

CHAPTER II

“He’s coming!” shouted the signaler at that moment.

The regimental commander, flushing, ran to his horse, seized the stirrup with trembling hands, threw his body across the saddle, righted himself, drew his saber, and with a happy and resolute countenance, opening his mouth awry, prepared to shout. The regiment fluttered like a bird preening its plumage and became motionless.

“Att-ention!” shouted the regimental commander in a soul-shaking voice which expressed joy for himself, severity for the regiment, and welcome for the approaching chief.

Along the broad country road, edged on both sides by trees, came a high, light blue Viennese calèche, slightly creaking on its springs and drawn by six horses at a smart trot. Behind the calèche galloped the suite and a convoy of Croats. Beside Kutúzov sat an Austrian general, in a white uniform that looked strange among the Russian black ones. The calèche stopped in front of the regiment. Kutúzov and the Austrian general were talking in low voices and Kutúzov smiled slightly as treading heavily he stepped down from the carriage just as if those two thousand men breathlessly gazing at him and the regimental commander did not exist.

The word of command rang out, and again the regiment quivered, as with a jingling sound it presented arms. Then amidst a dead silence the feeble voice of the commander in chief was heard. The regiment roared, “Health to your ex... len... len... lency!” and again all became silent. At first Kutúzov stood still while the regiment moved; then he and the general in white, accompanied by the suite, walked between the ranks.

From the way the regimental commander saluted the commander in chief and devoured him with his eyes, drawing himself up obsequiously, and from the way he walked through the ranks behind the generals, bending forward and hardly able to restrain his jerky movements, and from the way he darted forward at every word or gesture of the commander in chief, it was evident that he performed his duty as a subordinate with even greater zeal than his duty as a commander. Thanks to the strictness and assiduity of its commander the regiment, in comparison with others that had reached Braunau at the same time, was in splendid condition. There were only 217 sick and stragglers. Everything was in good order except the boots.

Kutúzov walked through the ranks, sometimes stopping to say a few friendly words to officers he had known in the Turkish war, sometimes also to the soldiers. Looking at their boots he several times shook his head sadly, pointing them out to the Austrian general with an expression which seemed to say that he was not blaming anyone, but could not help noticing what a bad state of things it was. The regimental commander ran forward on each such occasion, fearing to miss a single word of the commander in chief’s regarding the regiment. Behind Kutúzov, at a

distance that allowed every softly spoken word to be heard, followed some twenty men of his suite. These gentlemen talked among themselves and sometimes laughed. Nearest of all to the commander in chief walked a handsome adjutant. This was Prince Bolkónski. Beside him was his comrade Nesvítski, a tall staff officer, extremely stout, with a kindly, smiling, handsome face and moist eyes. Nesvítski could hardly keep from laughter provoked by a swarthy hussar officer who walked beside him. This hussar, with a grave face and without a smile or a change in the expression of his fixed eyes, watched the regimental commander's back and mimicked his every movement. Each time the commander started and bent forward, the hussar started and bent forward in exactly the same manner. Nesvítski laughed and nudged the others to make them look at the wag.

Kutúzov walked slowly and languidly past thousands of eyes which were starting from their sockets to watch their chief. On reaching the third company he suddenly stopped. His suite, not having expected this, involuntarily came closer to him.

“Ah, Timókhin!” said he, recognizing the red-nosed captain who had been reprimanded on account of the blue greatcoat.

One would have thought it impossible for a man to stretch himself more than Timókhin had done when he was reprimanded by the regimental commander, but now that the commander in chief addressed him he drew himself up to such an extent that it seemed he could not have sustained it had the commander in chief continued to look at him, and so Kutúzov, who evidently understood his case and wished him nothing but good, quickly turned away, a scarcely perceptible smile flitting over his scarred and puffy face.

“Another Ismail comrade,” said he. “A brave officer! Are you satisfied with him?” he asked the regimental commander.

And the latter—unconscious that he was being reflected in the hussar officer as in a looking glass—started, moved forward, and answered: “Highly satisfied, your excellency!”

“We all have our weaknesses,” said Kutúzov smiling and walking away from him. “He used to have a predilection for Bacchus.”

The regimental commander was afraid he might be blamed for this and did not answer. The hussar at that moment noticed the face of the red-nosed captain and his drawn-in stomach, and mimicked his expression and pose with such exactitude that Nesvítski could not help laughing. Kutúzov turned round. The officer evidently had complete control of his face, and while Kutúzov was turning managed to make a grimace and then assume a most serious, deferential, and innocent expression.

