the sun sinks lower and lower; one can already look at its huge disk of fire; but the Cadet sentries continue to stand motionless and their faces seem to be frozen in affectionate admiration for their sovereign.

XLIX

THE orchestra finished playing. The old drummer came forward, and with him a tall bugler. They halted and stood at attention before the Emperor. For twenty-five years this old drummer had read the prayer on the day of the Ceremonial Last Post and yet he always felt nervous. He deeply believed that he read the prayer before the Tsar anointed by God.

Complete silence reigned around. Conversation ceased. All waited for something. Marousia saw large tears of emotion trickling down the cheeks of her neighbour Varlamoff. Against her will she also was feeling moved.

A rocket rose into the air and burst with white smoke somewhere in the blue sky. A second, then a third followed. And suddenly the general salvo of all the guns of the Guard batteries in the main camps boomed forth and made everyone start. It was answered by a similar salvo of the batteries of the neighbouring camps and the echo rolled towards Duderhof and Kirchhof.

When it had died away the orchestra and all the drummers played the infantry Last Post.

At moments the rolling roar of the drums drowned everything else, then it suddenly stopped and the sound of the trumpets rang out, singing a strange war song which spoke of old days and of the glory of dying for the motherland. Both sorrow and happiness were in these sounds.

The officers and the musicians stood motionless. Marousia looked at the Emperor. He also was standing at attention and did not move.

The drummer raised his sticks over his drum and the bugler applied the gold bugle to his lips. The short sharp signal "for the prayer" rang out and died away, solitary and imperative.

"Musicians, drummers and buglers, for the prayer! Caps . . . off!"

All the heads were bared. The Cadets placed their rifles in the position "for prayer" and took off their caps. Marousia

TO RED FLAG

saw the Emperor take off his cap at the order of the old drummer. His face became serious.

"Symbols," thought Marousia, "but what deep symbols!"

The face of the drummer was again turned towards the Tsar. He seemed inspired by the grandeur of the moment. The red rays of the sinking sun lit him, the aged Russian peasant soldier, and the young tall Preobrajensky bugler, and surrounded them with a halo of fire.

"Our Father!" came in a short appeal from the lips of the drummer,— "which art in Heaven. . . ."

The sky listened to this prayer. The sun seemed to stop its movement and spread in liquid fire behind Krasnoie Selo.

"Thy Kingdom come," the drummer was saying, "thy will be done."

All were silent. Every sigh could be heard here and all around in the distance the Camps hummed with soldier voices. The companies were singing the prayer.

"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

The drummer read the prayer simply, pronouncing each word distinctly, but it seemed that a great sacrament was being accomplished. The Tsar was praying with his soldiers.

The old drummer said the last words, without haste covered his head with his cap, looked at the bugler and beat the signal "recall."

At his order all put on their caps. The Last Post was ended.

The Emperor put on his cap with a blue band, and descended from the mound. The sergeants of the companies, batteries, squadrons and sotnias which bore his name detached themselves from the platform of the musicians and began to come up one by one to the Emperor accompanied by the Adjutants of their units.

Their short answers were heard in the cool evening air and in the nervous tones of the voices Marousia felt that something great was happening here, of which they would speak with reverence for the rest of their lives.

L

For some time Sablin could not find Marousia from where he stood. He already began to feel anxious. Could it be that she had not come?

"Look, Pavel Ivanovitch, what a pretty girl is sitting next to Varlamoff. Do you know who she is?" said Matzneff addressing Gritzenko.

Sablin looked and saw Marousia.

"I don't know. It's the first time I've seen her. She is wonderfully beautiful. Perhaps she is a Cossack lady. There were many marriages among them this winter."

"No, she doesn't look like one. . . . There is something peculiar about her. Can't she be Samsonova?"

"No, Samsonova is there with Zobotareva and Miller. No, she isn't a regimental lady, see how gentle she looks."

This was said about Marousia and Sablin was pleased to hear it. He was glad to realise that he alone knew who she was and that perhaps she had come because of him.

He stayed behind, waited until the officers had left and then found Marousia in the crowd.

They went on foot towards the station.

The crowd hurried past them. On the road to the left files of izvostchiks rolled towards the railway. They did not want to speak before so many strangers. Each was deep in thought.

"Maria Mihailovna," said Sablin when they came out of the car and descended the steps of the Baltic station at Petersburg, —"may I ask you to go for a stroll along the quay if you are not too tired and not in a hurry."

"With pleasure," said Marousia.

They drove as far as the square of the Senate and there Sablin dismissed the izvostchik.

The summer evening twilight was ebbing away. It was growing dark. The moon had not yet appeared and the Neva stretched before them in a wide white space. The green and red lights of steamers moved in all directions. The quay was deserted.

"Well, what are your impressions?" Sablin asked.

Marousia turned her head towards him. She was in the same simple straw hat she had worn at Lahta.

"I haven't quite finished summing them up yet," she said,—
"I still keep my old opinion that he is a human just as we all are. Apparently he is kind, cheerful, doesn't like to pose, but there is something thrilling in his surroundings."

They kept silent. He could say nothing. Their hearts did not beat in harmony on that point. Sablin felt that there was criticism and analysis here and he feared to approach such topics with criticism.

"I think that emotion and enthusiasm would vanish should these surroundings be removed. But I like him. I want to think of him as a human being."

The tower clock struck the time on the Petropavlovsky Cathedral. Marousia shuddered, took Sablin's arm and drew closer to him.

"How terrible it all is," she said so quietly that Sablin could hardly hear her voice. "Tell me, Alexander Nicolaievitch,—why is it impossible to reign without shedding blood? Why are prisons, gallows, whips and hard labour needed as attributes of power?"

"Because there are criminals," said Sablin.

"But is a person who thinks otherwise than you do a criminal? . . . For instance . . . I am walking with you along this beautiful granite quay, I who have received an education, who know what science and art are, who love the beauty of life, and yet I often think of the moujiks, of the miserable villages, all the thoughts of whose inhabitants are concentrated on a strife for satisfying their hunger. I feel afraid when I think of this terrible inequality among men, Alexander Nicolaievitch. Can such thoughts be considered criminal?"

"Thoughts are not punished."

"But words are. If I went to speak of this to the people in the villages, would this be a crime? Yes? Today I saw one thing which greatly impressed me. This old drummer, a simple Russian moujik, gave an order and the Tsar obeyed him. Then

he prayed and the Tsar prayed with him. Tell me, was this arranged on purpose? Is this a symbol of the Tsar serving the people or is it mere chance? Or have I been wrong in understanding the meaning?"

Sablin could not answer. He did not know it himself. He had never thought of it before.

"Everything has been beautiful," said Marousia, "but how can one reconcile this beauty . . . with prisons?"

"Maria Mihailovna, don't forget that the Emperor Alexander II was murdered by criminals. This murder could not have represented the desire of the people but that of a little group of men, of a party."

"But, Alexander Nicolaievitch, have the people other ways of asserting their will than through men who have consecrated themselves to serve them, that is, through the parties?"

"Did the people elect these men out of their own midst, did they empower them to murder the Emperor? As far as I remember it, the people were indignant and surprised by the horrible deed."

"We don't know the real soul of the people. It is crushed down. Can the people freely express their will, their approval or their condemnation under the regime of police pressure which exists all over Russia? Alexander Nicolaievitch, the people are 'dark.' You cannot imagine how 'dark,' hungry and ignorant they are. They must be taught and educated. All the intellectual classes should go into the villages, you, the officers, should teach the soldiers; all should begin to work."

"You are quite right," Sablin agreed. He walked without looking at Marousia and only listened to her. The more she spoke, the more he felt her to be distant from him. A wall seemed to rise between them and his heart grew cold. She understood that she had gone too far and questioned herself.—"Do I really believe in what I say? Do I believe that general and practical education would make the people happy? Do I really want this handsome and noble looking Emperor, who knows how to use all this Byzantine splendour, by whose one word men are made happy and recollect with pleasure that one

word during the rest of their lives,—do I really want him to be murdered! And that in his place good, clever Korjikoff should rule the country in the capacity of president, untidy, ill-dressed, but full of self-denying love for his people?"

She smiled at the thought. But she did not want to give up what she had begun and she decided to make a new attempt. They came to the Fontanka and turned back. The summer evening twilight spread over the water which glimmered like silver brocade. A crowd of people poured out of a steamer which had come from the islands. It spread over the quay, another crowd hurried towards the steamer. For some time they were surrounded by strangers and did not speak. During these moments of silence she wished to dispell the cold that had arisen between them and to remove the impression her words had produced. She drew closer to him. "How dear and noble he is!" she thought,—“his views are entirely different, he is probably angry with me and yet he is so reserved and correct!"

"Alexander Nicolaievitch, what if the Tsar should leave his palace, his brilliant Court, should disguise himself as a simple moujik and should go into the country, work in some village and study the woes of the peasants? He could promote wide reforms after that. A Tsar who knows out of his own experience what is needed by the peasants would give it himself and then there would be no necessity for parties," said Marousia.

"Then the Tsar would cease to be a Tsar. A Tsar cannot be human. The people would not obey or understand such a Tsar. They would not listen to him and would not do their duty."

Marousia did not answer, and only sighed.

"God," quietly continued Sablin, "sent to the earth his son Jesus Christ, who was also God. God appeared on the earth as an ordinary man and went among other ordinary men to preach his sacred teaching. The people didn't accept it and murdered him—crucified him. But if Christ had appeared in all his glory, with his angels and archangels, in the splendour of Divine robes, then the people would have obeyed as a sacred law his least order or commandment."

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Do you believe in it all?" Marousia asked quietly.

"In what?" Sablin replied as quietly.

"In the things that are written in the New Testament," Marousia said bending her head.

"How could I disbelieve them, . . . and you?"

"Ah, I don't know . . . I don't know! My soul is troubled. Today this prayer in the field, and before that, you, Alexander Nicolaievitch, you aroused in me feelings and new thoughts such as I had never known before."

"You don't believe in God?"

"Tell me," Marousia asked quickly, "why did Christ appear as an ordinary man and not as a God or a King. Why did he preach and not legislate, why did he teach and not order?"

"He wanted the people to accept his Commandments of their own free will, to take them into their hearts and always follow them. An order, obedience to an order wouldn't have satisfied Christ, and he chose a different way."

"You have a deep faith," said Marousia, "I can see that. Everything is so simple in your mind. Partitions are put up, shelves are made and labels attached: "God, the church, candles, ikons, devotions; the Tsar, fidelity, parades, the regiment, the uniform, the honour of the uniform, the regimental family in general. Things permitted—things not permitted. . . ."

"And with you?"

She laughed. She openly and sincerely laughed at herself.

"With me, Alexander Nicolaievitch, all is chaos. I don't know myself what I think."

"And yet you want to teach others," he said in a tone of reproach. "Can you be a teacher without knowing for certain what it is that you want to attain?"

"And if you want, if you passionately desire. . . ."

"Desire what?"

"Truth."

"And do you know it, the truth?"

"Well, a state when all shall be happy."

"But do you know what it is that would make everyone happy? Perhaps what is good for you would be bad for me."

"Oh, I would stand even something bad, if only you might be happy," involuntarily escaped her.

Sablin looked at her. She seemed to him to be a nice child clinging to him in anxiety and distress and seeking support. As soon as he looked at her he felt that the cold of contradiction had vanished and the instincts of a man were awakened in him. Oh! Whoever she might be, even if a criminal, he would give everything only to kiss those lips and to look into the depths of those dark velvet eyes!

They were passing the bronze statue of Peter the Great. Steamers were whistling on the river. It was growing late.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Half past twelve," said Sablin.

"Good Heavens! How late it is! I must go home. You live in that street I believe. I want to see your house. Is it far?"

They crossed the square. The poplars of the boulevard rustled mysteriously overhead. The barracks stood dark, empty and gloomy. She felt sorry for him.

They were passing an *izvostchik*.

"Well, good-bye, Alexander Nicolaievitch, thank you very much for the great pleasure which you have given me. I shall never forget the fairy tale I saw today."

"When shall I see you again?" he asked, helping her into the carriage.

"When? I don't know. When you like. We have many things to talk about."

"Maria Mihailovna," he said simply,—*"come to visit my home. I live here in the second story. We can talk then alone. Do come."*

She wavered. He took her little, simply gloved hand.

"Maria Mihailovna, do be nice. I will show you the history of our regiment, I will show you pictures of the past and by knowing our past you will learn to understand our present. We have corresponded and argued together, we have almost quarrelled and yet we don't know why we are as we are. Do be nice. I implore you. Just for half an hour."

She smiled.

"What day is today?" she asked.

"Friday."

"All right. I will come just for a moment next Friday. At seven o'clock."

"Thank you, dear Maria Mihailovna. Exactly at seven I will listen for your footsteps at the threshold of my den."

"Good-bye, Alexander Nicolaievitch."

He followed her with his eyes until the carriage disappeared 'round the corner. Everything was rejoicing in his soul.

LI

DURING every day of that week Sablin left for the town after drill. He made his flat ready alone, without the help of his orderly. He took off the summer covers from the paintings and the mirrors, wiped away the dust and hired men to wash and polish the floors. On Friday he purchased flowers, sweets, cakes, laid the table in the dining room and prepared a samovar.

Kitty and Vladia had taught him many things. And there was much vulgarity about that table piled with cakes, sweets, expensive fruits, bottles of rare wines, flowers in vases and flowers scattered over the cloth. But could Marousia understand or realise all the commonplaceness of such a bachelor reception of a woman.

Sablin waited for Marousia and wondered who she was. An artist? But an artist with such features could not have remained unknown at Petersburg. She studied at the University, she was a friend of General Martoff's daughter, her name was Lubovina, she was a very pure girl and yet she was going to visit his flat. Would Rotbek's sister do so, or Baroness Wolff whom he had seen several times at dances during that winter? The idea would never have come to him to invite them. And yet he had invited her and she had agreed to come. Why? Because she must be a woman of a different circle of society and could do it. With *them* it was allowed.

And who were *they*?

Was she the daughter of a merchant, or a burgess, or a child of the barracks, the daughter of an army officer?

But what did it matter? She was charming. His heart beat more quickly when he was with her, when he looked at her dear face, wished, and did not dare to think that it might be possible to kiss it.

Sablin was waiting in excitement for Marousia. He sat in an arm chair in his study and looked through the window but could not remain long in one place and began pacing the rooms.

Marousia left her izvostchik on the Gorohovaia and walked in a round-about way towards Sablin's flat. Her heart was beating quickly. She asked herself—why? She had visited Korjikoff when he helped her to master geometry. Twice she had gone to see the brother of her school-friend, a lonely student who was lying ill, during the absence of her friend. In both places she had been met as a comrade. She had not been excited then and did not even think that there was anything extraordinary in her visiting a bachelor's lodging. She went to see Fedor Fedorovitch or comrade Pavel and that was all.

She had then told her brother and her father that she went to see them, but this time she had not done so and walked stealthily towards Sablin's flat. She felt ashamed. Several times she stopped and wanted to return, but she was even more ashamed to do that. She wanted to see Sablin. She loved him. She had felt that at Lahta, when she had forgiven him, and when she wrote to him. She had felt it even more strongly during their stroll on the quay after the Ceremonial Last Post. She liked everything in him. His vague cravings, his mistakes, his elegant easy manners and quiet speeches. He was different from all the men she had ever seen.

On the boulevard she looked 'round several times, but it was almost deserted and the rare passers-by paid no attention to her. She quickly entered the house porch. The staircase was dirty and covered with rubbish, lime and paint. The doors on the ground floor were open and empty halls could be seen through them. Two workmen were painting the walls there and singing a song. Marousia ran quickly up the stairs. The bronze plates

on the doors seemed to swim before her eyes. She felt like fainting. At the same moment, without waiting for her bell, the door quietly opened and she saw Sablin standing before her in a well-cut tunic, breeches and top-boots.

She entered the front hall.

Sablin silently raised both her hands one after the other to his lips and kissed them. She looked into his eyes and felt that the warmth of happiness emanated from them. She blushed, and felt calmer and better.

"So this is how you live," she said, entering his study and going towards a large mirror. She had come with the purpose of staying only a moment, in the front hall she had not even wanted to take off her light cloak but here before the mirror she slowly began to take off her hat and rearrange her hair.

Marousia looked 'round the room. The heavy curtains were drawn and a large lamp was burning over the table. She was surprised not by the luxury of the furniture, different from any that she had ever seen, but by the ancient style and solidity of it. Her attention was attracted by long rows of dark portraits which hung along the walls. Marousia came up to the first one and stopped before it, her hands folded behind her back. A tanned face in a high boyar cap looked out at her from a dark background. Squinting tartar eyes, narrow and fierce, gazed fixedly from under drooping thick black eyebrows. The face was framed by a black curling beard. A thin Mongolian moustache lay in a straight line over the upper lip. Beneath it hung the portrait of a white woman with red cheeks and lips, stout and with large bulging eyes.

"These are your ancestors?" asked Marousia.

"Yes."

"Were they painted during their lifetime or later?"

"This portrait was made by a painter of Ivan the Terrible, the Byzantine Campana in 1543. It is the founder of our family, the boyar 'Ivashka Sablin'* and beneath is his wife Maria Savishna of the family of the boyars Mstislavsky."

* "Sablin" in Russian means "sword."

Dark faces of men in "kaftans" with high collars or scarfs, in tunics, with wigs or without them, with decorations or stars, women with languid dreaming eyes, with beauty spots, handsome and ugly, were looking at her. All of them were his ancestors. Sablin knew them all. His great-grandmother had been an Italian, his grandmother a blonde Baltic German, his mother a Russian beauty.

Sablin knew the history of each. They were the nobles Sablin. They had a coat of arms, had living serfs in their possession, kept the traditions of their family and wore a sword at their side—the reason why they were called Sablins. She must also have had ancestors, only no one had ever thought of painting their portraits. She did not even have one of her father. Who was she? She did not even know that. She had heard that her grandfather had been a simple peasant, a serf, and that he had been sent by his lord to Petersburg. In the documents which she had presented at the University classes she was called a "burgess of Kronstadt."

"It would be nice," she thought, "to paint the portraits of all these peasants in shirts and sheepskins who had been beaten and whipped by the nobles Sablin and present them to him as my ancestors."

Turning away from the portraits she looked at Sablin. He stood near the lamp and his admiring gaze was fixed on Marousia. His figure expressed nobility and beauty. Suddenly she felt pleased to think that he had ancestors whose portraits had been painted.

She approached the table. A richly bound book, "the history of the regiment" lay under the lamp.

She sat down in a large comfortable arm chair. He settled near her and she began to look through the book. It also was full of portraits of ancestors. Old, pretentious uniforms, drawings of colours and standards, pictures of cavalry charges and encounters, portraits of hero officers looked at her from the pages of the book. Men had died on the field of battle and the descendants wrote down their deeds and drew up lists of their names. Drop by drop, as a building is built up brick after brick,

the complex traditions of the unit were created and at their foundation lay limitless fidelity to the Emperor.

Fedor Fedorovitch says: "It is necessary to break the allegiance of the army," Victor is right—it can't be done. What could Marousia do when she herself was impressed by these ancestors, by the history of battles and great deeds and by the portraits of heroes. Yes, Sablin is right, he knows what he wants and what aims he pursues. He moves along the same road which had been opened and trodden by his ancestors. And she? Among a wild grove of thoughts chaotically thrown together and where learned thinkers had placed hardly noticeable guide posts. Men had tried to open roads along these posts—and perished at the task. The revolutionary parties revered their names, but would there ever come a time when their names would be openly quoted and their portraits printed? What could Marousia do when she herself wavered and did not know on whose side the truth was? And if truth was on the side of Fedor Fedorovitch, beauty most certainly was on that of Sablin.

And wasn't beauty equal to power?

"May I offer you tea?" Sablin interrupted her thoughts. She rose and went with him to the dining room.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch, what does all this mean? You ought to be ashamed," she said looking at the table. And at the same time she felt pleased. He must love her if he tried to show it even in such ways.

"Would you like to have some champagne?"

"Shall I own," thought Marousia, "that I have never tasted champagne and have only read about it in books?" But she said:

"All right. Just a little. Only a drop. Let's go to your study. It is much cosier there . . . under the chaperonage of your ancestors."

Sablin brought a dish of peaches, which also she had never tasted, sweets and wine. They settled in arm chairs opposite each other. A little table with wine and fruit separated them.

"Will you allow me to smoke?" asked Sablin.

Marousia drank champagne in little gulps. The white bub-

bles of the liquid remained on her upper lip and she playfully licked them away. Blood was throbbing in Sablin's temples. But the deep blue eyes were looking at him with such confidence and with such naïve purity that he did not dare to move.

"Now, Maria Mihailovna," said Sablin, "now you know who I am. You know the histories of our family and of our famous regiment. I would like to know who you are, beautiful enchantress. Reveal your incognito to me and . . . let us be friends!"

Marousia looked at him as he sat slightly reclining in his arm chair with one leg over the other, slowly and carelessly smoking his cigarette. Every movement bore a stamp of noble laziness.

"My Prince!" she thought.

LII

A SHORT silence, and then Marousia spoke:

"Why do you want to know who I am and who my ancestors are. I too have had ancestors. But let me remain for you what I have been—an unknown acquaintance. We are both seeking for truth. Each of us has a different understanding of it and neither of us has found it. I desire the happiness of the whole world. I would like to love all mankind, while you acknowledge only a little part of the terrestrial globe. My heart is broader than yours. We have met in discussion and have become interested in each other. We have been bound together by admiration of the same idol—beauty. You worship it and are proud of the fact, while I consider it a weakness, almost a vice. . . . You have shown me a fairy tale of this world. A fairy tale about the Tsar and his kingdom. I know a different fairy tale. Some day, not now, I will tell it to you. You wouldn't understand it now. But let me remain unknown to you like Cinderella at the ball of the prince."

"But the prince found out who Cinderella was by the slipper she lost."

"Find out," Marousia said laughing, and slightly showed her little foot from under her long skirt. It was clad in an old and much worn shoe and stocking but she could be proud of it. A

light appeared in Sablin's eyes. "What" he thought, "if the old shoe, this good but modest dress are only a masquerade? What if she is quite different in her private life from what she seemed to be at the Martoffs? If she was so beautiful in this humble attire, how lovely she must be in transparent silk stockings and light patent leather shoes." He was facing a mystery and it excited him. She was Russian—that was evident from her beautiful and correct speech; she was clever, educated, tactful. She did not drink, but just played with the champagne, she did not eat the sweets. She took only one—evidently it could not be a rarity to her. "What if she is one of those aristocrats who, tired of society pleasures, sought stronger emotions?" Sablin smiled at his thought—"to be tired and to seek something new at nineteen!"

"Stop thinking about it," said Marousia. "You have offered me your friendship. I am deeply touched by your offer and I believe that it is quite sincere. I accept it. Let us be friends. I see you have many books the existence of which I never suspected. Show me those little books over there. The cavalry regulations! What funny pictures. I did not know that you had to study every gesture and every movement. The music of the signals! What strange words! What do they mean? Dear Alexander Nicolaievitch, this is quite a new world that opens before me. I never suspected that what appeared to us so silly when we met regiments in the streets is in reality so serious and of such importance. The science of war. Shall we really have war again?"

Did he listen to her or not? He admired her, the movements of her lips and the change of colour on her cheeks. She continued to speak. Instinctively she felt that her defense lay in conversation. She had either to leave or talk seriously, look at books and do something. Otherwise these strong arms would be stretched towards her and hungry lips would kiss her. What would she do then?

"Oh!" she suddenly exclaimed interrupting herself, "I came for just a moment only to look at your den and I have stayed for more than two hours."

She rose.

"Good-bye. I must go."

"When shall I see you? I hope here?"

"Why not?" she thought, "it has been so nice and cosy. He is noble, honest; and I also know how to behave."

"All right. Next week. Again on Friday. But only just for a moment. I will bring you back your books."

Marousia shook his hand and quickly ran down the dark stairs. The bang of the outer doors was heard and Sablin remained alone with his cakes, sweets, fruit and wine. "What shall I do with it all?" he thought. "I will take it to Rotbek. He likes sweet things."

LIII

EVERY Friday Marousia came to Sablin at seven o'clock in the evening. They read together, he played on the piano, sang to her, sometimes she sang too. The study was warm and was plunged in twilight, the samovar hummed in the dining room. They were alone. Sometimes, on bad days in autumn when rain poured outside and wood crackled in a brightly burning fire in the study, they sat side by side and looked at the fire. Marousia felt better when she was with him, but Sablin suffered. He desired Marousia. He no longer looked at her as at something sacred but he still knew that she was inaccessible.

A man loves with his eyes, a woman loves with her ears. Sablin knew that and he captivated Marousia by his conversation and singing. He kissed her hands and she laughed. Once during her fifth visit she was sitting at the piano. He came up to her from behind and kissed her neck. She began to cry. Had she pushed him aside in indignation, had she risen and left as she had done at Lahta, she would have been saved, but she began to cry and was lost.

He knelt before her, began to implore her not to be angry with him, kissed her hands and drew her closer to him. He told her how unhappy he was, how he loved her and how hard it was for him to feel that she did not love him at all.

That was untrue! She loved him, deeply loved him. To

prove this, to show him that she was no longer angry, she quietly kissed him on the forehead. They parted as friends and when she came to him on the next Friday he kissed her cheek and she answered him by a similar kiss. As if they were brother and sister.

A pure girl who has never known passion does not crave it and if she surrenders to a man it is almost always because of a feeling of pity for him. Pity is a most dangerous feeling for a girl and Sablin managed to make Marousia pity him and consider herself responsible for his sufferings.

Marousia saw that he suffered. He was burning with passion. He had grown thinner and his eyes seemed larger and darker.

It was a quiet November evening. She had stayed longer than usual. It was hard to leave him, so lonely and . . . so ill. His head was burning hot. Probably he had fever.

"No, Maria Mihailovna," Sablin was telling her, "you are cruel. Don't you see how I suffer? I am ready to die. Death would perhaps be better than such torture."

"What do you want me to do?" Marousia asked with an imploring note in her voice. She wanted so for him to be happy.

"Kiss me."

They were sitting in arm chairs opposite each other.

"If that will help you," she said rising, coming up to him and bending to his lips. He clasped her round the waist and she found herself on his knees. He kissed her lips. The large grey eyes were near to hers.

"Is this love? Pity me!" she said with quiet reproach.

But he did not hear her words.

LIV

THIS love was her torture. All the meaning of their meeting was now reduced to one moment of fire for which Sablin waited with burning eyes. She felt poignant shame, cried, implored him not to torture her, but on seeing his happiness grew quieter and kissed him. Their conversations, singing, discussions on elevated topics were now forgotten.

She could not abstain from coming, feeling how he waited for her. She did not want him to suffer, and preferred to suffer and sacrifice herself. And Marousia continued to visit him, not noticing that she could no longer answer his passion by passion, that she grew cold and irritated him by her coldness.

It was one o'clock at night. Cold winter weather was outside. Thick snow had just fallen and because of that everything seemed particularly quiet in the flat and in the bedroom where a large lamp was burning.

Suddenly a sharp ring at the kitchen door was heard. Who could it be? The orderly had been sent away to the squadron and could not return before morning. Someone not only rang the bell but banged his fists on the door. The noise could be heard in the next kitchen. Sablin jumped up, dressed hurriedly and stealthily walking in his stockings came up to the door. He heard someone pulling at the bell and shouting in a gruff soldier voice:

"Sherstobitoff, you devil! Open! Orders for His Honour!"

"Who is there?" asked Sablin.

"Orderly from the office, Your Honour, orders, general alarm is given. The regiment is lining up . . . A mutiny in the town!"

Sablin hesitated no longer, unbolted and opened the door.

A middle-sized soldier rushed upon him, seized him by the shirt and pulled him into the interior of the flat.

"Speak, Your Honour, where is my sister!" he heard a hoarse, gasping voice say as they passed struggling through the dining room and staggered into the study. Sablin recognised Lubovin.

Marousia, half dressed, ran out at the noise of the struggle. Lubovin saw her.

"Ah!" he shouted with fury.—"Then it is true! Ah you. . . ."

A collection of arms hung on the wall near by, and beneath it Sablin's revolver. Lubovin seized it and aimed at Sablin.

"Scoundrel, Your Honour, villain! Scoundrel!"

Without looking he fired and rushed out of the flat.

A cloud of smoke blotted Sablin out of his sight for a moment and it seemed to him that Sablin staggered and fell.

Marousia looked at Sablin, her features distorted with despair and pain. She ran to him, stretching her hands towards him.

"Sasha, you are not wounded? You are not hurt?" She did not think of herself or of the insult which her brother had directed at her. She thought only of him. If only he was unhurt! Sablin looked at her with troubled, wandering eyes. He was pale and at a loss what to do. Terrible thoughts rushed in a hurricane through his mind. He looked at the thin, pale girl. He did not need her love any longer. The fairy tale was ended. She was the sister of a soldier, she belonged to the same class of people as Kitty and Vladia, she had just been looking for an adventure, for her first. Others would come.

He had created a magic dream out of her mysterious incognito, he had believed that she was a Cinderella. . . . She was simply a nice looking girl and nothing more. But now he must save her and himself. Heaven only knows what Lubovin might do or shout downstairs? The shot also might have been heard on the staircase. People might come and put questions at any moment. She must disappear immediately for her own sake and for his. And afterwards, even should Lubovin give an oath that he had seen Marousia, he would have to swear that no one had been in his flat. This would be demanded by his duty to a woman, and all the more so to a young girl.

"Marousia, for Heaven's sake go! People may come in any moment!" he said.

"Yes, yes, but you? Are you unhurt? The bullet didn't touch you?"

"No, no. . . . Here is your hat. You will arrange your hair afterwards."

They bustled about the room. She dressed quickly. They were both pale.

"Go, go, for God's sake!" he said pressing her hands.

"Good-bye, my dear! God keep you! I shall feel so afraid for you! What may happen even yet?"

She did not fear for herself. She was prepared for anything.

Long ago she had sacrificed herself to him and wanted nothing from him in exchange.

She kissed him so tenderly that his heart sank. He waited until she descended the stairs. He heard the outer door close and listened for what might happen outside. All was quiet.

He went to the bedroom, then to the dining room and quickly removed all traces of a woman's presence. He poured the water out of the samovar, returned to the dining room, cleared away the plates, laid the revolver on the table, together with screw drivers and rags, and began to wait.

All the preparations had taken not more than five minutes. But it was already high time. The electric bell rang timidly in the front room.

LV

Lubovin was convinced that he had killed Sablin. What else could he have done? He had the right to kill. For the honour of his sister. He must immediately own the act so that everyone would understand that he had done it in a state of excitement and wrath. The jury always acquitted in such cases. Straight from Sablin's flat he ran towards the squadron barracks holding under his arm the same book of orders which he had dropped in the kitchen and picked up when rushing out. The men were sleeping soundly and snored in different tones. The lights were turned down and the orderly sergeant dozed near a table on which burned a lamp.

Lubovin ran up to him. He was pale, his eyes were wide open. He seemed drunk.

"I have killed Lieutenant Sablin," he gasped, "arrest me!"

But immediately he had said that he felt he had made an irreparable mistake. The words "Lieutenant Sablin" reminded him with pitiless clearness that he was a soldier, that he would have to appear not before the jury but before a court martial, that he would be confronted not by liberal judges who would voluptuously search in Marousia's heart and then acquit him, but by a severe officers' Court which would defend one who had belonged to their midst and would have Lubovin executed.

Lubovin realised all that when the orderly raised his sleepy eyes and muttered :

"What nonsense are you saying? Are you drunk?"

"The only thing left," thought Lubovin, "is to run." As quickly as he had entered, he rushed down the staircase, ran across the yard and dashed past the outer post. The latter noticed the book under Lubovin's arm and paid no attention to him. "An orderly must be running to the office," he thought.

Lubovin continued to run along the dark street which bordered the barracks and slackened his pace and walked calmly only when he emerged into a wide well-lit street and saw a policeman in the distance. Seeing that no one was pursuing him he decided to think over the situation. Court martial and execution rose like terrible phantoms before him. He saw a section of infantry soldiers, a white handkerchief, a priest.—"Who could save me? Only Korjikoff! He had started Marousia on this base enterprise, he had arranged it all, well, now he would have to put things straight." Lubovin knew that Korjikoff had a flat in Kirochnaia street where it reached the Tavrichesky gardens. There two months previously the party had installed a small printing press and store of army forms for the purpose of propaganda among the troops. Korjikoff lived there, interviewed the soldiers who came and in suitable cases gave them propaganda sheets and pamphlets.

The whole plant occupied three rooms. In the first was the office and the waiting room, in the second stood the press, in the third small room lived Korjikoff himself. He had a little iron bed with a torn mattress, an ill-smelling iron washstand, and a large table covered with army forms of the most innocent character. The pamphlets in a very small quantity Korjikoff kept on his person. Lubovin knew that Korjikoff worked at night and he was certain to find him at home. The main thing was to cover up his traces and to disappear for a while.

The gates of the house where Korjikoff lived were never locked. Many newspaper and printer's workmen lived there and people came in and out all night. As soon as he gently rang

the bell, Lubovin heard soft stealthy footsteps approaching the door and Korjikoff's rasping voice.

"Who is there?"

"I, Fedor Fedorovitch,—Lubovin," Lubovin said quietly.

Korjikoff did not believe him. Leaving the chain on the door he slightly opened it and only after ascertaining that it was really Lubovin did he let him in. Korjikoff was wearing his eternal brown suit, and held a lamp in his hand.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of seeing you so late?" asked Fedor Fedorovitch carefully bolting the door and leading the guest into his room. He placed the lamp on the table, sat down on a chair and offered one to Lubovin. But he continued to stand.

"I have just killed Lieutenant Sablin," Lubovin said, gasping with excitement.

"Good. Did you kill him quite?" Korjikoff asked in an even tone as if the matter were quite an ordinary one.

"Quite," Lubovin could hardly pronounce it.

"Good. And why did you kill him?"

"Because of my sister, Fedor Fedorovitch. She was with him. I found her in his flat."

"Well, what of it? Maria Mihailovna was only doing the task entrusted to her by the party."

"This is disgusting, Fedor Fedorovitch!" Lubovin exclaimed with indignation.

"Suppose it is," Korjikoff said,—“and what will happen now? Do you think that such a romantic murder will end simply?"

"That's what I wanted to ask. I wanted your advice. What will happen now? Court martial? Execution!"

"Yes, my friend, you have killed an officer of your squadron, your direct commander. You won't get patted on the head for that."

"What must I do then?"

Korjikoff fixed his little clever eyes on Lubovin and asked:

"Are you serious about it, Victor Mihailovitch?"

"Oh, Great God, Fedor Fedorovitch?"

"How did you find that out?"

"But she is pregnant."

"Who is?" asked Korjikoff and it seemed to Lubovin that there was a quavering note in his voice. But he did not change his attitude and continued to look frowning at Lubovin.

"Marousia."

"I didn't no-o-tice it" . . . drawled Korjikoff.—"And how did you?"

"I have been watching her for some time. Almost since the summer. When we returned from Camp I could see that she had greatly changed. She no longer went to her classes and strolled about the rooms humming songs. 'I am going to enter the Conservatory and then go on the stage,' she said, but I could see that she had thoughts which she concealed. I asked her once or twice. She only laughed at my questions but I could see that she began to be afraid of me. Well, I summoned the cook Mavra and questioned her."

"Wasn't that a rather base action," remarked Korjikoff—"it has a flavour of police supervision."

"I learned only that she always left at six o'clock on Fridays and did not sleep at home. Well, she had often done that before. We live far on the outskirts of the town and is isn't safe to return late past the factories. I knew that she stayed with her aunt. Last week we began to talk of something while she was standing and suddenly she almost fainted and I had to support her. After that I watched her face and her form—well, I understood. Only I didn't know who it was. I didn't think it was Sablin. I thought that both of them were more honest. Today I obtained leave from the sergeant. I was just coming out of the steam tramway when I saw her walking along the pavement. She wore a new hat coquettishly set on one side, and a new dress, but her face was pale and sad. I let her pass, got out of the tram and followed her. She walked for about a verst and then took an izvostchik. I took another. I could see that she was driving towards the barracks. She left the izvostchik before reaching them, made two or three detours and entered a porch. Well, it was clear that it was to Sablin that she had gone. On the first floor of that staircase is the dining hall of

the bandsmen, opposite lives the bandmaster with his family, and on the second floor lives Rotbek on one side and he on the other. Rotbek is never at home—I knew that. So I was certain that it was Sasha. I went to the squadron and saw his orderly sitting on the bed of the soldier who was on guard. ‘What are you doing here, Sherstobitoff?’ I asked him. The scoundrel laughed. ‘He gave me a ‘fiver’ and ordered me to sleep at the barracks. A girl is coming to him. It’s so every Friday.’

“And do you know who the girl is?” The cursed slave answered only: “That’s his business and not mine.” I saw that he wouldn’t say even if he knew. After the roll call I stretched myself on my bed and began to collect my thoughts. I got up in the night, dressed myself and went to the orderly.

“I shall get into trouble,” I said, “the sergeant told me to prepare several copies of the orders at the office and I forgot to do it.” He let me go. Well, I went to his flat. I stood before the door and listened. Everything was quiet, as if there were no one inside. I think I must have stood for about two hours on the stairs. My feet began to freeze. I was at a loss what to do. “What shall I do, once I get into the flat?” I asked myself. Everything was quiet there. I even heard the clock strike twelve. I rang the bell, then banged on the door and shouted. I purposely changed my voice and cursed Sherstobitoff, summoning him to open. Well, I heard him quietly breathing on the other side of the door. At last he asked: “Who is there?” I shouted: “An orderly from the office, mutiny in the town!” He unbolted the door. He had only his shirt and breeches on. Perhaps he was alone? I threw myself upon him and pulled him into the rooms? There I saw Marousia, half dressed. . . . I don’t remember how, but at that moment I saw his plated Smith and Wesson on the wall, he must have hung it there when he returned from duty. Well, as if someone pushed my hand . . . I seized it and fired . . . well . . . he fell. . . .” Lubovin said, gasping, and sank into the chair.

“So,” Korjikoff said calmly,—“and what then?”

“Then I ran to the squadron and owned up.”

"What!" said Korjikoff and again a kind of excitement was felt in his voice. "That was stupid of you, comrade."

"I know it, myself," said Lubovin, "only I was half mad then."

"And after that?"

"I saw the orderly didn't understand the meaning of what I told him, so I ran away,—that's how I'm here."

"And after that?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you?" Lubovin said, with despair. "It means court martial and execution."

Korjikoff rose from his chair and paced about the room. He stopped before Lubovin and said calmly: "Yes, court martial and execution. Perhaps they won't go so far as executing you. There are several points in the matter which are favourable to you. But you can't escape hard labour."

"Well, what am I to do? Tell me."

"You must disappear," Korjikoff said beginning to pace the room again.

"What do you mean?" Lubovin asked.

"I mean what I say. You can't escape execution in any case. So you shall do it yourself, right here. So that no one shall see you at it, and so that your body shan't be found. Maria Mihailovna must be saved."

Lubovin grew deathly pale. He was shivering all over. Korjikoff stood before him and looked at him fixedly and with contempt.

"Oh, you . . .!" he suddenly shouted sternly,—"*undress!*"

"Wh-a-t?" mumbled Lubovin.

"Undress, I tell you. Take off your great-coat. Well! You can't. . . . I'll help you. Well, quick! We must finish with it before dawn."

He helped Lubovin to take off his great-coat and threw it aside. He took his sword.

"It won't be easy to destroy this heavy thing. It must bear a number, I suppose?"

"Yes . . ." whispered Lubovin. He was pitiful to look at.

"Take off your underclothing," Korjikoff shouted sternly. "Does it also bear governmental stamps?"

"Fedor Fedorovitch, what does all this mean? Can it be that it must happen now?" Lubovin said shaking from head to foot.

"What has to happen, Comrade?"

"Death . . ." whispered Lubovin.

Korjikoff got out underclothing, drew aside a curtain behind which hung civilian clothes and picked a suit.

"Put these on," he said. "You can take my overcoat and my hat. I will prepare you a passport for abroad. You shall go to Switzerland to the village Sommervald to comrade Varnakoff. The train leaves at six o'clock from the Warsaw station. From now on you are comrade Stanislav Letschinsky, a Pole of the Kovno government, a locksmith by profession. Eh, the cut of your hair is unpleasantly soldier-like, but that doesn't matter, your features are not those of a soldier. But you must leave today. Try to speak with a Polish accent but better still keep silent. Well, are you ready?"

"And Marousia?" asked Lubovin who had regained his composure.

Korjikoff drew himself up proudly and looked straight into Lubovin's eyes.

"Don't worry about Maria Mihailovna, she won't have to bear any shame."

"What will you do?" asked Lubovin.

"I will marry Maria Mihailovna."

"But . . . she is pregnant . . ." Lubovin said quietly.

"That's the very reason why I am going to marry her," Korjikoff said looking proudly and keenly at Lubovin.

LVI

SABLIN rose and without hurrying went to open the door. He had already formed a plan for explaining the shot. The chief thing was to find out what Lubovin had said and where he was.

The young Lieutenant Valueff, who was orderly officer for the regiment, stood on the staircase.

"You are alive?" he asked, smiling stupidly.

"As you can see," Sablin answered. "Well, come in. What has happened? Why are you so late?"

He passed to the dining room with Valueff, got out two glasses, a bottle, and poured out wine. Purposely he placed the glasses near the revolver and the bits of oil rags and noticed the look of interest which Valueff cast at the weapon.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Well, you see. . . . It's such a stupid affair! The sergeant Ivan Karpovitch and the orderly of the second squadron rushed in to me and reported that you had just been murdered in your flat by private Lubovin."

"Lubovin? . . . cleverly done!" Sablin said laughing,—“and so you went to ring the bell at the door of a dead man. Who would have opened it to you?"

"Yes, I hadn't thought of that. I thought the door would be open."

"Well, all right. But why did Lubovin murder me? Just for recreation? Where is he? Has that villain been seized and arrested?"

"No, that's just the trouble. He rushed in like a madman, roared that he had killed you, and disappeared. I'm d . . . d if I know where he is now. He has bolted."

"What an idiot," Sablin said, sipping his wine. "Do you like this wine? I got it through Paltoff. His brother brought it. Real Bordeaux. Well, drink. But what a funny stupid business. You see I was waiting for a girl here, and well—she did not come. I felt rather lonely and couldn't concentrate my attention on reading. I remembered that I hadn't given my orderly my revolver to clean after the last exercise and decided to clean it myself. Just as I had got ready myself the bell rang in the kitchen. I went to open it and Lubovin entered with the book of orders. He looked very queer and spoke about a mutiny. I thought he was mad. I told him to give me the book of orders, but there was nothing that concerned me in it. I asked him what it all meant and laid my hand on the revolver but so clumsily that it went off—you can see where the bullet struck the wall. It almost got me. Lubovin bolted, roaring

something about murder. That's the whole of the stupid affair. So you say the scoundrel hasn't been found?"

"No, no. That's just the trouble, he has vanished. Well, I'm so glad. I'll go and report to the Baron, he must be anxious."

"And who told him?"

"The sergeant reported to Gritzenko and Gritzenko telephoned to the Commander. The old man is nervous."

"All right, go then. Only drink your wine. For my miraculous escape from a deadly danger!"

"Well, good night."

"Thank you. Tell the Baron that I will put in a formal report tomorrow."

"Certainly. Good night."

Sablin saw Valueff go, locked the doors and returned to his room. He undressed, stretched himself on his bed, blew the lamp out, covered his head with the blanket, and immediately Lubovin appeared before him pale and with features distorted by rage. He heard the insulting words: "Scoundrel! Villain!"

A soldier had thus cursed him, an officer. And what did he do? He continued to live, concealed the insult and lied, lied and lied!

He threw the blanket aside, opened his eyes and looked into the darkness. He thought of the Baron Korff who had committed suicide that summer at the camp and the conversation that had been held on that subject between Gritzenko, Kisloff and Matzneff. It was more difficult to live than to die, but it wasn't easy to die when life was beautiful. Last Saturday, tired of Marousia and disappointed, he had gone to the skating rink in the Tavrichesky gardens. Baroness Wolff was there with her daughters,—Vera and the Baroness Sofia who the previous year had married a wealthy landowner. They skated together, slid down the artificial hills. Vera was charming. He looked at her with other eyes than at Marousia. He had dreamed of possessing Marousia ever since their meeting at Lahta but his feelings towards Vera Constantinovna were different. In the autumn he had spent two days at their estate,

and had hunted woodcocks with Vera Constantinovna and her father. Vera Constantinovna wore top-boots, breeches, a long grey hunting coat and a soft grey hat with a green feather. She appeared smaller and more graceful in man's clothes. Sablin, although he was in love with Marousia, could not fail to notice Vera Constantinovna's beauty. But in spite of the proximity allowed by country life, he never once thought voluptuously about her. Marousia implored him to be a comrade and friend, while Vera Constantinovna said nothing about it and still she was a comrade.

Why? The answer was evident,—they belonged to the same circle of society.

That Saturday the Wolffs had invited him to dinner after the skating, and he stayed with them for some time afterwards. Vera Constantinovna left for a lesson in ballet dancing. A society ballet was to be given and she was taking lessons so as to take part in it. Sablin remained with Baroness Sofia. The drawing room was in semi-darkness, they sat in comfortable arm chairs, and there began between them a conversation of a type which young ladies sometimes allow themselves to lead with young men whom they consider to have had little experience in matters of love.

Sablin had the appearance of a Childe Harold. He was gloomy and discontented with Marousia. The Cinderella had remained mysterious too long and began to tire him. Sablin spoke to Baroness Sofia with bitter disgust about love. He saw in it only the satisfaction of sensual desire which is shortly followed by satiety. He hinted about Kitty, speaking about her with a poetical tendency and drew a misty silhouette of a mysterious Marousia. He let Baroness Sofia understand that he was already experienced in love, that he had had intrigues, and that he had the right to speak harshly of women and to consider them as beautiful, but inferior to men.

"That is all because you know nothing of women, dear Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Baroness Sofia, "you don't know love and that is why you judge so harshly. What you know and what you have experienced isn't love. It could be revealed to

you only by a woman of your own circle of society and only in marriage blessed by God in the church."

"Oh, these marriages!" Sablin said with contempt, "why cannot one love freely? The marriage, the dowry, all this commonplace platitude of the marriage ceremony, the courting of the bride, and then a common bedroom, children, swaddling cloths, b-r-r-r-r! There is nothing poetical in it all!"

"You say this because you know nothing about it. The ceremonies preceding and attached to marriage are not commonplace. They are the touching and pure preparation of a young girl to consciously become the wife of her husband and the mother of his children. The common bedroom is the emblem not of platitude and corruption as you think, not of the union of bodies, but of the union of souls. How touching it is to wake up at night and to hear the quiet breathing of your beloved and to know that he is near you. A young girl in our class knows that she must always be beautiful. Although her body is near to her husband her soul is still nearer. This is the touching side of marriage between people of high society, people of the same ideas and conceptions."

Sablin now thought of this conversation. He pictured to himself a bedroom in clear blue, the floor covered by a huge soft carpet of light grey. Two beds of polished birch and soft armchairs stood in it. At his side lay Baroness Vera Constantinovna in light filmy nightdress. He felt that Baroness Sofia was right—it would be something different from his experience with Kitty and Marousia. Perhaps it would be something more spiritual, where sensuality would soar above the earth and ascend into the heavens.

"All that might be possible," he thought. The frequent invitations to dinner, Princess Repnin's favourable attitude towards him, all this might mean preparations for his future marriage with Vera Constantinovna.

"But how could he ever ask her to marry him after the insult that had been inflicted on him by a soldier?"

"What am I to do? Great God, what am I to do? Can it be

that the only issue left is to take that very revolver and shoot myself?"

"No one is to be blamed for my death. I have taken my life because I cannot live after suffering an unavenged insult and because it is impossible to avenge it."

"So, all right," said Sablin and sat upright on his bed. "All right . . . I have shot myself . . . I have left a note . . . Lubovin asserts that he has shot me. An inquest is held and Marousia is discovered. I had proudly left life and left this beautiful, weak girl to bear all the burden of my sin. Would that be honest? Would that be noble?"

"Lieutenant Sablin!" he told himself severely, "you must know what you have to do. You must marry the girl you have led astray."

He sank on the pillows in exhaustion. "Marry the sister of a simple soldier! What must her relatives be like? Could I remain in the regiment after marrying the sister of a soldier who asserted that he had killed me? It would be very evident why I married her. The soldier had demanded it and I had married a girl with a past under pressure from him. Wouldn't that be a still greater insult to Marousia? Well, all right. That would be only for a moment, but after that would be a long, happy life in the consciousness of accomplished duty fulfilled. Marousia is so beautiful. Hadn't I believed her to be an aristocrat, a goddess who had descended to me? Hasn't she the little hands and slender feet of classical beauty? Has that been changed by the revelation of the fact that she is the sister of a soldier? Hadn't Matzneff and Gritzenko admired her at the Ceremonial Last Post and hadn't they desired to see her as a regimental lady?"

"Yes, that was all right so far as she was concerned. But she has relatives. She has a brother who had insulted him. She must have someone else. A mother, a father. . . ."

"What would the marriage in the regimental church be like? His crown bearers would be Princes, Counts, Barons . . . Rotbek would be the only one without a title. While those of his bride—the soldier Lubovin, clerk of the second squadron, an

izvostchik and Heaven knows who else. Well, the marriage might be arranged without pomp. It would be possible to leave the regiment after it, but it would be impossible to disappear from her relatives. Lubovin would come to see them after the end of his service. A brother! He couldn't kick him out. And she herself,—she is nice now, so long as she is playing a rôle, but afterwards? She would grow fat, all the defects of her education would come out and life would become unbearable."

"No, death would be better than such an existence."

For some time Sablin lay without thinking. An inner process was going on in him without touching his brain or producing any thoughts. His blood was speaking instead. And all that it said was summed up in a simple decision—nothing has to be done. Neither death nor marriage. Marousia is also no longer needed. All his efforts should be concentrated on removing Lubovin. It might even be possible to kill him. To provoke him to harsh words and then shoot him like a dog. Then his honour would be saved. Then the regimental uniform would bear no stain, because he would have killed the offender. He would forget Marousia and put an end to it all. How could he meet her now, when the image of the infuriated soldier and the sound of his insulting words would always rise between them! He could not meet her. She had witnessed this shame; she wearied him and he would take care never to see her again. If she should seek his assistance, well, supposing in the case of her marriage, he would provide a generous dowry for her. That was the way of looking at things in their class,—a girl with a past would not be objected to if she were a girl with a dowry.

"No, Marousia is different," an inner voice told him, but he suppressed it and did not listen to it. Blood powerfully dictated its decisions. He would have to put Lubovin out of his way even if he had to commit murder. It was the case of that mad dog which it was necessary to shoot. He would never meet Marousia again, he would enjoy society pleasures, would court Vera Constantinovna purely and would think of the whole episode as a joke. After all, it happened outside of his circle of society.

It wasn't with ease that Sablin came to this decision. He lay on his back and continued to think. It even seemed to him that he was in a strange dream, but it was only his thoughts and recollections which arose before his open eyes.

LVII

SASHA SABLIN is four years old. He has a charming mother whom he rarely sees because she is an invalid. He thinks of her as of a distant fairy. He has a father who is rarely at home. They live in a big house filled with quietly moving footmen and servants. He is looked after by a nurse and a governess. Two soldiers, every day from different regiments, are to be constantly seen in the hall and an orderly adjutant sits in the neighbouring reception room.

Sasha knows that all this is because his father is an important General. He knows that they have their own coat of arms, —a golden sword on a blue field. In his father's study hang dark, terrible looking portraits of his father's fathers and mothers. There were many of them. All dark and terrible looking. The orderly adjutant, the soldiers who sat in the hall and the servants had no coats of arms. They were ordinary people; and he was forbidden to talk to them.

The next recollection of his youth was the death of his father and his funeral. This happened later, when he was eight years old. A large coffin, covered with gold brocade, stood in the drawing room. Gold cushions with his father's decorations and stars were laid around it. He could see in the coffin the edge of gold epaulettes, a blue ribbon and a face covered with gauze. Officers and soldiers stood motionless near the coffin. The little Sasha was full of pride at the way his dead father was surrounded and taken care of. Then he remembered sounds of music and endless rows of troops, infantry and cavalry who followed his father's coffin.

"Mama," he asked his mother, "were all these men father's soldiers?"

"Yes," answered his mother, "he had many more than those you see here."

TO RED FLAG

"Mama, and why are only the Egeria and the Chevalier Guards following father?"

He knew the uniforms of all the regiments. The walls of their house were covered with paintings of troops in action and bivouac on parade scenes. Sasha liked to look at them. He had his own soldiers. He liked to line them up in order as if they were real soldiers. Sometimes his father had come to him, looked at his soldiers and showed him the places where his company commanders, officers and sergeants should have stood.

"Pay attention to the neatness of the alignment. It is a very important thing."

"Father, shall I be an officer?"

"Of course."

"And if I don't want to?"

"You must. All the Sablins have been officers. Civilians are disgusting people."

Cadets often came to play with Sasha and they taught him songs in which civilians were mocked. When a new blouse was brought to him, he seriously told his mother:

"Mama, I shan't wear it. It's civilian."

He joined a Cadet Corps when he was nine. The Corps was a special one. Its privileges did not consist in better tuition or in a broader program than that of other schools. On the contrary Cadets who were slack in their studies but whose parents could pay higher rates were transferred from other Corps to this one. But the Cadets of Sasha's Corps were proud of the fact that they wore blue trousers, red and black belts and that they were preparing to become cavalry officers. That was their ideal. Infantry, artillery, military engineers were despised, but of course not to the same extent as civilians.

When the teacher of history in the Corps spoke about the ancient times he always emphasised the great importance of the Roman "equites" and the fact that they formed the upper class of ancient Rome. When the middle ages were spoken of it was again pointed out that the mounted troops,—the knights—were at the top of the social ladder, that they were surrounded

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

by their vassals who were not mounted and who did not have the noble traditions of the knights.

Sablin grew up at home with his invalid mother who loved him passionately. He drove to the Corps in a smart carriage drawn by a thoroughbred race horse and in the Corps he made friends only with the boys who had similar horses and who dreamed of serving in the cavalry.

In the Corps Sablin's contempt for civilians in general only increased. But there were some exceptions. The boys who studied at the Imperial Lyceum and at the Imperial Law School were treated differently from the rest of the schoolboys who were contemptuously called "blue meat."

Corruption reigned in the senior classes where many boys kept mistresses and openly boasted of the fact. Diseases which were attached to corruption did not frighten the boys and the special section of the Corps hospital was called the "cavalry section."

Sasha was saved from this by his mother. By her great influence over him and by her personal moral purity she made the boy fear corruption and instinctively draw away from it. His mother wanted to develop noble instincts in him, to bring him up in humanitarian ideas, but she could not overcome those that had grown strong in him from early childhood.

In the Corps and at home Sasha learned to idolize the Emperor and to love Russia. But what Russia? He despised the Russian villagers, the Russian peasants—he thought them ignorant people fit only for dirty work. Those that owing to their talents came from their midst and entered the upper classes as an exception only confirmed the general rule that the people should be kept in their present state. The Tsar and his army and his fleet represented the Russia which Sablin adored. The army meant everything to him. He knew the names, the numbers and the details of the uniforms of all the cavalry regiments and did not know even approximately the number of infantry divisions in the Russian army.

From the Cadet Corps he went to the Cavalry School. There

he fully realised the barrier which existed between "we" and "they."

Sablin soon saw that "we" were few in numbers. "We" were only the Guards and not even all of them. There were regiments whose officers one could meet and be friendly with, but they were not considered as equals. The Army cavalry regiments were recognised, but not all of them. Only the Nijegorodsky Dragoon regiment was considered fully to belong to their own circle. Already at the school Sablin saw that he would have to live in a very small circle of people where everyone knew each other, in the circle which immediately surrounded the Emperor. It had its own rules and traditions. The main thing was to learn these rules and traditions and to follow them,—the rest would not matter. Because he, Sablin, was going to join a brilliant cavalry regiment. He, a Cadet, was more important than many officers and even Generals.

"Ah, Sablin! Sasha!"—an influential General would greet him at the theatre or at a ball and would stretch his hand out to him without noticing an old Colonel who stood to attention at his side and looked into his eyes. Sablin knew that this was the right thing to do—because he was one of "ours" and the other was one of "theirs."

His class of society still meant everything to Sasha, though he was living at a time when life was imperiously destroying the divisions between the classes and when the Emperor and the Grand Dukes themselves led this destructive movement. Lectures for the soldiers of the Guard Corps were arranged and were read by young officers of different regiments. Attempts were being made to follow a new road, to use education instead of rigid instruction, to transform the "nobles and people" into "officers and soldiers." But these attempts met a solid wall of mutual misunderstanding. The lectures soon became an unpleasant duty for which the officers prepared themselves but carelessly. The soldiers slept at the lectures. "An invention for the amusement of the nobles," they said.

Meanwhile military literature was openly saying that the army should be a school for the people. Compulsory instruc-

tion of the soldiers in reading and writing was insisted upon. This was done but it went no further. The army lacked the necessary teachers. All these attempts shook the old foundations of the stern, rigid discipline based on unreasoning obedience to any order of a commander even a stupid one. They aroused doubts and questions, but they gave no answers to them. Questions and doubts also arose in Sablin's mind, but his principal beliefs were left untouched. His caste remained a caste for him.

The difference in ideas was especially great where relations to women were concerned. The men in Sablin's circle of society formed an exclusive caste and all women were also divided into "ours" and "theirs." The first were treated with knightly courtliness. It was possible to joke about them, to condemn their little defects, but they were always spoken of with great respect. Sablin remembered well how Matzneff, the cynic and philosopher, had once cut him short at the theatre after he had been introduced to the wife of a Guard officer. It was in the period of time between Kitty and Marousia. The young woman kept her hand for a second too long in Sablin's and looked at him with admiration. Sablin afterwards asked Matzneff: "Is she accessible?"

"My dear friend," Matzneff told him,—"one doesn't speak like this of the wives of Guard officers. You can try to have an intrigue with her, perhaps you may succeed, but you will be a beast and a scoundrel if you ever breathe a word about it. In spite of my disgust for duels I should be the first to challenge you. Our wives must be held sacred."

That was said by Matzneff whose own wife was living almost openly with Manotzkoff. Everyone knew it, but no one spoke of it and Manotzkoff less than anyone. Manotzkoff was of an old family, his name was mentioned in the acts of Mihail Fedorovitch, the intrigue was carried on decently, and everyone kept silent.

"Ours," were the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of the men of his own caste. It was possible to criticise every joint of a woman as if she were a horse, but it was impossible to say

anything cynical about the wife or the daughter of a comrade. All this remained from the old landowners' mode of life when daughters of other "pomestchicks" were taken as wives and at the same time harems of young serf girls were formed. Intrigues with the latter sometimes went very far but it was more than easy to put an end to them. Serfdom was abolished before Sablin was born but the same attitude existed in the relations towards women of another circle. They seemed to be created for their diversion. Last winter Sablin spent the night at an "izba" during a hunt and saw a peasant girl of wonderful beauty. He desired her and found out that it wasn't difficult to arrange. When she undressed he found that she wore thin batiste underclothing. "Where did you get it?" asked Sablin.

"The Grand Duke . . . made a present of it to me," said the girl and named a young Grand Duke who was hardly more than a boy. Sablin passed the whole night with her and did not even find out her name and soon forgot that of the village.

He had esteemed Marousia as long as she had remained a Cinderella, but when she proved to be the sister of a simple soldier,—he had no reason to reckon with her any longer. Sablin knew that the whole of his caste would take his side and that all, beginning with the impeccable Repnin, would try to make him appear in the right and to remove this girl. The entire regiment would approve him and no one would blame him should he leave her.

The grey quadrangle of the window began to appear out of the shadows. Dawn was approaching.

Sablin closed his eyes and wrapped his head in the blanket. "I must sleep," he told himself.

He was aroused late in the morning by the noise of wood thrown down before the fireplace in the study.

"Sherstobitoff!" shouted Sablin.

A young soldier in a grey tunic entered the room. He seemed to bring in the smell of the frost.

"We did get scared yesterday," the soldier said, "Your Honour, when Lubovin ran in and said what he did. Great

God! The whole squadron was glad when we heard it wasn't true!"

"Where is Lubovin?"

"He can't be found. He has bolted. Many think he's killed himself, because he looked quite mad. The sergeant is pleased and says he deserved it. God punished him for being a socialist."

"So you say Lubovin hasn't been found?" Sablin asked, taking out of his mouth the cigarette he had lit.

"No, your Honour, nowhere," answered the orderly.

"Well, all right. I will sleep for another hour," said Sablin stretching himself. He was overwhelmed by a happy feeling of delivery from danger.

LVIII

FROM Sablin's flat Marousia went to her aunt where she always passed the night after evenings at the theatre and on similar occasions. She did not sleep, she was too deep in gloomy thoughts. She rose early, collected her books, as if she were going to her classes, but went home instead. Her father was not there, and the old cook Mavra was the only person in the house.

Marousia went to her room, flung her hat and coat on the bed, closed the window screens and sat down in a chair near the table. The sunlight and the crackling of the snow under the sledges and the feet of passers-by irritated her. She longed for peace and quiet. She had not been able to collect her thoughts during the night, and now felt only a mixture of limitless grief at the recollection of the events of the previous day and happiness that her Sasha was alive and unhurt. Now she pulled her thoughts together and raised a number of questions in her mind, answering them herself. Things did not appear so gloomy after all.

If only Sasha would love her!

She knew that she was pregnant, and was happy at the thought. Her child would be an eternal bond between herself and Sablin. She had wanted to speak to him some time previously, but his blind passion had prevented her. Now her brother

Victor had come between them and it was necessary to hasten the explanation. She would calm and subdue Victor. She deeply believed in Sablin's honesty and knew that he would not prosecute Victor for his action. All that had happened would remain between them.

But never for a moment did she think that Sablin would marry her. She knew that it would be impossible, that the very ancestry which had so impressed her the first time she had visited Sablin, would forbid it, that the regiment would be against it. It was not necessary after all. Sablin was a prince in her eyes, and a prince could not stoop to the level of her people.

But were there not a few girls who had children? She would become an artist, have her own flat, she would have admirers, but her heart would belong to Sasha Sablin alone forever. Let him marry whomever he might choose, let him love his wife, but let him know that he has his Marousia and her child who think only of him and live only for him. She thought that this love in separation, love at a distance, would be especially beautiful and poetical.

She would come to him on Friday and not allow passionate embraces. She would tell him briefly and simply: "I am going to be the mother of your child. Are you happy?" And then she would quietly discuss the future. He would help her to settle in a separate flat for the time of her illness. She would refund the expenses afterwards. She would immediately take a job on the stage, even as a chorus-girl, so as to earn her own bread and not depend on her father. Her father should never know of her fall. It would kill him and he should know nothing about it. She would say that she was leaving the town. Perhaps Varia Martova would help her and then she could manage without Sablin's assistance. How nice it would be to owe him nothing, but give him everything!

She smiled quietly and sadly. This lonely existence in distant adoration of her prince seemed so beautiful.

The bell rang. Mavra opened and the familiar stealthy foot-

steps of Korjikoff were heard in the dining room. He was the last person Marousia would have welcomed at this moment.

"Maria Mihailovna,"—she heard Korjikoff's rasping voice,—"may I see you just for a moment? The matter is most important."

"Come in, Fedor Fedorovitch," said Marousia. She did not rise to meet him, just held out her cold, limp hand. Korjikoff drew his own conclusions about her behaviour.

He sat down, put his elbows on his knees and rested his chin on the palms of his hands. He reminded her of Mephistopheles's statue at the Hermitage.

"Maria Mihailovna,"—began Korjikoff somewhat solemnly,—"I think you must be aware how deeply I love you. . . ."

Marousia remained motionless. He only saw that she was transparently pale and that she hardly breathed.

"I, an old student," began Korjikoff after a lapse of silence,—"adored you even in those days when you were dressed in a short brown skirt with a black apron and used to come to me when you could not master the difficulties of geometry. Yes. . . . Perhaps it is stupid, this confession? But it was inevitable. Maria Mihailovna, I ask you to marry me, I solemnly beg you to do so. Soon . . . this week."

Marousia rose.

"I don't understand you," she said.—"What are you saying, marry you? Why?"

"In the most formal manner. In a church, with a priest, a wedding dinner, the rough jokes of intoxicated guests—in a word, so that the whole factory would talk for some days of nothing else but your wedding."

Marousia laughed nervously. She felt cold all over her body.

"You, the convinced anarchist, are saying this? You, who have preached free love and civil marriage to the girls at the factory?" answered Marousia.

"Yes, I say this. And I alone have the right to tell you this, because I have loved you so long."

"And, pray, why do you claim such rights?" asked Marousia, straightening herself.

"Because you will soon be a mother," whispered Korjikoff, not looking at Marousia.—"Do you realise what that would mean if it became known? It would kill your father if he ever heard of it. Maria Mihailovna, I do not want you to become an object of jests and gossip. I love and respect you too much."

"Oh!" groaned Marousia. She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"Do not insult me,"—she said quietly.

"I do not. I do not blame you either. . . . I respect and pity you. But you must understand, Maria Mihailovna, that your hopes could live only as long as Lieutenant Sablin lived. . . . Now. . . ."

She interrupted him. She stretched out her hands, palms outwards, as if trying to shield herself from his words.

"What do you mean? While Lieutenant Sablin was alive . . . ? Has anything happened to him?"

"But yesterday. . . . Your brother Victor . . . murdered him in your presence."

"He only fired at him and missed. Alexander Nicolaievitch is alive and unhurt. . . . Where is Victor?"

"I have dressed him in civilian clothes, have given him a passport abroad and have sent him away from Russia. If he makes no blunders he will find himself in safety and in the hands of trustworthy people. All this, of course, changes the aspect of things, Maria Mihailovna," said Korjikoff rising,—"but my proposal stands, I beg you to marry me and to do so soon."

"You must know that I love him and him alone," said Marousia.

"I do," said Korjikoff briefly.

"I love his child already now," said Marousia, covering her face with her hands.

"I can understand that also," muttered Korjikoff in a changed voice. He was exceedingly pale.—"Notwithstanding this, Maria Mihailovna, I beg you to marry me."

"Who are you?" whispered Marousia.—"Are you a scoundrel and a cynic, or . . . or a saint?"

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"I beg you to marry me," said Korjikoff persistently and made a step towards Marousia.

She rose and moved away from him.

"Leave me," she whispered,—*"leave me. I implore you."*

"Very well. But I shall come every day for an answer."

"I cannot be your wife. Forgive me, Fedor Fedorovitch, but I do not love you. I have the greatest respect for you, as if you were my brother. But I cannot be your wife."

"I do not ask for that. I only beg you to marry me."

"Leave me," whispered Marousia.

"All right, I will go," said Korjikoff in an empty voice.—*"I understand. You cannot give your answer before you have seen Lieutenant Sablin. I shall return on Saturday."*

"Leave me, I implore you!"

"Do you realise, Maria Mihailovna, how deeply I have loved and do love you," said Korjikoff, grinding his teeth. He turned on his heels and went out of the room.

Marousia walked to her bed with difficulty and flung herself down, giddy and half conscious. Korjikoff's proposal had been more than she could bear.

LIX

MAROUSIA spent the whole week waiting anxiously for her meeting with Sablin. Several times she went to see the Martoffs and inquired about letters. It seemed to her that he ought to write after all that had happened. But there were no letters for her. "He is probably waiting for Friday, as I am," she thought,—*"he understands that such matters cannot be decided by letter. So much will have to be said and so much in the words depends on the intonation."*

She went out earlier than usual on Friday, then decided that it would be better to arrive ten or fifteen minutes later. It would be too awful not to find him at home if for some reason he were detained. She left her cab at the beginning of the Nevsky and went on foot, thinking of him and of the way she would meet him. She saw herself running up the staircase . . . the

TO RED FLAG

door opens quietly, even before she touches the bell . . . lights shine in the dining room and a fire crackles merrily.

He would kiss her and lead her to his study. She would gaze at his face for a moment and would then say quietly and with feeling: "Sasha, do you know that I am going to be a mother. I shall soon be the mother of your child. Are you happy?"

What would his feelings be? Would he appear troubled? He would certainly be happy. He would deliver her from the embrace of his arms, would put her down in an arm chair near the fire and would sit down near her. And then she would first of all tell him that he was free, that she did not even think of marriage. She would tell him her plans. He would probably smile in his usual charming manner and would light a cigarette, which was always a sign of excitement and a desire to protest. But she would not let him speak, she would tell him all the details of her plans and how she would leave him and concentrate all her attention on her motherly duties and stage work.

"Excellent, dear Mousinka," he would say,—“but it is all awfully naïve.”

She could almost hear the kind tones in which he would say that, with a merry twinkling of happiness in his eyes. She smiled. The picture was so vivid in her thoughts. She had not noticed that she was walking down the Nevsky alone in the evening and that men were turning 'round to look at her. A tall bearded officer dressed in a fur coat was following her and noticing her smile grew bolder and said:

"We are going in the same direction. Let us go together and it won't be so dull. . . ."

She felt frightened, and, almost running between the swift sledges, crossed the Nevsky and walked under the arches of the Gostinny Dvor shining with the bright lights of the shop windows.

She arrived at the chapel. Hundreds of thin wax candles were burning before the image of the Holy Virgin. People were coming and going, placing their lighted candles and leaving the chapel. Marousia had never been a believer. But now she felt unwonted emotion as she looked at the image of the pure

Virgin. The fact that she held in her arms her sacred child, the Saviour of the world, seemed to her to be a symbol.

The Holy Virgin,—a mother, would forgive and defend those girls who had become mothers but had remained pure nevertheless. The thought came to Marousia that there would be no sin in her motherhood because it would be expiated by her great love. That love would cover and obtain forgiveness for all that had been unclean in their relations.

Her heart overbrimmed with love when she went up the stairs leading to Sablin's flat. She attentively read the metal plate on the first floor: "Bandmaster Fedor Carlovitch Linde." Higher up was the door with Rotbek's card and she wondered what Rotbek was like. Opposite was Sablin's door but it did not open as usual. Could it be that he had not heard her footsteps?

She stopped, and had to cling on the hand-rail so as not to fall. Her heart was throbbing quickly and everything seemed to swim all around. Was it because she had walked too quickly? Dark forebodings came to her. She could not decide to ring the bell. Before, he used almost to hear the throbbings of her heart, her quiet breathing, and she herself felt his presence behind the door when coming up the staircase. All her beautiful and touching dreams were vanishing, and she felt only emptiness and a heavy weight oppressing her.

Her little finger clad in a gray glove—Sasha's gift—immediately waking the silence of the flat and the staircase, touched timidly the button of the electric bell. It rang out so loud and sharp that she started. But Sasha did not hear it. She rang again—dot—dash—dot. That was the agreed signal, but she had never yet had to use it. Sasha would now know for certain that it was his Marousia who was standing before the door.

Heavy, lazy, unfamiliar footsteps were heard approaching from the other side, the door was opened and a soldier in a red shirt and top-boots appeared before Marousia. He looked sleepily and severely at the young girl.

"Whom do you want?" he asked rudely.

"Isn't Alexander Nicolaievitch at home?" asked Marousia in a faint voice. A slight hope still glimmered that perhaps he

was ill or on duty and that he had left her a note. The soldier disappointed her. He answered with indifference, scratching himself.—“His Honour left at four, to his bride, I believe. Don’t think he’ll return before two of the night.”

He closed the door. There was no note, not even a scrap of paper for Marousia. He had left her, he did not love her and did not even trouble about her any more.

Marousia did not remember afterwards how she came down the staircase and how she ran down the dimly lit streets, avoiding the Nevsky. She arrived at home on foot towards nine o’clock, weary and chilled by the wind and the frost. Her father was drinking tea in the dining room. She had to divert him by conversation and appear merry and animated. But she did not succeed in this. Old Lubovin was looking at her keenly and at last asked: “What is the matter, Marouska, is anything wrong?”

“I have a headache, father,” she said.

“Well go to bed. You have a long distance to walk from your classes. But don’t drop them. You will become learned in the end.”

He kissed her on the forehead and blessed her. Her father’s kindness touched her, and tears filled her eyes. She turned away, left the dining room quietly and having flung herself on her bed she buried her face in the pillows and lost consciousness.

When the swoon passed away, she could not understand for some time how she had returned home. She remembered only that she had been standing on the staircase in the barracks and ringing the bell—dot—dash—dot. And now she was in her own room half lit by the reflected rays from the street lanterns.

“Thus everything is finished,” was her first conscious thought. Stage life and her beautiful dreams of love for a beautiful prince had become impossible and there remained nothing else for her but marriage with Korjikoff, whom she could never love. She would have to organise a home and some sort of workshop under the guidance of her aunt. She thought of a sign-board on a wooden house in some distant quarter of the

town: "Modes et Robes. Madame Marie Korjikoff," of a large room littered with cloth and trimmings, a crowd of girl apprentices and herself among them. Canaries would sing before the windows, geraniums would blossom and the girls chatter. Why was that not a picture of possible happiness?

It was better than the lot of many. Oh! It was not of such happiness that she had dreamt. But she would bear everything for the sake of her prince's child. She would bring him up like a prince, she would lavish all her love upon him.

Recollections of Sablin appeared distant and dim. The Tsar riding with his escort on the Manœuvre Field mounted on a beautiful horse and surrounded by his soldiers, the Empress, the handsome cadet sentries before the tent, the music, the roar of guns, the touching prayer of the old drummer—all this was only a fairy tale. And the Neva under the cover of silvery white nights, the thoughts about the terrible past of the palaces. And the beautiful youth with his ancestors and the history of his regiment—all had been only a fairy tale. But it had passed through reality, the dream of ravishing beauty had existed and had left him, who would be born from this dream, this enchanting fairy tale. Oh! A hero would be born, a great man of marvellous beauty and powerful talents. She would bring him up to have a deep love for humanity, because she had no anger, no blame, no reproach for his father. Only tender, all forgiving and all understanding love.

LX

SABLIN woke on that Friday with a vague desire that she would come. Sweet recollections of past Fridays rose before him but were immediately followed by the terrible phantom of Lubovin and by the recollection of the insults he had had to bear in the presence of his beloved. Sablin felt that words of love would vanish from his lips, that he would never again be able to approach this young girl. It would be wiser not to meet her at all. Probably she would not come herself. For a moment he thought of writing. But what should he write? He would not be able to adopt the old tone of openly expressed thoughts—

TO RED FLAG

Lubovin would be in his way. It seemed as if he would read the letter and not Marousia.

She would probably come with her brother now, if she came at all. Sablin had noticed several times during the past week a cowardly feeling of fear in his heart. He was afraid of meeting Lubovin because he knew that he had to kill him, but would he have the nerve to do it? He would have to commit suicide if not. What would he say to Marousia, how could he tell her that he had to kill her brother, how would he be able to speak about him and all that had happened? It would be impossible. She would probably understand that and would not come to see him as usual.

