

IN MAY 1855

I

Six months have passed since the first cannon ball whistled from the bastions of Sevastopol and threw up the earth of the enemy's entrenchments. Since then bullets, balls, and bombs by the thousand have been flying continually from the bastions to the entrenchments, and from the entrenchments to the bastions, and above them the angel of death has hovered unceasingly.

Thousands of human ambitions have had time to be wounded, thousands to be gratified and to expand, thousands to be lulled to rest in the arms of death. So many pink coffins and linen palls! And yet the same sounds from the bastions fill the air; still the French from their camp look with involuntary trepidation and fear at the yellowy earth of the bastions of Sevastopol, and count the embrasures from which the iron cannon frown fiercely; still the pilot from the elevation of the signal-station watches, as before, through the fixed telescope the bright-coloured figures of the French: their batteries, tents, their columns moving on the green hill, the puffs of smoke that rise from the entrenchments; and still, from many parts of the world, with the same ardour, crowds of different men, with still more different desires, stream to this fatal spot. But the question the diplomatists have not settled still remains unsolved by powder and blood.

II

In the besieged town of Sevastopol a regimental band played on the boulevard near the pavilion, and crowds of women and military men strolled along the paths making holiday. The bright spring sun had risen in the morning above the English entrenchments, had reached the bastions, then the town, the Nicholas Barracks, shining with equal joy on all, and was now sinking towards the distant blue sea, which, rocking in even motion, glittered with silvery light.

A tall infantry officer with a slight stoop, drawing on a presentable though not very white glove, passed out of the gate of one of the small sailors' houses built on the left side of the Morskáya Street, and, gazing thoughtfully at the ground, ascended the hill towards the boulevard. The expression of his plain face did not reveal great intellectual power, but rather good-nature, common-sense, honesty, and an inclination towards respectability. He was badly built, and seemed a bit shy and awkward in his movements. He wore a nearly new cap, a thin cloak of a rather peculiar lilacky shade, from under which was visible a gold watch-chain, trousers with foot-straps, and clean, shiny calf-skin boots. He might have been a German (but that his features indicated his purely Russian origin), or an adjutant, or a regimental quartermaster (but in that case he would have had spurs), or an officer transferred for the campaign from the cavalry or the Guards. He was, in fact, an officer who had exchanged from the cavalry, and as he ascended the hill towards the boulevard, he was thinking of a letter he had received from a former comrade now retired from the army, a landed

proprietor of the government of T——, and of his great friend, that comrade's wife, the pale, blue-eyed Natásha. He recalled one part of the letter, where his comrade wrote:—

“When we receive the *Invalide*,¹ Póupka” (so the retired Uhlan called his wife) “rushes headlong into the hall, seizes the paper, and runs with it to a seat in the *arbour* or the *drawing-room* (in which, you remember, we spent such jolly winter evenings when your regiment was stationed in our town), and reads of *your* heroic deeds with an ardour you cannot imagine. She often speaks of you. ‘There now,’ she says, ‘Miháylof is a *darling*. I am ready to cover him with kisses when I see him. He is *fighting on the bastions*, and is certain to get a St. George's Cross, and they'll write about him in the papers,’ etc., etc., so that I am beginning to be quite jealous of you.”

In another place he wrote: “The papers reach us awfully late, and though there are plenty of rumours, one cannot believe them all. For instance, those *young ladies with music* you know of were saying yesterday that Napoleon has been captured by our Cossacks and sent to St. Petersburg; but you can guess how much of this I believe. One fresh arrival from Petersburg tells us for certain (he is sent by the Minister on special business, a capital fellow, and now there is no one in the town you can't think what a *resource* he is to us), that we have taken Eupatoria, *so that the French are cut off from Balaclava*, and that we lost 200 in the affair and the French as many as 15,000. The wife was in such raptures that she *caroused* all night, and said that a presentiment made her certain you have distinguished yourself in that affair.”

¹ *The Army and Navy Gazette.*

In spite of the words and expressions I have purposely underlined, and the whole tone of the letter, Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof thought with an inexpressibly melancholy pleasure of his pale-faced provincial friend, and how in the evening he used to sit with her in the arbour talking *sentiment*. He thought of his kind comrade the Uhlan; how the latter used to get angry and lose when they played cards in the study for kopéyka points, and how his wife used to laugh at him. He recalled the friendship these people had for him (perhaps he thought there was something more on the side of the pale-faced friend): these people and their surroundings fitted through his memory in a wonderfully sweet, joyously rosy light, and, smiling at the recollection, he put his hand to the pocket where this *dear* letter lay.

From these recollections Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof involuntarily passed to dreams and hopes. "How surprised and pleased Natásha will be," he thought as he passed along a narrow side-street, "when she reads in the *Invalide* of my being the first to climb on the cannon, and receiving the St. George! I ought to be made full Captain on that former recommendation. Then I may easily become Major already this year by seniority, because so many of our fellows have been killed, and no doubt many more will be killed this campaign. Then there'll be more fighting, and I, as a well-known man, shall be entrusted with a regiment . . . then Lieutenant-Colonel, the order of St. Anne . . . a Colonel" . . . and he was already a General, honouring with a visit Natásha, the widow of his comrade (who would be dead by that time according to the day-dream), when the sounds of the music on the boulevard reached his ears more distinctly, a crowd

of people appeared before his eyes, and he awoke on the boulevard a Lieutenant-Captain of infantry as before.