The third company was the last, and Kutúzov pondered, apparently trying to recollect something. Prince Andrew stepped forward from among the suite and said in French:

“You told me to remind you of the officer Dólokhov, reduced to the

ranks in this regiment.”

“Where is Dólokhov?” asked Kutúzov.

Dólokhov, who had already changed into a soldier’s gray greatcoat, did not wait to be called. The shapely figure of the fair-haired soldier, with his clear blue eyes, stepped forward from the ranks, went up to the commander in chief, and presented arms.

“Have you a complaint to make?” Kutúzov asked with a slight frown.

“This is Dólokhov,” said Prince Andrew.

“Ah!” said Kutúzov. “I hope this will be a lesson to you. Do your duty. The Emperor is gracious, and I shan’t forget you if you deserve well.”

The clear blue eyes looked at the commander in chief just as boldly as they had looked at the regimental commander, seeming by their expression to tear open the veil of convention that separates a commander in chief so widely from a private.

“One thing I ask of your excellency,” Dólokhov said in his firm, ringing, deliberate voice. “I ask an opportunity to atone for my fault and prove my devotion to His Majesty the Emperor and to Russia!”

Kutúzov turned away. The same smile of the eyes with which he had turned from Captain Timókhin again flitted over his face. He turned away with a grimace as if to say that everything Dólokhov had said to him and everything he could say had long been known to him, that he was weary of it and it was not at all what he wanted. He turned away and went to the carriage.

The regiment broke up into companies, which went to their appointed quarters near Braunau, where they hoped to receive boots and clothes and to rest after their hard marches.

“You won’t bear me a grudge, Prokhór Ignátych?” said the regimental commander, overtaking the third company on its way to its quarters and riding up to Captain Timókhin who was walking in front. (The regimental commander’s face now that the inspection was happily over beamed with irrepressible delight.) “It’s in the Emperor’s service... it can’t be helped... one is sometimes a bit hasty on parade... I am the first to apologize, you know me!... He was very pleased!” And he held out his hand to the captain.

“Don’t mention it, General, as if I’d be so bold!” replied the captain, his nose growing redder as he gave a smile which showed where two front teeth were missing that had been knocked out by the butt end of a gun at Ismail.

“And tell Mr. Dólokhov that I won’t forget him—he may be quite easy. And tell me, please—I’ve been meaning to ask—how is he behaving himself, and in general...”

“As far as the service goes he is quite punctilious, your excellency; but his character...” said Timókhin.

“And what about his character?” asked the regimental commander.

“It’s different on different days,” answered the captain. “One day he is sensible, well educated, and good-natured, and the next he’s a wild beast.... In Poland, if you please, he nearly killed a Jew.”

“Oh, well, well!” remarked the regimental commander. “Still, one must have pity on a young man in misfortune. You know he has important connections... Well, then, you just...”

“I will, your excellency,” said Timókhin, showing by his smile that he understood his commander’s wish.

“Well, of course, of course!”

The regimental commander sought out Dólokhov in the ranks and, reining in his horse, said to him:

“After the next affair... epaulettes.”

Dólokhov looked round but did not say anything, nor did the mocking smile on his lips change.

“Well, that’s all right,” continued the regimental commander. “A cup of vodka for the men from me,” he added so that the soldiers could hear. “I thank you all! God be praised!” and he rode past that company and overtook the next one.

“Well, he’s really a good fellow, one can serve under him,” said Timókhin to the subaltern beside him.

“In a word, a hearty one...” said the subaltern, laughing (the regimental commander was nicknamed King of Hearts).

The cheerful mood of their officers after the inspection infected the soldiers. The company marched on gaily. The soldiers’ voices could be heard on every side.

“And they said Kutúzov was blind of one eye?”

“And so he is! Quite blind!”

“No, friend, he is sharper-eyed than you are. Boots and leg bands... he noticed everything...”

“When he looked at my feet, friend... well, thinks I...”

“And that other one with him, the Austrian, looked as if he were smeared with chalk—as white as flour! I suppose they polish him up as they do the guns.”

“I say, Fédeshon!... Did he say when the battles are to begin? You were near him. Everybody said that Buonaparte himself was at Braunau.”

