

CHAPTER X

Rostóv's share in Dólokhov's duel with Bezúkhov was hushed up by the efforts of the old count, and instead of being degraded to the ranks as he expected he was appointed an adjutant to the governor general of Moscow. As a result he could not go to the country with the rest of the family, but was kept all summer in Moscow by his new duties. Dólokhov recovered, and Rostóv became very friendly with him during his convalescence. Dólokhov lay ill at his mother's who loved him passionately and tenderly, and old Mary Ivánovna, who had grown fond of Rostóv for his friendship to her Fédyá, often talked to him about her son.

"Yes, Count," she would say, "he is too noble and pure-souled for our present, depraved world. No one now loves virtue; it seems like a reproach to everyone. Now tell me, Count, was it right, was it honorable, of Bezúkhov? And Fédyá, with his noble spirit, loved him and even now never says a word against him. Those pranks in Petersburg when they played some tricks on a policeman, didn't they do it together? And there! Bezúkhov got off scotfree, while Fédyá had to bear the whole burden on his shoulders. Fancy what he had to go through! It's true he has been reinstated, but how could they fail to do that? I think there were not many such gallant sons of the fatherland out there as he. And now—this duel! Have these people no feeling, or honor? Knowing him to be an only son, to challenge him and shoot so straight! It's well God had mercy on us. And what was it for? Who doesn't have intrigues nowadays? Why, if he was so jealous, as I see things he should have shown it sooner, but he lets it go on for months. And then to call him out, reckoning on Fédyá not fighting because he owed him money! What baseness! What meanness! I know you understand Fédyá, my dear count; that, believe me, is why I am so fond of you. Few people do understand him. He is such a lofty, heavenly soul!"

Dólokhov himself during his convalescence spoke to Rostóv in a way no one would have expected of him.

"I know people consider me a bad man!" he said. "Let them! I don't care a straw about anyone but those I love; but those I love, I love so that I would give my life for them, and the others I'd throttle if they stood in my way. I have an adored, a priceless mother, and two or three friends—you among them—and as for the rest I only care about them in so far as they are harmful or useful. And most of them are harmful, especially the women. Yes, dear boy," he continued, "I have met loving, noble, high-minded men, but I have not yet met any women—countesses or cooks—who were not venal. I have not yet met that divine purity and devotion I look for in women. If I found such a one I'd give my life for her! But those!..." and he made a gesture of contempt. "And believe me, if I still value my life it is only because I still hope to meet such a divine creature, who will regenerate, purify, and elevate me. But you don't understand it."

"Oh, yes, I quite understand," answered Rostóv, who was under his new friend's influence.

In the autumn the Rostóvs returned to Moscow. Early in the winter Denísov also came back and stayed with them. The first half of the winter of 1806, which Nicholas Rostóv spent in Moscow, was one of the happiest, merriest times for him and the whole family. Nicholas brought many young men to his parents' house. Véra was a handsome girl of twenty; Sónya a girl of sixteen with all the charm of an opening flower; Natásha, half grown up and half child, was now childishly amusing, now girlishly enchanting.

At that time in the Rostóvs' house there prevailed an amorous atmosphere characteristic of homes where there are very young and very charming girls. Every young man who came to the house—seeing those impressionable, smiling young faces (smiling probably at their own happiness), feeling the eager bustle around him, and hearing the fitful bursts of song and music and the inconsequent but friendly prattle of young girls ready for anything and full of hope—experienced the same feeling; sharing with the young folk of the Rostóvs' household a readiness to fall in love and an expectation of happiness.

Among the young men introduced by Rostóv one of the first was Dólokhov, whom everyone in the house liked except Natásha. She almost quarreled with her brother about him. She insisted that he was a bad man, and that in the duel with Bezúkhov, Pierre was right and Dólokhov wrong, and further that he was disagreeable and unnatural.

“There's nothing for me to understand,” she cried out with resolute self-will, “he is wicked and heartless. There now, I like your Denísov though he is a rake and all that, still I like him; so you see I do understand. I don't know how to put it... with this one everything is calculated, and I don't like that. But Denísov...”

“Oh, Denísov is quite different,” replied Nicholas, implying that even Denísov was nothing compared to Dólokhov—“you must understand what a soul there is in Dólokhov, you should see him with his mother. What a heart!”

“Well, I don't know about that, but I am uncomfortable with him. And do you know he has fallen in love with Sónya?”

“What nonsense...”

“I'm certain of it; you'll see.”

Natásha's prediction proved true. Dólokhov, who did not usually care for the society of ladies, began to come often to the house, and the question for whose sake he came (though no one spoke of it) was soon settled. He came because of Sónya. And Sónya, though she would never have dared to say so, knew it and blushed scarlet every time Dólokhov appeared.

Dólokhov often dined at the Rostóvs', never missed a performance at which they were present, and went to Iogel's balls for young people which the Rostóvs always attended. He was pointedly attentive to Sónya

and looked at her in such a way that not only could she not bear his glances without coloring, but even the old countess and Natásha blushed when they saw his looks.

It was evident that this strange, strong man was under the irresistible influence of the dark, graceful girl who loved another.

Rostóv noticed something new in Dólokhov's relations with Sónya, but he did not explain to himself what these new relations were. "They're always in love with someone," he thought of Sónya and Natásha. But he was not as much at ease with Sónya and Dólokhov as before and was less frequently at home.

In the autumn of 1806 everybody had again begun talking of the war with Napoleon with even greater warmth than the year before. Orders were given to raise recruits, ten men in every thousand for the regular army, and besides this, nine men in every thousand for the militia. Everywhere Bonaparte was anathematized and in Moscow nothing but the coming war was talked of. For the Rostóv family the whole interest of these preparations for war lay in the fact that Nicholas would not hear of remaining in Moscow, and only awaited the termination of Denísov's furlough after Christmas to return with him to their regiment. His approaching departure did not prevent his amusing himself, but rather gave zest to his pleasures. He spent the greater part of his time away from home, at dinners, parties, and balls.