

## CHAPTER XVI

Kutúzov accompanied by his adjutants rode at a walking pace behind the carabineers.

When he had gone less than half a mile in the rear of the column he stopped at a solitary, deserted house that had probably once been an inn, where two roads parted. Both of them led downhill and troops were marching along both.

The fog had begun to clear and enemy troops were already dimly visible about a mile and a half off on the opposite heights. Down below, on the left, the firing became more distinct. Kutúzov had stopped and was speaking to an Austrian general. Prince Andrew, who was a little behind looking at them, turned to an adjutant to ask him for a field glass.

“Look, look!” said this adjutant, looking not at the troops in the distance, but down the hill before him. “It’s the French!”

The two generals and the adjutant took hold of the field glass, trying to snatch it from one another. The expression on all their faces suddenly changed to one of horror. The French were supposed to be a mile and a half away, but had suddenly and unexpectedly appeared just in front of us.

“It’s the enemy?... No!... Yes, see it is!... for certain.... But how is that?” said different voices.

With the naked eye Prince Andrew saw below them to the right, not more than five hundred paces from where Kutúzov was standing, a dense French column coming up to meet the Ápsheons.

“Here it is! The decisive moment has arrived. My turn has come,” thought Prince Andrew, and striking his horse he rode up to Kutúzov.

“The Ápsheons must be stopped, your excellency,” cried he. But at that very instant a cloud of smoke spread all round, firing was heard quite close at hand, and a voice of naïve terror barely two steps from Prince Andrew shouted, “Brothers! All’s lost!” And at this as if at a command, everyone began to run.

Confused and ever-increasing crowds were running back to where five minutes before the troops had passed the Emperors. Not only would it have been difficult to stop that crowd, it was even impossible not to be carried back with it oneself. Bolkónski only tried not to lose touch with it, and looked around bewildered and unable to grasp what was happening in front of him. Nesvítski with an angry face, red and unlike himself, was shouting to Kutúzov that if he did not ride away at once he would certainly be taken prisoner. Kutúzov remained in the same place and without answering drew out a handkerchief. Blood was flowing from his cheek. Prince Andrew forced his way to him.

“You are wounded?” he asked, hardly able to master the trembling of

his lower jaw.

“The wound is not here, it is there!” said Kutúzov, pressing the handkerchief to his wounded cheek and pointing to the fleeing soldiers. “Stop them!” he shouted, and at the same moment, probably realizing that it was impossible to stop them, spurred his horse and rode to the right.

A fresh wave of the flying mob caught him and bore him back with it.

The troops were running in such a dense mass that once surrounded by them it was difficult to get out again. One was shouting, “Get on! Why are you hindering us?” Another in the same place turned round and fired in the air; a third was striking the horse Kutúzov himself rode. Having by a great effort got away to the left from that flood of men, Kutúzov, with his suite diminished by more than half, rode toward a sound of artillery fire near by. Having forced his way out of the crowd of fugitives, Prince Andrew, trying to keep near Kutúzov, saw on the slope of the hill amid the smoke a Russian battery that was still firing and Frenchmen running toward it. Higher up stood some Russian infantry, neither moving forward to protect the battery nor backward with the fleeing crowd. A mounted general separated himself from the infantry and approached Kutúzov. Of Kutúzov’s suite only four remained. They were all pale and exchanged looks in silence.

“Stop those wretches!” gasped Kutúzov to the regimental commander, pointing to the flying soldiers; but at that instant, as if to punish him for those words, bullets flew hissing across the regiment and across Kutúzov’s suite like a flock of little birds.

The French had attacked the battery and, seeing Kutúzov, were firing at him. After this volley the regimental commander clutched at his leg; several soldiers fell, and a second lieutenant who was holding the flag let it fall from his hands. It swayed and fell, but caught on the muskets of the nearest soldiers. The soldiers started firing without orders.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” groaned Kutúzov despairingly and looked around.... “Bolkónski!” he whispered, his voice trembling from a consciousness of the feebleness of age, “Bolkónski!” he whispered, pointing to the disordered battalion and at the enemy, “what’s that?”

But before he had finished speaking, Prince Andrew, feeling tears of shame and anger choking him, had already leapt from his horse and run to the standard.

“Forward, lads!” he shouted in a voice piercing as a child’s.

“Here it is!” thought he, seizing the staff of the standard and hearing with pleasure the whistle of bullets evidently aimed at him. Several soldiers fell.

“Hurrah!” shouted Prince Andrew, and, scarcely able to hold up the heavy standard, he ran forward with full confidence that the whole

battalion would follow him.

And really he only ran a few steps alone. One soldier moved and then another and soon the whole battalion ran forward shouting “Hurrah!” and overtook him. A sergeant of the battalion ran up and took the flag that was swaying from its weight in Prince Andrew’s hands, but he was immediately killed. Prince Andrew again seized the standard and, dragging it by the staff, ran on with the battalion. In front he saw our artillerymen, some of whom were fighting, while others, having abandoned their guns, were running toward him. He also saw French infantry soldiers who were seizing the artillery horses and turning the guns round. Prince Andrew and the battalion were already within twenty paces of the cannon. He heard the whistle of bullets above him unceasingly and to right and left of him soldiers continually groaned and dropped. But he did not look at them: he looked only at what was going on in front of him—at the battery. He now saw clearly the figure of a red-haired gunner with his shako knocked awry, pulling one end of a mop while a French soldier tugged at the other. He could distinctly see the distraught yet angry expression on the faces of these two men, who evidently did not realize what they were doing.

“What are they about?” thought Prince Andrew as he gazed at them. “Why doesn’t the red-haired gunner run away as he is unarmed? Why doesn’t the Frenchman stab him? He will not get away before the Frenchman remembers his bayonet and stabs him....”

And really another French soldier, trailing his musket, ran up to the struggling men, and the fate of the red-haired gunner, who had triumphantly secured the mop and still did not realize what awaited him, was about to be decided. But Prince Andrew did not see how it ended. It seemed to him as though one of the soldiers near him hit him on the head with the full swing of a bludgeon. It hurt a little, but the worst of it was that the pain distracted him and prevented his seeing what he had been looking at.

“What’s this? Am I falling? My legs are giving way,” thought he, and fell on his back. He opened his eyes, hoping to see how the struggle of the Frenchmen with the gunners ended, whether the red-haired gunner had been killed or not and whether the cannon had been captured or saved. But he saw nothing. Above him there was now nothing but the sky—the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with gray clouds gliding slowly across it. “How quiet, peaceful, and solemn; not at all as I ran,” thought Prince Andrew—“not as we ran, shouting and fighting, not at all as the gunner and the Frenchman with frightened and angry faces struggled for the mop: how differently do those clouds glide across that lofty infinite sky! How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last! Yes! All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing, but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace. Thank God!...”