“Buonaparte himself!... Just listen to the fool, what he doesn't know! The Prussians are up in arms now. The Austrians, you see, are putting them down. When they've been put down, the war with Buonaparte will begin. And he says Buonaparte is in Braunau! Shows you're a fool. You'd better listen more carefully!”

“What devils these quartermasters are! See, the fifth company is turning into the village already... they will have their buckwheat cooked before we reach our quarters.”

“Give me a biscuit, you devil!”

“And did you give me tobacco yesterday? That's just it, friend! Ah, well, never mind, here you are.”

“They might call a halt here or we'll have to do another four miles without eating.”

“Wasn't it fine when those Germans gave us lifts! You just sit still and are drawn along.”

“And here, friend, the people are quite beggarly. There they all seemed to be Poles—all under the Russian crown—but here they're all regular Germans.”

“Singers to the front” came the captain's order.

And from the different ranks some twenty men ran to the front. A drummer, their leader, turned round facing the singers, and flourishing his arm, began a long-drawn-out soldiers' song, commencing with the words: “Morning dawned, the sun was rising,” and concluding: “On then, brothers, on to glory, led by Father Kámenski.” This song had been composed in the Turkish campaign and now being sung in Austria, the only change being that the words “Father Kámenski” were replaced by “Father Kutúzov.”

Having jerked out these last words as soldiers do and waved his arms as if flinging something to the ground, the drummer—a lean, handsome soldier of forty—looked sternly at the singers and screwed up his eyes. Then having satisfied himself that all eyes were fixed on him, he raised both arms as if carefully lifting some invisible but precious object above his head and, holding it there for some seconds, suddenly flung it down and began:

“Oh, my bower, oh, my bower...!”

“Oh, my bower new...!” chimed in twenty voices, and the castanet player, in spite of the burden of his equipment, rushed out to the front and, walking backwards before the company, jerked his shoulders and flourished his castanets as if threatening someone. The soldiers,

swinging their arms and keeping time spontaneously, marched with long steps. Behind the company the sound of wheels, the creaking of springs, and the tramp of horses' hoofs were heard. Kutúzov and his suite were returning to the town. The commander in chief made a sign that the men should continue to march at ease, and he and all his suite showed pleasure at the sound of the singing and the sight of the dancing soldier and the gay and smartly marching men. In the second file from the right flank, beside which the carriage passed the company, a blue-eyed soldier involuntarily attracted notice. It was Dólokhov marching with particular grace and boldness in time to the song and looking at those driving past as if he pitied all who were not at that moment marching with the company. The hussar cornet of Kutúzov's suite who had mimicked the regimental commander, fell back from the carriage and rode up to Dólokhov.

Hussar cornet Zherkóv had at one time, in Petersburg, belonged to the wild set led by Dólokhov. Zherkóv had met Dólokhov abroad as a private and had not seen fit to recognize him. But now that Kutúzov had spoken to the gentleman ranker, he addressed him with the cordiality of an old friend.

"My dear fellow, how are you?" said he through the singing, making his horse keep pace with the company.

"How am I?" Dólokhov answered coldly. "I am as you see."

The lively song gave a special flavor to the tone of free and easy gaiety with which Zherkóv spoke, and to the intentional coldness of Dólokhov's reply.

"And how do you get on with the officers?" inquired Zherkóv.

"All right. They are good fellows. And how have you wriggled onto the staff?"

"I was attached; I'm on duty."

Both were silent.

"She let the hawk fly upward from her wide right sleeve," went the song, arousing an involuntary sensation of courage and cheerfulness. Their conversation would probably have been different but for the effect of that song.

"Is it true that Austrians have been beaten?" asked Dólokhov.

"The devil only knows! They say so."

"I'm glad," answered Dólokhov briefly and clearly, as the song demanded.

"I say, come round some evening and we'll have a game of faro!" said Zherkóv.

“Why, have you too much money?”

“Do come.”

“I can’t. I’ve sworn not to. I won’t drink and won’t play till I get reinstated.”

“Well, that’s only till the first engagement.”

“We shall see.”

They were again silent.

“Come if you need anything. One can at least be of use on the staff...”

Dólokhov smiled. “Don’t trouble. If I want anything, I won’t beg—I’ll take it!”

“Well, never mind; I only...”

“And I only...”

“Good-by.”

“Good health...”

“It’s a long, long way.
To my native land...”

Zherkón touched his horse with the spurs; it pranced excitedly from foot to foot uncertain with which to start, then settled down, galloped past the company, and overtook the carriage, still keeping time to the song.