

CHAPTER XXX

The glow of the first fire that began on the second of September was watched from the various roads by the fugitive Muscovites and by the retreating troops, with many different feelings.

The Rostóv party spent the night at Mytíshchi, fourteen miles from Moscow. They had started so late on the first of September, the road had been so blocked by vehicles and troops, so many things had been forgotten for which servants were sent back, that they had decided to spend that night at a place three miles out of Moscow. The next morning they woke late and were again delayed so often that they only got as far as Great Mytíshchi. At ten o'clock that evening the Rostóv family and the wounded traveling with them were all distributed in the yards and huts of that large village. The Rostóvs' servants and coachmen and the orderlies of the wounded officers, after attending to their masters, had supper, fed the horses, and came out into the porches.

In a neighboring hut lay Raévski's adjutant with a fractured wrist. The awful pain he suffered made him moan incessantly and piteously, and his moaning sounded terrible in the darkness of the autumn night. He had spent the first night in the same yard as the Rostóvs. The countess said she had been unable to close her eyes on account of his moaning, and at Mytíshchi she moved into a worse hut simply to be farther away from the wounded man.

In the darkness of the night one of the servants noticed, above the high body of a coach standing before the porch, the small glow of another fire. One glow had long been visible and everybody knew that it was Little Mytíshchi burning—set on fire by Mamónov's Cossacks.

"But look here, brothers, there's another fire!" remarked an orderly.

All turned their attention to the glow.

"But they told us Little Mytíshchi had been set on fire by Mamónov's Cossacks."

"But that's not Mytíshchi, it's farther away."

"Look, it must be in Moscow!"

Two of the gazers went round to the other side of the coach and sat down on its steps.

"It's more to the left, why, Little Mytíshchi is over there, and this is right on the other side."

Several men joined the first two.

"See how it's flaring," said one. "That's a fire in Moscow: either in the Sushchévski or the Rogózhski quarter."

No one replied to this remark and for some time they all gazed silently at the spreading flames of the second fire in the distance.

Old Daniel Teréntich, the count's valet (as he was called), came up to the group and shouted at Míshka.

“What are you staring at, you good-for-nothing?... The count will be calling and there's nobody there; go and gather the clothes together.”

“I only ran out to get some water,” said Míshka.

“But what do you think, Daniel Teréntich? Doesn't it look as if that glow were in Moscow?” remarked one of the footmen.

Daniel Teréntich made no reply, and again for a long time they were all silent. The glow spread, rising and falling, farther and farther still.

“God have mercy.... It's windy and dry...” said another voice.

“Just look! See what it's doing now. O Lord! You can even see the crows flying. Lord have mercy on us sinners!”

“They'll put it out, no fear!”

“Who's to put it out?” Daniel Teréntich, who had hitherto been silent, was heard to say. His voice was calm and deliberate. “Moscow it is, brothers,” said he. “Mother Moscow, the white...” his voice faltered, and he gave way to an old man's sob.

And it was as if they had all only waited for this to realize the significance for them of the glow they were watching. Sighs were heard, words of prayer, and the sobbing of the count's old valet.