

CHAPTER IX

Scarcely had Pierre laid his head on the pillow before he felt himself falling asleep, but suddenly, almost with the distinctness of reality, he heard the boom, boom, boom of firing, the thud of projectiles, groans and cries, and smelled blood and powder, and a feeling of horror and dread of death seized him. Filled with fright he opened his eyes and lifted his head from under his cloak. All was tranquil in the yard. Only someone's orderly passed through the gateway, splashing through the mud, and talked to the innkeeper. Above Pierre's head some pigeons, disturbed by the movement he had made in sitting up, fluttered under the dark roof of the penthouse. The whole courtyard was permeated by a strong peaceful smell of stable yards, delightful to Pierre at that moment. He could see the clear starry sky between the dark roofs of two penthouses.

"Thank God, there is no more of that!" he thought, covering up his head again. "Oh, what a terrible thing is fear, and how shamefully I yielded to it! But they... they were steady and calm all the time, to the end..." thought he.

They, in Pierre's mind, were the soldiers, those who had been at the battery, those who had given him food, and those who had prayed before the icon. They, those strange men he had not previously known, stood out clearly and sharply from everyone else.

"To be a soldier, just a soldier!" thought Pierre as he fell asleep, "to enter communal life completely, to be imbued by what makes them what they are. But how to cast off all the superfluous, devilish burden of my outer man? There was a time when I could have done it. I could have run away from my father, as I wanted to. Or I might have been sent to serve as a soldier after the duel with Dólokhov." And the memory of the dinner at the English Club when he had challenged Dólokhov flashed through Pierre's mind, and then he remembered his benefactor at Torzhók. And now a picture of a solemn meeting of the lodge presented itself to his mind. It was taking place at the English Club and someone near and dear to him sat at the end of the table. "Yes, that is he! It is my benefactor. But he died!" thought Pierre. "Yes, he died, and I did not know he was alive. How sorry I am that he died, and how glad I am that he is alive again!" On one side of the table sat Anatole, Dólokhov, Nesvítski, Denísov, and others like them (in his dream the category to which these men belonged was as clearly defined in his mind as the category of those he termed they), and he heard those people, Anatole and Dólokhov, shouting and singing loudly; yet through their shouting the voice of his benefactor was heard speaking all the time and the sound of his words was as weighty and uninterrupted as the booming on the battlefield, but pleasant and comforting. Pierre did not understand what his benefactor was saying, but he knew (the categories of thoughts were also quite distinct in his dream) that he was talking of goodness and the possibility of being what they were. And they with their simple, kind, firm faces surrounded his benefactor on all sides. But though they were kindly they did not look at Pierre and did not know him. Wishing to speak and to attract their attention, he got up, but at that moment his legs grew cold and bare.

He felt ashamed, and with one arm covered his legs from which his cloak had in fact slipped. For a moment as he was rearranging his cloak Pierre opened his eyes and saw the same penthouse roofs, posts, and yard, but now they were all bluish, lit up, and glittering with frost or dew.

“It is dawn,” thought Pierre. “But that’s not what I want. I want to hear and understand my benefactor’s words.” Again he covered himself up with his cloak, but now neither the lodge nor his benefactor was there. There were only thoughts clearly expressed in words, thoughts that someone was uttering or that he himself was formulating.

Afterwards when he recalled those thoughts Pierre was convinced that someone outside himself had spoken them, though the impressions of that day had evoked them. He had never, it seemed to him, been able to think and express his thoughts like that when awake.

“To endure war is the most difficult subordination of man’s freedom to the law of God,” the voice had said. “Simplicity is submission to the will of God; you cannot escape from Him. And they are simple. They do not talk, but act. The spoken word is silver but the unspoken is golden. Man can be master of nothing while he fears death, but he who does not fear it possesses all. If there were no suffering, man would not know his limitations, would not know himself. The hardest thing (Pierre went on thinking, or hearing, in his dream) is to be able in your soul to unite the meaning of all. To unite all?” he asked himself. “No, not to unite. Thoughts cannot be united, but to harness all these thoughts together is what we need! Yes, one must harness them, must harness them!” he repeated to himself with inward rapture, feeling that these words and they alone expressed what he wanted to say and solved the question that tormented him.

“Yes, one must harness, it is time to harness.”

“Time to harness, time to harness, your excellency! Your excellency!” some voice was repeating. “We must harness, it is time to harness....”

It was the voice of the groom, trying to wake him. The sun shone straight into Pierre’s face. He glanced at the dirty innyard in the middle of which soldiers were watering their lean horses at the pump while carts were passing out of the gate. Pierre turned away with repugnance, and closing his eyes quickly fell back on the carriage seat. “No, I don’t want that, I don’t want to see and understand that. I want to understand what was revealing itself to me in my dream. One second more and I should have understood it all! But what am I to do? Harness, but how can I harness everything?” and Pierre felt with horror that the meaning of all he had seen and thought in the dream had been destroyed.

The groom, the coachman, and the innkeeper told Pierre that an officer had come with news that the French were already near Mozháysk and that our men were leaving it.

Pierre got up and, having told them to harness and overtake him, went on foot through the town.

The troops were moving on, leaving about ten thousand wounded behind them. There were wounded in the yards, at the windows of the houses, and the streets were crowded with them. In the streets, around carts that were to take some of the wounded away, shouts, curses, and blows could be heard. Pierre offered the use of his carriage, which had overtaken him, to a wounded general he knew, and drove with him to Moscow. On the way Pierre was told of the death of his brother-in-law Anatole and of that of Prince Andrew.