

CHAPTER XVI

“Well, that’s all!” said Kutúzov as he signed the last of the documents, and rising heavily and smoothing out the folds in his fat white neck he moved toward the door with a more cheerful expression.

The priest’s wife, flushing rosy red, caught up the dish she had after all not managed to present at the right moment, though she had so long been preparing for it, and with a low bow offered it to Kutúzov.

He screwed up his eyes, smiled, lifted her chin with his hand, and said:

“Ah, what a beauty! Thank you, sweetheart!”

He took some gold pieces from his trouser pocket and put them on the dish for her. “Well, my dear, and how are we getting on?” he asked, moving to the door of the room assigned to him. The priest’s wife smiled, and with dimples in her rosy cheeks followed him into the room. The adjutant came out to the porch and asked Prince Andrew to lunch with him. Half an hour later Prince Andrew was again called to Kutúzov. He found him reclining in an armchair, still in the same unbuttoned overcoat. He had in his hand a French book which he closed as Prince Andrew entered, marking the place with a knife. Prince Andrew saw by the cover that it was *Les Chevaliers du Cygne* by Madame de Genlis.

“Well, sit down, sit down here. Let’s have a talk,” said Kutúzov. “It’s sad, very sad. But remember, my dear fellow, that I am a father to you, a second father....”

Prince Andrew told Kutúzov all he knew of his father’s death, and what he had seen at Bald Hills when he passed through it.

“What... what they have brought us to!” Kutúzov suddenly cried in an agitated voice, evidently picturing vividly to himself from Prince Andrew’s story the condition Russia was in. “But give me time, give me time!” he said with a grim look, evidently not wishing to continue this agitating conversation, and added: “I sent for you to keep you with me.”

“I thank your Serene Highness, but I fear I am no longer fit for the staff,” replied Prince Andrew with a smile which Kutúzov noticed.

Kutúzov glanced inquiringly at him.

“But above all,” added Prince Andrew, “I have grown used to my regiment, am fond of the officers, and I fancy the men also like me. I should be sorry to leave the regiment. If I decline the honor of being with you, believe me...”

A shrewd, kindly, yet subtly derisive expression lit up Kutúzov’s podgy face. He cut Bolkónski short.

“I am sorry, for I need you. But you’re right, you’re right! It’s not here that men are needed. Advisers are always plentiful, but men are

not. The regiments would not be what they are if the would-be advisers served there as you do. I remember you at Austerlitz.... I remember, yes, I remember you with the standard!" said Kutúzov, and a flush of pleasure suffused Prince Andrew's face at this recollection.

Taking his hand and drawing him downwards, Kutúzov offered his cheek to be kissed, and again Prince Andrew noticed tears in the old man's eyes. Though Prince Andrew knew that Kutúzov's tears came easily, and that he was particularly tender to and considerate of him from a wish to show sympathy with his loss, yet this reminder of Austerlitz was both pleasant and flattering to him.

"Go your way and God be with you. I know your path is the path of honor!" He paused. "I missed you at Bucharest, but I needed someone to send." And changing the subject, Kutúzov began to speak of the Turkish war and the peace that had been concluded. "Yes, I have been much blamed," he said, "both for that war and the peace... but everything came at the right time. *Tout vient à point à celui qui sait attendre.* * And there were as many advisers there as here..." he went on, returning to the subject of "advisers" which evidently occupied him. "Ah, those advisers!" said he. "If we had listened to them all we should not have made peace with Turkey and should not have been through with that war. Everything in haste, but more haste, less speed. Kámenski would have been lost if he had not died. He stormed fortresses with thirty thousand men. It is not difficult to capture a fortress but it is difficult to win a campaign. For that, not storming and attacking but patience and time are wanted. Kámenski sent soldiers to Rustchuk, but I only employed these two things and took more fortresses than Kámenski and made them Turks eat horseflesh!" He swayed his head. "And the French shall too, believe me," he went on, growing warmer and beating his chest, "I'll make them eat horseflesh!" And tears again dimmed his eyes.

* "Everything comes in time to him who knows how to wait."

"But shan't we have to accept battle?" remarked Prince Andrew.

"We shall if everybody wants it; it can't be helped.... But believe me, my dear boy, there is nothing stronger than those two: patience and time, they will do it all. But the advisers *n'entendent pas de cette oreille, voilà le mal.* * Some want a thing—others don't. What's one to do?" he asked, evidently expecting an answer. "Well, what do you want us to do?" he repeated and his eye shone with a deep, shrewd look. "I'll tell you what to do," he continued, as Prince Andrew still did not reply: "I will tell you what to do, and what I do. *Dans le doute, mon cher,*" he paused, "*abstiens-toi*" *(2)—he articulated the French proverb deliberately.

* "Don't see it that way, that's the trouble."

*(2) "When in doubt, my dear fellow, do nothing."

"Well, good-by, my dear fellow; remember that with all my heart I share

your sorrow, and that for you I am not a Serene Highness, nor a prince, nor a commander in chief, but a father! If you want anything come straight to me. Good-by, my dear boy.”

Again he embraced and kissed Prince Andrew, but before the latter had left the room Kutúzov gave a sigh of relief and went on with his unfinished novel, *Les Chevaliers du Cygne* by Madame de Genlis.

Prince Andrew could not have explained how or why it was, but after that interview with Kutúzov he went back to his regiment reassured as to the general course of affairs and as to the man to whom it had been entrusted. The more he realized the absence of all personal motive in that old man—in whom there seemed to remain only the habit of passions, and in place of an intellect (grouping events and drawing conclusions) only the capacity calmly to contemplate the course of events—the more reassured he was that everything would be as it should. “He will not bring in any plan of his own. He will not devise or undertake anything,” thought Prince Andrew, “but he will hear everything, remember everything, and put everything in its place. He will not hinder anything useful nor allow anything harmful. He understands that there is something stronger and more important than his own will—the inevitable course of events, and he can see them and grasp their significance, and seeing that significance can refrain from meddling and renounce his personal wish directed to something else. And above all,” thought Prince Andrew, “one believes in him because he’s Russian, despite the novel by Genlis and the French proverbs, and because his voice shook when he said: ‘What they have brought us to!’ and had a sob in it when he said he would ‘make them eat horseflesh!’”

On such feelings, more or less dimly shared by all, the unanimity and general approval were founded with which, despite court influences, the popular choice of Kutúzov as commander in chief was received.