Sablin had received an invitation for Friday from the Wolff's. An early dinner was planned, then a drive to the islands in troikas, tobogganning on the Krestovsky island, tea there, a supper late at night at the Wolff's house. The day promised many subtle pleasures. The young, happy, smiling face of Vera Constantinovna, ruddy from the frost, would be opposite him in the sledge. Her white ermine cap and white veil, her white coat of ermine fur and high white boots would make her resemble a fairy in winter dress. He would hear her merry voice as he sped with her down the steep Krestovsky hills, displaying his cleverness in steering the sledge. How nice it would all be!

Sablin went to the morning drill, then straight to the Mess and played billiards there after lunch. He sent to fetch fresh clothing from his flat, changed in the Mess and at five o'clock he was ascending the stairs of the Wolff's house, feeling fresh and clean.

The day passed agreeably near Vera Constantinovna. She seemed so beautiful and pure that Sablin began to fear that he would never dare to make a proposal to her. Everything was pleasant. The drive in troikas, the hills where she shrieked with delight, the Baroness Sofia and her husband. The old Baroness was amiable and even the old Baron, who smoked cigars gloomily, paid for everything and said something in German that made both his daughters laugh.

Sablin returned home after three o'clock in the morning. His

orderly reported while helping him to undress that a young girl had called who wanted to see him.

"What did you say?" asked Sablin.

"I said that Your Honour was not at home and would not return until late," answered the orderly.

"Was she alone?"

"Yes, Your Honour."

"Very well," said Sablin,—“you can go.”

"Marousia had come,"—he thought. He felt vexed, ill at ease and ashamed. His conscience was beginning its work. But Sablin thrust away these thoughts. He was so happy, so tired by the frost and the excitement brought by wine and the vicinity of a charming young girl, that he simply would not bother about a battle with his conscience. "What is finished," he said to himself,—“is finished.” And he was soon asleep. In the morning he went to the barracks of the squadron with a firm decision to write a note to Marousia after drill and to explain briefly and clearly that it was her brother and herself who were responsible for the cessation of their friendship, that he was of course ready to do all he could to lessen his guilt before her. . . . But he was not able to write that letter.

Gritzenko called him aside in the squadron and said: "Go to Prince Repnin's flat after drill, Sasha. He wants to see you."

"For what purpose?" asked Sablin.

"I don't know dear friend, let us go together."

LXI

THEY found that Stepochka was with the Prince. In the hall Sablin recognised his short overcoat with colonel's shoulder straps and felt comforted. Stepochka would mediate for him and Gritzenko also seemed to be on his side.

The hoarse laughter of the Prince was heard in the study. He was joking about something with Stepochka. An orderly in livery reported their arrival and they were immediately invited to enter. The Prince and Stepochka rose to meet them, put aside their cigarettes and the Prince assumed an official manner. But the fact that he called Sablin by his Christian names

and not by his rank and family name when addressing him, showed that nothing dangerous was ahead and Sablin felt reassured.

"Sit down, Pavel Ivanovitch, sit down Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Repnin, motioning Gritzenko to the sofa and Sablin to a chair near the huge writing table.

All sat down and silence reigned for several seconds. Repnin fixed the sharp attentive gaze of his clever eyes on Sablin's eyes as if trying to read his thoughts. Stepochka was beating out a nervous tattoo on the table with his short, thick fingers. Gritzenko's gaze was wandering over the room.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," Repnin began at last,— "A mysterious event took place a week ago in the regiment. Lubovin, private of the second squadron, deserted under exceptional circumstances. I think that you alone could enlighten us on this mystery. All the efforts of the secret police have been fruitless. Lubovin is not to be found anywhere, neither dead nor alive. No soldier has left Petersburg without the necessary authority. We have therefore decided to invite you here and to put you some questions in private conversation. What can you tell us about all this?"

Sablin did not answer immediately. His heart was beating wildly and he felt cold all over but he pulled himself together and answered calmly:

"I have told all that I know in my report to the Commander of the regiment, Prince. I cannot add anything more."

"I would not have put this question to you," said Repnin,— "if this perhaps most simple but unfortunate occurrence had not received a certain publicity. Petersburg is large, but after all it does not differ much from provincial towns. This event has become a subject of gossip in society. The name of the deserter is being attached to yours and you must agree that this is good neither for you nor for the regiment."

"What more can I say, when I know nothing," Sablin said with dignity.

Repnin looked keenly at Sablin, who lowered his eyes under the sharp, steel-like gaze.

"Tell me, is there a woman mixed up in this matter?" asked Repnin.

"No," said Sablin in an empty voice, reddening to the very roots of his hair.

"Nicolai Mihailovitch," said Steepochka,— "why do you ask such questions? Could a decent officer tell you whether he had an intrigue with a respectable woman or not?"

"I understand this," Repnin said seriously,— "I understand this. But there is a special detail here, Alexander Nicolaievitch, which struck me as being peculiar, and which made me invite you here. You told the orderly officer that you had been waiting for a certain person, but that she had not come. . . . Am I right in this?"

"Yes, I do not deny it," Sablin answered quietly.

"Who was that person?"

"I cannot name her."

"We do not insist," said Steepochka, his fingers beating a still sharper tattoo on the table.

Repnin said nothing. Silence reigned in the study. Repnin's daughters were practising on a piano two rooms away and the monotonous tune penetrated into the study, cheerless and dull.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Repnin, lifting his small aristocratic head,— "this summer you took an entrance ticket to the Ceremonial Last Post for Maria Lubovina."

The question was so unexpected that Sablin started and grew pale. He knows all!—The thought flashed through his mind. He knows all and is only playing with me to make me own up. What am I to do? Tell the whole truth. Tell everything openly, as it happened. That Lubovin had come and to avenge the honour of his sister had insulted him and had fired a revolver, but had missed. Tell that he had lived all this time in the grip of cowardice,—that he had feared Lubovin's return. And then? There would be only one honourable issue, which would not stain the honour of the regiment. Prince Repnin would rise, put a loaded revolver before him and say: "Lieutenant Sablin. You have the means yet to save your honour and that of your uniform. I give you half an hour for medita-

tion." He would then go away with Steepochka and Gritzenko and leave him alone. Sablin knew of a similar case.

One of the members of a noble family had stolen some time ago the jewels of his mistress and had pawned them. His younger brother bought them back, but the affair became public and he then called his elder brother into his room, placed a revolver before him and said: "You are an officer and you must know what you have to do. It is the decision of our family." The elder brother committed suicide. There had been a lot of talk about this in society. Many pitied the deceased but all justified the younger brother and considered that he had acted like a hero. Prince Repnin would also be a hero in his eyes if he would let him commit suicide in his study. But if the scandal of the other officer had not become public, if his mistress had not spoken, would the younger brother have given the revolver to the elder? A scandal is a scandal only when it is talked about, but when everything has been kept secret, there is no scandal at all. Sablin looked at Repnin. He expected to meet a cold impassionate steel gaze, full of contempt and demanding death. . . . But he saw that the prince was looking at him with love and pity. An unusual softness was reflected in his grey eyes. He was patiently waiting for an answer and hoped that it would be favourable for Sablin.

"I remember something vaguely," said Sablin, not daring to look into Repnin's eyes.—"Yes, it is true. I had asked for a ticket. Lubovin had told me something about his old mother . . . I don't remember well who it was. . . . We had been singing together; I was captivated by his voice and wanted to comply with his request. Yes, something similar did really happen."

Repnin lowered his eyes. He felt ashamed for Sablin, understanding the whole truth now. Sablin was lying. Lubovina was really mixed up in this affair. Who was she? A wife, a sister,—it did not matter, but there had been a woman because of whom a soldier had shot at an officer and the officer had not retaliated. But what could he have done? Now the only thing left for him was to die. Repnin looked at Sablin. He liked this

officer who was the pride of the regiment and he knew of the secret intentions of the Princess, his wife, to marry him to Vera Wolff. Could he sign the verdict?

The scales, simple and dull, came from the other end of the flat, stopped, and began again. They reminded him of nice girls in short dresses and of purity, truth and happiness. The same thought came to Repnin that had come to Sablin. The only issue was to hand him a revolver, and to condemn him to death. Dismissal from the regiment would only increase the scandal. But he could not give the death warrant. The scales played by the childish hands prevented him. They spoke of young lives just at their dawn, they reminded him that Sablin was also young and at that moment Repnin could not decide to wrench from him his life. He remained silent, waiting for assistance from the judges. Gritzenko understood his feelings.

"There is one thing that I can't grasp, Prince," he said.—"Why so much fuss is made about this case. I have known Lubovin for more than two years. He is the worst soldier in the squadron, forward, almost a socialist. He is half mad. All this stupid affair may be only some hysterical prank or base black-mailing. We only help Lubovin and support the aims he has pursued by dwelling longer upon it."

"You are right, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Repnin.—"But people have begun to talk already. I do not know who started it, but the Grand Duke asked me yesterday whether it was true that a soldier had shot at an officer and had then deserted."

"Well, what then? What then?" interrupted Steepochka, who had suddenly become animated.—"They will talk for some time and then stop. All of it should be forgotten. Lubovin is not here, but even if he were—one does not reckon with a madman. Alexander Nicolaievitch should be sent on leave for some time. Let him have a good rest and, what is most important, let him leave Petersburg and the neighbourhood of this gossip."

Repnin sighed with relief. This possible issue seemed most convenient and acceptable.

"Pavel Ivanovitch, what is your opinion?" he asked.

"The plan is excellent. Should Lubovin return, I will have him placed in a lunatic asylum."

No one asked for Sablin's opinion.

"Then, gentlemen, I consider the matter closed. Lieutenant Sablin is quite guiltless. There is nothing that one, could do against a mad dog. I am convinced, gentlemen, that all that has been said here won't leave these walls. And now, gentlemen, I hope that you will lunch with me. The Princess is waiting for us . . ." Reprin rose from his chair.

Three days later Sablin left on leave for South Russia.

LXII

KORJIKOFF kept his promise and on Saturday came to see Marousia.

"Maria Mihailovna," he said, entering her room, not having even knocked at the door,—*"I have come for an answer."*

Marousia started. She was sitting at her table and had been reading Sablin's letters of the previous year.

"What do you wish?" she asked, looking at him with entreaty.

"Maria Mihailovna, I have come to beg you to marry me. . . . Oh! I beg only for your hand! I do not dare even to speak of your heart. I know that it belongs to another man."

"Do you know," said Marousia clenching her teeth,—*"that he did not receive me. He was not at home when I came. He acted as if I were a girl of the worst kind. Did you hear this? And you come to me after that! You want to marry me!"*

"It is good that he did not offer you money, be thankful for that," said Korjikoff seriously and laid his hand on Marousia's. He sat down in a chair near her.

"Maria Mihailovna, let us talk seriously. I came last week and have come now not with the purpose of playing the fool. I have weighed everything and have understood everything. Once can forgive, when one understands! Maria Mihailovna! I have nothing to forgive. Because it has all been my fault. I brought about your acquaintance. I overestimated your power and my own,—do you understand?—my own! I thought that they were weak. I thought that the moment had come to over-

throw the cursed reign of absolutism. I knew that the Army barred the way, I knew that by a special system of training the officers could so impress the brains of simple folk that they became capable of killing their own fathers and brothers. I wanted to attack their power, I wanted to make the officers waver. I had chosen you as a weapon but you were attracted by beauty and perished in consequence. Now you must realise that you made a mistake. You must see now what is lurking behind that beauty."

"Beauty," whispered Marousia.

"What do you mean?" asked Korjikoff, caressing her hand,—
"beauty even in the fact that he has left you, that you have not been accepted in vice?"

"There is beauty even in vice. I have thought it all over, Fedor Fedorovitch, and I have come to the conclusion that Sasha could not have acted otherwise. Their power lies in beauty and there is beauty in the lightness with which they handle us. If Sasha had married me. . . . No, I can't talk of that. Fedor Fedorovitch, I have come to realise that they are right and not you. I realise that equality will never, never become possible on earth. All that you say is untrue. It is all nothing but Utopia. Capitalists will always exist, as shall lords and slaves. Yes. . . . Can you understand, Fedor Fedorovitch, what I have been through to make me realise that he was a lord and I only a slave and when I saw that I was happy in this feeling?"

"You were blinded by love," said Korjikoff.

"No, Fedor Fedorovitch,—my brother Victor insulted him and ran away. And I felt that a slave had insulted him because a lord would have remained to bear the consequences of his action."

"He had to do it because of the unjust laws, Maria Mihailovna."

"Fedor Fedorovitch, I will tell you everything. Your Marousia is changed, she is not the same as she used to be. She has left not only you, but she has left the party also. I do not love the Tsar and I condemn the monarchy, but I understand it. I

agree with you that the division of humanity into Russians, Germans, English, Chinese is absurd, but I love Russia and the Russians more than anyone else. I even love the Army!"

"This will all vanish with time, your passion is speaking in you," said Korjikoff.

"No, Fedor Fedorovitch, I wanted to poison him and have been poisoned myself. I have noticed cruelty, blood and injustice in his ideas, but I have also seen a great beauty in them. With us everything is grey, pale, disgusting; sweat replaces blood, while their lives are full of powerful impulses. Ours are dull and monotonous."

"Maria Mihailovna, I can understand this also. It will soon disappear."

"You say that you understand, Fedor Fedorovitch. No, you understand nothing, and you never will. I had no God and now I see that God exists."

"A cruel, revengeful and unjust God," said Korjikoff.

"No," Marousia replied with passion.—"Only an unknown and inconceivable one. Yesterday I passed by a chapel where there stood the image of the Holy Virgin with hundreds of candles burning before it. Hundreds of people have been comforted there. And I feel that forgiveness and clemency can come only from there."

"Nonsense, Maria Mihailovna, nerves, illness—nothing more."

"Can you forgive?" said Marousia and looked attentively into Korjikoff's eyes.—"No, you will never forgive and you will never forget."

"I repeat that I have nothing to forgive. I do not condemn you and I understand you."

"Do you understand everything? Do you know what I will teach my child, when it shall be born?"

Marousia looked for some time into Korjikoff's eyes as if trying to penetrate into his very soul and said at last in a moved whisper:

"God exists! That is what I will teach him. I shall bring

him up in the feelings of love for Russia and of fidelity to the Emperor. . . . What will you say to this, Fedor Fedorovitch?"

But just as he was going to answer she stretched out her hand to his mouth with a childish gesture and said: "Stop. Answer nothing. I shall learn your answer with time."

"What kind of a man are you, Fedor Fedorovitch?" she added quietly.—"Perhaps you are a saint? Perhaps you do not believe in all that you preach? You have such a beautiful soul! I can see it! What a pure beautiful soul you have! When that is true one can be tortured but still continue to sing hymns. . . . You are preparing yourself for torture with me, but still you continue to sing. . . . But do you realise that I shall never love you, although I see how good, how morally pure and beautiful you are. I shall always, do you understand,—always,—remain true to him."

Marousia rose and took a photograph of Sablin out of the drawer.

"Look,—this is his photograph. Read the inscription,—'To my beloved Mousia.' He gave it to me then and now he has not received me, he has thrust me aside. But still I kiss him. You wanted to be tortured—well, be! Look! Do you suffer? No, you seem happy. You smile! You laugh. . . . You are mad! You must be a sensualist! No, Fedor Fedorovitch, tell me! Who are you?"

"I am an old experienced student," said Korjikoff laughing, "I am a man without prejudices, with a hardened will and a strong heart and you,—you are a little child kissing a doll. Do you think that I can feel jealousy towards a doll? Rot! What nonsense! Beauty, God, the Tsar and your love,—all was a dream. A dream of your childhood. Nothing will be left of it all when you grow up."

"I shan't love you even if I do grow up," Marousia said angrily.—"I shan't love you and I don't want to, just because you are so good. I shall always love him but you—never. Is that clear?"

"Maria Mihailovna, my proposal is entirely business-like and has nothing to do with your feelings. All you have said just

now comes from your heart, from your general state and from your nerves. We shall talk of that some other time. And now I hope you will allow me to beg your father's consent to our marriage. I will talk to him as soon as he returns home. He is a man of old ideas and won't understand either your delirium or my philosophy. We want to be married in the local church—and nothing more is to be said."

"How can you continue to speak of it now." Marousia interrupted him.

"All the more so now, when I see the state you are in. If my wife says all this nonsense—it won't matter, but it will be bad should it be said by a girl."

"Bad in other people's opinion."

"Exactly."

"You are afraid of them," sneered Marousia.

"I am afraid of no one, not even of you," said Korjikoff,—
"but I want to prevent a new and unnecessary tragedy, which can easily be done through a simple formality. The marriage ceremony is nothing to me but it will mean delivery from a catastrophe for your father. He is on the brink as it is because of the desertion of his son. Do not kill him. We will marry and put an end to it all. You can continue to live in this same room and thus stay with your father. I shall remain where I live now under the pretext of work and insufficient means to hire a flat. No one will blame us for such an arrangement."

"But you will lose your freedom forever because of this marriage."

"This point worries me least of all. If I do ever love anyone, it will be a girl who holds all these customs in contempt and who will come to me without any marriage ceremonies. I love you because you act differently from what you have said just now. You speak about God, the Tsar, about Russia, and at the same time you give yourself entirely away to love and to passion. I am certain that you never thought then of the Tsar or of Russia. Do as you like, I would divorce you if you ever felt for a second time anything similar. I have a broader understanding of love than you have. One has to offer everything if one loves,

and give what one holds to be dearest of all. . . . Well, enough of this. I will speak to your father immediately. I see him coming down the street. Will you confirm my words by your consent?"

Marousia nodded silently. She was trying to keep back her tears.

LXIII

OLD LUBOVIN was not surprised at Korjikoff's proposal. He knew that Korjikoff had loved Marousia even when she was a schoolgirl and took lessons from him. But he was not pleased at this turn of events. He had hoped for a better match and had spent a lot of money on Marousia's education not for the purpose of seeing her Korjikoff's wife. Who after all was Korjikoff? He could remember him as a ten-year-old school-boy at the time when his son Victor was born. Korjikoff used to come to their modest lodging and Lubovin's wife fed the ever hungry Fedia in the kitchen. His father had been a workman in Lubovin's factory, had early become a widower and was killed in an accident soon afterwards. The boy studied on money provided by the factory's office but there was no one to feed or to look after him. He had stood first at the end of his public school course. He then entered the university and had been studying there for more than ten years now, not being able to pass some examinations. Korjikoff was under the supervision of the police. But he was a clever fellow, slippery as an eel and had never been caught.

Lubovin had hoped for a man with a definite position and good prospects for the future and not for such an unreliable individual as Korjikoff. He seemed too old for Marousia. But Lubovin frankly acknowledged that he understood nothing about modern young people and that he could not talk to them.

"Are you serious about it?" he asked, after listening for some time to Korjikoff's explanations.—"Has she given her consent?"

"I am quite in earnest," said Korjikoff, bowing respectfully, like a real bride-groom and obedient future son-in-law.

"On what will you live?"

"I have the necessary means. The party can afford to give them now," said Korjikoff.

"That is just what I don't like, Fedia. You will have to leave all this nonsense when you marry. No good will come from your propaganda work in the factory. Three honest lads were arrested yesterday because they were found in the possession of some of your pamphlets. You have made Victor desert. The police are constantly watching me now. How can you be a bride-groom and a husband after all this?"

"But you ought to credit us with a desire to help you, Mihail Ivanovitch. The party is fighting for the workmen, it helps them to strive against capital and the day of our victory is approaching. The factories shall then be in the hands of the workmen and we shall reap our reward. Our work won't be forgotten. We, and not they shall be on top."

"You will be a statesman," Lubovin remarked with a laugh.

"Perhaps higher up even. A President."

"Stop that, Fedia. The Cossacks will thrash you for such words and you really deserve it. "You are a blessed fool and nothing more. A lazy beggar, a propagandist. And you think that I will let you marry my daughter?"

"Maria Mihailovna has given her consent, Mihail Ivanovitch. We have talked everything over."

"She has given her consent? I cannot believe it. Marousia, come here, darling."

Marousia appeared silently in the doorway, looking like a shadow.

"Have you heard the song he sings? He wants to marry you. Eh? Will you do so? I cannot compel you to refuse, but I cannot approve it. Is it possible that you have consented?"

Marousia approached her father, fell on his breast and whispered through tears:

"I have, father. He loves me."

"Well, marry then. It may be that he loves you, only it all seems queer to me—everything is different from what it was in

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

my time. A bride weeping at the betrothal! Eh! Marousia, Marousia. . . . If only you will be happy. . . ."

LXIV

MAROUSIA'S marriage was celebrated a week later. Korjikoff had hurried things as her situation became more and more apparent and later it would become difficult to escape gossip. The marriage festivities were merry and noisy. Old Lubovin got drunk, the guests acclaimed the young pair when they timidly kissed in their presence. Even the police were represented by the local inspector and that circumstance helped Korjikoff to free himself from supervision and become classified as a well intentioned man. Korjikoff respectfully kissed his wife's hand when the last guest had left, put on his overcoat and went home. Marousia shut herself up in her room.

The outward flow of her life was not altered. Until summer she continued to attend her courses, but Korjikoff used his right of a husband to visit her each day and to help her in her studies. He brought her socialistic pamphlets, read them to her and tried to prove the correctness of the teachings they proclaimed and the necessity of armed warfare against capital by the workmen. He culminated the Army and the monarchy but Marousia did not retaliate. She did not agree with him but had no desire to argue. She felt a new life beginning in her and she was happy in listening to it. All her thoughts were in the future. Korjikoff kept his promise and never once reminded her of her situation and of her love.

Old Lubovin grew grimmer and grimmer as he watched the young pair. He began to drink—a vice that had been unknown to him before. Not only his melancholy mood affected him but also an old disease. Marousia called a doctor, who overcoming all his protests examined Lubovin, and grew serious immediately. The days of his life were numbered. During the spring he remained constantly in bed and in summer Marousia did not leave his bedside. Lubovin saw that she was going to become a mother, counted the time on his fingers and his features deepened in grimness. He was beginning to understand his daughter.

ter's sudden marriage—Marousia had sinned. But with whom? Could it have been Korjikoff?

The inevitable explanations took place on a day in July. The sun was scorchingly hot, clouds of dust floated down the street, which was filled by the rumble of heavy carts, horse tramways and by the unhealthy smell of a workmen's quarter. Marousia walked heavily into her father's room and sat down near his bed. He had only just had an attack, his forehead was moist and his hair dishevelled. He looked at Marousia's form with displeasure and at her face which had grown plain, saying:

"Marousia, was your marriage in February or in March?"

"On the 6th of February," Marousia answered quietly.

"So, so. . . . And when do you expect it to happen?"

Marousia gasped, her eyes brimmed with tears, and the expression of her face became pitiful.

"I don't know, father," she whispered.

"You don't know? Is that really so?"

He remained silent for some time. Superhuman suffering was depicted on his face.

"With whom have you sinned?" he asked so hoarsely that Marousia could hardly understand the words he was saying.—It can't have been Fedor? I don't believe it. Tell me his name."

Marousia remained silent, her face hidden in her hands.

"You have deceived your father. I have brought you up, I have given you education. . . . I have indulged you, thinking that something would come out of you . . . and only to witness your degradation. . . ."

A spasm seized him. Something rose in his throat and he gurgled heavily.

"Father! Dear father . . . what is it? . . ." Marousia said bending over him. He was lying motionless on his back; his gaze was fixed on Marousia with an expression of pain and anguish mixed with reproach.

"Father, dear, say something . . . forgive me. . . ."

"I have thought all my life only about you. . . ." Lubovin said distinctly,—*"I have devoted myself to you. . . . To you and to Victor, and you . . . left me . . . deceived me. . . ."*

Tears appeared in his eyes which were growing dim.

"I am dying alone. . . . In disgrace. . . ."

"Father, forgive me!"

Marousia knelt and put her arm 'round her father's head. Her eyes were near to his, looking sorrowfully at her.

"Forgive me. . . ."

"I can forgive. . . . I must forgive. . . . But I cannot understand this Marousia. Can it be that you had no thought of me? . . . Had you no pity for me. . . . Ah! Marousia. . . . I had hoped to die differently. . . . I have never known disgrace in my life and now I have to die in shame. . . . My children have deceived me. . . ."

Marousia was weeping.

"Well, do not cry,"—Lubovin said kindly.—"Stop, wipe your tears. Listen, Marousia . . . I have forgiven you, you must also forgive me. It is probably all my own fault in not having brought you up properly. I shan't live long. . . . Send for the priest, Father Grigory. . . ."

The confession took place in the evening. The aged priest with long gray hair and grizzly beard read the prayers before him and tears stood in his eyes when he left the room. He came up to Marousia who had been waiting for him.

"I know," he said with kindness, "that you have left God, but you should believe in Him. Your father has a pure soul and he asked me to tell you that you should not be offended with him."

"I believe, . . . " said Marousia, bending her head.—"I believe in God and I hope that He will forgive me. . . ."

The priest laid his hand in blessing on Marousia's head and left.

Lubovin died the same night. Marousia had been sitting in an arm-chair near his bed. She had dozed for a moment during the night and felt startled, when she awoke, by the uncanny silence that reigned in the room. Her father's hoarse breathing was no longer to be heard. The candle which had been lit in the farthest corner so as not to trouble Lubovin, had burnt out and the room was in full darkness. Marousia lit a candle and

approached her father's bed. He was lying on his back. His head was buried deep in the pillows. The nose looked sharp, pointed and white. The eyes were closed, the lips were firmly pressed together and had a bluish tint. Marousia touched his hand—it was already cold.

Marousia went to the dining room where Korjikoff was sleeping on a sofa.

"Fedor Fedorovitch," she said,—*"father is dead."*

"Ah," Korjikoff said rising,—*"That was to be expected."*

"What are we to do?" Marousia asked weeping.

"Arrange for a funeral," Korjikoff answered calmly,—*"the usual proceedings."*

The necessary formalities were accomplished in the morning and Marousia accompanied the coffin to the Ochtensky cemetery.

She had to remain in bed after her return. The anguish which, owing to her, her father had experienced on his death-bed had deeply afflicted her. Her marriage, the rejection of her dreams of a free life, of the education of her future prince according to her wishes,—all had been done only for the purpose of not letting her father know what had happened. She had not succeeded in this and he had died unhappy. Perhaps the real reason of his death had been the disgrace that had befallen his family, which had been his pride and to which he had devoted the whole of his life.

Korjikoff had come to live in Lubovin's house. His constant attention touched Marousia. They often discussed the future, the principles on which her child should be brought up and Marousia discovered that Korjikoff had formed definite plans in this respect. He never spoke openly of them, only hinting sometimes that Marousia's child would become a leader of the socialistic movement. In his opinion it did not matter whether it were a boy or a girl. He shared Marousia's belief that the child would be physically as beautiful as his young and healthy parents, who had passionately loved each other.

"Power and boldness, the spirit of initiative of the father and the kind heart of the mother shall be blended together in him,"

Korjikoff used to say.—“It will lie with us to bring him up so that he shall love the proletariat, and absorb our principles from childhood, that he shall not be poisoned by the Bible and that he shall hate the nobles.”

Marousia did not feel strong enough then to fight her husband, but she foresaw a fierce struggle in the future. She would bring up Sablin's child quite differently.

“He shall wear a sword at his side,” she thought,—“as all the Sablins have done. . . .”

LXV

SABLIN thought that Fate, unseen powers and his guardian angel were arranging everything for him so that he saw only the pleasant side of life and could fully enjoy it. The idea never entered his head that the Petersburg society had taken an interest in his private affairs and that Princess Repnin had decided that it was time to marry off the young man. She had talked the matter over with Baroness Wolff, an old friend of hers, and the latter agreed to assist in bringing about Sablin's marriage with her daughter.

The Baron intended to visit his estate and orange groves in the Caucasus and it was decided that the whole family should pass the spring at Batoum. Sablin's affair hastened their departure. Everything was anticipated by the Princess and arranged for in advance. She gave Sablin a letter to her cousin, a Governor of a province in the Caucasus, and requested that he should hand it over personally at Novorossisk.

The Governor received Sablin rather coldly. The province was a new one, the town was under construction and the Residence only half finished. The arrival of a young handsome guardsman with a letter from the influential and power-loving Princess Repnin seemed most suspicious. The Governor was afraid that he would be asked to take him into the Civil Service, but he had no use whatever for a young miscreant who had been expelled from the Guards. He opened the letter with a business-like gesture without excusing himself, but immediately

became amiable when he had finished reading it and invited Sablin to a five o'clock tea at the Residence.

"You will make the acquaintance of the local society," he said.—"It may be you will meet some people you have known at Petersburg. Please tell the charming Princess when you return, that her requests are law to me."

The Governor rose, giving Sablin to understand that he was busy and would be glad to see him leave.

Tea was served in the drawing room and on the balcony of the Residence, from which could be seen the harbour, surrounded by white snow-peaked mountains. The sea had a dark blue colour in the distance and a green tint nearer the shore. The sky was blue, the February sun rather hot and the ladies wore white dresses with bunches of violets. Many people of the most different types were present. Georgian waiters, clad in dark "tcherkesskas" glided noiselessly among the guests serving tea and fruit.

Sablin heard a familiar voice and looked 'round.

"Tea with bananas? How delightful," the voice said.

It was Baroness Vera Constantinovna talking to the hostess. He approached them.

"What are you doing here, Vera Constantinovna?" he said.

"Father wants to buy a summer residence here and we are all with him."

"I will leave you dear Vera," said the hostess. "I have to go and make myself pleasant to the professor."

She joined a middle-sized man with quick eyes and a curly beard which had never known a razor, who was presently gesticulating and saying:

"Yes, Maria Lvovna,—Your husband shall become a new Jason. He will extract gold from these grey rocks. Not gold in the literary meaning of the word, but the golden fruits of subtropical vegetation. Have you received my latest samples? I hope that next year we shall drink tea from our own Chakvinsky plantations."

"Won't you go with us?" said Vera Constantinovna to Sablin. "We are going to book our passage tomorrow and leave the day

after. We shall sail on the steamer 'The Grand Duke Constantine to Batoum and shall visit Gagri, Sotchi, Adler and some other places on the way. It promises to be most interesting."

"You are going to seek the Golden Fleece, Baroness," said a stout Armenian coming up to them with a cup of tea in his hands.—"Your father is starting a good business. You will become a Golden Fleece yourself when you arrive there with your golden hair. All the Argonauts will sail after you."

"Colchis," the voice of the professor was heard saying—"certainly it is the Colchis of the ancients. I understand the Greeks who had their villas built here for rest. You will see a magical country, Maria Lvovna. Something is always blossoming there. Now? Now, the mimosa is in bloom, the azalea and many others. February is the worst time of the year but still the country is full of magical beauty."

Sablin listened to the fragments of conversation. He heard familiar names: "Count Witte has purchased some land at Sotchi," someone was saying,—"yes, not far from Botkin's villa, slightly higher up than that of the Prince of Oldenburg. And where is yours?"

"I haven't decided yet between Gagri and Batoum."

"Choose Mahindjaoury, next to me."

"Why does everything go so nicely with me?" thought Sablin. "Why does Fate send me one gift after another? Kitty, Marousia. . . . Hardly does one thing end when something else comes, and grows up in its place. A short while ago he had parted with Marousia and now Vera Constantinovna was appearing with a beautiful new country as background. The Golden Fleece! He would become an Argonaut and would try to find it.

For a moment Lubovin's pale wrathful face rose before him.

"Scoundrel! . . ." the insulting words came back.

But they faded away. The regiment, Prince Repnin, Gritzenko and Stepochka had shielded him from Lubovin. And once more Sablin's heart was filled by a warm feeling of love

and gratitude to the Emperor, to the order of things he had created, and to the regiment in which life was so easy.

LXVI

BLUE waves ran towards the steamer and broke against its high black sides. The sun was bright and hot. Merry young porpoises showed their dark backs and vanished, only to appear again once more casting the blue water up into foam that sparkled under the rays of the sun.

The coast could be seen from the port side. The blue waters were bordered by mountains rising in high white cliffs or sloping down in steep valleys covered by thick woods.

Sablin was sitting on a bench in the stern, Vera Constantinovna, reclined in an easy chair opposite him, reading.

The wind played with her golden hair, tickling her nose and made her frown. Sablin also had a book but he had laid it aside long ago and was watching the beautiful view of the sea and the mountains.

Suddenly the girl put down her book: "I believe my hair is in an awful state," she said, and made a movement to rise.

"Stay for a minute longer. I want to talk to you."

"To talk? We have done nothing else these two days."

"This time I would like to talk seriously about life."

"About life?"

"Yes, why some people have so many pleasures and are surrounded by happiness, life seeming to be one great festivity arranged for their benefit, while others dwell in poverty, misery and grief?"

"Because they were born for that and then you must remember that 'to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.'"

"Well, what shall be required of me?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it will be in the war where you will have to suffer physically and spiritually. I think that our Emperor is so kind to your officers in peace-time just because he knows how hard it will be for you in case of war."

"But if there should be no war? And then the soldiers ought

to be even more petted than the officers if one looks at things as you do."

"Who can foretell the future? Take myself. I am so happy. I love outdoors, hunting, the sea, the people, my relatives; and my life is one perpetual joyful holiday. We went with Sonia to a fortune teller a week ago. We saw her advertisement in the papers, put on our worst clothes and called at her flat. And you know, it was perfectly wonderful! She told us who we were, all about my character, where I had studied, that I was attending the Court and that I would soon be married and have two children—a boy and a girl. But then she wrung her hands and said: 'Oh! What an awful end awaits you, my young lady. I won't tell you what it will be. Perhaps I am wrong but our science is never mistaken.' She was uncannily exact in all she said and even told me that I was going to have an interesting journey soon after!"

"I suppose she had the appearance of an old witch, this fortune teller?"

"No, she was quite a young girl, very thin, pale and handsome. She had finished her school only two years previously, had studied books on chiromancy and earned her bread by the knowledge she had acquired. She is a believer. Icons adorned her room and candles were burning before them. She said that the fate of every man and the pathways of his life are laid down by God. A guardian angel is appointed to see him through and so that he should not forget what is to happen, all the future life of a man is written down on the palms of his hands as if they were books. Every night the angel comes, looks at our hands and says: 'Tomorrow this should happen, but he must be saved from that.'"

"Do you really believe in all this. Vera Constantinovna? One would then have to give up the belief that human will is free. A crime would not then be a crime, a great deed would no longer be great and . . . and an insult would not be an insult."

"I don't know. But she was wonderfully exact in all she said about my past. I am sure that if you think of the past days of

your life you will also probably find that you have not always acted as you would have liked to. There are cases when one intends to do something but does not manage it and is sorry about it afterwards."

Sablin thought of Marousia. Had he not been blind in never once thinking to connect her name with that of the soldier of his squadron? Why had he been so perplexed and done nothing after Lubovin's insult? It had all been for the best. Lubovin had disappeared; now he was travelling with this charming girl, who was his equal. It was so easy to chat with her. She touched the chords of his heart which vibrated in response without being strained.

It had been different with Marousia. The souls of both had then undergone a great strain. Their hearts had been ablaze and Sablin never knew where love ended and where class differences began. Sometimes Sablin had felt a chill come over his soul as he strolled down the quays at daybreak with Marousia. But could he ever experience a similar feeling towards this wonderful girl? Her head was leaning back dreamily resting on a cushion and her blue eyes reflected the blue of the sky. She was a woman but he did not think of her as a woman. She was first of all a Baroness of straight descent from the Dukes of Kurland. Her intimate life was full of mystery for him. The Wolffs occupied four cabins and they were accompanied by an English lady. When she used to bid him good night in the evening in the presence of Miss Proctor and descend to her cabin, he could not follow her even in his thoughts. But he often thought of the words of Sofia Constantinovna who had told him that the love of an intellectually developed woman married to a man of her own social standing, was quite different from that of other women.

A steward dressed in a blue jacket and white trousers appeared on deck and struck the luncheon gong.

"Come, we must wash our hands," said Vera Constantinovna and ran lightly down the gangway.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

LXVII

THE steamer rolled heavily, its bows burying themselves in the waves. Silvery spray flew over them, voices were drowned in the roar of the waves and the wailing of the wind in the steel rigging. The captain, muffled up in his black naval overcoat, paced up and down the bridge glancing at the stars and the ship's compass, humming a tune and from time to time entering the pilot house. Sablin and Vera Constantinovna sat under the bridge wrapped up in one large rug. They were gazing at the full moon which was floating over the sea and at the snowy peaks glistening under its rays.

"Are you afraid, Vera Constantinovna?" asked Sablin.

"Not in the least. Do you hear the captain humming overhead? It must be all right then. The stormy sea is so beautiful."

"Won't you get scolded for remaining so long on deck?"

"There is no one to do it. They are all groaning in their cabins. Mother is asleep, Miss Proctor is snoring and Sonia is almost weeping. But I feel very happy."

"So do I."

"Isn't it clever of us!"

"I am marvelling at you, Vera Constantinovna."

"Look at the moon and don't marvel at me. I am the descendant of knights," Vera Constantinovna said, rolling the 'r' in the Russian word 'knight.'

"A fine descendant who cannot pronounce the word."

"Oh, shut up. I have been sufficiently worried at school because of my 'r.'"

"Why don't you try to carry a stone in your mouth as Pericles did."

"Demosthenes, and not Pericles."

"Only to think that you were the best pupil in your class. Of course it was Pericles."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You an officer! What do you teach your soldiers!"

"Well, tell me then who was Socrates."

"He was a learned man, a philosopher. He lived in a barrel and went 'round during the day carrying a lantern and seeking a man."

"You are wrong."

"Excuse me, sir, I am never wrong."

"Socrates was a horse of the second squadron on the right flank of my section."

"What nonsense you do talk! Do you love horses?"

"Very much."

"What is the name of yours?"

"Mirabeau. I had it purchased in Ireland."

"Mine is called 'Carmen' and what a darling she is! I like dogs too, but I hate cats, they are such mean creatures."

Thus they continued to chatter jumping from one topic to another and saying nothing important, but neither Sablin nor Vera Constantinova could go to sleep in their cabins afterwards.

Later, after both had gone below Sablin dreamt of the Baroness and did not know what he would like most. To sail over seas, to gallop over the steppes on thoroughbred horses, to dance, to sing to her or to sit at a window of some magical castle, gazing at the moon.

His life was running like a dream. They had been at sea for two days, had visited Gagri, Novi Afon, Poti and had spent three weeks at Batoum. Every day they had driven out into the country in a carriage drawn by a pair of brisk horses. The old Baron had his land measured, verified plans, counted trees and was cross with Vera, Sofia and Sablin when they were inattentive in translating to him what Russians, Georgians and Turks said. He purchased plants, stone, cement, talked to the architect, inspectors and Turkish workmen, shouted, stamped his feet and rushed up and down his estate dragging Sablin after him and explaining all his plans and intentions.

Generally the Baron was pleased with his day's work, had drinks served, often slapped Sablin on the knee and told in German long tales about his service in the Prussian lancers when he had been acquainted with General Rosenberg, the General "Vorwärts." He called Sablin "thou" and "Sasha."

But everything has an end. The Baron suddenly told Sablin on a rainy dark evening that he considered that everything on the estate had been started in a satisfactory manner, that he had arranged for his brother-in-law and Sablin to be his business partners and that it was time to return home. The ploughing season would soon begin at his other estate "The White House," near Petersburg and he wanted to reach it in time to shoot wood-cocks as the spring was an early one that year.

"I would like you, Alexander Nicolaievitch," he told Sablin in German,—*"to stay here three months for me until the construction of the house and planting of the tea and the orange groves is finished. Herr professor has promised to help you, and I believe you had no other plans with which this would interfere."*

"Naturally," Vera Constantinovna said, "Alexander Nicolaievitch will stay here. He has promised to arrange a beautiful rose-garden for me."

Sablin looked at Vera Constantinovna, at the stout Baron, and . . . agreed.

LXVIII

SABLIN lodged at an hotel at Batoum and every morning left by motor launch or by rail for the Green Cape, where the Baron's estate was situated. He stayed there the whole day and sometimes the night, sleeping out-of-doors in the garden. He bathed in the sea in the mornings, stayed for some time on the beach admiring the scenery and returned to the estate by a path through the woods. The work advanced rapidly there. Masons were building the house. Dark Georgians, naked to the waist and bare-foot, walked quietly to and fro, carrying stones or rolling barrels of cement. In another place beams and boards were being planed. Handsome Turks in dark fezzes were planting trees and bushes somewhat lower down the slope. Work was in full swing everywhere. Each man seemed to know what he had to do, each man went home in the evening physically tired but humming a merry tune and happy with the work he had accomplished. Sablin alone felt out of place. He wanted

to help, but what could he do? Men carried plants, the roots wrapped in matting, and fixed them in round holes dug in the ground. Sablin looked on but did not know whether it was being done correctly or not.

The name of the professor whom Sablin had met at the Novorossisk residence was being spoken of everywhere in those days. He was arranging some wonderful plantations near Chakva, where the flora of the whole world was to be assembled.

Sablin went to pay him a call and found the professor at work. He was wearing a light suit and walked between rows of small bushes with dark sharp-pointed leaves. A chinaman in a blue suit accompanied him. He greeted Sablin cordially and took him 'round the plantations. "They are not just a mere pastime, these plantations," the professor was saying.—"It shall be a place through which Russia shall realise what a precious gem the Batoum district is. All that a man needs can grow here. All that we have had to import from abroad, paying high prices. It shall be our own now. Our own tea, lemons, oranges, sugar cane and rubber. My ambition is to organise it all so that any-one could come here and study the methods of the work. These plantations shall be useful for the whole region."

They sat down on a bench which stood on the edge of the cliff.

The sea murmured below them. Blue and transparent it fringed the shore with a thin line of white foam. The beach appeared rose-coloured from this height owing to the blocks of granite and marble with which it was strewn. Green grass grew higher up the slope. The mountains here retired from the sea shore, forming the beautiful valley of the river Chakva. The red hills surrounding it were covered with symmetrical lines of small bushes. Broad roads bordered with trees crossed the valley in several places, small houses of Georgian workmen clung to the slopes. It was the Chakvinsky tea plantation. Below Sablin's feet stretched a level terrace covered with green grass and trees of pink acacia with rose-bushes among them. It was a huge rose-garden. The fragrance of the blossoming

roses floated up with gusts of the sea breeze. Ridges of violet mountains formed the background of this broad panorama. They had a dark colour lower down owing to the thick forests which covered their bases but the bluish summits disappeared in the misty distance. The snow-peaks of the Caucasian mountains glimmered there, transparent as clouds and sparkling like opals. The snowy crest of Elbruz dominated all.

"I never tire of gazing at this view," said the professor.—"It is always beautiful and none is equal to it in the whole world. I have admired the Nagasaki harbour, I have seen the southern beauty of the Bosphorus and the northern splendour of Stockholm, I have been in America and have watched the mighty roll of the waves in the Indian ocean at Colombo, but nowhere have I met the same full harmony of rich shades of the sea, of the luxurious colours of the lands and the mountains and of the sky constantly furrowed by clouds. I am happy that I am a pioneer here, that I have studied this region and I am spreading its fame.

"Some think that humanity shall be happy only when personal freedom and equality before the law is attained, others demand full freedom and full equality in all respects, some preach anarchy. But happiness is to be attained only through work which must be creative. A slave toiling on the soil can be happy by creating beauty, while a free idler can commit suicide, disappointed with his freedom deprived of creative work. You must have noticed how happy are all the people with a spark of talent in them—painters, poets, architects, sculptors, writers and artists. They can create! For years they bear their future creations in their hearts and are seized by uncommon excitement when they start to bring it into existence. They forget about food, they do not think of the comforts of their body and live only with the images rising out of their thoughts. . . . Even simple bootmakers, carpenters, tailors have their moments of happiness because they create. The results of their work may be only trifles, but they are creations.

"I am now creating these gardens. Everyone who creates,

whatever trifle it may be, bears in his breast an atom of the Divine Intelligence and is as happy as God."

"Then we, who serve in the Army, can never be happy," said Sablin.

"Why?"

"Because the very purpose of our existence is the destruction of culture. Burning towns and villages, trampled fields, plunder of the inhabitants and death of the enemy,—all this is brought by war. I have never seen the painting of a battle which did not have flames as a background. There can be no happiness in the military service."

The professor remained silent. The leaves of great poplars rustled quietly overhead, the sea murmured below, telling something about the earth, and the warm air was full of a strong perfume of roses.

"I think that you are wrong," said the professor. "You have been thinking only of the process of war. Look at these blocks of splintered rock, look at these deep holes in the ground where seeds shall be planted. They have an ugly appearance for the moment and symbolise destruction, but we shall marvel at the beauty of the plants which shall grow here. Wars can be creative and they can be destructive. The war of Liberation of 1877-78 was terrible. I remember tales I have heard about the valour of our soldiers at Shipka, the terrible march over the Balkan mountains, the typhus which raged in the valley of the Maritza and on the shores of the Black Sea, but that war brought liberty to the Serbians, Bulgarians and Montenegrins, that war gave us this fertile region and see how it develops under the Russian rule. Only maize grew here in the days of the Turks and we are now reconstructing the glory of the gardens which were here in the days of Rome and Byzantium. No, you are wrong. There is a creative element in war and happiness can be found in it. It is the happiness of victory. Create a victorious Russian army," said the professor, raising his voice,—"train our soldiers so that no enemy would dare to attack us, defend this creation of mine, defend it from the lazy Turks, from the rapacious Georgians and from anyone who would ven-

ture to lay unclean hands upon it. Create a real army worthy of Russia, an army which would remember the purpose of its existence and you will be happy. Every day of peace shall be a reward for your creative work!"

The professor rose. He seemed greatly excited.

"Such a lot is spoken nowadays about peace," he said. "It makes me feel nervous, because it means war. I would be far more at ease if more thought were devoted to possible conflicts and if preparations were made for them. Everyone would desire this little paradise in case of war and my gardens would then perish. Defend them, Alexander Nicolaievitch, I am afraid for them. . . ."

LXIX

SABLIN received a wire from Gritzenko in August: "Commander Petrovsky. All on new lines. Return." He did not wait for his leave to expire but handed the estate over to a manager, a cousin of Wolff sent down by him, and left for Petersburg.

He felt glad as the train approached the Capital. There were three reasons for this. First of all he was glad to be soon in the company of his regimental friends, the dark-eyed Gritzenko, the ruddy Rotbek, serious Fetisoff and the cynical Matzneff; he was glad that he would soon be surrounded by tall handsome soldiers clad in the familiar uniform, see his favourite horses, hear the clinking of spurs in the streets and the flowing tune of the regimental march.

The second pleasure he anticipated was a visit to the Wolff estate, "The White House," after the manœuvres. He would meet Vera Constantinovna there and intended to make a proposal if he had not been mistaken and the girl's heart was free. The Baron and the Baroness had heartily invited him to come and stay with them, and Vera Constantinovna had written him a nice note.

The third reason was a longing for creative work which would bring him happiness. He wanted to help in the creation

TO RED FLAG

of the army and in the preparation of victory. The words of the professor had greatly impressed him.

The army was not preparing itself for war. "We won't live to witness one. There has been enough fighting as it is," was the general motto. Sablin had three pairs of patent leather shoes, but he would not have known what to put on and his feet would have been frozen if he had had to ride out in the frost. There were no fur coats for the soldiers and the officers. The Quartermaster's stores were full of heavy brass helmets and cuirasses, but the regiment would have to start on a winter march clad in light caps. The horses were fat and unfit for long marches.

Feverish activity reigned in the East and the West. Military agents and ordinary tourists reported new discoveries in the art of warfare and of gigantic programmes for armaments, but everything continued to slumber in Russia. The magazine rifle was the only innovation, after which the army settled down to its old routine. Reforms consisted only in alterations of the uniforms and in the introduction of coloured caps.

How could Sablin work creatively in a regiment whose only purpose was the maintenance of order in the capital? The Guard Corps had been sent to the front in 1877-78, but their regiment had remained at Petersburg. Perhaps the same thing will happen in the next war, said some of the officers. But Sablin wanted to work even in his modest capacity of a section commander.

He arrived at the regiment two days before the manœuvres and inspected the quarters of the men on the next day. He found disorder everywhere and reprimanded the section corporal. He came to the grooming of the horses at half past five the following morning. The section corporal reported five minutes later, the sergeant coming after him.

"What is he after?" thought the sergeant. "I would have understood if it had happened after a night of revelry, but he seems to be quite sober. He has apparently got up specially for this purpose. Is he trying to make up to the new Commander?"

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The soldiers also disapproved of the change in Sablin. They considered it much better for themselves when officers left the task of supervision to the corporals and sergeants and behaved as nobles should. Everything was much simpler then.

Sablin began to notice grim looks on the faces of the soldiers, but he continued to work on the same lines. Gritzenko told him: "Don't be too hot-headed, the sergeant and the corporal can manage everything." Rotbek remarked that he did not consider it worth while to trouble his noble head with such nonsense because the soldiers themselves knew what they had to do. But Sablin persisted.

The regiment had to reconnoitre the river Strelka during the manoeuvres. It was necessary to draw a map of it at the request of the Headquarters of the Inspecting General. The new Commander of the regiment, a young General of the General Staff, summoned the adjutant.

"Tell Lieutenant Sablin to draw up this map," he said.

The adjutant, Captain Samalsky, had been accustomed to issue orders independently under the command of Drevenitz and remarked respectfully:

"It is impossible to send Sablin, Your Excellency. An officer of a quite different type would be needed here. Sablin would be good as orderly officer or in the guard, but I don't think he could do this work satisfactorily. It would be better to send Captain Grüntal, the instructing officer of the educational section."

"Send Lieutenant Sablin," said the Commander of the regiment.

"Yes, Your Excellency, but . . ." began Samalsky.

"I have spoken," the General replied curtly.

"There will be a row," thought the adjutant, transmitting the order to Sablin. "I can imagine the appearance this river will have in the interpretation of our dear Sasha. I suppose I shall have to accompany him to the guard-house afterwards.

But Sablin took the matter differently. This simple sketch would be his first creation. The first one after his conversation with the professor. Straining his will and his memory he tried

to recollect all that he had been taught, took the necessary implements, mounted his horse at three o'clock in the morning and rode away accompanied by an orderly. He started to work with the first rays of the sun. The day was a fine one. The August sun poured its rays on the high grass which covered the banks of the dreamy river. Sablin left his horse with the orderly and went down the river on foot, verifying its curves by a compass. He marked the bridges, laid them out in cross section and added explanatory notes. Hours passed but he did not think of the time. He had some milk and black bread at a water mill, enjoying the meal more than he would have enjoyed a supper at a first class restaurant.

Women were bathing not far away; their laughter and cries were heard but he never once glanced in the direction whence they came. His arms and his feet were aching with fatigue, but he did not feel it. He was happy. He was creating. The river was appearing in all its details on a large sheet of paper ruled out into inches by lines forming pale green squares. Ford- ing places were marked,—he had verified and measured their depth. Bridges were flung over it. A large stone bridge, the main road passing over it, a wooden one near the mill and a small plank bridge for foot traffic lower down. Sablin had forgotten nothing and the picture on the paper was clear. Sablin felt proud of his work.

He rejoined the regiment late in the evening after covering seventy versts, and reported to the Commander who was still working in a cottage with the adjutant.

General Petrovsky scanned the plan with attention.

"It is the work of a Staff Officer," he said meditatively. "Lieutenant Sablin, I thank you in the name of the service."

Petrovsky turned to the adjutant when Sablin had left.

"What were you telling me yesterday? He is an excellent officer in all respects."

"He seems to have changed greatly during his leave," thought the adjutant.

Sablin felt happy when he walked briskly to his room, not realising his weariness. "Yes," he thought,—“the professor

was right. Happiness lies in creative work whatever it may be. . . ."

LXX

SABLIN did not use the permission to return home by rail after the manœuvres but of his own free will rode back with the regiment. He was the senior of the lieutenants present and led the unit. He covered the distance in three days and rode into the yard of the barracks towards noon of the fourth day, the troopers following him in full order. Cold thin rain was pattering gloomily.

The regiment lined itself up in the yard and the men leading the horses of those who had already arrived by rail trotted into the stables. Sablin raised his sword over his head and ordered:

"To the colours! Draw sabres! Present sabres!"

He experienced at first a feeling of pride and happiness when the band played the majestic Guard March and a N.C.O., a young lieutenant walking before him, splashed through the pools of water in the yard bearing the regimental colours wrapped in a leather cover with a large metal two-headed eagle on the staff.

The instruments of the incomplete band—the best musicians had left by rail—sounded hoarsely in the damp air. The colours had an indifferent appearance in their cover.

A poignant feeling of sadness overwhelmed Sablin suddenly. The small squadrons in which many men were absent had a miserable appearance. The troopers were drenched through and looked weary and gloomy. The grey sky of Petersburg and the roar of its traffic were oppressing them.

"What if all of it is untrue?" thought Sablin,—“the regiment, the colours, the military service and Russia. If sadness, slime and rain alone exist in reality.”

He let the men go, and returned in a gloomy mood to his flat. Everything had been altered in his rooms so that nothing would remind him of Marousia and of Lubovin. Sablin changed his wet clothes, went to the Mess where he found only two young lieutenants who had been his companions and on his return stretched himself out on a sofa and fell asleep.

TO RED FLAG

He was leaving at nine for "The White House," where his fate would be decided.

At five he was awake again dressed and hastily began to pack.

The orderly who had replaced Sherstobitoff was preparing tea in the dining room. "After tea," thought Sablin,—*"I shall drive to Ballé and Ivanoff and purchase the sweets she and her mother prefer. . . ."*

A long sharp peal of the electric bell sounded in the hall. The orderly went to open the door.

"A civilian wishes to see you, Your Honour," said the orderly. "An intrusive looking fellow."

"Who is he?" asked Sablin.

"A student, perhaps, or some petitioner. Perhaps he's a creditor."

Sablin had no debts. He shrugged his shoulders, put on his tunic and said, going towards his study: "Ask him to come in."

The orderly introduced the visitor into the study. He was a short man, all in brown. A much worn brown suit, brown beard and hair ruffled and wet,—all were of the same colour and shade. He resembled an old sparrow who had just had a bath in a pool of dirty water. He had an irritated and offended expression and his head was slightly bent on one side—quite like that of a wet sparrow.

Sablin continued to stand behind his writing table and gazed questioningly at the visitor. He did not ask him to sit down and did not shake hands. The orderly remained in the study expecting to be summoned to throw the intruder out.

"Whom have I the honour to meet?" Sablin said coldly.

"I am Korjikoff," said the visitor fixing the gaze of his sad, inflamed eyes on Sablin. He seemed drunk.

"What can I do for you?" asked Sablin.

"Hell, there is nothing to be afraid of. Send your damned soldier away," Korjikoff said nervously.

"Petrenko, leave us," Sablin said, shrugging his shoulders. "There can be no secrets between us!"

The orderly suddenly left the study and remained in the dining room where he began to shift cups and plates noisily so

as to manifest his presence. Korjikoff came nearer and said quietly, his lips hardly moving:

"Maria Mihailovna Lubovina asks you to come to her immediately."

Sablin continued to stand in silence, a frown creeping over his face. It had all been forgotten and was so unnecessary now! Korjikoff noticed this.

"She is dying," he said abruptly,—“and wants to bid you farewell. . . . Come!” he shouted imperatively—“every minute is precious, come!”

"Who are you? . . . Why has Maria Mihailovna sent you?" Sablin asked growing pale.

"Oh! What does it matter to you? I am the husband of Maria Mihailovna. . . . Do you hear! I am her husband. She has begged me to bring you to her!"

Sablin looked once more at Korjikoff.

No, he was speaking the truth. There was no anger or hatred in his eyes but only limitless grief. Sablin shrugged his shoulders once more and went to the hall to put on his overcoat.

LXXI

THE cab in which Korjikoff had arrived was waiting outside. Steam rose from the tired horse and the izvostchik himself, clad in a wet oil skin coat, paced up and down the pavement.

They got into the carriage. Both were silent. Sablin felt uncomfortable in his elegant new overcoat and coloured cap at the side of this man who sat huddled up in a corner. "The husband and lover drive together,"—thought Sablin and a feeling of disgust came over him. "What must he feel towards me," Sablin continued to think, and became more and more downcast. "Why have I agreed to accompany him? He will bring me to Marousia, who is really suffering perhaps and will say: See what you have brought about. He will shower reproaches on me."

The rain continued to patter and the pavements were covered by black spots of umbrellas. Sablin noticed every surrounding detail of that drive. Great post wagons painted yellow and

black clattered past them near the Nicolaievsky station drawn by teams of powerful horses. Several men lay on the tarpaulins covering the mail and were joking about something.

"Why do I notice all this?" Sablin thought. "Perhaps I see it all for the last time if this mysterious Korjikoff is luring me into a trap where Lubovin would meet me instead of Marousia. They would overpower me easily,—I have forgotten to take my revolver." For a moment he had a desire to jump out of the carriage, but felt ashamed of proving his cowardice and glanced sideways at his companion. He was sitting quietly in his corner and seemed to be deep in gloomy thoughts. His face had such a sad expression and his general appearance was so weak and insignificant that Sablin almost laughed at his apprehensions. He began to think of Marousia. Was it true that she was dying? What could her illness have been? Perhaps she only wanted to see him once more and had invented this story so as to induce him to come. Where could her brother be? Evidently his companion knew all, but it was impossible to question him. "It's lucky that it is raining," thought Sablin. "We would have looked fine together in the same carriage."

Husband and lover.

He tried to bring Marousia back to his memory but her features had grown dim and had been replaced by those of Vera Constantinovna. Only a recollection of something tender and passionate remained. The last scene was the only vivid one. Lubovin dressed in a great-coat, his rough hands seizing the collar of his shirt, the insult and the revolver report. "How depressing it all is," thought Sablin. "I hope this will be the last I hear of the whole affair. Our drive seems endless."

They were on the outskirts of the town. Dirty ditches bordered the road, the houses were small and built out of wood, surrounded in some places by small gardens with miserable willow and birch trees. Korjikoff stopped the izvostchik at last, paid him and rang the bell at the door of a small house with three windows opening on the street.

Sablin waiting behind, had a feeling of numbness. The idea had now come to him that it was he who should have paid the

izvostchik and not this man, evidently poor, that it would be difficult to find a carriage for him afterwards in this distant quarter and that he should have told this one to wait. He was following Korjikoff mechanically.

An old grey-haired woman opened the door. Korjikoff entered first, then Sablin. He found himself in a narrow room hung with old yellow wall paper. A large chest covered by a rug stood in a corner, a mirror hung on the wall. The smell of cabbage and onions came from the kitchen. Sablin followed Korjikoff's example and took off his overcoat and cap. The mirror reflected his elegant form clad in a well-cut tunic and tight fitting breeches. It seemed quite out of place in the surroundings.

"Well?" Korjikoff asked in an anxious whisper, addressing the old woman who stood supporting her chin with her fist and looking at Sablin.

"She's calmer now. She's been afraid that you would arrive too late. I'm afraid she won't last much longer."

"Come," said Korjikoff. They passed through the dining room, where the table was covered with a clean white cloth. Geraniums stood on the window sill and a canary hopped about in a cage.

"Wait a moment," Korjikoff whispered and walked on tip-toe into the next room.

Sablin's heart was beating wildly—he would be in Marousia's presence in a few seconds. What would she look like? The stinging smell of cabbage and onions irritated him and prevented him from thinking of Marousia as he would have liked to. He continued to hold his cap in his hands according to the military custom and twitched it nervously. The minutes appeared very long accompanied by the tick-tack of a large clock which hung on the wall.

"Come in," Korjikoff said. The room they entered was plunged in semi-darkness. The white curtains were drawn and the light of the grey autumn day hardly penetrated through them. An iron bedstead stood near the wall. Marousia lay on it, her head resting on low white pillows. Her pale face, sur-

TO RED FLAG

rounded by the loose dark hair, had a ghostly appearance. Her delicate nose had become sharp, the lips were only just noticeable as thin violet lines. Only the large blue eyes which were fixed on Sablin were full of life. She raised her thin white hands towards him as if wishing to clasp him in her arms and said softly:

"So you have come. . . . I knew you would. . . . I am happy now."

Sablin bent over her. She clasped her arms 'round his neck and tried to bring his face nearer. Tears touched Sablin's cheeks. She was crying.

"It is nothing, it is nothing," she said,—“look.”

Her eyes pointed in the direction of a large arm chair which stood near to the fire place. A kind of nest was arranged there out of bed linen and on it rested a small wrinkled child who was slowly moving his thin arms and legs like a spider.

"He is yours!" she whispered. "He is yours! Are you happy? Yes! Take him—bring him up! He is yours!"

Sablin looked into Marousia's eyes. The light was fading away in them. Her hands were moving restlessly, the fingers clenching together and relaxing again. As if she were trying to find something on the bed cover and wanted to clutch it.

The shade of the eyes became of a paler blue, the pupil was becoming smaller. But love was still reflected in them.

"My prince!" Marousia whispered with passion and anguish. "My prince . . ." she wept. The lips uncovered two rows of white clenched teeth. Sablin stooped down to kiss them. They were cold and stiff. Sablin shuddered and drew back.

The lips moved again. Marousia raised herself a little, her face took on an expression of frigid marble beauty, her hair covering her thin white neck.

"My prince!" was heard once more faintly. She fell back on the pillows and remained motionless. Her eyes opened once more, but there was no life in them. They had a dull misty colour. The eye-lashes shuddered slightly and shaded the eye-lids which closed together.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Sablin stood there not knowing what to do. Korjikoff sobbed nervously near the door.

He approached Marousia's bed and crossed her arms on her breast. The child moved and cried in the arm chair.

"Go away! Go away instantly," Korjikoff exclaimed, looking at Sablin with terrible hatred. "Do you hear me? Go away!"

Sablin turned and tip-toed out of the room. Korjikoff followed him. Sablin halted in the dining room. The cries of the child were heard from the bed room.

"But my child?" he said looking at Korjikoff. "She asked. . . ."

"What!" exclaimed Korjikoff, clenching his fists. "He will never be yours. I have been her lawful husband and according to the law the child is mine. Do you understand? What are you, after all this? What can one call you?"

Sablin said nothing. He did not know what course of action to take.

"Well!" Korjikoff shouted with fury. "Do you intend to remain here much longer? Clear out! Quick!"

Sablin turned and walked away. The silvery tinkle of his spurs sounded vulgar and out of place, the canary fluttered in its cage as if also wanting to hurry his departure. The metal shoulder straps of his overcoat glittered provokingly in the ante-room. Sablin felt depressed by the absurdity of all that had taken place. He put on his overcoat hurriedly and left the house.

Cold rain continued to patter. The dark road was covered by pools of water and not a single *izvostchik* was in sight. Sablin walked hastily along the slippery boards of the pathway. He could not think of the events he had just witnessed, only Marousia's last words full of passionate love and of anguish constantly sounded in his ears and flashed through his brain.

"My prince! My prince! . . ."

PART II

I

THE WINTER PALACE was brightly illuminated. All four entrances,—the Commandant's, Her Majesty's, the Saltikovsky and the Jordansky,—were open and footman in livery with huge staffs in their hands stood before each surrounded by servants and messengers in red coats. A continuous stream of coaches drawn by big grey Russian horses drove up to the Saltikoff entrance, and elegantly dressed ladies and young girls, their evening gowns covered simply by furs or light silk "sorties de bal," jumped out of them. The carriage would move slowly away, the snow crackling under the wheels and another drawn by black Hanover horses with nervously twitching nostrils would roll up instead. A lady would descend from the carriage accompanied by a statesman in a three cornered hat with plumes or by a General in an open cloak, under which could be seen his breast covered by decorations and with a broad blue or red ribbon slung over his shoulder. As soon as the chilled horses would start at an impatient trot from the entrance, other carriages and sledges would come up in their place. Sometimes a young general dressed in a grey fur cap with the red top of the Imperial Suite and a light beaver cloak would drive up in a light sledge drawn by a fine horse.

"Please, Your Excellency."

"Your cloak, Your Excellency. No ticket is needed, just ask for Iakov. I shall personally look after it," the respectful deep voices of clean shaven servants were heard.

The fragrance of various perfumes coming from the furs, lace and dresses of the ladies, became stronger and stronger in the brightly lit vestibule. The ladies passed before a huge mirror, arranged their hair and made a last inspection of their dresses. The faces of all were rosy, some from the frost, others from skillfully applied paint. The eyes of the younger

ladies sparkled with excitement and pleasure. They were nervous. It was the first and probably the last palace ball for many of them. The so-called "city ladies," wives and daughters of officials, were invited to certain balls apart from the intimate palace circle, and according to lists carefully prepared beforehand.

Diamonds sparkled in initials pinned to the low cut dresses of the Maids of Honour of Her Majesty and of those who had been the best pupils at the Institute.

"Aunty, do you look me over, is everything in order?" a charming fair young lady was saying, rolling her "r's." She had a beautiful figure with a lovely white neck modestly covered by the tulle and lace of her silk cream-coloured dress on which flowers were painted in water colours.

"Really, Vera, all is in perfect order."

Vera Constantinovna Sablin, born Wolff, a descendant of the dukes of Kurland, was far from being a novice at the Court. She had already been Her Majesty's Maid of Honour for some time, but nevertheless always felt nervous before a ball. She was entranced by the luxury of the Palace, by the young and fresh faces around her. The desire to be better than they were always overwhelmed her. Tall, blue-eyed, with a crown of golden hair and a fresh natural colour in her cheeks at a distance she resembled the young Empress whom she admired and tried to imitate in everything.

"It's such a pity that Alexander is on duty today, he would have known what to do. He always notices everything, even a speck of dust. He has a military eye, while you, aunty, only repeat that all is perfect and don't notice that the initial brooch has become unpinned!"

"Ah! Vera. . . . I shall arrange that in a moment. Why are you so nervous?"

"Aunty, have you noticed how thin Betristcheff has grown? She looks like a little gypsy now, but she is very beautiful, still. She's desperately in love with Lambin, but he doesn't take the slightest notice of her. He's always galloping about, fighting, rushing off on some wild expedition. Ah, General," she turned

smiling graciously to a General of the General Staff with a red St. Anne ribbon over his shoulder, who was approaching her respectfully.

"Vera Constantinovna, you are beautiful as usual. Let me kiss your artistic hand before you put your glove on," said the General in a sweet voice.

"You are a dear, Iakov Petrovitch," Vera Constantinovna answered laughing, and holding out her really beautiful hand adorned by magnificent rings with diamonds and opals.

"And where is your husband?"

"He is on duty with His Imperial Majesty."

"What a charming pair you are, seven years have passed and I never cease to admire you. It *is* seven years since you were married, I believe?"

"Oh! Don't speak of it. My daughter will soon be old enough to become a bride and I'm beginning to feel quite aged."

"Allow me to introduce my friend Nicolai Zaharovitch Samoiloff. He arrived only yesterday from Japan after having lived there for twelve years."

"Oh! It must have been terrible," Vera Constantinovna exclaimed holding out her hand to an old and queer looking Colonel of the General Staff. He had a large, clever looking bald head with a big nose, black, untidily trimmed moustache tinged with grey, a prominent shaven chin and sharp hazel eyes. He was of middle height; his body was badly proportioned and he wore an old, crumpled and ill cut black parade uniform. His top-boots were too big for him and his broad trousers fell in folds over them. His sword swung clumsily at his side and one could see that he had grown unaccustomed to wearing it.

"Ah, *voila ce fameux Samoiloff*, about whom the whole Court talks at present," Vera Constantinovna thought. Her husband had told her that two days previously this Colonel had greatly troubled the Emperor by his report. "Yes, a man with such a resemblance to a Quasimodo would trouble anyone. A real Japanese—he probably had a Japanese wife, too."

"And you haven't been bored to death there?" she asked.

"Oh, he hadn't any time for that," Iakov Petrovitch Pestret-

zoff said laughing. "He had a whole harem of geishas at his disposal there."

The Colonel did not reply to this jest which he had already heard several times at the court.

II

OFFICERS were streaming into the Jordansky entrance. Smart carriages drove up rarely but mostly cabs with steaming, tired horses. Many came on foot. Few wore the broad Nicolaievsky cloaks over their epaulets, but nearly all had put on dark grey overcoats and wrapped in coloured silk handkerchiefs the gilt embroidery on the collars of their parade uniforms. Here there were no ladies or young girls. The huge marble gallery usually adorned by beautiful statues was now full of wooden coat-racks behind which stood soldiers dressed in parade uniforms. They had been detailed on fatigue from the various regiments, the men of each unit forming a separate group. Their eyes were attentively scanning the officers who were streaming past them over the violet carpet, and voices were constantly heard:

"Your Honour, our regiment is here."

"Here, Your Honour, these are our racks."

Their duty was to receive the cloaks and overcoats, stow away the galoshes, and help to put them on after the end of the ball. At the end of the dimly lit marble corridor they could see a bright spot. There the mirrors of the staircase reflected the light of thousands of lamps, reflected the marble, gold, carpets and the multi-coloured swarm of the Tsar's guests sparkling with gold, silver and diamonds as they ascended to his apartments. Savory dishes on silver plate and goblets of wine were carried past them during the supper and the sounds of music and the dull rumble of voices reached them floating down the corridor.

It was all for the gentle folk. The Tsar was there, surrounded by the nobles; and they, the soldiers, had to perform the duties of servants, doze in the corridor near the overcoats and wait for the end.

A crowd of people was streaming up the white marble stair-

case adorned by huge stone vases each of which was a marvel of art. Men of the Tsar's hunting retinue stood motionless on each second step of the staircase, some dressed in dark green costumes embroidered with gold, in Russian fur caps and with hunting knives in their belts, others with brass bugles slung over their shoulders. Young jockeys stood in some places in pairs, dressed in black velvet caps, short red coats bordered with gold, elk-skin breeches and patent leather riding boots with yellow bands on the top. All these picked men represented different types of Russian manly beauty. Foreign ambassadors and military attaches halted before some of them, admiring their handsome picturesque features.

Military parade uniforms dominated in the crowd ascending the stairs. Sometimes was seen the black evening dress of diplomats, the red coats of senators and the gold-embroidered tunics of statesmen. Here and there appeared merrily chatting ladies like delicate flowers on a field of metal.

The groups of new arrivals parted in the round hall near a huge malachite vase. Some turned to the immense Nicolaievsky hall where a platform decorated with flowers and laurel trees had been erected for the musicians and where a guard of tall Chevalier Guards, clad in picturesque parade uniforms with brass helmets surmounted by silver double-headed eagles stood before the Emperor's portrait. Others went towards the wonderful Pompey gallery, at the entrance of which stood as motionless as statues two great bearded Guard Cossacks clad in red uniforms and black Persian lamb caps.

The entire hall was full of guests, numbering about five thousand. The officers moved about and formed groups according to their units. The foreign ambassadors and their wives stood near the great doors leading to the Emperor's inner apartments. The stout Turkish ambassador in a red fez,* the oldest neighbour, friend and enemy of the Moscow Tsar, formed the centre of the group. The white and black of evening dress was mingled here with the elegant toilettes of the ladies; here stood

* Husni-Pasha.

the Chinese representatives and next to them a fragile little Japanese lady in a dress of Paris fashion. All waited for the Tsar to appear.

III

"I AM glad that you have arrived," Pestretzoff said, pushing his way through the crowd of officers in the Pompey gallery, arm in arm with Colonel Samoiloff. "Something perfectly damnable is going on here. You can't imagine what it is like—I simply don't recognise him."

"What's wrong?" Samoiloff asked smiling.

"Let's go somewhere else. There are too many inquisitive ears around. That's a good spot,—we won't be in anyone's way if no lovers have already taken refuge here."

Pestretzoff led Samoiloff through a glass door into the quiet coolness of the winter garden. A tall officer of the Izmailovsky regiment rose from a bench as they approached, saying to a lady who had been sitting next to him: "Alors a demain."

The pair left the garden.

"Excellent," Pestretzoff remarked. "He'll give her a hot time tomorrow," he said nodding in the direction of the tall officer,—“he's the greatest libertine in the whole Guards and a tremendously impertinent fellow. I can't understand how Countess Paltoff risks going anywhere with him. Well, it doesn't matter. Nothing has changed here, love-making continues to be all important. Now tell me what is happening there."

"Feverish preparations for war were in full swing when I left. The mobilisation had not been declared officially but had been already almost completed in secret. The whole Japanese nation has been so morally worked upon, that they hate us with all the power of their souls. The hands of your Japanese barber simply twitch from a desire to cut your throat as he shaves you, only because you are a Russian."

"I suppose English diplomacy has something to do with it all?"

"Certainly. It serves the interests of everyone. We have

scared many people by the construction of that railway. 'The Russians want to dominate on the Pacific!' 'Why do you need concession on the Yalu?' Only to think of the stupidity of it all. When I arrived at Port-Arthur, I found that there was practically no fleet there. More than half was at Vladivostok. I made my report, which was met with laughter and jokes. 'Nonsense,' they said, 'you have wrong information.' Think of it, they said that to me, who had spent years and years there. 'There will be no war. The macaques won't dare.' 'What macaques?' 'Your yellow faced beggars.' I saw that it was useless to talk to them and came straight here."

"That is so. But Kouropatkin * has been there, he must have seen everything. What does he think? Have you seen him?"

"The day before yesterday. I reported to him straight from the station."

"Well?"

"He only smiled. I could see that he understands everything. The Japanese Army had made a terrible impression on him. 'What can I do?' he said. 'They don't want to fight here and that's all.' 'How can that be,' I asked, 'when our diplomats are doing everything in their power to provoke war?' 'That's no business of mine,' he answered, 'Count Lamsdorff may give you an answer to that.' But that gentleman simply laughs at the macaques."

"But isn't our Army really the best in the world?"

"Outwardly, Iakov Petrovitch," said Samoiloff and laid his hand on Pestretzoff's elbow, "yes, outwardly that is so. But inside! Oh! Great God! I have visited my friend Tishin at Port-Arthur. He is in command of a regiment there and I have questioned him. 'Have you got machine guns?' 'No.' 'Field glasses for the officers?' 'No. . . .' And so on. They haven't even got khaki shirts, and joke that their white ones are just as good. 'You wear it a bit longer, so that it gets well soaked in sweat and covered with dust, and it'll be more in-

* War Minister at that time.

visible than a khaki one. . . . They joke at anything you say, Iakov Petrovitch, . . . they simply won't look at things seriously."

"And the spirit of the troops?"

"Some fear the macaques so that they won't be able to resist their onslaught, others indulge in the opposite extreme and pooh-pooh everything. Nothing is done,—no sensible manœuvres,—nothing. They just drink and carry on their old routine of life. The whole place swarms with Japanese spies. Japanese workmen are employed in the Port-Arthur harbour. Half of them are spies."

"Have you made your report to Him?"

"Yesterday I was granted an audience. He received me in a charming way. He listened to my report very attentively and put several questions which displayed, a full, how shall I say, lack of information—he knows everything but only from the point of view most pleasing to him. He does not listen to me nor to Kuropatkin nor to other specialists because the youngsters surrounding him have given him an entirely false idea of Japan. One of his A.D.C.'s had spent a week at Nagasaki, another had been present at the manœuvres of a Japanese company, a third had had a Japanese mistress, a fourth had travelled in Corea and everything made him think of Japan as of a weak toy-like country."

