

## CHAPTER XIV

“Well, is she pretty? Ah, friend—my pink one is delicious; her name is Dunyáša....”

But on glancing at Rostóv’s face Ilyín stopped short. He saw that his hero and commander was following quite a different train of thought.

Rostóv glanced angrily at Ilyín and without replying strode off with rapid steps to the village.

“I’ll show them; I’ll give it to them, the brigands!” said he to himself.

Alpátych at a gliding trot, only just managing not to run, kept up with him with difficulty.

“What decision have you been pleased to come to?” said he.

Rostóv stopped and, clenching his fists, suddenly and sternly turned on Alpátych.

“Decision? What decision? Old dotard!...” cried he. “What have you been about? Eh? The peasants are rioting, and you can’t manage them? You’re a traitor yourself! I know you. I’ll flay you all alive!...” And as if afraid of wasting his store of anger, he left Alpátych and went rapidly forward. Alpátych, mastering his offended feelings, kept pace with Rostóv at a gliding gait and continued to impart his views. He said the peasants were obdurate and that at the present moment it would be imprudent to “overresist” them without an armed force, and would it not be better first to send for the military?

“I’ll give them armed force... I’ll ‘overresist’ them!” uttered Rostóv meaninglessly, breathless with irrational animal fury and the need to vent it.

Without considering what he would do he moved unconsciously with quick, resolute steps toward the crowd. And the nearer he drew to it the more Alpátych felt that this unreasonable action might produce good results. The peasants in the crowd were similarly impressed when they saw Rostóv’s rapid, firm steps and resolute, frowning face.

After the hussars had come to the village and Rostóv had gone to see the princess, a certain confusion and dissension had arisen among the crowd. Some of the peasants said that these new arrivals were Russians and might take it amiss that the mistress was being detained. Dron was of this opinion, but as soon as he expressed it Karp and others attacked their ex-Elder.

“How many years have you been fattening on the commune?” Karp shouted at him. “It’s all one to you! You’ll dig up your pot of money and take it away with you.... What does it matter to you whether our homes are ruined or not?”

“We’ve been told to keep order, and that no one is to leave their homes or take away a single grain, and that’s all about it!” cried another.

“It was your son’s turn to be conscripted, but no fear! You begrudged your lump of a son,” a little old man suddenly began attacking Dron—“and so they took my Vánka to be shaved for a soldier! But we all have to die.”

“To be sure, we all have to die. I’m not against the commune,” said Dron.

“That’s it—not against it! You’ve filled your belly....”

The two tall peasants had their say. As soon as Rostóv, followed by Ilyín, Lavrúshka, and Alpátych, came up to the crowd, Karp, thrusting his fingers into his belt and smiling a little, walked to the front. Dron on the contrary retired to the rear and the crowd drew closer together.

“Who is your Elder here? Hey?” shouted Rostóv, coming up to the crowd with quick steps.

“The Elder? What do you want with him?...” asked Karp.

But before the words were well out of his mouth, his cap flew off and a fierce blow jerked his head to one side.

“Caps off, traitors!” shouted Rostóv in a wrathful voice. “Where’s the Elder?” he cried furiously.

“The Elder.... He wants the Elder!... Dron Zakhárych, you!” meek and flustered voices here and there were heard calling and caps began to come off their heads.

“We don’t riot, we’re following the orders,” declared Karp, and at that moment several voices began speaking together.

“It’s as the old men have decided—there’s too many of you giving orders.”

“Arguing? Mutiny!... Brigands! Traitors!” cried Rostóv unmeaningly in a voice not his own, gripping Karp by the collar. “Bind him, bind him!” he shouted, though there was no one to bind him but Lavrúshka and Alpátych.

Lavrúshka, however, ran up to Karp and seized him by the arms from behind.

“Shall I call up our men from beyond the hill?” he called out.

Alpátych turned to the peasants and ordered two of them by name to come and bind Karp. The men obediently came out of the crowd and began taking off their belts.

“Where’s the Elder?” demanded Rostóv in a loud voice.

With a pale and frowning face Dron stepped out of the crowd.

“Are you the Elder? Bind him, Lavrúshka!” shouted Rostóv, as if that order, too, could not possibly meet with any opposition.

And in fact two more peasants began binding Dron, who took off his own belt and handed it to them, as if to aid them.

“And you all listen to me!” said Rostóv to the peasants. “Be off to your houses at once, and don’t let one of your voices be heard!”

