

CHAPTER XIV

An hour and a half later most of the players were but little interested in their own play.

The whole interest was concentrated on Rostóv. Instead of sixteen hundred rubles he had a long column of figures scored against him, which he had reckoned up to ten thousand, but that now, as he vaguely supposed, must have risen to fifteen thousand. In reality it already exceeded twenty thousand rubles. Dólokhov was no longer listening to stories or telling them, but followed every movement of Rostóv's hands and occasionally ran his eyes over the score against him. He had decided to play until that score reached forty-three thousand. He had fixed on that number because forty-three was the sum of his and Sónya's joint ages. Rostóv, leaning his head on both hands, sat at the table which was scrawled over with figures, wet with spilled wine, and littered with cards. One tormenting impression did not leave him: that those broad-boned reddish hands with hairy wrists visible from under the shirt sleeves, those hands which he loved and hated, held him in their power.

"Six hundred rubles, ace, a corner, a nine... winning it back's impossible... Oh, how pleasant it was at home!... The knave, double or quits... it can't be!... And why is he doing this to me?" Rostóv pondered. Sometimes he staked a large sum, but Dólokhov refused to accept it and fixed the stake himself. Nicholas submitted to him, and at one moment prayed to God as he had done on the battlefield at the bridge over the Enns, and then guessed that the card that came first to hand from the crumpled heap under the table would save him, now counted the cords on his coat and took a card with that number and tried staking the total of his losses on it, then he looked round for aid from the other players, or peered at the now cold face of Dólokhov and tried to read what was passing in his mind.

"He knows of course what this loss means to me. He can't want my ruin. Wasn't he my friend? Wasn't I fond of him? But it's not his fault. What's he to do if he has such luck?... And it's not my fault either," he thought to himself, "I have done nothing wrong. Have I killed anyone, or insulted or wished harm to anyone? Why such a terrible misfortune? And when did it begin? Such a little while ago I came to this table with the thought of winning a hundred rubles to buy that casket for Mamma's name day and then going home. I was so happy, so free, so lighthearted! And I did not realize how happy I was! When did that end and when did this new, terrible state of things begin? What marked the change? I sat all the time in this same place at this table, chose and placed cards, and watched those broad-boned agile hands in the same way. When did it happen and what has happened? I am well and strong and still the same and in the same place. No, it can't be! Surely it will all end in nothing!"

He was flushed and bathed in perspiration, though the room was not hot. His face was terrible and piteous to see, especially from its helpless efforts to seem calm.

The score against him reached the fateful sum of forty-three thousand. Rostóv had just prepared a card, by bending the corner of which he meant to double the three thousand just put down to his score, when Dólokhov, slamming down the pack of cards, put it aside and began rapidly adding up the total of Rostóv's debt, breaking the chalk as he marked the figures in his clear, bold hand.

"Supper, it's time for supper! And here are the gypsies!"

Some swarthy men and women were really entering from the cold outside and saying something in their gypsy accents. Nicholas understood that it was all over; but he said in an indifferent tone:

"Well, won't you go on? I had a splendid card all ready," as if it were the fun of the game which interested him most.

"It's all up! I'm lost!" thought he. "Now a bullet through my brain—that's all that's left me!" And at the same time he said in a cheerful voice:

"Come now, just this one more little card!"

"All right!" said Dólokhov, having finished the addition. "All right! Twenty-one rubles," he said, pointing to the figure twenty-one by which the total exceeded the round sum of forty-three thousand; and taking up a pack he prepared to deal. Rostóv submissively unbent the corner of his card and, instead of the six thousand he had intended, carefully wrote twenty-one.

"It's all the same to me," he said. "I only want to see whether you will let me win this ten, or beat it."

Dólokhov began to deal seriously. Oh, how Rostóv detested at that moment those hands with their short reddish fingers and hairy wrists, which held him in their power.... The ten fell to him.

"You owe forty-three thousand, Count," said Dólokhov, and stretching himself he rose from the table. "One does get tired sitting so long," he added.

"Yes, I'm tired too," said Rostóv.

Dólokhov cut him short, as if to remind him that it was not for him to jest.

"When am I to receive the money, Count?"

Rostóv, flushing, drew Dólokhov into the next room.

"I cannot pay it all immediately. Will you take an I.O.U.?" he said.

"I say, Rostóv," said Dólokhov clearly, smiling and looking Nicholas straight in the eyes, "you know the saying, 'Lucky in love,

unlucky at cards.' Your cousin is in love with you, I know.'"

"Oh, it's terrible to feel oneself so in this man's power," thought Rostóv. He knew what a shock he would inflict on his father and mother by the news of this loss, he knew what a relief it would be to escape it all, and felt that Dólokhov knew that he could save him from all this shame and sorrow, but wanted now to play with him as a cat does with a mouse.

"Your cousin..." Dólokhov started to say, but Nicholas interrupted him.

"My cousin has nothing to do with this and it's not necessary to mention her!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"Then when am I to have it?"

"Tomorrow," replied Rostóv and left the room.