"But is Japan so powerful in reality?"

"One can't say that Japan is powerful, but we can't fight Japan. We must do everything in our power to avoid war."

"As far as I know, we don't want it ourselves."

"Well, then we oughtn't to lose a single minute, but remove everything from Yalu and immediately put an end to these absurd forest concessions there."

"That is impossible. Do you know who's capital is invested there?"

"I do. All the more reason for removing it, so that there should be no motives for war, so that the soldiers could not say that they were being driven to fight. You must not forget that

our internal foes are wide awake and won't lose the opportunity. Our duty is to save the throne."

"Nicolai Zaharovitch, have you really apprehension of danger threatening the throne?"

"Every war, Iakov Petrovitch, unsettles the people and tears away from them the mask of indifference they generally wear. Either a crown of victory, laurels, rewards, and the bloodshed is then forgiven,—or on the contrary you have to exculpate yourself and give an account of your actions. Our people, and not only the simple folk but the intelligentsia even, which cannot keep quiet and hope for a constitution, will of course immediately spread the news that Russian blood is being shed for the defense of Imperial capital. You can imagine what everyone will feel about it."

A handsome young officer dressed in the dark green uniform of the Imperial Suite with white shoulder straps bearing the Emperor's initials, white silk belt and patent leather top-boots with ball spurs, passed through the garden and said hurriedly:

"Your Excellency. . . . His Majesty the Emperor."

"I am coming, Sasha," Pestretzoff said, rising.

"He is the husband of the charming young lady to whom I introduced you in the vestibule. An excellent officer in all respects and an example of limitless fidelity to the Emperor, which is now more highly valued than anything else."

Pestretzoff and Samoiloff crossed the gallery, passed under the arch and mixed with the crowd of officers who were waiting for the Emperor to appear.

IV

IN several places in the hall the Masters of Ceremonies suddenly tapped their thin sticks on the floor, the crowd of guests moved and quieted down in alert silence. The heads of all were turned towards the doors, some rose on tip-toe and tried to see something over those in front. The flowing mighty sounds of the polonaise from Glinka's opera "Life for the Tsar" were heard.

A Master of Ceremonies in a black evening coat, holding in his hands a slender ivory stick bearing the Imperial initials and

ried by a blue ribbon, quickly walked through the crowd, requesting them to give way and forming a corridor among the guests.

The Emperor walked with the Dowager Empress, his mother, on his arm, and was clad in the uniform of the Preobrajensky regiment. This circumstance filled with happiness the hearts of the officers of that regiment. Count Paltoff, a tall man of athletic build, was the first to notice it. He saw the Emperor over the heads of the crowd and immediately said to the Commander of the regiment:

"Your Excellency, His Majesty the Emperor is in our uniform. . . ."

"In our uniform . . . in our uniform," the other Preobrajensky officers began to repeat, and their faces reflected as great a pleasure as if they had received a birthday present.

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna followed with the stout Turkish ambassador. She returned graciously the deep bows of the men and the court curtsies of the ladies. But she seemed uncomfortable under the curious looks with which the ladies were scanning her, especially those who were novices at court.

Grand Dukes and ambassadors followed in pairs with Grand Duchesses, Princesses and wives of ambassadors.

The procession sparkled with the diamonds of the ladies and with the gold and silver of the uniforms. It passed round the hall and returned to the great doors, where it formed a separate group. The Empress sat down on a chair, the Emperor at her side.

A smart handsome captain of Her Majesty's Lancers, Masloff, glided up to the Empress and begged her permission to begin the dancing. She silently nodded her consent. The orchestra played a waltz and Masloff offered his arm to the Empress.

Only a few couples danced, and in the part of the hall nearest to the Emperor. Vera Constantinovna, glowing with beauty, danced with a handsome hussar Koltzoff; another hussar, Captain Lambin, waltzed with a young girl, Verotchka Betristcheff; the young Countess Paltoff had the same Izmailovsky officer as

TO RED FLAG

partner and her husband danced with the Emperor's sister, the Princess Olga Alexandrovna. As soon as the waltz ended and the polonaise began, the majority of the officers present crowded towards the Pompey gallery and the Malachite hall where refreshments and sweets were served according to a custom introduced by Peter the Great at his assemblies and improved by the Empress Catherine. Long rows of tables stood along the walls, covered by silver candlesticks and "surtouts de table." Each was a creation of art, each spoke of the past. Goblets with the eagles of Peter the Great, whole hunting scenes with groups of men, trees, stags, boars and hounds supported crystal dishes and china trays piled with fruits, cakes and sweets. Tea-cups and crystal glasses for lemonades and syrups were placed round them. Bottles of champagne of the Court vintage "Abrao-Durceau" stood here and there in pails of ice surrounded by crystal glasses.

The sweets of the Peterhof Court Confectionery had nothing unusual about them and were of a lower quality than those of many of the Petersburg Confectioneries, but every officer tried to take some for his wife and children. However, most of the officers crowded round the champagne. Gritzenko, dressed in his white parade uniform, stood near a table and was drinking his fifth glass in slow gulps, his long black moustache dipping each time in the golden liquid.

"How nice it is to be the Tsar's guest," he said, winking to Sablin who had just joined him.

The smart hussar Lambin was standing near them and sipping tea.

"It's a good custom, Sasha. An old Russian custom. 'Russia's pleasure is drinking,' said the first Christian sovereign of Russia. The lessons of history appear before me as I stand here. The court of Vladimir the Bright Sun, huge cans filled with Greek wines and the legendary knight Ilia gulping them down all at once. Eh! Our ancestors lived merrily in olden days, not as their descendants do. Ah, Lambin! Am I right?"

"Recollections come to me of Peter the Great and of his goblet of the great eagle," Gritzenko continued. "The kind Em-

press Catherine and the picturesque crowd that surrounded her lived in these very walls. Asia and Europe, the East and the West gathered 'round these tables and drank perhaps out of these very goblets."

"It is good to eat and to drink," Sablin remarked, "but there is one thing that I cannot understand. Look at that officer with silver shoulder straps who has taken a huge pear and cannot succeed in introducing it into his pocket. His cap is full of sweets. See, he is taking some more. The servants are looking on and are probably laughing at him in their hearts. What is it? Simple greediness?"

"No, Alexander Nicolaievitch," Lambin said, seriously looking at Sablin,—“it isn't greediness. Approach a man with love and not with blame and you will see something different then. This officer probably has a wife and children, who idolise the Emperor as all of us do. It will be the Tsar's sweets, the Tsar's pear for them. They will divide it and eat a little piece each. The sweets they will keep as a souvenir, or eat them as sweets coming from a fairy land. They will serve to illustrate his account of the ball, to which they have not been invited."

"I agree with the Captain, Sasha," said Gritzenko. "Tell this episode to the Empress when you are on duty and I am certain that she will be touched."

A footman brought silver jugs with tea and hot water. Lambin glanced at him and smiled.

"Ah, Vinogradoff!" he said, "How are you getting on?"

"By your favours, Sir, I shall never forget them."

"Thank God that you are keeping fit, but Kumoff has grown into disgraceful shape in the Tsar's own service," Lambin nodded in the direction of a stout servant who was pouring tea.

"I don't get enough gymnastics, Sir," the servant answered laughing respectfully.

"They are all my ex-corporals, Alexander Nicolaievitch," Lambin said as he walked away with Sablin. "Fine fellows, and I am glad I managed to get them this good job. That stout beggar took many prizes for horsemanship in his time. And now

TO RED FLAG

—he pours out tea as a profession. Yes,—‘tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.’ It has been well said ‘Everything vanishes.’ . . . Only one thing doesn’t. . . .”

“So you know them all?” Sablin asked.

“We have done four years of service together, lived the same kind of lives, thought the same kind of thoughts. Good fellows, fine Russian soldiers! I love them deeply,—war seems to be approaching and no one can foretell what will happen. . . .”

“The war,” said Sablin and added, bending to Lambin’s ear: “I can assure you that there will be no war.”

“Is this your personal opinion?”

“It is the opinion of His Majesty.”

“Ah . . .” said Lambin. The “ah” was so significant that Sablin looked at Lambin with surprise.

“Let’s go and dance,” Lambin said. “The Emperor has invited us here not to talk politics but to dance with his guests. It is a ball, Alexander Nicolaievitch, don’t forget that. . . .”

V

CAPTAIN MASLOFF rushed round the hall making arrangements for the quadrille. “Messieurs engagez vos dames. Et á vos places s’il vous plait!” he shouted.

A time-table had been drawn up for the Court ball and was being rigidly adhered to. Exactly at midnight supper was to begin. The dancers occupied chairs, but those who did not dance settled in places where it would be easier to rush for supper. The majority of the guests belonged to the latter category. Everyone wanted to get a place in the hall where the Emperor’s table was. Everyone wanted to see the Emperor at his supper. Besides, some specialists affirmed that the food was of a superior quality in that hall.

“La premiere figure! Avancez. . . .” shouted Captain Masloff who was dancing with the Empress.

Lambin was not far from them. He was dancing with the niece of his ex-Commander, Verotchka Betristcheff, who was for the first time at a palace ball as a “city lady.” Their vis-à-vis were Vera Constantinovna and Gritzenko.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"They seem fairy-like, these balls, don't they, Vadim Petrovitch," Verotchka said, fanning herself during an interval.

"Yes, it is a good custom," Lambin replied,—“But I would have gone farther. I would have arranged some similar festivities for peasants, workmen and soldiers. The castes are being destroyed and the Tsar ought to realise that he cannot have the nobility alone to support him. You are young, Vera Iliinichna, and I fear that you will have to go through many hardships yet.”

"But Russia seems so happy now, Vadim Petrovitch, the future seems to be so promising. The Emperor is full of a desire for peace.”

"It's impossible to talk at these balls," Vera Constantinovna said to Gritzenko. "Have you seen Paltova? Her toilette 'gris perles' is very becoming to her. She is the most beautiful military lady of the season.

"After yourself, Vera Constantinovna.”

"Quelle betise. Vous croyez? Am I not quite old looking?"

"Vera Constantinovna, I never flatter.”

"Oh, I know. You criticise every woman as you would a horse.”

"I am an old cavalry officer, and then there is some gypsy blood in my veins.”

"When shall we go to hear the tziganes?"

"When you like. Your husband is against it.”

"Oh, Alexander! He will never let me go. Don't you find that Paltova is surrounded too much by the Izmailovsky regiment?"

"That is quite understandable, her brother belongs to that regiment.”

"Ah, Rotbek! What a darling he is! His wife is also very nice. Why haven't his sisters been invited? They are so nice.”

"In those words you have pronounced their death verdict.”

"No, really. Rotbek belongs to our regiment. What does it matter that his father is manager of a commercial enterprise? As if only a few outsiders have been invited here. Oh! I would have invited only the "fine noblesse.”

TO RED FLAG

"The concert balls at the Hermitage have been arranged for that purpose."

"Et grand rond! Chaine chinoise. . . ." Masloff was shouting.

The quadrille was ended. The dancers in pairs and the spectators crowded towards the halls where the supper was served.

Pestretzoff and Samoiloff were moving with the crowd.

"You have been speaking about the high level of the discipline in the Russian Army," Samoiloff said. "But I don't notice it here. Where is it? Could anything similar occur at the Court of the Mikado? Officers push you,—a General,—and rush forward in a crowd. See, someone pushed the Princess Olga Alexandrovna as he passed her and hasn't even excused himself. What is it then?"

"Feeding. Gratuitous feeding and drinking," Pestretzoff answered calmly.

"What do you want, after all?"

"I want" said Samoiloff "to see education and not only outward training. I want Guard officers not to push each other as they hurry to take their places at the Tsar's table; I want, that if all should be dying from thirst and someone should find a pint of water, that he would bring it and give it to the Emperor. I want to see sacrifice, whereas now there is nothing but greed before me. Iakov Petrovitch, days of terrible convulsions are approaching. I would need then soldiers who would obey me as implicitly as did the grenadier of Peter the Great at Potsdam, when he ordered him to jump through the window of the palace: 'Through which, Your Majesty?' Are there such soldiers now?"

"I think that there must be."

"And officers? You do not answer. History will soon demand heroic deeds from them. Will they be able to do them? Will they be equal to the occasion?"

VI

PESTRETZOFF AND SAMOILOFF sat together during the supper in one of the distant halls. They had not tried to push forward

and had not sought to be nearer to the sun. Voices were humming around them. The band of one of the guard regiments played on the balcony.

They had started on a turkey with chestnut dressing, when the whole hall suddenly rose with a clatter of chairs and turned in one direction.

The Emperor had entered from the hall where the Imperial family was supping. He walked quickly past the tables, scanning the guests with a kind smile on his lips and speaking the Russian form of greeting:

"Please. Eat for your good health. . . ."

The sovereign of the Russian land was passing round among his guests. Somewhere among the officers a cheer was raised and rang from hall to hall accompanied by the majestic tune of the Russian National Anthem.

Sablin was accompanying the Emperor, a feeling of deep love and fidelity written on his face.

Noise and movement were heard in the great hall where the Emperor had been supping. He had risen, and ladies, young girls, officers, generals and statesmen rushed towards his table before he had time to leave the hall. Everyone tried to take some souvenir, mostly flowers. Some picked a spray of hyacinths or lilies of the valley, others seized whole bunches of them and returned triumphantly to their ladies. Sablin brought to his wife a single spray of lily of the valley and said:

"The Empress had held this spray in her hands, Vera. Put it before the ikon near the bed of our little Tania."

"Oh! Thank you," Vera Constantinovna said, taking the flowers and raising them to her lips. "I shall keep it pressed in my Testament."

The attack on the table continued. Fruit and sweets were being taken in handfuls under the pretext that they came from the Tsar's table. The swarm of guests was turning towards the vestibule. The ball was ended.

"Is that what you think?" an Army artillery Colonel with a black beard said to his companion, a young Lieutenant,—"you

think that it is the Tsar's luxury, the Tsar's palace, the Tsar's music, the Tsar's entertainment?"

"Well, yes, certainly. . . ." answered the young lieutenant,—
"whose else could it be?"

"Throw your pears away, Kolia, and don't take them to your mother. Everything that you have met with here belongs to the people. It has all been arranged at the expense of the people, on their money, their blood and their sweat. And we form part of the people. You, myself, all of us, are the people, and accordingly all of it is ours. We have been our own guests and have eaten and drunk our own food and wines. He has only been our manager. And did you notice that the salmon was not fresh at our table and that the sauce-provençale was somewhat sour? Yes . . . and the pheasants were too high. They were decorated with their tails and wings, it is true, but still they smelt. I am certain that someone has stuffed his pockets with money as he prepared this ball. Some German probably."

"Are you going on foot, Ivanitzky?"

"Per pedes apostolorum, as usual. The weather is fine and I shan't go to the lectures at the Academy tomorrow. Yes, my dear friend, God and the Tsar have been created for simple folks. But we educated people ought to realise that the Tsar is only the sign board of an enterprise. It is getting dilapidated, this sign board, my dear friend. You have drunk champagne as much as you wished and praise the Tsar, but I tell you that both the sign board and Tsar are bad. The champagne was not good and I assert that the salmon was not fresh. All these Frederikses and Meyendorffs only make fools of us Russians."

The Colonel staggered slightly, glanced sideways at a sentry in a high brass cap who stood at attention and began to recite the verses:

"'The gleam of the helmets riddled by shot.' . . . Is your helmet riddled by bullets, friend?" He addressed the sentry as he halted before him.

"Come, Misha," his companion said, pulling him by the sleeve,—
"don't you realise that he's a sentry?"

"I do, and very much even. A sacred person. He cannot talk when standing at his post. But, my dear, this is laid down in German regulations and we ought to converse heartily, in Russian fashion. It's difficult to keep straight, friend, after the Tsar's champagne. You must be quite frozen here at your post, eh?"

"Come, Misha, stop this. . . ."

"Wait. Go away. You understand nothing. He's of the Pavlovsky regiment and every helmet that they wear has a historic hole bored by a bullet in some battle. The name of the soldier who wore it then is engraved beneath. Is that so?"

"Come, Misha Ivanitzky, I've enough of this."

"He keeps silent. He isn't a Russian then, this rotter. . . ."

The Colonel staggered away and walked down the quay supported by his companion.

VII

SABLIN'S feeling of love for the Emperor had reached its climax after his appointment as personal A.D.C. He no longer lived in the barracks of the regiment but had a luxurious flat on the second floor of a house in the Malaya Morskaya street. Sometimes, while sitting in the evenings before the fire in his study, he would dream of heroic actions he would accomplish so as to save the Emperor. Various scenes arose in his imagination. He threw himself upon a murderer wrenching a bomb from his grasp, which burst in his hands; he shielded the Emperor with his breast from a dagger; he led a regiment to the assault of an enemy position.

He loved the Empress with the same depth of feeling and she noticed this because she was surrounded by unfriendly people. Sablin frequently received invitations to the private table of the Emperor when he was on duty at the palace. The Empress questioned him about his family, showed him her little children and became more and more friendly towards him and Vera Constantinovna when she saw that he loved children as much as she did.

"How many children have you?" she once asked Sablin.

TO RED FLAG

"Two. A boy Kolia—six years old and a girl Tania, five."

"The same age as my Tatiana."

"The name Tatiana was given her in honour of Her Imperial Highness."

"Why have you no more children? Is your wife unwell?" the Empress asked.

"Oh, no. She is so young and likes society pleasures. She loves the Petersburg life."

"Tell your wife," the Empress said seriously,—"that it is not good. Children are a blessing of God and it is a sin to renounce them."

Sablin felt confused and did not answer.

"Ah, these new theories," the Empress said,—"they won't bring any good to Russia."

Sablin took photographs of the Empress with her children and accompanied the Emperor when he went out riding. The Emperor loved riding and often went as far as Gatchino accompanied by Sablin and two Cossack orderlies. The Emperor loved simple Russian people more than anyone else. He thought that the moujiks, soldiers and men of his hunting retinue that he saw, were religious, good and devoted to him. He had no passion for women. He had fallen in love only once. In his youth he had been present at an evening where he met a modest little girl with long hair. The little girl, who was the Princess Alice of Hesse, shyly remained in a corner of the room and did not say a word to anyone. The Emperor, then Tsarevitch, fell passionately in love with the Princess and spoke about his feelings to his parents. Many efforts were made to distract him but nothing came of the intrigue with a ballet dancer, Maria Labounsky, on which his father had insisted for his health. That with the ballet dancer Kshesinsky had held a more important place in his life. The power loving, shameless, cynical Pole attempted to subjugate the Tsarevitch to her will but did not succeed. After his marriage he entirely devoted himself to family life.

The Empress immediately realised his weakness and her own power. She saw that she had more brains and common sense

than he had and began to form plans for the good of Russia. She studied Russia's history. She drew parallels between herself and the modest Princess of Zerbst* who had become a great Empress and had brought fame to Russia and herself. She also was a modest Princess of Hesse who had studied medicine, had obtained a doctor's degree in philosophy and had now become Empress of Russia. She could influence her husband but very soon she saw that he was far from being an autocrat, that a complex net of intrigue was being woven around him and that he became easily subject to many influences other than her own. She was believed to have German sympathies, although she hated Emperor Wilhelm and worshipped Queen Victoria. The whole Court of Alexander III was proud of the creation of the alliance with France and hated Germany.

The old courtiers grouped themselves round the Dowager Empress who had an influence on her son. Alexandra Feodorovna began to strive against it, but unsuccessfully. She soon realised that this strife would not be easy, for the whole Russian nation had loved the Tsar Peacemaker, as Alexander III had been called, and revered the Dowager Empress. She felt worried and miserable owing to the constant hope for a son who never came, and because of all the gossip which rose from this fact. Her husband became irritated each time a daughter was born, disappointment reigned among the people, and the courtiers and Ministers were cold towards her, feeling that she was losing her power.

She became interested in mysticism. The Montenegrin Princesses Anastasia and Militza, who had become Russian Grand Duchesses, involved the Empress in a number of dark superstitions which they had brought from their native mountains. They invited to Russia and presented to the Court a French adventurer, Philippe Nizier, who had been a druggist's apprentice at Lyons. He asserted that he was a saint, that he was capable of accomplishing miracles. Some of his prophecies were rather successful and this increased the belief of the Em-

* Catherine II.

press in him. Phillippe began to have an influence on appointments and everyone courted him. During a voyage abroad he suddenly died, but he left a deep impression on the soul of the Empress and obliging people tried to find a successor for him. She was shy by nature and in that unsuccessful strife became more and more so.

She desired to become more intimately acquainted with the troops and to bring them under her influence. But she could not ride. She wanted personally to present her own regiment of Lancers to the Emperor at a parade but could not start her horse on a gallop from the right foot. At last an old horse was found that she could manage but all her pleasure was spoiled by the ugliness of her steed, and she left without having said a single word to the officers. Soon after that incident she heard enthusiastic accounts of the Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna who had cantered up to her Ahtirsky hussar regiment over the ice, had personally directed a smart cavalry manoeuvre, had slept at the Officer's Mess in the company of her maid and had left on the evening of the following day, after conquering the hearts of all the officers.

She could not do it. In her dreams she saw herself making beautiful speeches, preaching culture and patriotism to the Russians, who had too little of these qualities in her opinion, but when she appeared before these very Russians, red spots of nervousness covered her face and she did not know what to say. Whole minutes would sometimes pass in silence at the audiences if the people who were being presented to her were unresourceful and she would put some silly question or leave without having said anything at all. She felt angry with herself but could not conquer her shyness. Sometimes she saw things that did not exist, and thought that everyone loved her only kept secret this feeling.

Alexandra Feodorovna felt angry when she saw admiration in the eyes of the person who was being presented to Maria Feodorovna when both Empresses held a general reception, and the Dowager Empress put question after question smiling with majestic graciousness and handing out her little perfumed hand

to be kissed. She listened to the phrases of greeting and held out her hand in silence, hurting those presented by her haughty inattention.

She was spoken of as unfeeling, cold and despising Russia. In reality she was only unnaturally self-loving and therefore shy. A small group of people surrounded her, whom she loved with all her heart.

Sablin felt deeply touched by the attention and confidence of Alexandra Feodorovna. She spoke to him about children for hours.

"Tell me Sablin," she said once,—“who should I be before all. An Empress or the mother of my children?”

Sablin, thinking of his love for his own family quickly answered:

“A mother.”

The Empress looked at him gratefully.

“Thanks! Oh, thanks. You understood me, others have told me that I am only Russia’s Empress, but those are words of harsh and heartless people.”

VIII

SABLIN was lunching with the Emperor in the intimate circle of his family. The lunch passed almost in silence but for occasional remarks in English of the Emperor and the Empress and the unceasing childish prattle of the merry little Grand Duchess Tatiana. The lunch ended, the children were led away and the Empress kissed the Emperor on the forehead and left for her apartments. The Emperor rose. He had to be present at a conference at one o’clock but for some reason he lingered. He approached a window and gazed out on the neat Tsarskoie Selo park and at the melancholy sadness of the bare willows and oaks bordering the wide lanes.

“Tell me something amusing,” the Emperor meditatively said to Sablin.

Sablin had a talent for anecdotes out of Jewish and Armenian life, could give a good description of some noble deed of a soldier or a peasant, and the Emperor liked to listen to him.

But he remained silent now. The Emperor's sad mood infected him and he could not think of anything amusing. All was quiet in the dining room. Servants were noiselessly and quickly clearing the table. The rhythmic tic-toc of a large clock was alone heard, and Sablin watched it with anxiety, afraid that the Emperor would be late for the conference.

"The summer and the golden autumn have passed," the Emperor said in a low voice,—“the winter has come. I love our Russian winter,—the snow, the frost, the drives in sledges and the hunting. All of it is so nice. The snow is so pure and so honest. Isn't it, Sablin? . . . Why can't men be pure and honest? Why are some always hatching plots against others, why are there intrigues all around? Do you know, Sablin, I have never heard anyone say anything good about another person, but always something nasty. Why? What interest do they find in it?”

Sablin answered nothing, not knowing what to say.

"Ministers come to me with their reports. Hatred and not love is in their words. Their own interests and not Russia's. They all try to gratify me when they ought to love Russia. I am an autocrat Sablin, and the day shall come when I will prove it!"

The Emperor looked at Sablin attentively as if expecting to hear protests. But Sablin remained silent. He did not understand the Emperor and listened with anxiety to his words.

"You may think that all of this is dear to me? No, Sablin, I would have given much to be an ordinary, simple man and to have only the land, flowers, a garden and fruit around me. And a quiet sky overhead, and God. No one else. No intrigues and no strife. Why do all these people strive for power? Why do they constantly fight each other and fall turn by turn. Why?"

The Emperor looked round the dining room with sad eyes and turning to the window quietly beat a tattoo on the glass with his fingers.

"Your Imperial Majesty," Sablin said, looking with anxiety at the clock. The Emperor turned quickly and sighed.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"It is time to go," he said. "Yes, I know. An Emperor hasn't the right to be late. It always makes the people who are waiting for him fear that something has happened. One has to hurry always, to receive someone and speak or answer questions. The freedom of sovereigns?—it does not exist!"

The Emperor walked quickly out of the dining room. Several minutes later he was seated with Sablin in a broad sledge and his features had the usual kind and affable expression. All shadows of sorrow had vanished from it.

IX

THE opera "Mephistopheles" was given at the Hermitage theatre at the end of January 1904. Everything came off in excellent fashion and Chaliapin sang better than usual. A supper was served afterwards and the Emperor sat at a large round table shaded by palm trees. He appeared to be in a good mood. It seemed that the dark clouds that had arisen in the East were now dispersing. Russia was making concessions. During the entr'acts the eyes of all had been fixed on the Japanese ambassador and military attache. As always they hissed when they spoke, inhaling air through their teeth, and were extremely reserved. They calmly answered the tactless questions of some officers about the probability of war: "It depends on the will of the Mikado and of your Emperor. Our duty is to obey."

After the opera Sablin and Vera Constantinovna drove to a ball given by Countess Paltoff, and returned home only towards dawn. Sablin had just got up at ten in the morning when a message was brought to him from the regiment. The Commander requested all the officers to assemble at the Mess. There was nothing extraordinary in this. "Some election again," thought Sablin,— "or the discussion of Mess matters." The hour alone appeared queer. Eleven was the time for drill.

All the officers were assembled at the Mess when Sablin arrived, but the Commander of the regiment was late. The reason for his summons had been guessed. The morning papers contained the news of an attack on our fleet carried out by the Japanese without declaration of war. Three large battleships

were either sunk or seriously damaged, sailors had been killed and wounded. The telegram was brief and not clear. One thing was felt—we had been taken unawares. It was insulting and painful.

The officers were wandering around the Mess, waiting for the arrival of their Commander. Matzneff had spread a large map of Japan and Corea on one of the tables of the library and the officers were scanning it. Few knew the whereabouts of Port Arthur. Others were reading the newspapers. The stout Men-shikoff was eating a steak in the dining room as a precaution for emergencies, and Fetisoff, who had just returned from drill, was drinking tea. Gritzenko played in the billiard room, solving problems he put to himself. Rotbek looked on, munching something, and offered advice.

Matzneff was engaged in a discussion in the library.

"There will be no war," he was saying. "It is to no one's interest. The Japs have kicked up a row and will quiet down."

"It's impossible after such an insult to the Russian State," Repnin said,—“we have let it go once, as it is, when our Emperor travelled in Japan as Tsarevitch and a Jap attacked him.”

"It was the case of a mad dog then, but now it means war," said Koreneff.

"War without declaration. It is something unheard of in the civilised world," Samalsky remarked. "Only these yellow savages are capable of such a rash step."

"They shall get a thrashing for it!" Fetisoff said as he entered from the dining room.

"I like it," Rotbek said. "Only to think of it. Tiny Japan displaying such impertinence! Just went for us!"

"What insolence!" Samalsky said,—“I spoke to their military attache at the theatre yesterday. He was perfectly calm and said that the decision lay in the hands of our Emperor and that there would be no war should he not wish it. He must have known that the war had already begun!”

"How could he have known it?" Fetisoff asked.

"He must have known if the newspapers knew."

"I can state only one thing," Sablin said,—“the Emperor knew nothing. His Majesty was calm and in a good mood.”

“An exotic expedition,” Repnin said condescendingly,—“one cannot call it a war. It will be something like the suppression of the Boxer uprising.”

“I shall have a villa built there on conquered land. I have heard that there are splendid places near Nagasaki,” Rotbek said.

“I think that it shall be a most serious and difficult war,” said Captain Bobrinsky, who had finished the General Staff Academy a year previously. “The Guards may have to go to the front.”

“What!” Stepochka Vorobieff exclaimed nervously. “The Guards cannot be sent to the front. They have quite different and much more important tasks before them. It would be madness to move the Guards from the capital.”

“Why?” Bobrinsky asked.

“Because apart from a foreign foe we always have inner ones. Petersburg cannot be left alone with its universities and multitudes of workmen.”

“The Cossacks can easily disperse the students with their nagaikas,” Fetisoff remarked.

“Don’t forget the workmen, they number over two hundred thousand!”

“They are unarmed!”

“Today they have no arms and tomorrow some friendly power can manage to arm them under the pretext of sending machinery.”

“The police ought to see to that,” said Matzneff. “The Guard cannot be kept here only because of the students and workmen. That would be too much.”

“It isn’t a matter of workmen but of the defense of the Throne and of the dynasty,” Repnin said seriously,—“only the Guards fully realise the immense importance of the Empire for Russia, and only the Guards are quite free from ideas. . . .”

“But in 1824 . . .” put in Matzneff.

TO RED FLAG

"It was a misunderstanding which arose out of the abdication of the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch."

"And Elisabeth? And Catherine? Haven't the Preobrajensky and Izmailovsky regiments helped them in their 'coups d'états?'" Matzneff continued.

"That is just why the Guard Cavalry which has always been faithful to the Throne must be kept at St. Petersburg. It isn't the question of a palace 'coup d'état.' That would be impossible and unnecessary now, but of a revolutionary rising of armed multitudes."

"After all it's good that we won't be sent to the front," Matzneff said. "War isn't a nice thing. Blood, wounds, corpses. I dislike them and the distance is too great. Let those fight whom it pleases. I feel no longing to go."

The ringing voice of the orderly officer, Lieutenant Kongrin, was heard in the hall as he made his report to the Commander of the regiment. Petrovsky, ruddy from the frost and looking excited, entered the library. He shook hands with the officers and said:

"Gentlemen, please excuse me for arriving late. I have come straight from the Grand Duke, Commander-in-Chief. . Gentlemen! An unexpected, unheard of and shocking event took place last night. The Japanese fleet treacherously crept up to our ships in Port Arthur harbour and blew up some of them. Three large battleships have been put out of action. The ambassador has offered no apologies—they would have been impossible. The Emperor has declared war on Japan."

The Commander of the regiment stopped to recover his breath. The officers were infected by his excitement.

"I am very sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot congratulate you upon going to the front. The Guards remain here. We hope to attain victory without touching our Western frontier."

"Does anything threaten us from there?" Reprin asked and genuine anxiety was heard in his tone.

"As far as I know the Emperor has already received from Emperor Wilhelm assurances that Germany is keeping a neutrality favourable to Russia. Our noble friend and recent guest

has been true to his word. But the Guards are needed here. The Throne and the capital have to be well guarded in days of war."

"Have you heard who has been appointed Commander-in-Chief?" Prince Reprin asked.

"For the moment Linevitch. But he will probably be replaced by Kuropatkin who desires this appointment. There is some possibility that our August Commander-in-Chief will go there personally."

"Your Excellency," Fetisoff said rising. He had suddenly grown pale and looked straight into the eyes of the Commander of the regiment. "Will the officers who express the desire to leave for the front be allowed to go?"

"I don't know. . . . Why not? I will ask the Grand Duke. Gentlemen, I have not finished yet. His Majesty desires to personally inform his Guards about events. The Emperor desires to unite with his officers in a general prayer before the Almighty in these hard moments sent to him by God. We must put on our parade uniforms and immediately leave for the palace."

The Commander of the regiment made a movement to leave. Lieutenant Fetisoff and four young Lieutenants approached him.

"Your Excellency," Fetisoff said,—“Myself and the Lieutenants Oksenshirna, Malsky, Turoff and Popoff beg you to obtain for us a permission to leave for the front as volunteers, even as privates.”

"All right," Petrovsky said with displeasure,—“Prince, note their names.”

"Write mine down also," Sablin said firmly, coming forward.

X

THE air was close in the little palace hall adjoining the church, which was now full of officers. Voices hummed all around. The attack of the Japanese fleet and the coming war formed the only topic of conversation. War was discussed everywhere. Most thought of it as a merry expedition of some other troops

TO RED FLAG

to distant lands and of new victories, new conquests and new glory. It could not be otherwise. Not much time had elapsed since Russia had obtained the beautiful Batoum district and had conquered the Caucasus, Turkestan, Poland, Bessarabia and the Crimea. All had been obtained by the power of Russian arms and the gigantic structure of the great Russian Empire had been built up brick after brick by the blood of Russian soldiers and officers. Japan would also be conquered. Almost everyone had heard of Japan as a charming little country, a pretty toy full of nice little women. The words: "The Tokio province,"—"The Gokohama and Nagasaki districts" were already on people's lips. The Guard officers were certain that the Guards would not be sent so far from the capital. They were onlookers and saw only victory and glory in the war. The mood of the Army officers was slightly different. Battalions had already been sent from their regiments to the Far East, still more might be taken, and this made them anxious. Questions which nearly everyone had tried to forget now arose in their full importance.

What would they do with their families, if they should be sent? Where should they leave them? What would happen to their children if they should be killed? War was quite different from what it had appeared at a distance.

The sticks of the Masters of Ceremony tapped nervously on the floor. The door leading to the church was opened and closed immediately and a fragment of a religious hymn sung by the choir floated into the hall.

The order was heard: "Gentlemen, officers! Attention!" Everyone was silent.

The Emperor entered the throng of officers. Sablin could see him, could hear his low voice, but did not understand a word of what he said. He was too excited by his own sudden decision to leave for the front. The Emperor spoke quietly and briefly. Someone raised a cheer as soon as he finished and a mighty hurrah suddenly rolled through the hall and followed the officers as they descended the stairs. All were certain of victory.

Sablin left the palace, and drove home.

The winter sun was shining brightly, the clean white snow sparkled under its rays. Newspaper boys were running along the pavements and shouted merrily:

"A great victory for Japan! An attack on Port Arthur! A great victory for Japan!"

"What does this mean?" thought Sablin. "How dare they shout so. . . . A victory for Japan. No one stops them. An officer approaches them and buys a newspaper. A policeman looks on and displays complete indifference to what this stupid boy is shouting. What is it? Lack of patriotism and of understanding of the importance of the moment?"

". . . A great victory for Japan! Three battleships have perished! . . . Where am I? At Tokio or at St. Petersburg? Why don't I stop him myself and box his ears for these absurd shouts? It does not seem to hurt anyone's feelings. A young girl passes him, a student. . . . Are we Russians if we don't feel this?"

The izvostchik let his horse run at a full trot when they entered the Malaja Morskaya street and turning his face which was ruddy from the frost and fringed by a small curly beard he said:

"Is it true sir, that the Emperor has declared war on the Japanese?"

"Yes. Haven't you heard that they attacked us and almost succeeded in sinking three of our large battleships?"

"I have heard. Everyone is talking about it. But can it mean war?" We ought to have acted differently . . ."

"What do you mean?" Sablin asked with surprise.

"So. . . . With good feeling. So that there would be no war."

"It is impossible."

"It may be so, but still it's necessary. The Tsar can do anything. He's like God."

The izvostchik kept silent for some time and then turned round again.

"Then there'll be mobilization?"

"Yes, certainly," Sablin answered.

TO RED FLAG

"So. . . . That's just what I say. We don't need war. Think of it only. I have a wife and three children. A month ago I bought my own horse and my own sledge and am now my own master. And here comes the mobilization. E—eh! We don't need it. We don't. It would have been better to end it all peacefully!"

Sablin paid the *izvostchik* and looked with disgust at his ruddy good looking face.

"He is a Russian!" Sablin thought as he ascended the staircase,—“the Japanese have attacked us, have delivered a smack on the cheek of the Russian nation and he thinks nothing of it. They are ready to present the other cheek. Their personal petty interests dominate all. The beauty of great deeds, glory, honour,—all is a mere sound for them. All that he thinks about is—wife, three children and to be his own master. It is horrible! Total lack of patriotism!"

XI

THE six-year-old Kolia dressed in a blue sailor shirt and short knickers and the fair-haired five-year-old Tania heard the bell and, knowing that it was their father, ran to meet him, not listening to the words of their German nurse.

"Father has come, father has come!" shouted Kolia dancing round him and pulling at the cold scabbard of his sword,—“I met him first!"

"No, I have," Tania interrupted him.

"Go, children, you will catch cold, I have come in from the frost."

"No, father, I want to go with you," prattled Kolia, following him.

"Take them, *Fraulein*," Sablin said. "Is Vera Constantinovna at home?"

"She is in her drawing room," answered the nurse.

"Tell her, please, that I would like to speak to her."

Sablin went to his study, took off his parade tunic and flung it over the back of a chair. Vera Constantinovna entered and they kissed.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Alexander," Vera Constantinovna said quietly,—“can it be true? Has war been declared?”

“Yes, the Emperor has only just spoken about it to us. There was no other issue after this insult to Russia!”

“Our regiment of course stays here,” Vera Constantinovna said.

“Yes, it will, but a permission has been granted to the officers to join for the time of war other units which are leaving for the front. I am going to leave also.”

“What?” Vera Constantinovna said frowning. “You will do that?”

“Why no?” Sablin said quickly and stopped before a window with his back turned to the light. Vera Constantinovna was standing before an arm chair. She was dressed in a loose light blue morning gown trimmed with expensive lace. Her hair was not done and fell in capricious waves over her forehead. Sablin had to acknowledge that she was very beautiful and that he loved her more and more as time went on.

“Who is leaving from the regiment?” Vera Constantinovna asked quietly, hardly moving her lips.

“Fetisoff, Oksenshirna, Malsky, Popoff and Turoff,” Sablin answered.

“I can understand Fetisoff. A wild sort of fellow, an adventurer. Oksenshirna is a nasty boy whom soon no one will receive in decent houses and who will be dismissed from the regiment because of his scandals. The parents of Malsky and Popoff will never allow them to go. Turoff can go—no one needs this ugly fellow. But you? Did you realise what you were doing when you volunteered?”

“Vera, I had thought. . . . I know only one thing. My duty as an officer is to go to the front in war time. I cannot look at it otherwise. I would feel ashamed to parade the streets in officer's uniform while war is going on.”

“I am against it,” Vera Constantinovna said proudly, her nostrils twitching. She raised her head and fixed her blue eyes on Sablin. He lowered his.

“You are a descendant of the knights of Livonia, Vera. You

cannot say such things. You ought to persuade me to go should I have wavered. Your duty is to tell me: 'With your shield or on it.' "

"I know where my duty lies," Vera Constantinovna replied,—"but you do not realise yours. Is your regiment leaving? Your squadron, the men whom you have taught? Why don't you answer?"

"No, they are not going."

"Your duty is to stay with them. You can never know what is coming. What will happen if the Guards should be needed for the defense of the Throne, while all the officers have departed in quest of cheap laurels of victories over the Japanese? Would it be good?"

Sablin remained silent.

"I say nothing about your duty towards myself. You can't leave me like this. I am young and I love you so. I can't live without you. Have pity on me."

She stretched her arms towards him. The broad lace sleeves of her morning gown slipped down to the elbow and the bare beautiful arms with fingers sparkling with gems were stretched out towards him. Sablin was struggling with himself. He stood at the window, his head bent low. Blood flowed towards his brain and hindered his thoughts. The excitement he had experienced at the Palace from the words of the Emperor, from the general enthusiasm and the ringing cheers of the officers was disappearing and being replaced by a different one.

"Just as you like," Vera Constantinovna said sadly and her beautiful arms fell limply,—"just as you like. You are the lord and I am your slave. I wouldn't have said a word if it was our regiment that was going. It would have been your duty then. But your duty is the defense of the Throne and of Russia. A war of conquest, an expedition to Japan is for adventurers for whom personal glory has more importance than a severe adherence to a difficult duty. Have you thought of the Emperor? He has showered favours on you. He has made you his personal A.D.C. and you are leaving him in hard moments of war and perhaps of revolution."

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

She stood sorrowful and her blue eyes were still fixed on him. Her dark eyebrows were frowning, the thin lips were firmly pressed together.

"Well, all right! Go then . . ." she said suddenly in a sobbing voice and tears shone like diamonds in her eyes and ran down her cheeks. She sank powerless into the large leather arm chair. He was at her feet in a second, clasped her knees, kissed her little hands, kissed her cheeks covered with tears and sought her lips. But she avoided his, hid her face on his breast, pushed away and then clasped him to her.

Passion was seizing them.

Vera Constantinovna left the study happy with her victory. Sablin remained alone. He sat on the sofa, his hands supporting his head and curling his long hair round his fingers. He was thinking. Was there any difference between himself and the izvostchik who had driven him home from the palace? There the motives were a horse, a sledge, wife, children and the newly experienced happiness of ownership, and here—the comfort of a luxurious flat, the love of a beautiful young woman and the wide happiness of a life without worries such as he had led during the past years. Which of them could be then called the patriot? Where was the mighty unselfish love for Russia for which no sacrifice would be too great? But the words of Vera Constantinovna kept ringing in his ears. The izvostchik would have to go if he should be mobilized, but perhaps he would not be called upon and would then keep his family and his horse. What was he then thinking about? He had not been called upon. His duty lay in remaining at his difficult post and not in leaving for a merry expedition full of adventures.

XII

SABLIN had not withdrawn his request to the Commander of the regiment. He could not do that and Vera Constantinovna did not insist upon it. She pleaded her cause before the Empress. The Empress took the matter into her hands and Sablin's application for a transfer to the Far East was declined by order

from above. Only Fetisoff, Oksenshirna and Turoff left from the regiment. Malsky and Popoff withdrew their requests.

All Sablin's thoughts were at the front. He read all the news that arrived from the Far East, tried to meet people who returned from there, questioned them; and the more he thought about the war the less he understood the Russian people in general and the educated classes especially.

The war was going on while Russia lived its usual life and showed no interest in the events. After Turentchen it had become evident that it was not a merry expedition to the country of the geishas but a difficult, serious war that lay before Russia,—a war which would influence the whole development of the life of the nation. But the society circles were still ironical about the war.

A pompous farewell supper with music and speeches was arranged for Fetisoff, Oksenshirna and Turoff, but no one praised their noble impulse. On the contrary all seemed to blame them for leaving the regiment. The supper was extremely merry, and many jokes were made.

"Bring me back a pair of geishas," Rotbek, who had consumed a considerable amount of champagne, said as he kissed Fetisoff.

"I can't, you are married."

"It doesn't matter. They shall only dance, sing and nothing more."

"You'll get a hot time from your wife for it."

"I'm not afraid."

Only when Matzneff said, looking in Fetisoff's direction: "I have a feeling that he won't return," all were silent around him and the terrible thought came to them through the mist of wine vapours: "one can be killed and wounded where these men are now going."

The Russian educated classes were not worried by the defeats of the Army, felt no sorrow because of them and did not institute national mourning after the loss of the "Petropavlovsk" and the death of Makaroff and Verestchagin. After a moment

of grief and thoughtfulness all resumed their ironical attitude towards themselves.

No one sought for the real reasons of defeat, which lay deep in their own souls, but only joked and laughed. Humouristic poems were circulated among the public.

The government tried to interest the lower classes by issuing grotesque pictures of naval actions, a cavalry attack at Vafangoo and portraits of Kuropatkin, Stessel and Linevitch. Correspondents sent back long accounts to their newspapers but even the most favourably inclined often let the hard truth appear between the lines.

The enemies of the government raised their heads and the people who hoped to overthrow the existing order of things began to work.

Sablin soon felt that some cord had snapped and that a deep precipice now separated the people from the Tsar. Perhaps it had existed before, but it had been concealed. There was no hostility as yet. Only entire indifference. Once Sablin drove back from the summer manœuvres to the "White House" using post-horses. He talked to the driver, a calm, sensible looking man of about thirty. The conversation kept turning to the war.

"Do the Japanese continue to beat us, sir?" asked the driver.

"They don't. Great battles are raging and we have had to retire slightly. But we shall throw them back as soon as we get reinforcements."

"My brother has written to me from there. It's necessary to finish this war and to surrender. We can't beat them."

"How can we surrender. We shall then have the Mikado instead of the Emperor!" exclaimed Sablin.

"It's all the same to us, sir, Nicolas or the Mikado. We shall have to pay the same taxes and the Mikado may lessen them perhaps. . . . More land, that's what we need. It would have to be divided equally."

The driver was a simple good natured fellow and no traces of revolutionism were to be noticed in him. His words made Sablin think deeply. He had heard much about the ignorance and lack of education of the Russian people. When working

with recruits Sablin had often met with their primæval ideas on life, but like most men of his class he saw Russia's power in this ignorance and lack of culture of the Russian peasant. He thought that this would enable the peasants to have a pure faith in God, to revere the Tsar and to obey the authorities. Sablin thought that an ignorant crowd was easier to deal with, that it was more obedient. The war opened the eyes of the people. It raised the curtain which hid the darkness that reigned in their souls and Sablin saw with horror that no traces of patriotism, of faith in God or of love for the Tsar were to be found there. Only a greedy desire to possess land and to have their own horses, cattle and other appliances. He thought of the *izvostchik* on the day of the declaration of war—"I am my own master," and of the newspaper boys. The latter still continued to shout painful news from the front in the same tone but no one stopped them.

The necessity to teach and educate the people, to create schools of patriotism became evident to Sablin. But who would do the teaching? Those who had finished high schools and universities? He thought of the young educated people he had met in the days of his youth at the house of the Martoffs. This class of people itself needed to be taught patriotism. They did not believe in Russia and they did not love it. . . . They had started writing pamphlets directed against the Army; they laughed and mocked at our failures.

The Tsar, the people and the educated classes were opposed to one another and none of them understood the rest. The Tsar loved Russia and believed in the people. He thought he could judge of them by his Body-Guard and by his servants. The Tsar had often told him: "Our people are the best in the world." The Tsar did not know that in the meantime the real people said calmly: "It's all the same to us, Nicholas or the Mikado. . . . We want land!"

The people had their own Tsar. The terrible Tsar, Hunger, and the Land which saved them from it and which was their Tsaritsa.

The educated people were between the people and the Tsar.

They did not love or recognise the Tsar, and all tried to undermine his power and authority, some consciously, others unconsciously. There was a wide gulf between the life of the educated classes and that of the people. They did not know or understand them. They idealised the peasants, endowing them with qualities which they lacked. Something was going wrong in the great Russian building, cement and separate bricks were falling out of it. It was then that someone made a new epigram full of anxiety about Russia: "Russia is a giant with feet of clay. The feet are being washed away and the giant may collapse at any moment." Prince Shahovskoi, a serious officer and a distant relative of Count Leo Tolstoi, had said this to Sablin.

Sablin had been happy before the war. He had loved the Tsar, Russia and the Russian people and felt quite at home in the circle of his family.

Now he began to lose his faith in the people. He often visited the squadron and talked to the men and the sergeant.

The old Ivan Karpovitch was brimming with wrath and indignation.

"The men are becoming quite different from what they were, Your Honour. They're going crazy. I tell a man to polish his brass buttons and he begins to speak of the Japanese war. 'Nothing shining is needed there,' he says, 'all is invisible.' They're getting too educated and talk too much."

But the soldiers avoided talking to Sablin. They feared him and Sablin noticed by some of their questions that new thoughts were rising in their minds and that they tried to conceal them.

"Your Honour," the smart corporal Pankratoff asked, "how could it happen that we had no maps ready for the Far East? One cannot fight without maps nowadays."

"Your Honour, people are saying that cavalry is no longer needed now. The Japanese have none, but they get on quite well without it. The horses are quite expensive. If only one could distribute them among the farms . . ." said the private Baum, the son of wealthy colonists.

Questions that had not existed before now rose in the minds of the soldiers. Previously they had implicitly obeyed all the

orders of the officers without thinking over or discussing them. The soldiers had trusted the officers.

Now the soldiers took interest in the newspapers and read much; some questioned and talked to the officers. This moment should have been used to support and to unite with them in the same thoughts, but the officers could not do that. Neither could Sablin. The whole of their lives prevented them from doing so. Sablin involuntarily remembered Lubovin and Marousia. Yes, his ancestors rose between them. The soldiers sought equality and friendly intercourse, Sablin desired the same but nothing came out of his conversations with the men. They involuntarily took the form of lessons. The soldiers had to get up, stand at attention when talking and call him "Your Honour." Their relations still had the form of those of a noble and of servants.

It was difficult to speak to them. Reports came from the war of the importance of invisible colour for clothing, of trenches, of scouting and of the impossibility of cavalry attacks. The same white shirts and cavalry drill in close order reigned on the manoeuvre field meanwhile. War was teaching the necessity of new methods but the old routine continued to prevail. The men were losing all interest in the manoeuvres. Sablin went to see Dalgren, a cavalry expert.

Dalgren had a reputation for reserve but he now condemned Kuropatkin and blamed him for lack of audacity. The spirit of criticism had penetrated even into the General Staff. Everyone criticised much but little was done to straighten things out.

"Thus the war has given a tremendous blow to the Russian Empire," thought Sablin. "The Tsar, the educated classes and the people have become separated from each other. The people do not believe in the Tsar and the intellectual classes hate him and desire to overthrow him. The educated classes and not the people are the Tsar's enemies and the fight must be with them. Now or never the Tsar must do something that will separate him from the all-criticising intellectuals and bring him nearer to the people."

XIII

IN the last days of September Sablin received an order from the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna to accompany a transport of presents from her to an Army Corps near Mukden. The presents had been carefully prepared and packed, many of them personally by the Empress. They consisted of a large handkerchief in which were enveloped a set of underwear, tobacco, tea, a pound of sugar, sweets, writing paper, envelopes and a large photograph of the Empress with the newly born Tsarevitch in her arms.

Sablin arrived at Mukden on a quiet autumn day. Four Guard soldiers accompanied the truck with the presents. Sablin found a transport unit near the station and, having left two of his soldiers to supervise the unloading, rode through Mukden towards the Headquarters of the Corps. One of his corporals and a transport soldier accompanied him, mounted on little Manchurian horses.

Mukden was teeming with life. Russian soldiers in grey, blue and green shirts crowded the streets. No one saluted and there was none of the outward discipline to which Sablin had been accustomed at Petersburg. No freedom or comradeship, such as the war might have created, could be noticed in their behaviour. They seemed indifferent to everything. Officers covered with dust and almost as untidy as the soldiers, except for their silver or gold shoulder straps, surrounded hawkers, purchased various trifles or simply wandered aimlessly through the streets. Chinese in blue dresses were seen here and there, heavy Chinese wagons with two huge wheels and a great blue cover were slowly driven through the crowd by pairs of mules, horses, donkeys or even cows. The wagons were laden with various domestic possessions on which sat brightly painted Chinese women with narrow eyes. Mounted Chinese, accompanied by untidy looking Russian soldiers, returned from scouting for provisions.

Long boards with golden Chinese letters over the shops surrounded by multi-coloured rags, red poles with gilded balls on

the top, typical Chinese houses, the roofs of which had upturned edges, temples with stone "shidzi,"—something between a dog and a dragon—, terrible looking pictures of gods painted over the gates, the long black plaits of the men, the round caps with round balls on the top of those of the officials, the barbers shaving half naked workmen in the streets and cooks roasting Chinese dishes on grates in the open air. Russian soldiers, officers and army wagons laden with aromatic Russian rye bread, moved among these Chinese surroundings. The contrast diverted and interested Sablin. He soon noticed that the appearance of both officers and men was quite different in various units. He could see neatly dressed infantry soldiers with the Emperor's initials on their crimson shoulder straps. These saluted well and were smart looking. He could see men of Petersburg units clad in yellow shirts with numbers on their shoulder straps that had become familiar to him from the manoeuvres. These also seemed good. But others had lost all soldierly appearance, were clad in semi-Chinese rags and were impertinent and disgusting. Sablin noticed that the men with the Emperor's initials on their shoulder straps were smarter than the rest. The Emperor's name seemed to put an obligation on them. Sablin began to talk with his orderly, the transport soldier, so as to verify his own impressions, and asked to what unit belonged the soldier who had so smartly saluted him.

"Of His Majesty's First East Siberian regiment, smart fellows all of them," answered the soldier.

"How do they fight?" asked Sablin.

"The best regiment we have out here," said the Siberian soldier,—*"the Japs run before them."*

"Why aren't all like this regiment?"

"Why?"—the soldier had evidently never thought of it,—*"I don't know why. It is true that they are different. There are regiments which it is useless to send into action, they run at the first shot. But these fight one against ten and sing songs in the meantime. I don't know why that's so."*

They rode out of the town passing through gates cut in a

great battlemented wall. The road passed through fields of reaped gaolian or Manchurian millet of gigantic size.

They met heavy carts laden with sheafs of gaolian, sacks of grain and cages with chickens. The rich country partly continued its autumn work. The dim outlines of violet hills were hardly noticeable ahead or to the left. Warm air flowed before them quivering with the heat.

Sablin rode past the houses of Chinese landowners. Pear trees stretched over stone walls, their branches laden with golden fruit. Brick paved paths, geraniums covered with their bright autumn blossoms and grey houses with paper windows could be seen through the gates.

Peaceful existence and the quiet of a warm autumn reigned around. Little reminded one of the war.

XIV

THE Commander of the Corps, a tall handsome old man, an ex-guardsman and A.D.C. of the Emperor Alexander II received Sablin kindly. He lodged in one half of a Chinese house, the other being occupied by his staff. The latter, being Guard officers and Sablin's Petersburg acquaintances, met him with noisy exuberance and began questioning him about Petersburg and the thoughts of people there.

"I am fed up with this war," said an aide, Captain Koushkovsky. "You can't imagine to what extent I'm fed up with it. We can't beat the Japs. They're much more cunning than we are."

"How do our men fight?"

"I can't understand them. Sometimes they accomplish marvels of bravery and at others fly in panic. Somehow everything is stupid and aimless. There is no certainty about anything. Tomorrow will begin the advance upon Liao-Yang, but, frankly speaking, I'm convinced we won't take it."

"Why has the advance been ordered then?" asked Sablin.

"Public opinion insists upon it," said Bobchinsky, another aide of the Corps Commander.

The latter was examining the presents.

TO RED FLAG

"How good it is," he said,— "that Her Majesty has sent her portrait. It will encourage the soldiers before the battle. It will be easier now to die for her."

The Commander of the Corps decided to drive after dinner to the nearest division and there personally distribute the presents. The order to assemble the regiments was telephoned to the division and at five o'clock Sablin settled with the General in a comfortable carriage drawn by a pair of good horses and drove towards the bivouac. His heart was beating. He would soon see men who knew already what life and death meant, before him would be men many of whom would die on the morrow. "What are they like?" he thought. "Have they risen in spirit as they wait for brave deeds and for death or are they still full of petty interests of everyday life?"

Long rows of low tents appeared on a wide yellow trampled field. It was the bivouac of the division. The battalions were lined up in dark grey quadrangles. The instruments of a band which had not been cleaned for a long time, shone dully on the right flank of the nearest regiment.

The regiments presented arms and the band played a march.

The Commander of the Corps approached the first regiment, greeted the men and commanded, "Order arms!"

Sablin stood behind the Commander of the Corps. Motionless lines of soldiers were before him. Grey caps, great-coats tied up in rolls and slung over the shoulders, grey trousers, top-boots,—Sablin was accustomed to it all and it reminded him of manœuvres and not of war. The men had a sullen appearance. Their eyes expressed nothing.

In spite of his age the voice of the Commander of the Corps had the tones of a man accustomed to speak before the ranks. He said that Her Majesty had not forgotten the Army among her many Imperial duties, that she had thought of the soldiers and had sent for each man her portrait and a gift.

"Keep in your hearts this favour of the Empress," said the General,— "remember our mother the Tsaritsa and die boldly for her and for Russia!"

Tears appeared in the General's eyes. He was deeply moved

by his own words. The soldiers answered the usual phrase: "We shall do our best, Your Excellency," and remained silent again.

The order was given to stack arms and the issue of the presents was begun by companies.

Sablin asked for permission to stay at the bivouac, and walked among the tents. He was a stranger here. He talked to the officers; and aged Colonels addressed him, a Captain, in respectful tones. The soldiers only gaped at his uniform and the sparkling initials on the shoulder straps and smiled stupidly. Sablin had tea with the Commander of a regiment and left the bivouac saying that he would return on foot to the Headquarters of the Corps.

The bright Manchurian sun was quietly sinking in a golden mist. A great red moon rose slowly above the dark hills as if it were bound by a huge lever to the sun. All the beautiful colours of the Manchurian autumn sparkled overhead from the fire of the sunset. Rare clouds had soft pink or coppery shades; the deep sky was like dark blue brocade and began to shine with silver in the East where mountains were already sparkling. The air was warm, dogs barked in a village, a donkey brayed and cows lowed. The grey bivouac was quieting down. The smell of cabbage soup and of fresh bread floated from it; and taking cover under the tents it resembled a great beast that was settling to rest.

Sablin approached the edge of the bivouac and sat down under a large tree. Its shadow thrown by the moon was becoming more and more distinct and at last concealed Sablin from view. The tents of the bivouac began to appear like yellow spots. The soldiers had lit candles in them preparing themselves for sleep. Three voices, probably belonging to officers, tenor, bass and baritone were singing near by. They sang well and the three voices which were evidently accustomed to each other, blended in beautiful harmony of the sad and touching tune. Sablin listened to the words and felt disgusted.

They were singing a cynical dirty song which described the

grey Russian life in an abominable colouring and sang it to this beautiful tune which touched the very soul.

"How can Russian educated men revel in this dirt and obscenity? Can it be that this and not a prayer, a hymn or a bold mighty battle song of a Russian soldier accompanies them to battle? They are going into action tomorrow!" thought Sablin. He rose and walked towards the bivouac.

XV

HE passed the tents in the darkness, looking into those where lights were burning and soldier voices were heard. No one recognised him.

"Who goes there?" was sometimes asked from the tents.

"Friend," answered Sablin and went on. He enjoyed the warm moonlit night and the nearness of people who were going into action.

"How good it is of our mother the Tsaritsa," Sablin heard a voice say. "She has thought of us and all the presents are well chosen. Some good man must have advised her. A good shirt this is too. I will put it on for the battle. If I get killed I shall then appear in the Tsaritsa's shirt before the eyes of God."

"You are a fool," a grim hoarse voice interrupted him.

"You're another," said the first voice.

"Put the light out and don't scatter your things about. You aren't alone in the tent. It's the last candle end we've got."

"Keep quiet."

Sablin walked up quietly to the tent and looked inside. Four soldiers were stretched upon a litter of straw. A fifth had spread near the entrance the handkerchief in which the presents had been wrapped and examined its contents. He now held the portrait of the Empress in his hands and looked at it attentively.

"I am thankful for her portrait. She is beautiful and her children are darlings. I have seen many noble people in my life but one can immediately see that she is a noble among nobles."

"Silence!" said a grim looking thin soldier who lay next to him.

"Have you forgotten your peasant life, Filip Ivanovitch?" asked a bearded soldier with a good natured face.

"I have never worked on the land. My father rented a bar in the Commercial fleet and I have always sailed with him as a boy. Many wonderful foreign places have I seen; we have been four times round the world. Yes. . . . When I grew up I started a business of my own, but it didn't go well. Then I got the job of butler in a dragoon regiment's Mess. Yes. . . . a fine time it was. Much money flowed past me. Debts were not paid sometimes and I just held on by a thread; some beat me, others lavished gold upon me; but I could not leave, so merry it was. The gentlemen liked me and I can say that I loved them."

"Because you're a slave!"

"Don't swear, Zahar Petrovitch. I am not speaking for your benefit."

"I can't listen to your disgusting stories."

"Well don't. I don't compel you to. . . . Yes. . . . You only made me lose the thread of my thoughts, Mr. Zakrevsky. A fine time we had at the dragoon regiment. All the officers were good fellows. Colonel von Stein was in command. They would have merry evenings at the Mess sometimes. . . . They would get drunk and perform regimental drill round the table. Buglers would give signals and they would roar the orders all at the same time. Then von Stein would shout: 'There are no gentlemen!' and all would get under the table as quick as they could. There was a stout major Ousoff among them, he would also puff and snort and run on all fours under the table. There they would sit until von Stein shouted: 'gentlemen exist!' and all would then dash out from under the table. A merry time it was!"

"The scoundrels! Call themselves nobles after that!"

Filip Ivanovitch glanced sideways at the speaker and replied nothing.

"I remember how they once decided to have a funeral of Lieutenant Serejnikoff."

"Did he die?" asked the bearded soldier.

"No, he was only quite drunk. They constructed a fitter,

read all sorts of nonsense over him and then carried him home to his wife singing funeral hymns. And what would you think? . . . A month later his horse slipped at the manoeuvres, fell and crushed him. He died two weeks after the accident. Their joke had evidently displeased God."

"Jolly glad he perished," growled the thin soldier.

"Oh! the scoundrels!" exclaimed Zakrevsky.

"What did they do to you, Zahar Petrovitch? They enjoyed themselves and no one suffered from it. They did beat people at times but they always generously rewarded the offended. You had only the pleasure of getting easily earned money. . . . Yes. . . . There had been a Captain Krasilnikoff in the regiment. A good gentleman. Once they all got drunk and towards morning decided to drive round the town. They assembled izvostchiks but Krasilnikoff stayed behind for some reason and did not get one. I led him out of the Mess because he could hardly stand on his feet and he said: 'Filip Ivanovitch, tell me, my dear friend, is it decent for a nobleman to walk when tight?' I kept silent. He continued: 'No, Filip Ivanovitch, a nobleman shall never walk when tight. He would lose his dignity otherwise. He must have something to drive on.' A hearse was passing at that time. 'Stop' shouted Krasilnikoff,—'it isn't quite decent, this chariot, but it's better than to walk. Help me in, Filip Ivanovitch.' He seated himself on the hearse and made the driver gallop after the rest of the party."

"I would spit in your face, Filip Ivanovitch, if I didn't think it degrading for myself. An animal has more self respect than you have!"

Filip Ivanovitch assumed a sorrowful expression, shook his head and said:

"I see that I have been casting pearls before swine and that you haven't understood me. No, I shan't meet such gentlemen again as lived in bygone days!"

He tied up the presents in the handkerchief, stowed it in his haversack, and asked as he stretched himself on the straw:

"Shall I put the light out?"

No one answered. Filip Ivanovitch blew out the candle and

darkness stood in the tent. Sablin quietly walked away. Lights were being put out here and there and the bivouac had a mysterious appearance in the moonlight.

Sablin met two soldiers returning drunk from the village.

"Ough! The d . . . d Chinaman! Served three glasses only for the sugar and the shirt. He wouldn't even take the portrait."

"Why did she send it," said the second soldier,—“of what use is it to us!”

"Hell. . . . Think of the diamonds that were on her. One could buy a whole village with them. She would have done better by selling them and sending vodka to the soldiers than presents and portraits!"

"The Chinaman gave three glasses for the whole present. And it's called a Tsar's present!"

They went on swearing and stumbling over tent pegs trying to find their own tent.

"These fellows will also go into action and may die tomorrow," thought Sablin.

XVI

ON his way back to Petersburg, Sablin felt a desire to tell the whole truth, all that he had seen. But what was the truth? Did he know it? He had seen excellent units and had met men in rags, but did not know the reason for this difference. He could not have named the Commanders of the good and of the bad units. He had been presented to Kuropatkin and Kuropatkin had charmed him. All that he had said was clever and wise. It seemed that it was no fault of Kuropatkin that the war was unsuccessful. He had foreseen and reported everything. He could not tell this to the Emperor, because it would have been equal to accusing him of responsibility for all the misfortunes, and he honestly believed the Emperor to be free from blame.

When the day of the audience came and the Emperor and the Empress received him in the evening after supper in the presence of only one Maid of Honour, Sablin described in pleasant and vivid colours the scenes he had witnessed. The order in the

Army was excellent, Kuropatkin was an able and gifted leader and had a thorough grasp of the situation. The soldiers were modest heroes who loved the Emperor and were ready to die for him. Everything was going on well.

The Emperor listened to Sablin, looking at him with large sad eyes. He thanked Sablin for his report and rewarded him with a decoration. Shaking hands with Sablin he looked for a moment queerly into his eyes as if reproaching him for his lies. Sablin felt burning shame when he left the palace, as if he had done something exceptionally mean. But thinking things over, he came to the conclusion that he could not have made a different report. He had no grounds to blame anyone and he would have had to remain silent or to say what he had said.

In December Port Arthur unexpectedly surrendered. That had never happened in Russian history, and the shadows of the defendants of Pskov, Sebastopol and Bayedzid seemed to rise in anguish from their graves. Fortresses had been abandoned, but they had never been surrendered. The fact was terrible because it made evident a new defect in the Army—weakness of spirit. But everyone soon quieted down after having accused Stessel and attached a label of traitor to him. The war was too distant and did not touch Petersburg, where the same noisy and merry life was proceeding. People enjoyed themselves more than usual and only the great fluffy fur caps of men leaving for the front reminded one of the war. The usual flow of life was not altered on the banks of the Neva.

That day the first shot was fired at the Emperor. A shrapnel, its fuse set a point blank range was directed at the Imperial pavilion across the Neva by the hand of a traitor, a soldier of a Guard battery which had to fire the salute. But the attempt did not meet with success, the bullets having whizzed over the heads of the Emperor and those surrounding him, tearing some of the regimental colours which were behind and smashing windows in the palace. No one had the courage to bring the truth to light. The battery was the same in which the Emperor had served and which his uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei Mihailovitch, had commanded in his young days. No one could confess

that treason had penetrated there, that men who could be willing to murder the Tsar existed among the Guards. All was explained by an accident. It was much simpler thus. Sablin was deeply impressed by this event and expected that the Commander of the battery would take some action. "There are only two issues before him," thought Sablin, "suicide or the monastery." But the Commander of the battery tried to exculpate himself, the incident was hushed up and he was transferred to an Army unit. No one was punished.

Sablin expressed his indignation but did not meet with sympathy anywhere. With horror he began to see that not the intellectual classes only had lost their feeling of love for the Emperor. The old noble classes, the high society which had always supported the Tsar and the Throne now was also infected. "We" became of more importance than "He." The honour of the uniform, traditions, personal welfare of separate individuals met with more consideration than did the Emperor. The Guards accepted this fact in silence.

XVII

THE Sablins, Paltoffs, Rotbeks, Vorobieffs, Matzneff and Gritzenko had agreed to go on a party on the 9th of January to a restaurant on the outskirts of the town to listen to the singing of the "tziganes." The date had been fixed some time previously. After the fall of Port Arthur Natalia Borisovna Paltoff had been seized by a desire to enjoy herself at any price. She hoped to forget thus the shame of the defeats. But large disturbances took place at Petersburg on the 9th of January, the troops shot into the crowd, many people were killed and windows smashed in the Nevsky. Sablin was certain that their party would have to be postponed, but at eleven o'clock Stepochka Vorobieff came as he had agreed to do. Countess Paltoff dressed in a black silk evening gown arrived soon after with her husband and then Rotbek with his little gay wife Nina Vasilievna. They waited in the drawing room for Matzneff and Gritzenko, exchanging impressions of the day.

"I think that it would be better to postpone our party," said Sablin. "It isn't safe even."

"Nonsense; it is safer today than at any other time. The whole of the police is on the lookout and half of the garrison is camping in the streets. These field kitchens and picket lines about the town remind me of Paris pictures in 1814," said Paltoff, "I think that the ladies would be interested to see it."

Paltoff was in high spirits. His company had passed the whole day in the streets and had shot at the mob. He was pleased that everything had come off smoothly. It had been rumoured that the soldiers would refuse to open fire and would murder their officers if they tried to arrest their leaders. The officers had received an order to be at the barracks before dawn. At six o'clock in the morning Paltoff had arrived at the barracks accompanied by his junior officers. He felt uneasy as he mounted the stairs dimly lit by lamps blackened by smoke and entered the dark corridor leading to the bedrooms. Noise and shouts came from there. It even seemed to Paltoff that he heard whistles. But he met with the usual scene as he swung open the heavy doors. The air was close, lamps lit dimly the large hall with beds standing in rows and lithographs and time tables pinned to the walls. The winter night reigned on the other side of the dark windows.

The men in overcoats, caps and cartridge pouches on white straps stood in a long line along one of the walls holding their rifles at "order arms." The sergeant ordered "attention." Everything was as usual, as if they were going out for drill or short manœuvres. Paltoff greeted the company, the men answered smartly and he saw the same familiar sleepy faces as he walked down the ranks. The sergeant followed him grunting discontentedly from time to time as he adjusted the straps of the men. Paltoff thought that it was perhaps necessary to say something to the soldiers, to tell them that they might have to shoot and to remind them of their oath of allegiance.

But what should he say? He did not understand himself what was happening at Petersburg. It had been rumoured that the workmen intended to go to the Emperor's palace and pre-

sent their demands. Some said that this had economical grounds, that they desired to work less and to receive more, others insisted that the socialists were behind it all and that the workmen would demand the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, the abdication of the Emperor and immediate peace with Japan. The Emperor was not in Petersburg but it was impossible to allow any demonstrations and it had been ordered to fire on the crowds in case of disobedience. What would he say then? Would the soldiers understand him? Count Paltoff had a very vague idea of it all himself and he realised that it would be better to say nothing. He asked, not addressing anyone in particular: "Have the cartridges been issued?" "Yes," answered someone's grim voice from the ranks. Paltoff ordered: "Right face!" The company turned heavily and remained motionless.

"Forward march!" the boots clattered and creaked down the corridor.

It was not so dark in the streets. Lamps were still burning, but pale grey dawn was approaching. There were no passers-by. Dvorniks were sweeping the snow off the pavements and scattering snow over them. The air was calm and frosty. The snow creaked under the feet of the company as it lined up down the street. Paltoff led his company towards the appointed place. He felt more at ease now and only wanted to sleep. Rare passers-by, servants with baskets and postmen began to appear in the streets. The lamps burned no longer. Dawn had already broken, the sky had a greenish tint and light clouds floated over the houses. Smoke rose in columns out of many chimneys. Bells sounded from many church towers announcing an early service.

They arrived at the designated crossing of streets and halted. Time seemed to pass very slowly, and they did not know what to do. One of the officers found a small inn near-by and Count Paltoff went there with the officers leaving the sergeant in charge of the company. It was necessary to fill the time. They sat in a small room at a little table covered with a clean white cloth. Large tea pots, glasses, bread and butter were placed be-

fore them. Izvostchiks and dvorniks were drinking tea in the next large room. Men came and went throwing coppers on the counter and ordering tea.

It was broad daylight when they left the inn. The street was full of people, men went to and fro, some were hurrying, others walking slowly. The movement was unusual but there was nothing dangerous in it. The soldiers stacked their rifles and crowded round them. Some sat on curb stones and dozed. Several of the passers-by tried to stop near the company but numerous policemen drove them away.

About noon the rumble of a volley was heard near-by, and was soon followed by a second. Then all was silent again. Several men with pale faces ran down the street. One of them had lost his cap. The passers-by disappeared as if by magic. Paltoff formed his company, and another half hour passed. Men began to appear at the end of the street. They not only covered both pavements but overflowed into the middle of the street which was soon filled by a compact black crowd. Suddenly red banners were unrolled in two or three places. Something was being sung in the crowd, but one could not yet make out the words. An izvostchik dashed in front of the crowd towards Paltoff's company. A deathly pale police officer sat in the sledge. He was without a cap, his face was blood-stained and bruised and his sword had been torn away.

He came up to Paltoff and raising his hand to his head in salute, evidently forgetting that he had no cap on, reported in a shaky voice.

"You will have to shoot. They are quite mad and have murdered a policeman. See what they have done to me."

Paltoff drew up his men across the street and looked at the soldiers. They were grimly calm. Fury against the crowd was boiling in Paltoff: "What do the fools want?" he thought,—"Jews incite them and they advance only to get shot!" The crowd came nearer and halted. Red banners quietly floated over it. Something was painted on them in black sprawling letters. Paltoff looked at the inscriptions. "Down with autocracy!" was written on one. "Long live socialism! The Social Revolu-

tionary Party," was to be seen on another. He felt that the blood flowed away from his brain, he hardly heard what the police officer was continuing to report about killed men, upset telephone posts and barricades. Paltoff left the company and followed by a bugler went towards the crowd, lightly stepping over the snow. He had never walked so easily. The snow was deep in some places, in others it had been made smooth and slippery by the sledges but Paltoff did not notice this. He felt as if he was walking upon air.

"Listen!" he said and felt surprised at the hard calm tone of his voice. It seemed to him that someone else was speaking, so strange was the sound of his own words as they reached his ears. "I request you to disperse and to stop rioting!"

The crowd was silent, only the quick breathing of excited people was heard. Suddenly two men came forward. A schoolboy of about sixteen walked over the snow with his arm clasped round the neck of a young man of about twenty with a bluish pale face covered with coal dust. He was dressed in a dark overcoat, torn trousers and had a grim and sullen appearance.

The schoolboy halted two paces from Paltoff and addressed the soldiers in a voice stammering with excitement.

"Comrades! We are the workmen and inhabitants of Petersburg! Our wives, our children and our parents are all going to our father, the Tsar, to seek truth and defense. We are in poverty, we are oppressed and burdened by exhausting labour, we are not considered as men but as slaves. We have stood it all, but. . . ."

"Silence!" Paltoff said imperatively. "Disperse immediately!"

"I cannot be silent!" exclaimed the schoolboy growing pale.

"Disperse! I have orders to open fire and I will do my duty," Paltoff said firmly.

"You ran from the Japanese and now you're showing us how brave you are!" a woman shouted from the crowd. She was simply dressed, but wore a fur coat and had a muff in her hands.

"Again I ask you to disperse. Otherwise I will open fire and

you—you will be responsible for the death of innocent people you have misled," said Paltoff.

"Murderers, hangmen, crows!" came from the crowd.

"We will treat the Tsar as he treats us. He wants us to die for him in Manchuria, but he can wait for it now!" said the workman who had come forward with the schoolboy.

"We have no Tsar! What kind of a Tsar is he!" shouted the same woman.

"Disperse! I am going to open fire immediately!"

Paltoff turned and walked behind the ranks of his company.

"Don't be afraid, comrades, press forward! They have blank cartridges!" shouts were heard in the crowd.

Paltoff gave an order. The company shuddered in an obedient movement and raised their rifles. Paltoff felt that the military mechanism of his company was in perfect working order and grew reassured.

The crowd swayed on the same spot.

"We cannot go back!" shouts were heard. "We shall die either way!"

But no one went forward.