“Why, we’ve not done any harm! We did it just out of foolishness. It’s all nonsense.... I said then that it was not in order,” voices were heard bickering with one another.

“There! What did I say?” said Alpátych, coming into his own again. “It’s wrong, lads!”

“All our stupidity, Yákov Alpátych,” came the answers, and the crowd began at once to disperse through the village.

The two bound men were led off to the master’s house. The two drunken peasants followed them.

“Aye, when I look at you!...” said one of them to Karp.

“How can one talk to the masters like that? What were you thinking of, you fool?” added the other—“A real fool!”

Two hours later the carts were standing in the courtyard of the Boguchárovo house. The peasants were briskly carrying out the proprietor’s goods and packing them on the carts, and Dron, liberated at Princess Mary’s wish from the cupboard where he had been confined, was standing in the yard directing the men.

“Don’t put it in so carelessly,” said one of the peasants, a man with a round smiling face, taking a casket from a housemaid. “You know it has cost money! How can you chuck it in like that or shove it under the cord where it’ll get rubbed? I don’t like that way of doing things. Let it all be done properly, according to rule. Look here, put it under the bast matting and cover it with hay—that’s the way!”

“Eh, books, books!” said another peasant, bringing out Prince Andrew’s library cupboards. “Don’t catch up against it! It’s heavy, lads—solid books.”

“Yes, they worked all day and didn’t play!” remarked the tall, round-faced peasant gravely, pointing with a significant wink at the dictionaries that were on the top.

Unwilling to obtrude himself on the princess, Rostóv did not go back to

the house but remained in the village awaiting her departure. When her carriage drove out of the house, he mounted and accompanied her eight miles from Boguchárovo to where the road was occupied by our troops. At the inn at Yankóvo he respectfully took leave of her, for the first time permitting himself to kiss her hand.

“How can you speak so!” he blushing replied to Princess Mary’s expressions of gratitude for her deliverance, as she termed what had occurred. “Any police officer would have done as much! If we had had only peasants to fight, we should not have let the enemy come so far,” said he with a sense of shame and wishing to change the subject. “I am only happy to have had the opportunity of making your acquaintance. Good-by, Princess. I wish you happiness and consolation and hope to meet you again in happier circumstances. If you don’t want to make me blush, please don’t thank me!”

But the princess, if she did not again thank him in words, thanked him with the whole expression of her face, radiant with gratitude and tenderness. She could not believe that there was nothing to thank him for. On the contrary, it seemed to her certain that had he not been there she would have perished at the hands of the mutineers and of the French, and that he had exposed himself to terrible and obvious danger to save her, and even more certain was it that he was a man of lofty and noble soul, able to understand her position and her sorrow. His kind, honest eyes, with the tears rising in them when she herself had begun to cry as she spoke of her loss, did not leave her memory.

When she had taken leave of him and remained alone she suddenly felt her eyes filling with tears, and then not for the first time the strange question presented itself to her: did she love him?

On the rest of the way to Moscow, though the princess’ position was not a cheerful one, Dunyásha, who went with her in the carriage, more than once noticed that her mistress leaned out of the window and smiled at something with an expression of mingled joy and sorrow.

“Well, supposing I do love him?” thought Princess Mary.

Ashamed as she was of acknowledging to herself that she had fallen in love with a man who would perhaps never love her, she comforted herself with the thought that no one would ever know it and that she would not be to blame if, without ever speaking of it to anyone, she continued to the end of her life to love the man with whom she had fallen in love for the first and last time in her life.

Sometimes when she recalled his looks, his sympathy, and his words, happiness did not appear impossible to her. It was at those moments that Dunyásha noticed her smiling as she looked out of the carriage window.

“Was it not fate that brought him to Boguchárovo, and at that very moment?” thought Princess Mary. “And that caused his sister to refuse my brother?” And in all this Princess Mary saw the hand of Providence.

The impression the princess made on Rostóv was a very agreeable one. To

remember her gave him pleasure, and when his comrades, hearing of his adventure at Boguchárovo, rallied him on having gone to look for hay and having picked up one of the wealthiest heiresses in Russia, he grew angry. It made him angry just because the idea of marrying the gentle Princess Mary, who was attractive to him and had an enormous fortune, had against his will more than once entered his head. For himself personally Nicholas could not wish for a better wife: by marrying her he would make the countess his mother happy, would be able to put his father's affairs in order, and would even—he felt it—ensure Princess Mary's happiness.

But Sónya? And his plighted word? That was why Rostóv grew angry when he was rallied about Princess Bolkónskaya.