

## CHAPTER XI

In the middle of this fresh tale Pierre was summoned to the commander in chief.

When he entered the private room Count Rostopchín, puckering his face, was rubbing his forehead and eyes with his hand. A short man was saying something, but when Pierre entered he stopped speaking and went out.

“Ah, how do you do, great warrior?” said Rostopchín as soon as the short man had left the room. “We have heard of your prowess. But that’s not the point. Between ourselves, mon cher, do you belong to the Masons?” he went on severely, as though there were something wrong about it which he nevertheless intended to pardon. Pierre remained silent. “I am well informed, my friend, but I am aware that there are Masons and I hope that you are not one of those who on pretense of saving mankind wish to ruin Russia.”

“Yes, I am a Mason,” Pierre replied.

“There, you see, mon cher! I expect you know that Messrs. Speránski and Magnítski have been deported to their proper place. Mr. Klyucharëv has been treated in the same way, and so have others who on the plea of building up the temple of Solomon have tried to destroy the temple of their fatherland. You can understand that there are reasons for this and that I could not have exiled the Postmaster had he not been a harmful person. It has now come to my knowledge that you lent him your carriage for his removal from town, and that you have even accepted papers from him for safe custody. I like you and don’t wish you any harm and—as you are only half my age—I advise you, as a father would, to cease all communication with men of that stamp and to leave here as soon as possible.”

“But what did Klyucharëv do wrong, Count?” asked Pierre.

“That is for me to know, but not for you to ask,” shouted Rostopchín.

“If he is accused of circulating Napoleon’s proclamation it is not proved that he did so,” said Pierre without looking at Rostopchín, “and Vereshchágin...”

“There we are!” Rostopchín shouted at Pierre louder than before, frowning suddenly. “Vereshchágin is a renegade and a traitor who will be punished as he deserves,” said he with the vindictive heat with which people speak when recalling an insult. “But I did not summon you to discuss my actions, but to give you advice—or an order if you prefer it. I beg you to leave the town and break off all communication with such men as Klyucharëv. And I will knock the nonsense out of anybody”—but probably realizing that he was shouting at Bezúkhov who so far was not guilty of anything, he added, taking Pierre’s hand in a friendly manner, “We are on the eve of a public disaster and I haven’t time to be polite to everybody who has business with me. My head is sometimes in a whirl. Well, mon cher, what are you doing personally?”

“Why, nothing,” answered Pierre without raising his eyes or changing the thoughtful expression of his face.

The count frowned.

“A word of friendly advice, mon cher. Be off as soon as you can, that’s all I have to tell you. Happy he who has ears to hear. Good-by, my dear fellow. Oh, by the by!” he shouted through the doorway after Pierre, “is it true that the countess has fallen into the clutches of the holy fathers of the Society of Jesus?”

Pierre did not answer and left Rostopchín’s room more sullen and angry than he had ever before shown himself.

When he reached home it was already getting dark. Some eight people had come to see him that evening: the secretary of a committee, the colonel of his battalion, his steward, his major-domo, and various petitioners. They all had business with Pierre and wanted decisions from him. Pierre did not understand and was not interested in any of these questions and only answered them in order to get rid of these people. When left alone at last he opened and read his wife’s letter.

“They, the soldiers at the battery, Prince Andrew killed... that old man... Simplicity is submission to God. Suffering is necessary... the meaning of all... one must harness... my wife is getting married... One must forget and understand...” And going to his bed he threw himself on it without undressing and immediately fell asleep.

When he awoke next morning the major-domo came to inform him that a special messenger, a police officer, had come from Count Rostopchín to know whether Count Bezúkhov had left or was leaving the town.

A dozen persons who had business with Pierre were awaiting him in the drawing room. Pierre dressed hurriedly and, instead of going to see them, went to the back porch and out through the gate.

From that time till the end of the destruction of Moscow no one of Bezúkhov’s household, despite all the search they made, saw Pierre again or knew where he was.