Then the man who had stood at the side of the schoolboy stepped forward and shouted:

"Come, comrades, don't be afraid! Forward! I will be the first to die for the people!"

He advanced and the crowd moved after him. Those behind pressed against the front ranks and they had to move on.

"Company!" ordered Paltoff.

A sinister silence followed. Someone exclaimed plaintively: "They have blank cartridges!"

The crowd moved forward.

"Fire!" Paltoff could scarcely utter the word.

The sharp rattle of the rifles cut the air. Terrible shrieks were heard. . . . The red banner vanished, the crowd fled in panic. The schoolboy, the woman with the muff and several men were stretched on the snow. Men ran down the street shrieking wildly. . . . The police officer appeared from behind the company. He looked pleased and happy. He called out the

dvorniks of the houses to carry away the killed and the wounded and shouted wrathfully:

"Clear these . . . away, and quick! Ah! The scoundrels, the d . . . d cowards!"

"Draw cartridge!" Paltoff ordered. He also was triumphant—his company had stood the test.

The order to return to the barracks came at six o'clock. Paltoff led the company back and then drove home. He was too excited to eat, stretched himself on a sofa in his study and fell asleep. His wife woke him at ten o'clock.

"Are we going?" she asked.

"Of course we are," said Paltoff and hurriedly began to get ready. Triumph filled his soul and he felt the hero of the day. The victory had been his. It would be so pleasant to sup now in merry company and to listen to the tziganes.

XVIII

At last Gritzenko and Matzneff arrived. They were late because they had decided to drive through the town to ascertain the state of things. Sablin spoke to them of his apprehensions.

"Of course we can go," Matzneff said lazily,—*"there are no traces of these scoundrels."*

"The theatres are open," said Gritzenko,—*"I have seen people driving there."*

"The socialists have been defeated," said Matzneff. "How did your soldiers behave?" he asked Paltoff.

"Splendidly, the volley was excellent."

"Were many killed?"

"About thirty, I think."

"I must confess that I wasn't quite certain of your men. In the Semenovskiy regiment eight soldiers didn't fire. They are going to be court-martialled. The Moskovskiy and the Egorskiy regiment didn't fire at all," said Matzneff.

"This beast Gapon has turned their heads," said Sablin. "They carried ikons, banners, sang prayers. I can't understand this muddle. Where did this priest come from?"

"What priest is he," said Stepochka. "Do you know the de-

mands they put forward? I have read a copy of their petition to the Emperor. "Land must be distributed among the people and easy credit made possible. The indirect taxes must be replaced by an income tax."

"Fine!" laughed Rotbek.

"Then—the war should be stopped at the wish of the people."

"That smells of Japanese money. Now when we're nearing victory!" said Gritzenko.

"But the best of all comes at the end: 'The Government should be responsible to the people, the church separated from the state and a Constituent Assembly convoked.'"

"I have personally seen their banners 'Down with autocracy,'" said Paltoff.

"What does this mean then? A revolution?" asked the Countess Natalia Borisovna.

"Yes, if you like," Vorobieff answered.

"And when! During the war!" said Rotbek.

"No," Sablin said, "I am certain that the workmen are not responsible for this."

"Of course not," said Matzneff. "It is the work of the socialists and of our intellectual classes who are constantly seeking something and do not know themselves what they want."

"Your French revolution has turned their heads," said Vera Constantinovna.

"Ah, there was a Napoleon in my French revolution," Matzneff replied.

"And here—the priest Gapon!" Rotbek exclaimed laughing.

"So you think that it is ended?" asked Vera Constantinovna.

"Oh, quite, once and for all," Paltoff said. "Russia isn't in danger so long as our fine Guards exist, so long as the soldiers obey the officers and the officers remain faithful to the throne. I felt that I was big and strong today when I gave the order to my company. My will was the will of hundreds of men. They were as obedient machines in my hands."

"Well, let us start then," said Rotbek. "Pavel Ivanovitch, have you got everything ready."

"Yes. Mesdames, the programme is the following: two chorus girls,—one a lyric singer."

"Morgenstern, of course," said Sablin.

"You have guessed," answered Gritzenko, sighing and comically lowering his eyes.

"Oh!" exclaimed Nina Vasilievna, "at last we shall see your . . . your flame."

"The other is French."

"Is she very . . . ?" Vera Constantinovna asked.

"Very," Gritzenko answered laughing, "but I have warned her to be careful. . . ."

"Why?" Nina Vasilievna asked naïvely.

"And then, mesdames, it will be in French and much can be excused in a foreign language. We shall pretend not to understand. After that we shall have supper and listen to the *tziganes* with Stesha and Sandro Davidoff."

"Oh, it does promise to be interesting. We mustn't lose time," Natalia Borisovna said, rising.

XIX

THEY were expected at the restaurant on the outskirts of the town. The porter threw open the doors before them and they ascended a broad wooden staircase covered by a red carpet. Mirrors in gilded frames reflected the handsome officers and the beautiful faces of ladies flushed with the frost.

Vera Constantinovna was disappointed. She had expected to find marvellous luxury in this notorious place but everything was clumsy and lacked taste. A stout Tartar waiter with a shaven head, dressed in an evening coat and white waistcoat, led them through a wide corridor covered by a soft carpet to a room which had been reserved for them. A table was laid for supper in the centre of the room. The windows were hung with heavy curtains and withered palms stood before them. A piano, a broad sofa covered by a rug and cushions, and several arm chairs completed the furniture. There was nothing cosy about the place. The ladies looked round with contempt. All of them had the same thoughts. Here their husbands tried to

TO RED FLAG

"Don't you recognize me? I'm Nina Berg," she said.

The meeting resulted in Nina's going into Zoia's flat for tea and a chat. "You'll tell me all about yourself."

Valia was shown to the recovered school friend.

"That's a future citizen," said Nina. "Mind, Zoia, that you bring her up to understand real liberty and love of humanity."

Zoia Nicholaievna told the story of her life. Nina listened to her as though she were a doctor listening to his patient's report on his ailing. At times she would interrupt her by questions which made Zoia blush.

"Why should you care to know? You are a young girl," she ended by saying.

"Zoia, I know that you won't judge me harshly and will understand me. I am no longer a virgin."

"You are married," Zoia Nicholaievna exclaimed. "You've been deceiving me?"

"No. I've given the preference to free love. My first love was a student. Oh! How he loved me! Now it's an officer of the new formation: a former man of law."

"How could you? Without the sacrament of matrimony! First one and then the other! What a nightmare!"

Nina burst out laughing, jumped from her seat and, putting her hands on Zoia's shoulders, kissed her on the mouth, on the eyes, on the nose. Then, stepping back two paces, she took a tragedian's pose, folded her arms on her breast, dropped her pretty face on her bosom and, looking at Zoia Nicholaievna, began in a dramatic tone:

"You are free of sin, throw the first stone at me!" Then, noticing that Zoia Nicholaievna was on the point of bursting into tears, she embraced her, and, taking her by the waist, led her into the sitting-room.

"Your place is most cosy. It's so quiet and nice and so out of the way here. May I visit you?"

"For goodness' sake, yes! I'd be so happy if you often came to see me. If you can, come every day. Have dinner with me here tomorrow or, better still, come to lunch and stay to dinner."

"May he come too? He's not a bad fellow. He's now serving in the reserve battalion of the guards."

"Please invite him too," muttered Zoïa Nicholaievna confusedly.

"But for God's sake don't tell anyone, and don't write about it to your husband."

"I have no secrets from him."

"Then let this be a secret, to begin with at least. Do you promise?"

Zoïa Nicholaievna, thinking that Nina did not wish him to know that she, Nina, had a lover, consented.

"There now, what a dear you are!" Nina exclaimed. "Such a kind soul! I'll tell him to come at once, if you don't object. You'll see what a jolly time we'll have. Let me ring him up. You've got a telephone, haven't you?"

"No! What do I need a telephone for? Whom could I talk with, considering I don't know a soul in the town."

"How can you possibly live without a telephone? You'll have to have one fixed up. I want to draw you, my sweet butterfly, into the very flames of the revolutionary struggle."

On the next day Nina arrived towards evening with an officer, a stout man with thin, slightly-curved red hair, clean-shaven like an actor and with oily impudent eyes. He wore a well-fitting tunic, knee-breeches and puttees which covered his fat calves up to the knee. He was shiny, and too affable, and did not take Zoïa Nicholaievna's fancy.

"There, Zoïa, I've brought 'tovaristch' Boris along with me. Let me introduce him to you—Sub-lieutenant Boris Matveievitch Knoop. You must call him simply 'tovaristch Boris.'"

"Why should she, straight away?" Knoop objected. "Let her first get used to us, like us, and understand us."

He bowed with deference and kissed her hand. Zoïa Nicholaievna could not help noticing that his hands were "soignéés," with expensive rings and well-trimmed, polished nails. He smelt of scent. Zoïa Nicholaievna did not know what to say to him and felt perplexed, unaccustomed as she was to the society of men.

Knoop at her request seated himself in an arm-chair and begged to be allowed to smoke.

"You are nervous, Boris," said Nina patting Knoop's hand. "You're smoking and that's a sign that you are nervous."

"No, wonder! I didn't expect to meet such a pretty lady. Besides it's so difficult to start when you are ignorant of the 'Credo' of the person you intend talking to."

"Her 'Credo?'" said Nina, with a laugh. "Kaiser, Kirche, Kinder, Kleider und Küche.* That's about all Zoia knows. The boarding-school, her father—a Brigadier-General in some out of the way town, and her husband—a Colonel, a bold regimental Commander, knight of the St. George's cross, a slave of his Emperor, and a father to his soldiers."

Nina called on Zoia every day, mostly accompanied by Knoop. They had dinner together, visited cinemas and theatres, had tea together in the evening and Knoop tried to develop Zoia's mind by opening her eyes to those vast fields which lay in store in the free Socialistic-Democratic Russia of the future. According to his words the Kingdom of Heaven, the great truth and paradise on earth were to be the result of the future revolution. Zoia listened to him entranced. There would be no more capital punishment, no prisons nor banishments, mankind would be happy, and no oppressed or disinherited fellow-creatures would exist any longer. When left to herself, however, she would analyze all the opinions and plans emitted by Knoop and Nina, and would discover, in the paradise to come, many a detail which did not speak to her heart. However the whole matter seemed dim and incomprehensible to her mind until, one evening, the visit to her lodging of a gay crowd consisting of Osetroff, Gaiduk, Schlossberg and a quaint-looking girl, who introduced herself in an off-hand way as "tovaristch Jenny," gave her more insight into their real meaning.

Osetroff, in his elegantly-cut tunic, wide Russian breeches and shaft boots, a lock of hair overhanging his forehead, and with the manners of a village peasant, instantly filled the small

* The Emperor, the Church, Children, Dresses and the Kitchen.

sitting-room with his loud voice and laughter and deeply impressed Tania, who gazed at him with enthusiastic eyes. His face and manners bespoke his cock-suredness, as though they meant to say: "I can dare anything and, if needs be, I can pay." Gaiduk wore a modern tunic and riding breeches, lace-boots and puttees. His figure was square and angular. He hardly spoke and, after making Zoïa's acquaintance, concentrated his heavy gaze on her. His broad clean-shaven face was shiny and covered with pimples and warts, while a sensual smile, which discovered two rows of scarce and yellow teeth, played on his thick fleshy lips.

Schlossberg wore a starched high collar under his military tunic, long trousers and lace-boots. His beardless pale face, the dark rims under his eyes, which looked tired and dim, and his languid and lazy movements proved him to be of a sickly constitution. He stretched his thin and "soigné" hand to Zoïa with a condescending movement. His fair shiny hair was carefully parted and showed signs of premature baldness.

"Tovaristch" Jenny wore a man's shirt with a bright red scarf, held together by a pin in the shape of a skull, and a dark-blue jacket. A skirt of the same colour fell slightly below her knees, showing high yellow lace-boots. She would have been handsome with her fair hair and dreamy, enigmatic eyes, had her complexion not spoiled the general impression by its sickly, anemic pallor.

"Don't be surprised at our unceremonious behaviour," said Schlossberg gently, addressing Zoïa Nicholaievna. "The war's to blame for having made us so off-hand. We have got into the habit of reaping without having sown."

At times Zoïa Nicholaievna had the feeling of being in the midst of lunatics. They often came to see her, brought wine with them as well as vodka and zakouska, and towards midnight they'd assemble in her dining-room, drinking, and making a hell of a row. She was unable to protest and when she would complain to Nina, saying that her house was not a public-house and that she objected to their spending their money, her friend would reply:

"My dear child, can't you understand that therein lies communism? All our strength and the happiness of future existence depend on the absolute absence of restraint. Haven't you noticed? Osetroff has fallen head and ears in love with you at first sight? You can consider yourself very lucky. He's handsome and well off. His father owns fifty cab-stands notwithstanding the war. Besides he's of such an impetuous nature that you can never tell what scrape he is likely to get into. Have you taken a fancy to him?"

"Yes, he's good-looking, but his eyes frighten me."

"You must give yourself to him. Don't forget that he is a prominent member of the faction, a leader of the coming movement, and such a good-looking fellow. You can consider yourself mighty lucky."

"Nina," Zoia objected severely. "Please never talk to me on such a subject, do you understand? It's very wrong of you. It's disgusting, Nina"—she exclaimed in tears. "You must do all in your power to keep Osetroff from coming to see me any more."

Nina somehow succeeded in calming Zoia. Once Zoia had envied Nina's high lace-boots. On the following day, soon after lunch time, Osetroff turned up with a parcel. She at first wanted to have him shown out, but had not the courage. When she came into the sitting-room, he untied the parcel and took out a charming pair of boots.

"I've brought them for you, Zoia Nicholaievna. Please, accept this little present at my hands."

"No, Michail Sergeievitch. Never in the world. How could I accept such a present!"

"Zoia Nicholaievna! only just see whether they fit, whether I have succeeded in choosing the right size."

There he was, standing in front of her with the boots in his hands. His eyes were burning with passion, and beads of perspiration shone on his forehead at the roots of his hair. His wide chest heaved with emotion, and yet she noticed a trace of shyness in his gaze. His hands trembled. The shoes were charming and Zoia seated herself helplessly in an arm-chair.

He took her movement for a sign of consent and threw himself on his knees before her. With trembling hands he proceeded to unlace her boots and, having pulled them off, fitted on the new pair which reached nearly to the knees.

"Do they fit? Try to walk in them," he implored, rising to his feet. Zoïa Nicholaievna walked a few paces. The boots were a perfect fit, and simply moulded her small foot and leg. Zoïa was unable to hide that the boots pleased her.

"I'll take them off myself," she said, "and then for God's sake take them with you and leave me. You're quite crazy."

She seated herself in the arm-chair, and at that moment he rushed towards her and covered her feet and legs with passionate kisses. Zoïa Nicholaievna was staggered by such insolence and nearly fainted.

"You . . . you are a scoundrel. You're mad!" she exclaimed rising to her feet. "Go, go, at once."

"You charming little tiger! You must be mine. All I possess I lay at your feet and myself into the bargain! Be mine!" exclaimed Osetroff. He endeavoured to catch hold of her but she escaped him, rushed into her bed-room and closed the door.

"Zoïa," he cried, "let me in. You'll drive me wild!" She kept silent.

"Zoïa," he went on, "God knows what I am capable of committing in my frenzy. I don't care a hang. I'm a finished man and am ready to suffer death."

No answer.

He tried to break open the door. Tania made her appearance, answering Zoïa's bell from inside the bed-room.

"Be off, Michail Sergeievitch, stop this scandalous behaviour," she said with a laugh. "What on earth are you doing? The wife of a Colonel, and her husband at the front. She's a General's daughter. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Tania," Osetroff said imploringly. "You must understand me. I must possess her, I insist on it."

"Go away! have done with this scandal."

"I'll go off my head, Tania!"

His wild and inflamed eyes fixed Tania's and evidently read something in their gaze, and a spark of understanding passed from one to the other. Tania turned pale of a sudden and breathed heavily.

"I'll cover you with riches, Tania!"

"You mustn't, Michail Sergeievitch," she said retreating to the door. Osetroff followed her slowly with clenched fists. His whole body quivered under the reminiscence of the kisses he had lavished on Zoïa's well-shaped feet and legs. He was hardly able to restrain himself.

Tania ran to her room, leaving her door open, and Osetroff followed her stealthily.

"I'll give you a fortune," he went on, hardly conscious of his words. Tania stood by the window with her back to the light, pale and breathing hard. Osetroff approached her, caught her by the waist and his lips met hers.

Seven days elapsed before Osetroff came to see Zoïa again. His friends gave her to understand that he had been on a spree and had visited places that they were ashamed to mention. Nina pressed Zoïa's hand and said disparagingly: "Whatever have you done, Zoïa! Osetroff has been for seven nights on the loose with fallen women. He has gone to the dogs!" On the eighth day he made his appearance as if nothing had happened. He kissed Zoïa's hand most respectfully. He was tidily shaved and scented. His face looked wan, his eyelids bore the traces of sleepless nights and his eyes looked dull.

"Ah!" said Gaiduk. "There you are! After a night passed with her you've yourself become effeminate."

"Stop it!" said Osetroff sternly. "Don't forget our agreement."

The evening was passed as usual. Political topics were broached, the necessity of a revolution was discussed, as well as the burden of the war. Nina recited and was made to dance. Zoïa became quite lively and looked upon the episode of the previous week as having been a nightmareish dream. She went to her room, arrayed her feet in the boots presented to her by Osetroff, and returned to the sitting-room.

"Nina," she said. "Let's dance the Hungarian dance."

She had a great talent for dancing. Her modest way and the classical steps she produced made a deeper impression than Jenny's wild execution of the sailor's jig.

Osetroff's eyes shone, his face grew flushed. During supper he drank any amount of vodka and cognac, and, when the meal was over, went into the sitting-room and proceeded to sing, in a voice full of passion, a few verses from "Stenka Razin" about the exploits of the robber and his rape of the Persian Princess.

"Those were jolly times, my friends," he exclaimed, "when one was able to seduce Princesses! And now? A General's daughter! Damn the Generals," he added with an obscene oath.

He stopped short, looking around with a wild gaze.

"It's all rot, damn you. To hell with everybody."

"There Misha! You were a communist and have now become a bourgeois," remarked Knoop reproachfully.

"You are in my way," muttered Osetroff.

"Let's go, 'tovaristchi,'" said Schlossberg. "He's gone off his head."

Nina laughed hysterically. Jenny, deadly pale, looked at Zoïa fixedly. Knoop seemed displeased with something. They all began fussing about, with trivial and insinuating smiles, and hurriedly proceeded to leave, with the exception of Osetroff, who remained alone in the sitting-room, his arms crossed, and with the same expression of scorn. Zoïa Nicholaievna followed her guests to the hall with a look of dismay. She was at a loss to understand what had happened. She noticed how Gaiduk whispered something to Tania as she helped him on with his overcoat, whereupon Tania disappeared, returning shortly in her mantle and shawl.

"So long, Zoïa. Be a good girl! Believe me it's best so!" said Nina as she gave her a parting kiss. "You must talk it out with him."

They departed accompanied by Tania, treacherously leaving Zoïa to the power of that awe-inspiring man. Zoïa decided to shut herself up in her room. He would surely not break open the door? Osetroff, however, seemed to have guessed her in-

TO RED FLAG

tention. He made a rush at her and clutched her rigid hands. She looked at him imploringly.

"Michail Sergeievitch," she whispered, "leave me. You mustn't!"

"Very well! I shan't," he said gently and bowing his head.

"That is not real love," Zoia went on. "That violence and dastardliness!"

"You know very well that I recognize neither love nor dastardliness," said Osetroff fixing Zoia's tearful eyes.

"Let me go," she whispered. "Please, be a good fellow and leave hold of me."

"Zoia Nicholaievna! I've after all behaved honestly, as you would have me to. According to your bourgeois morals, I've acted as I should have. I have decided to come and take leave of you. But I can't. After your dance I feel again vanquished by you."

"Leave me!"

"Zoia Nicholaievna! I'm a new man and stop at nothing. I could kill a man as easily as I could crush you, without the slightest qualms of conscience. If you resist, I'll smother you and possess your dead body. I don't care a hang," said Osetroff, as he took her by the waist. "You've driven me wild, you General's daughter!" And he lifted her in his strong arms, as he would have a feather.

He carried her to the bed-room, hurting her by the pressure of his muscular arms and bending his flushed face to hers. His dark eyes gleamed.

Zoia Nicholaievna understood that resistance was useless.

The child, roused out of its sleep by the sound of the heavy foot-steps, began crying in its cradle.

"You should be ashamed of the presence of the child," Zoia whispered.

"I don't care a hang!" Osetroff replied angrily as he threw Zoia on the bed.

She made an effort to cry for help, but her voice gave way, and she fell into a swoon.

XXII

ON the 13th of December Sablin received the manifesto addressed by the Emperor to the army and to the Fleet, in which the plan and the object of the war were explained. The words, expressed in the noble traditional Russian style, spoke of the Emperor's firm resolution to continue the war to final victory over the enemy, and of the sacred Russian purpose, tending towards the reestablishment of the Russian orthodox cross at Constantinople, towards the freedom of the Dardanelles straits and towards giving autonomy to Poland.

This manifesto had been issued by the Tsar in answer to Miliukoff's speech delivered at the Duma in November and distributed in numberless copies at the front. It was a noble invitation to the united forces for an attack and victory. That was the sense in which Sablin interpreted it.

Sablin read the manifesto to each regiment of his corps separately. He was desirous that every single soldier might hear and understand the Emperor's words.

After having made the round of the regiments Sablin cantered to the centre of the division and commanded:

"Division, present arms! Attention!"

The regiments quivered with a bristle of bayonets.

"A hearty hurrah to the Supreme Leader of the Russian army!"

Two bands struck up the national hymn and sixteen thousand men shouted with such powerful voices that the snow dropped from the shaggy fir-trees on the outskirts of the forest. The powerful hurrah, accompanied by the national hymn, was repeated more than once and, when they had quieted down, the troops seemed surprised at their own exuberance. Sablin let the regiments file past him. The music thundered, regimental singers were heard singing here and there, while the men walked past in columns and sections.

As the companies came up to their dug-outs, they dispersed noisily, putting aside their guns.

"I say, comrade Pantuchoff! Did you hear what the Com-

mander of the corps said? Does Turkey intend concluding peace?"

"Devil a bit. They've decided to fight until we are in possession of Constantinople."

"I'm damned! We can't even manage to take Kovel, so how the hell are we to get to Constantinople."

At home Sablin found an urgent parcel brought to him by a motor-cyclist of the army headquarters. The messenger, soaked with perspiration and half dead with fatigue—owing to the snow he had ridden the whole night the thirty miles which lay between the army headquarters and the army corps headquarters, in a leather jacket—stood in the yard of the tiny hut occupied by Sablin and Davydoff.

Sablin gave orders to his adjutant to attend to the messenger and retired to his tiny hut, where he proceeded to examine the papers. The first paper was a private wire from Petrograd.

"Come without delay. Most urgent Events of special importance. Details at your lodgings. Repnin, Matzneff, Gritzenko."

Sablin frowned. After the manifesto, the tenor of which was that an attack was shortly planned, after the result of his work in the army corps, a journey to Petrograd did not suit him at all. Evidently those who had required his presence in Petrograd were aware of Sablin's character and of his dislike to go on leave, for a wire came from the army headquarters naming him member of the Petrograd St. George's Committee and directing him to leave for that city at once for the committee-meetings, which began on the 17th December. Samoïloff had sent him, together with the cable, his pass and all the documents required for the railway journey. Sablin handed these papers to Davydoff. He was in Petrograd twenty-four hours later.

He arrived at the Nicholas station at break of day. It was dark still. Lanterns burnt in the station buildings, but the streets were not lighted and a soft misty duskiess was spread over the town, veiling the far end of the Newsky Prospect, so that the Admiralty building vanished from one's sight. Sablin sent his luggage with a porter to his lodging and walked down the Newsky Prospect. He did not feel like going home. The

business for which he had been called by Repnin, Matzneff and Gritzenko was not likely to require his presence until mid-day and he had a long monotonous forenoon before him. Sablin decided to stroll through the streets of his native town.

He came up to the Kazan Cathedral, which extended towards him its grey stony arms. The columns were covered with hoarfrost and the flower-beds, in front of the gallery, were under snow. The portals of the church were open, the early morning-service having just come to an end, and several early church-goers were descending its wide staircase. Sablin turned to the left and entered the Cathedral, which reminded him of his childhood.

He bought a taper and went towards the Ikon of the Kazan Virgin Mary. He walked slowly along the slippery flags. A woman in a seal-skin lay stretched on the floor by the image. He heard her sob as her shoulders quavered. "She has probably received sad news from the front," thought Sablin. His first movement was to step back so as not to interfere with her grief, but just then she suddenly rose to her knees and turned her face his way.

An unutterable anguish filled her big grey eyes, worn with weeping. They threw a passing, indifferent gaze at Sablin's face and fixed themselves on his shoulder-straps with a wild stare, as though the number on them had staggered her. She clutched at her bosom and would have fallen on the stone floor, had not Sablin caught her.

"Allow me to help you," he said, "you must rest awhile and take a seat."

"No, I'll soon recover my strength. It's nothing. I was taken aback. The army corps in which my husband is serving. You belong to the same corps?"

"I am the Commander of the corps," Sablin said gently.

"Oh, General Sablin!" she exclaimed.

"The same," he replied. "Who's your husband?"

"Lieutenant-Colonel Kosloff," she whispered.

Sablin remembered the bright and golden dawn at the

TO RED FLAG

trenches of Shpelevri. So that was Zorka, that very Zorka, Kozloff had prayed for with such passion!

"I saw your husband the day before yesterday. He was in excellent health. His regiment is the best of the corps, and is stationed in perfect security in the reserve where it will stay on for another twelve days. Nothing can have happened to your husband."

Sablin watched the young woman. The news about her husband seemed to make no impression on her. The same unspeakable grief showed in her eyes and she started weeping afresh.

"I know, I know," she said. "I have received his letter. It's I who am in question. For God's sake save me. I don't wish to die: I'm so young yet."

Sablin asked himself whether she had not perhaps taken poison, to such an extent did her face seem distorted by suffering.

"What is the matter with you? I am ready to help you as far as lies in my power."

She looked up at him with a look of helpless entreaty.

"The circumstances are so unusual that I don't know how to explain them to you. I can't be saved," she exclaimed in despair.

"But will you take me home," whispered Zoïa Nicholaievna. "Teach me what to do!"

The woman was interesting. Her tears, her dishevelled hair, her pale cheeks and swollen lids did not affect her charm. She was attractive, owing to her fragile womanliness, and for that very reason Sablin objected to escorting her home. Who knows what she is? He remembered Wertzinsky's cynical hints. What if she were but a clever adventuress? What an impression would it make, if at nine p.m. he found himself in the lodging of his Colonel's wife? He had another look at her, ready to refuse her invitation, but he read such sincere despair in her eyes that he decided to accompany her.

"I consent," he said. "Let's go."

The chamber-maid looked with surprise at Sablin, as she

helped him off with his coat. She peeped into the parlour and asked Zoia Nicholaievna, whether she should prepare tea.

"Yes, serve it in the dining-room," replied Zoia Nicholaievna, as she seated herself on the sofa, close to the arm-chair which she had offered to Sablin.

The street, the lodging with its small rooms, the smartly dressed chamber-maid, the fans on the walls, the palms, photos, engravings recalled various reminiscences of his youth to Sablin's mind and he involuntarily kept on his guard. It was not to seek of a love-episode that he had come.

"I am ready to hear you," he said.

Zoia Nicholaievna grasped his hand. Hot tears dropped from her eyes as she sobbed nervously.

"I wished to die," Zoia began with anguish as she looked up at Sablin. "I must die. I spent a sleepless night and thought it well over. I went to pray to the Virgin Mary of Kazan and decided to throw myself into the Fontanka. I had even spotted a hole in the ice close to the Anitchkoff bridge. While I was praying, such a longing to live overcame me!"

She again fell to sobbing and held Sablin's hand as though for support.

"So I prayed, knowing that it was impossible, and, conscious that my fate was irrevocable, I foresaw how I would come up to the hole in the ice, how I would take off my fur-jacket. I was sorry to spoil it. It could be of service to Valia. So I pinned a ticket to the lining with instructions that the jacket should be given to Valia. Then, suddenly, I imagined myself leaning over the railing, and throwing myself into the cold depth. And, I felt as though I had turned into stone. I was conscious that I had no other alternative. I was just rising to go to my fate, when I saw your shoulder-straps and the number of my husband's corps. I could hardly believe that a human being was standing in front of me: I took you for a vision."

She stopped to take breath.

"You did not believe in a miracle?" said Sablin gently. "Wasn't it, however, a miracle that I should have, just at that moment, entered the cathedral and brought you news of your

husband? The holy healer of our grief knows how to create miracles unperceptibly and how to save those who are in distress."

Her grey eyes filled with tears and she started weeping inconsolably, moaning as small children do.

"And how about that abomination? One of them will come tonight, and tomorrow the other. I'm ill, mind you. They've contaminated me, the scoundrels. I went to see the doctor yesterday. . . . What will come of it? . . . I'm alone. Who's to help me? They come in crowds, drink, kick up a row and then one of them stays behind and does with me what he chooses. It's horrible, disgusting! And what am I to do? Complain? Inform my husband? Is it possible to let one's husband know such things? Alexander Nicolaievitch is capable of killing me and then committing suicide. There's no protection to be looked for anywhere. One of them took me by force and bragged about it to another. Then the other, a hideous Lett! I can't bear the sight of him! He threatened to write to my husband. What was I to do? I was obliged to submit. If you knew how disgusted I am. And this—day after day! Then I fell ill. I had no notion that such diseases existed. What was left to me but death!" she exclaimed dropping her head onto Sablin's hand and pressing her sobbing mouth to it. "And at the same time I don't wish to die! I can't!" she cried.

She sobbed for a while, unable to check herself.

He realized that in her case there could be no question of either love or inclination. It was simply a case of simplicity, bordering on foolishness, and of weakness, outraged by impudent adventurers.

"They pretended that it meant freedom," she went on with scorn, looking at Sablin with moist eyes. "A new life! But I cannot continue such a life. Tonight he'll come. What am I to do? I can't struggle. He's stronger than I. . . . I'll go away. . . . The Virgin Mary has not saved me, I'm unworthy."

"Wait a bit," Sablin said. "All that is quite unnecessary. No one will come to you. No one will be admitted. You say—in the evening. Then from four a.m. until early in the morning

my servant Timothy, an elderly, strong soldier of the Reserve, will remain on guard in your entrance-hall. He will let no one in. It's quite simple. He'll just tell any casual visitor that your husband has returned. You'll have a good night's rest, and tomorrow. . . . Tomorrow I'll fetch you and take you to a sanatorium in Finland. They'll cure you there and everything will be forgotten. And tomorrow, Zoïa Nicholaievna, you'll hand me a letter for your husband. A nice fond letter, without mentioning a word of your misfortune. You'll write that your lungs are weak and that consumption was to be feared, and that you had to go in for a rather long cure. But mind," Sablin went on with conviction, reliving mentally his tragedy and that of Vera Constantinovna, "mind you, never never mention a single word to him, never give him to understand by the slightest sigh that anything has happened! Let it be your own cross, you must not ruin your husband's life, for you do not yourself know to what an extent he loves you."

"I know," she answered in an undertone. "But how can I go on living now?"

"You can and must. The war will last some time yet, and you will have time to recover. And by then everything will have been forgotten and happiness will return to you."

Zoïa looked with her large sad eyes into the very bottom of Sablin's soul, clutched his hand and was on the point of raising it to her lips, when Sablin took her hand in his and kissed it.

She saw him off, weeping gently.

XXIII

At home Sablin found a note from Matzneff, with the address to which he was to go that night at ten o'clock, and with instructions to knock in a particular way. Sablin frowned. "I'm damned!" he muttered discontentedly. "This has a taste of back-door romance."

He drove over to Tania's school on a short visit. Then he called on an eminent specialist to consult him about Zoïa Nicholaievna, rang up the sanatorium at Raïvolla, ordered a room, promising at the same time to accompany the invalid on the fol-

TO RED FLAG

lowing day, sent his old servant Timothy to the Pushkinskaja street, found time to see the president on the St. George's Committee; and at ten p.m. he was at the place appointed by Matzneff. He had made up his mind to tell Matzneff of the poor woman's tragedy, that Matzneff should be able to look after her and help her when he, Sablin, would have returned to the front. He had absolute confidence in Matzneff's decency.

On knocking at the door of an unknown lodging at the far end of the Sergeiefskaja, he heard a rustle behind the door and Matzneff's voice inquiring who was there?

"It's I, Ivan Sergeievitch," said Sablin.

"Who are you?"

"Why, Sablin. Can't you hear?"

"There are any amount of Sablins about. What's your Christian name?" Matzneff went on.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch. What tomfoolery, Ivan Sergeievitch. All this is idiotic."

"There's nothing idiotic about it. Who was your first love?"

"Kitty," Sablin replied, unable to restrain his mirth.

The door opened and Sablin found himself in the arms of the old philosopher.

"Welcome, welcome, old man," said Matzneff, "and don't fret. We are living in times when it is advisable to study Sherlock Holmes so as not get into a mess."

Matzneff fixed the door with an iron hook, fastened the door-chain, turned the key in the lock and said:

"That's better. Now we are all assembled."

"Whose is this lodging?"

"It's the lodging of the singer, Morgenstern, Gritzenko's flame, if you remember. However, neither she nor her maid are in. We are by ourselves."

He led Sablin into a small, smartly-furnished sitting-room, where Repnin and Gritzenko were seated, looking very serious. The single lamp, that was switched on, threw its light on the table.

After a few common-place words exchanged between the assembled friends, they seated themselves.

"Let us begin," said Gritzenko addressing Prince Repnin. "Alexander Nicolaievitch," the latter began, "we have invited you to discuss a rather ticklish and difficult undertaking that must be carried through, so as to save Russia and His Majesty. Will you agree, beforehand, to join us? Can you trust us, your old regimental comrades?"

"I have entire confidence in you, and am as certain that you won't wrong the Emperor as I am that I could never betray him."

"I thank you, Sasha," said Matzneff.

"You are acquainted with the Emperor's last manifesto?" said Repnin.

"I read it the day before yesterday to the regiments of my corps, and it was welcomed by thundering hurrahs."

"Naturally that manifesto should logically have been followed by an order to remove, if not confine, Rasputin and to forbid the Empress to meddle in the affairs of the State," Repnin went on in an undertone. "That has not been done. Of course the accusations as to the Empress being in contact with the Germans have not been proved and I am certain that they are unfounded. However, the more the calumny seems absurd the greater is the belief of the population in its truth. You are acquainted with Miloukoff's speech in the Duma on the 1st of November, a speech full of monstrous lies but which impressed the lower classes. The population is in a state of nervous excitement. We are on the eve of a revolution. The moderate faction insists on a palace-revolution, but the radicals have raised their heads and are aiming at the abolition of the throne. We are on the eve of terrible events, and we must help our Emperor and do that, which he cannot make up his mind to do: we must remove Rasputin."

"He must be killed," Prince Repnin proceeded. "All the measures have been taken to that effect. The mission has been entrusted to . . ." and Prince Repnin bent towards Sablin's ear and whispered a few words.

"That's impossible!" Sablin exclaimed. "No, my friends, keep your hands off. Keep them from such a mad deed. Their

hands have never shed blood. They won't be able to commit manslaughter, it's physically out of question."

Sablin thought of his nocturnal discussions with Wertzinsky. It is not given to every one to raise himself or to lower himself to manslaughter, and he could not picture to himself how those persons, whom Repnin had mentioned, were likely to do it. One of them was a pale, sickly-looking, sensitive and handsome youth, a connection of the Emperor. The second was a nobleman, very talented, a man of brain, and stout at heart. The third he knew but slightly: an hysterical brawler, an author, a politician, an orator, but by no means a murderer.

"Is it possible that you were unable to find a hireling for the purpose?" he exclaimed.

"My dear, Sasha," said Matzneff. "Everything has been minutely discussed. A hired murderer would not suit us. Besides twice the attempt was made and without success. Don't forget, Sasha, that his power is that of the devil. And only those can fight the devil, who are not afraid of his snares, for whom he is nothing but a dirty, cowardly peasant."

"All is organized," said Repnin. "We three—and we request you to be the fourth—are expected to act as a reserve force in case our aid is required or if it is necessary to destroy all traces. May we count on you, yes or no?"

"Prince . . . Pavel Ivanovitch! Have you ever considered that the murder of Rasputin might be the first step toward revolution?"

"Too late, Sasha," Gritzenko remarked with sadness. "We see no other issue. Will you join us?"

"Certainly. What am I expected to do?"

"Tomorrow night, he has promised to come to a house on the Moïka where he has been invited to a rendezvous with a lady of the best society, whom he has been after for some time. That's where the plot has to be played out. We'll have to stay on duty here."

"Good heavens! What filth!" Sablin exclaimed. "Pimp-work, a snare, treason and murder!"

"Yes, my dear Sasha, politics is no joke," said Matzneff with

a frown, "but Rasputin isn't a man who can be challenged in a duel and shot with a pistol on equal terms. The fact that the murder will have been perpetrated by such men must raise them in the eyes of the population, will justify them in those of the Emperor and will help in taking the next step, that is, of removing the Empress."

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," Prince Repnin insisted, "we have considered the matter over and over again. There's no alternative. This is not the time for drifting with the current. Tomorrow we shall meet here at the same hour. Knock and use the pass-word: 'revenge.'"

Punctually the next evening Sablin appeared at Gritzenko's lodging. He felt sick at heart and disgusted, as though he were being drawn against his will into a muddy swamp. The night was passed in playing cards: bridge was followed by "macao" at five copecks a point, to while away their time. Gritzenko treated them to wine and cold supper. At two o'clock Matzneff drove off to make inquiries and returned at six in the morning, pale and excited.

"Thank Goodness!" he exclaimed. "All's over. But how complicated it all was, and how different to what we had expected."

"Have they finally succeeded?" asked Repnin.

"Yes, he is dead and done for. Let us hope for ever," said Matzneff, breathing heavily, and proceeded to give particulars.

"They thought at first that he would not come, that he had guessed that something was wrong. At last he arrived and was received by the youngest member in the cellar-flat, which had been purposely furnished for the occasion. He came in, looked about with suspicion and asked straight away 'Where is she?'"

"'Upstairs, with the guests. She'll come down presently,' said the youngest.

"He shook his head, looking displeased, but finally gave in.

"Wine and pastry were placed on the table and the wine contained poison. He would neither eat nor drink.

"'I won't have anything,' he said capriciously. 'Let her come

first. We'll drink together. Why is it so quiet here? Are the guests there? Are they dancing? I don't hear any music.'

"Of course no one was there except the elder member and the member of the Duma. Rasputin seated himself by a table in a corner. It was dusk in the large cellar, furnished, like a sitting-room, with large Turkish sofas and arm-chairs. Some lamps in one corner threw a dim light under the low vaults. As the youngest member afterwards told me, a creepy feeling came over him. All seemed so mediaeval: low ceilings, vaults, Rasputin in his characteristic garb, a short coat with an open collar which showed his silk shirt embroidered by the Empress, cut glass decanters and wine-glasses, small glasses with poison and his favourite wine and pastry.

"Rasputin's eyes glittered like burning coals and he trembled with sensual impatience. As time passed, the conversation waned.

" 'You'd better go fetch her, my friend,' Rasputin finally said to the youngest member. 'Why doesn't she come. Tell her that a friend, a good friend is waiting for her.'

" 'Very well,' said the youngest, 'I'll go. Meanwhile have a drink to raise your spirits, Grigori Efimovitch.'

" 'Raise my spirits? I'm all right as I am.'

"Nevertheless he took a wine-glass and emptied it slowly. You can picture yourself the state of mind of the youngest member! A strong dose of poison, such as would have killed an elephant, had been mixed in the wine. The effect should have been instantaneous. The pastry likewise contained poison.

" 'Somehow your wine tastes bitter tonight,' he said, taking a pastry and eating it.

"The youngest member noticed that he had chosen a poisoned one. Again no effect. There he sat smiling and looking at the youngest member with his dreadful, piercing eyes.

" 'I say, young man, where is my beauty? If she won't come to me, I'll go to her. They are dancing, you say? I am fond of dancing myself. I expect there are any amount of women? I'll have a look.'

" 'Wait, Grigori Efimovitch, I'll better go and fetch her,' said

the youngest member, who felt that he could not stand it any longer. There sat Rasputin as before, his hooked fingers clutching the arm of his chair, while with the other hand he poured out a second glass of wine from the decanter and drank it, with the same result. The youngest member left the room. The elder member and the member of the Duma were waiting for him on the dark stairs.

"'Well?' asked the member of the Duma, 'has he drunk the wine?'"

"'Yes.'"

"'Is he done for?'"

"'Not a bit. He's in perfect health.'"

"'Perhaps he is dead now?'"

"'No, I tell you.'"

"'Go and have a look.'"

"'No, I can't stand it any longer. I did not believe in the Evil spirit, but now I am beginning to.'"

"'Well, then I'll go.'"

"'Let us go together.'"

"The elder member pulled out his revolver and proceeded down the stairs.

"At that very moment the door opened and Rasputin appeared.

"In the light thrown on the stairs by the open door, he noticed the three men and grasped the situation.

"He rushed to the front-door.

"'He'll escape,' cried the member of the Duma in despair. The elder member shot at him. Rasputin returned to the sitting-room, made a few steps and fell to the ground, moaning.

"'Now he's done for,' cried the member of the Duma. 'We must fetch a motor-car and carry him away.'"

"The youngest member shivered as though he had the fever. He was of no use any more and was advised to lie down and have a rest. The member of the Duma went into the yard, leaving the entrance-door open. The elder member looked into the sitting-room and nearly went off his head. Rasputin, whom they had considered dead, was sitting on the carpet, supporting

himself with his hands. He was pale, his hair was dishevelled, his eyes turned wildly in their orbits as he looked about. He caught sight of the elder member and proceeded to raise himself.

"‘Ah,’ he exclaimed, ‘I will tell everything, to the mistress. I’ll tell her that you have killed me,’ and all of a sudden he stood up and in two bounds ran past the elder member to the exit.

"The elder member rushed after him, and collided with the member of the Duma, who had just returned.

"‘Rasputin’s bolted,’ he cried.

"‘You’re mad! Why! He’s dead!’

"‘Nothing of the kind. . . . There he is.’

"A dark shadow was seen creeping along the wall towards the gate. The member of the Duma rushed after him. He was armed with a splendid American revolver. He aimed and shot twice. Rasputin staggered and fell. The member of the Duma ran up to him. Now no doubt was left—he was killed. . . .

"‘The shots were heard in the street,’ said the elder member. ‘There’s a pool of blood on the carpet. We can expect people to come at any moment.’

"‘Don’t worry. We’ll say that we’ve killed a dog,’ said the member of the Duma.

"They called a dog and shot it inside the house, so as to account for the shots. But, as you can well understand, alarm had been raised. Both the police and the watchmen were on their guard, while a long trip and the worry with the heavy corpse lay still in store for them.

"The car advanced and a policeman instantly approached it. The member of the Duma decided to play it boldly and, walking up to the policeman, said: .

"‘I’m a member of the Duma. My name is the following. I belong to the conservative faction and am devoted to the Emperor. I’ve just killed Rasputin.’

"‘The Lord be praised! Is it possible?’

"A psychological moment, my friend, which they had to make the best of.

"A soldier came up. He proceeded to make inquiries as to the

reason of the shooting. The member of the Duma approached him and said:

"I have killed Rasputin. Have I done well?"

"You couldn't have done better," was the answer. "It was high time."

"Help us, my friends, to place him into the car and carry him away."

"With pleasure."

"And thus the secret ceased to be a secret. The member of the Duma undertook, with the aid of the policeman and the soldier, to carry Rasputin's body into the car. N. N. acted as driver.

"I believe he's moving," said the companion of the member of the Duma.

"No, no! He's dead."

"Wrapped in his rich fur-coat, Rasputin lay heavily at their feet. They reached a bridge and an unfrozen spot close by, chosen by them beforehand. The place was deserted. A light fog rose from the river. They had a great deal of trouble in lifting the heavy body over the parapet. A black shadow appeared at the further end of the bridge: evidently some watchman or policeman roused by the noise of the car. They started to drop the body over the parapet. The three of them had the greatest difficulty in lifting the heavy weight, but at last they succeeded. A pale face appeared from under the fur-collar. Rasputin clutched the balustrade with his hands."

"Had he come to life again?" Gritzenko exclaimed excitedly. "The devil!"

"May be or possibly it only seemed so to them. The member of the Duma told me that he heard Rasputin use bad language, as he was hanging on the balustrade. Finally the body was flung across the balustrade and, hitting the water with a dull sound, disappeared.

"So that was the end of it," said Matzneff, with a heavy sigh.

"No, my friends," said Sablin leaning his face on his hands, "that's not the end, but the beginning . . . of the revolution. And to think, oh Lord, whose hands are to be blamed for it!"

XXIV

ON the 28th of February, 1917, early in the morning, Sablin inspected all the battalions chosen for the attack, and had a long talk with Kozloff and the battalion Commanders. He noticed perfect confidence in the successful result.

"The men, Your Excellency, are impatient to start at once," said an elderly Captain.

"They won't funk it?"

"I don't think so. The enthusiasm is very great. They are all persuaded that we shall be in Kovel on the 1st of March at nightfall."

"The cavalry will," said Sablin.

"We'll not remain behind," Kozloff remarked.

He accompanied Sablin to his car.

"Have you received any letters from your wife?" Sablin inquired.

Kozloff's face beamed.

"A letter is forwarded to me nearly once a week from headquarters. She writes daily. I don't know how to thank you, Your Excellency, for all the interest you have shown her. Thank goodness, it was only an inflammation of the lungs and not consumption. She is on the way to complete recovery."

"The Lord be praised," said Sablin, involuntarily looking down. "At ten I'll come to you at Shpelevri, and at two sharp we'll start."

Sablin returned to headquarters at two o'clock. Davydoff informed him that the Commander of the army wished to communicate with him by direct wire. Sablin crossed the street to a hut where the telephone had been established. General Samoïloff was speaking. The offensive had been postponed.

"It's impossible to put off the offensive," Sablin answered. "The men are longing to advance, a counter-order would extinguish their ardor and a defeat, instead of victory, would be the result. What's taken place?"

"A categorical order from the Commander of the Western front. The offensive has been put off on the whole front."

"They've lost their heads. The weather is warm. The snow is melting fast. Soon the mud will be such as to prevent all work, until the spring sets in definitely."

"I've got to transmit you the decision of the Commander of the Western army and of the Supreme Headquarters. The offensive is postponed, and the reasons are unknown to me. Don't leave your post. Be ready at any moment to be called to the telephone. So long."

The connection was cut off.

"Is that all?" Sablin asked of the telephone-assistant.

"That's all," the official replied as he rose from his stool. He was a typical telegraph-official of the old stamp. He looked sternly at the soldier sitting at the Morse-machine and said to him:

"Bislenieff, leave us for a while."

The soldier rose with a smile and left.

"Your Excellency," the official whispered, "allow me to inform you that they are, for some reason or other, keeping secret the fact that there are great disturbances in Petrograd. The soldiers are in mutiny. What is happening there no one knows. Maybe the revolution has broken out by this time. The Emperor is said to have left the Supreme Headquarters."

"Not a word about it for the present!"

"I'll be as dumb as a fish, Your Excellency."

Sablin gave instructions to inform the regiments that the offensive had been postponed, and the news was everywhere received with surprise and disappointment. The day that Sablin had expected to be full of excitement, in the expectancy of the coming fight, proved insipid and endless. Sablin returned to his hut and paced to and fro in his small room. At eleven he was summoned to the telephone. Pestretzoff wanted him at Army Corps Headquarters. Sablin hastened to his car and was soon on his way.

Pestretzoff received him at once. He showed him into his office, carefully closed the door and approached his table, then returned to the door, which he opened abruptly. His orderly was standing outside, evidently eaves-dropping.

TO RED FLAG

"What are you doing here?" said Pestretzoff.

"Nothing. I thought you might need me."

"Off you go!"

"There, you see, Sasha," Pestretzoff observed, "that's the beginning. . . . I don't exactly myself know why I asked you to come. I simply longed to have a talk with an old friend. I know nothing. There are riots in Petrograd. A collision between the police and the troops has taken place, I believe owing to scarcity of food-stuff, or something. There is no news from Supreme Headquarters, no instructions. That's easily explained. He who does nothing is not likely to make blunders, and to err at the present moment would mean to risk one's neck, or one's post or standing, at the very least."

Pestretzoff looked through a heap of dispatches and at last produced a telegram.

"By the bye I've received a wire. The Commander-in-Chief of the Western front is afraid that the disorders are likely to contaminate the army, and on the strength of it wishes more union and intercourse between the officers and the soldiers. That's all. . . ." On the 9th of March, Sablin's old servant Timothy arrived with newspapers and a letter from Matzneff, giving a detailed account of the Revolution in Petrograd and the Tsar's forced abdication.

It was on a warm spring day. The snow was melting rapidly. The 204th division was drawn up in reserve order with the purpose of swearing fidelity to the Temporary Government. Sablin had, that very morning, received instructions from the Commander-in-Chief of the army to be present at the ceremony. Pestretzoff feared lest the soldiers might refuse to swear fidelity and insisted on Sablin's explaining to the troops that the Emperor had abdicated the throne of his own free will, that the Grand Duke Michael had followed suit and that a Constituent Assembly would shortly be called together for the purpose of deciding the future form of Government in Russia, that there was no reason for any feeling of uneasiness and that, if the people chose to be governed by an Emperor, their wish would be fulfilled.

Sablin read the insipid manifesto with reserve, and without the zest that he had formerly shown on similar occasions, and said that, as Russia could not be left without some sort of government, the Temporary Government had for the time being taken on itself the burden of power and that the soldiers were to swear fidelity to the same.

He watched the faces of the soldiers. They seemed thoughtful, many of them bowed their heads, and Sablin said to himself: "the nation has taken upon itself the burden of self-government and is now hesitating."

He rode aside, dismounted and lit a cigarette. The priest came forward and, placing himself before the front, proceeded to read the words of the oath in a monotonous tone of voice, whereupon the officers and then the soldiers came up in a file and affixed their signatures.

Sablin was on the point of retiring, when he was suddenly startled by noise and loud voices. A small group of soldiers was coming in his direction from the woods, shoving an officer disrespectfully in front of them. Sablin was surprised when he noticed, on their shoulder-straps, the number of Kozloff's regiment and recognized Ermoloff. Those very soldiers, who had worshipped their officer and with whom he had so intimately lived at the front, were now pushing him roughly and uncereimoniously.

"What's happened? How dare you?" Sablin exclaimed.

The soldiers came up to Sablin, surrounded by a crowd of men who had already sworn fidelity and now gaped and listened to what was going to happen.

"Your Excellency," a young soldier with an insolent face began, without leaving hold of Ermoloff's overcoat. "Allow me to report to you, that, while all were swearing fidelity, Lieutenant Ermoloff suddenly retired and went to the forest."

"That means, that he refuses to swear fidelity," another soldier observed.

"To begin with, I forbid you to touch an officer and order you to go back to your ranks," Sablin cried.

None of them moved. Kozloff, pale as death, shoved himself

through the crowd and placed himself by Sablin's side. Sablin noticed that he had opened the holster of his revolver and had slipped the revolver forward.

"I have sworn fidelity to my Emperor," Ermoloff said in a firm voice, "and shall swear it to no one else."

"There, you see!" some voices exclaimed. "The Emperor has abdicated of his own free will, the nation has been obliged to take up self-government, and he refuses to serve the nation."

"To your places," Sablin cried wrathfully.

"I say, comrades, we ought to ascertain, whether the General himself has sworn fidelity. Maybe he likewise objects to serve under the red flag."

"Haven't you heard the General's order," Kozloff remarked.

"Do you intend to revolt?"

"It's not we who are revolting, but those who refuse to take their oath. They ought to be arrested."

"Arrest them! Arrest them!"

"And the General likewise."

"Right you are, boys."

"There's no Emperor any longer, there are no masters; arrest the General!"

"Forward, boys. Seize them."

The situation was becoming serious. The foremost kept back, not daring to lay hands on their army-corps Commander, but the crowd began pushing from behind. Shrill whistles rent the air.

"Wait a bit, comrades!" a slightly lisping voice exclaimed from the crowd, and Sablin knew it for Wertzinsky's. "Lynching is not the way of a free nation. You were wrong in arresting tovaristch Ermoloff. He's as free a citizen as you are, and it's his own look-out whether he wishes or not to swear fidelity. No one forced you to do so either. Tovaristchi! The moment has come when you must prove that you are worthy of the great liberty which has been gained by the coarse hands of the soldiers and of the workmen! You must not defile these pure moments of the great revolution by violence. Let us separate in peace, tovaristchi, with the certitude that some persons

do not side with us. These will be looked upon by us with utter disdain. To your dug-outs, comrades. The red banner has replaced the Two-headed Eagle of tyranny and arbitrariness!"

The crowd began to disperse.

"I implore you, Your Excellency, to leave the corps," Kozloff said. "The men are crazy. They are sure to come to their senses again and will then pray you on their knees to forgive them."

"Mount my orderly's horse and accompany me," said Sablin to Ermoloff. "It's not safe for you to remain among them."

"I fear nothing, Your Excellency," Ermoloff replied. "I don't even fear death. Life is no more worth living!"

"Your life may yet be needed! Come!"

They rode past the dispersing soldiers in silence. Hardly any of the soldiers saluted Sablin. They said nothing, but looked sulkily at their superiors.

XXV

AT Corps Headquarters Sablin found all in confusion. Radio-officials, telegraphers, soldiers of the bicycle and motorcycle-section were talking loudly outside. He looked sternly at the soldiers and entered his hut. Davydoff, pale as a sheet, and smoking hard, was pacing to and fro.

"What's up, Sergei Petrovitch?" Sablin inquired.

"I very nearly thrashed the telegrapher and now regret not having done so," Davydoff replied.

"But what's happened?"

"Well, you see, a message was received tonight by radio entitled 'To all whom it concerns, to all sections, companies, squadrons, batteries, etc., be it known' a lot of rubbish. The news that discipline is abolished. The declaration of soldiers' rights. Mind you, Your Excellency, not their duties, but their rights! The soldier has the right to go wherever he chooses to, to travel first-class, and it is not even mentioned whether a ticket for that purpose is required, the military salute is no longer necessary and his superiors, outside drill, are not to be looked upon as such."

"Who signed it?"

"The Committee of the Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies."

"How was it forwarded?"

"That's just the question! It seems that it isn't the first. The radio works incessantly at night. What's to be done!"

"You must simply lay it away, as a document of the present muddled times."

"That's easily said, Your Excellency. The matter is, however, that they seem to have the lead. Have you heard of the celebration at Moscow, of the revolution and of the abdication of the Tsar? The head of the garrison, Adjutant-General B., was invited by the soldiers to be present at the review. He made his appearance, but as he had nothing red to adorn him, his adjutants drew his attention to the fact, whereupon one of the cringing varlets of the revolution turned the General's red-lined overcoat inside out and presented it to B. The General arrayed himself in it. A fine Cardinal!"

Towards evening instructions were received from the Headquarters of the army to explain to the soldiers that order No. 1 was only meant for the various sections of the Petrograd garrison, which had lifted the revolutionary banner. The soldiers lost their heads entirely. The government evidently placed betrayal of the oath, betrayal of the Emperor, street riots, above the serious, heavy work at the front.

Three days later peremptory instructions were given along the whole front to apply the order No. 1 to the whole army, whereby the troops were freed of discipline and were transformed into an armed herd. Vague reports of an impending St. Bartholomew's Eve, during which all the officers were to be slain just because they were officers, were spread among the troops.

Sablin summoned Davydoff.

"We, the Commanders can no longer serve a government of this sort," he said. "Have an order issued, in the usual form, to the effect that I am leaving the service, stating as main reason the utter impossibility of commanding the troops in such circumstances."

"Are you right, Your Excellency, in doing this?" Davydoff said. "If all follow your example—"

"That would be splendid," said Sablin. "If all the officers were to leave the service, the government would desist from destroying the army."

"Would it not, on the contrary, precipitate the St. Bartholomew's Eve affair?"

"Maybe, but it can't be helped in any case. I wish to leave the service so as not to witness and share in the final dissolution of the army and the ruin of Russia. Prepare the papers and have Ermoloff sent to me."

"Very well, Your Excellency."

Shortly after Ermoloff entered the hut.

"Lieutenant Ermoloff," Sablin began, "the Nth cavalry division with its sharp-shooter regiment will pass through our village. I have written about you to the head of the division and to the Commander of the sharp-shooter regiment to accept you. You will join them and follow them."

"Your Excellency," Ermoloff said firmly. "Allow me to remain."

"Why?" Sablin objected, and looked hard at the young man. Where had he come across such pale faces with large brilliant eyes? Where had he seen the nobility of features. . . . He recalled the pictures of the XVth and XVIth centuries representing Italian monks. He thought of those holy Sebastians and Anthonies attached to stakes and pierced by arrows. The eyes of a martyr, ready to sacrifice himself for his faith, for his ideal, were directed on Sablin.

"Allow me to return to my company," Ermoloff said. "They won't harm me. My presence is needed there. It is my duty to stay with them to the end."

"How old are you?" Sablin inquired with a feeling of admiration.

"I am twenty years of age," Ermoloff replied.

"Go and the Lord have mercy upon you."

At three a.m. the clerk brought Sablin the papers.

"I was at a loss how to write the order, Your Excellency," he

said. "Formerly such documents were addressed to His Majesty. I have addressed it to the minister. I have left out the title of 'Excellency.' Will that do?"

"I'll look it through," Sablin said. "Leave it here."

The clerk retired and Sablin proceeded to study the papers which gave a full account of his military career. It had been a pleasant life for the officers in the regiment, with its discipline, drill, its band and mess. A regimental family with its petty interests and reviews; with court-balls and five o'clock teas, with horse-shows, races and field-exercise. Everything for the officers. . . . And how about the men?

The men? A quarter-pound meat-ration, rich cabbage-soup, well cooked porridge, two pounds and a half of bread, an elegant uniform, the tender love of cooks and chamber-maids and pleasant prospects of returning to their homes. A quiet life with no intricate problems, a life of petty interests confined to a good night's rest, a cup of "vodka," and the fear of a rebuke or punishment. A life full of excitement and activity, the complicated ritual of military life.

Their life could likewise not be considered a hardship under the Two-headed Eagle.

And now? . . .

The long summer-night was waning. Candle after candle had burnt to the end and Sablin did not sleep. The pale morning dawned through the window of the hut, opening to the view the muddy road, the posts of the broken fence, the black fields and melting snow on the slope of the hill, and the distant forest in the back-ground. The early spring-dawn brought a yet deeper sadness into Sablin's soul.

Surely the Two-headed Eagle was still in existence? What could replace it? The strains of the band, playing the well-known regimental march of the dragoon regiment of his division, became audible, as well as the noise of the horses' feet splashing along the muddy road and the command of "attention." The Commander of the regiment, perceiving the flag of the army corps Commander, had evidently hoped that Sablin

would come out to greet his division. Sablin put on his overcoat, fastened his sabre and approached the window.

No, he would not go out to greet them.

Close by the very hut, behind the trumpeters, the colours appear. The Two-headed Eagle on its pike is covered over with a red casing—and wide red ribbons dangle from its top. The soldiers wear red bows in their button-holes, and similar bows are attached to the chests of the Commander of the regiment and to that of the head of the division.

No, Sablin will not go out to them. He had commanded the division under the Two-headed Eagle and refuses to greet the bloody, red flag. He does not recognize revolutionary soldiers. Even stout von Veber, the Commander of the hussar regiment, has a red bow, the order of cowardice, attached to his chest.

The sounds of the horses' hoofs of the Cossack regiment become audible and the faces of the men with their red bows bear an impudent expression. Red ribbons adorn that very same flag which had served during the attack of Jelinesnitza, and the Two-headed Eagle is hidden from the view. Sablin took up his pen and was on the point of signing the resignation, when the vision of Ermoloff rose before his mind's eye. He thought of those clear honest eyes on the pale face, the eyes of a martyr. And how about them, the officers? Those who, like Christ, had picked up their cross and ascended their Golgotha? Would he, Sablin, drop his cross and abandon them? Would he be capable of not partaking, in their midst, of the sufferings of the soul, of the horrors of the coming Bartholomew's Eve?

Sablin threw away his pen and tore the document that he was on the point of signing.

PART V

I

FOR a while after the revolution the sentries continued to stand immovably on the observation points, the men never parted with their masks, the reserves were always watchful, the chemical detachment daily verified all the appliances for gas defence. Although the famous order No. 1 had been sent into the regiments, very little attention had been given it. In speaking to the soldiers the word 'thou' continued to be used; when necessary, strong language was employed; the lazy and slack men were threatened with being sent to the front lines. The officers inspected the rifles, the non-commissioned officers shook their fists at those whose arms were dirty or rusty, the sentries were relieved every two hours exactly and the masses did not realise what had taken place. In the companies of the reserve the anthem and the prayer "Save us, oh, Lord!" were no longer sung after the last post and "Our Father" alone was to be heard. The men saluted as before; and new terms of addressing their seniors, as Mr. Lieutenant or Mr. Captain instead of "Your Honour," were used only by the most easy-going men.

Indeed the men noticed the change only after the return from Petrograd and G. H. Q. of the soldiers, who had been sent as delegates from the regiments to the meetings of the representatives of the front and of the army.

A common man called Ikaeff, recently promoted to the rank of ensign from that of sergeant, had arrived and with him a soldier, who had formerly been a schoolmaster. He had been deported to Siberia for the part he had taken in the revolution of 1905, had however escaped and since then had lived in Germany. His name was Voronkoff. Each of them reported to the soldiers all the events that had taken place in Russia and taught them how they were to comport themselves.

Ikaeff had assembled a company in a narrow junction of

trenches and sitting on the banquette at the sentry's feet talked enthusiastically about the southern meeting at Lutsk of the delegates from the front.

The sentry, looking through the breast-work at the green fields, listened to what Ikaeff was saying, gazed at the darkish lines of the enemy's barbed wire and could not understand how, after all that had happened, the war could still continue, that it was still necessary to stand on guard and watch the Germans working, either mending their wire or cutting passages through it. The Germans worked in a quiet, business-like way, and an officer could be seen pacing behind them and from time to time he could be heard shouting at them. Now was the very moment to shell them, but evidently the same feeling of good-natured laziness had taken hold of the artillery observer. Let them go on with their work. What was the sense of killing now, when such freedom had been proclaimed and when such unheard of things were taking place.

"I came to Lutsk, comrades," Ikaeff was saying enthusiastically, "and already soldiers were waiting for us on the platform. Each of them had a red bow pinned to his overcoat. They met us and inquired if we were the delegates of the corps. 'Show us your credentials!' they said. They verified them and then took us to the palace in motor-cars as if we were Generals. They gave us red bows, saying: 'Comrades, this is the sacred sign of freedom, you must wear it on your breasts!'"

"There you are!" said one of the listeners with a deep sigh. "And when Setrakoff put on such a bow, which a Jew had given him, and General Sablin saw it, he shamed him saying: You are not a girl to wear ribbons and bows! It is no part of the uniform! He threatened to send him to the front lines."

"He is a General of the old régime," Ikaeff said, spitting out the husks of sun-flower seeds. "He lacks discernment. He does not understand the achievements of the revolution! There I met real Generals, comrades! We arrived at the palace. And what do you think, comrades! I would not believe my eyes! The sentries were sitting, eating sun-flower seeds, joking with the passers-by, their rifles against the wall! Well, I asked, what

is the meaning of all this? Won't they be tried for such behaviour? But they only laughed at me, saying: What, comrade? Is it so bad? This is not the old régime. These are free soldiers! and a free sentry—he fulfills his duty, but orders that he may do whatever he likes!"

"That's right!" sighed someone in the crowd.

"That's right!" thought the sentry and, turning his back to the enemy, followed attentively what Ikaeff was relating.

Voronkoff was running fussily from one dug-out to another. He had been in Petrograd and had arrived full of the daring passion of the revolution.

"Comrades!" he would say breathlessly, his nervous face twitching, "you are duped, comrades, and you are betrayed. You are kept on purpose as under the old régime. What does it mean? The giving of titles, the rendering of the salute and the officers who scold you as before! Comrades, cast it all off, you must begin to democratise the army. In Petrograd all the chiefs are elected. Such a General as Sablin is not possible there. He would have been tossed on the bayonets a long time ago. I don't see any of the achievements of the revolution here. You must assemble at a meeting and demand the fulfilment of the order No. 1. The rights of the soldier are not observed, you are the same slaves as before. Where are your red banners of the revolution with the sacred watch-words that I saw in Petrograd? It is always the same with you, comrades—the Tsar and God! Oh, comrades! it is not for this that we have dethroned the Tsar and that we have learned at last that there is no God at all and that He was only invented by the bourgeoisie and the capitalists to keep the people in slavery and darkness. Comrades, I saw the sacred words on the red banners: 'Peace to the cottages—war to the palaces!' 'Down with the war!' It is the capitalists alone who desire the war and we are their slaves no longer. Let us hoist red banners and under them and with them we will fight for the rights of the people and for the achievements of the revolution!"

Suddenly the order No. 1, that had until then seemed mean-

ingless and incomprehensible, had become of vital importance and had completely revolutionized the soldier's life.

The sentry, who had listened to Ikaeff, had long finished his two-hours watch, Ikaeff had gone away and was sleeping, the men had dispersed in the dug-outs, but no relief came. Meanwhile, in the dug-out of the guard, a young ensign argued with the men, urging them to relieve their comrade.

"Sedoff," he said, "it is already five minutes past eleven, you must go and relieve Kovaleff."

"It does not matter, Mr. Ensign, he can stand a little longer, my chest hurts."

"Then go you, Pankratoff."

"Catch me! Why should I go if it is Sedoff's turn, I have stood all night. He can stand till twelve and then the 8th company will relieve us."

But at twelve o'clock the 8th company did not arrive: it was in no hurry. There the men were listening open-mouthed to Voronkoff's stories. It was 4 o'clock when Kovaleff was relieved.

Gas-masks, great-coats, cartridge-pouches were scattered about the dug-outs and the soldiers did not bother to clean the rifles. The bucket, supposed to be kept full of water in case of a gas-attack, was empty; the tow was damp; the petroleum had been carried to the different dug-outs and was used there and the brushwood was flooded. When the company's C.O. came and scolded the men, none of them stirred to carry out his orders and whistles and shouts followed him as he left the dug-out. He distinctly heard the men scream: "Wait a bit, and you will see Eremeieff's night," meaning St. Bartholomew's night. The men murmured and whispered anxiously in their dug-outs. The meaning of all the speeches and of all that was taking place in Petrograd and in Lutsch was one and the same—the war was finished. They must return home and bring to their cottages the long-promised peace.

The 16th company had got a piece of red linen and Voronkoff was writing on it in large letters: "Down with the war." It was decided to place this banner of the revolution in the

night on the fort nearest to the enemy, so that he could also learn of the sweetness of the Russian Revolution.

It was whispered everywhere that maybe the land would be divided and distributed in their absence, and what was the use of continuing the war now when there was so much land to be had and full freedom, without masters and without the Tsar.

Slowly and heavily as mill-stones worked the soldiers' brains and they could not master all that had taken place. Usually in such cases the soldier turned to the officer for an explanation, but it appeared that now he could trust the officer no longer.

An important meeting was fixed for the 19th of March in the 204th Division. The Division was to elect its delegates to report its wishes to the Temporary Government and to offer the Government its congratulations on the revolution.

Nearly all the officers and the representatives of the entire corps were present and Sablin himself was there.

When he entered the big dug-out—the church and the riding school of the 198th regiment—all rose and silence reigned.

They had elected as chairman the Doctor Sophia Lvovna Gordon, a handsome Jewess. They had chosen her because she had nothing in common with the old régime. She was the superintendent of the field hospital of the City Union and had a long-standing weakness for Sablin. The presidium was formed of officers and N.C.O.'s. of special merit, the majority of whom were decorated with the Cross of St. George. At Sophia Lvovna's suggestion, which met with the general approval, Sablin was offered the honorary chairmanship and he was invited to take a seat near the handsome Jewess.

"In the order of the day," began Sophia Lvovna, "stand: The election of a delegate and his associates for the purpose of sending them to Petersburg; the communication of the Division's answer to the following questions: the organization of the Russian State, the attitude towards the war, military discipline, the decision concerning agrarian questions, all to be reported to the Temporary Government."

"And to the Soviet of the Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies," a voice was heard speaking from the seats.

"Comrades, I request you not to speak from your places," Sophia Lvovna said, "I suppose that we must begin by electing the delegates, so that having heard all that will be said here they may take down what is necessary. The vote must be done by ballot. But so as not to have our opinions differ, and to elect a delegate more or less unanimously, I propose that you name those whom you consider worthy to be the deliverers of the opinions of the Division."

Complete silence followed.

"General Sablin," said an ensign promoted from the rank of sergeant and decorated with four crosses of St. George, "because General Sablin has always been a father to us, he is also a General of merit and a knight of St. George, he knows our wants and takes care of us."

"Comrades," Voronkoff's nervous voice was heard saying, "we have just thrown off the oppression of the cursed Tsarism and nevertheless we still see on the General's shoulder-straps the initials of the autocratic Emperor. At present Nicolashka. . . ."

"Stop," Sablin shouted, "don't dare speak of the Emperor in such terms! There is no Emperor any more, but I shall not allow his memory to be insulted."

"There, comrades, you see," Voronkoff said moving away.

"Voronkoff you are wrong," Wertzinsky shouted from his place.

"General Sablin and Colonel Kozloff, as knights of St. George," the ensign repeated once more.

"The Crosses of St. George have nothing to do here," screamed someone from his place.

"Then Ensign Osetroff!"

"The Captain Wertzinsky!"

"The Ensign Gaiduk!"

"The soldier Voronkoff!"

"Voronkoff, comrade Voronkoff!"

"The candidates have been named," Sophia Lvovna said, "let us vote."

TO RED FLAG

The assembly became restless and noisy. Sablin rose and left the dug-out. Davydoff followed.

Voronkoff was elected delegate from the Division by a crushing majority. Osetroff, Gaiduk and Shlossberg were elected as his associates. Sablin glanced into the dug-out when the voting was already finished and the Division Commander as well as many of the officers were shaking hands with Voronkoff and congratulating him.

Sophia Lvovna looking handsome and animated, drove over to report to Sablin about the meeting. She gazed at him with caressing and languid eyes, as she read her notes.

The majority of the officers had declared themselves for a constitutional monarchy, the soldiers for separate republics, similar to the United States, but without one general president for all the states; all the officers and part of the soldiers—for the war till its victorious conclusion in complete harmony with the Allies. The crushing majority of the soldiers—for immediate peace and the discharge of the men. Many officers and all the soldiers were for the democratisation of the army and the establishment in it of the right of election. The soldiers' distrust of the officers clearly manifested.

"General," Sophia Lvovna said, placing her strong, white, well-groomed hand on Sablin's and bringing her handsome face close to his, her eyes suddenly full of tears, "go away, don't stay here."

The dark eyes gazed deep into Sablin's soul.

"Please, do! It will be nasty here. Oh! Alexander Nicolaievitch, they are so exasperated against you and against all the officers that it frightens one. Something terrible will surely take place."

"But you rejoiced so, Sophia Lvovna, at the revolution?" Sablin said nervously. The proximity of the handsome woman excited him.

"Oh, I imagined it quite different. This is not a revolution. It is the roughest mutiny."

The beautiful hand trembled on Sablin's. The handsome

face was near, the large, languid eyes looked at Sablin with love and pity.

"Thank you, Sophia Lvovna," he said, "but it is not in my habit to escape when there is danger. I won't abandon my duty and where should I go? It is the same everywhere."

She stood near the table, the lower part of her face was lit by the two candles that were placed upon it. Shadows flitted over it. She looked once more at Sablin.

"General," Sophia Lvovna whispered, "I shall tell you a secret which may cost me my life. Our religion teaches us: ' . . . and slay the worthiest gentile! Crush the serpent's head!' Now our people are the rulers. . . . You are the worthiest. . . . Oh! I tremble for you. . . . I love you so. . . . Take care of yourself!"

It was so quiet in the cottage that Sablin thought he could distinguish the beating of his heart. Sophia Lvovna stood with drooping head. Pallor suited her oriental type. Her long eyelashes fluttered.

Two minutes passed. The watch which lay on the table ticked them off.

"Good-bye," Sophia Lvovna said, extending her hand.

"Good-bye," Sablin said and kissed the white hand.

She crossed the clay floor with heavy steps. He could hear her call the coachman, and the noise of the wheels as the carriage drove off.

Sablin sat down on a stool near the table and resting his elbows upon it, whispered:

"And slay the worthiest gentile! What does it mean? Or is it really so? The seventy sages hinted at by Wertzinsky whom nobody knows and the Russian revolution led from the depths of Zion. A mystery? But it is far better not to think!"

The hut was yet full of the smell of perfume.

Sablin went out into the yard and called Davydoff.

II

THE soldier Pantuchoff, a peasant of the Government of Penza, the father of five children, took his post. Resting his

elbows on the breast-work and placing his rifle beside him, he looked at the sunset. It was a warm spring evening. Just before they had had a heated dispute in the sentries' dug-out regardless of the enemy's firing. The Lieutenant Löwenthal, of German origin, endeavoured to prove that the land could not be simply taken away from its former proprietors because many of the landowners had bought their land and it would be most unjust to do so, but that the State was obliged to buy it and give it over to the peasants granting them payment by installments to their Bank.

The Ensign Gaiduk said on the contrary that the land must be taken gratis from the former landowners, as they had enjoyed it long enough. At the height of this animated dispute the section corporal sent Pantuchoff to take his turn in the trenches. Pantuchoff threw on his great-coat carelessly and, leaving his cartridge-pouch and his gas mask, went to the breast-work, carrying only his rifle.

Pantuchoff's turn had long finished, but nobody came to relieve him. That did not trouble him much. He had slept well in the dug-out, warmed by the men's presence. The night was fine, just cool enough and it was so pleasant to dream under the starlit sky.

"What a perfume. Spring is in the air. It would be fine to go home for Annunciation or for Easter and with God's blessing settle everything with the landowners and begin to work on the new shares. But the German does not leave off! That is the result of the officers' martinet. He is frightened. Yes! How cleverly we have freed ourselves! That was well done, but there must be no return to the past. The fellows say that all the landowners must be killed all at once. But it is dangerous. Suppose we have to answer for it? What then? Well, what a noise they are making there! Quite like engines letting off steam. And where did he get those machines. He did not have them before."

Suddenly a horrible thought flashed through his mind: "They were preparing a gas-attack! Gas! They had already begun it."

And all that he had been taught, all that he had rehearsed several times in the presence of General Sablin rose suddenly in his mind. First of all the mask had to be put on, then the alarm given along the whole front, the artillery had to be notified, the bonfires lit, sprays of chemical mixtures were to be thrown out at the approaching waves of gas, oxygen given to those who were suffocating.

