

## CHAPTER XXI

The Russian troops were passing through Moscow from two o'clock at night till two in the afternoon and bore away with them the wounded and the last of the inhabitants who were leaving.

The greatest crush during the movement of the troops took place at the Stone, Moskvá, and Yaúza bridges.

While the troops, dividing into two parts when passing around the Krémlin, were thronging the Moskvá and the Stone bridges, a great many soldiers, taking advantage of the stoppage and congestion, turned back from the bridges and slipped stealthily and silently past the church of Vasíli the Beatified and under the Borovítski gate, back up the hill to the Red Square where some instinct told them they could easily take things not belonging to them. Crowds of the kind seen at cheap sales filled all the passages and alleys of the Bazaar. But there were no dealers with voices of ingratiating affability inviting customers to enter; there were no hawkers, nor the usual motley crowd of female purchasers—but only soldiers, in uniforms and overcoats though without muskets, entering the Bazaar empty-handed and silently making their way out through its passages with bundles. Tradesmen and their assistants (of whom there were but few) moved about among the soldiers quite bewildered. They unlocked their shops and locked them up again, and themselves carried goods away with the help of their assistants. On the square in front of the Bazaar were drummers beating the muster call. But the roll of the drums did not make the looting soldiers run in the direction of the drum as formerly, but made them, on the contrary, run farther away. Among the soldiers in the shops and passages some men were to be seen in gray coats, with closely shaven heads. Two officers, one with a scarf over his uniform and mounted on a lean, dark-gray horse, the other in an overcoat and on foot, stood at the corner of Ilyínka Street, talking. A third officer galloped up to them.

“The general orders them all to be driven out at once, without fail. This is outrageous! Half the men have dispersed.”

“Where are you off to?... Where?...” he shouted to three infantrymen without muskets who, holding up the skirts of their overcoats, were slipping past him into the Bazaar passage. “Stop, you rascals!”

“But how are you going to stop them?” replied another officer. “There is no getting them together. The army should push on before the rest bolt, that's all!”

“How can one push on? They are stuck there, wedged on the bridge, and don't move. Shouldn't we put a cordon round to prevent the rest from running away?”

“Come, go in there and drive them out!” shouted the senior officer.

The officer in the scarf dismounted, called up a drummer, and went with him into the arcade. Some soldiers started running away in a group. A

shopkeeper with red pimples on his cheeks near the nose, and a calm, persistent, calculating expression on his plump face, hurriedly and ostentatiously approached the officer, swinging his arms.

“Your honor!” said he. “Be so good as to protect us! We won’t grudge trifles, you are welcome to anything—we shall be delighted! Pray!... I’ll fetch a piece of cloth at once for such an honorable gentleman, or even two pieces with pleasure. For we feel how it is; but what’s all this—sheer robbery! If you please, could not guards be placed if only to let us close the shop....”

Several shopkeepers crowded round the officer.

“Eh, what twaddle!” said one of them, a thin, stern-looking man. “When one’s head is gone one doesn’t weep for one’s hair! Take what any of you like!” And flourishing his arm energetically he turned sideways to the officer.

“It’s all very well for you, Iván Sidórych, to talk,” said the first tradesman angrily. “Please step inside, your honor!”

“Talk indeed!” cried the thin one. “In my three shops here I have a hundred thousand rubles’ worth of goods. Can they be saved when the army has gone? Eh, what people! ‘Against God’s might our hands can’t fight.’”

“Come inside, your honor!” repeated the tradesman, bowing.

The officer stood perplexed and his face showed indecision.

“It’s not my business!” he exclaimed, and strode on quickly down one of the passages.

From one open shop came the sound of blows and vituperation, and just as the officer came up to it a man in a gray coat with a shaven head was flung out violently.

This man, bent double, rushed past the tradesman and the officer. The officer pounced on the soldiers who were in the shops, but at that moment fearful screams reached them from the huge crowd on the Moskvá bridge and the officer ran out into the square.

“What is it? What is it?” he asked, but his comrade was already galloping off past Vasíli the Beatified in the direction from which the screams came.

The officer mounted his horse and rode after him. When he reached the bridge he saw two unlimbered guns, the infantry crossing the bridge, several overturned carts, and frightened and laughing faces among the troops. Beside the cannon a cart was standing to which two horses were harnessed. Four borzois with collars were pressing close to the wheels. The cart was loaded high, and at the very top, beside a child’s chair with its legs in the air, sat a peasant woman uttering piercing and desperate shrieks. He was told by his fellow officers that the screams of the crowd and the shrieks of the woman were due to the fact that

General Ermólov, coming up to the crowd and learning that soldiers were dispersing among the shops while crowds of civilians blocked the bridge, had ordered two guns to be unlimbered and made a show of firing at the bridge. The crowd, crushing one another, upsetting carts, and shouting and squeezing desperately, had cleared off the bridge and the troops were now moving forward.