

## CHAPTER V

Next day the decrepit Kutúzov, having given orders to be called early, said his prayers, dressed, and, with an unpleasant consciousness of having to direct a battle he did not approve of, got into his calèche and drove from Letashóvka (a village three and a half miles from Tarútino) to the place where the attacking columns were to meet. He sat in the calèche, dozing and waking up by turns, and listening for any sound of firing on the right as an indication that the action had begun. But all was still quiet. A damp dull autumn morning was just dawning. On approaching Tarútino Kutúzov noticed cavalymen leading their horses to water across the road along which he was driving. Kutúzov looked at them searchingly, stopped his carriage, and inquired what regiment they belonged to. They belonged to a column that should have been far in front and in ambush long before then. "It may be a mistake," thought the old commander in chief. But a little further on he saw infantry regiments with their arms piled and the soldiers, only partly dressed, eating their rye porridge and carrying fuel. He sent for an officer. The officer reported that no order to advance had been received.

"How! Not rec..." Kutúzov began, but checked himself immediately and sent for a senior officer. Getting out of his calèche, he waited with drooping head and breathing heavily, pacing silently up and down. When Eýkhen, the officer of the general staff whom he had summoned, appeared, Kutúzov went purple in the face, not because that officer was to blame for the mistake, but because he was an object of sufficient importance for him to vent his wrath on. Trembling and panting the old man fell into that state of fury in which he sometimes used to roll on the ground, and he fell upon Eýkhen, threatening him with his hands, shouting and loading him with gross abuse. Another man, Captain Brózin, who happened to turn up and who was not at all to blame, suffered the same fate.

"What sort of another blackguard are you? I'll have you shot! Scoundrels!" yelled Kutúzov in a hoarse voice, waving his arms and reeling.

He was suffering physically. He, the commander in chief, a Serene Highness who everybody said possessed powers such as no man had ever had in Russia, to be placed in this position—made the laughingstock of the whole army! "I needn't have been in such a hurry to pray about today, or have kept awake thinking everything over all night," thought he to himself. "When I was a chit of an officer no one would have dared to mock me so... and now!" He was in a state of physical suffering as if from corporal punishment, and could not avoid expressing it by cries of anger and distress. But his strength soon began to fail him, and looking about him, conscious of having said much that was amiss, he again got into his calèche and drove back in silence.

His wrath, once expended, did not return, and blinking feebly he listened to excuses and self-justifications (Ermólov did not come to see him till the next day) and to the insistence of Bennigsen, Konovnítsyn, and Toll that the movement that had miscarried should be executed next

day. And once more Kutúzov had to consent.