"Good Lord! Where is my mask? Holy Virgin save us sinners! What will happen? What will happen!"

Pantuchoff threw himself about in the trench, not attempting to do anything. He wanted to launch a rocket, to give the alarm, he ran to the box containing them, but it was flooded with water. Nobody had carried it out during yesterday's rain, although someone had spoken about doing so. And the matches were floating in the water. Pantuchoff's first movement was to telephone to the battery, but he was so scared that he could not remember where the telephone was. It seemed to him that he already smelt the gas and then he remembered that the fellows had let out all the oxygen for fun. "And how sour it was," thought Pantuchoff, "and how light,—you drank it like lemonade!"

He ran into the nearest dug-out and flung the doors wide-open. A small lamp was burning on the boards. Eight men, completely undressed were engrossed in a game of cards. The rest of the men were sleeping soundly, snoring in different tones.

"Gas, comrades, gas," Pantuchoff shouted, looking about wildly for his mask. But he could not see it among the clothes and underwear that was lying all over the place.

"What are you inventing?" shouted an old soldier, drawing in a heap of banknotes.

"Honour bright, comrades, the German has sent over the gas. It is making a terrible noise!"

The men jumped up, somebody upset the lamp and it went out; they were suddenly plunged into darkness. The men were fighting, trying to find their clothes and wrenching them from each other.

The faint sounds of the gong were to be heard from the

neighbouring fort. One of the men, looking like a demon in his gas-mask, was knocking against a sheet of iron with a broken hoof and the blows resounded sorrowfully and dully in all the trenches. The men began bustling and hurried out, the majority without gas-masks, which they had left behind in the dug-outs of the reserve when they took up their turn.

A young officer, lately promoted from a military school, whose mask the men had just taken away, was telephoning with tears in his voice:

"Ivan Fedorovitch! Ivan Fedorovitch! Mr. Captain. It is you? Oh, God! Hurry and open fire! Orders No. 4: gas-attack. What do you say? They don't allow? The guard is our Division? But tell them we are perishing!"

Part of the company, directed by the officers, had put on their masks and were drawing up behind the breast-works. Those who were without masks ran towards the river. Far behind it could be seen the yellow flashes of the guns, and the roar of the artillery that had been sent to reinforce the corps was heard. The delegates from the infantry had given in at last to the appeals of the men in the trenches. But it was too late.

A thick fog was spreading in the dusk over the black, damp earth. A light, westerly wind was driving it straight on to the trenches. It rolled up to the poles of the wires and they were immediately swallowed by the fog. It was evident that no one could escape from its rapid advance.

The gong that had been ringing all along the line of the trenches was silent. The young officer, who had telephoned, ran out of the breast-work, without either mask or cap, and ordered "rifles down" to be in readiness for the attack. Some of the men had tied handkerchiefs over their mouths and stood without masks. Those were the best soldiers of the old time.

It smelt of sour, suffocating chemicals and of bitter almonds; a yellow shroud enveloped the faces and the damp willow hedge before the trenches. The faces without masks were green and the eyes, suddenly opened widely, looking terrified.

What is it? the young officer thought. He felt that he was losing all control of his movements, and his fingers twitched

convulsively. He thought he saw his beloved mother, as he had seen her last at his home in Petersburg, when she had blessed him before he left for the front. . . . "Mother," he was about to exclaim, when he fell back with a terrible expression on his convulsed face. People were dropping all around. Their sudden death, the expression of unhuman terror on their yellowish faces, utterly unlike those of the ordinary dead, terrified those who gazed upon this scene of horror through the dim glasses of their masks. The men began to leave their positions. They were making their way towards the river. They came across separate groups of men lying in heaps along the road and on the field. They were the bodies of those who had run away first and whom the waves of gas had overtaken in their flight.

It was the approach of dawn. Everything vacillated in the misty greenish gas-waves, that filled and spread over the hollows and cavities. Near the regimental kitchens lay the bodies of the cooks and the corpses of horses. The fires under the kettles were going out.

The bridges on the river were broken. The ice was half-covered by a yellow-greenish sheet of vapour. The gas had not spread any further, dissolved by the dampness of the river. The crowd of soldiers pushed forward on to the ice. But it gave way, cracked, sunk and the people began to vanish in the dark waters, from which rose clouds of vapour. It was not deep, the water hardly came up to the men's waists, but it was impossible to advance.

"To the bridge, to the big bridge, comrades," shouted the men, and without giving a thought to the enemy they rushed up the river to the big bridge which had not been destroyed. Meanwhile, a scanty line of German scouts was penetrating into the trenches. The men in grey coats and low metal casques, from under which peeped the dark faces of demons, holding their rifles at "charge bayonets," dispersed in the trenches. They began shouting, at the men who were running along the river-side, causing them to hurry still more towards the bridge.

But it was occupied by a large column of masked men. It

was the 204th and 209th regiments, which Sablin had hastily assembled and which he led personally to the counter-attack.

It was day-light. The slanting rays of the sun lit up the sandy hillock, behind which lay the fortifications of the Lessischensky place d'armes. The waves of the yellow-greenish fog rolled on the slopes of the hillock like a phantastic serpent creeping on its belly. The landscape seemed unnatural through the glasses of the gas-masks. From the effects of the gas last year's grass was flattened down and had turned dark. The larks that the gas had reached lay dead in the fields. The entire slope of the hill was covered with dead bodies. A carriage stood motionless on the road, the horses had dropped down dead and the soldier on the box had also been suffocated; he was still sitting in his seat bending forward. Seated in the carriage with green faces were the G.O.C. of the Brigade and Colonel Pantuchoff. Further on was an overturned cart which had been evidently upset by the horse in its last agonized struggles and in it were sitting the manager and the paymaster, both of them dead. The morning wind was pulling at the paymaster's black beard.

The men, who had reached the other side of the river, hesitated visibly.

"First Battalion, line of companies with extended intervals to the right of the road," Sablin commanded and his voice had a muffled sound coming from under the mask.

His great-coat as well as his shoulder-straps had turned yellow from the gases, and the Emperor's initials were black.

Sablin stopped to let the leading company pass. Kozloff was leading it. But as soon as the companies extended their intervals they advanced more slowly. They were met by running men wearing masks.

"Stop, comrades!" they shouted in muffled voices, "turn back, all is lost, the strength is on the enemy's side."

Kozloff and Ermoloff continued to advance and the Morochensky regiment followed them silently. The first platoons extended into lines of skirmishers. The German scouts began to come out of the trenches.

Sablin climbed up the hill and looked through his field-glasses at the battle-field, without lifting his mask.

The Morochnensky regiment, as well as the Pavlinovsky were both nearer the trenches than the Germans. One more effort and the place d'armes would again be occupied by the Russian forces. They would rest afterwards in the fortifications. Notwithstanding the disorderly fire of the Russian artillery, that showed the absence of a good observer, it reached the enemy and the German lines frequently dropped down.

The seconds seemed endless.

Ermoloff, who was in front, continually lifted his gas-mask and shouted loudly:

"Forward, brothers, forward! They are done for."

The measured buzzing of several propellers was heard overhead. Bombs fell with a dull sound, discharging clouds of brown smoke, and overhead was heard the cracking of machine-guns. The men advanced. But at the same time a small group detached itself from the Pavlinovsky regiment. A red flag with black letters waved over it. From time to time one man or another of the group would stop and, lifting his gas-mask, shout out shrilly: "Fall back on to the bridge. Save yourselves!"

The columns stopped. A bomb thrown from an aeroplane exploded in the vicinity of the company of the reserve, killing several men. Sablin drew his revolver and threw himself at the men who were running towards him. He caught a glimpse of the pale face of Osetroff, who had taken his mask off and shouted:

"Arrest the General. He is bought by the Germans. He is a German spy!"

Sablin stopped and aimed at Osetroff, but at the same moment, rough, strong hands caught hold of him from behind and he was surrounded by the crowd carrying the red flag. He recognized Gaiduk, Schlossberg, Ikaeff and Voronkoff by their voices and their shoulder-straps. It was Voronkoff who was carrying the red flag, on which stood: "Down with the war!"

TO RED FLAG

Sablin was surrounded and violently dragged towards the bridge.

The whole crowd rushed after him. There was a terrible crush on the bridge.

"Not on to the bridge, on to the ice, it will hold," roared somebody's powerful bass.

The men jumped on to the ice, some of them crossing safely; others fell through, struggled amid the blocks of ice and were drowned, others waded out.

Aeroplanes were dropping bombs over the general chaos, and machine-guns crackled. The aeroplanes flew so low that the aviators were visible to the naked eye, but no one attempted to shoot at them. Colonel Davydoff, Kozloff, Lieutenant Ermoloff were being conducted over the bridge in the midst of a dense crowd of soldiers. Nobody had dared to tear off Sablin's shoulder-straps, but those of the other officers had been torn off.

Once over the bridge they removed their gas-masks and without looking back, hastened to reach the forest, hoping to find shelter there from the attacks of the aeroplanes.

Meanwhile the Brigade of German infantry was entering undisturbed into the trenches of the Lessischensky place d'armes. That stronghold a constant menace for Kovel, had been cleared without casualties, except for a few men killed and wounded by the fire of the artillery, and the Germans were preparing to throw several Divisions to the western front. The Nth Army Corps had practically ceased to exist.

III

VORONKOFF had taken upon himself the management of everything in the Staff of the Corps and gave orders with impetuosity and alacrity; he sent for the delegates of all the regiments of the Corps to try General Sablin and Colonel Kozloff; he gave orders to stop the fire of the artillery and addressed Pestretzoff in an imperious tone. Pestretzoff was at a loss what to do; should he send for the Cossacks and have Voronkoff arrested or was he to try and put up with him? He applied to the front

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

for instructions. The Headquarters answered that severe repressions must be avoided, that Sablin was to blame himself for not having taken the initials off his shoulder-straps and for arresting the bearers of red flags. The revolution had to be accepted and it was necessary to be with the people and not to show any opposition. Pestretzoff was advised to persuade Voronkoff to send Sablin to the meeting in the General Headquarters; its members were well intentioned and the whole incident might easily be settled.

Pestretzoff acted accordingly. Sablin, Kozloff, Davydoff and Ermoloff were convoyed to the General Headquarters by an escort under Gaiduk's command.

The men of the Corps were gradually dispersing. Every night five or ten men deserted from each company, generally the best and most reliable soldiers forsaking the front.

"No good can be expected," they said. "A soldier arrests a General, a knight of the Cross of St. George, and the senior Commanders, instead of shooting him, reason with him. Well, what can you expect after that?"

Pantuchoff, who had safely crossed the river and was miraculously saved, related to soldiers who came from his village his plans about the division of the Obolensky estate, and seven of them decided to go home at once. Three days they hid in the woods, advancing cautiously, but when they reached the rear they convinced themselves that there was no need to hide. The soldiers were at the head of everything, the loving word "comrade" was heard everywhere. Russia swarmed with deserters and the word itself sounded proudly.

Pantuchoff and his friends travelled to Penza in a first-class carriage. On the way he occupied himself with cutting off the velvet of the seats as a present for his wife.

"Won't she be pleased," he said to his comrades.

The Russian Army had ceased to exist.

IV

PETERSBURG had gone mad. Women of society, yesterday His Majesty's most faithful subjects, rushed to hear Kerensky

speak and smothered him with flowers. The crowd looked respectfully when Madame Kerensky, driving in the Imperial carriage drawn by the Tsar's own horses, called at the most expensive shops and dress-makers buying jewelry and ordering herself the most extravagant dresses and lingerie. The papers, in flattering servility, gave pictures of Kerensky, snapshots of his life in the Winter Palace and at the front. He was worshipped and everyone thought him a Russian Napoleon.

Yet in May at Tsarskoie Selo the Polejaeff family, with whom Tania Sablin had come to stay, led the same undisturbed existence as nature herself. Polejaeff who had a large estate in the south of Russia in the Taurid steppes had served three years in the same regiment as Sablin. Later on he had married, had resigned, devoting himself entirely first to his wife and then to his children. He had two sons and one daughter. Paul, the eldest, was twenty years old and Nicolas—nineteen; his daughter Olga was seventeen. Polejaeff's wife had died very soon after the birth of their last child. He sent the boys to the Pages' Corps, and placed his daughter in the Smolny Institute. It was there that she met and became intimate with Tania Sablin.

These good people were Tania's devoted friends, worshipped her father and had chosen him as their hero, who would save the Emperor. They implicitly believed that when he had been saved Russia too would be delivered. The Emperor had abdicated, but that was of no importance in the eyes of Olia and Tania. They knew that the Emperor led the life of a prisoner in the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoie Selo, and living there themselves they dreamt of helping him and when it became possible of rescuing him. They knew that he was guarded by the Sharp-shooter Regiment, and Nika had now joined that very regiment. Pavlik, who was at the front, hoped to do the same. A small plot to save the Emperor was being hatched in the Polejaeff family.

It was a clear summer morning in Tsarkoselky Park, with a blue sky and a sun that seemed full of promises. Later it became unpleasant to walk even in the most frequented alleys,

when soldiers' noisy gangs filled the park after dinner. They feared no one. Things so horrible were related about them that they could not even be mentioned before the young girls, but what they guessed made them shrink with disgust.

They dared everything. They had arrested and imprisoned the Tsar. What more was possible?

Olia and Tania, both dressed alike in white low-necked blouses, with dark skirts, had gone out with Miss Proctor, their old English governess; Quick, their collie, was also with them. Both girls walked quickly; the gravel crunched under their feet. Tania carried an English book in a light yellow covering. They passed near the lake, entered a long dark alley of large limes and sat down on a bench.

"Look, Tania," said Olia, "over there at that man. He has the beauty of a brigand. That is how I picture myself Stenka Razin."

"And he is an officer of the guard."

"And with him is a horror of some kind. But how dressed up she is. She has high boots and a sable stole on her shoulders in such a heat. They have probably stolen it from some house during a search."

"I think, girls," Miss Proctor said, "we had better go." But before the young girls had time to rise, the couple was already near the bench and the officer flopped down beside Tania. Quick started up and growled, his hair standing on edge. Olia and Tania moved hastily away.

"Aristocrats!" they caught the mocking words thrown after them. The officer's companion looked at them through her gold lorgnette.

The couple were Osetroff and Jenny. From under his creased cap, worn at the back of his head, a black lock fell over his white forehead. His wide Russian khaki shirt was unfastened and left bare the strong, bull-like throat and white chest. Upon it a precious pendant with a blood-red stone was hanging on a thin gold chain. His trousers were tucked into high boots of yellow leather. He did not wear a sword, but a large, heavy Mauser hung at his side. Owing to the heavy casualties among

the officers in the regiments of the Guard during the last attacks, Osetroff had been transferred by the chief command into a reserve regiment of the Guard, which the government wished to form of revolutionary officers who were all against the old régime.

Osetroff took out of his pocket a gold cigarette-case with initials in diamonds and lit a cigarette.

"Well, Jenny, so you have broken with Schlossberg?" he asked mockingly, looking at her from under half closed lids.

"Devil take him," Jenny said in a hoarse, tired voice. "He is so vague, so undecided. I love a man who looks like a man, so that when he embraces you he almost crushes you."

"Own up that your ideal is the sailor Dibenko."

"Well, what of it? I don't deny it. He is a fine fellow. He is worth loving. A real giant knight from the Volga. But you also will do."

"Do you think so?"

"And do you love me?"

Osetroff smiled disdainfully.

"Now Jenny, don't be hurt by what I am going to say. I have never loved anyone. I hate everybody, such a hatred rises in me that I would like to destroy everything. But what is it to destroy? It's too little for me. No! What I want is to spoil, spit upon and degrade everything. When I gaze at the sky and see its azure, and the golden clouds sweep over it, I long to spit at it and spit until all its blue vanishes."

"Do you also hate me," Jenny asked.

"You? How shall I explain? I need you just now, you are my illness, my weakness. You see, nothing stops you and nothing frightens you. I want to have you near me at night. I am not strong enough. Since I killed Captain Siversoff in the street in the presence of his wife and child there is no peace for me at night. He is always before me. Then, while we were sacking a house on the Kamenooostrovsky I slashed a policeman's throat and the blood sprinkled me all over. Well, when it is night the thought possesses me—and what if there is a God? You will say that it is my conscience pricking me? Not at all, simply

fear and nothing else; and when I am with you, I am not afraid. Last night when I slept at your place I was drunk and I saw a strange dream. It seemed as if Zorka came and told me: 'Do you know that you have buried the victims of the revolution badly on the field of Mars? They lie too close to one another. They struggle at night and bite each other, and you can see it all so distinctly, so clearly.' You know that since then I would like to have their graves dug up and to see for myself. What do you say to it?"

"You dream of Zorka? You can't forget her?"

Osetroff frowned.

"I loved the girl," he said, "if I had cast her off, I wouldn't have minded. But I am enraged that we were parted against my will, and I know who did it—General Sablin. He has concealed her too, God knows where, but I shall find her."

"And if you do, what then?"

"I don't know. If I did not love her I would not be jealous of Gaiduk, and I am jealous of him."

"But the idea was yours?"

"I know, out of friendship. I thought that as now all was in common, so it must be the same with a woman. But it turned out differently."

"You are a bad communist."

"Well, it will come. You see I think that the best thing would be to love a woman, to live with her, and then to kill her. There, that is a feeling that is worth experiencing."

"You are a cynic, Misha!"

"Do you think so? I have thought of being a Napoleon but our people are not the French people. I will tell you how I understand our people. For instance we have miraculous images, like the Kazanskaya Holy Mother. Crowds of people of all sorts worship before it, old men and women, girls, children, rich merchants, all kneel before it. Well if I were to approach it and behave before it in such a way that I myself would feel ashamed, then I am certain, from that moment I should become more sacred in the eyes of the people than the image itself, because I would appear stronger than it is, and if the same

thing were done with the relics of Seraphim Sarovsky, then for them I would become a Napoleon. Our people are slaves by nature and they must be treated accordingly. They must have a stick over them and strength. The government of the Tsar showed its weakness and that caused its downfall. It was afraid of capital punishment. No! This is the way I would have acted: They revolt! Well, I should have come towards them with a machine-gun and shouted: 'All of you on your knees, hounds!' They would have obeyed blindly, I am positive. Then I would have shot them all dead with my machine-gun. Perhaps the intense scorn I feel for the people explains my hatred for them."

"Where do you get such ideas, Misha?"

Osetroff was silent for a few moments. "Well, to be truthful," he said "not all are my own. I have become intimate with a soldier called Korjikoff. I met him in the Soviet. He, I think, will be the Russian Napoleon. Nothing is sacred for him. And our people, as I understand them, require either a saint or someone who scorns everything. There is nothing in between for them. Well, come along, Jenny, let's go and have a drink."

And they went away, Osetroff singing at the top of his voice a popular song of the revolutionary mob.

V

PAVLIK POLEJAEFF had come back quite unexpectedly from the front and all the young people, Pavlik, Olia, Nika and Tania, were assembled in the evening. Nika had been on guard in the palace.

"It was impossible to speak either to the Emperor or to any one of the family," Nika was saying. "It can't be managed. The soldiers watch them too narrowly. They never leave them alone; when they sit down on a bench immediately soldiers come and sit down beside them, start smoking and try to speak with them or carry on most objectionable conversations among themselves."

"I came to relieve Ensign Gaiduk, a new officer sent here

from the Army to inculcate democratic ideas. He is an awful cad, a Lettish peasant. The relief generally takes place during lunch-time and the officers, the new one and the one who is leaving, salute the Emperor and he shakes hands with them. It was also so this time. Gaiduk and I saluted and the Emperor came up towards Gaiduk and stretched out his hand smiling amiably. Gaiduk stepped back and would not shake hands with the Emperor. Olia, you should have seen just then the Emperor's face, what deep sorrow it expressed. He approached Gaiduk, took him by the shoulder and, looking straight into his eyes, asked: 'Why have I deserved such treatment?'

"Gaiduk stepped back again and said: 'I belong to the people. When the people reached out their hands towards you, you pushed them away, now I won't take your hand,' and left the room. I followed him. 'You are a cad, Sir,' I said, overtaking him."

"Thank you, Nika," murmured Tania.

"He stopped and looked at me quietly. I shall never forget his glance. It was as if he did not see me, as if he gazed into space. 'You can't insult me, comrade,' he said. 'Better not try. If I spit at your face, you will die from the insult. If you spit at mine, I shall only wipe it. That is all, so better not compete with me, our forces are too unequal.' Then he turned and joined his men."

Everybody was silent. The twilight of the Petersburg summer night was spreading over the terrace, the perfume of the heliotropes and mignonette grew stronger. Quick, lying near the pink and blue hydrangeas, was watching Nika attentively through his half closed eyes.

"Nika," Tania whispered fixing her blue eyes on him. "Nika, I am a stranger among you, I am not a Polejaeff. I know that you sincerely love my father, my late brother and me. Give me your hands, there, you Olia give me one of yours and the other one to Pavlik, he must give his to Nika and Nika give me yours. 'I swear.' Let this be sacred. We will save him. I don't know how, but we will save him!"

They stood up, moved by all that had taken place. They felt

as if the oath they had given bound them together sacredly and for ever.

Nika did not take his eyes off Tania. He had been in love with her since the day when he, a ten-year-old boy, dressed up as a marquis, danced a minuet with her, a nine-year-old little marchioness, at a fancy dress-ball, and since these early days his heart had been true to her. His love grew and changed its character with the passing years. The tender feeling of a brother had become a strong, all conquering, first love.

"I have a plan," he said. "I will save the Emperor. But until it is time to speak, no one must know anything about it. Pavlik will you help me?"

Pavlik nodded his head.

"Nika!" said Tania, "God bless you." A small childish hand embraced his neck and pure lips touched his forehead.

"Save Russia," Tania said, and ran to her room.

Nika belonged to the officers of the new generation. He had been promoted after the revolution and after the famous Order No. 1, granting all freedom to the soldiers, had been issued. He had not served under the Double-headed Eagle, he had never been called "Your Honour"; he was addressed either as "Mr. Ensign" or Nicolai Nicolaievitch. He was used to it and it did not shock him. He had a sincere love for the people; he trusted them, and so easily obtained what Sablin had struggled for in vain in his youthful years—the full understanding and the good feeling of his men.

He understood the new discipline and when, after drill or when on guard the regimental kitchen brought them their dinner it did not trouble him to take his turn with the men, carrying his own bowl. He did not mind not being served first or not eating better fare. Indeed, the fact that he was treated like an ordinary soldier, raised him in his own opinion. He liked the rough humour of the men, especially of the young ones, and he considered them as children who could be easily educated. He soon made the soldiers understand how wrong it was to speak roughly or slightly of the Emperor and he awoke in them a feeling of pity for him and the understanding of their fault.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

But he worked quite alone. The Tsarskoselski Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies, or as it was called, the Sovdep, had sent a great number of its officers into the regiment. They gave the soldiers pamphlets and books in which the Emperor was represented most repulsively; they also showed them caricatures of the Tsar's family, and in general they tried to influence the men against the Emperor and his family. Nika soon understood that all the actions of the soldiers were due to the foreign element that was dressed up in officers' uniforms and that it was they who taught them and forced them to take brutal and rough measures. Gaiduk was the most energetic worker in this sense.

Nika soon understood that the Temporary Government was not to the soldiers liking. It had granted many liberties, but it had not released them from the war, had not given them the desired peace and had not allowed them to go home. If the Emperor returned to the throne and gave them the longed for peace, they would stand by him and help him to keep it, but they had been told that he was a traitor and wanted to sign a separate peace that would ruin Russia. From early childhood Nika had passionately loved the Emperor. He had given Tania Sablin his first, youthful love and only waited for the end of the war to propose and then marry, feeling that he would not be rejected. Like all thoroughly good youths, he considered himself unworthy of Tania, thought her faultless, and decided to accomplish an exploit which would make him worthy of her.

The saving of the Emperor would be that exploit. He made up his mind that the influence he had over the soldiers, as well as their credulity and their daring would serve him for this purpose. His plan had long been worked out. He had chosen Sablin's old chauffeur Petroff to be his chief assistant. It was to him that Nika hastened that same evening.

VI

PETROFF belonged to the type of devoted Russian natures who, when they have once given their affection, remain faithful to it. He was a true Russian of the old school, deeply religious, at-

tached to all the rules of the Orthodox Church and leading an earnest, steady life. He belonged to the peasant class, was a workman in a mechanical factory, quite a simple man and as such had a right to the freedom of speech refused in those days to the "intelligentzia," or the "bourgouisi" as the capitalists were called.

While the real "bourgoui" was afraid of wearing good clothes or showing himself on the street in an expensive coat, Petroff went about in a handsome fur coat and knew that no one would dare to touch him.

After General Sablin's arrest by the soldiers of the Moroch-nensky regiment, Petroff had taken a prominent part in his liberation. It was he who had driven the car that was to convey all the prisoners with the Ensign Gaiduk and the escort to the meeting of the army and who instead of taking them there, brought them to the house occupied by the staff of the front. He then quickly summoned the general on duty and the tables were instantly turned: Sablin, Kozloff and Ermoloff were set free and Gaiduk and the soldiers were arrested. They were to be court-martialled, but the local Sovdep stood up for them and they were liberated, the whole case being classed as an habitual revolutionary excess.

After that it became dangerous for Petroff to remain at the front and Sablin invited him and his wife to live in his flat in Petersburg in Miss Proctor's former rooms. It was his wife, a thin, respectable looking woman, in a lace scarf, which made her look like a Spanish woman, who told Nika that he could find her husband in the chief garage at the Michailovsky riding school.

The doors of the riding-school were open and a long line of cars could be seen in the dimly lit garage. Several armed men stood leisurely before it.

"What do you want, comrade," they asked. Nika had the appearance of a revolutionary officer. His black, budding moustache was cut short, he wore his cap on the nape of his neck, a loosely fitting tunic, breeches and shoes with puttees. He could

easily be mistaken for one of Kerensky's or Goutchkoff's aide-de-camps, or an officer of the lorry company.

"Is the chauffeur Petroff here," Nika asked.

The other chauffeur went back and returned a few minutes later followed by Petroff. "Your wife has sent me to fetch you, are you free?"

Petroff had told Nika several times that with money, a powerful motor-car and a few bold, reliable men, nothing could be easier than to save the Emperor. Now in five minutes Nika and Petroff were ascending the stairs of Sablin's flat. Nika took Petroff into Sablin's library and without turning on the light made him sit down opposite himself on the other side of the table. He told his plans, which included the romantic idea of getting the Emperor away to the Hermitages of the Old Believers in the Ural Country. Nika was eloquent about it.

"The Emperor must be saved," Petroff said, speaking at last, "that is evident. The State can't exist without an Emperor. What is a Republic? A lot of Jews who jabber and shout at meetings, that is all. . . . But it can't be done in a car. You said he would have to be taken to the Government of Viatka, or even as far as the Ural? But have you decided where to, exactly?"

"No."

After a silence Petroff resumed:

"We are risking our heads, Your Honour. It must be well done and he himself must wish it. If he wants it to be done—then all will be right. You see we can't get him so far as the place itself in a car. First of all on account of the benzine. Then we have no maps. Who knows the condition of the roads there? And if you stop to inquire then you give yourself away; they will find us and take us by surprise and there will be an end of it. And if, God forbid, the car were to break? And besides we can't take them all. With him it's simple: he can shave his moustache and his beard, no one will know him. The Tsarevitch can be dressed up as a girl if necessary, but she and the Princesses? It is impossible to take them, they are too

striking. Besides that, we must take them in several cars. And we won't find them."

The old man's words made Nika's heart sink. He was ready to give the whole thing up, and go home, but Petroff thought differently.

"We *must* save him," he said. "Can you answer for your brother, Nicholai Nicholaievitch?"

"Most certainly I can."

"Well then, my old mother lives in a remote village near Novgorod, three versts from the highway. She is a woman of the old times, discreet and honest. She is comfortably off. Thanks to General Sablin I could help her on. She has five rooms in her cottage, but the most important thing is that it is situated in the wilderness of the government of Novgorod. So we must go there. We can reach it in six hours. I will get a powerful car. Send me Pavel Nicolaievitch tomorrow, but make him take off his shoulder-straps; he can practise and then he will be my assistant. You will be carrying an important order; the only thing is that the guard should open the gates and not close them before we have driven away. You understand, it must be done while the Emperor is out walking. We will take him as he is and then—amen. From my mother's, after he has shaved and dressed himself up as a peasant we will go through the woods to the place you spoke of. That is the only way to do it. And now will Your Honour allow me to offer you some tea, in General Sablin's name?"

No time was to be lost. Tsarskoie Selo was full of threatening rumours concerning the decision which had been taken to remove the Tsar and his family to Siberia. The soldiers spoke about it openly. Nika's friends, the Sharp-shooters, partly acquainted with his plan, had promised their help.

"We don't want to be answerable for it," they said, "it must be done so as not to throw any suspicion or responsibility on us. If you are caught then, you must not put the blame on us; it will be no use, for we will deny everything."

Nika never stopped to think about it. He took all the re-

sponsibility on himself. He never thought of the consequences it might bring.

Pavlik was driving Petroff's car as his helper for the second week, the gas had been provided and they had even stored a great quantity in Luban. Everything was ready. Only they had not been able to speak to the Emperor. But how could he refuse? Russia's welfare was in question. Pavlik advised using force if necessary. They only waited for the day when the guard they trusted would be on duty and when the gates would be as if accidentally left open. At last this occasion presented itself, but unluckily the Ensign Gaiduk commanded the guard.

The Emperor generally took his walk at eleven o'clock. At that hour they were to enter the park. The weather was uncertain. Heavy clouds swept across the blue sky and a strong wind blew from the sea. The car worked well and steadily. The small red flag which waved over it showed that all who occupied it had acknowledged the revolution. So many cars drove about the town in those days, with young ensigns and soldiers, that Nika did not arouse anybody's suspicion. He was taken for some delegate or member of the Sovdep. Russia's future belonged to the Ensigns, the day was their's and it was they and not the Generals who disposed of the motor-cars. The car's presence did not astonish anyone even when it drove into the park and took the direction of the Alexander Palace. Nika, endeavouring to master his agitation and not to rise in his impatience in his seat, was all attention. The road bordered by willow trees widened, and first an iron grate was seen, then appeared the sentries with rifles and at last the gate-way was before them. It stood wide open. The car put on speed and seemed to fly.

The Grand Duchess and the Tsarevitch were sitting on the lawn before the palace. The Princesses were in simple blouses and wore small hats. The Tsarevitch was in a military shirt with soldier's shoulder-straps, and the St. George's medal was pinned on his breast. He wore a military cap and top-boots. They had just been working in their vegetable-garden. A sol-

TO RED FLAG

dier in an apron with a spade in his hands stood behind them, he was one of the palace servants. The Emperor sat on a bench near by and the Grand Duchess Olga Nicholaievna was reading to him. They were quite by themselves; Gaiduk could not be seen. The car dashed up. The brakes grated and the suddenness of the halt nearly tossed Nika out of his seat. The Emperor rose and the Tsarevitch followed him. The Emperor was very pale; he had grown thin and his beard was turning grey. He looked questioningly at Nika.

"Your Majesty, get in quickly with the Tsarevitch. We have come to save you," Nika said.

The Emperor shook his head. Nika made the sign of the cross.

"We are Russian people, Your Majesty, and we suffer deeply from your imprisonment; we have come to save you and the Tsarevitch. Please get in, Your Majesty."

The Tsarevitch was looking at Nika with curiosity. The Emperor did not speak.

"You don't trust us, Your Majesty?" Nika said breathlessly. "I swear that we are not liars. We belong to the old nobility, we are your faithful subjects."

"I believe you," the Emperor answered distinctly, his face twitching nervously. "But I will fulfil my duty to the end. Let God's will and my people's be done. The Russian people won't harm me, as I never wished them any harm."

The soldiers and Gaiduk were running from the palace.

"Take hold of them by force," Pavlik screamed. The Tsarevitch began to cry and pressed against the Emperor. Nika was seized by a sudden weakness and indecision; he dared not touch the Emperor. An expression of infinite sadness was in the Tsar's beautiful eyes.

"You won't employ force, it will only make matters worse," the Emperor said gently and turned towards the guard as if seeking their protection.

"All is lost," Pavlik said.

"Get in," Petroff said, "we will escape." Pavlik dragged

Nika into the car and immediately it lept forward. Shots were heard behind them.

"They are shooting at us," Petroff murmured. "Thy will be done."

The car swung round the lawn; Gaiduk ran across it, shouting something to the sentry at the gate, but it was too late, the car was already dashing along the road.

For a long time no one spoke. Nika could not grasp what had taken place. Pavlik was sitting near him. The wind was blowing in their ears. The road looked white and even. Everything seemed to be flying towards them—the hay-carts, the barking dogs, the villages with the grey cottages, the small gardens, the inns, surrounded by innumerable peasant-carts; their own horn sounded continually, the children along the road-side screamed at them, the springs of their car tossed them up high when they passed over bridges, under which dark streams were flowing, and before them stretched the road, as straight as an arrow, bordered narrowly on both sides by dark firs and pines.

Petroff slackened down and turned round. The road stretched for many versts behind them and nothing was to be seen on it.

"Well," Petroff said, "we have failed. You must hide now. The soldiers will certainly betray you. We will go to my mother and see what can be done."

"And you, Petroff?"

"I will manage all right, no one knows me. Perhaps the car has been recognized. I'll be back tonight; I will store the car and go and lie down. All will be well with me. But the soldiers know you."

The car turned in the darkness and crossing a ditch entered the forest and stopped.

"You, Pavel Nicholaievitch, keep watch for a moment while I lead Nicholai Nicholaievitch to our house."

Nika followed Petroff for over an hour along a narrow forest-path. The prickly firs scratched their faces and the damp soil creaked under their feet. At last a forest-glade, a lake and six cottages facing it appeared before them. The

TO RED FLAG

moon on its decline rose above the water and was reflected mysteriously in its dark surface. The dogs barked hoarsely, but no light was to be seen. The cottage-windows were all dark.

Petroff knocked for a long time at a cottage-door. At last they heard steps and an old voice asked, what was wanted.

"It is I, mother," Petroff said. "I have brought you lodgers."

The door was opened; a stout, old woman stood in the doorway, lit up by a small, smoking lamp; she was wrapping a grey woolen shawl round her shoulders. She looked at Nika with kind eyes and murmured: "Come in, and be welcome. God bless you. Are you hiding from the soldiers?"

Nika entered the dark room which smelt of fowl.

VII

ON the 30th of July intense agitation reigned in the palace from early morning. The Emperor had been informed of the Temporary Government's decision to send him and his family to Tobolsk for his personal security. His safety had been guaranteed him and he had been promised that all measures would be taken for his and his family's comfort. The majority of the Emperor's suite and servants had voluntarily decided to follow him.

At ten minutes past six in the morning on the 1st of August the train, carrying the Emperor and his family into banishment, slowly left the station. The soldiers of the 2nd and 4th regiments formed its escort.

In the middle of August the Morochnensky Infantry regiment, which was stationed 20 versts from the positions, received the order to go into the trenches to relieve the Pavlinovsky regiment. The order was signed by the Corps Commander, the General who had replaced Sablin.

A meeting was organized to discuss this order. The government, which was not recognized by the Provisional Government, but which was represented everywhere by the Soviet of the Soldiers' and Workmens' deputies and with which all the innumerable committees of the front, the Army, the Divisions, the Corps, the Regiments and the Companies created by Kerensky

and Goutshkoff, were in continual contact,—that government had decreed that not every order of the chiefs must be blindly obeyed.

The orders were divided into military orders, which the revolutionary discipline required everyone to carry out implicitly, and non-military orders, which, before being complied with, it was not only permitted but even advised to examine, so as to make sure they did not tend to shatter the achievements of the revolution, that they were not meant to bring back the former régime.

The meeting took place the evening preceding the attack, in a small town, half Polish and half Jewish, in the square in front of a Catholic church and of a ruined house of a Polish landowner. A grey crowd of soldiers, numbering fifteen hundred men, crushed together on the square in front of the platform which had been erected at the demand of the local revolutionary leaders in the "happy" days of the March revolution. Leaning on each other's shoulders, eating and spitting sun-flower seeds, shouting to each other and continually interrupting the orators, the men listened to the officers or the soldiers who in turn sought to persuade them of the necessity of obeying the order.

The meeting was long and noisy. At last a soldier climbed clumsily on the platform. He smiled broadly and uncovering his head shouted:

"My best greetings to you, comrades, and to all our honest people. Yes. But we must go into the front lines out of fellow feeling. They are worn out and we are rested. It is only just and we will go! Not because we are ordered to do so, but out of justice and brotherhood. Let them rest, we will show what stuff we, the Morochnensky soldiers, are made of. We were always good comrades, we won't fail now!"

He tossed his cap into the air and left the platform. He was loudly cheered and the exclamation of: "That's right, well said!" followed him.

The crowd began to disperse. It was about supper time.

"What is your opinion, Kazimir Kazimirovitch," Kozloff asked Wertzinsky, "will they go or not?"

"All depends on the weather," Wertzinsky answered. "They may go if the weather is fine."

Kozloff looked ten years older after these four last months. His arrest by his own soldiers, the Army's ruin, had affected him deeply.

The morning when they were to take the field was foggy and grey. A drizzling rain was falling; nevertheless the regiment, talking and screaming, left the village noisily. There was a river, ten versts from the night's lodging and half way from the lines; Cossacks sentries guarded the bridges that were thrown over it. The regiment was to halt there.

The men were drawing near in a grey, noisy crowd. They advanced slowly and gloomily, no songs were heard. They did not like singing the old songs, they were ashamed of them and they knew too few new ones.

"Halt!" sounded the command, when the leading company had reached the river. "Halt, halt!" was repeated in all the sixteen companies and, without waiting for the permission to do so, the men sat down wherever they fancied and lit their cigarettes.

Scarcely were they seated, when a sailor appeared in their midst; his cap was pushed to the back of his head, his shirt left his neck and chest bare. He had come from the neighbouring railway-station. He was young, impudent looking and alert. He talked to one group of soldiers, then to another, and a third; suddenly single soldiers began to leave the regiment and ran towards the bridge. Once there, they took off their cartridge-pouches, pulled the cartridges out and flung them into the water. Separate shots sounded: the soldiers were firing into the air. This continued for several minutes, then the entire regiment was seized by madness: incessant, disorderly firing sounded all over the stately oak-forest which sloped towards the river.

The men dragged out the cartridge-boxes, snatched the machine-gun belts and threw them into the water. Screams of: "Down with the war!" were heard from all sides amid the shooting. To the right several hundred voices were singing the melody of the Marseillaise roughly and coarsely. New

voices joined them continually. The firing had spread all over the regiment. The shots, repeated by the echo in the forest, seemed louder. First one and then a second machine-gun started shooting in the forest, and the fierce, wild Marseillaise was carried along the river, at times louder, then fainter, exciting and carrying the men away. Only a few knew the words, and the song sung without them was but a savage and fierce howl.

"Down with the war. Down with the officers! Arrest them."

When the first shots had been fired Kozloff mounted and rode towards the soldiers.

"You have gone mad," he shouted. "Who are you? Germans? Germans? Joined up with them? Stop shooting! Officers, to your posts!"

Pale faces were all around. The men didn't understand what had taken place. Their eyes were terrible. Soldiers, not belonging to the regiment, were running from the village carrying red flags.

"Grab the Commander!" someone shouted, and Jelieskin, his orderly, caught hold of the bridle of Kozloff's horse. The crowd surrounded him. He was about to draw his revolver, but his intention was guessed. One of the soldiers caught hold of the holster, clung to it and tore it off together with the weapon. The shooting and singing had ceased. The men had gathered into one heavily breathing crowd. All around were wild, insane eyes.

"Drag him along, drag him along!" Someone was ordering in the crowd. Rough hands snatched Kozloff by the leg, pulled him off his trembling horse and hauled him towards the forest. Jelieskin never left Kozloff's side. He did not touch him and stared at him dully, with a pale, horrified face.

"Brothers, what are you doing?" Kozloff exclaimed, with tears in his voice. "I have a wife and children."

"Tie him to a tree. There, so. To this oak. Twist his hands back firmly."

TO RED FLAG

"What are you going to do with me? Why?" Kozloff exclaimed.

"Haven't you drunk enough of our blood?"

The men crushed together, trod on each other's feet, stumbled, fell, got up again and pushed on further, panting heavily.

"Where is the rope?" someone asked in a business-like tone.

"Look in the cart, I think it was there."

"Shall we torture him first or finish him off at once?" asked a young fellow, bareheaded with dishevelled hair.

A solitary shot was heard.

"The sailor has settled with the Ensign," someone said close to Kozloff. "He shot him with his revolver."

"Shall we begin?" The men were trembling and had lost all human aspect. They spoke mechanically and in broken sentences. None of them understood what they said and what they did.

"We must strip him first."

"No, we can finish him off so."

"No, he must certainly be undressed. Why should his tunic be lost, it is brand-new."

Kozloff's tunic was pulled off.

"Wait, comrades, and the boots."

"You are damned sharp! You imagine they'll be yours."

"They are first-class. Let us toss for them. Haul them off, I tell you."

Without stopping Kozloff's boots were dragged off. He no longer walked himself, the men shoved him towards the forest.

"No, take his trousers off."

"His trousers? And what for?"

"What for? And his watch? And his money?"

Kozloff, half naked, bare-footed, was tied to the trunk of a tree. He looked at the men with wide-open eyes, full of suffering.

Jelieskin stood before him, gazing at him with pity or bewilderment.

"Well, shall we try him?" he asked hesitatingly, addressing himself to the crowd.

"And who preached the war? Eh? To the victorious end, eh?" voices were heard saying.

"Shall we shoot him?"

"It is not sufficient to shoot him!"

"Wait a bit, comrades. How were we taught?" exclaimed a young dishevelled soldier, placing himself in fencing position a step and a half from Kozloff.

"Thrust forward and butt to the rear!" commanded one of the men laughing.

A terrible, sharp pain contracted Kozloff's body. The bayonet had passed through his stomach and entered the tree. The soldier turned the rifle round fiercely and with the butt-end hit Kozloff in the face. The bones cracked. The nose, the mouth were one bloody spot, out of which the eyes, which were yet alive and had half dropped out of their sockets, gazed in horror and suffering. Kozloff began to sink to the ground with an agonized groan.

"Finish him off," someone shouted. Several shots were fired at Kozloff's shapeless, bloody face and he was silent.

"Now, comrades, hurry along into the village. Ours are there already. The fun has begun."

They all rushed away.

"Kill the Jews," someone shouted in the crowd. The soldiers were dragging Jewish women, girls and youths into the wood. An invisible force was drawing the men towards the spot where innocent blood had been shed, where, tied to an oak, bending forward, was the motionless, terrible Kozloff, where lay the dead bodies of the Captain, of the Ensign and of the six young officers, with their shoulder-straps torn off, with their skulls smashed by the shots.

There, among the dead bodies, the soldiers in groups of fifteen to twenty men were swarming and bustling, accomplishing their evil deed. From there came groans of pain, hysterical laughter, women's sobs, prayers for mercy, coarse laughter and fierce jokes. The beasts were feasting and revelling over their prey.

Beyond the bridge, crouching near the water edge, sat Wert-

zinsky. He rested his head on his hand and gazed dully at the dark, flowing river, repeating mechanically the words of the Marseillaise. Although the oak-grove on the other side was quiet and peaceful, Wertzinsky thought he still heard the moans of the martyred officers, Kozloff's agonized death-groans and the cries of the miserable women. He thought he could distinguish their white, motionless bodies lying on the grass between the trees.

"What is it? What is it?" he murmured. "It is not a revolution, but a mutiny, a Russian mutiny; as Pushkin had already said: 'The Russian mutiny is meaningless and merciless.' And this is only the beginning."

"Your Honour," he heard a voice speaking over him. Standing upright before him, saluting him, was the very soldier who had killed Kozloff.

Wertzinsky looked at him.

"The regiment begs Your Honour to lead it to the position."

Wertzinsky sighed and rising obediently ascended the slope leading to the road, where, in the falling dusk, the companies stood silent and in full order.

He thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets and bending his head marched before the regiment.

The Morochenensky regiment reached the positions after ten o'clock of the evening. Two battalions were to stay in the dug-outs in the forest and two were to occupy the trenches.

Wertzinsky was received by the Commander of the Pavlinovsky regiment, a young officer of the General Staff, and by the chairman of the soldiers' committee, an educated intelligent Jew, a young fellow with a pale, delicate face and large prominent eyes and sensual lips. He wore a coat without shoulder-straps and did not wait for Wertzinsky to shake hands with him, but stretched his hand out first. A petroleum lamp was burning in the dug-out, which was silent as a grave and smelt strongly of earth and cold tobacco smoke.

"Why so late, comrade!" asked the officer of the General Staff. "We heard a fierce firing going on in the rear and we thought the German aeroplanes had attacked you."

Wertzinsky before answering threw an expressive glance at the chairman of the committee.

"You may speak before the comrade Zonnenfeld. I have no mysteries and secrets from the soldiers. We have pledged ourselves to serve in full brotherhood under the red banners of the revolution," the Commander of the regiment said.

"The fact is," Wertzinsky said, "that although we have come to relieve you I don't know whether you will accept us. We have come without cartridges, without the Commander of the regiment and almost without officers."

"And why it is so?" the Commander of the Pavlinovsky regiment asked.

"Some of the cartridges have been thrown into the river, others have been fired off into the air; Colonel Kozloff, Captain Pushkin, Lieutenant Zveginetsky and six officers have been killed by the men; about forty officers have run away and I can't tell you exactly who is here and who is missing."

"That was to be expected," Zonnenfeld said and gazed fixedly at Wertzinsky.

"Yes," the Commander of the Pavlinovsky regiment said, "Kozloff tried the men's patience. He was too much for the old customs. He did not understand the new revolutionary soldier and he has paid for it. God bless his soul. Naturally one feels sorry for him, but he would always have it his own way and he would not admit the soldiers' free will."

"That is not all the men have done," Wertzinsky said bitterly. "Having committed this murder they rushed into the small town of Dalin and sacked it. I don't exactly know what happened there, but the women were being tormented till the evening and their bodies are lying under the bridge in the wood."

"How disgraceful!" Zonnenfeld exclaimed. "Why did you not stop them?"

"I should like to have seen you stopping them!" said Wertzinsky.

"You should have used your arms against them."

"I have never used arms against anyone; such are my convictions."

TO RED FLAG

"Plehanoff's tactic," Zonnenfeld said mockingly.

"I shall not begin a dispute on principles with you, comrade—you have two standards: one for the officers, the other for Jews and Jewish women. You are a Bolshevik, a follower of Lenin, blood does not repel you. And for me, comrade, any murder is equally disgusting and monstrous, so let us stop this conversation."

"The first is an execution, maybe a cruel and an unjust one, but execution is the vengeance of the people. The second is a senseless, savage murder, Russian bestiality," Zonnenfeld retorted hotly.

"Stop, comrade," the Commander said. "Let us admit that capital punishment will be recognized as necessary in view of the violence inflicted on the population. It is indispensable for us, Captain, to establish who is responsible for it all."

"I think it is utterly impossible to do so—it was the work of a whole crowd. Out of a thousand five hundred men I should say that only five hundred kept away."

"Mr. Colonel," Zonnenfeld said, "I think that the right thing to do would be to give the whole case over to the committee of the Army and to the political commissar; he will know how to deal with it and how to judge it not from the judicial point of view, but from the revolutionary standard. The men guilty of the 'pogrom' must be severely punished, but it is impossible to have a thousand men shot or even tried. It is necessary to separate the instigators and the chief participants and the committee of the regiment will establish this."

"I shall not discuss or examine this case," Wertzinsky said in a tired voice. "I have another question to ask: the men are preparing to go into the trenches, but they have no cartridges. They have no officers."

"I'll help you; I will give you half of my cartridges, but really it is of no importance," said the Commander of the regiment. "We are no longer at war with the Germans, neither we nor they do any shooting. Each day conversations and truck are carried on between the front lines. Yesterday my men exchanged a machine-gun for a bottle of rum, and it was such

horrid stuff. I reported to the Staff. Our honourable Abraham Petrovitch gave order to note the machine-gun as lost in fighting. There are many who speak Russian among the Germans, so our men talk with them about making peace. It is not a front, but an idyl. To my knowledge there is but one company against our regiment; they have ceased counting with us and they do not think of attacking us. And the fact of our having or not having cartridges makes no difference, the men having settled definitely that they would fight no more."

When Wertzinsky was left alone he threw himself down in his overcoat on the dirty hay-sack, which he had inherited from the Pavlinovsky regiment, and shut his eyes. He groaned and turned to the wall. He was persecuted by the vision of a little girl. He had seen her when he was running from the oak-forest towards the bridge. She was a child of twelve, with long, golden-brown hair, with large black eyes, shaded by long lashes. She looked strong and healthy. Four soldiers were carrying her. Her red petticoats were turned up and showed her small feet and her legs in black stockings. She was screaming and moaning and her open lips uncovered her pretty even, white teeth. An old man and an old woman were running after them. They had forgotten everything in their wild grief, they scolded and beat the soldiers' backs with their bony, knotted fists and their thin, clinging fingers, as the bones of a skeleton, clung to the men's shirts. "Did these people come from palaces? And who were the executioners?"

Wertzinsky sat up on his bed. All his body was aching and shook and shivered with ague.

"It is because I have not taken off these damned rattles." He took off his ammunition belt, his overcoat, his clothes and his boots, and remained in his underwear.

The light of a clear dawn penetrated the narrow windows and the open door. The place was full of soldiers and they could be seen crowding on the steps outside in the bluish, gray light. They were pale and brought with them the heavy odour of sweat and of exhausted human beings. They were thrusting some kind of notes at Wertzinsky saying:

"Mr. Captain, here are the names of the instigators from all the companies. The second company is to blame. We, honour bright, are innocent. We wanted to deliver the officers and we know nothing about the Jews, we even ran away. And here are the boots, wear them, Mr. Captain, they are strong and new; and don't think we took a thing, oh, dear no! We are sending the fellows to bury them, that is the victims of this revolution and we want to send for the priest. We will swear on our honour that we are perfectly innocent, in spirit and in body! As before the Almighty. It is only the second company, and the sailor, God knows where he came from."

Wertzinsky looked at them and the senseless smile of a mad-man contorted his clean-shaven mouth.

"Send everything to the division Headquarters. I don't know anything," he said.

"Very well, Mr. Captain," the men answered obediently and left the dug-out. The slanting rays of the festive summer-sun and the joyful twitter of the forest birds penetrated into the dug-out.

Wertzinsky fell on his couch and dropped into a sound, dreamless sleep. . . .

VIII

IT was decided in the corps Headquarters that the murder of the Commander of the regiment as well as that of the officers and the sacking of the small town of Dalin should be submitted not to the Court of Inquiry for important cases, but to the army committees; it was decided also to send the commissar of the army with a Cossack regiment and machine-guns for the capture of the criminals. This case was neither exceptional nor the only one of its kind. Excesses of the same nature had occurred in different places and practice had shown that the Court of Inquiry remained without results. Instructions had been received from the War minister regarding such cases. It was advised to proceed with utmost caution, so as not to irritate the soldiers.

The "Praporshtchik" Knoop was the Commissar of the army.

The revolutionary wave had carried him first to the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies as a delegate of the regiment, then he had joined the Executive Committee of this Soviet, known as the "Ispolkom," and after the revolution in April in which he had played a leading part directing the soldiers he had been sent as Commissar to the Army. The same Knoop who had struggled against discipline and order in the Reserve battalion and against Captain Savelieff and who had sung chansonnets at Countess Paltoff's evening party was now a person whose importance equaled that of the Commander of the Army. He disposed of the motor-cars; if he had no regular aide-de-camps, there were always obliging members of the local Sovdep and of the Committee of the Army only too eager to serve one of their own people. Some of the Corps Commanders, the Commanders of the Division, the Commanders of the Regiments ignored him, others flattered him, seeking his help and hoping to restore the regiments with his assistance. There were ample reasons to turn a head much steadier than Knoop's. He became most important; he dressed at the best Petrograd tailors, ordered himself an elegant tunic, breeches and copied in manners and speech his idol—Kerensky.

When the bloody event which had taken place in the Morochensky regiment became known to the Staff of the Army, Knoop came to the meeting of the local Sovdep, made a fiery report and obtained the assurance of the local Sovdep's support as well as its promise to confirm all his decisions. The corps Headquarters had been informed by telegraph of his arrival and the best car of the garage of the Army was put at his disposal. It was decided to meet him as if he were the Commander of the Army.

The car, driven by two educated looking youths, drove up smartly and stopped. Knoop threw off his coat carelessly, in a manner studied and copied from the old Generals. He then turned towards the entrance. The officer on duty reported.

"How do you do, General?" Knoop said reaching out his big, well-kept hand, with its polished nails. "I think we will start at once. Are the men assembled?"

TO RED FLAG

"The soldiers are on the bivouac. The battalions which occupied the lines have refused to be relieved. The 806th regiment is in the reserve. They have confessed. All the names of the instigators have been taken down and I don't doubt that they will be given up."

Knoop, who had been invited to take the place at the head of the table, sat in a negligent attitude, drinking tea and eating the sandwiches which had been prepared for him.

"You need not go," he said patronizingly to the Corps Commander. "It is too much honour for these scoundrels. We will go with the Division Commander. Are the Cossacks ready?"

"The bivouac is surrounded and the machine-guns are placed," said the Commander of the Cossack regiment, gloomily, looking at Knoop with unconcealed hatred.

"Then let us start," Knoop said rising.

The mounted Cossacks surrounded his car; and escorted by them he drove towards the wood. It was a hot August day. Rosy-white, fluffy clouds floated on the blue sky and it seemed clear and high. The road was bordered with slender red-yellow pines, under which pink heather was withering and the strong perfume of resin, moss, pines and juniper was poisoned at times by the odour of decaying bodies of dead horses. Barbed wire and the crumbling trenches of the reserve which had not been repaired for a long time became visible. The car entered a forest-glade where several low huts were scattered about. Two battalions were standing in lines. The men were unarmed. All around in the forest crowded soldiers of the 806th regiment; they had come to watch the execution. Mounted Cossacks with drawn swords were dispersed on the outskirts of the forest. The Sotnia of the reserve, also on horseback, stood facing the battalion.

The command of "attention" was given and the battalions were quiet. Dead silence reigned in the glade. Knoop got out of the car, which drove away puffing and creaking. He advanced towards the 1st battalion escorted by the Cossacks and by a small suite, carrying his head high, walking awkwardly

with careless steps over the moss and the heather. Tchoutchkin, Kozloff's Lieutenant-Colonel, who having been in the baggage train had had the good fortune to escape the fate of the other officers, was now in command of the regiment and had come to meet his chiefs. He was a man of fifty, a good soldier, whose severe face clearly expressed that he was a man of duty.

Knoop stopped at a distance of five steps from the battalion. He clenched his fists and shouted:

"Scoundrels! did you imagine that freedom has been given you, so that you might kill, plunder and commit deeds of violence? We don't establish an English or German régime, but a Democratic Republic in the full sense of the term. You are the free-est soldiers of the world! And how did you use the freedom you had been given?"

"You have killed faithful servants of the Republic and you have degraded yourselves to plunderings. You, You. . . . You are not free soldiers—citizens, but mutinous slaves! And you will be dealt with as such. I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies and I demand," he shrieked, "I demand that you deliver me immediately the scoundrels who instigated you to rebel."

Knoop stopped speaking. No one stirred, not one single voice was lifted in the battalion.

"Have the instigators been delivered?" the Division Commander asked addressing himself to Tchoutchkin.

"Yes, Your Excellency," the Colonel said.

"Have them called," Knoop said.

Tchoutchkin didn't move, as if it didn't concern him.

"Call them out, Colonel," the Division Commander said.

Tchoutchkin stepped forward in front of Knoop and began calling out loudly and distinctly from memory the soldiers' names.

Very slowly and reluctantly the soldiers left the ranks of the 2nd company and formed a line in front of the battalion. They were young fellows of unmilitary appearance, for the most part not peasants, but towns-people. They were eighteen in number.

"And besides these," Tchoutchkin said, "there are two more,

Krotoff and Lunchakoff, who are on the position. They have been sent for."

"Have these blackguards arrested!" Knoop shouted fiercely.

"Comrades! What is all this?" screamed one of the instigators.

"We shan't give them up!" exclaimed several voices in the battalion and hundreds of clenched fists were lifted overhead, but no one moved from his place.

"Cossacks!" the Division Commander said.

The mounted "sotnia" rode up to the battalion, all the hands were lowered and silence reigned once more.

"Take them in charge," Knoop said to the Cossack officer.

The officer glanced at him gloomily, surrounded the men who had been called out with his Cossacks and led them away.

It was so intensely silent in the forest that one could hear on the heather the rustle of the retreating men's steps. Knoop felt like Gulliver in the land of Lilliputians.

"Dismiss the battalion," he said to the Division Commander softly, "I will speak separately with the men."

"Dismiss the men," the Division Commander said to Tchoutchkin.

"It is better not to do so, Your Excellency," said Tchoutchkin, looking at the men anxiously.

"It is nothing; dismiss them. I know what I am doing," Knoop said.

"Dismissed!" commanded Tchoutchkin.

The two grey squares of the battalion columns dispersed and small groups of men covered the glade. Some surrounded the Cossacks and began talking to them, others walked in crowds behind Knoop. He stopped near a big fir-tree and standing on its roots, looked down at the mob of soldiers facing him. He imagined himself to be a new Christ, a preacher of a new religion, surrounded by the people, thirsting for his vivifying words.

"That fellow's speech was not a democratic one," said a Cossack. "Scoundrels! we have heard enough of that during the old régime."

The Cossack officers reported these speeches to their Commander; he assembled his regiment and went to find Knoop.

"I would advise you to go away," he said, "you have done your duty, you have taken the instigators, and all these speeches will only make matters worse."

Knoop frowned scornfully.

"Oh," he said, "you don't understand a soldier's soul. It is absolutely necessary to dispel all this darkness; the soldier must be convinced that he is wrong."

The Colonel ordered the chauffeurs to bring up the car. At the same time an officer, pale and agitated, approached Knoop and said, looking at him, but addressing himself to the Division Commander:

"Your Excellency, the battalions which occupied the position have left it and are advancing in lines and in battle formation. They have opened fire. I ordered the Cossack machine-gunners to shoot at them. They have refused to obey."

"How? They have left the position?" Knoop exclaimed wrathfully. "That is a crime. I will show these villains what it is to uncover the front. Where is the position, Colonel? Take me there."

"You had better not go," exclaimed the Commander of the Cossack regiment.

"I will go," Knoop said stubbornly. "It is my duty to bring these scoundrels back to their senses."

He got into the car with the Division Commander.

The car moved, when a piercing voice rose above all the other noises:

"To your arms!"

Armed men came rushing out of the dug-outs. They surrounded the glade closely and blocked all the passages. The anti-aeroplane gun boomed as a call to rebellion and immediately the disorderly firing of over three thousand rifles echoed in the forest. The rifles were fired into the air. The entire mass of the Cossack regiment rushed forward and, drawing the officers after it, galloped towards the road passing between the barbed wire of the position of the reserve. The road was narrow and

TO RED FLAG

the dazed Cossacks dashed straight at the barbed wire; the horses fell entangled between the piles, the bullets buzzed over them, breaking the branches of the trees and increasing the panic. But not all discharged their rifles into the air. Some of the men shot at the car in which Knoop and the Division Commander were sitting, as well as at the group of horsemen among whom were the Commander of the Cossack regiment and his aide. The Cossack orderlies had left them. The car which was about to turn onto the road leading to the position was stopped by the chauffeurs who jumped out and ran towards the huts and hid behind them. Knoop and the Division Commander jumped out after them. The Division Commander gripped the Commander of the Cossack regiment's stirrup and holding on ran beside him after the Cossacks. Knoop rushed towards the hut. But the soldiers who had been standing before it ran in first and closed the door from inside. Knoop remained standing on the small porch. He was pale. His eyes expressed the fear of a tracked animal. A soldier with the flat, broad face and the hands of a monkey, dealt him a blow on the head with the butt-end of his gun and Knoop fell face downwards near the door. Several shots fired at the back of his head finished him off. The soldiers were accomplishing everything silently, gravely, in a business-like way. Knoop remained lying on the porch.

The Commander of the regiment, Tchoutchkin, had hidden in a dark corner of the hut. The soldiers rushed in after him.

"Here he is," shouted a fine-looking fellow with the Cross of St. George. "Haul him out, comrades."

The Colonel, grey-haired, with a dishevelled beard, in a tunic with shoulder-straps, with a sword and a revolver, dropped most unexpectedly on his knees.

"Mercy, brothers," he implored, in a sobbing voice. "Have pity, I'm not in fault. I have always been on your side."

"Drag him out," came the fierce order given by the same soldier who had just killed Knoop.

Rough hands grabbed Tchoutchkin and hauled him to the door.

"Brothers," he begged, "in Christ's name have mercy on me."

"Hark whom he has remembered. Christ!" said a soldier with a pale, idiotic face, a mere lad. "And do you believe He really was Christ? Eh?"

"Let us crucify him as Christ was crucified. Then he will soon know," another soldier suggested.

"We haven't any nails," remarked one of the men who was pushing Tchoutchkin along.

"He does look like Christ, only his beard is grey. Well, he is an old Christ."

"Let us crucify him here, to this wall."

A small chapel had been erected in the forest out of fresh pine trunks. Formerly mass had been celebrated in it by the priest on duty. Before the revolution soldiers had decorated it with carvings, and ikons, painted by officers, were hanging in it. It was here that the men brought Tchoutchkin.

"Brothers," he implored, "you are soldiers and not murderers. We have fought together."

"Well, shall we crucify him?" asked a tall soldier smilingly, holding Tchoutchkin to the wall. "It's the right place."

"Haven't you heard, that we have no nails large enough?"

"What do we need nails for?" drawled the soldier who had killed Knoop. "Bayonets are just as good as nails. Pull his hands up. Lift him!"

A bayonet was thrust into the open palm and then torn off the rifle. The fingers instinctively closed and caught hold of the bayonet. A second bayonet pierced his left hand and he half hung down, supported by a strong, bearded soldier of the reserve. The man looked at him with grave, thoughtful, gentle eyes; he had looked in the same way at the oxen and the sheep which were brought to be slaughtered.

The third bayonet pierced Tchoutchkin's breast right in the middle and penetrated deep into the planks.

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water," muttered Tchoutchkin hoarsely, but distinctly.

"Will you be silent, old dog," the soldier who had killed Knoop screamed passionately.

Tchoutchkin lifted his head which had dropped onto his breast and looked straight into the man's eyes, murmuring: "Amen, amen, amen."

There was something in the fading gaze of the old Colonel which made the soldier, who was pale enough already, turn still paler, he caught hold of his rifle and shot straight at Tchoutchkin's temple. The Colonel's legs shuddered helplessly and then he was motionless. A sudden, wild terror seized the soldiers who had crucified him and they all rushed away panic-stricken from the place of execution. The firing had ceased. The cartridges were nearly all out. The excitement and the furious intoxication had given place to a feeling of apathy, and the people who had just reached the utmost limits of bestiality and audacity felt intense horror seize their souls and their hearts stopped beating in the agony of their fear. Without entering the dug-outs they went straight into the trenches in disorderly crowds hoping to find peace and justification in the enemy's presence. The German sentries stood uncovered and watched the strange events that were taking place on the Russian side.

Meanwhile the Cossacks who were escorting the prisoners and who already had covered a distance of eight versts dispersed, and the prisoners also escaped.

About eleven o'clock the authorities drove up to Headquarters in three large cars. They were members of the local Sovdep. Korjikoff, who was at their head, had been sent from the Petersburg Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies. Seven men were with him. Two Jews, one of them a former student, now a soldier, called Gommel, the other a watch-maker—Zilberfandt; two soldiers, Losseff and Bealo, both of them young, who had finished the primary school; Lomoff, a soldier belonging to the peasant class, dull and obstinate, Pavlutzky, a young hair-dresser and Lihatcheff, a chemist's apprentice. Lomoff alone was over thirty, all the others were under twenty-one. They seated themselves before a table with grave faces trying to look important, got out their books and started ques-

tioning the General in command of the Corps and his chief of the Staff and the officers who had witnessed Knoop's murder and who had run away from the regiment.

Korjikoff sat at the head of the table gazing silently at everyone with intelligent, angry eyes. Gommel was in charge of the inquiry. His amiability was exaggerated.

"I presume, comrade Victor," he said, addressing Korjikoff, "that we need not continue our inquiry. Everything is perfectly clear: The events were caused by the inertness of the authorities. The officers, instead of stopping the soldiers and putting an end to the excesses, fled from them like cowards. Shall we proceed to the place where the events happened?"

Korjikoff nodded his head.

"And I should advise you, sirs," he said, turning to the officers, who stood, visibly depressed, in the large room, "to join your regiments at once and to do your utmost to gain the men's confidence. I consider that it is you who are chiefly to blame in this painful event."

A lieutenant, an officer of pre-revolutionary days, with a pale face and brilliant eyes, stepped forward and said firmly:

"You are wrong! We did all we could and our tortured and killed comrades are a proof that it was so. Discipline must be restored, you must establish respect. . . ."

Korjikoff interrupted him.

"But you have not yet been killed?" he said ironically, "so you have not fulfilled your duty to the end. We can't compel the men to respect you. You must gain their respect."

Korjikoff left the cottage accompanied by the other members of the Sovdep.

The forest near the dug-outs of the reserve was empty. The members of the Sovdep got out and saw the body of Knoop. Korjikoff looked with indifference at the murdered man's face.

"Well, he can thank himself for it," he said speaking to himself.

Korjikoff left the group which was standing devoutly before the body and putting his hands behind his back walked up and down.

Suddenly a wild, strange sound attracted his attention.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" someone was laughing roughly and angrily.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Korjikoff went in the direction of the laughter. The fir-trees and pines stood farther apart, forming a small glade, a chapel made of planks was standing on it. It was decorated with withered garlands of fir-trees and mistletoe. Images of our Saviours, of the Holy Virgin, of St. Nicholas and of two Angels were placed in special niches.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" came from the interior of the chapel. Korjikoff entered it.

A man of strange appearance stood looking at the back-wall of the chapel, laughing wildly like a mad-man. He was dressed in a loose great-coat with shoulder-straps which had once been golden; he wore no cap, his light hair, turning grey, was dishevelled and he had a clean-shaven, wrinkled face.

The body of an officer was hanging on the wall of the chapel; it was crucified with outstretched arms, fixed with bayonets to the wall; the chest was also pierced through with bayonets, and the head was smashed and drooped down.

"Comrade!" the man exclaimed choking with laughter. "Look here, comrade, how cleverly our men have done it. A people which is said to have God ever living in their souls. . . . They have crucified Colonel Tchoutchkin like Christ! . . . He is surely in God's Kingdom by now! . . . Holy Russia! . . . With its priests, its miraculous images, its sacred relics! . . . And it crucifies like Christ. . . . Do you grasp, comrade, the strength of this allegory? . . . The Tsar is no more, and God exists no longer. Amen. There is an end to it. And who crucified Christ? The Jews? And Tchoutchkin, who crucified him? . . . Not the Jews? . . . No. The Orthodox, Christ-loving Army? That is fine! In the sixth month of the revolution! And mind you, it is a bloodless one. What will happen now? You ask what? Behold this fall, comrade. The precipice is so deep, that it seems impossible to fall any deeper. And what if 'Per aspera ad astra!' Towards what stars shall we jump out of such a precipice! This is the Russian revolu-

tion! Colonel Misha Tchoutchkin has been crucified like Christ! Misha! You'll be a saint. The priests, if they are not all exterminated, will canonize you. Saint Father Michael, implore God for us! . . . Ha! . . . Ha! . . . Ha! . . . Isn't it a fine allegory?"

"You please me," said Korjikoff, looking intently at Wertzinsky. "What is your name?"

"My name! Allow me to introduce myself," said the man saluting.

"Wertzinsky, Kazimir son of Kazimir, Captain and student of Latin. Revolutionary and follower of Plehanoff."

IX

AFTER Sablin's arrest by the soldiers and his liberation, he went to Petersburg firmly determined to have his resignation accepted. He found there that hopes centered in Kerensky. He was trusted, people sided with him, thinking that he would be the link between the Provisional Government, formed of the middle-classes, and the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies.

Sablin's resignation was not accepted. An order of the Minister of War Kerensky had just been issued forbidding the senior Commanders to resign. In vain Sablin tried to prove how impossible it was for him to return to the corps where he had been insulted by the soldiers. They told him in the staff that he need not return, that he would be given another corps. Everything that was happening was so comprehensible, the army would get over the disease it was suffering from. They gave him as an example the French revolutionary army, which had started by the "sansculottism" and had developed into Napoleon's heroes who had conquered Europe. They flattered Sablin. "We need Murats," they told him. "But where is Napoleon?" he asked them. Some said that a Napoleon would appear, others were mysteriously silent and pointed at Kerensky's portrait hanging everywhere, some in profile, some en face, but the majority only waved their hands hopelessly at Sablin. The staffs had lost their important and grave aspect too suddenly, the street had invaded them also.

Sablin saw a battalion of a regiment of the guard leave for the front. It marched towards the Nicholas station along the Zagorodni Prospect to the sounds of the popular march "Under the Double-headed Eagle." A big red silk flag waved over it. The following watch-words were worked on it in white silk, on one side: "The war to a victorious end in full harmony with the Allies," and on the other: "Long live the Temporary Government." The battalions marched briskly, the officers keeping in the ranks. He also met a large unit, which was either going to the station or to take part in some kind of demonstration. Big red flags waved over it and on them stood in black letters: "Down with the Temporary Government," "Hail to the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmen's deputies," "Peace to the cottages and war to the palaces." A large crowd of women followed singing the Marseillaise.

The staffs and departments were suddenly invaded by young girls with typewriters and the formerly severe and quiet chanceries and offices were filled with the noise of Remingtons.

"What can such a number of girls find to write in your offices?" inquired Sablin of an officer of the staff whom he knew.

"God alone knows!" he answered, "where a half-literate clerk managed to get things done before, nowadays at least ten girls are employed and you can never get satisfaction."

Kerensky was forming women's battalions and the lovers of the fair sex were greatly attracted by them, concealing their true feelings under the beautiful watch-words of women's rights. Sablin watched all that was taking place and was no longer revolted at the unnecessary surrender of the Lessischensky place-d'armes, at his own arrest, at the insults he had endured. He no longer wondered at the failure of the advance and at the army's dishonour. It could not have been different, because all the principles of military science had been overthrown.

The evenings passed at Varia Martoff's with the young people and their passionate disputes often rose in Sablin's mind. They had attained their aim. The military salute, the holiness of the banners, the exactness in the service of the guard, the

drilling, the education—everything had been ruined; liberty and freedom were in all things.

The armies were destroyed and were replaced by a crowd. After having observed all that was happening Sablin understood that there could be no question of resignation, as there also was no service. Only one other thing could be done and that was to go abroad, but Sablin could not decide to take such a step—he considered it an act of desertion.

Sablin went to see Oblienissimoff. He found him packing his things. The apartment he occupied in his own house was nearly empty. The costly pieces of furniture, of Boule and inlaid work which Oblienissimoff had collected all his life were no longer there.

“Ah, Sasha,” Oblienissimoff shouted opening his arms. “How do you do? What has brought you to our Bedlam?”

“Bedlam?” Sablin said. “It is not long since you drove about in cars, delivering speeches to the crowd, congratulating them with the great bloodless revolution.”

The uncle looked slyly at his nephew and began laughing loudly.

“Was it a long time ago? Look, I have shaved my beard and have cut off my moustache. I have turned into an actor from the Russian ‘barin’ I was. I was a fool, Sasha, a complete fool. No, my dear friend, nothing will tempt me back again into our ‘matoushka’ * Russia. Do you remember my beaver coat? Eh? The ‘pride and the beauty of the revolution’—the sailors took it. Yes. I had been driving with them about town in a lorry delivering speeches. It was in the days when we believed we were reaching heavenwards; when we got home they told me: ‘And now, comrade, take off your coat.’ ‘How so?’ said I, ‘why must I take it off?’ ‘Because,’ answered they, ‘you have worn it long enough.’ And they took it off.”

“Where are you going, uncle?” Sablin asked.

“Abroad, Sasha. I have realized all my property. My estate has been turned into francs and they are in the Swiss bank. My

* Little mother.

house is in Swedish kronen. All my movables, including my collections of porcelains have been turned with the help of a kind friend into Spanish pesetas. I am taking with me a small collection of miniatures from one of the palaces given to me by an acquaintance. But please don't imagine anything nasty. I'll save them. And I'll return to Russia only after I have been told by a person whom I can trust implicitly that everything is again as it was formerly."

Oblienissimoff embraced Sablin and his eyes were full of tears.

When Sablin left Oblienissimoff his heart was full of a feeling of bitter perplexity. The porter with spectacles on his nose sat reading his paper. He no longer wore a livery and did not stir when Sablin went up to the coat-rack.

Towards the end of August Sablin being now again in the field, his former chauffeur Petroff arrived from Petersburg and brought him a voluminous letter from Tania. When Sablin looked at the thick envelope addressed in a hand-writing so like the one of his late wife Vera Constantinovna his heart sank with foreboding.

"My dear, beloved, brave Papa," Tania wrote. "I feel, my truthful father, my pride, I must write to you, you whom I love and respect above all, I know that you will understand me and will not blame me, and maybe will praise me.

"You know, Papa, from my last letter that Nika and Pavlik Polejaeff attempted to release him and that they failed. They are obliged to hide temporarily and are in a place of safety. Petroff will tell you everything in detail. On the 31st of July, they were taken to Tobolsk." The letter went on to describe the arrival of the Imperial family at Tobolsk and their life there as told in letters to the Grand Duchess Olga Nicholaievna.

Tania proceeded: "Papa, you will understand me and won't blame me. I have sold all my diamonds, my furs and my dresses. I have sold all that belonged to me. I dressed up as a peasant woman, I bought the clothes of the girl from Perelessino who brings milk to the Polejaeffs. Three days I studied her ways, and I start tomorrow morning to be nearer to them.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

I have her passport. Now, Papa, I am Tatiana Shagina, a peasant of the village Perelessino of the Tsarskoie Selo district. Sister Valentine says it is an exploit. No, Papa, it is my duty. Oh, if I could only help them. If I could only approach them at early mass and whisper to them: 'We haven't forgotten you. We think about you, we—Russia!' . . . To dispel their hopeless thoughts, to destroy the calm terror of their monotonously planned existence. Papa! Bless me and pray for me. It is my duty. I kiss you fondly, fondly, and know that you, my noble-minded, my honest Papa, would have acted in the same way if you were in my place.

Your little Tania."

"My Great Tania," thought Sablin. "So that is how the blood of the Sablins pays their Empress for the terrible insult it has suffered. Vera's spirit did not stop Tania—the pale hand of her mother did not call her into my locked study, didn't open the box and didn't give her the diary to read which will be put with me into my coffin? But did my Vera wish to revenge herself on the Empress? She carried with her to the grave her touching adoration for the sacred names of the Tsar and the Tsaritsa.

"My Great Tania! May God bless you in your exploit! And I? I must work for my opportunity."

X

SEVERAL days later Sablin went to Petersburg on a fourteen days leave. He wanted to look about and observe what was going on and then decide what he was to do. The Moscow State Committee gave him fresh hopes. Besides this Sablin had a matter of personal interest, which he had voluntarily taken upon himself, and the accomplishment of which he considered to be a question of honour. It was the providing for and the settling of the fate of Kozloff's widow and daughter. Sablin knew that she was in distress, that she could not obtain from the new government even the small pension she was entitled to after her husband's death, and that she was threatened with dismissal from the hospital where she was lying. Sablin decided to de-

TO RED FLAG

posit a considerable sum of money in her name and to provide for her with Matzneff's assistance.

It was to his old comrade that Sablin went after his arrival in Petersburg, with Korniloff's name on his lips and with the confidence that there must be a change, that there must be a break in Russia's disasters.

"You think that Korniloff will be Russia's Napoleon," Matzneff said, after he had listened to Sablin seriously and attentively. "I fear you are mistaken. He does not play the right instrument and the proper tune which could take possession of the minds of the Russian people. No, Sasha, if you are searching for a Napoleon then come to me at seven o'clock this evening and I will show you a true Napoleon, who knows what must be done and who can fish in troubled waters. Borrow the porter's clothes, because if you come as a General you probably won't get out alive, and it is worth while listening to what will be said."

"And where will you take me?"

"I will take you to the abode of refined depravity, where baths of onyx were to be found, where the cult of woman reigned, where the modern Frina shone, who attained beauty by divinizing her body, who made cynicism a thing of beauty and was herself so impregnated with incense that she became celestial."

"This is interesting," said Sablin.

"Yes, it was extremely interesting. Notwithstanding all my indifference to feminine beauty and to women I understood her and those who surrounded her. Now you will see something totally different. Will you come?"

"Yes," answered Sablin.

A dense crowd was standing before Kshesinskaya's * marble house with its Pompeian balcony. The people trampled the grass and the flower-beds with their heavy boots, crushed the rusty lilac bushes and the bluish American fir-trees. Sailors in low-necked blue and white shirts with bare chests, untouched by the

* Famous dancer of the Imperial Petersburg Ballet.

sun, adorned with jewelled chains and pendants, with designs of anchors, serpents and dragons tattooed on their arms, soldiers in grey tunics and grey trousers, in shoes and puttees, wearing their caps at the back of their heads, with locks of hair falling on their foreheads, Cossacks in elegant tunics and blue breeches, with red bands so wide that from a distance they seemed to be entirely red; young officers dressed like soldiers, with their arms flung round the men's necks, stood among handsome, eager-faced young women, dressed in bright showy clothes.

Amid the predominating grey mass of soldiers and officers were to be seen the dark shabby clothes of workmen and of young intelligent looking men as well as the coat of the educated man, who standing on tip-toe looked eagerly and open-mouthed over the heads of the crowd; young girls as well as schoolboys; students; a priest in his cassock, could be seen.

About nine o'clock in the evening, Matzneff, dressed up as an apache, in a wide-brimmed hat, in an old suit and a plaid thrown over his shoulders, pushed his way through the crowd, accompanied by Sablin wearing Petroff's jacket and cap and giving himself the airs of an independent comrade who knows his own worth.

A red flame flashed and disappeared in front and above the crowd, as if red electric lamps were being tested or rockets fired.

"It means that the anarchists will lecture again," said a soldier who stood in front of Sablin.

"Not anarchists but communists, a difference must be made between them," corrected his neighbour.

"Lenin will speak, Lenin himself," said a wide-shouldered handsome sailor who stood in the front row.

Matzneff pulling Sablin after him pushed through to the sailor's side and asked him:

"Tell me, comrade, who is this Lenin?"

"Lenin? Haven't you heard? Its even been in the papers. Lenin is a German spy. He came in a sealed car from Germany to help the Germans. I have read that he has received seventy millions from them for this work."

"And why is he allowed to do it?"

The sailor looked suspiciously at Matzneff.

"And why not? Now is freedom. Everyone can do what he pleases. You must reason and find out for yourself what is right and what is wrong. The secret treaties of the Tsarist diplomacy exist no longer.

"But nevertheless, comrade, we are at war and here is a man who comes from the enemy's country having received money there. Formerly spies and traitors used to be hung."

"That's so," said a young soldier in a tunic without shoulder-straps, eating sun-flower seeds and joining the conversation. "Under the Tsar's régime there was criminal punishment and oppression of every kind and now there is freedom. They say that Lenin speaks justly about everything and also about the war, and it remains to be proved whether he is a spy. Perhaps people are being duped intentionally because he belongs to the people and stands up for their rights. And who are you?"

Matzneff did not answer.

Red lamps flared up on the balcony of Kshesinskaya's house, lighting it up. It was draped with red bunting; enormous red flags waved gently beside it. Night had already fallen, the sunset had faded, it was dark and in this obscurity Kshesinskaya's balcony stood out like a bloody niche.

A group of young people came out on to the balcony talking animatedly. Some of them were dressed in lounge suits, others wore soldier shirts, but they all had large red bows pinned on their chests with ends falling down to their waists. They looked as if they had enjoyed a good meal and a good drink. A thin man with a typical Jewish face stood out among them. He wore glasses, had unequally lifted eyebrows, a moustache and a small, Mephistopheles beard. He moved slightly forward and stood in a proud attitude with his arms folded on his chest.

"Trotsky, Trotsky," was murmured in the crowd.

"And they are all Jews," said someone good-naturedly.

"Jews are people like the rest," answered someone in the crowd.

"They are cleverer than many Russians."

A movement of deference was noticeable in the group as a small, awkwardly built man, passing through it advanced to the very edge of the balcony.

"Lenin, that's Lenin," was heard in the crowd.

"I tell you straight out, Jenny," Sablin heard a low voice saying behind him: "The Russian has to be startled. You remember my telling you about the image of Kasan and about Seraphim Sarowsky? * Well, it's the same with Lenin: 'Here I come straight from Germany; everyone knows that I am a spy, I've even been paid for it and you see I'm speaking with you and teaching you.' It is boundless impudence. That's what Russian people like. They will most certainly follow him."

Lenin had short legs and a long body with a stout prominent stomach. He was dressed in a common-looking lounge suit that seemed red in the red light and he also wore a red bow. His large head with its ugly face was poised on a short neck. He was quite bald. His small squinting eyes under thin brows were gray. His irregular flat nose, scanty moustache and small pointed beard under a voluptuous mouth gave him the appearance of a typical book-keeper, school-master or bank-clerk. There was nothing of the people in him, nothing Russian, and still less nothing of a Napoleon. At times the senseless smile of an idiot contorted his puffed-out cheeks. He was a monster in the full sense of the word, a product of degeneration brought on by an intellectual life surpassing his mental capacity as well as by the calm, inactive life of a philosopher.

He came up to the balustrade, upholstered in red, rested his hands on it and gazed silently and long at the crowd.

"All authority to the Soviets!" he exclaimed at last and then began speaking.

He spoke incoherently, his elocution was bad, his sentences abrupt, he often repeated himself and Sablin gradually formed the impression that this small man was knocking with an enormous hammer into the brains of the people who listened to him,

* A well-known Hermit, who was beloved and worshipped for his saintly life. He was canonized during the reign of the Emperor Nicolas II.

TO RED FLAG

with the stubbornness of idiots, to his boldly criminal and at the same time simple ideas.

"All authority to the Soviets!" repeated Lenin, "because it is the true authority of the people. The power must belong to the indigent, to the poor, to the proletariat. The capitalists have oppressed and driven the people for many centuries, they have drunk the people's blood. The hour of retribution and of justice has struck. Everything they possess is not theirs but it has been taken by them from someone else. He who possesses has committed theft. Possession is theft. There'll be truth in the world only when no one will possess anything, but everything will belong to all; so the one who takes is acting rightly, because he is taking what has been robbed. Rob what has been robbed and then we will see what must be done. That is the way to spread the revolution."

The crowd listened breathlessly. The soldier who stood near Sablin and who was eating sun-flower seeds never took his eyes off Lenin's face, forgetting even to spit out the husks.

Matzneff lived with his wife at the end of Pushkinsky street. He had two children, a boy of fourteen and a girl of six, and he knew better than anyone else that they were not his own. The husband and wife lived in different parts of the house and it happened that they did not meet for several weeks at a time. But since the beginning of the war they had somehow been drawn together by the interest they both took in the war, and since the revolution they had become good friends. Manozkovsky's death in 1915 at the head of his regiment and Varvara Dmitrievna's efforts to conceal her great sorrow contributed in no small degree to this change. At that time Matzneff had shown her true Christian sympathy and comforted her by his intelligent and friendly talks. Varvara Dmitrievna was still handsome and young looking. She was a clever, well-educated woman.

"Varia, will you give us some tea?" Matzneff said.

"Varia," will you give us some tea?" Matzneff said.

They sat down in the dining-room.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"So you see, Sasha, Lenin appears to be something of a riddle."

"Excuse me, Ivan Sergeievitch," Varvara Dmitrievna interrupted him, "are you going to speak about politics?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go round the rooms and see if anyone is listening. Although Marfa has been in my service for twenty years, and I took her as a child and trained her myself, she is now always hanging about the doors trying to overhear something and then go and report it to the commissariat. Paul is also quite changed. He won't wear his livery anymore, he says it is the uniform of a slave."

XI

SABLIN arrived at the General Headquarters early in the morning. At nine o'clock every morning a car was sent to the station to meet those who had come to the General Headquarters on business and bring them to the Staff. Sablin found Mogileff in a state of excitement and anxiety. A continual stream of people was going up and down the palace stairs. The Commander-in-Chief was busy. Sablin was asked to wait on the landing. An officer with a bandaged head and an artificial leg, a complete invalid and apparently not quite sane approached Sablin and began talking to him.

"I have just been present at the meeting of the Union of invalids," he said. "We have unanimously decided to follow Korniloff. His cause is sacred and he stood up for the officers. It is time to put an end to all this indecency."

His manner and his words perplexed Sablin.

"Korniloff's position must be pretty bad if it is the invalids who think of defending him," Sablin thought.

The aide-de-camp on duty came out on to the landing and told Sablin that the Commander-in-Chief would see him.

"But only for a few minutes," he added.

He showed Sablin into a study with two tables and a few chairs. The door was thrown wide-open and a man of medium height came into the room quickly, with firm and resolute steps.

He carried his small head high. His squinting, shining eyes under delicate brows had a searching look. Sablin could not help noting the nobility and charm of his manner and movements. He gave Sablin his hand, asking him quickly: "Are you with us or against us, General?"

"I am with those who desire Russia's welfare and happiness," Sablin said firmly. "I am with those who serve the army and its honour. I am with you, Your Excellency."

"Fate itself has sent you to me. Are you acquainted with the situation?"

"Scarcely."

"I have ordered the Temporary Government to be arrested. I take the whole weight of authority upon myself, so as to re-establish order. Krimoff's cavalry corps has been sent to Petrograd. I suppose Krimoff must have reached it already. Go there, I shall need you."

"We have no proofs so far, Your Excellency," the Chief-of-Staff remarked gently, "permitting us to believe that Krimoff is in Petrograd. Wouldn't it be more prudent to direct the General to Pskoff to General Klembovsky who needs firm men?"

Korniloff glanced quickly at the Chief-of-Staff.

"You are right," he said. "Go to Pskoff to General Klembovsky; he will receive you and give you the necessary directions."

"When do you wish me to start?"

"Immediately," said Korniloff shaking Sablin's hand and giving him to understand that his audience was over.

"The train leaves at two," said the Chief-of-Staff. "I shall have a seat reserved for you in the Staff-car."

At two o'clock that afternoon Sablin left Mogileff in a compartment which had been reserved for him. He reached Pskoff late at night. The station was overcrowded with soldiers. There was a great bustle and noise, as was the case everywhere in these after-revolutionary days. There were no vehicles at the station. Sablin went to the Commandant to ask for a car from the Army garage. The Commandant was disconcerted and harassed by soldiers and officers who were crowding round

him asking for night-lodgings and for places on the train. He looked at Sablin with fatigue and absent-mindedness.

"What can I do for you, Your Excellency?" he inquired, looking up at Sablin, and suddenly smiled pleasantly and Sablin recognised Captain Mikhailitchenko, the officer whom he had decorated at the same time as Karpoff in the village of Ozeri. "My God, Your Excellency, how come you to be here?"

"I am sent to General Klembovsky."

"General Klembovsky is not here, Your Excellency. He left for Petersburg yesterday. It is General Bontch-Brouevitch who is in command of the front at present, by order of Kerensky."

"By order of Kerensky?" Sablin asked severely. "And Korniloff?"

"Korniloff is probably arrested, at any rate we don't know where he is. There is no communication with the General Headquarters. General Alexeieff has gone there. In fact it is the commissars and the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' deputies who dispose of everything at the front. Yesterday an officer was killed in the street for speaking slightly of the Soviet. The murderers are known, but they were left free. We expect that the officers may be murdered any night."

"And Krimoff?"

"He is in Luga, but it is said Kerensky summoned him to Petrograd and he has been arrested there. General Pestretzoff, our former Commander of the Army, is here. Allow me, Your Excellency, to call him up. You could pass the night at his place, it will be better to do so, as there are no rooms to be had."

"All right," Sablin said.

Pestretzoff was yet up although it was two o'clock in the morning. Sablin hunted him up in a large government building standing on the bank of the river Velikaya. He lived with his wife in an apartment which had been requisitioned for him.

At supper, besides Nina Nicholaievna and Pestretzoff, there was a modest looking young man in a soldier's uniform. Pestretzoff introduced him as the assistant of the commissar.

TO RED FLAG

After supper Pestretzoff settled Sablin in his study. The neighbouring room was full of armed soldiers.

"What is that?" asked Sablin.

"The guard," whispered Pestretzoff. "The Soviet sent it to protect me."

"But on whose side are you, tell me for Heaven's sake, are you with the Soviets or with Korniloff?"

Pestretzoff waved his hands in dismay, placed a finger on his lips and left the room hastily.

Sablin awoke early. He got up and went into the dining room, where to his astonishment he found Pestretzoff already drinking tea.

"Where are you going so early?" Pestretzoff asked.

"For a walk," Sablin answered.

"Let us go together. My little commissar is sleeping and I am free," Pestretzoff said.

They went to the river-side.

Sablin heard in the distance the familiar measured clatter of horses' hoofs; it was cavalry marching through the town. He stopped. Squadrons of dragoons on black horses were passing over the bridge in the direction of Zavelichie. The beautiful horses, the riders with their lances hanging behind their shoulders, were outlined against the background of the fortress-walls of old Pskoff. Sablin was seized by a feeling of intense sadness.

"Krimoff has committed suicide in Petrograd," whispered Pestretzoff abruptly. "General Korniloff is arrested by the order of Kerensky. General Alexseieff has arrived at the General Headquarters. Kerensky has proclaimed himself Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. Krimoff's entire Cavalry Army has betrayed Korniloff and a delegation of Cossacks and soldiers came to Kerensky and informed him of their willingness to serve him. Kerensky works in complete understanding with the Soviets. Sasha, of course, you are all by yourself in life, you have no one and nothing you care for, you may take risks. But what is the use of risking? Of course if

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

a true Napoleon existed then I too would join him. And who knows, perhaps it is they who are right?"

"They who?" Sablin asked in a tired voice.

"The New Russia, the Democracy, the Proletariat, the Soviets. Fathers never understand their children. And we too don't understand them. And who knows, truth may be on their side."

"Truth in treason to the Country, truth in the delivery of our positions to the enemy, truth in the murder of the best and most honest Officers and Generals, truth in pillage and violence!" Sablin exclaimed looking at Pestretzoff.

That same evening Sablin left for Perikalie to join his Corps, where he learned that he had been removed from the command of the Corps by Kerensky and summoned to Petersburg.

XII

PETROFF'S small house in which the brothers Polejaeff were hiding lay in the depths of the Novgorod government in the village Zaposdalovo; it was so remote that it was not even marked on the map. The whole village consisted of six houses standing in one line on the side of a lake.

One October morning when Pavlik and Nika were just up and were having their tea, Mashoutka, the old woman's neice, ran into the room. Her hair was dishevelled and loose strands showed from under her shawl; her black eyes glistened brightly and her face was rosy-red from the early morning frost.

"Two people are in the forest inquiring for you Sirs, and they ask you to come at once."

"What sort of people," Pavlik and Nika asked simultaneously.

"Who can tell? They are dressed like common people but they look like gentlemen. One of them is of your age, the other is a mere lad."

Pavlik and Nika went to the forest; two individuals were waiting for them at its edge. Their faces were thin, they shivered with cold, after the night spent in the forest.

"Dear me, you, Ermoloff!" Nika exclaimed.

"Yes, it's I, and that's my brother Misha."

"Michail Ermoloff, pupil of the sixth class," Misha said in a deep voice.

"Come along with us. You'll get warm in the cottage and have some tea," Nika said.

"How did you find us?" Nika inquired when they were inside.

"Oh, your Petroff! I went to see him eight times," said Ermoloff, "before he would trust me and believe that I came from General Sablin. Only then would he tell us how we were to find you. We need you, friends, there is trouble on hand."

The four young men talked a long time over what had been going on. They decided to go to Petrograd and take a hand in affairs. The Kerensky Government was breaking up.

"Where will we go to?" Nika asked.

"We will see. If everything is quiet, then to Sablin's apartment. We will consult him. After that we will go to the Soviet of the Cossacks on the Znamenskaya. Our staff is there. And then we will see what is to be done."

"I'll tell you what I think," Misha said. "We must form a group of about twenty men armed with hand-grenades, and besides try and persuade fifty comrades to join us; then go all together to the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workmens' deputies and when Lenin is speaking, shout: 'Kill them!' and rush at them with our grenades. I am sure it will work."

So they set out on their adventure, which landed them in a capital already in the throes of the disturbances which exchanged Kerensky's rule for that of Lenin. They literally ran the gauntlet of Bolstein to make way into the Ruler's Palace quartered by a Corps of Cadets. As they stood before the gateway, bullets were ringing against the iron.

"Open, friends!" Ermoloff shouted breathlessly.

The wicket was opened and a Cadet let them pass into the yard.

A bon-fire was burning and about twenty Cadets were sitting near it. They surrounded the new-comers.

"The chief trouble," said a Cadet, "is that there is no one in

command. Kerensky has gone away and the ministers have locked themselves up here and do nothing but talk. . . ."

"Have you heard, gentlemen," another Cadet said, coming out of the palace, "Paltchinsky has just told us that the ministers have received a message from the Town Hall that the social workers, the merchants, the people and the clergy are coming to deliver the palace. They will soon be here. . . ."

"Can you let us have some fire, gentlemen?" said a girl of about twenty-five approaching the group of Cadets. She wore a great-coat over her skirt and a cartridge belt was fixed round her waist.

"Won't you come and sit with us, Lenotchka?"

"I haven't time," and Lenotchka took a burning piece of wood and ran with it to the palace.

"Well, and how do they behave?" Pavlik asked.

"They are all right. They are only too eager to fight. It is the 'shock-company of the Womens' Death Battalion.' They have already fought in the Millionnaya Street. They accomplished the sortie in proper form, carrying their rifles correctly, and a woman officer led them—revolver in hand. Now they occupy together with us the first story of the palace."

The Cadets talk died away. The pale dawn was drawing near.

Nika sat apart looking at the Cadets who surrounded the bonfire. After the sleepless night their faces were pale and tired. A good-looking Cadet, thin and slender like a young girl, lay on the steps with his delicate face pressed against the dark boards of the guard-house. The Cadet with the black moustache slept sitting up beside him and snored loudly. One called Wagner sat in an arm-chair, which had been brought out of the palace and looked at the sky with dreamy eyes which a bluish circle surrounded. He noticed that Nika was looking at him and came towards him.

"I consider the whole business utterly hopeless," he said. "We are less than four hundred, we have not enough cartridges and we are completely cut off. Kerensky ran away the 25th of October, today or tomorrow Polkovnikoff will betray us or

TO RED FLAG

also run away and what will become of us then? The 'Avrora' has entered the Neva, she has already fired at the town. Two good shots and nothing will remain of the palace."

"But what is to be done? We can't surrender," Nika said.

"No, to surrender is impossible; they will shoot us and torture us. Vertounoff told us, that when the Cadets were led to be shot, the mother of one of them, a well educated and well dressed woman of about forty, threw herself down on her knees before the Red guards and implored them screaming: 'I am his mother, give him back to me!' A Red guard cursed at her and said: 'Well, then just see us kill your puppy!' and fired at him one shot after another, while she crawled on her knees around him, catching hold of his legs. What can we expect from them?"

It was now the 30th of October. The situation in the Winter Palace was getting gradually worse. The Cadets of the Oranienbaum School had left. The Peterhof School of N.C.O's. was not reliable. Who was reliable? Who could be trusted? It was evident that the Winter Palace was no longer held by the Cadets, but by the Bolsheviks. The Cadets were crowded in the picture-gallery and in the Field-Marshal's Hall forming the immediate guard of the Temporary Government, which was deliberating about the surrender of the palace.

Petersburg illuminated by bon-fires was in a turmoil of agitation and the victory of the Bolsheviks was to be felt in the dull noise of the crowd, the hootings of the cars which had suddenly reappeared.

"It is impossible to surrender. It is dishonourable to surrender," was repeated in the hall, passages and staircases of the palace, when suddenly the terrible and startling news: "The white flag is hoisted over the palace . . . !" was spread among the defenders.

A dense, agitated crowd suddenly poured into the square before the palace filling it with its tumult. Sharp words of command sounded in the crowd. Big crowds of sailors, soldiers and Red guards rushed into the gates and doors of the palace and penetrated into it from all sides. Sailors from the "Avrora"

stepped out of the crowd and surrounded the members of the Temporary Government. For several minutes a subdued drone of many thousand voices could be heard in the palace. The comrades were still careful of keeping a revolutionary discipline, when suddenly a shot was fired—a Cadet had committed suicide.

The shot seemed to wake up the crowd. It passed from a condition of motionless expectancy into one of intense activity, and began dragging things off the tables, tearing the upholstery off the chairs and sofas. Men were to be seen, laughing and carrying in their arms the young girls of the Women's Battalion. Separate cries rose above the general noise and rang all over the palace.

"Save me, save me!" Lenotchka screamed, while sailors dragged her through the rooms of the lower story.

"Carry her on to the Tsar's bed. Well, there are plenty of them here!"

"That's fine!"

"Help! Help!"

"Oh, Lord!"

The beasts were feasting and revelling all over the palace, allaying their thirst for blood and crime. Groups of eight, ten people could be seen gathered together in the dusk; groans, heavy breathing, cynical curses and abuse rung out on all sides. The Cadets were disarmed and led into the yard to be removed elsewhere.

"Bring a machine-gun, we will finish them all off here," shouted a sailor laughing, his eyes aglow with merriment.

A young officer, wearing a great-coat with shoulder-straps and a red band on his sleeve, made his way through the crowd and approached the Cadets, pushing the sailors aside with an air of authority.

He ordered them to form ranks.

"Nothing will happen to you. Comrade Schlossberg convey them to the Fortress."

That night in the yard of the Fortress, near the mint, beside the Troubetskoy Ravelin, the Cadets were crowded like cattle. Some of them lay on the wet stones, others stood leaning against

TO RED FLAG

the wall, while some crouched on the ground. Armed workmen sat round a bon-fire near the gates. A thin, cold rain was drizzling and the night seemed endless.

Misha and his brother as well as Pavlik and Nika were there. Wagner with his pale, girlish face kept close to them. He took Nika aside and began speaking.

"You know, Lenotchka was my fiancée. I don't want to live anymore. In the Degtiarnaya street in the house number twenty-eight, lodging twenty-six in the yard . . . my mother. . . . Tell her, how I died."

The Cadets came up to the Red guards and talked to them. They were workmen, all of them young fellows, some dressed in black coats, others without them, but all had cartridge-pouches and machine-gun belts tied round them. They stood leaning on their rifles, joking and talking.

"Well, gentlemen—bourgeois, your day is passed. The day before yesterday a hundred of your kind were exterminated in the Smolensky field."

"And where did the Cossacks go?" the Cadets asked.

"To Gatchino. But they were so few—four hundred in all followed Kerensky. The majority was for the authority of the people."

Late at night it became known that the captured ministers had been brought to the Fortress.

"This is the end of the Temporary Government, comrades. The workmen's and peasants' authority is established in Russia and now we will have peace, bread and land. Nobody will do you any harm, cadets," the Red guards said.

"Do you think Tania and Olia feel anything of what is happening to us?" Nika whispered to Pavlik.

"Better not think! Olia is in Tsarskoie Selo, and Tsarskoie. . . ."

"God is merciful."

"Do you think we will be shot?"

"If they at least did not torture us!"

A foggy, gloomy and damp day broke at last. A motor-lorry drove noisily along the narrow street and stopped at the gate.

A young pale-faced man entered the yard, surrounded by armed sailors. He was holding a paper and a revolver in his hand.

"Cadets, form ranks," he shouted.

The Cadets began forming two lines; their faces were pale and their eyes gloomy.

"The authority of the Soviets has triumphed!" the young man began saying. "All over Russia order is being restored and the Soviet of peoples' commissars has decided to grant their lives to all who were led astray and were deceived by the mad leaders working for the reaction. Sign this paper in which you acknowledge the authority of the Soviets and pledge yourself not to step against it arms in hand. After that you are free. You may all go home. Swear."

The Cadets were silent; many of them breathed heavily, tears were in their tired eyes.

"I swear," exclaimed a young voice, endeavouring to sound deep and solemn. "I swear to struggle all my life against the violators of the Russian people and to kill the traitor, the spy, the scoundrel—Lenin."

"What's that, who spoke?" screamed the young man in authority.

"I did," Misha said stepping forward. "Sign the paper, gentlemen. It is forced upon you and is worthless. My blood will release you from your oath."

"To the wall!" the young man shrieked.

A sailor pushed Misha so roughly that he fell forward on the stones, but immediately rose and went to the wall with firm steps.

He stood against the wall and his big, radiant eyes shone like an angel's on an image.

"Fire!" the young man shouted taking aim himself.

"For the Tsar and for Russia!"

About ten rifles clicked sharply. A dark spot of blood suddenly stood out on the pale face. The eyes closed, the body swayed forward helplessly and dropped face-downwards onto the damp flags, from under which brown grass was peeping.

"Villains, hangmen!" Wagner shouted and rushed at the

young man, but rough hands caught hold of him and put him to the wall.

"I will finish this one off myself," the young man in authority said, drawing a step nearer to Wagner. He fired straight at his temple.

"Long live the revolution," he shouted, continuing to shoot in a state of frenzy at Wagner's dead body.

"Well, gentlemen! Whoever fancies it can take his turn."

The Cadets stood in complete silence. Some were trembling visibly.

"Come and sign."

Half an hour later they were leaving the Fortress. They walked silently avoiding looking at one another.

A motor-lorry passed them under the Fortress gate-way and made them crush to the wall: the sailors were driving away. They sat along the sides of the car and two bodies were lying at the bottom of the lorry. A sailor snatched his rifle and fired over the cadets heads making them start involuntarily. The men laughed roughly. Having passed the bridge the Cadets dispersed and slowly went to their homes. All around was the boisterous street mob. Soldiers were sauntering about and screams of "Long live the Soviet Republic!" filled the air.

XIII

ALL this time Sablin stayed in his apartment scarcely ever going out. What could he do? He, a General of the Emperor's suite. His appearance alone would be sufficient to excite and enrage the soldiers. At first he tried to find some work and went to the War Minister Verchovsky. Verchovsky came from a good family; he had begun his education in the military Pages' Corps. Verchovsky expressed his astonishment that Sablin applied to him. He had not been informed that Kerensky had appointed Sablin to serve in his staff.

"Such experienced Generals as you are must be at the front. The Army needs them. In any case I will inquire what directions have been given concerning you and will inform you. Do you live here?"

Sablin gave his address.

"Very well. There is such an amount of work to be done, we have received such a heavy inheritance, that you won't remain without employment."

This had taken place on the 18th of September, but September had passed, October was coming to an end, and no one had troubled Sablin, he had not been called up by telephone and had received no papers from the War Minister's Office.

Sauntering in the streets, meeting and talking to his fellow-officers of the guard Sablin soon understood that he could not be called. Neither he, nor men sharing his convictions were needed by Kerensky, who did not want to reestablish and reorganize Russia and its Army, but to destroy and ruin both.

Sablin saw sometimes in the mornings disorderly ranks of soldiers drilling on the field of Mars. They stood for hours doing nothing, eating sun-flower seeds, chatting and laughing. Once he saw a squadron of his own regiment on the field of Mars. It was being exercised by a soldier. The horses were thin and badly groomed. The men rode badly, everything was dirty and rusty.

A youthful-looking officer, a Count Kangrin, stood apart. Sablin, who knew him, came up and asked him why it was not he who taught the men.

"Oh, Your Excellency," the Lieutenant answered excitedly, "they would not obey me. You see a miracle today: the committee itself ordered the drilling."

Sablin witnessed the murder of youthful cadets and officers. What could he do? He could only die, only be tortured and killed as they were. Sablin knew that he was doomed to die, that the Eremeieff's night of which the soldier spoke with such voluptuousness since the beginning of the March revolution, the night of the officers massacre, had already come. He understood that the Russian officers and all the educated classes were beginning to mount their Way of the Cross, and he likewise. He did not fear death. Life had long lost all meaning for him, because it had been deprived of the beauty which is brought into it by the family, the Fatherland, one's own regiment, the

TO RED FLAG

Army, victory and the Tsar, as the symbol of all that is elevated, and this beauty had been torn out of his heart, but he did not want to die like sheep or cattle that are being led to be slaughtered. He wanted to give his life fighting, and he waited for the beginning of the fight, when he would sacrifice his life for something big, and meanwhile he saved himself for it.

On October the 25th the red flag of mutiny passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks and they began their rapid work of destruction. The 2nd of November the Soviet of the peoples' Commissars summoned General Korotchan, a prominent artillery officer, the Chief of the Military Artillery School and member of the Artillery Academy, to Smolny to be questioned. The examination did not last long. He was not charged with any crime. The sailors led him out of Smolny, took him into a back street and killed him brutally.

In some cases people were grabbed, taken to Smolny, where a mock trial was gone through, then they were conveyed to the Petropavlovsk Fortress or into the Smolensky field where they were shot. Others were killed in the streets, in their homes, in hospitals, others were lynched and tortured to death—the Soviet authority exterminated and did away with all its enemies.

The 9th of November the new authority announced the appointment of the ensign Krilenko to the post of Supreme Commander. Krilenko's first order was to demand the sending of delegates from the whole front to negotiate with the Germans. Peace was to be concluded by the soldiers themselves without the participation of Generals and governments. Peace was to be signed by companies, battalions and regiments with the corresponding units of the enemy.

This was so new for International Law that even the Germans doubted the possibility of obtaining peace in this manner and decided to treat with the Stavka in Mogileff.

After the Supreme Commander Kerensky's flight from Mogileff, his functions had automatically passed to his Chief-of-Staff General Douchonin. He was still a young General, handsome, perfectly honest, but timorous and irresolute. He had completely surrendered himself to the commissars. It was they who

really commanded the army, he merely signing all the papers and orders. To him the Germans appealed.

He was indignant at such a suggestion and did not recognize Krilenko. Krilenko then boarded trains with bands of sailors and Letts, and moved towards the Stavka. They advanced slowly and cautiously. The smallest resistance offered by Korniloff's shock detachments would have been sufficient to make Krilenko and his bands flee in disorder. But after numerous meetings the shock battalions decided not to interfere and declared themselves neutral. Krilenko feared to take the risk of going to the Stavka and demanded that Douchonin should come and report to him in his train. He guaranteed him his entire safety. Vainly the commissars and Douchonin's friends dissuaded him from going to see Krilenko. Scarcely had Douchonin appeared on the platform of the station when brutal sailors rushed at him. They tore off his shoulder-straps and lynched him in Krilenko's presence. They stripped him naked, outraged his body and left it lying on the platform.

The dead man's widow and daughter came to fetch his body; they were conducted before it and only after having been insulted and mocked at were they permitted to take it to be interred. . . .

Douchonin's murder, committed in such a dastardly way, accompanied by exceptionably vile and cynical mutilations pleased the army of scoundrels and traitors. Since then every death-sentence of a General or an officer was delivered accompanied by a cynical leer, and by the verdict: "To join General Douchonin's Staff."

Sablin knew it all. He knew that he too was of the number of those who were doomed to receive a post in General Douchonin's Staff. Following Petroff's advice, who had remained true to him, although he served in Lenin's personal garage, Sablin had left his former apartment and continually moved from one flat into another, passing the nights with friends, mostly at Matzneff's, sometimes in Prince Repnin's empty home, sometimes in Gritzenko's or at Maria Fedorovna Morgenstern's apartment.

His personal life was finished.

Sablin had aged by twenty years during these last three months. His hair had turned grey and only his figure retained its youthful appearance, and his military bearing had remained the same while his steel grey eyes shone and spoke of his indomitable will.

Around was a bustling crowd. People enjoyed themselves more than ever. The cinemas were overcrowded, the theatres were playing, Maria Fedorovna sang at concerts daily and this gaiety was like a feast during the plague, at a time when people stood in queues for long hours before the bakers' shops, when already no sugar was to be found, when meat had become a rarity and when half the shops were closed and their windows were nailed up with planks.

A letter from Tania. . . . Petroff had brought it. He had received it from a soldier, who had not wished to give his name. She had settled in Tobolsk. She sewed shirts for the soldiers who guarded the Emperor and she washed the linen of the Tsar's family. It enabled her to know all that was taking place at Tobolsk in the "Street of Freedom." Tania's trust, that the Russian people would understand the terrible crime they had committed and would release and restore to the throne their lawful Emperor, never forsook her. But she was becoming impatient. She feared for the inviolability of the Tsar's family. The bloody visions of the French revolution persecuted her.

"Papa," Tania wrote, "you must hurry. Something must be done, something must be undertaken. I have already told you in a former letter that I cannot define the present existence of the Emperor and of his family otherwise than by the words 'calm terror.' When I compare the nearest past with what is taking place now, I see that existence was still possible before, and that now life has become unbearable, owing to a thousand slights, insults, revolting, insolent deeds.

"I am sitting in a small room, not far from their house, and sew by the light of a petroleum lamp. All around is the cold Siberian winter. Deep snow lies in the streets and narrow, firm path-ways have been traced through its hard white layers,

which look like sugar. It is cold, Papa. When someone happens to pass by, the snow creaks so loudly that I can hear it in my cottage. My hostess, who is an old woman, sits in the next room. A cat has jumped on to my knees and lies on its back playing with the ball of cotton with its velvety paw. I am cosy here, Papa, but how are they?

"The Temporary Government has stopped sending them money. We go about in Tobolsk and collect for them among the merchants and the peasants. The educated classes don't give anything. Papa, the Russian Tsar who has to beg for his living! But he does not know it, we hide it from him.

"The new authority, I don't know, Papa, what kind of government it is, but evidently it is a nasty one, has announced by telegraph that it does not intend to keep the Tsar's family. Ten servants have already been dismissed, half a pound of sugar per month is allowed for one person. Bodily sufferings have been added to their intolerable spiritual torments.

"Papa! But it won't do! History will never forgive the Russian people this infamy. Papa, you must act, you must work. I do all I can. One of the soldiers who is on guard here has fallen in love with me. He is ugly, small, he has crooked legs, his face is marked with smallpox, he has a turned-up nose, a large mouth with big, bad teeth, he smells bad, he is stupid, but he is kind. I have promised to marry him, Papa, if he saves the Emperor and his family. He only thinks about it now.

"But you must work out there, in Russia, Papa. You Generals, whom he has favoured, you must influence the Allies. What are they thinking about? Is this the way they pay the Emperor for being true to his promises? Why don't King George and Queen Alexandra do something? And Poincaré and Foch? Are they so weak that they can't order the group of Jews who rule Russia to release God's crowned Tsar and cease torturing him? Papa, my own, beloved, truthful Papa. All my hopes are in you. But it is necessary to act. If nothing is done, nothing will be achieved. . . ."

Sablin called Petroff and asked him what the soldier who had brought the letter was like.

TO RED FLAG

It appeared that he had crooked legs, that his face was marked with small pox, that he had a turned-up nose, and a large mouth.

"My clever girl," Sablin thought. "She is right. One must act, and not wait!"

XIV

A DULL report, sounding like underground rumbling or like a whisper coming from behind a stone wall,—the dull report came that order was established on the Don and that everything was as it had been in former times. There was a disciplined army, gendarmes stood at the stations, the trains ran according to the time-tables, calm and peace reigned all over the Don region, Korniloff had been released from the Bichovsky prison, no one knew by what means. An officer of the General-Staff and a commissar had arrived at the prison with the order to release him and he was set free. The order was so cleverly counterfeited that no one doubted its authenticity. Korniloff was marching southward through the steppes surrounded by his loyal Turkomen. Cadets and officers were joining him. Once more a Russian Army was being formed in the South and it would deliver Russia from the yoke of the Bolsheviks!

It was Ermoloff who, having found Sablin at Maria Fedorovna Morgenstern's, had told him the news. He told him everything.

"We must escape, Your Excellency," Ermoloff said. "There is sure to be work for you there. On hearing your name soldiers and officers will gather around you."

It was decided that they would go to Rostoff and then see what was to be done. Ermoloff promised that he would be the first to start; he promised to look about, to call on the Ataman Kaledin, to settle matters with him, to find General Alexseieff and to meet Sablin at Rostoff with a report of all he had learned. The brothers Polejaeff would go with Sablin and form his guard, but they would keep apart as if they were strangers; they would take Olia with them; she would join the Smolny Institute which had just been sent to the south.

"And I will go with you," Maria Fedorovna said suddenly.

"If you travel with a lady, Alexander Nicolaievitch, you will attract less attention. You will only be a bourgeois, one out of the great number who now go southward in search of luck. If you go alone, you will be considered a counter-revolutionary and you will not escape serious troubles."

"Go, Moussia," Gritzenko said looking into the sorrowful, big blue eyes of his friend. "You are right, you are wise."

"But what will you do there?" Sablin asked.

"Rostoff is a gay town and I will always manage to earn my living there. Maybe I will sing in the operetta, it has always been my dream."

"And you, Pavel Ivanovitch?" Sablin asked.

"I will remain here. I have an eighty-year-old mother, Sasha, how can I leave her? I will manage to live somehow. We have decided with Matzneff to hold out to the end. Who knows, maybe by the spring Kaledin will be in Moscow and you will also be drawing near with Korniloff. And I have also a great faith in the Germans. It would not be the first time that the Warangians would deliver us."

Sablin went to the office of the Company of the International sleeping cars. It appeared that tickets for Rostoff could not be easily procured. They were all sold out up to the second of February. A clerk, whom Sablin knew and who had sold him tickets before, told him to come and inquire daily. Tickets might be returned by people who, having reserved them in advance, changed their minds at the last moment.

"Only excuse me," he said, "I will not put your name down in my books. Give me some other one, because I know you are being searched for."

"Morgenstern," Sablin said without hesitating.

"Excellent, it is a Swedish name, it'll even be better so. The 'tovaristchi' have still retained a certain fear for foreigners. Will you believe, that what saves us yet is the inscription on our cars of: 'Compagnie Internationale.' They imagine that we have something in common with their new God—the International, and don't touch us."

There happened to be tickets for January the 22nd but the

same clerk informed Sablin that the train would not run any further than the station Lissky, because it was reported that fighting was going on near that station between the Cossacks and the Bolsheviks. The clerk did not know any details.

It was to this inner front that Sablin was hurrying and his heart beat with youthful ardour in anticipation of battle and victory.

They travelled to Moscow without incidents; Maria Fedorovna and Olia Polejaeff in the ladies' compartment, Sablin in another one with Pavlik and Nika and a rich Jew from Rostoff, named Kappelbaum. The car was crowded. The passage was so full of officers and soldiers that it was impossible to open the door of the compartment and to go to the lavatory, where the windows were smashed, where water failed and three "tovaristchi" snored lustily under the wash-stand. If it were not for these details one might forget that one was travelling after the revolution. The compartment was clean, fresh linen lay on the berths and the electric light burnt brightly.

Sablin was dressed in a winter coat with a fur-collar, and wore a soft beaver cap, lent him by the brother of Varvara Dmitrievna Matzneff. Kappelbaum took him for a merchant. Pavlik and Nika wore also civilian clothes.

The soldiers felt intimidated on finding themselves in the passage of an International car and behaved decently and quietly.

They had to change in Moscow and as there were no through trains, they hired carriages and paid the cabman the extravagant fare of twenty-five roubles. The train was to start from the Kursk station in the evening and the porter told them that a struggle and a row generally accompanied the securing of seats. An hour before the train was formed, the entire platform was crowded with soldiers, who carried not only bags and small trunks, but some of them even rifles, and as soon as the train drew up before the platform they all rushed, pushing and crushing one another and immediately filled all the cars.

"They did this once yesterday," the porter told them, "and

pushed a woman upon the lines. She was crushed to death by the train. They don't mind anything."

But again there was order in the International car. The soldiers did not penetrate into the compartments but stayed in the passages; they stopped one another, saying it was a foreign car. They were evidently firmly convinced that everything belonging to their own country could be robbed and destroyed with impunity, but they stood in awe of anything that was foreign, fearing they might have to answer for it.

They reached Voronej without adventures. There the train stopped for an hour, when a guard came and told them that as the Cossacks were fighting under Tchertkovo and refused to let the train pass, the travellers might either leave the train or travel back.

Sablin, Pavlik and Nika gathered together to decide what was to be done. A young, energetic looking engineer, a Caucasian highlander called Artschanoff, joined them. He had occupied Kappelbaum's seat, when the latter passed into another compartment. Nika was of the opinion that they had better leave the train at Voronej and cross the frontline with horses. Artschanoff took part in the conversation.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, if I allow myself to give you advice," he said. "Follow my example. Where are you going to? To Rostoff?"

"Yes, to Rostoff," Sablin answered.

"Well, I am also going to Rostoff. We will return to Griazi and board the train for Tsaritsin. It is perfectly quiet there. From Tsaritsin we will go to Torgovaya and from there by the new line to Rostoff."

"And why not cross the front with horses?" Nika asked.

"But you are an officer, are you not?" Artschanoff asked, looking straight at Nika.

Nika hesitated.

"That is. . . . I was an officer," he said.

"That makes no difference. If you fall into the hands of the Red guards they will shoot you soon enough and besides the other gentleman is travelling with a lady," and he nodded at

Sablin, "and you have a young girl to take care of. It is winter now and who can tell all you will have to face on the way. And if you follow my advice we will lose only one day."

Pavlik was of Artschanoff's opinion; Sablin did not say anything, but it was evident that he also did not care to arrive at the front in civilian dress and begin his adventures by becoming a captive of the Bolsheviks. It was decided to remain in the train.

They got off the train at Griazi early in the morning and waited for one which would take them to Tsaritsin. The traffic was carried on irregularly, but at the demand of the soldiers, who crowded at the station in great numbers, the station master consented to send a goods train to Tsaritsin.

"You won't object, gentlemen, to giving the guards thirty roubles each," Artschanoff said. "They will chose a less dirty car and we will travel in it to Tsaritsin all by ourselves, a company of bourgeois."

Everyone agreed, Kappelbaum, Artschanoff and a young telegraph official took the settling of the matter upon themselves and, after numerous visits to the committee of railway men and lengthy confidential conversations, matters began to shape themselves favourably.

"We don't accept bribes, comrades," a young railway official told Artschanoff when the latter offered to pay for the car.

"But I am not offering you any," Artschanoff said, "I only ask you to accept these four hundred roubles collected among the passengers for your political party as a token of sympathy."

"And do you know what party we belong to?" the young man asked, laughing complacently.

"To the Bolshevik," Artschanoff said. "Because it is the only party which can exist in Russia now."

The young man failed to see the irony, but was flattered and became more lenient.

"All right," he said. "I'll give you a receipt for the money. Our party does need means, what with educational aims we pursue and other expenses. I am sorry to say we can't give

you a luggage-van, we will chose you a car cleaner than the rest and which has not been used for the transport of cattle."

The car turned out to be one which served for carrying coal. But such a small inconvenience as coal dust had to be overlooked and the passengers began to settle on their luggage.

All around was the noisy bustling crowd of soldiers. Cars were insufficient in number to carry them all and seeing that another car was being coupled to the train the men rushed towards it.

Sablin had got used to the soldiers' meetings and to the expressions they used at them during this year and a half of free republican life and remained perfectly calm, knowing that if this gang had no leader, the words and threats would not be carried out.

He was also not disturbed by the men filling the car and pressing and pushing the people who had paid for it. This was to be expected. The men travelled on the roofs of the cars and on the buffers, so naturally they would not let a car remain only half occupied.

XV

SABLIN having settled Maria Fedorovna and Olia as comfortably as possible sat down near the wall and, plunged in his thoughts, followed but vaguely the conversations and disputes which were going on in the car. He nevertheless had noticed at once a young soldier, dressed better than the rest, apparently a commissar or a member of a committee. He understood his importance at once and concentrated his attention on him.

The train moved; many dropped off to sleep, but Sablin remained awake.

He remembered all his life. He remembered Gritzenko's party in the spring, when he, a young lieutenant, had stood up for Zahar, when afterwards he had sung with Lubovin and when he had seen Kitty home. He was nearer to Zahar, to Lubovin and to the men of his platoon then than now when he had lived among them for twenty-five years. He knew better the feelings of his horses Leda and Diana, and of his Mira-

beau whom he had mounted in the days of his youth, than the thoughts and feelings of these heavy-brained men.

He had lived with Kitty for a whole week, never leaving her for a minute. Even now he had but to close his eyes and a wave of voluptuous emotion would sweep over him at the remembrance of her lovely body and beautiful, fragrant arms. How many times had he kissed the nape of her neck with the perfumed waves of her golden locks caressing his face. And did he know or interest himself in what she thought or felt then? He had spoilt her life and he did not even know where she was now, and was she dead or did she still live.

And he remembered Marousia. He had never experienced such rapture in the love of any other woman. He had ruined her body and her soul. He had upset all her inner world. She had cried and suffered and he had experienced delight and enjoyment. And does the sight of human tortures and the slow death of a human being also afford delight? There were people who witnessed executions and who continually went to circuses to see tamers of wild beasts and the risky feats of gymnasts so as to be present at the moment of their destruction . . . and . . . to experience a thrill of delight.

"My prince! My prince!" the words reached him from afar.

All this had been! It had been and was no more. Lubovin had disappeared, as well as Korjikoff. And where was his son Victor?

He had seen non-existence engulf Marousia, but the others might still be living; only Sablin knew nothing about them and would he ever know anything?

'Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse! . . .'

This gives strength, reason and the ability to live.

Everything passes! . . .

The little red spider who wriggled so helplessly in the small house on the Schlisselburg Tract had grown up. He must probably be the same age as that soldier over there. What a beautiful and delicate face it was and at the same time how repulsive, Sablin mused. "Why does he look at me so intently? Has he served with me somewhere? Who is he? A chauffeur? A

motor-cyclist? A radio-operator? A clerk? He has delicate hands, full of breeding, well-cared for, which so strangely recall other hands. Whose? Whose? There is something pleasant and nice in the severely knitted brows, which does not harmonize with his insolent bearing. Where have I seen him, where have I met him?

"What does he want? Why have armed soldiers, whom he beckoned gathered before the car? Why is he coming towards me?"

"Are you not General Sablin?" Sablin heard the question which was addressed to him and the voice which spoke sounded dull and far away. It was as if his ears were stopped with something, as happens when in deep diving water gets into the ears.

"Here it is," Sablin thought. "My turn has come." He thrust his hand into his pocket where he carried his revolver and by an imperceptible movement of his thumb slipped open the safety catch.

"It is you I am asking!" the soldier exclaimed wrathfully, stretching out his hand towards Sablin.

Everything had become intensely quiet: Sablin heard the drops of water fall off a twig onto the porous snow and penetrating it rustle on the dry leaves. One drop fell, and then another.

"Here it is!" flashed through Sablin's mind and his heart immediately told him: "Everything passes. . ."

"Yes, I am General Sablin!" he said quite calmly. "What is it you want?"

He did not hear what the young soldier said to the group of men standing in front of the car, but he heard only that an odious, impudent calumny had been spoken, which the soldiers believed and that they would lynch him. Sablin knew the psychology of the crowd and of the soldiers far too well to be mistaken.

"Not everything is lost yet," he thought and pulling his revolver out of his pocket threatened the men with it and threw

himself into the crowd. He was not mistaken. The crowd opened before him, no one snatched his revolver from him or caught hold of him. Sablin jumped adroitly over the ditch and started running, making wide jumps on the spongy snow.

Sablin was forty-four years of age, but he had practised sport all his life and had seen real service. He was strong and agile. He soon felt that the men who had started after him ran heavily and awkwardly and that they would not overtake him. The shots that were fired at him were fired without aim. Sablin did not even hear the buzzing of the bullets. He ran more quietly choosing his direction. He knew the men would not run far from the train and that he would be saved if the engine-driver started it.

But suddenly Sablin felt that someone had separated from the group of soldiers and was overtaking him quickly. Sablin understood that this one was as strong and agile as he himself, but younger. Ten, twenty jumps more and he would overtake him from behind and throw him down. Sablin was afraid to look round, but he instinctively knew that it was time to fire.

He stopped suddenly and, turning round, faced the man who was overtaking him. He lifted his revolver and took his aim. . . . A haze dimmed his sight for a second. Between him and the young soldier, who was overtaking him, a curious small cloud vacillated on the wet snow between the thin trunks of the poplars. In the fluctuating morning fog radiant blue eyes, large and sorrowful, shaded by long, dark lashes shone distinctly. A delicate, white face, perfectly bloodless, stood out against a background of long dark hair, falling down the back in curly waves; two delicate hands stretched out towards him and the cry of: "My prince, my prince!" came from afar.

The vision lasted but one second. Sablin had barely time to think "it is because I have been remembering Marousia. . . ."

But this second proved fateful for him.

A strong blow on his wrist knocked the revolver out of his hand. Heavy powerful hands weighed on his shoulders, caught hold of him, and he was surrounded at once by the whole crowd. He was pushed, his cap was knocked off his head. He was hit

so heavily on the neck that it made his ears ring and somebody's rough voice said laughing triumphantly:

"Into General Douchonin's Staff! . . ."

Sablin thought that an intense silence followed these words. The thin trunks of the poplars and the spongy snow were outlined indistinctly, as well as the light-blue sky which seemed sorrowful and weeping, seen in between the interlaced, dry twigs.

He thought he heard the branches rustle in the wind and murmur gently: "Into General Douchonin's Staff!"

He fully grasped the meaning of these words and looked about him with anguish.

Someone, who had just run up, dealt him a heavy blow on the nape of the neck with something hard, probably with the butt-end of a rifle. Everything grew dark before Sablin's eyes, he swayed and heard once more the triumphant, gay voice shouting:

"Into General Douchonin's Staff!"

PART VI

I

WHEN Sablin threw himself into the crowd of soldiers, revolver in hand, a commotion ensued in the car. All the soldiers, Nika and Pavlik, Polejaeff as well, jumped out and rushed after him. Nika and Pavlik did not know why they were running. They were without arms, being officers they ought to have feared the soldiers themselves, but they had a certain hope that they might be of use, might help and even save General Sablin. They saw him stop and take his aim. The whole crowd stopped too, except a young soldier who continued to run after him, always keeping his eyes fixed on him, like a greyhound pursuing a hare. The soldier with a pale and angry face, as well as a few of the men, started running from the sides. But Sablin did not fire, he lowered his revolver and at the same instant the crowd overtook him, and the Polejaeffs understood that all was over with Sablin. The attention of the entire crowd was taken up by him and no one heeded either Nika or Pavlik, who stood on the outskirts of the wood.

"Let us go with him," said Nika.

"We can't help him in any way," Pavlik said.

"We must find Olia and escape as quickly as we can. It is impossible for us to return to the car."

"But how? And he. . . . Can we desert him?" Nika said, his lips trembling and tears coming to his eyes. "Would it be right?"

They stood in the wood, their young hearts beating with indignation and helplessness. They felt a bitter shame at everything they had witnessed. A dull, fierce hatred for the soldiers filled their hearts, a thirst for vengeance, for a bloody, terrible vengeance was to be the chief aim, the chief wish of their life.

"Let us go to the south, to the Cossacks," said Pavlik. "There we will get arms and then we will go and deliver him."

"Yes, if they will not kill him before that."

"Then we will avenge him."

"And what about Olia?"

"Of course she will come with us. As a Sister of Mercy. Where could she go? We have no home, no land, we must go to the Cossacks, it's the only thing which can save us."

They found Olia in the wood not far from the car. As soon as she saw them, she began waving them back, giving them to understand that they were not to approach the embankment, and she started towards them looking on all sides and hiding behind trees.

"My dear ones," she said, looking alternately at her brothers, as if wishing to convince herself that both of them were alive and unhurt. "Stop, stop, don't go any further."

She approached and began speaking nervously.

"We must not think of returning to the train. We must escape as far as possible. The old woman in the shawl and the wife of the telegraphist have betrayed you. They said that you also were with General Sablin. They called you his aide-de-camps. And where did they get it from? They grabbed and arrested the Kuban officer, his wife kneeled before them, imploring them to release him, but they seized her as well. The young soldier with the handsome face managed everything. The engineer who disputed with them yesterday, the lady who was with him and the stout Jew have also been arrested. They began searching the things. I had hidden in the wood and could see them tossing the empty bags on to the line. To return now would mean certain death. We must escape."

"But where to?" said Nika.

"To the south, to the south!" Pavlik said. "And without losing a single moment."

The sun shone over the wood. The brothers Polejaeff and Olia could tell the south by the sun, the tree trunks on which the snow had already melted and by the darkened sides of the hillocks. They pictured to themselves the south and the Cossacks as a blessed country of order, where the great Russian army was being reestablished, where the bloody haze did not

float over the towns and villages and where red flags, inciting to mutiny and looting had not been hoisted. Their young hearts trusted firmly that Russia was still alive there, that she would rise to cast off the yoke of the violators, of the tyrants and traitors.

And so, to the south!

They started off avoiding the villages, keeping away from the main roads. They carried nothing with them except a small amount of money. Their luggage had been left in the train. But they did not mind the privations; they believed firmly that they would find Russia, that she would warm and feed them.

Towards evening with hearts full of hope they approached the first stanitsa of the Don. A Cossack passed them on horse-back; he appeared to be an officer and was dressed in a rich fur coat and a large handsome papaha, at his side he wore a sword adorned with silver. He was accompanied by two Cossacks. They were also in rich fur coats, one of them was in a Cossack papaha, the other in a low beaver cap. The officer looked intently at the passers-by. He was dark and pale, with short, black moustache, a delicate nose and full, well-shaped lips.

Pavlik recognised him at once.

"Nika," he said, "that is Ivan Michailovitch Martinoff. Do you remember him? We used to meet him at the Lenitsins. He sometimes sang there and had a fine baritone voice. He is an officer of the Guard. This is a God-send. I'll go and look for him, we shall find out about everything from him."

"Pavlik, but if he . . . if he belongs to them?"

"What an idea! How could it be, Cossacks were with him. They belong certainly to Kaledin. We are saved."

But a certain feeling of cautiousness made them separate. It was decided that Pavlik would go alone and Olia and Nika would remain on the outskirts, near a corn stack.

"Have patience," Pavlik was saying. "I'll bring you bread and bacon, we will make you some tea, some hot soup. Ivan Michailovitch is a splendid fellow. He also knew Sablin well. Do you remember, Olia, how he made love to you?"

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Pavlik had no difficulty in finding the place where the Cossack officer had halted. His elegant horse, and those of the two Cossacks, were tied up before a big house belonging to a wealthy Cossack.

Pavlik mounted the porch and stood dumbfounded. A white card was nailed on the door, bearing the following inscription in big letters: "Office of the Kamishansky Soviet of Workers, Red Soldiers, Peasants and Cossack Deputies,—the Commissar."

He was about to turn round and run away, when the door was thrown open and in the streak of light appeared one of the Cossacks who had accompanied Martinoff, with a paper in his hand.

"Whom do you want, comrade?" he asked, looking Pavlik over from head to foot.

"The Essaoul (Captain) Martinoff. I know him personally," Pavlik said firmly.

"Whom must I name?"

"Pavel Nicolaevitch Polejaeff," Pavlik answered boldly. He understood that he was lost, that boldness alone could save him.

Ivan Michailovitch was sitting in a well-furnished room at a table covered with a table-cloth and was eating. His face was lit up by a petroleum lamp with a porcelain shade. A bottle of vodka stood before him, plates with rich fish, herring, caviar and large pieces of bread were standing on the table, as well as a covered tureen. A young Cossack woman, tall, handsome and fair with long plaits of thick hair covered with a silk shawl, stood in the corner, leaning her chin on her white, plump hand.

"Polejaeff, Pavel Nicolaevitch," Martinoff said cordially. "How come you to be here? Sit down. You will be my guest. What has brought you to our part of the world? Praskovia Ivanovna, please try and find us another plate. There, Praskovia Ivanovna, you have told me that you had never seen a living 'bourgoui.' And here is one who has come to us himself. Look and admire. But I am only joking."

Martinoff poured Pavlik some vodka, placing the plate with the rich amber-coloured fish before him. He had changed but

little since Pavlik had seen him in Tsarskoie Selo. He had only shortened his long, silky moustache and had shaved his small Mephistopheles beard, which made his face look rounder and himself stouter. He was well-dressed and the long fingers of his well-cared-for white hands were adorned with costly rings out of which one big diamond sparkled in the lamp light. Pavlik wondered mentally where these rings had come from? He knew that Martinoff was not rich, that he had been compelled to quit the guard after a story of some kind in connection with money difficulties. But Martinoff gazed at Pavlik with the same handsome, black eyes, shaded by thick, long lashes, and his gestures were full of their former frankness and the cordiality of a man who loves to entertain and to regale his friends.

"Well," said Martinoff, half closing his eyes and looking sharply at Pavlik, "you are making your way to Kaledin or to Alexeeff? Eh? Many of your kind are trying to get there. And what for? Pavel Nicolaevitch, I knew you when you were like that," and Martinoff lifted his hand a little above the table. "I also knew your sister, Olga Nicolaevna, and I know your brother well, and will tell you frankly that I love you all very much. Well, you are going to Alexeeff or to Kaledin. But who are they? Republicans! And I know perfectly well that you are monarchists. And to whom are you going? To the hirelings of the French, to those who sent the Cossacks and the Russian people to destroy their own brothers for French money. Here we have the authority of the workers and the peasants. Russia is here, and who is with you? I know positively that the Cossacks did not join Kaledin, and Alexeeff is followed only by military cadets, pupils of the military schools and a few officers. What are you planning? You are in the minority. First think it over. Russia numbered a hundred thousand officers, if not more, and out of them hardly four thousand have joined Alexeeff. And why? Because every officer, Pavel Nicolaevitch, is a monarchist, that is an axiom. And I am a monarchist, just as you."

"But how," said Pavlik, "are Lenin and Trotsky also monarchists?"

"Who knows, who knows," Martinoff said, nodding his head. "We . . . do you remember how I once sang, I had even composed the melody myself: 'If we're lonely, we'll go to the Volga, if we're poor—we'll find silver and gold!' Pavel Nicolaevitch, is it fair that a banker, a wretched Jew, should possess wealth, millions, precious stones, gold, and I, who am an educated Cossack of the Don, clever, handsome, because I well know, Pavel Nicolaevitch, my own worth, have not a penny in my pocket? Why? The tables must be turned. The clever, the young and the daring, these are the ones the Bolsheviks are putting forward. Join us! Eh?"

Martinoff drank one glass of vodka after another and was getting tipsy. But drunkenness with him manifested itself in greater loquacity, in a sharper understanding, in an increase of friendliness and in still more ample gestures.

"Before deciding to join you," said Pavlik, "I should like to know more exactly who are the Bolsheviks. I had formed in Petersburg a rather different opinion of them."

"Praskovia Ivanovna, tell the 'bourgui' what the Bolsheviks are," said Martinoff addressing himself to the young woman.

"Oh, Ivan Michailovitch," the Cossack woman said, hiding her face shyly.

"Bolshevik means—everything is permitted," said Martinoff bringing his hand adorned with rings close to Pavlik's face.

"I examined the safes in Petrograd, and do you see what I received for it? By right too! By right of the strong, the dexterous, the intelligent. Look at Praskovia Ivanovna, she's a priest's daughter. In former times, we should have had to be engaged, and who knows whether her parents would have agreed. Besides, I am already married. But she loves me and has done so for a long time, and now since it has been declared that women are common property, my love is mine, by right of my looks. I understand bolshevism, Pavel Nicolaevitch, as the realization of one's will."

"So, Pavel Nicolaevitch, Mironoff, Commissar of the Don, is

TO RED FLAG

coming here tonight. If you like, I will introduce you to him, and you may stay with us. Mark my words, the month will not be out before we shall have swept Kaledin and Alexeeff out and the red flag of the labouring Cossacks will flutter all over the Don, from North to South. Kaledin still holds out only in Novotcherkask and only because no one attacks him. Think, comrade, power, wealth, a luxurious life, freedom, women—all will be yours if you join us. Mind you, I don't force you, —others kill such as you, but I give you a free choice. I allow you to go into the enemy's camp. You are hungry, tired, frozen, after your wanderings in the fields. I offer you the chance to get warm, to eat, and to rest. In the last few days it has been decided to start forming the Red army, we need instructors. Well! I am waiting for your answer."

"I cannot join the Bolsheviks," Pavlik said in a low voice. "They are German spies, they are traitors, no one has elected them, they have usurped the authority."

"Tales, Pavel Nicolaevitch, only bourgeois tales, lies and calumny. And even if it is so. Whom are you joining? In one case it is German money and in the other it is French—you are still not going to work for a Russian cause."

"Ivan Michailovitch," said Pavlik getting up. "You promised to let me go and I am going."

Both were silent for a few seconds. Martinoff did not take his eyes off Pavlik.

"Well," he said, "a long time ago I was in love with your mother. I was quite a young officer then. In her memory—go. Only go quickly. Mironoff is coming here tonight with his division and then you will not be able to escape. Praskovia Ivanovna, will you give my guest some bread, fish and bacon."

For five days after this took place Pavlik, Nika and Olia continued their march through the steppes during the nights, guiding themselves by the stars. Pavlik would find the Polar star, then turning round they would choose some object, a hillock, a tree or a hay-stack and they would move ahead as long as their strength permitted. They searched for the small huts used by the Cossacks during the summer field work, where

they would shelter and hide in the old rotten straw, passing the day listening to what was going on in the steppe. In those days the lonely deserted steppe lived a peculiar life. Figures of mounted Cossacks were to be seen, driving before them horses, cattle and fowl. Heavy carts creaked, drawn by large grey oxen, the stanitsas and the small farms bustled with excitement leading an existence unusual for the winter season.

The supplies given by Martinoff were soon exhausted. They fed on crusts of old bread, obtained from time to time and on ears of corn. At last fatigue, hunger and cold compelled them to take the risk and enter a stanitsa. One dark night they knocked at the door of an isolated cottage. The words they heard in answer to their knock, uttered in an old voice, gave them hope that they might be spared a hungry death in the steppe. These words were: "May Christ save you!"

II

It is a lovely, sunny warm day and spring is in the air, the lark's gay song fills the azure vastness. It has frozen during the night, but now the wide, black road has thawed along the telegraph wires which disappear in the distance. The pools, as well as the deep wheel-tracks full of water, shine in the sun.

A line of people is advancing through the steppe, keeping to the road-side. They walk in columns, carrying their rifles smartly, keeping pace, dressed in grey shirts, with their army-coats rolled up and fixed in the old manner. Looking at them from a distance one is able to forget that a revolution has taken place in Russia, that the Double-Headed Eagle is overthrown, degraded and insulted, that officers are being killed, that the hearts of Russians are polluted and that the valourous Russian army is transformed into a crowd of dirty comrades "tovaristchi." This column is marching at such a fine pace, the bayonets are carried so regularly, the intervals are kept so exactly between all the platoons, the companies are so well picked, that the heart rejoices when looking at them.

It is not the old Russian song, the soldiers' song recalling the valourous deeds of forefathers and the Imperial glory,

which rises from the centre of the column, but the new song, composed but lately, calling to glory and honour. It is not soldiers' rough voices which are singing it, but the voices of young people, who have a knowledge of music and who can render even a simple marching song musical.

Pavlik and Nika Polejaeff are marching in the ranks of the soldiers. They walk, swaying in time to the melody, and close to them is Ermoloff, in the place of the platoon commander. The wind-bitten, emaciated faces are full of determination and the eyes gaze unflinchingly and proudly before them. Not all the company is wearing top boots, many officer-soldiers are in puttees, many are those whose boots are torn, and their feet are wrapped up in rags. The regiment is dressed poorly, but neatly. Each buckle is in the right place and the lack of uniformity in the equipment is compensated by the correction of the military drill, the pace and the animation of the youthful faces. These are either experienced officers, who have had seven years drill in the military cadets' school and two years training in the military college, or cadets. If there is a yesterday's student among them, then he has also acquired the military deportment, considering military customs and obligations, including death and wounds, in the same way as the military cadets.

Behind the column, at a certain distance, appears the Russian flag, the Commander-in-Chief's badge. A tanned, emaciated man, with dark eyes burning with enthusiasm was riding on a cream-coloured horse. A stout General with grey hair and black eyebrows, rode wearily behind him on a small Cossack horse, wearing a grey, broad papaha, pressed in front in the Kabardins fashion. He looked lazily about him and, at times, a grimace of vexation contorted his pale handsome face. This was Denikin, Korniloff's right hand in the work of the organization of the army. He was the idol of the young officers, after his passionate, impetuous speech made at the officers' meeting in defence of the army and of the officers. A stout man in a short civilian coat with dark, shining eyes rode in Korniloff's suite: it was General Loukomsky. The picturesque, handsome figure of a young Tekinets, Korniloff's

aide-de-camp, sitting erect in his variegated, national dress, with a turban on his head, stood out sharply among the grey army overcoats. Perfectly motionless in the saddle rode General Romanovsky, with General Bogaevsky beside him. He had a pale, pleasantly smiling face, with black hair and moustache. He was the brother of Mitrophan Petrovitch, the Don's wonderful speaker, who charmed the Don's Kroug and its Government by his beautiful, harmonious speeches. Korniloff was escorted by several officers mounted on horses of different colours; half a sotnia of officers closed the escort and several Tekintzi formed a handsome group. They rode straight before them, over the steppe covered with weeds at an easy canter, and their light, impetuous motion in the rays of the sun, incited the regiments to advance. Involuntarily all heads in Korniloff's regiment turned towards him, the young eyes shining with enthusiasm. "Our Korniloff!" passed in the ranks. He led them across the deserted steppes, as tribes and nations were led in former times, as the armies were led by the ancient heroes. He was Moses, he was Xenophon and scarcely could the Anabasis of the ten thousand Greeks in Asia Minor have been harder than this wandering of officers and children in the Pricaspian steppes.

Where was he taking them? And what for? In the declaration of the Voluntary Army which had just been issued, Korniloff writing about its fundamental problems said: "Those who realize what the expectancy of favours from the Germans involves rightly understand that we can be saved exclusively by keeping to our Allies."

The village captured by the volunteers was deserted. The cottages had a sorrowful aspect with their closed shutters and broken windows. Dead bodies of soldiers were lying about in the mud. It was strange to think that these Russian people, wearing all of them Russian army overcoats and grey fur caps, were enemies. About thirty of them were lying in a heap, evidently hit by the fire of a machine-gun. Twelve men, with red bands tied round their sleeves, were standing in the square near the white church apart from the large group of captured

TO RED FLAG

soldiers. They were commissars and communists. Yesterday but simple clerks and regimental musicians, today they were the leaders of the grey herd of soldiers, spreading the revolution and kindling the passions in view of achieving Russia's total destruction.

They were watched by four cadets and young ensigns, gazing at the prisoners with earnest, childish eyes, gripping their rifles firmly. They had captured them in the church where the communists had hidden, and after having disarmed them they dragged them out into the square. One of the Ensigns, called Losseff, had recognized his brother among the commissars. He was two years his senior and now kept looking at him with bewilderment, only able to murmur:

"Oh brother!"

"Well, what then, brother," the captured man answered with concentrated fury. "Are you satisfied, eh? Well, shoot your brother down, you hireling of the French capitalists. You are fighting for the landlords' estates! Yes, we both have indeed so much land, we could not divide it to our mutual satisfaction, and we started fighting."

"Silence!" a cadet shouted roughly coming up to Losseff. "I'll teach you to shut up, you Jewish sneak! I'll pierce your bowels with my bayonet."

After that Losseff kept a gloomy silence.

A young girl in masculine attire came galloping down the street mounted on a thorough-bred horse. Her pale face, with large grey eyes, set very close together, expressed unnatural animation. It was the Baroness Borgsten. Two months ago deserters had burnt her country home; they had tied her father to a plank and in her presence they had tossed him against the ground until he was dead and his eyes had rolled out of their sockets. She had also seen the soldiers torture and kill her mother and her twelve-year-old sister. She would have met with the same fate if German troops had not been approaching and the soldiers, taking fright, had not run away leaving her alive. She swore to avenge herself. She made her way to the Don and enlisted as a private in the ranks of the Voluntary

Army. Daring, handsome, an excellent horsewoman, she soon earned the general esteem. No one knew her past history. Her hatred of the Bolshevik soldiers was considered as a mania. The volunteers admired her pluck and her cold-blooded indifference to danger. Whenever she happened to see grey overcoats without shoulder-straps, fur caps worn at the back of the head, fringes of untidy hair falling upon their foreheads, like those worn by women, Jewish individuals in officers' tunics with scarlet bands on their sleeves, a strange smile would contort her delicate lips, showing her teeth and giving her face a savage expression. Terrible reminiscences would flash through her mind. A superhuman passion would light up her grey eyes, and few were the volunteers who could gaze into them at such moments. The pupils would disappear almost entirely, leaving nothing but the grey iris, intensifying the internal fire burning in them. At such times her hands acquired a supernatural strength. Her horse feeling the harsh tension of her will became so docile that it understood her wishes by intuition.

At such moments Baroness Borgsten saw things which were invisible to others.

She rode up to the group of commissars at an easy canter and stopped her horse abruptly. The men who were on guard knew her.

"What are these beasts?" she asked.

"Commissars," a tall, lanky cadet answered her.

"Why have they not been shot?"

"I don't know," the cadet said gloomily. "Evidently there is no one to do it."

"You have heard Korniloff's order: 'The war is being carried on with the definite purpose of extermination. Either they will exterminate us, or we them.'"

"We have heard it," the cadet murmured lowering his eyes.

A rapturous expression of delight came to the Baroness's face. A smile of passion played on her lovely lips. She slowly and deliberately unfastened the heavy service revolver hanging on her hip, fixed it on to the holster, using it as a rifle and dropped the horse's bridle.

TO RED FLAG

The commissars watched her, their faces assuming an expression of bestial terror. They remained perfectly motionless under her gloomy gaze. The servants of the International could read their fate in her eyes, they, who but yesterday had martyred the priest in this very same village; cutting his stomach open, they had pulled out his bowels, nailed them to a telegraph post, and had chased and dragged him round and round until all his intestines were pulled out and he dropped down dead. They saw a superior force expressed in the intense brilliancy of the strangely contracted pupils.

"Please move away," the Baroness said to the sentries in a hushed voice. "Let God's justice be fulfilled."

Her words rung out distinctly in the big square, where in one of the corners the crowd of captured Bolshevik soldiers were talking noisily and they were carried over the stanitsa, in which separate shots were still being fired here and there.

The Baroness, without dismounting, her horse standing as a statue, slowly took her aim, all her gestures full of supple, feminine grace, and fired. The soldier who was standing the farthest from the Baroness, who had been staring at her with an expression of tense stupidity on his face fell to the ground without a groan. Deliberately, one shot followed another, until all the twelve men had dropped down dead.

The Baroness folded her revolver, hung it on to her belt, took up the bridle with a soft sigh as of gratified passion and looking with tired eyes once more round the Bolsheviks she had killed, rode away at a pace through the village.

III

THE Kornilovski regiment was passing through the stanitsa in the evening dusk. It was marching as usual in perfect order, but without singing. A Cossack cart was driving behind it; it was carrying Korniloff's body, enveloped in his military coat. A guard escorted the body.

Olia, who had just finished carrying the wounded out of the hut and had placed them on the cart, was waiting for the regiment to pass, intending to follow it.

She thought the regiment seemed less numerous than before; its ranks were thinner; here was the platoon in which her brothers were marching, Ermoloff would surely be with them. But he was not there, her brothers were alone. Their faces were grey, with sunken cheeks and protruding cheek-bones. Rags were keeping together one of Pavlik's boots, which had quite fallen to pieces. They both kept their eyes to the ground, and did not see Olia.

"Nika, Pavlik!" Olia called out. "Where is Ermoloff?"

Pavlik glanced at his sister gloomily, as if not recognizing her and passed on. Nika stepped out of the ranks.

"Get ready Olia and start," he said.

"Where is Sergei Ippolitivitch?" she exclaimed.

"Why do you need him? We are all done for, sooner or later, it makes no difference."

"Nika, what has happened to him?"

"He is gravely wounded in the stomach. He could not have stood the driving and has been left behind. The inhabitants names have been taken down and they will answer for anything that happens."

"Where is he?"

"He is in the cottage of the Cossack Kravtchenko on the outskirts of the stanitsa Elisavetskaya. . . . But what are you thinking of?"

"I'll go there."

"You are mad, Olia!"

"No it's you, who have left him, who are mad."

"But Olia, all the same, he'll die."

"The more so, he'll die in my arms. He will die without anger or hatred, blessing you."

"Olia I won't let you go."

"You won't dare stop me! Go, fulfill your duty to the end and let me do mine. I am a nurse before being your sister, and you are a soldier, a Kornilovets, before being my brother. Your place is in the ranks of your regiment, mine is with the wounded. I am a Russian girl, as you are a Russian soldier and we must know how to face death! Go!"

Olia embraced Nika and kissed him.

"Give Pavlik my blessing," she said. "Father and mother are looking down upon us! They will pray for us and protect us. . . . Farewell my dear."

Nika followed the regiment, he stumbled and did not see the road under his feet. "Nothing matters now," he thought. "Korniloff is no more and we are doomed to perish!"

Olia went to Sister Valentine to tell her the decision she had taken.

"You are undertaking a noble deed," Sister Valentine said, unfastening the medicine-case. "Take these dressings and medicines," and she hastily tied the parcel up.

"And this," she said, giving Olia a small bottle, "is something in case you are threatened by the soldiers."

"Thank you," said Olia.

They parted simply, without any superfluous words, without tears. Everything was so insignificant, so small compared to what was taking place this lovely spring-night, with the new moon and the air so fragrant with the smell of the budding trees and of the damp soil.

Olia went along the deserted stanitsa. The inhabitants had hidden and the cottages could be seen behind the fences with their shutters tightly closed. Olia was the only one to hasten there, from where everyone was escaping. Many Cossacks were hurriedly loading their carts preparing to forsake the village, fearing a bloody revenge. Olia asked them to show her the Cossack Kravtchenko's house.

"Further, further down the street," Olia was told, "on the right-hand side, the second cottage from the end."

The new moon was already casting a bright light and the shadows of the budding trees lay on the ground. The street sloped down, the dogs she met did not bark, but ran away hiding behind the wickets.

A man with a bandaged head lay stretched across the road. It was a wounded man who being left behind, had shot himself. . . . Ermoloff was in the same circumstances.

Olia met some Cossacks who were carrying spades; they

were probably going to remove the bodies of those who had committed suicide.

"Where is Kravtchenko's house?" Olia inquired.

"Are you going to the wounded?" one of the Cossacks asked, stopping.

"Yes, I am going to the wounded."

"There are two left, the third succumbed, he took his life. May God help you. You will see a light in the windows of the second house from here."

Two planks forming a path-way led across a small garden. The branches of a lilac bush brushed Olia's cheeks with their fresh delicate buds, which were yet without perfume. Olia mounted the steps of the porch, opened the door and entered the room. A lamp was burning on the table. An old Cossack and an old woman were sitting before it drinking tea. Two men were lying on some straw, which had been placed on the floor along the walls. One of them was moaning piteously, with his eyes rolled up in his dark face. He was unconscious.

"Hurrah!" he shouted on hearing Olia's steps. "Hurrah! we will all die, but we shall seize it!"

The second was Ermoloff. His face was white and strikingly clean in these dirty surroundings. A big soft pillow was placed under his head. He gazed at Olia with widely opened eyes, full of suffering. He was conscious and recognized her.

"Olga Nikolaevna," he said, trying to raise his hands, but they dropped down helplessly upon his coat.

Olia noticed that his wrists were swollen and that the bones stood out sharply, as well as the thin arms which were bare up to the elbows.

"We have been forsaken," he said looking around.

"My dear," said Olia, "no one has forsaken you, everything will be all right."

"Is it so?" Ermoloff asked peering into Olia's very soul.

"It's true, my beloved. All will be as God wills it."

The Cossack and the woman were looking at Olia.

"Have you come to say good-bye, Sister?" the Cossack asked.

"There you see," the old man said, beginning to fuss ner-

vously. "It won't do, I tell you, old woman, it's not right. The Bolsheviks will come and then it won't do. We must hide them. Do you hear, old woman."

"But where shall we hide them?"

"Where! But in the barn, old woman. It's warm now and we will arrange for the Sister to be with them and we will hide them behind the things that are standing there. We'll bring them milk in the mornings and we will at least have saved Christian souls."

"Oh, old man, and if we have to answer for it."

"Shut up, shut up, mother, I tell you we will save them. Look at her, mother, she is young and beautiful and nevertheless she was not afraid for herself, she came here. And what are we mother? We are old. What do we need? And in this way we'll have saved our souls."

The whole night Olia and the old people worked arranging a corner for the wounded in the back-yard, behind the poultry and the sheds. They brought beds, mattresses, the old people willingly gave clean sheets and late at night, when the moon had set, the wounded were placed in the big barn, behind the thrashing machine and the ploughs.

Ermoloff had fever and his breathing was scarcely noticeable. The other wounded, a thirty-year-old Captain, tossed about moaning. He was continually delirious.

Olia, whose limbs ached with fatigue, came out of the barn. The air was fragrant and cool. The last stars were fading in the cold sky. A rosy mist was spreading over it. The air was full of the perfume of mint, of worm-wood and of black earth coming from the steppe. The trees stood motionless in the garden. The apple-trees were adorned like brides with delicate fluffy pink and white buds, casting a sweet penetrating perfume. Down below, in a green frame of winter-corn and willow-trees, flowed the wide blue ribbon of the Kuban. The birds sung lustily in the branches greeting the rising sun. The cock was shaking its feathers close by in the chicken-pen and crowing hoarsely. The cows could be heard breathing behind the wall and the bull snorted softly. All around were peace, wealth,

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

joy and wide expanse. Mother earth in expectation of the sun was fertile and full of powerful, vivifying sap.

A solitary shot sounded in the hollow on the outskirts of the stanitsa. . . . Then another one. . . . Tipsy voices were heard screaming and shouting. A dog, with its tail between its legs, came rushing past; it looked about frightened, unable to understand what was happening. The Bolshevik hordes were entering the village.

IV

SABLIN advanced stumbling over the roots of trees and stumps. He was pushed along from behind. Some of the men would get before him and he would feel their fetid breath on his face. His hands were caught hold of, his arms were pulled back and tied firmly with a handkerchief. Every moment Sablin expected to be shot at from the back and to be killed. Everything was being managed by a young soldier.

"Wait, comrades!" he shouted. "Wait! This is not a General who can be finished off at once. No, we will examine him and do the whole thing properly. Don't touch him! How dare you!" he shouted severely at a soldier with fierce, pale grey eyes, who was on the point of thrusting his bayonet into Sablin.

"Well, shall we watch over him? Shall we stand at attention before His Excellency?" asked the man, nevertheless drawing back and obeying the young soldier's words.

"It's not your business, comrade," said the young soldier, speaking with authority. "If I find it necessary you will stand at attention. General Sablin is my prey and I shall do with him whatever I see fit."

The thought that the young soldier wished to save him and was no enemy of his, but a well-wisher, came to Sablin for a moment, but gave him no happiness. "How can I live after the blows and the insults? What is there to live for? They are Russian people, Russian soldiers whom I loved so well," thought Sablin. "This is the Russian Army which was all in all to me."

"Gently comrades! It was forbidden even at the time of the Tsar's régime to insult a prisoner, and now, when it's the peo-

TO RED FLAG

ple's authority you must show your discipline. We alone have the right to judge him and know what tortures he deserves."

"Oh, you Commissar," drawled the soldier with the angry eyes.

"Yes and not only a Commissar but also a member of the Cik,"* retorted the young soldier speaking with dignity. "I will let Trotzky know if you behave roughly."

"We don't care a pin for your Trotzky! He is a Jew and a traitor," rejoined the soldier with the pale eyes.

"Comrade, it is your lack of education and your proletarian origin which allows you to speak in this way and this is why I don't take any measures against you. But mind you, this is already counter-revolution."

"Stop, comrade," said the soldiers. "Why quarrel, don't you know that he is a Commissar."

"The same masters as before, but cads," hissed the soldier, leaving Sablin alone.

He moved away, threatening him with his fist from a distance.

"You just wait," here he used a vile Russian curse. "You just wait, you only let the General go, I shall lynch you with my own hands."

"Don't you worry, comrade!" said the young soldier, such an evil smile contorting his face that Sablin understood he would not only have to face death, but also horrible tortures, and he mentally began praying.

They took Sablin to the train and placed him in a car with his hands tied back. Armed soldiers got in with him. The same Red Guard managed everything. The train moved immediately reaching a big station in twenty minutes. There Sablin was led out and taken to a second class compartment. Four armed soldiers got in with him; two of them seated themselves near the window, the other two near the door. The commissar occupied the neighbouring compartment.

"I suppose, Mr. General," one of the soldiers of the escort said, looking at him, "it must be hard to sit with your hands

* Central Executive Committee.

tied back. Let me untie them. You won't run away, will you?"

"Do you believe," Sablin said looking the soldier straight in the face, "that I was capable of selling the position at the front for forty thousand roubles? Do you know me?"

"Yes I do. I served in your corps. We were all very fond of you."

"Then why should I run away? You understand yourself that it is only the man who has something to fear who runs away and why should the man who is innocent do so?"

"That's true," drawled the soldier. "But you don't know him . . . Korjikoff. . . ."

The blood left Sablin's face and he asked breathlessly—"Whom don't I know?"

"But the commissar . . . Korjikoff. . . . He is a terrible man. A demon. A few days ago he himself killed an officer. He noticed his shoulder-straps under his overcoat, came up to him, drew his revolver and killed him. He is a cruel man, Your Excellency. He is worse than a peasant, although he is of gentle blood. But what's wrong? Oh! how weak you are! Comrade, we ought to warm some tea for the General, see how weak he is!"

"It's the fatigue," his neighbour said, "and then also the agitation."

"And he probably hasn't eaten anything."

"Yes, we must feed him."

The soldiers placed the unconscious Sablin on the sofa and one of the men went to bring some boiling water and some bread.

Sablin travelled four days before he reached the north. He was in a semi-conscious condition. The men of the escort were relieved every day. They gave him tea and bread. Twice they brought him a thin, nasty soup. On the fifth day Sablin saw dimly through the half-frozen carriage windows the buildings of barracks, a canal under snow and he understood that he had been brought to Petersburg. He hadn't seen Korjikoff once during all these days.

"If I know who Korjikoff is," thought Sablin, "he probably

TO RED FLAG

does not know who I am and our relationship. If the red-haired socialist had told him the secret of his birth, he would have betrayed himself, and he did not say anything. . . . But then why had he not let the soldiers dispatch him 'to General Douchonin's staff' and why had he brought him to Petersburg?"

Sablin decided to be silent whatever might happen.

The train stopped at the Nikolaevsky station. It was about mid-day when Sablin was led out of the car and conducted through a dense crowd of soldiers and onlookers to the Znamensky square. A motor-car was awaiting them. Sablin was placed on the back seat, between two soldiers; several armed men stood on the steps of the car; Korjikoff sat down beside the chauffeur.

"What a dangerous animal they are conducting," thought Sablin. "How extravagant is the people's authority! At the time of the 'Tsarism' the criminal would have been led modestly by two escorts and now. . . ."

The car crossed the Lafonsky Square, entered a gate-way and drove in between immense piles of wood. A crowd of people in black coats was standing near the gate. They were armed with rifles of different makes and machine-gun belts were tied round them. An armed car, like a grey monster, was standing in the right side corner of the yard, a gun covered with snow looking out gloomily from its round turret.

A young man in a black cap, with dark hair falling down on to his brow, with a small moustache on a pale face, wearing a black student's coat, over which a richly decorated sword with a brand-new St. George's tassel was fastened, and armed with a revolver, approached the car and asked:

"Whom have you brought, comrade?"

"I am Commissar Korjikoff," the commissar answered proudly, getting out of the car. "I have brought General Sablin."

"You are expected Comrade," the young man said, bowing respectfully, and ran towards the high doors.

"Let them pass!" he shouted to the Red Guards, who were standing smoking at the doors.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The Smolny Institute swarmed with bustling men armed from head to foot. Armed workmen, sailors and soldiers were hurrying up and down the wide double stairs and were bustling in the colonnaded hall. Women with bobbed hair, the majority of them young, in short skirts and fur jackets, many of them with revolvers at their waists, sat before small tables on the landings surrounded by sailors and Red Guards, examining the permits. Others with anxious faces, were hastening along the passages, carrying scraps of paper and disappearing into rooms in which typewriters were sounding. Two soldiers, escorted by sailors, were carrying a big basket full of fresh hot loaves. All these people were busy and preoccupied, but at the same time they were gay. The word: "Comrade" rang all over the building and sounded naturally and easily.

Several soldiers passed Sablin carrying a young fellow all bruised and covered with blood. Sablin thought he was dead. No one heeded him. A well-dressed young girl with an intelligent face, Sablin thought she must surely belong to a good family, was sitting before a table on the first landing. She stopped Korjikoff asking:

"Your permit, Comrade! To whom are you going?"

"It's Comrade Korjikoff with the captured General Sablin," said the young man in black respectfully, stepping forward. "He is bringing him to Comrade Antonoff."

"Room 37, Comrade."

Korjikoff began mounting the stairs.

The Smolny Institute with its wide passages and class rooms opening out of them to the right and to the left, full of soldiers, workmen and sailors, who were hanging about the corridors and staircases, reminded Sablin of the University during the interval between the lectures.

It was dirty everywhere. Papers were scattered about all over the place and the smell of untidy lavatories infected the air. Slips of paper were stuck carelessly on the glass doors and over them were the former inscriptions in golden letters:

"Dormitory," "The VIth Class."

Two guards were standing before the ex-room of the school

TO RED FLAG

mistress. They were both sailors. One of them had served in the former navy; he was about thirty years old, with a thin yellow face. The other one was a lad of about fifteen years old; his military coat hung awkwardly on him; a sailor's cap with a black ribbon, much too large for him, was pulled over his eyes.

They admitted Korjikoff quite easily.

"Let the General stay here," said Korjikoff.

Sablin entered a spacious room. It was already occupied by people of different standing and appearance. The room was untidy: straw, mattresses, pillows, old padded coats and parcels were scattered about on the floor, lying in the corners and along the walls. The air was damp and cold; it was heavy with tobacco smoke, with the exhalations of uncleanly human bodies and it smelt of stale food. It was evident that people were living, eating and sleeping here and that the room was but seldom aired.

Pieces of black bread were lying on the table, a big tea-pot, enamel mugs and glasses, with a muddy beverage smelling of rotten leaves, stood upon it. Thirteen people occupied the room, twelve men and one woman. The majority had probably in days gone by, been well-dressed, but at present their clothes were creased and dusty from lying on the floor. The shirts were dirty and many of the men were without ties. The woman was in a padded green jacket, which evidently did not belong to her, but her hair was waved and her cheeks, which were burning feverishly, were powdered.

"Professor!" exclaimed a young man who was standing at the corner of the table. His clean-shaven face and his whole body was twitching nervously. "Will you introduce us to the General?"

The one who had been addressed as Professor was a neat looking old man, with well-groomed grey whiskers and with a thin wrinkled face. He was dressed in a black morning coat, a crumpled shirt; and his well-worn boots had holes in them.

"Mr. General! Your Excellency," said he, speaking in a weak, refined voice, tears coming to his eyes. "You have joined the

forgotten one's. Let us trust that with God's help you will also be forgotten, because . . ." he faltered.

"Professor, don't trouble the shadows of the dead," said the young man. "We were forty-four people here. We came at the time of the great October Revolution, when the proletariat had carried off its victory. We numbered four generals, a Grand Duke, who occupied the neighbouring room, three deputies of the Duma, six members of the Constituent Assembly, six cadets, five officers, four students, five women students and eight people of various callings. We were accused of holding counter-revolutionary opinions, of sympathizing with Kerensky and of assisting his forces. The generals, the officers and the cadets were executed, some were removed to the Prison Kresty, others to the Fortress and we were left here. Professor name the bourgeois."

The Professor, who had mastered his agitation, began speaking once more:

"Your Excellency, your being a General upset me. I was frightened for you. I can't approve capital punishment. I have fought against it all my life. I have written strong pamphlets against it, and when Tolstoy wrote his article: 'I can't be silent' I acquainted the students with it and suffered for it."

"Do you know, General?" said the lady, speaking in a deep contralto voice, "the Bolsheviks offered him the job of an executioner, to finish off the bourgeois."

The professor winced.

"Let us go on with our subject," exclaimed the young man.

"General, you behold people with shattered nerves," said the Professor, speaking again. "People who are ill. You have come, so to say, to a ward of madmen. The young man over there, who twitches continually, is Soldatoff, the famous painter of the old school, you have probably heard about him. They offered him the privilege of becoming a futurist and painting placards in the railway carriages which were to glorify the advantages of the Soviet rule. The lady is the well-known pianist—Podlesskaya,—they both lived on what they earned, on what their heads and their hands gave them, and now their fingers

are swollen with frost and their heads are benumbed by the cold of the cell."

"Sit down here, General, without further ceremony," said the lady. "I will give you some tea. You must be hungry and tired."

"Yes, I am tired," said Sablin startled by the sound of his own voice. It was so weak after the sleepless nights and the lack of food.

"Have some tea and then lie down and rest. We will dine afterwards. They don't feed us badly here, they even sometimes allow us meat; it is much better than in the Kresty. We will learn to know each other better later on. We are all of us decent people. In fact 'bourgeois!'"

Sablin sat down on the bench and was given a mug of tea.

After tea Sablin went into the next room, which had apparently been a lavatory of the smaller girls, judging by the washing-stands fixed low down. He put his coat on the asphalt floor, lay down upon it and soon sunk into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

At about eleven o'clock of the evening two Red Guards came to fetch Sablin.

"General Sablin, you are to be examined," shouted one of them.

"Farewell, dear General! God bless you!" said Mme. Podlesskaya.

Sablin rose and went out. The dinner, which had been really nourishing and plentiful, as well as the tea had strengthened him. His voice was stronger. His nerves were in a better condition. Sablin was conducted along a passage and led into a large room, probably a former class-room. It was devoid of furniture, a small table and a chair standing in the middle, a cupboard with old papers in one of the corners, were the only things in the room. The floor was dirty, covered with traces of muddy boots. A solitary lamp with a smoked shade was burning dimly over the table. The corners of the room disappeared in darkness. The cold winter night looked in through the big, many-paned windows. The sound of steps and the voices of people, who

never stopped bustling along the passages even at night, were vaguely heard. The Red Guards who had brought Sablin, stayed at the door while he came up to the table and sat down in the chair.

V

A QUARTER of an hour passed. A clock in the passage struck eleven. The Red Guards stood near the doors, leaning on their rifles and at times sighed heavily. They were ordinary Petersburg workmen with gloomy faces, one of them was clean-shaven, the other had a bristly red moustache.

A small man entered the room hastily. He had an ugly clean-shaven face; he was badly built, had long arms, like a monkey's and very short legs. He approached Sablin with determination and stopped beside the table. Sablin looked up at him.

"You are in our power, Your Excellency," he said. "We may do with you whatever we choose."

He stopped speaking, as if expecting Sablin to protest, but Sablin remained silent.

"Anything, anything we like, kill you if we want!" shouted the little fellow, pulling at his red curly hair. "But we may also pardon you, we may bring you to a height which you had not reached even at the time of the Tsar's Government. It's true that you did what you liked then, now you will have to serve us and we will watch closely that you do not betray us. We won't promise you not to hang you by mistake, but we will promise to execute you mercilessly if you betray us. You are accused, Your Excellency, of trying to get through to the Generals Alexseieff and Kaledin, so as to take part in the struggle which is being carried on against the authority of the Soviet. This accusation is so well founded, that any further inquiry is unnecessary."

"I don't deny it," said Sablin quietly, looking the small, badly built fellow over from head to foot. "I was going to join the Ataman of the Don Kaledin and to assist him in his sacred struggle for Russia's freedom."

"Well you see, you went quite uselessly. Ataman Kaledin

shot himself the 30th of January. He understood that he was going against the people's will, that he had been a tool in the hands of foreign capital and he committed suicide. The working Cossacks authority is established on the Don. Soviets are on the Don. Resistance is useless, Your Excellency. Ataman Doutoff is defeated and is surrounded at Orenburg, Alexseieff has fled from Rostoff. The entire nation has recognized the authority of the peoples' commissars, the only lawful authority after the Tsar's."

"You consider the authority of the Tsar a lawful one?"

"Absolutely. I served in His Majesty's secret police. But when the Emperor abdicated, Your Excellency, the Temporary Government was compelled to seize the authority. The only elected authority which is a lawful one is the Soviet's. No one recognized Prince Lvoff and even Kerensky, notwithstanding his great popularity with all the classes of society. Everyone acknowledged Lenin."

"Did you call me for an inquiry or for an accusation?" interrupted Sablin.

"Neither for one, nor for the other. I have been ordered to transmit you the flattering offer to join the revolutionary military soviet and to assist us by your experience as a specialist to form a people's Red Army."

"Are you a socialist?" said Sablin.

"Yes, we are Bolsheviks, we are Communists."

"Then what do you need an army for? The doctrine of socialism denies the army, discipline, chiefs."

"Quite right. But circumstances don't allow us to carry our doctrines out in full regularity. English and French capital have risen against us. They are forming numberless bands of white guards and the achievements of the revolution are in danger. We must render the whole nation capable of defence, we must militarize the country. We well know Your Excellency's talents. I am charged by the Soviet of the Peoples' Commissars and specially by the President of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Trotsky, to offer you a high military post in the people's Red Army. I don't know what post it is, but that's

a detail. Maybe that of Minister of War or Commander of the Front, but not a less important one."

"May I see Comrade Trotsky?" Sablin asked.

"What for?"

"To strike him in the face for his vile offer!" exclaimed Sablin in such a thundering voice that the guard woke up with a start.

"Oh, Your Excellency, Your Excellency!" said the little man shaking his head. "I am the more sorry for you as I have heard so much that is said in your favour." A handsome sailor entered the room. He was very tall, well built, muscular and strong. His black hair waved naturally and a few curls fell on to his forehead and on to his brows. His large eyes looked straight before them. He wore a black tunic of the guard, without shoulder-straps and trousers tucked into smart boots. His broad, handsome face was bold and daring. He approached the little man, saying: "Well, comrade Andrei. Have you convinced the General?"

The other one shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. General," said the sailor, and Sablin could feel the smell of good wine. "Agree without hesitating. In the first place, there is the ideal: the entire authority to the Soviets, to the Russian people. It also means: entire—undivided! The Jews won't always govern us, a day will come when we will take the upper-hand. And besides I must tell you that I have much success among women. And we would procure you such lovely proletarian girls! The army will be a real one; blows will be permitted and all the rest as long as it is not counter-revolutionary. Yes, Mr. General, I highly recommend you to agree!"

"I will go and report your decision to the Soviet," said the little man. "You have not changed your mind?"

"Oh, Mr. General—change it. I am sorry for you. There will be but one choice left; either backwards or facewards, but any way to the wall! . . . The choicest elements of Russia are perishing. All through sheer obstinacy."

"I have given you my answer," muttered Sablin, setting his teeth.

"All right, I will report."

The little fellow went out together with the sailor.

Sablin began pacing the room. He stopped at the window. It looked out on a garden; old limes and oaks, covered with hoar-frost extended their crooked, black branches powdered with snow. Deep snow-drifts lay in it. The lights in the small windows of the houses on the Ohta twinkled dimly, and on the other shore, beyond the wall with its stone pavilions, stretched the white Neva.

"If I were to smash the window and throw myself out onto the snow there might be a chance of not being killed, but what of it," thought Sablin. "A wild chase, once more yells, shots, blows and insults! . . . Christ suffered and he bade us do the same." Sablin remembered the lessons of his old nurse and turned away from the window.

Sounds of heavy boots and the noise of rifles were heard in the passage. A detachment numbering about twenty sailors entered the room in a disorderly manner, and surrounded Sablin. A red-haired Jew followed them hastily. He was in a military tunic and top-boots. He carried himself very straight and his head was thrown back. His little beard stuck out forward and he wore spectacles on his thin nose.

"General Sablin," he said in a tone of authority. "You refuse to place your knowledge and your experience at our service. It means you are not sufficiently ripe yet. Hunger will teach you. When you will have been selling newspapers in the streets, when you will have served as a porter, when you will have visited every bank seeking for a penny-worth employment, when you will know misery—then it will be easier to deal with you. To the Petropavlovskaya Fortress! To the Troubetskoy Bastion! Until further orders!" he shouted angrily. And before Sablin had time to say anything the Jew had left the room with quick firm steps.

The same night Sablin was removed in a motor lorry to the Petropavlovskaya Fortress and cast into solitary confinement in a small, two-storied house situated behind the mint.

VI

At the beginning of his imprisonment Sablin expected his death warrant every hour. He listened to the steps sounding in the passage and prayed God to grant him the strength to face death bravely. At night the smallest noise would make him start. He drove away sleep and walked up and down his cell. The small barred window was faintly visible. The noise would cease and not one single sound of the outer world penetrated into the cell. Sablin pined tediously until the morning. He thought he heard shots, the noise of motor-cars, shrieks—and the minutes dragged like hours. The pale dawn came at last, the lamp was extinguished, a bluish light stole through the window, bitter cold stiffened the limbs of the weary body. No one came to fetch Sablin. He continued to live. Days and weeks passed in this manner.

Sablin often thought how he had gazed at this very fortress from the windows of the Winter Palace's Hall and dreamed of ghosts coming out of it. He had strolled with Marousia along the quay opposite and she had been indignant and had pitied those who were cast in its dungeons. Sablin remembered what he had read and what Marousia had told him of the last hours of the prisoners who were sentenced to death. How little it resembled this which was happening to him. Then there had been a trial, followed by a verdict, announced with certain pompousness. The criminal knew that he would be executed. He could hope to be pardoned but this hope was but a feeble one. Now there were no trials, verdicts existed no longer and Sablin could only suppose that he was doomed to die. In former times the man who had been sentenced was surrounded to a certain degree by comfort. He was decently fed, he was given books and the Bible. Before the execution the priest visited him and he was hung after a great many formalities had been strictly followed, which were certainly painful for the criminal. Still the ceremony of execution was not devoid of a certain degree of Christian Charity. All, from gaolers to executioner, the priest, the prosecutor, the officer in command of the sentries

were kind to the condemned man. They executed the criminal without anger and hatred, fulfilling their duty. The sentries stood silently at the cell's door and did not insult and poison the condemned man's last moments. The criminal could not but feel that these people had personally nothing against him, the law had condemned him and the Sovereign alone could pardon him. The entire burden of authority reposed on the Sovereign. Perhaps it was out of the intricate experiences of these victims sentenced to death and deserted in literature that a feeling of hatred developed and grew in certain circles of the Russian public against the Monarch and the Tsar's authority.

Silence reigned in the criminal's cell. His food was delivered at regular hours, the prosecutor listened to what he had to say on definite days, and a priest visited him. There was the horror of solitary confinement, which sometimes deprived the prisoners of their reason, but there was not that which Sablin experienced.

He did not know whether he was in solitary confinement or was simply living in the Fortress. All depended on the guard, on the soldiers. At times the door of his cell would be thrown open and soldiers of the guard would rush in. They would insult him roughly and curse.

"You damned bourgeois! You won't cast off your fine manners, you scoundrel! Wait a moment, we'll finish you off!" They would yell at him, they would aim at Sablin, they would misbehave themselves in his cell and then the entire, noisy throng would leave him alone. There was no one to whom to complain and it was also perfectly useless.

And on the following day—the doors of the cells were opened and all the prisoners were allowed to assemble, to become acquainted; they conversed freely, scolding the authority of the Soviets and the soldiers would join them.

Besides Sablin, was imprisoned with him in the same building an old General aide-de-camp of the Tsar. He had become quite childish from all he had lived through. He longed to write his reminiscences. There was also a member of the State Duma, a fidgety, nervous individual, certain of being liberated.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"The most important thing, gentlemen," he said, "is to remain fit under these conditions. Physical exercise is absolutely necessary."

He heated all the stoves of their building, swept the floors in the cells and the passages and did all the heavy work. He was old and weak and dropped from fatigue.

"That's nothing," he would say. "That's only my body. But my spirit is strong. I can still spit all my hatred into the Jews' and violators' mugs."

A maid of honour of the Empress occupied one of the cells. She was sick and knelt in prayer for long hours at a time never coming out of her cell even when her door was opened.

Scarcely any news arrived from outside. They only knew what the sentries told them. The soldiers spoke of the war in the interior of the country, of the victories over Koltchak, over the Cossacks of the Don and over Denikin. But the fact that the sites of the victories were drawing always nearer Moscow made one think that they were not so important. But one spoke more of food rations, of bread, of speculation, of boots and of overcoats.

The following day freedom would come to an end. The new guard was exceptionally severe, threatened to shoot the prisoners, rapped the floor with the rifles; and dead silence would reign in the prison.

The food was very poor. At times they received no food at all, at others an evil smelling grey soup would be brought and a yellow tepid beverage, bearing the name of tea.

The body melted from such food. Terrestrial thoughts and desires vanished. The first day's hunger made Sablin think about nourishment; he remembered the luxurious meals in his mess and at his home; he pictured to himself the table covered with different kinds of vodka, with zakouska, the big pies filled with fish, the varieties of soups and meats; then he ceased thinking about food and it all dropped away. He was happy to feel that he did not lose his nerve, that his soul was strengthened by the knowledge of its everlasting life and his forthcoming death did not frighten him.

TO RED FLAG

At night Sablin frequently heard the noise of a motor lorry. People would fill the passages, lamps would flare up, abuses, implorations and moans were heard. Screams of despair filled the air, someone was being brought, someone was being led away, a car throbbed noisily and it seemed, or maybe it really was so, that sharp piercing volleys could be heard above the noise of the motor.

Next day the soldier fulfilling the duties of jailor, on bringing the bread and jug of water, would say sorrowfully: "Yesterday twenty-seven people were executed."

One night a barefooted man, wearing nothing but his underwear was thrust into Sablin's cell.

"Stay here, meanwhile," said the soldier, pushing him in.

He was a youth, with a pale, intelligent face and large eyes. He was trembling all over. The cell was cold and damp and he had nothing besides his underwear. Sablin threw his coat over him and put his arms around him to warm and quiet him.

This unexpected caress totally upset the young man and he began sobbing.

"Save me, save me!" he said, pressing Sablin's hands. "They will kill me! I know it, I know it. I have been taken because I wanted to escape. I have been charged with desertion. Save me. My mother will go mad if she knows it."

He mentioned a well-known name of the aristocracy.

"My mother is in the Crimea, she is expecting me. . . . Save me. . . . I will do everything, everything . . . if only I could live. Do you understand. . . . I am ready to bow to them. Oh! If only I could live—live. . . . I have a fiancée! Save me. . . ."

The door of the cell was opened and a soldier called out the young man's name.

He pressed against Sablin.

"Well be quick. We have no time to fuss with such as you! Hurry to the wall!" shouted the soldier and suddenly the young man rose, stepping awkwardly with his bare feet on the stone floor, and obediently complied with the soldier's orders. There was something so ghastly in the movements of this young body

clad in white, moving across the cell, in the faded eyes, in the humble obedience to the call, something recalling the pitiful submissiveness of an animal, that Sablin never forgot and continually dreamt of the young man dressed in white, leaving the cell with bowed head.

Since the autumn of 1918, Sablin's cell had been frequently in charge of a man with intelligent, thoughtful eyes and a high forehead. His clean-shaven face was thin and nervous. His eyes penetrated to the depths of the very soul and he was subject to two different frames of mind. One, when he would sit in a corner, perfectly silent for several hours at a time, moaning gently, the other one of great excitement—then he spoke, continually gesticulating and relating past events. He used to come to Sablin's cell and sit on a stool in a corner for several hours either silent or talking volubly.

Their acquaintance had begun on one of his visits to Sablin's cell, on a day when he had obtained the permission to shave and have his hair cut. After that Sablin was sitting on his bed, feeling fresh and clean, lost in thought.

The man on duty entered the cell accompanied by the sentry, glanced at Sablin and having said :

"What a typical bourgeois" went out of his room. An hour later he came in once more and sat down on the stool opposite Sablin. He sat with his back to the high window with Sablin facing him.

"You were not offended?" said he.

Sablin was silent.

"You don't answer me? I am a commissar and a member of the Extraordinary Commission for fighting the Counter-Revolution! . . . But on the whole it does not matter, I am just such a bourgeois as you are. You attracted my attention, because you are insulted and mocked at by the comrades, probably you are sentenced to death, you are not fed, you are devoured by lice and nevertheless you remain a gentleman. You are a born gentleman and you will probably die as a gentleman. And they—although super-men, are nothing but cads. You are silent? Well don't speak, don't speak. I quite understand, you

loathe speaking to me. The more so as I am an educated man. I am a doctor of philosophy. Do you know, that my profession is law; I have been a prosecutor and particularly I have studied the question of criminal punishment. Was it moral or immoral? Admissible or inadmissible? and if yes, then how was it to be carried out?

"Well at first I came to the conclusion that naturally it was inadmissible. And I was extremely puzzled and fussed about it. Do you remember Andreieff's 'The Seven Men Who Were Hung'—a fine subject. Don't you think so? Well, later on I read his 'The Governor.' I understood that it is a case of war. If they were not hung, they would kill him. How could one speak of abolishing capital punishment? Then came the war and all the rest of it and later Lenin seized the authority. I had edited a paper with him once, so since then we are friends. He has a brain! Believe me, he is a genius. Every word of his is a revelation. And I must own that the question of criminal punishment worried me. How could freedom and all the rest, individual liberty and criminal punishment go together.

"So I went to see him. He received me, listened attentively to what I had to say and then told me: 'But, comrade, criminal punishment does not exist in reality.' How not. . . . And the executions? And the tortures? But Lenin smiled his gay smile and said: 'You don't understand. Criminal punishment is a rite. It's torture, it's agony. Trial, prosecutors, priests, hangmen—it is even said that in former times the executioners were dressed in red shirts and red caps—there is a flavour of inquisition about it. This exists no longer. But, understand, we don't want certain people and they must be removed. Study our way of governing and you will see that criminal punishment is abolished.' I was appointed to the Extraordinary Commission. What a change in my way of living! I had been feeding in communistic eating-rooms, eating horrid fish soup, and bread made of peelings of potatoes, and now: I have my own cook and she turned out to be an aristocrat; I have wine on my table and bread. Yesterday we ate ice cream. My wife and my children are pleased."

He stopped speaking, his animation had vanished and he added in a listless voice: "You are listening and think that I have come here to make you betray yourself and then denounce you. Well, you are right. Everything is carried on here in this way. It is the first time that I speak frankly. Because even at home though you eat ice cream and in the evenings play cards, you can't tell your thoughts to your wife or your son, because they may betray you. The position is awful. I don't know whether you will understand it?"

He went out, but came back five minutes later excited and animated.

"You attract me. I looked into your large, grey eyes and understood that you are a true bourgeois—you won't betray me, won't denounce me for a piece of fish or for a considerate word of the commissar; and although my cook is an aristocrat she is quite ready to kiss my hands, she is broken down nervously and is hysterical. She is mad about men and is ready to betray at any moment for a word of love. I know you would like to kick me out, but dare not do so."

"It is not that I dare not throw you out, but that I can't," Sablin said. "In any case you will refuse to obey me."

"Well, and maybe I should obey you. I am a considerate man," the commissar answered.

"The subject you have touched upon interests me and has always interested me," Sablin said.

"Criminal punishment! Well, I should say so! I understood the whole thing in the Extraordinary Commission. Have you ever been in a slaughter house? It is a horrible sight, but it revolts no one. Young girls of refined society even go there to drink hot blood, which is supposed to cure anaemia. The slaughterer is considered a decent man and no one shrinks from giving him the hand. His work is considered unpleasant, but necessary and he most decidedly is not an executioner. Well, anyhow, roast beef, beef steaks and the like are worth something. So Lenin ordered that the same thing should be applied to human beings. There must be no sentimentality about it. If you like, there is something of the Talmud in this

conception. In the Hebrew's opinion the Gentile is not a human being but an animal, so Lenin gave us, the Extraordinary Commission, directions that all the former bourgeois nonsense: the prosecutors, the trial, the priests, the hangmen must be done with. The individual must be simply removed, destroyed and there is an end of it. Then someone had the idea of utilizing the bodies. They decided to use the flesh of the criminals they had executed and can you imagine, the Chinese proved themselves to be masters in this work, and I used to go wishing to know how the thing was done.

"Picture to yourself a motor-garage on the Goročovaya with a concrete floor and with a spout in the corner near the wall. They were brought into the garage in the night. It was half dark. Two old lamps were burning dimly. The Red Guards stripped the prisoners naked. Clothes and underwear are as valuable now as the skin of an ox. They stood naked and shivering, many of them were so cold and felt so ashamed that they didn't think of death. Others were crying, crawling about on their knees, kissing the soldiers' hands. Then came an agent of the Tcheka.* And there are lovers of this kind of thing. Of course he was under the influence of some sort of narcotic, cocaine or ether. His eyes were shining, his nostrils palpitated. He was dressed in leather from head to foot. A black leather cap, called commissarka, with a big red star was on his head and he wore a leathern jacket. Trotsky himself wears one, then leathern breeches and high boots. A big revolver hung at his side, with ten or eight cartridges. His aspect was self-pleased and insolent."

"Place the bourgeois to the wall!" he shouted. "They may stand as they like, with their faces or with their backs towards it. I don't mind."

"And a row of trembling, naked bodies was lined along the wall. . . . Yes. . . . Have you seen the picture of the German painter Stook? . . . Or those of our amateur Decadents. . . . Oh, God! How hideous the human body is. Large, puffy

* Tcheka—the Extraordinary Commission.

stomachs, thin legs, long arms and all that dirty, smelling badly. The agent approached the group and shot some in the temple, others in the back or the head. He did it so quickly. . . . It was quite like the slaughter house."

The man ceased speaking and left the room once more.

"Excuse me," he said coming back, "but I can't relate anything without taking cocaine. I have had some more. That time I stayed to the very end studying the new methods. And you know, Lenin's insolence and intelligence are amazing. Formerly at the time of the guillotine, the gibbet and the executioners—there were heroes. Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette were heroes. Rissakoff and Geliaboff and Lieutenant Schmidt were also heroes—their bodies were searched for, honoured, civil funerals were organized. Now there are no more heroes either of the revolution or of the counter-revolution, merely cattle for slaughter. I believe they finished off all the thirty prisoners in five minutes time. And it was then that Chinese came and began carving the bodies of the dead. They worked just like butchers. They chopped off the heads, the arms, the legs, disembowelled the stomachs, put everything in iron boxes, then began cutting the remains into pieces. I watched them work. The pieces of flesh looked like ordinary meat. They took it to the Zoo to feed the beasts. Is it not clever? The complete destruction of the individual. The Government of the Tsar hung Kaliaieff, shot Schmidt, but their memory lived, and here try and find out, who or how many were executed?

"I came out of the garage. It was a pale Petersburg summer morning. I was born in the city and I love the melancholy white nights, the pale sky behind the steeple of the Admiralty and the fresh odour of the royal Neva. You can't think of another term than royal, although it is counter-revolutionary. Well, I came out into the street and there were five or six women standing about, some of them old, others young.

"Mr. Commissar!" they cried. "We know that all is over. Give us the bodies! Give them, that we may bury them. I am a mother. . . . I a wife. . . . I a sister. . . . I a daugh-

TO RED FLAG

ter. . . !" It was awful! . . . Lenin has planned the whole thing wonderfully. Go and get a hero's body out of a panther's or hyena's stomach? Well, now you see the difference there is between the imperial Christian system and our communistic one?

"I heard that in the days of famine the Chinese used to sell this flesh in the markets. And now I never eat meat. The sight alone makes me sick. I abhor the smell of it. But I cannot help approving the system. It is a complete annihilation of the personality. They are cattle and not human beings. . . . Forgive me, for having fatigued you but I have eased my soul. I fear to speak frankly at home. I have a son, Arkashka. He is fifteen years old. He delivered his cousin, a cadet, to the Tcheka and told them that he was hiding at his aunt's. He did it for a box of old sweets. I suppose he would not shrink from betraying me also. He grows up in the new ideas, which consider humanity as cattle. . . . The beggar is waiting for the new crematorium to be finished; he wants to see through the glass how the bodies are consumed, 'I know father,' he tells me, 'that there is nothing, neither God, nor soul; the State has invented it all to keep the people in darkness.' Eh, what do you say of such a young animal? He would betray his father quite easily. He belongs to the present generation. He worships Lenin. Excuse me for telling you all this, but I see you are a man of the past, a real gentleman. You won't betray me, and I had to give vent to my feelings and thoughts."

The commissar, who at times came to see him, the Red Guards, the old General aide-de-camp and the other prisoners, all seemed unreal to Sablin, to be visions of a terrible nightmare. Real life could not admit of such faces and such stories. The commissar, with his shattered nerves, saturated with cocaine, was not sane. He lived plunged in his visions, which were horrible, bloody dreams. Sometimes he brought Sablin newspapers. But it was unpleasant to read the illiterate articles of the "News" and the "Red Paper." Sablin asked for a Bible and for books, but the commissar only shook his head saying: "That's impossible. You understand if I allow it, I myself

may be stood against the wall. The prisons have outlived their time, together with the bourgeoisie. My chief, Dzerjinsky has said: 'The proletariat does not need four walls, it will know how to manage with one.' But probably there will soon be a change for the better in your fate."

And it really was so: with the beginning of winter Sablin received a bigger ration of bread, meat-soup, and a barber was admitted once a week into his cell. He was given clean underwear a mattress and a quilt and he received a big parcel of books from an unknown quarter. They were all on military subjects. Bonch-Brouevitch's tactics, military administration and the army regulations. A large envelope was placed in one of the books. It bore no inscription but proved that someone was thinking of Sablin outside. The parcel contained money and a letter from Tania. It was an old one. The parcel had been lying about for a long time, it was covered with mildew and the inscription in pencil was quite faded. Sablin could not make it out. He opened the parcel and took out several sheets of paper, covered with his beloved daughter's delicate handwriting. The top of the first page was marked with a cross with eight ends and under it stood the following words: "The Lord has willed to put an end to the lives of the Saintly Imperial Sufferers in the night of July the 4th, 1918."

The letter went on to tell at length the story of the months of mistreatment and the final butchery. The last words were:

"Papa, I pray for you and I think about you. I have no one and nothing besides you!

Your Tania."

VII

ONE dark night in the middle of the winter Sablin was awakened by a detachment of sailors headed by a youthful commissar. He did not know exactly when this happened, because all his efforts to mark the days and the dates had been useless.

"We have come to invite you to a new lodging," the commissar told him.

Sablin was familiar with the particular humour and wit of

Soviet officials, who invented all kinds of different names for capital punishment and he thought that they had come to execute him. He began to dress, hastening involuntarily.

"Don't hurry comrade, we will wait for you," said the young man lighting a cigarette. "We have been ordered to bring you to the Gogol street, to your own apartment."

Sablin did not believe the commissar. He put on his creased shabby overcoat and went out surrounded by the sailors. The frosty air dazed him. His feet were freezing in his old boots. He drew a full breath and not having been out so long it made him feel giddy. He lifted his head: the stars were shining brightly in the dark sky and the moon was visible behind the Cathedral. How lovely life was!

A motor-car stood waiting before the door. Sablin was placed on the back-seat and the commissar sat down beside him, the sailors placed themselves on the steps of the car, which drove out of the fortress, jolting over the stones.

They turned on to the Troitsky bridge and Sablin beheld the Neva. The lamps were not burning on the bridge, nor in the rest of the town, which was plunged in darkness. There was no light in the windows of the palaces and of the houses along the quay and the other shore stood out in a dark line against the clear sky and the snow-covered Neva. The bridge was empty, neither carriages, cars nor foot-passengers were to be seen and there was also no militia, police or sentry of any kind. The town seemed dead and forsaken. It was difficult to realize that this was the same Petersburg in which Sablin was born and had grown up, in which he had lived gaily for so many years and which he loved so dearly. He had left the city living a nervous busy life; he had rushed through it when patrols were guarding the streets, when bon-fires were lit at all the corners and the town lived an anxious life, full of fear and danger. It was only a year ago. The spring in which he had been arrested by the soldiers and had tried to escape through the forest with snow sinking softly under his feet was a thing of the past, as well as the summer, the coming of which he only knew by the heat in his cell and by the increased fetid odour of uncleanness

and decaying bodies which came from the yard, by the moaning of the wind at nights and by the splashing of the waves. Then winter came once more. Judging by the scarcity of the snow and by the black holes in the ice it was the beginning of winter.

How gay it had been in Petersburg in by-gone days on the Troitsky Bridge. It was animated even in the late hours of the night. . . . And now? A dead town lay before Sablin.

The car rolled along the quay passing before the sleeping palaces. Their doors were locked, their windows nailed up with planks, their panes having been broken and the palaces stood gloomy and bare. A sentry from an infantry regiment of the Red Army was walking up and down before the Winter Palace in which all the windows had also been smashed. It seemed as if the commissar's words were coming true: Sablin was really being taken home.

The car halted before the gates. The sailors knocked for a long time on the doors and an old man came out whom Sablin did not know. On seeing sailors he uncovered his grey head, bowing with servility.

"Sablin's apartment," the commissar said curtly.

"Please come in, comrades," the old man answered politely, speaking in a trembling voice and leading them up the back stairs.

Sablin thought that had he possessed his former strength he could have snatched the rifle from the sailor who was walking behind him and could have killed them all, and if it were his fate to die by the hand of his country-men he would at least die fighting. But he was so weak that he would probably not have been able to hold the rifle. His legs trembled and refused to obey him and there was a buzzing noise in his ears. He understood now why the youth, who had been pushed into his cell, had so submissively obeyed the soldier's call, although knowing he was going to certain death. Hunger had subjugated the human will. He implored the Lord to grant him the fortitude to die bravely, if he did not possess the strength for resistance.

Once more the sailors knocked at the door with the butt-ends

of their rifles, kicked it with their heavy boots and pulled the bell, making it ring without stopping. Avdotia Markovna, Petroff's wife, opened the door, lighting the room with the small lamp she was carrying. On seeing the sailors her hands began trembling so violently that she almost dropped the lamp. She was pale and thin, and her eyes had an expression of hunger and fear.

"We have brought the master," the commissar said. "Comrades clear the apartment. Which was the General's favourite room?"

"The study Your Excellency," Avdotia Markovna said trembling all over.

"Take us there, comrade Madam."

"It is occupied by a communist sailor," murmured Avdotia Markovna.

"We will send him away. He is not such a very important bird," the commissar said.

Avdotia Markovna went down the passage into the drawing-room. An individual was sleeping on the sofa rolled up in a carpet. The air was heavy and stuffy.

Sablin noticed that all the locks on the doors were broken and that many of the bronze door-handles were missing. He walked through his own apartment failing to recognize it. The furniture had been moved. Even at first sight, in the semi-darkness, Sablin saw that many things were missing.

The study-door was thrown open. In the flickering light Sablin felt turned upon himself the gaze of Vera Constantinovna's blue eyes. The picture was hanging in its former place. Two bodies were lying on his couch in a close embrace. The sound of voices made them turn and rise. They were young. A silly-looking lad and a young girl with fat freckled cheeks and small narrow eyes. She sat down on the edge of the couch, swinging her big, bare feet and frowning at the light. Here too the air was stuffy and a fetid odour of human perspiration and dirt filled the room.

"Well, comrades, you have enjoyed the master's bed sufficiently," the commissar said.

"But where must we go, comrade? It is by the orders of the Tcheka that we are here, and we can't be turned out like this in the middle of the night. We are communists," protested the man speaking in a hoarse voice and scratching himself vehemently.

"I know what I am about," answered the commissar quietly. "There are many other rooms here. Take your belongings and clear out. I have received positive orders from the military Revolutionary Soviet.

"But how so," the lad retorted. "How can such orders be giving that communists who are working people should be turned out of their beds in the middle of the night. We are not bourgeois, comrade."

"Shut up," the sailor said, "if not, I shall have soon settled with both you and your friend."

"Comrade Commissar," the girl cried, "I insist on not being insulted."

The commissar merely looked at her without speaking, but evidently she saw something so threatening in his gaze, that she hastily began to pull black silk stockings on her not particularly clean feet.

"And you, comrade Madam," the commissar said, turning to Avdotia Markovna, "put the lamp on the table, bring pillows, sheets and a quilt, prepare the wash-stand and everything necessary for the General to pass the night as he was used to do when at home. And in the morning you will give him his breakfast."

"But how shall I do it, Your Excellency," Avdotia Markovna said, "if the communists who were here have taken all the linen. She too is pulling on our young lady's stockings. When she came yesterday she had none, but they hunted about and took all they could lay hands on—shirts, stockings and everything I had time to hide."

"Comrade," said the commissar to a tall sailor, "go with the comrade Madam and take everything that is necessary for the night. And tell them that from tomorrow the two neighboring rooms will be occupied by the guard."

TO RED FLAG

The pair who had been sleeping on Sablin's couch went away leaving behind one pillow, tumbled sheets and a warm quilt. Avdotia Markovna came back carrying a somewhat cleaner pillow, another quilt and began making a bed for Sablin on the couch. The commissar, after having placed a sentry at the door of the study, wished Sablin a good night's rest and left the room.

Avdotia Markovna was silently tidying the wash-stand, shaking out the quilt and spreading the sheets. Sablin stood leaning against the book-shelf.

"Well, how are you?" Sablin asked. "How did you get on without me?"

Avdotia Markovna stopped, quilt in hand, tears gathering in her eyes and murmured in a scarcely audible voice:

"Don't ask me, Your Excellency. The walls have ears here. They have shot my beloved Senitchka, my husband. Tomorrow is the fortieth * day. And why? Who can tell?"

And she went out of the room hastily and unsteadily.

Sablin remained alone. He took the night-lamp and came up to the table. Here he had locked up the fatal diary and forgotten it when he had fled. The cabinet where he had kept his papers was empty. Sablin came up to the bookcase. Half the books were missing. Several volumes were standing about in disorder with bindings torn off. The portraits of his ancestors were still hanging to the right and to the left of Vera Constantinovna's picture. The light was too weak to see them distinctly, but here and there shimmered the whites of the eyes, the pale foreheads, the gold of the uniforms and the lace of the dresses.

Sablin tottered with fatigue. All was dark before his eyes. He undressed hurriedly and threw himself on to the couch. The rapture of being still alive, of not having been executed thrilled him, giving him comfort and peace and he dropped into a sound, dreamless sleep.

It was day when Sablin woke up. He had gotten warm under his two quilts and lay, failing to understand for a long time

* By the tenets of the Orthodox Church memorial services are held for the deceased on the ninth, twentieth and fortieth days.

where he was and how he had gotten here. At times he thought that maybe the events of the last few months, his escape from Petersburg, his arrest in the train, Smolny, the Petropavlovsk prison, Tania's letter with the fatal news of the cruel death of those he had loved so well—were but a painful, torturing nightmare. And now he had waked up, the wintry morning was looking in at his window and the ever beloved, dear Vera was smiling gently at him out of her frame.

Sleep had strengthened him, his head was clearer. Sablin noticed the absence of the carpets and of the fur rugs in his room. The parquet-floor was bare and soiled. Dust, husks of sun-flower seeds and dirt formed such a layer on some parts of the floor that it seemed to be covered with a coating of grey clay. . . . The locks, wrenched out of the table, had left big holes in the drawers and cabinets. The table was quite empty; the bronze-statuettes, the malachite writing-set had disappeared. The leather had been torn off the big, easy chair and it stood covered only with torn and shabby canvas. The atmosphere of the room was cold and heavy, cobwebs hung in all the corners.

No, everything had really happened: the revolution, the Bolsheviks, the soldiers' insults, Korjikoff, and the prison. What would happen now? He did not know. Why had they brought him home? Maybe there was another Government? Maybe the bloody fog had lifted from over Russia. Or were fresh tortures, fresh sufferings in store for him?

Sablin got up, washed and dressed. He approached the portrait. Somebody's sacrilegious hand had covered Vera Constantinovna's white, bridal dress with indecent, vile inscriptions in pencil and ink. Sablin sighed heavily and went to the window. A well-known view lay before him. A confectioner's sign used to hang on the opposite corner, but it was no longer there. The shop-windows were boarded up. Close by a long tail of waiting people were standing before a neighbouring door. Poorly clad individuals were trampling in the frost, but they were also laughing at something near by. A Red guard, carrying a rifle, was walking to and fro. An old gentleman, decently dressed, passed carrying a birch log. Two young girls, in good

fur jackets, were pulling a little sleigh with planks, which had belonged to some fence, and a dirty bag filled with something. Their faces were emaciated, but they were laughing. A wide street stretched to the right leading to a square which was slightly visible. Three men were standing before a house reading a paper posted on a wall.

A sledge drawn by a black, well-fed, but badly groomed trotter passed. It was occupied by a young man in a grey soldier's overcoat, wearing a red band with golden stars on his sleeve. He was holding a richly dressed woman by the waist. But the horse, the coachman, the young man and the woman resembled so little a real trotter, a real officer and a real woman that they seemed a caricature. Gazing at his own street Sablin began to understand the decadents and the futurists. He understood their crooked houses, their horses formed of corners and the broken lines with which they drew people. Petersburg life had ceased to be a reality—it had become a picture and a bad and vulgar one. In these ten months it had changed into a caricature of real life and its aspect awed Sablin.

Avdotia Markovna looked in and seeing that he was up brought him his tea, bread and sugar.

"The Commissar has sent it," she said. "He has ordered that everything should be given you. I brought it here. The communists and their damsels are in the dining-room, it would be unpleasant for you there."

Sablin was about to address her, but she was gone before he could do so, evidently fearing to speak with him.

Sablin caught himself on the thought that he felt no indignation at his apartment having been plundered; the fact that strange people were living in his rooms and were using his things as if they belonged to them did not shock him, but he realized that he experienced a material enjoyment in drinking good tea, with black bread and sugar. The space and the light of the dirty, cold room affected him pleasantly. The sight of the soiled picture of the woman he had loved did not revolt him, nor the fact of his private papers having been stolen out of his family archives.

"What is it?" he thought. "Is it the effect of prison and hunger? The subjugation of the will and of the spirit to the demands of the stomach and the body? And if I, who was strong, submitted to it and felt it, then what will become of those who are weak? They will lick the hand which beats them."

The commissar who had visited him in the Fortress had repeated to him some two weeks ago Trotsky's last bon mot: "We have obtained such complete submission of the bourgeoisie that if I ordered it to come tomorrow to the Tcheka on the Gorochovaya to be flogged, a long tail of bourgeois would form there."

It was the authority of hunger, the authority of the piece of bread. But he, Sablin, would not submit to it, however weak.

At six o'clock in the evening, the door of the study was opened and a tall, stout man came into the room. He was dressed in a soldier's military coat, lined with kangaroo fur, which he had kept on. The electric light had been turned on in the library as well as in the rest of the apartment and Sablin immediately recognized General Pestretzoff.

Sablin was sitting at his desk reading a book of Kouprin which he had found in his book-case.

He did not rise to meet his uninvited guest, but remained sitting, crossing his arms on his chest. Pestretzoff understood his gesture and said:

"Well, do as you like! We won't quarrel about it. When you have heard what I have to say, you will think differently of me. You have lived through a great deal, Sasha, and I too have suffered sufficiently. You know, Sasha, that I lived for two months selling the few belongings I possessed. Then I was deprived even of that and I spent six days in the streets selling the cakes Nina Nikolaevna baked. It was then that I was summoned to the Nicolas station. There, in a car of the Imperial train, I found my friends of the Academy—Bontch-Brouevitch and Baltisky. We spoke long and frankly. Remember—tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner. It is our misfortune that such as you don't understand them. Yes, you for instance, Sasha, were going to join Kaledin and Korniloff. What for?

It was in March, but listen my dear friend. . . . I don't know, Sasha . . . you always considered me a clever man. Yes, I know, I know, and I thought the same of you, but excuse me, I really can't understand one thing. You are silent, well don't speak and listen, listen."

"I am listening, Your Excellency, only because I can't throw you out of here. Strength is on your side," Sablin said in a weak voice.

"Oh, Sasha! Not so loud, not so loud, for God's sake," Pestretzoff said, waving his hand at him.

"Don't use God's name, you who have sold yourself to Satan!" Sablin said.

"Oh, dear! Always the same! . . . Well just wait one moment. You will speak differently when you have heard everything. The dreams of our ablest military academicians, who had always desired a universal military training of the people in the villages and schools, thereby achieving the transformation of the nation into an army numbering a hundred million have been realized by Trotsky. We are called, Sasha, to create the greatest army and with it to conquer the world. We need you! And how lucky it was that we found you in time and that you can work with us. I reported to Trotsky about you and he is pleased to entrust you with the organization of the Red cavalry."

Sablin got up. Oh, how weak he was! He cursed the months passed in confinement when he had fed on stale bread and water. His legs refused to carry him. He would have liked to choke the fat old man sitting on the coach in his warm coat. "Your Excellency," he exclaimed, "do you understand the vileness and dastardliness of your words and your actions? You help Lenin to form an army. . . . What for? For Russia? Oh, if they served Russia! If Russia were dear to them! They serve the Third International. They want a worldly revolution, the murder of the bourgeois and of the capitalists, the destruction of culture . . . the transformation of humanity into beasts and their surrender to them. And you, all of you, the better you organize the Red army, the more you employ your talents, your intellect, your will power, the more

harm will you bring to Russia. But listen. . . . You will never, never form a real army! You have robbed it of its Russian soul. . . . You have ruined the Russian soldier's faith, you have killed the Tsar, you are drowning your country in blood."

Sablin's voice failed him. He whispered the last words hoarsely. His strength forsook him. He sat down again in the big oak arm-chair, which he had bought at an exhibition of Russian hand-industry. He began speaking once more in a hoarse voice:

"Death. . . . I know that death awaits me. I know it, I am prepared for it. . . . Look around you. . . . It is you who have ruined everything. You have soiled it, spat upon it. You have covered beauty with vile inscriptions. You have pushed our wild and uncultured people to bloody deeds, to murder and to reckless plundering. You. . . . You. I will die soon, I know it, and I tell you—never, never will you demolish Russia! Mind you: Russia will rise and will deal you such a blow that nothing will be left of you. The fire of the people's wrath will consume you in this world, and you must know, Your Excellency, that if the Russian people are patient and humble, they are terribly cruel in their wrath and that they will stand up for their Russia! . . ."

A short silence reigned in the study. Pestretzoff did not answer Sablin's passionate speech, uttered in a weak, faltering voice. One could hear the communists scolding and quarreling behind the wall in the drawing-room. At last Pestretzoff rose and began speaking:

"Sasha," he said, and Sablin thought he could hear in his voice the warm tones of former years. "You spoke of death. . . . You can't know what Lenin is capable of, if he hears you still refuse to work with us. Don't forget: you are charged with attempting to join Korniloff who is struggling against the Republic of the Soviets. You did not deny it. This constitutes treason to the people and is punished with death. . . . In place of death I offer to have your apartment repaired, to give you back whatever will be possible of your former possessions, two full sets of equipment and. . . ."

"Silence! Your Excellency, don't take advantage of your strength and my weakness. I shall never betray my country. And if I could not die for Russia in the ranks of the valorous Volunteer Army—I am ready to die here."

"You will be tortured," whispered Pestretzoff. Sablin's face lit up.

"So much the better!" he said. "The more terrible my tortures and those of the generals and officers you martyrize in the Tchekas—the greater is our sacrifice. I will accept torture as a happiness and with it . . . glory! . . ."

"Sasha," whispered Pestretzoff, so faintly that his words were scarcely heard and his old chin trembled. "I am ordered to tell you that your daughter Tatiana is arrested and held in Moscow at the disposal of the Tcheka. If you consent she will be immediately delivered and given back to you in complete inviolability."

A groan of agony escaped Sablin. He looked up at Vera Constantinovna's picture. Her blue eyes gazed down at him unflinchingly and firmly. An iron will was visible in his wife's delicate beauty. She had sacrificed her own life and she would give her daughter's, but she would not commit a vile action. . . .

"Never!" murmured Sablin. "Go away . . . you . . . hound!"

Sablin caught hold of his head. What he saw made him tremble from head to foot. Pestretzoff rose slowly from the couch he was sitting on, bent his stiff knees and kneeling bowed before Sablin touching the floor with his forehead. Then rising heavily he went silently towards the door with shuffling, tottering steps.

Sablin was so bewildered that he remained sitting speechless in his arm-chair. Several minutes after Pestretzoff had gone the light was extinguished in the entire apartment.

The foreboding of something terrible—of death, and sufferings—weighed upon Sablin.

A petroleum lamp was brought into the study and Avdotia Markovna came in with his dinner.

"The Commissar has sent it," she said.

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The dinner had been warmed up, but even in former times it would have been considered good. It consisted of consommé with a piece of meat, fish with potatoes, a wing of roasted chicken and two sweet cakes. Evidently the commissar still considered the affair as concluded and did not admit of a refusal.

The lamp was taken away after dinner and Sablin remained in the dark library. He knew that this night he would be taken away and he was preparing himself in consequence. He lay down without undressing, so as to be spared the humiliation of putting on his clothes before the mocking guards. He went to sleep and immediately saw a terrible dream. He was looking at a sea of troubled water. It was slightly agitated and many of his friends and acquaintances were swimming in it and drowning. Sablin was also swimming, but his strength was forsaking him and he was sinking. When he was touching the bottom he saw that it was covered with guns, banners with the Double-headed Eagle and with bones. And suddenly among the skeletons he saw two corpses. They were fixed by the legs to iron balls and the water had lifted them. In one of them he recognized his dead son Kolia. He was dressed in the uniform of the Pages' Corps. The other was Tania's body in a white ball-dress. The water was gently swaying their bodies, lifting and lowering the black eyelashes on their greenish faces. The water was carrying the drowning Sablin towards them.

He woke up. The room was cold and damp. Sablin could not get warm even under his two quilts.

VIII

SUDDENLY the electricity flashed up in all the apartment. In the stillness of the night the communists had waked up and were whispering anxiously, packing their belongings. Avdotia Markovna with dishevelled hair, in an old, shabby dressing gown, thrust her head through the door saying in a frightened voice:

"A search will take place directly, Your Excellency."

TO RED FLAG

But Sablin understood that it was not a search, but that his last hour had struck.

Cars were throbbing in the street. Sablin went to the window. Red guards were getting out of a big lorry. A small Ford, lit up by the light of the car's lanterns, was standing behind it and was occupied by two men.

A few minutes later eight Red Guards entered Sablin's study. Four of them were young—about eighteen years of age, with stupid, insolent, clean-shaven faces. The fifth was a red-haired fellow with a freckled face. Sablin thought he had seen him before. His narrow eyes, like those of a pig, stared stupidly from under inflamed lids. The sixth was a healthy-looking peasant with a beardless face. His small, closely cut moustache did not harmonise with his fat cheeks and fleshy nose. He wore an expression of bestial joyfulness. The other two men were Chinese.

The whole lot of them rushed at Sablin, as if fearing that he might run away or attempt to resist them. They grabbed him and forced him into the oak arm-chair, where they tied him firmly by the legs, the arms and the waist. Someone, who was standing at the door gave the orders.

"Place him beside the bed!" he said. "Turn him towards the window! That's so!"

Sablin was seated opposite Vera Constantinovna's portrait.

"Now, all of you, go away. Vam-poo, prepare everything as you did in Charkoff. Do you understand? You are to wait in the next room," the voice said in the door-way.

The study was empty. Sablin was alone. Vera was gazing at him and against his will sweet memories rose in Sablin's mind.

A young man with brilliant grey eyes entered the room, walking with assurance. He was dressed in a leather suit. Two big revolvers hung at both sides of the yellow belt which kept his jacket in at the waist.

Sablin recognized Korjikoff.

And it was not only Korjikoff he recognized in the young man; he saw also himself. Yes, that is how he looked the first

years after his promotion when he had been at Gritzenko's party. It was his height and his small, thoroughbred hands, and the dignified bearing of the Sablins and their proud gait. So had he come up to Gritzenko shielding Zahar. . . .

Korjikoff's eyes glistened. He came up to the writing-table and leaned against it.

"My dear Papa!" he said smiling. "And now you see you are mine. But how they stood up for you in the Military Revolutionary Soviet. Trotsky himself was for you."

One could hear the chauffeurs moving in the street, interchanging brief sentences.

"Do you know me?" Korjikoff asked abruptly.

Sablin was silent.

Korjikoff took a pocket-book out of his pocket and produced two pictures. He brought them close to Sablin's face. One was Marousia's portrait, the other was Sablin in his youth.

"This is my father and my mother," said Korjikoff winking slyly. "And it is you who are my Papa. Do you feel any fatherly tenderness for me? Eh? Are you proud of me? You—when you were my age, were only a lieutenant of a regiment of the Guard; I am a commissar and a member of the Extraordinary Commission. That's a career, my dear Papa! I start life differently than you did. Now I look at you and I find you resemble me. I belong to you and nevertheless I have no feeling of any kind for you. Whether it is you or this table is the same to me."

Korjikoff lit a cigarette.

"Would you care to smoke?" he said coming up and thrusting his cigarette between Sablin's lips. Although Sablin wanted to smoke very badly, he spat the cigarette out.

"As you like," said Korjikoff. "Let us talk seriously. Does a human being possess a soul? You think he does and I think he does not. You consider that man has been created by God and I don't think it. Man is like a rabbit or a louse, he is born of mucus and there is nothing in him. You probably loved my mother and she adored you and I was born of your love—and nevertheless I don't even know you, so where is the soul? I

have a friend, the comrade Dora. She worked in the Odessa Tcheka. These questions interested her. 'If a human being has a soul,' said she, 'then where does it go after he is killed?' And this is what she did: she would sit down on a chair with legs wide apart and naked counter-revolutionaries were placed behind her. They were made to crawl under her chair on all fours and when a head appeared between her legs she would shoot, hitting the prisoner in the temple. Then she would watch for something to happen. Of course nothing ever did; there was only a bad smell. She used to settle thirty people a day and never once saw a soul. So evidently there is no God. . . ."

"You are silent," Korjikoff continued, smoking his cigarette. "You don't answer. Probably it is all highly unpleasant for you—I—your son, my mother's memory and all such rubbish. Yes . . . well, if you like we can alter everything. You can write a paper tonight in which you recognize me for your legitimate son. Yes, and I shall be called Victor Alexandrovitch Sablin. But why should it be Victor? I have not been christened. Surely you have names belonging to your family? I ought to be named after my grandfather—Nicholas Alexandrovitch. And you yourself shall consent to join the military revolutionary Soviet and the communist party. Brussiloff has placed his son in Boudeniy's cavalry and you shall take me into your Red cavalry. We will decorate you with the five-pointed star, Papa, you will have a Commander's band on your sleeve and see how fine you will be—General Sablin swearing fidelity to the Red flag of the Third International! That is a career Papa!"

Korjikoff glanced round at the portraits of his father's ancestors hanging on both sides of Vera Constantinovna's picture and spoke with the same pretty expression which had once been Marousia's.

"Your ancestors! How glad they will be! And you, Papa, need not be anxious. These ancestors don't exist. It's all rubbish. The traditions of a race! It's all rot. And what about this one—your last fancy? Rasputin's admirer? I read her diary, Papa, when your papers were brought to the Tcheka after

the search here. They interested me. Maybe it was the voice of the blood speaking in me; maybe it was the interest I had for my stepmother's case? a most curious story. And what were you thinking about? You a hero, a knight! Really, Papa, you are a funny body! In the old days you didn't dare thrash my uncle Lubovin for his insolence, then you gave me up to Victor Victorovitch; you did not even make Rasputin pay for his action. How so? She must have been beautiful. I love her style. In general I have your tastes, but I am bolder than you were. I have experienced and tasted everything. Well, of course, the present communistic régime allows greater possibilities.

"Well, Papa, what have you to say to my plan? Sablin father and son, both serving in the Red Army! How many soldiers and Cossacks will come to join you from Denikin's army! They will say that if Sablin has acknowledged the Workmen's and Peasants' authority then surely it must be the right, lawful power. Well, have you made up your mind? You have only to nod your head and everything will come of itself—women, wealth and dignities. Eh, Papa? I assure you, it's my son's love which is speaking in me. Something like the voice of the blood!"

Korjikoff stood, waiting for an answer. But Sablin was silent. His gaze fixed on Korjikoff expressed such suffering and hatred that Victor easily read his answer.

"Well," he said, getting up and going into the corner of the room. "Frankly I did not expect a different answer. Still—you and I are both Sablins. You serve under the Double-headed Eagle, I under the Red flag of the Third International. We both understand our duty thoroughly, but excuse me, I will have my last say. In case you reject our offer, besides yourself your daughter will also perish. I have decided to destroy her. I will deliver her to the Red Guards. You understand me—don't you? I will keep my word. Do you consent to join our party?"

"Never!" Sablin exclaimed.

"Very well," Korjikoff said coldly. "I will take my measures."

"You loved her," Korjikoff said. He placed himself behind Sablin and spoke into his ear. "Her memory is dear to you. You gaze at her picture and you think she is blessing you, your sufferings and your death. We will disfigure her."

Korjikoff took out his revolver.

"I am a crack shot. A black hole will replace her right, blue eye. And you, Papa, just try and imagine she is alive."

A shot sounded dully behind Sablin. And at the same moment the picture swung to one side and fell down with a crash. The old frame struck the floor and broke, while the picture itself rolled behind the cabinet which stood under it. It was so unexpected and uncanny that Korjikoff pressed his hands to his chest and big drops of perspiration stood out on Sablin's forehead.

"Well, what is there so wonderful!" Korjikoff exclaimed. "The bullet broke the cord and naturally the picture fell down. The frame was very old. It was cleverly done. And now we will shoot at Mamma!"

Korjikoff placed Marousia's picture on the cabinet.

"Your hand would surely have trembled," he said. "You would not have even dared fire at the picture of my mother. How could you? And for me it is the same as if . . ." and Korjikoff used a peasant's low curse.

"I will hit Mamma straight in the forehead," he said.

He fired, but the bullet hit half an inch higher than the picture!

"It is odd," Korjikoff said. "It has never happened that I should miss at seven paces. I can hit a ten copeck-piece and here. . . ! Well let us try again!"

But he missed once more. Sablin sat lost in thought. How they had changed and upset everything in Russia! Formerly had a shot been fired in a Petersburg apartment in this same Gogol street, it would have inevitably been followed by the appearance of the porter. The police would come and inquire: "Who had fired and why had it been done?" Sablin remem-

bered how after Lubovin had shot at him the whole regiment was in a turmoil. "Someone fired a shot in Lieutenant Sablin's lodging! . . ." It was an event. And now one shot followed another, the neighbouring rooms were full of communists and Red Guards and no one was interested in what was happening.

The repeated shots fired at Sablin's ear irritated him, but diverted him as well. He desired passionately that Korjikoff should not hit Marousia's picture. A son may not shoot even at the likeness of his mother. Was it mysticism? Let it be mysticism! But if he misses, then I am right and not he. It means he is not a rabbit born of mucus, but has an everlasting soul. A vicious, vile, but an everlasting one and in this case invisible threads stretch from him to the dead Marousia and reach Sablin. The seventh bullet struck quite close, but the picture did not stir.

"You wretch!" Korjikoff said. "But wait a moment. Don't you triumph, Papa. You just wait! Your turn will come! Hullo!" he shouted as Sablin had done in days gone by, "Hullo! Here, comrades!" The Red Guards rushed into the room.

"Vam-poo? Is it ready?" Korjikoff asked.

"Yes, everything is ready, comrade commissar," answered the Chinaman, his yellow face quite passionless.

"You will pull it off as you did in Charkoff?" Korjikoff asked.

The Chinese nodded his head. His narrow eyes were lifeless, his flat, greasy face looked like a mask.

"Drag the General into the kitchen. Comrades untie him," Korjikoff ordered.

The Red Guards rushed at Sablin. They were dirty and shabby. Their bodies smelt of perspiration and Sablin, weakened by everything that had taken place, almost fainted. Everything grew dark before his eyes. He saw the people but indistinctly. They dragged him across the rooms, into the kitchen, where the stove was burning brightly. A kettle full of boiling and bubbling water was standing upon it. Sablin was led up to the very edge of the stove. All around he saw eager, curious faces. The Red Guards looked alternately at Sablin and at

Korjikoff waiting for something new, which would stir their strong nerves. Three electric lamps lit the kitchen up brightly. The scared Avdotia Markovna was sitting on her bed, her head buried in her pillows.

"Am I like the General, comrades?" Korjikoff said.

"Yes, you are like him, his living image," answered the men.

"Well, comrades, he is my father. He dishonoured a workman's daughter in days gone by and then abandoned her. I was her son; he forsook me too. It all happened at the time when Russia was ruled by a Tsar and all was possible for the nobles. What does he deserve?"

"Death!" roared the voices.

Korjikoff smiled and taking Sablin's wrist lifted his hand.

"Comrades, do you see what hands this bourgeois has?" he inquired.

"Like a girl's," said a red-haired soldier, who was holding Sablin firmly round the body.

"With these very hands, His Excellency struck the soldiers' faces in honour of the Tsar and the capitalists," Korjikoff exclaimed in a shrill voice.

The communist lodgers and two women were pressing in the door-way, gradually pushing their way into the kitchen.

"Comrades," Korjikoff continued. "This General, not wishing to recognize the workmen's and peasants' authority disguised himself and made his way to Kaledin and Korniloff. I overtook him and brought him to be judged by the people, who condemned him to death."

"That's right!" the communists and the Red Guards shouted.

The kitchen was suddenly very quiet, and Sablin heard one of the women whisper: "Is he going to be finished off at once here? That's interesting!"

Sablin did not see pity in any of the faces which surrounded him. Avdotia Markovna was experiencing nothing but acute terror and she trembled with fever. One of the women, wrapped up in Tania's Orenburg shawl drew up nearer. Sablin recognized her. It was Pasha, Tania's personal maid. She

had grown fat and her red cheeks were puffed. She was bare-footed and Tania's lace petticoat hung above her knees.

"These gentlemen," Korjikoff said, speaking in the silenced room, "were in the habit of wearing white gloves. They despised us, the common people. For them we were but low animals."

Everything grew dark in Sablin's eyes. He no longer saw the crowd of onlookers, nor the kitchen. Close to him the water was bubbling in the kettle and the wood was crackling. Pasha's face stood out distinctly with black shadows under the eyes, a satisfied fat face, full of womanly eager curiosity. He saw the shawl on her shoulders, which he had so often seen wrapped round Tania.

"We will pull the General's white gloves off," he heard a voice say quite close to him. But the voice had a muffled sound and the faces were as if in a haze. The room was as hot as a Russian bath after a great quantity of steam has been let in, when the voices have a muffled sound and the words can scarcely be heard.

"Undress the General," Korjikoff ordered.

The Red Guards pulled off Sablin's coat, his trousers, his shoes and his socks. Sablin vaguely understood that the end was approaching, but his consciousness was numbed and his body had lost all sensibility. He was standing on the floor with bare feet, but he did not feel it.

The crowd of lodgers drew nearer.

"It means they will finish him off here," Pasha remarked. Her brown eyes were full of eagerness and curiosity.

"Vam-poo," Korjikoff said. "Go ahead!"

The Chinese pushed his way through the crowd and came up to Sablin. He took his arm from the Red Guard who had been holding him and gripped it firmly at the elbow with his sinewy-brown fingers. Then he did the same thing with Sablin's other hand. The blood stopped flowing to the finger-tips and the hands were benumbed.

Then by a quick and brisk motion the Chinaman put both Sablin's hands into the boiling water.

TO RED FLAG

The crowd breathed a heavy sigh. Sablin's face turned deathly pale. His eyes opened wide and big tears rolled down his cheeks. He slightly opened his mouth, but he uttered no groan. All eyes were fixed upon his face. The Chinaman alone looked into the kettle with a business-like air.

"Bourgoui! He did not even scream!" muttered the red-haired soldier with hatred. The younger men looked straight into Sablin's face and breathed heavily.

"Doesn't he feel anything?" said someone in the crowd.

"Oh, God," murmured Pasha.

It was intensely quiet. One could hear the people's heavy breathing. The water was bubbling in the kettle and Sablin's hands were getting whiter and whiter, gradually losing all life. The electric light burnt brilliantly as if for a festivity of some kind.

Korjikoff was looking admiringly at Sablin.

"These damned bourgeois know how to die," thought he.

"Hold them so!" the Chinese said to the red-haired soldier giving him Sablin's hands. He produced a knife. Drops of perspiration from the heat and the steam stood out on his greasy yellow face. Slowly, pressing hard on the knife, he cut the skin on Sablin's hand all around. Blood trickled from under the soldier's fingers and fell in big drops into the boiling water.

It was still quieter. Sablin no longer saw the crowd of soldiers encircling him. He continued standing firmly, but a throbbing noise filled his ears. Absurd ideas passed through his mind. His chin was trembling. He strained his will not to moan.

Having cut the skin, the Chinese turned it off most carefully and then took the hands gradually out of the boiling water so as to pull the skin off.

The crowd pressed still closer and keeping their breath the people watched the proceedings as a most curious experiment.

"Oh, God! They have pulled the skin off a living being," murmured Pasha.

She was so near to Sablin that he could feel the smell of the

perfumed ointment she used for her hair. The odour was most obnoxious to Sablin, but he did not see her face, nor his own hands.

"The fingers, the fingers!" Pasha whispered. "Oh, dear! How thin they are, you can see the bones. The nails have come off with the skin."

Sablin felt vaguely a sensation of cold in his hands and a sharp pain. They had been taken out of the boiling water.

Then he was hit in the face with something warm and wet, something that felt like leather and he heard Korjikoff's insolent laugh.

"I will put these gloves on, Papa, when I embrace my sister."

After that Sablin lost consciousness.

Sablin came back to his senses in the frosty air. He was being led barefooted over the snow. Two men were holding him under the arms, the third was pushing him on from behind. They were going along a street; Sablin saw the dark sky and a few stars overhead. The big stone houses were dark and gloomy, the snow struck him as being very white under his feet. His hands were sticking up straight before his face, but he did not recognize them. The black fingers were thrust asunder and they throbbed with a burning pain.

But Sablin was not astonished at being led in the night through the streets barefooted over the snow. He was following his own Gogol street. The strangest and oddest thought rose in his mind.

"One can easily catch cold in the winter without a coat," he thought. "The skin will probably never heal. My hands will have to be amputated. But what for, when I am going to be executed. And the risk of catching cold and my hands are nothing in comparison to death." And still he could not understand the meaning of death, that soon everything would be over. Vera had been carried away from this same street. It was a sunny day and the air was fragrant with the smell of the fir-branches with which the street had been strewn. He was following the coffin and just before him was a big wreath of madonna lilies and of roses. It had been sent by the Empress.

White and black ribbons were tied to it. The wind pulled them about. Kolia was walking beside him in a black uniform and a shako with white plumage. On his other side walked Tania dressed in deep mourning. They were both weeping.

Sablin did not cry. . . .

From here he had driven with Vera to listen to the Tsigans in a sledge drawn by a pair of trotters, covered with a big net. The frost bit his nose and ears.

The frost and the snow were different then.

Out of a hundred faces of relations and friends stood out for a moment Pestretzoff's face, but he too had become a stranger. Oh, Lord! Life was at an end. And no one knows anything! Pasha looked at him with curious eyes and hated him. The same Pasha, who, when he had come the first time from the front, had looked at him with the eyes of a woman ready to surrender herself. His tortures and his death were useless. None would know about them, none would see him. He probably had fever, he could not clearly understand what was happening with him and at times he no longer felt the acute pain in his hands.

They entered a gateway. Two motor-lorries were standing in the yard and the noise throbbed painfully in his head and his ears. His legs trembled and he could hardly stand. They descended into a cellar along dirty and slippery stairs. Small electric lamps hanging down on wires from the ceiling were burning dimly. A hideous odour of decaying blood filled the air and bodies of dead people in dirty underwear were lying about. Shots sounded dully.

A man dressed in leather came up to Sablin.

"Place him," he said.

Sablin was put to the wall. He was so weak that he leaned against it. It gave him an unpleasant sensation of cold through his underwear. He ceased to understand. A man dressed in black with a cap set on the back of his head approached him. A red star was fixed on to his creased cap. His motions were slow and listless. He seemed tired and breathed with difficulty,

as if after heavy work. His young beardless face was pale and his eyes glistened feverishly.

"Oh!" he said. "How they have mutilated him. . . . White Guard! . . ."

Sablin distinctly heard the words and they pleased him.

"Will you shoot him yourself, comrade?" asked the man in black. "I have enough of it and I'm deadily tired. No emotions today. Officers alone. No one implored for mercy, no one crawled on their knees, no one was terror-stricken. . . . It was most stale. . . ."

Sablin heard this with satisfaction. No one had implored, no one had crawled before them. Officers!

"And I too am an officer," he thought, lifting his head and pulling himself up.

Marousia's face appeared before him. But Sablin understood that it was not her's but Korjikoff's and he forced his eyes to express indifference and calmness.

"The Sablin's know how to die!" Korjikoff said, and Sablin felt on his temple the cold of the muzzle.

The lorries were throbbing outside, making a rumbling noise. All the bright life was concentrated in this small garage full of the smell of decaying blood, where the backs of the victims felt the damp cold of the brick walls and the bare feet slipped in bloody slime. Dead bodies were lying all around. Red Guards armed with rifles were crowding near the walls and two men clad in leather suits sauntered about in the midst of this chaos, giving themselves the airs of masters.

"And this is Russia," thought Sablin.

At dawn on a winter day Red Guards were loading dead bodies into lorries in the yard of the Extraordinary Commission.

They were bringing out naked corpses carrying them by the feet and by the heads and placing them in the lorries. Blood trickled up on the dirty snow.

"But this is General Sablin!" a tall handsome soldier remarked, lifting a dead body in underwear on the lorry.

"Did you know him?" asked the man who had brought the body.

"Certainly. He was a kind gentleman. It was with him we charged the German battery. A fine and brave officer."

"Look comrade, how they have mutilated him. The skin has been torn off his hands."

"Yes, they have been at him. It is a great pity. He was a fine gentleman."

"There are no more gentlemen!" the first soldier said severely. "What are you whimpering about. Don't you know where you are? Mind, you will yet be put to the wall yourself, if you are not careful."

The soldier sighed and was silent.

IX

THE political committee of Korjikoff's regiment is giving an evening party. The assembled guests are the officer in command of the regiment, several communists, two agents of the Tcheka, the members of the Extraordinary Commission for the struggle against counter-revolution, the Lett Gaiduk, Schlossberg and his usual companion—Jenny, also a member of the Tcheka, and two former society girls, Mimi Granilin and Baby Drantsoff, the mistresses of commissars.

Twenty people were assembled in Korjikoff's new apartment, which he had just furnished in the regimental barracks.

Notwithstanding the hot July evening all the windows of the apartment were closed. A nauseous smell of uncleanness comes from the Neva and the boulevards, which are quite empty and on which grass is growing between the stone-flags. Two shabby cars are standing waiting before the door; one is a town car for the girls, the other a touring car for the agents of the Tcheka, in case of their being summoned.

It is a warm, calm night. The Neva glistening in the silvery rays of the moon-light silently rolls her dark, cold waves. No fires of ships are to be seen and a low long torpedo-boat stands like a dark vision near the Nikolaevsky Bridge. The houses are dark and seem to be plunged in an everlasting sleep. A

sentry is pacing to and fro near the bridge to question passers-by, but there are none.

Korjikoff's apartment was furnished very peculiarly: pictures of old Russian "Boyars" and noble "Boyarini" * in dresses of ceremony, of Generals with stars and decorations, of statesmen in powdered wigs, are hanging in the big drawing-room. A long table decked for supper is standing under the bronze electric chandelier in which the lights are not burning. Heavy oak chairs and easy chairs, small chairs upholstered in faded blue silk are placed around it. Here also is a sofa and an oriental couch—an amalgam of dining-room, study and drawing-room furniture. Everything is costly, dirty and dusty. Korjikoff's study is in the next room. An immense writing table, damaged and with broken locks stands in the room with separate pieces of a costly malachite writing set scattered upon it. But it also is incomplete. One of the ink-stands is missing, a paw of the bronze bear is broken off. A few papers, several numbers of "The News" and a list of some kind are lying on the table. A large easy chair, a big sofa and two book-cases with smashed glasses in their doors and without books also stand in the room.

The supper-table is covered with a disorder of hors-d'oeuvres, various wines and dishes with roasted fowl and joints. The guests were in keeping with the surroundings. They too looked as if they had been collected and requisitioned from all over Russia and then mixed up all together. They were scattered about the room and ate in a disorderly way.

The master of the house is sitting at the head of the table in a deep blue easy chair. He is wearing the habitual, new, shining black leather jacket, decorated with red and golden emblems. It is unfastened and shows a red silk shirt, tucked into leather breeches; two revolvers are stuck in the belt. Korjikoff never parts with them. His young face, worn out with vice, cocaine and drink, is gloomy. He is visibly out of temper. He is in one of those heavy moods when everything is possible and when

* Russian nobility of old times.

TO RED FLAG

he dares everything. The commanding officer of the communist regiment, Pavel Goloub is sitting in an easy chair on his right hand. He is a powerfully built man of about forty-five, a former sergeant. He is bald, stout, muscular and strong. His florid face is covered with wrinkles from which peep out a pair of grey eyes always expressing servility. On Korjikoff's other hand sits the military specialist—Rachmatoff, an elderly cavalry Colonel, who has sold himself to the Third International. He is elegantly dressed in a black hussar tunic, with magenta breeches, the uniform of the former cavalry school.

He is sipping his champagne in the careless manner of a man used to it, and keeps his big, bright eyes fixed on the young communist who is sitting opposite him, and who is also a military specialist. It is the comrade Nikolai Polejaeff. He is elegantly attired in a new, well-fitting English military tunic, with red bands on the chest and red and golden stars embroidered on his sleeve. He is a hero of the Polish war—a rising star of the Red Army. Next to him Osetroff is busily engaged with the wing of a turkey. He has grown much thinner, but carries himself well and looks at Polejaeff with enamoured eyes. He is his idol of the moment and he is ready to follow him through fire and water.

The other guests—young men in Russian shirts with red bands across the chest, with red belts, in old uniforms, in lounge suits, are sitting some beside the table, others on the sofa. They have taken much wine and find it difficult to control their spirits, but they fear the master of the house and from time to time look at him anxiously.

Two Red guards in wide, badly fitting Russian shirts are carrying the tea round, carefully walking on tip-toe.

Mimi Granilin is sitting on a small chair near the window, beside a big vase of flowers, waving her fan, looking down at a handsome officer—the communist Osetroff. She is dressed in a costly embroidered silk frock, close-fitting and narrow, which shows her delicate legs.

Baby Drantsoff is lying on the couch. She is in the full bloom of her twenty-four years. Her head, with its classic profile,

with immense grey-blue eyes, high, white forehead, sallow complexion delicately pink and her dark hair, which she wears bobbed after the sovdep fashion is full of dignified grace. Her broad shoulders and generously exhibited, well developed bust are snow-white. Her close-fitting dress outlines her tall figure with broad hips and slender legs. Two years ago she had been outraged by a handsome sailor at an examination at the Tcheka and since then she has been morally unstrung. She had cast off all her education. To eat and drink, to enjoy herself, to loll in bed with strong men smelling of gun-powder and blood, who dare everything, to accept their presents: rings stained with blood, bracelets and brooches, coming from unknown sources, to hunt in other people's cup-boards and wardrobes and then shamelessly try on before the men underwear and dresses which did not belong to her—all this had become her life. Her body full of vitality longed for strong sensations and she became famous among the mistresses of commissars.

Schlossberg is lying on the couch beside her, embracing her. He is completely drunk and Baby hates the touch of his damp, cold hands. But she dares not send him away.

"Comrade," she whispers. "Do you know the comrade Polejaeff?"

"No and why?"

"I have been told that he is a peculiar communist, that he has never had to do with women."

"Well, and I suppose, Baby, that he is just the man for you."

"And why not. I suppose he must be interesting."

"I'll manage it."

"And what about comrade Korjikoff?"

"Oh, it's indifferent to him!"

"You doubt comrade that these are my ancestors?" Korjikoff was saying to Polejaeff looking straight at him with half closed eyes.

For two weeks Korjikoff had been feeling uncomfortable in the young officer's presence. A scythe had come across a stone, as a Russian proverb says. This young man, a perfect communist from every point of view, had come from the Polish

front with the highest and most brilliant testimonials given him by Touchatchevsky and Boudenniy. A special favourite of Trotsky's, he affects Korjikoff strangely. In this young man's presence he feels his will-power paralysed, this enrages him and he meets a cold mocking smile. The comrade Polejaeff tells him straight out things for which he ought to be shot on the spot, but Korjikoff is silent, smiling awkwardly. At the present moment everybody is drunk except Korjikoff and Polejaeff. Korjikoff wants to vex Polejaeff, to humiliate and crush him.

"If they were your ancestors you would surely know who they were," Polejaeff answered coldly and his icy calmness irritated Korjikoff. "You have brought them over here from General Sablin's flat and after having hung them without any taste or understanding have imagined that you have become their descendant."

"Sablin was my father," Korjikoff said quickly.

"I don't doubt it. That is why you bear the name of an executed Social-Revolutionary," Polejaeff said coldly.

"It is because I was born out of wedlock."

"But do you know what is marriage?" Polejaeff asked mockingly.

"The communists don't acknowledge marriage," Korjikoff said.

"Then why do you speak about it?"

Korjikoff rose and left Polejaeff. He was enraged.

"Waiters!" he shouted loudly.

A Red Guard ran up to him, standing at attention.

"Comrade, run to the squadron and order my singers and musicians. Quick!"

The Red Guard rushed to fulfill the political commissar's order.

"I have an orchestra for you, Mr. Commissar," the Commander of the regiment said, winking his eyes under their swollen red lids. "Like comrade Boudenniy's. Two accordions and a clarinet. But they play most wonderfully. You will hear them directly. And they know all the new songs, about Koltchak and the volunteers. They know the best there are."

"Well, we'll hear them," Korjikoff dropped the words negligently.

The musicians numbered five men. They had been fetched out of their beds and had come grubby, dishevelled and smelling badly. They were dressed in shabby tunics and breeches and their pale faces were stamped with sickness and lack of nourishment.

"You hounds!" Goloub shouted at them fiercely. "You couldn't tidy your hair—you scoundrels! You good for nothings. Be quick and tidy yourselves. Take care that I don't see you in this state again."

They went to the kitchen but did not look much better when they came back.

The accordion struck a shrill note, the clarinet joined in, then the other accordion, and a common, coarse melody filled the hall. The talking stopped.

A high, hoarse tenor voice rang out like a lament, to the accompaniment of the droning sounds of the accordions and the clarinet. It was hardly singing, but suggested rather the cries of the Jaroslav peasants who used to offer their wares in former days in the yards of town houses and villas. Then they sang one of the numerous vulgar songs brought on by the revolution.

"What's that," Polejaeff said when the musicians had finished the second song. "When I was out walking through the town today, I heard another melody. Give me the accordion, comrade."

Polejaeff looked around coolly and began singing a popular tune, mocking the communists and the commissars.

"That's a good one!" exclaimed Goloub. "That's well said: 'My husband is a commissar—I'm a speculator. . . .' That hits it."

"It's a White Guards' song!" said Korjikoff, scornfully. "Where did you get hold of it, comrade?"

"I heard it in the Petrocommune. Boys were singing it in the street on the 25th of October."

"Apparently the Tcheka has not visited it till now," remarked Gaiduk.

TO RED FLAG

"Wait a bit, it will get there," Korjikoff said grimly.

Everybody had grown silent. The agents Gaiduk and Schlossberg had approached Korjikoff, ready to catch hold of Polejaeff. Jenny was looking intently at Nika, a pale smile on her face. Baby Drantsoff had lifted herself up and was resting on her elbow gazing at him with admiration. A certain movement was also perceptible among the officers. "Oh!" exclaimed Goloub bitterly, his grey eyes filling with tears. Polejaeff alone remained perfectly calm. He went to the piano with quiet firm steps, opened it and tried it without sitting down.

"You there! Orchestra of Boudenniy!" he shouted imperatively. "Hush! Not a sound! Don't poison my Russian ear with rubbish invented by hooligans and counter-revolutionaries! I will sing."

He struck a powerful chord and his strong voice rung through the room:

"Pour me some wine.
My glass is empty,
When there's no wine, there is no song!
In wine is love,
And depth of passion.
The world is small for our revelry!"

"Eh, comrade," called Nika, interrupting his song, "give me a glass of wine!"

Korjikoff approached him with the stealthy steps of a cat.

"What are you thinking about," he hissed. "You seem to forget that I am the master here!"

"The master," Nika roared without turning round. "You are mad, comrade commissar; glory be to Lenin, we live in a communistic state and there is no property here. Comrade—give me some wine!"

The Red Guard came up with a bottle and a glass. Polejaeff deliberately emptied his glass without taking his eyes off Korjikoff and then turning once more to the piano began playing. Melodies of old Russian songs and Russian operas flowed from under his fingers, stirring vague memories. Polejaeff began

by a gay popular song; he played with gusto, smiling and winking, then he broke off abruptly and a melancholy slow melody sounded through the hall. Then he passed on to the opera "A Life for the Tsar," carefully, as if teasing, struck two chords of the Russian Anthem and immediately played the gay song "Vanka."

"Well, come along, comrades! You surely know it, why are you silent? Eh?"

And he began singing it himself.

Rachmatoff was the first to join him, then the younger people could resist no longer, even Goloub sang in his quivering old voice, tears rolling down his cheeks.

Everyone of the guests were singing. Korjikoff alone kept silent walking up and down the big room.

Polejaeff began playing the popular Russian song "Down the Mother Volga" and the chorus of guests took up the powerful Russian song without waiting to be asked.

"Boudenniy, sing correctly!" Polejaeff shouted from the piano.

The melody rose and spread. Korjikoff paced to and fro under his ancestors' pictures and he thought their eyes followed him. He smelt some cocaine, but it made him feel still worse.

He saw that not only his guests alone were singing but that all his ancestors in their pictures had opened their mouths and were singing the cursed Russian melody. He looked round. All the guests and all the waiters were also singing. The young Red guard, who had brought Polejaeff the wine, had put the bottle down and with wide-opened grey eyes was smiling happily and singing lustily in a strong voice.

"Oh, you scoundrel!" Korjikoff hissed and snatching his heavy revolver from his belt fired straight into the guard's open mouth.

The man choked and dropped down, hitting the back of his head heavily against the corner of the couch. The dark, thick blood oozed out of the black hole which had once been his mouth.

There was a commotion in the room. Gaiduk and Schlossberg ran up to Korjikoff.

"It's counter-revolution?" murmured Gaiduk.

"Yes," said Korjikoff proudly.

He was beside himself. He sniffed through distended nostrils the smell of blood and cold gun powder, looking at Baby Drantsoff with the savage eyes of a beast. She was sobbing, convulsed in hysterics on the couch. The guests had not stirred from their seats. The musicians were standing in one corner, ready to run away. Rachmatoff stood beside them, with a dull smile fixed on his face. Polejaeff alone continued sitting at the piano, looking by turns at Korjikoff and at the dead body. It was lying quite close to the couch with its head but a little lower than Baby's where she sobbed among the cushions.

Korjikoff in two strides was beside Baby. He bent over her and began taking her dress off with quick, adroit movements. She had calmed down and looked at him submissively. A minute later a beautiful nude woman lay beside the dead body.

Intense silence reigned in the room. The mind refused to grasp what was taking place: the dead body with its black sunken mouth, the big eyes which protruded out of their sockets, the white forehead with the dishevelled hair falling upon it, a black pool of blood shimmering in the electric light—while two bodies were writhing clasped in a voluptuous embrace above the dead. Baby's sighs were mixed with Korjikoff's heavy breathing. Mimi Granilin sat in an arm-chair with closed eyes. She had fainted; the Red guards watched Korjikoff with the dense avidity of beasts and licked their parched lips.

Polejaeff turned to the piano and began singing a sad tune in a muffled voice.

"Comrades, we must be going," Rachmatoff said.

Korjikoff did not keep them back. Polejaeff stopped playing and left the piano. Osetroff turned to go away. There was no one in the room besides Korjikoff and Polejaeff.

"Comrade, I shall ask you to stay," Korjikoff said. Polejaeff glanced at him as if he were looking into space and said in a low voice:

"The law says: 'And slay the worthiest Gentile!' And is this one," asked Nika turning and pointing with his eyes at the Red guard's dead body—"is he the worthiest? Oh, you. . . ."

"How, you know . . ." Korjikoff exclaimed with bewilderment, "you know. . . . It means that you too are initiated. . . . Come comrade, let us go to the Tcheka."

"Some other time, comrade," Polejaeff answered coldly. "I don't feel inclined today. I'm not in a mood for it."

X

POLEJAEFF occupied three rooms in a luxurious private house. He had managed to arrange them with the comfort to which he was accustomed. On coming home he found his bedroom-door by the light of the moon and entered his room. He had a Red guard orderly, but he did not wake him. He undressed in the dark, the electric light being allowed him in winter only for two hours daily. When he had undressed he lay down on his soft comfortable bed and felt that he was shivering feverishly.

"No, it can't go on like this," he thought. "It is impossible. . . . If I don't sleep nights I shan't be able to stand it for long. All my game is carried on nerves and if they break down? And how can they hold out when I have to work in a lunatic asylum? Korjikoff already suspects me. It is so easy to give one's self away; and at the same time today has given me so much. They are all Russians, everyone of them, Russians and not Internationalists, Russians and not communists. Maybe Gaiduk, Schlossberg and Jenny, but the last two don't count, they are mad. But Rachmatoff, Goloub, Osetroff, the musicians of Boudenniy's band and the officers—they all love Russia and long for the past. But they dare not speak because the cruel, bloody terror is hanging over them threateningly. A gang of scoundrels, such as Korjikoff, hold them in a tension of continual fear by such sallies as the one of today. We must place ourselves above them and today I have succeeded in doing so."

A shudder of intense repulsion passed over him. He saw the dead body and over it the beastly scene of passion. "One must

be born a particular sort of being and brought up in a special way to be capable of such a thing."

"The barracks are full of curses. God and especially the Holy Virgin are being continually abused and outraged. They have created a similar literature and their poetry is written in the same style. The sacred officers, who have to tremble continually for their lives, as are being daily shot in great numbers in the Tchekas, are afraid of everything and press closer to the Red guards. They fear, but work nevertheless; they direct, train and drill the hungry, tattered men, leading them into battle; and die under the red flags. And there are no means to approach them. You can't get anything out of them. You can't learn anything. After today's experience they won't dare sing anymore. Korjikoff, Gaiduk, a few more scoundrels keep them in a state of eternal fear. The whole of Russia is terror-stricken and in wild dread loots, steals and jeers in her cynical corruption, horrified at her own abomination."

Polejaeff settled in his bed more quietly and turned to the window which was gradually growing lighter. The events of the last three months rose with painful lucidity in his feverishly excited brain.

The escape with Olia, Pavlik and Ermoloff from the wreck of Denikin's army. His long travel first as a fireman on board a ship, then as stevedore in the Odessa port, the trying journey to Petersburg by rail. His casual encounter with Osetroff, his cautious conversations with him and his joining the Petrograd commune. Polejaeff obtained a communistic passport and studied the communistic doctrine. Then his departure for the Polish front. Here he understood that the Polish war was for many a solution of the painful and difficult problem of being mobilized by force and of having to fight against one's own brothers for the Third International. The Polish war was a national war. Officers, Generals and many of the soldiers understood that the very existence of Poland was a menace to Russia's independence and the majority went to the frontiers of Germany hoping that after having come into touch with Germany, Russia would once more be healthy and strong.

His mind ran on to later happenings:

A month ago Polejaeff had called on some friends of his in the Gorochovaya. They lived in a communist apartment where three families related to each other, numbering eighteen people, occupied five rooms. That day the protection of Soviet officials, they all served in various Soviet offices, had procured them genuine tea and sugar. Someone had brought strawberries from the country. They had some flour at home and the young girls had cooked some sweet cakes. It was a real "bourgeois" tea. They joked, laughed and even sang to the accompaniment of a guitar, and a cottage piano. Several young girls were present, and an elderly gentleman, once a great liberal, who had written a treatise against criminal punishment. It was a white, clear night; the windows were open. Suddenly the throbbing of a motor-car penetrated the room and shots were fired at intervals.

"I think shooting is going on," one of the young girls said, holding a cake in her hand and seating herself on the windowsill.

"Yes, again," another one remarked coming up to the cottage piano.

"Kolias told me that twenty-eight officers were to be executed."

"Then it is probably they who are being shot," said the young girl who was sitting at the piano and who began playing a gay melody.

Polejaeff looked at them. Their faces were pale and sickly. Many of them wore thin shoes on bare feet, having no stockings. They all looked fagged out. But the desire to live was strongly rooted in them, not letting them realize that quite near people were being killed.

He remembered another scene. They had lived on muddy soup boiled of frozen potatoes and suddenly they captured a rich Polish town. His company, led by communists, dispersed in the houses; screams, shrieks were heard, lamentations, moans, one shot was fired, then another, afterwards all was silent. The streets had become empty, all had dispersed in the houses. An hour had passed when a Red guardsman, a communist, a hand-

TO RED FLAG

some fellow, the type of a cab-driver, flushed, smiling gaily, beckoned to Polejaeff.

"Come, comrade Commander . . . ours are already having a fine time."

The cream of the communists of the company had gathered in a wealthy house. The table was already served. The bewildered servants bustled about, carrying plates and glasses. In a corner of the room five young girls were sitting and lying on some carpets with their hands tied. Three of them were in school dresses with black aprons, the other two in neat white frocks. They were deathly pale and looked around with big frightened eyes. They were not crying, having no more tears left.

Osetroff, Polejaeff's regimental comrade managed the whole feast. Ham, which had been discovered somewhere or other was being placed on the table. Geese and mutton were being roasted in the kitchen.

"Wine! Women! Music!" was Osetroff's greeting when Polejaeff came into the room. "It was worth the fight, comrade!"

Gold, silver and jewelry were lying on a separate table in a heap: watches, bracelets, brooches, rings, cigarette-cases. . . .

The orgy lasted three days. When it was over the Red guardsmen had left the town and the house where they had been feasting. Three dead bodies of schoolgirls remained lying in a corner on the carpets; the two older girls were still breathing, they moaned and followed the retreating men with insane eyes. They were bodily and mentally ruined. The communists, on forsaking the town, spoke of the feasts they would arrange when they captured Warsaw and reached Vienna, Budapest and Paris!

The trying part of Polejaeff's position consisted in his never being alone. Although he had been given three rooms, other people lived in the same house as he did. His functions brought him continually into contact with people of the most various standings and he could not talk openly with any of them. In this terrible government no one looked each other in the eyes,

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

no one said what they thought. Everyone spied on everyone else, a friend could not trust a friend and a father did not trust his son and this loneliness in the midst of a multitude of people was terrible indeed.

XI

THE morning after Korjikoff's party the men in the squadrons were rising listlessly after a heavy long sleep. The hot July day was well advanced, the horses were making the chains of their halters ring anxiously, gusts of warm wind swept the dust and the old straw in the regimental yard. But in the squadrons the men continued to loll in bed. It was not easy to rise with empty stomachs. In vain two young communists walked up and down the squadron screaming in shrill voices: "Rise comrades, it's time to clean!" But the comrades did not hurry: some pulling on their tattered blankets or military coats more closely about them, others sitting on their beds in underwear, scratching themselves meditatively. Abuses and curses sounded all over the place.

"Again someone has grabbed my boots. If it's you Rotoff, damn you, I'll make you pay for it!" said a red-haired fellow in a hoarse voice; he had a freckled face and narrow eyes like a pig's, surrounded with white eye-lashes.

"But why should we go and work without having eaten, comrade?" a pale-faced Red guard said, scratching himself and showing from beneath his shirt his yellow loins and his sunken stomach.

An officer stopped before him.

"Well, scoundrel, are you going to reason, and to grumble! You good for nothing!"

The Red guard was silent. But when the officer had moved away he muttered between his teeth:

"You are no better yourself! Only wait, you son of the devil. The time will come for us to settle our accounts. He has stuck Jewish stars on his sleeve and thinks himself no end of a nut. Just like a Tsar's officer!"

"A Tsar's officer knew his duty at least and was a gentleman

and this one—what is he? A Jewish tailor,” said his neighbour, a thin soldier called Perejaroff, one of the musicians in Boudeniy’s band. “We played last night at the commissar Korjikoff’s. Well they were all quite tipsy. His orderly happened to vex him and he shot him on the spot. The man had, no doubt, also a Christian soul!”

“It is not quite so, comrade,” rejoined his neighbour Loboff, pulling on his trousers. “Of course the political commissar behaved badly as regards the orderly. But about the soul, I saw it burn, this very soul, and I know that there is none.”

The horses were being led out to be groomed. Although it was summer time they had not quite lost their winter-coat yet; shaggy, thin, with big bellies and protruding ribs, they moved along sorrowfully, their halters sounding like fetters. The officer in command of the regiment, Goloub, true to his old habit of sergeant, was present. He was pensive. Heavy thoughts oppressed his mind, but he was afraid to think because his thoughts were frank counter-revolution and he knew but too well where it led to.

The soldiers of the squadron were divided into two different classes—the commissars and the mobilized men. Goloub knew that a communist soldier could not be touched. He would always pay one back, complain and report the smallest matter to the commissar which might easily result in degradation from the post of commanding officer to the rank of private and even lead to an execution in the Tcheka. The mobilized men were a herd, which was beaten and knocked about. Voices were heard shouting among the men: “The commissar, the commissar is coming!” Goloub turned pale with fright.

Korjikoff advanced gloomy and sullen. He had a head-ache after last night. His face was pale and sickly with dark rings under the eyes. No one could believe that he was only in his twenty-fifth year. He went round the men looking them straight in the faces, with his hands thrust in his pockets. Remembering the time he had served in Karpoff’s Don regiment, he saw that the horses here looked very different. He was passing before a dirty, thin horse which looked at him with lovely

eyes. Evidently it had seen better days. Powerful, wide-boned, with a dull, black coat, with a tail which had once been cut short, but which now had grown unevenly, it looked at Korjikoff. Korjikoff stopped involuntarily.

"What is this black horse?" he carelessly asked Goloub, who was following him respectfully.

"The mare Leda. It is General Sablin's horse."

"Is it so . . ." Korjikoff said and was on the point of adding: "exterminate it."

Something had survived Sablin. Korjikoff remembered Sablin's daughter and wondered why she was being kept in Moscow and not sent over. He had demanded her removal to Petersburg immediately after her father's execution, but had been informed that she was sick with typhus. Later Korjikoff had gone away for the spring and had forgotten her. . . . "I'll have her brought if she is still alive. . . . And now this horse. . . . Why does it stare at me? . . ."

Korjikoff turned to leave the yard. When he was on the point of going out he was caught up by a Red guard.

The man was pale, his eyes were wandering restlessly and his English tunic hung on him as on a peg.

"Comrade Commissar," the man said overtaking Korjikoff. "Allow me to report."

They came out into the empty street. In the shade the smell of dampness and dirt was stronger. The Red guard looked around him. No one was in sight.

"This morning, when we were getting ready for work, Perejaroff, a mobilized Red Army man, belonging to no political party, started speaking before everyone of the Tsar and praising former times. It is dangerous. He criticized the present order of things. He said that under the Tsar they were given six lumps of sugar, that four kinds of fruit-marmalade could be obtained. He told of last night's occurrence, saying that a man had been killed without any reason."

"Who is Perejaroff?" asked Korjikoff stopping.

"He plays the clarinet in Boudenniy's band."

Korjikoff turned back sharply to the gates and shouted:

"Comrade Commander, send the Red guards-man Perejaroff to the Tchresvitchaika today to be questioned."

Perejaroff dropped the bag of cut straw he was holding and lowered his ashen-grey face. He understood that he was doomed to die and tears rolled slowly down his thin cheeks.

Trotsky was to review the troops of the Petersburg garrison on the Field of Mars. He wanted to select detachments to be sent to the Crimean front. Strong gusts of cold wind blew from the gulf, bringing a smell of sea-weeds, freshness and autumn. The peoples' commissars liked reviews, but they were ashamed of showing it. That is why the ceremonial side of the reviews was treated with a certain affected carelessness. Trotsky was long overdue. A drizzling rain was falling. Pestretzoff was in command of the review. He sat heavily on a big horse; he was dressed in English equipment, wearing a big pointed cap, like a pilot's, with a red star. He looked important and proud. He rode round the ranks with General Samoïloff and stopped on the right flank of the Lettish regiment. "Do you remember," Samoïloff said most unexpectedly for everyone and still more so for himself, "how exact and punctual the Emperor was! He always came exactly at eleven, not a minute later."

No one answered, Pestretzoff looked round, scared and nervous and eyed his horse's ears suspiciously. It seemed that a horse might even betray in this damned land of treason and false reports.

A heavy grey armoured car with protruding machine-guns, followed by a red motor car, appeared near the Engineer Castle. It was occupied by several people in military coats and high caps.

"Present arms!" Pestretzoff shouted, galloping to the centre of the field.

The dark lines swayed all over it. The Red guardsmen were taking up their rifles.

"Attention!" Pestretzoff commanded in his habitual loud voice, forgetful of everything. He thought that the old field of Mars heard him, that immediately the bright May sun would

show itself and he would behold the calm, clear face of the Leader of the Russian army.

He continued giving his commands, carried away by his enthusiasm. Old hungry Leda shrunk under him. Memories of other times rose in her mind. She thought that she was carrying not the baggy, heavy old man, but the slim Sablin, full of youthful buoyancy. She straightened her weak legs, dilated her delicate nostrils, threw her tail back and bent her back, ready to gallop, wherever she was ordered to go.

Trotsky got out of his car, wiped his wet glasses and then taking hold of the reins caught his stirrup awkwardly with his stiff foot.

The officers of the suite were mounting their horses.

The rain was heavier. The regiments were forming in the thick mud. The band of the Lettish regiment struck shrilly the first notes of the old, smart Tsar's march to which the regiments of the Imperial guard used to pass before the Emperor, under the swaying banners of the Two-headed Eagle. Marking time with exaggeration, the coursanti marched past Trotsky, but the smoothness and ease which can be only obtained by long drill and gymnastics were missing. The youthful faces were turned towards Trotsky and the red stars, damp with rain, shone brightly. They took small steps, they stamped their feet as boys do when playing at soldiers.

Pestretzoff, saluting Trotsky, galloped towards him and stopped, bending respectfully towards the military commissar. For him, who had served for nearly forty years in the Imperial Army it was evident that the standard of drill in the Red Army was low; he saw the ugly carriage of the men when they marched by on bent knees and it made him frown. "Such drill, such marching can please only Jews," he thought.

"Don't they march well, General?" Trotsky said, turning his face slightly towards him.

"Perfectly, Comrade Commissar," answered Pestretzoff drawing himself up and saluting with his sabre.

"Very well, comrades," screamed Trotsky in a screeching voice to the coursanti.

TO RED FLAG

The battalion having waited for the left step, answered in a shrill voice marking every syllable distinctly:

"We serve the people and the revolution," just as in former times the troops answered: "Happy to do our best, Your Imperial Majesty!"

Regiments followed upon regiments; and Polejaeff's squadron was approaching the saluting point.

As in a dream the empty space opened before him. He saw the first squadron moving away and beyond it Prince Oldenbourg's pink house in the grey fog and the low rolling clouds. He unsheathed his sabre and gave the word of command "march." The squadron moved and followed him, approaching Trotsky. For a moment Polejaeff ceased to realize his surroundings. He thought he was Their Majesties' page leading his squadron and that smart, rosy cheeked soldiers were coming after him. He looked back. Hungry horses were trotting listlessly through the mud. Grey soldiers' faces were looking gloomily from under flat caps on which shone brilliant, bloody stars.

"Salute, why don't you salute," Goloub shouted hoarsely at him.

Polejaeff lifted his sword to his chin stiffly and mechanically and then lowered it and turned his head. Against the background of the dark foliage of the Summer Garden a group of horsemen were outlined. Two armed cars were standing behind it. One figure stood out of this group. Polejaeff saw a big brown head piece fitting the wearer's head like a cap and beneath it a little face with a small goat's beard. He thought that he saw a devil and that the brown cap hid the horns. A cold shiver ran down his spine and he murmured under his breath: "Oh! Lord, forgive! Forgive and save us!"

"Very well, comrades!" came from the group and the Red guardsmen answered behind Polejaeff "we serve the people and the revolution!"

XII

PRAYER and music soothed Polejaeff's heart-ache and moral sufferings. He would play melodies from operas and operettas from memory in the cold drawing-room, sing old melodies, or compose, surrounding himself with visions of the past. The room was dark. He played and sang, forgetting the time, not noticing how the evening passed into night and how the wind gradually abated.

The drawing-room door, which like all the rest of the doors in the apartment had no lock, opened and the dark figure of a tall man crept into the room, bringing with it a smell of leather, rain and the cold of the autumn night.

Polejaeff stopped playing and peered in the dusk at the intruder who named himself.

"Osetroff," he said. "Excuse me for coming without being called. I was sitting upstairs listening to your music. I am so utterly miserable, I came to listen. Forgive me."

Polejaeff began playing a nocturne. Osetroff sat down in an arm-chair at the corner of the piano and disappeared in the dusk.

"Please comrade, won't you sing the melody you sang last time at Korjikoff's. The one about the brigand who repented and entered a monastery."

Polejaeff complied readily and began singing in a hushed voice.

"Did it really happen or is it only a legend?" Osetroff asked Polejaeff when he had finished playing.

"It is the people who have made up that song," Polejaeff answered.

"I think it is true. Oh, comrade, if it were not true one would not have the strength to live. A terrible sadness oppresses me. At nights I have no peace. Visions persecute me. . . . Yes, that's how the thing happened. Shortly before the revolution Knoop introduced me . . . he was an officer, . . . a Jew. The soldiers killed him . . . in Kerensky's time when the officers were being exterminated. Well, he introduced me to my regi-

mental Commander's wife. I fell desperately in love with her. I treated her like a cad, insulted her and she had to submit to everything. Gaiduk, the present agent of the Tcheka outraged her also. . . . But then General Sablin came from the front, he took her away and hid her. It was said that he had taken her to Finland. Last year Sablin was tortured and shot and there was no one to help her any more. Her husband had been killed by the soldiers without cause at the time of the first revolution under Kerensky. Her personal belongings and her furniture were kept in a store-house; I knew it and I arranged with Schlossberg that by order of the Tcheka whoever happened to apply for these things should be arrested and brought to us. She came last March. She had been sent out of Finland with her little eight-year-old girl. She was famished and without any means. She had scarcely any clothes because she had sold all she possessed. She was brought to the Tcheka. We had settled with Schlossberg that she was to be taken to Korjikoff's to be examined and I, of course, was there. She was just as fair and as lovely as ever. I felt that my old passion had not died. We four locked ourselves up—Korjikoff, I, she and the little girl. I pretended that I had repented. She felt it was not true and refused to touch anything I offered her, but she could not stop the child from eating. The little girl was rosy and looked healthy—it was evident she had denied herself everything, but had fed her child. Well, a mother. . . . Korjikoff teased the child and amused himself giving her sweets and making her say nasty words and curses against the Lord and Our Lady. The child screamed at him: 'Stop, Uncle, you daren't say such wicked things about God!' The mother tossed about the room like a caged bird, crying and wringing her hands, but not saying a word. Korjikoff outraged the child first, then I wanted to do the same, but I saw that she was cold . . . she had died. Well, comrade, since that very day I have had no peace. I see her continually before me. I came into my room yesterday—it was day-light. But there she was, sitting in an arm-chair with her chestnut hair down her back. She looked at me and I understood her to say by the movement of her lips, though

no sound passed them: 'Give me my child back. Give me my Valia!' and then she vanished. . . . And now, comrade, I am always frightened."

Osetroff stopped speaking. The drawing-room was silent. The Neva groaned behind the windows and the waves splashed angrily, breaking against the granite parapet.

Polejaeff got a note from Korjikoff. "Comrade," the commissar wrote, "a few friends are coming to dine at my place today at seven o'clock. Comrade Vorotnikoff has brought a sturgeon from the Don. We will tackle it. Won't you come? With communistic greetings. Victor Korjikoff."

Some internal change was taking place in Korjikoff which he could not explain. He experienced an intense sadness and spiritual depression which he vainly tried to drown in alcohol, cocaine, debauchery and blood. Tania Sablin had been brought from Moscow, but the agent of the Tcheka who had taken her to the Extraordinary Commission in the Gorochovaya street had written to Korjikoff saying that the girl was not worth his attention: she was thin, yellow and in fact as terrible as death itself. Korjikoff answered curtly "exterminate her" and did not even go to see his sister.

He was fed up with everything. He had experienced everything, had tasted everything and was disenchanted in everything. He yearned for something unusual, but could not find it. He had publicly outraged the relics of saints, but his conscience did not trouble him; he had danced and defiled churches, experiencing nothing but boredom. Sablin's pale face was constantly before him and he was dismayed, that although tears had rolled down his cheeks, he had never emitted a groan and had not asked for mercy. "And Polejaeff is like him," he thought. "They possess a greater moral force than we do. But why don't they resist? Isn't it yet time? And when it does come?" At such thoughts a feeling of terror would seize Korjikoff. "Is Polejaeff a communist? Devil only knows! He behaves so smartly and manages his squadron so well and does not fear death. Everyone is delighted with him. His papers and letters have all been examined, he never visits anyone and has no

friends. Rachmatoff and Osetroff only swear by him. Gaiduk himself said once: 'With such a brain, such a will and firmness of character as comrade Polejaeff's he ought to be an agent of the Extraordinary Commission and not serve in a Red regiment.' What we all commit under the influence of cocaine, he, if necessary will do in cold blood."

"But he does not do it," Korjikoff retorted nervously.

"He probably finds it unnecessary. He spares his strength. When we will be finished men he will yet be strong."

"Well, I'll make him do it!" Korjikoff hissed. . . .

The dinner was a great success. Korjikoff had commanded a cook who had formerly served a Grand Duke and ordered him to manage everything as he had done for his former master. The crockery and the servants also came from a palace. Vorotnikoff had sent the wine of the best Cossack Don vintages and the brandy had been obtained from the commissar of peoples' welfare. Champagne was served after a fine joint of veal. The company numbered thirty guests.

Korjikoff sat at the head of the table. He was gloomy and thoughtful and spoke to no one. Vorotnikoff sat on his right, and Rachmatoff—the military specialist—on his left. Schlossberg sat beside him, then came Jenny, Polejaeff, Baby Drantsoff, Gouloub, two young officers of the communist regiment, Gaiduk, Mimi Granilin, several communist officers of Korjikoff's regiment and Vorotnikoff's aides-de-camp.

After dinner Bourdenniy's band played and sang. Korjikoff either sat in a corner near the window or paced up and down the room silently.

A famous opera singer had been invited and his powerful bass voice filled the hall with melodies of revolutionary songs, of the well-known "Doubinoushka" and other Russian folk songs.

"And will you sing 'God save the Tsar?'" Korjikoff asked him looking him straight in the eyes. Polejaeff was close to the singer.

"If you order it," the singer answered pulling himself up like a soldier. "Hunger will force you to do anything."

"Well, well I am joking," Korjikoff said in a softer tone.

Then he added nodding his head at Polejaeff: "There, he will sing it without being hungry."

Korjikoff moved away and joined Gaiduk.

"For what o'clock has it been fixed?" he asked.

"For twelve," Gaiduk said.

"At my place?"

"Yes."

Korjikoff looked at his watch. It was a quarter to twelve.

"Comrade Osetroff," he said. "You will come with me."

Osetroff bowed his handsome curly head.

Korjikoff came up quite close to Polejaeff.

"And you, comrade, will also come with us."

Korjikoff's eyes expressed a tenderness and gentleness which Polejaeff had never noticed before.

"Where to?" Polejaeff asked.

"To the Extraordinary Commission," Korjikoff answered gently.

"Why?" Polejaeff demanded dryly.

"You have never yet been present at a Bolshevik trial. It is instructive. Today we will judge eighteen White-Guard Officers and one woman, a society girl, who wanted to save the Tsar. She was busy carrying on excavation work in Ekaterinburg. She is my sister—Tatiana Sablin. So come with us and you shall see how the thing is done. We have been eating and drinking, we have indulged in ices and champagne—all very bourgeois enjoyments, now we will drink human blood and flatter our proletarian tastes."

Polejaeff was pale, but calm. He had surrendered himself to the Lord's will. If it were his fate to meet Tania under such extraordinary conditions in the Tcheka at the hour of her execution, if he were doomed to die a tragical death with her, let it be so; yet he would save her from dishonour.

"All right," he said. "It is quite interesting. I have never witnessed an execution."

"Would you like some cocaine," Korjikoff whispered into his

TO RED FLAG

ear, "you may try to shoot them yourself. It is pleasant . . . thrilling. If you wish, we will take Jenny with us."

"I don't know," Polejaeff drawled, speaking as in a dream. "Maybe, why not? . . . I suppose it must be a strong emotion."

"Yes," murmured Korjikoff, "and, if you like, we can place all the condemned men in a line and we will pass our time with the girls, I with Jenny and you with my sister. Eh? And let them look on. Or else we will make them. . . . Let them enjoy themselves before being shot."

"Well, we can always think of something when we are out there," murmured Polejaeff, not hearing his own voice.

"Comrades," Korjikoff said. "Eat, drink and be merry. We shall leave you for half an hour. I thirst for pleasure, and to serve the revolution. Come along Jenny, Gaiduk, Osetroff, Polejaeff."

XIII

A DETACHMENT of Red guards was crowding at the gates. Rachmatoff's powerful car was standing before the front-door. Korjikoff and those who had come with him went into the yard. A lorry was standing there and chauffeurs, dressed in costly fur-coats, all of them members of the Tcheka, were fussing round it. The big basement, which had formerly served as cellar, was brightly illuminated. The electric light shone through small narrow windows into the yard, lighting up the frozen flags and the narrow stone foot-path. A Red Army man carrying a rifle stood at the door of the basement. The entrance was narrow, with very steep steps. Polejaeff quite unconsciously remarked everything most carefully. He noticed that the motor-lorry blocked the way between the entrance and the detachment, that the gates leading into the street were open, that Rachmatoff's chauffeur, whom he knew, was in his seat. Polejaeff noticed even that he was pale and agitated. He was a young technical student, who had entered Rachmatoff's service so as to keep his mother and three little brothers.

The basement was low vaulted, and two arches divided it into three parts. Several Army men were standing in the first part.

They stood at attention when the commissar and the agents entered the basement. A sofa, two arm-chairs, a small inlaid table, were placed in the middle, which had been well swept. Two bottles and some glasses, biscuits, cigars and cigarette-boxes were standing on the table. A sentry had been placed to guard these treasures. A carpet and embroidered Caucasian cushions were lying on the floor before the couch. In the third part of the basement a thin line of emaciated people, wearing nothing but soiled, shabby underclothing were digging with big spades a narrow, deep ditch, watched by Red Army men.

Korjikoff was unnaturally excited; the pale-faced Jenny, continually smelling cocaine, came up at once to the table, nervously poured herself out a glass of brandy, and swallowed it in one gulp. Her face expressed disgust. The air was heavy with the fetid odour of dampness, human sweat and of uncleanness. Gaiduk was pale, but composed and exaggeratedly attentive. He seemed to be on the watch. Polejaeff looked at Osetroff. He, who habitually was quite tipsy at parties and at this hour of the night, today was perfectly sober, calm and resolute. He looked attentively and earnestly at Polejaeff, and Nika read friendship and resolution in his glance.

"It is very well managed," Korjikoff said. "I hardly expected it to be so well done."

He walked over the carpet, lit a cigar and said turning to Polejaeff:

"Today you are my guest and I want to show you everything. You will make a fine Tchekist with your strong nerves. You need only practice your hand at it, and then it is quite easy. Let us walk round. Attention, stop digging"—he screamed turning towards the wall.

The people stopped working and stood up against the wall. They were human beings who no longer looked like living people. On the right hand stood a young fellow of about twenty years of age. His face was so emaciated that it seemed a skull fixed on to his thin neck. His cheeks were sunken, his lips so dry, that they were hardly visible. His yellow body showed through the holes of his shirt, his ribs standing out sharply.

His thin, white legs had a pitiful aspect, standing on the damp, freshly dug-up soil. He looked without winking at Polejaeff with his big black legs, and Nika thought that he had seen this tall, thin youth somewhere before. Next to him stood an old man with a big stomach. He wore an old but clean shirt, and made of good linen. His stout neck was bare and his full legs were red from an unhealthy rush of blood. He kept his grey eyes fixed on the approaching group. Further down was an elderly, bearded man of sullen appearance in spectacles. He was badly built and thin. Behind him stood a middle-aged man, who carried himself well and gazed at the Tchekists with an unflinching and sharp look. He continually pulled at his shirt and drawers as if ashamed of his untidy appearance.

A woman was standing at the opposite end. Polejaeff only recognized her when he had passed half the line of men, and from that moment he never took his eyes off her, gradually recognizing the dear features. The corn-flower blue eyes alone reminded him of the old Tania. Her hair had been clipped after the typhus she had gone through and now stuck up straight on her head, surrounding her lovely face with the golden halo of a martyr. Her face was bloodless. Her pale cheeks were sunken. Her rounded chin expressed will and strength and her lips had the blue tinge of a corpse. The dark, delicate eyebrows and the large eyes, shaded by dark lashes, stood out on the white face. She wore only a long peasant's shirt. But it was clean and neat and hung in loose folds, like the chiton of a martyr, round her emaciated body. Her little bare feet, soiled with earth, shrunk nervously on the ground. She shivered from cold. Her eyes were lifted heavenward, and she did not notice the approaching group. She was lost in prayer. Her small hands with their tapering fingers were folded on her chest.

Polejaeff looked at her intently; under his gaze she turned her head towards him and their eyes met. Polejaeff was clothed in a service-coat and wore a big red star on his cap. Tania looked at him for some time, her delicate brows knitted over her lovely blue eyes. Suddenly they expressed terror, horror, disgust and scorn, and sighing heavily she turned away and once more lifted

her eyes. She clenched her hands in a gesture of despair and her lips murmured words of prayer. What was she praying about?

"And this is my half-sister," Korjikoff said, but Polejaeff interrupted him.

"A fine assortment, real Christian martyrs," he said, trying to stand between Korjikoff and Tania.

Korjikoff looked at him gloomily and repeated slowly, sounding each syllable.

"Yes, they are martyrs."

He broke into shrill laughter like a madman. He then turned back sharply and went towards the couch.

"Here you see before you, comrade Polejaeff, the ordinary job of a real Tchekist," he said puffing at his cigar. "Today it is even a small one. The number generally varies between thirty and sixty. Do you remember, Gaiduk, we once had eighty?"

"Eighty-two," Gaiduk answered calmly. "That was after the attempt on Lenin."

"There are different ways of shooting them," Korjikoff said in a business-like tone, slowly taking off his coat lined with costly fur and remaining in his leather jacket. "You can place them either with their faces or their backs to the wall. You can also make them lie face-downwards in the graves they have dug and shoot them in the backs of their heads. You can also mock them before killing them, as comrade Dora does, or else they can be outraged first, as the coarse Red Army men generally do. You know, comrade, no one is viler than the common Russian people. They are capable of any baseness. I must say that I personally am sick of it all, it does not interest me any more. . . . But to be capable of experiencing passion I must have killed someone before. I love the horror of what people are used to call sin. I love something excessive. That's what I have planned for tonight. That woman over there is my sister, well, I don't fancy her, her eyes are so saintly and that's something I don't like. Jenny is Gaiduk's mistress. . . . Well, first I will kill a few and then you can have a try. It's

TO RED FLAG

quite easy. Then we will share the women. I shall take my sister and you Jenny, in a pool of blood amid corpses and in the presence of all the others, that won't be bad."

"All right," said Polejaeff. "I will see what I can do."

A plan was already shaping itself in his head. He glanced at Osetroff, who returned his gaze, looking at him with the bold and devoted expression of a faithful dog, and then unfastened his holster.

In the front of the basement the Red Army men were noisily dividing the victims' clothes. Jenny was sprawling on the couch, looking through her half closed, narrow eyes at the pink liquid in her glass. Korjikoff took out his large army-revolver and walked slowly towards the line of people. Polejaeff followed him, but without arms. After him came Gaiduk, always keeping his eyes on Korjikoff. He had unfastened his holster and half drawn his revolver out. Osetroff came just behind him, revolver in hand.

The long line of people in their under-clothes formed a white blur in Polejaeff's eyes, and out of it he only saw Tania's up-lifted blue eyes. Dead silence reigned in this part of the basement.

"Start the motor!" Gaiduk shouted addressing no one in particular.

Someone invisible, who was but a dark spot in the night's fog and who was standing at the door, repeated in a hoarse voice:

"Start the motor."

And the dull roar of the car filled the yard.

Korjikoff, treading stealthily like a cat and carrying his revolver behind his back, approached the young man who was looking into space. The cigar which Korjikoff was holding between his teeth sent out a thin spiral of bluish smoke. The old man looked at Korjikoff with terror and with prayer. Further on the other victims seemed to sway like visions.

"Why are you staring, old man?" Korjikoff asked. "Don't expect mercy."

"He is my son and he is innocent!" the old man murmured. "Spare him, don't kill him before my own eyes!"

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"This can easily be done, Mr. General," Korjikoff remarked sneeringly and taking his cigar out of his mouth applied the burning end first to one of the old man's eyes and then to the other.

The cigar hissed and went out. With a groan of pain the old man leaned against the wall.

"How vile!" the young man exclaimed.

"Shut up, puppy!" Korjikoff screamed out and rapidly passing his revolver from his left hand to the right fired straight at the young man's forehead. The youth swayed to the wall, knocked against it and bending forward fell to the old man's feet. While the father was bending over him Korjikoff killed the old man firing at his bare nape.

The bearded man with glasses turned impulsively to the wall convulsed by heavy sobs. Korjikoff aimed carefully at his throbbing head and fired at last at his back in the dirty close-fitting shirt. The man's body continued to throb, Korjikoff fired at it a second time with a grimace of disgust.

"I die for my faith, my Tsar and my country!" the tall man with the strong face said firmly.

"Well die then, hound!" and Korjikoff fired straight into his open mouth.

Someone began sobbing hysterically, but Polejaeff saw that it was not Tania. She was lost in prayer and he thought that her slender figure was on the point of tearing itself away from the dirty ground and to float heavenward. Two white shadows dropped down unconscious.

Korjikoff moved along continuing to fire. Polejaeff counted the cartridges. The seventh shot was fired and Korjikoff slipped the revolver into its holster. He then got out an immense parabellum, surveyed it lovingly and said, offering it to Polejaeff:

"This is my favourite, won't you try it?"

Polejaeff took it. He quickly exchanged glances with Ose-troff, who was still looking at him firmly with the eyes of a faithful dog.

TO RED FLAG

"The chief thing is to keep cool," Korjikoff said. "The hand must be steady, but even if you miss, it won't matter much."

"I am perfectly calm," Polejaeff said, not hearing his own voice. He heard the faint moans of the bearded man, who was still breathing and someone's shrill cries of: "It's impossible! It's a nightmare! I acknowledge Lenin! Let me go! I will do anything you want!"

A vile curse and abuse accompanied by coarse laughter came from the group of Red guardsmen. The motor was throbbing in the yard.

Polejaeff raised his revolver rapidly and shot straight at Korjikoff's face.

At the same instant a second shot rang out. Osetroff had fired at Gaiduk's back.

Polejaeff thought that dead silence had followed these two shots and that time had stopped. But it was not so. The soldiers continued to quarrel and scold. The motor throbbed and someone screamed out hysterically: "We are saved!"

Polejaeff in one wild stride was beside Tania and caught her in his arms. She seemed wonderfully light. Osetroff rolled her in Korjikoff's fur coat, which the latter had thrown on the couch, and then they both dashed towards the door.

"What has happened, comrade?" asked the sentry, who was standing on the narrow staircase, and barring them the way.

"The commissar has fainted," Osetroff answered, pushing him aside and helping to carry Tania, who was rolled in the commissar's coat with the red band on its sleeve.

The motor was working noisily in the yard. Red guards were sitting and standing before the open gates. Rachmatoff's chauffeur was sitting in the car, staring fixedly before him.

"Comrade," Polejaeff called out to him, placing the unconscious Tania at the bottom of the car. "Take us to my house as fast as possible."

Osetroff jumped into the car.

"Nikolai Nikolaevitch, let us go to my place. I have all she may require. I have a lot of gold and we will start this very night."

"All right, Misha," Polejaeff answered, calling Osetroff for the first time by his pet-name.

The car moved softly, rolling silently on the frozen road.

A minute later a group of people in under-clothes rushed out of the gates into the street and started running, followed by a crowd of soldiers, firing, while someone was screaming wildly:

"The commissar is killed, the commissar . . ." accompanying these screams by terms of extreme abuse.

In the basement five dead, half-clad bodies, lay on the up-turned soil beside the ditch, a sixth body was moaning softly, moving its hand.

Near by Korjikoff was lying with his arms thrown out. His face, smashed and burnt, was nothing but a bloody hole. One of the men had already robbed him of his revolver and of one of his boots. Gaiduk's body lay beside Korjikoff's. Jenny was sitting near him, gazing into the dead man's face with raving eyes.

The brandy, liquor, cakes, cigars and cigarettes had all disappeared from the table, which was lying overturned. The electric lights burnt brightly.

The Red guards were hastily packing the big carpet, which they had brought out of the basement, into the lorry. The chauffeurs were drinking the brandy and the liquors straight out of the bottles. Through the lighted windows of Korjikoff's apartment in the second story one could see his guests. Two pairs were moving round the table—Mimi Granilin and Baby Drantsoff were dancing with Vorotnikoff's aides-de-camp.

Life in the Republic of the Soviets was following its normal course.

Tania regained consciousness in the cold night-air. She moved at the bottom of the car hiding her bare feet. Polejaeff wrapped them up carefully in the folds of the coat and lifted her to the seat.

"Don't worry, my dear young lady," Osetroff told her gently. "It won't take us long to reach my home and once there I will give you all you need. I have a pair of fur-lined boots, a coat of real astrachan fur, a fur cap, a shawl and we will wrap you

TO RED FLAG

up warmly. We will dress you like a princess and then we will escape abroad."

"Who are you?" Tania asked in a weak voice. She spoke so indistinctly that Polejaeff could only guess what she had asked.

"I thought, Tatiana Alexandrovna, that you had recognized me," Nika replied.

Tania moaned softly. She opened her eyes wide and asked in a low, but firm voice:

"How do you come to be here, Nikolai Nikolaevitch?"

Since childhood she had always called him Nika as he had always called her Tania, and now by addressing him so formally by his first name and patronymic a gulf was formed between them of sombre suspicion and of fear on one side and supplication to understand and forgive on the other.

"The Lord has guided me here and he has saved you. He will also save Russia . . ." Polejaeff said.

Tania did not say anything. His reference to God appeased her. She settled more comfortably and gazed into space. Polejaeff saw her eyes, grown unnaturally large, shine in the darkness, he saw her deathly pale face and felt how she shuddered in Korjikoff's warm coat.

The car stopped soon. They had arrived.

"Wait a minute," Osetroff said. "I must put things straight."

The car stood motionless in the frozen street. Polejaeff listened anxiously. Danger might overtake them at any minute. The commissar's and the Tcheka agent's murder were certainly known in Korjikoff's apartment by now. A pursuit was to be expected. The red flame of a candle flashed in one of the windows of the second story and then a dark blind was dropped upon it. Osetroff came running down with a pair of warm felt-boots and a civilian hat for Polejaeff.

"Slip them on, Miss," he said, "the stairs are damp and dirty."

A red soldier with a rifle had come up to the car with Osetroff.

"He will watch meanwhile," Osetroff remarked. "If you

see anyone coming," Osetroff said to the soldier, "a patrol or a crowd, fire immediately into the air. Do you understand?"

"I understand," the man replied sullenly.

"I also will stay here," Polejaeff said.

"All right, maybe it is safer," Osetroff answered.

He offered Tania his arm and guided her respectfully across the yard and up the back staircase. She followed him obediently.

"Please, be careful, Miss, there is yet a step," Osetroff said.

The door of the flat was open and a light was burning dimly in the third room.

"Here, Miss. I have got you all I had. Eat, please. I will go and warm you some tea."

Osetroff had placed a plate with smoked fish and bread on the table, and opening the drawers of a big chest began tossing on the couch big bundles of batiste and silk underwear, stockings, petticoats, blouses and ball-dresses.

"Choose whatever you like," Osetroff said. "And then let us start without losing time. Don't fear; no one will come in."

He left the room closing the door after him.

Tania was alone in the big room dimly lit by the solitary candle. She sat down on the low, broad bed-stead of white birch-wood, decorated with bronze, over which was carelessly thrown a blue-padded quilt. Heaps of dresses and underwear were lying on the couch and on the carpet. The candle, burning in a dirty brass candlestick, was standing on the dressing table with an elegant toilet set and a big mirror. A soft upholstered decorated chair stood before it. A plate with some badly smelling fish and two pieces of stale black bread was standing on the table.

"Whose room was this? Who slept on this bed?" Tania wondered, "to whom did these stockings, this underclothing and these dresses belong?"

There was nothing suitable for a journey and for a flight. All these elegant transparent chemises, embroidered in flowers and intricate designs undressed more than they clothed. They spoke of passion and corruption and had been brought here

TO RED FLAG

for this purpose. A spicy odour of old perfume came from the underwear. Some of the chemises had been worn and not washed. "When and where had they been taken off? Maybe in just the same kind of basements, before executions?"

Tania's small, rough fingers trembled. At last she chose three new chemises which she thought more decent and then, having taken off her shirt, which was more like a shroud, carefully slipped on the three chemises. The touch of the fragrant batiste was pleasant to the emaciated body and reminded her of old times.

The silk stockings were very thin, open worked and embroidered. Tania put on three pairs of stockings and still her feet were no warmer. She put on high boots, several petticoats, a blouse, she brushed her dishevelled hair and fixed it with a tortoise-shell comb, and after having dressed felt calmer. She took a piece of bread and began eating it. . . . An animal warmth spread in her veins. The room, lit by a meagre solitary candle, with the luxurious bed and the heaps of sweetly-smelling underwear scattered about seemed to her like a dream.

Someone knocked at the door. Osetroff asked:

"May I come in?"

"Come in," Tania replied.

"I have brought you some tea," Osetroff said coming into the room and placing three cups of tea on the dressing-table. "All the three are for you. I did it to gain time. Every minute is precious. Drink it quickly and let us start."

Tania felt more herself after the tea. She wrapped an expensive Orenbourg shawl round her shoulders, then threw on a sable stole and over it put on a wide Astrachan cloak.

"That's right, Miss. It will all be useful, maybe you will have to live upon it for many years and I don't need it," Osetroff said helping her on first with one thing and then another.

Complying with Osetroff's injunctions Tania put on Korjikkoff's coat on the top of all and moving with difficulty she went after him. Osetroff descended the stairs before her, carrying the candle and lighting the steps. It was still quiet in the street. The pale-faced chauffeur was sitting in his seat. Polejaeff and

Jelieskin were standing beside the car, peering anxiously into the dark night. Two shots were fired a few blocks away and then all was silent once more. The big city seemed to be lying in waiting, holding its breath anxiously in the nightly torpor.

"At last," Polejaeff murmured.

"It's all right, comrade, I have taken a passport for her and for us too."

"No one has seen you?"

"The comrades know. But it doesn't matter now. Jelieskin, are you coming with us?"

"Yes, I will come with you, Michail Sergeievitch."

"Let us start and may God bless us!"

This long forgotten Russian expression sounded oddly in the night's silence coming from under a cap with a Red star badge. The chauffeur turned round and looked at Osetroff.

"Go ahead, friend, and drive along the Zabalkansky into the Peterhoff road. Will we have enough essence to reach Oranienbaum?"

"Yes," the chauffeur said, starting the car.

The dark town rushed towards them. The car with its faintly burning lamps swayed and jumped in the holes and ridges of the bad road. People were sauntering near the barracks and drunken cries and shrieks could be heard. A woman was crying and cursing, endeavouring to free herself from Red guards who had caught her. The nearer they came to the suburbs the more deserted were the streets. Not a soul was to be seen on the Obvodny Canal devoid of barges or boats. Several dark shadows with bags and parcels slipped by hurriedly near the Baltic station and an engine was whistling hoarsely behind the high station fence. Then came the freshness of the fields, the smell of decaying cabbage in the vegetable gardens, the strong smell of water, rushes and of the sea. The car was rolling along the Peterhoff road. They drove past empty spaces, mile-stones, spreading leafless birches with white trunks, rustling willows growing on the banks of ditches. It smelt of marshes. Then came gardens, villas, the white gates of the Sergieff Monastery; the road was better and firmer, the pools were covered with

thin, shining ice, which cracked under the weight of the passing car. Then once more came villas, parks with dark trees, sheds of fire-brigades, a stone-bridge over sluices with the water rushing noisily and tumbling down in a water-fall, and to the left spread the dark expanse of the Strelna lake, and then once more came villas, fields and the road passed between the bushes and the trees of the Michailovsky and Znamensky parks. The car drove between two stone-pillars of an old gateway and the trees of the Alexandria Park pressed closely on both sides of the road. The air smelt of moss, fir trees and dampness. The car jumped over the bad pavement of the Peterhoff streets and once more they passed villas, then came the palace, the big square. . . .

How well Tania knew it all. She had known it since early childhood and it was very dear to her. Witnesses of her games with her brother Kolia were passing rapidly before her. How many memories were roused in her by the sight of the dark pines and the mysterious fir-trees of the Peterhoff parks! She had ridden her pony here with her father and mother, here she had driven in a chaise and here as a child she had learned to venerate the Imperial family. . . . Visions of her father, her mother, her brother, their horses, her darling pony "Ralph" pressed round her. But they were concealed by the vision of one who reigned over them all. The vision of the Tsar and the visions of all the other Tsars rose before Tania as the car rushed along, approaching Peterhoff. And they had all died!

Visions of a recent past rose before Tania's mind. The murder of the Tsar and his family, the burnt-out glade in the dense forest and her searches for a proof which would let her hope that the abomination, which was whispered about by everyone in Ekaterinburg, was not true.

Then the two years passed with Koltchak's army. The suffering caused by the knowledge that those who worked for Russia's salvation, who called themselves "Whites"—also spoke badly of the Tsar, repeating continually—"a return to the past is impossible." But what was to replace this past? Koltchak was betrayed by the Allies and the Czecho-Slovaks and

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

murdered dastardly. It was abject, vile. . . . Blood, treason and baseness were everywhere. Then came a life of concealment in a Siberian village and the slow journey to the South. The attempt to escape somewhere where a Russia still existed which could live openly, which was not tortured, not devoured by lice, not succumbing from putrid wounds, not tracked and not flooded in blood, but a Russia which was free, where the national Russian colors waved proudly and where it was possible to speak of the past.

Tania had a protector. It was a Red Army man, who was in love with her. It was he, a miserable, half savage being, with a wide, strong-jawed, pox-marked face, who had accompanied and led her like a watchful nurse through boiling Russia and had brought her safely to Moscow.

Then came the meeting with Pestretzoff. . . . He had told her that her father had agreed to serve in the Red Army. After that, life with an aunt of hers in a flat on the Arbat, occupied also by workers and soldiers. She had lived on Pestretzoff's casual gifts and on money obtained from the sale of her aunt's last possessions. . . .

Then she was arrested and imprisoned with thirty other women; she had seen how they had succumbed, forced by hunger, and were tempted to take up service in the Soviet Government. Then came the news of her father's torture and death.

One morning, her adorer, the Red Army man, Thomas Sissin, came to see her. Even he had aged and had grown thinner. His round, potted face, with its heavy jaw, clean-shaven and without eyebrows, making it look like a woman's, had grown still uglier.

"I have brought you a louse, comrade," he said, producing a small box. It's a fine typhoid one, I got it from a comrade and paid a lot of money for it. It has been tested. Whomever it bites is sure to fall ill. It's such a fine louse! . . . So I got it for you."

"But why do I need it?" Tania said shuddering.

The round, pale face approached hers. The big mouth opened showing a row of rotten teeth.

TO RED FLAG

"Orders have been received to send you to Petersburg. A commissar wishes to have you for his mistress . . . But I won't have it. I want you to remain pure. If you can't be mine—no one else shall have you."

Sissin spoke quite openly, calling everything by its course, peasant name, expressing himself as everyone did in this State, where shame existed no more.

"So you just take this louse and let it creep on your body and you will fall ill of typhoid and they'll leave you alone."

Tania took the louse; she fell ill with typhoid, she lay in the hospital with a cropped head and was at death's door . . .

The twentieth century . . . Civilization and culture . . . Now she is driving in a car . . . Silky underwear presses softly to her body, costly fur is wrapped round her neck.

They had been driving for an hour and a half and she had not spoken a word with Nika. She dreaded to learn the details, she feared to be told, that he, whom she loved so dearly, was with them, that he served under the Red Flag, that he had bowed to Satan.

She was brought back to reality. The car had stopped in a field. The shore was quite near. Gusts of wind moaned and sung in the ears and the waves roared dully.

"Well, friend, are you also coming with us?" Nika said, addressing the chauffeur.

The man looked at Polejaeff, his face was pale. He was going through an internal struggle.

"No", he said dully. "I can't go, my mother and my little brothers are there . . ."

"But what will you do?" Polejaeff asked.

"Let me go. I will come back to Rachmatoff and tell him everything. They won't have time to catch you before the morning, and once there, you don't risk anything."

"Well, let it be so", Osetroff said. "He is right, if he escapes, his mother will be killed. Let him tell everything, he will manage all right. Please, alight, Miss. And you know what, Nikolai Nikolaevitch? You stay here with the young lady and Jelieskin and I will go and look for Toporkoff. If we all go we

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

will frighten him. You see, I have already arrested him twice, but he always paid for his release. He belongs to us . . . He takes people over to the other side. He charges ten thousand Tsar's roubles per head. He drinks heavily after each crossing. He was an officer of the guard in the old army. He is a nobleman, a bourgeois! . . . So good-bye for the present. Answer me when you hear me shout:—Hop, hop!"

The car turned back and disappeared in the dusk of the night. Polejaeff and Tania remained alone.

XIV

"NIKA, how did you come to serve them?" Tania asked sitting down on a big stone on the shore.

Night surrounded them. Dark clouds drifted across the sky; when they were torn assunder the moon cast its silver rays over the troubled sea revealing in its light the white-crested waves, the sandy shore, the broken black rushes, the shrubs with their ragged leaves, bent by gusts of wind, and then everything disappeared once more in the darkness. Close by, the dark forest rustled noisily and the black pines moaned as if complaining of their fate. Not a light could be seen, and no fires of passing ships were on the sea. The white-crested waves rolled hissing and muttering dully; they rose black and shaggy, fringed with foam, then bending rushed straight at Tania and fell suddenly, murmuring humbly on the sand at her feet.

It was warm and cozy sitting in the fur-coat, the wind did not penetrate through the woolen shawl and beneath it her cheeks burnt feverishly. Tania listened to Nika telling her all the events of the last three years.

The figure in the soldier's coat and fur-cap nestled up closer to him. Large eyes gazed up at him and only they and a straight white nose could be seen. They had loved one another three years ago and their love had survived all the privations, hardships, dangers and sufferings. And now neither knew whether the other one's love was still alive. Did Nika still feel towards her—Tania Sablin, the same passionate adoration. She had then been the daughter of a well-known General, a

rich fiancée, belonging to the best Petersburg society, lovely in her eighteen years . . . Her father had been tortured and shot. Now—she possessed nothing—neither home, nor property, not even a country. She was a beggar, dressed in stolen clothes; and maybe here, abroad, someone would claim her Astrachan fur-coat, her shoes, her underwear and she would be tried. Her youthful body was withered from hunger and typhoid, her beautiful hair had been cropped, and her blood had not the strength to send a rosy flush to her sunken cheeks . . . She was a poor fiancée indeed!

Nika gazing into her shining, loving eyes thought that he was not worthy of her. Yes, he had saved her. Yes, maybe already to-morrow they would be free and in a free country, but Russia was not delivered and to what altar would he lead her, whom he loved above all, and where would he build his nest?

Their hearts throbbed in unison. One and the same hymn of love sounded in their souls, their long-suffering, sorrowing souls harassed by their terrible existence and which, like young horses who, after being chased along rocky mountainroads, have sore backs and bleeding knees, and eyes full of mute suffering; but their souls were still young and thirsted for love and happiness.

The dark sea lay before them. The sadness of the north surrounded them. The supple branches of the willows bent low towards the ground, the rusty grass was damp and joyless, the black rushes rustled dully and in the forest the dark pines moaned and sighed. The late autumn spoke of death and the earth was like a cemetery.

"How lovely it is!" Tania said. "My beloved, how lovely!"

The white ray of a search-light played on the dark sky. It swept over the water, and the waves like a silver funeral-cloth flashed and sparkled beneath it. It touched once more the dark sky, seeming to search something in the shaggy clouds, which were hurrying eastwards, then slipped along the shore, flashed its bright light on the pines intensifying the darkness of the forest. The straight tree-trunks with their rosy-red tops, a grey fence and a low hut stood out distinctly. The ray slipped along the shore and beneath it different objects appeared like visions:

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

an old overturned skiff, a two-masted Finnish sailing-boat, the stones, the sand and the low flat, wind-swept grass.

Osetroff, Jelineskin and another tall man in peasant clothes were coming towards them.

They pushed off when the moon had risen and the sea was shimmering and sparkling in its silvery rays. They got into the boat from the shore. The men, having taken off their shoes, paddled through the icy water to the boat, while Nika carried Tania. She was cosy in his strong arms; she felt herself a little child once more and a happy feeling of freedom and safety overwhelmed her. A little Finnish boy was sitting in the boat. He opened out the sail to slanting yard and threw the ropes over the heads of the passengers who had settled at the bottom of the boat. Toropkoff seated himself on the poop and took hold of the tiller.

"Are you ready, gentlemen", he said. "You haven't forgotten anything?"

"Ready", said Osetroff.

"Well, may the Lord help us."

Toropkoff doffed his cap and crossed himself and all the others did the same.

Toropkoff tightened the sail and the boat shuddered. A wave washed under her, then another knocked against her, breaking in thin sprays, sprinkling everybody with the icy drops. A silvery spray twined like a serpent after the stern. The boat shuddered and slipped on to the water, cutting the hissing waves with its prow. The shore was receding rapidly. Only black waves were all around shining like pale diamonds in the moonlight.

Tania sat on Korjikoff's coat at the bottom of the boat. Polejaeff sat down beside her shielding her from the wind and the waves. The young girl nestled closely to him and her small head in the grey shawl dropped on his shoulder.

Over there getting nearer was Finland.

THE END