III

He went first to the pavilion, near which was the band. Instead of music-stands, other soldiers of the same regiment were holding the music-books open before the players, and, looking on rather than listening, stood a circle of clerks, junkers,¹ and nursemaids with children. Most of the people who were standing, sitting, and sauntering round the pavilion were naval officers, adjutants, and white-gloved army officers. Along the broad avenue of the boulevard walked officers of all sorts and women of all sorts—a few of the latter in hats, but the greater part with kerchiefs on their heads (and some without either kerchiefs or hats)—but it was remarkable that there was not a single old woman amongst them—all were young. Lower down, in the scented alleys shaded by the white acacias, isolated groups sat or strolled.

No one was particularly glad to meet Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof on the boulevard, except, perhaps, Captain Obzhógof of his regiment, and Captain Sòuslikof, who pressed his hand warmly; but the first of these wore camel's-hair trousers, no gloves, and a shabby overcoat, and his face was red and perspiring, and the

¹ The term junker, borrowed from the German and pronounced yunker, is used in Russian in more than one sense, but at the time of the Crimean war it meant a volunteer, usually of good family, who had not yet received a commission, but was not treated as a private, and on an emergency was allowed to take an officer's duty.

second shouted so loud, and was so free and easy, that one felt ashamed to be seen walking with him, especially by those white-gloved officers (to one of them, an Adjutant, Miháylof bowed, and he might have bowed to another, a Staff-Officer whom he had twice met at the house of a mutual acquaintance). Besides, what was the fun of walking with Obzhógof and Sòuslikof, when, as it was, he met them and shook hands with them six times a day? Was this what he had come to hear *the music* for?

He would have liked to accost the Adjutant whom he had bowed to, and to talk with those gentlemen; not at all that he wanted Captains Obzhógof and Sòuslikof and Lieutenant Pashtétsky and others to see him talking to them, but simply because they were pleasant people, who knew all the news, and might have told him something.

But why is Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof afraid, and unable to muster courage to approach them? "And supposing they don't return my greeting," he thinks, "or merely bow and go on talking among themselves as if I were not there, or simply walk away and leave me standing among the *aristocrats*?" The word *aristocrats* (in the sense of the highest, select circle of any class) has lately gained great popularity in Russia, where one would think it ought not to exist. It has made its way to every part of the country and into every grade of society that is reached by vanity (and to what conditions of time and circumstance does this pitiful propensity not reach?). It is found among merchants, officials, clerks, officers,—in Sarátov, Mamadíshi, Vinnitza: wherever men are found. And since in the besieged town of Sevastopol there are many men, and consequently much vanity, the *aristocrats* are here also,

though death hangs over each one, be he aristocrat or not.

To Captain Obzhógof, Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof was an aristocrat, and to Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof, Adjutant Kalóúgin was an aristocrat, because he was an adjutant and intimate with another adjutant. To Adjutant Kalóúgin, Count Nórdof was an aristocrat, because he was an aide-de-camp to the Emperor.

Vanity! vanity! vanity! everywhere, even on the brink of the grave and among men ready to die for a lofty cause. Vanity! It seems to be the characteristic feature and special malady of our time. How is it that among our predecessors no mention was made of this passion, as of small-pox and cholera? How is it that in our time there are only three kinds of people: those who, considering vanity an inevitably existing fact and therefore justifiable, freely submit to it; those who regard it as a sad but unavoidable condition; and those who act unconsciously and slavishly under its influence? Why did our Homers and Shakespears speak of love, glory, and suffering, while the literature of to-day is an endless story of snobbery and vanity?

Twice the Lieutenant-Captain passed irresolutely by the group of *his aristocrats*, but drawing near them for the third time he made an effort and walked up to them. The group consisted of four officers: Adjutant Kalóúgin, Miháylof's acquaintance; Adjutant Prince Gáltsin, who was rather an aristocrat even for Kalóúgin himself; Lieutenant-Colonel Nefyórdof, one of the so-called "two hundred and twenty-two" society men (who, being on the retired list, re-entered the army for this war); and Cavalry Captain Praskóúhin, also of the "two hundred and twenty-two." Luckily for

Miháylof, Kalóugin was in splendid spirits (the General had just spoken to him in a very confidential manner, and Prince Gáltsin, who had arrived from Petersburg, was staying with him), so he did not think it beneath his dignity to shake hands with Miháylof, which was more than Praskóuhin did, though he had often met Miháylof on the bastion, had more than once drunk his wine and *vódka*, and even owed him twelve and a half roubles lost at cards. Not being yet well acquainted with Prince Gáltsin, he did not like to appear to be acquainted with a mere lieutenant-captain of infantry. So he only bowed slightly.

"Well, Captain," said Kalóugin, "when will you be visiting the bastion again? Do you remember our meeting at the Schwartz Redoubt? Things were hot, weren't they, eh?"

"Yes, very," said Miháylof, and he remembered how, when making his way along the trench to the bastion, he had met Kalóugin, walking along courageously, and smartly clanking his sabre.

"My turn's to-morrow by rights, but we have an officer ill," continued Miháylof, "so——"

He wanted to say that it was not his turn, but as the Commander of the 8th Company was ill, and only the Ensign was left in the company, he felt it his duty to offer to go in place of Lieutenant Nepshisétsky, and would therefore be at the bastion that evening. But Kalóugin did not hear him out.

"I feel sure that something is going to happen in a day or two," he said to Prince Gáltsin.

"How about to-day? will nothing happen to-day?" Miháylof asked shyly, looking first at Kalóugin and then at Gáltsin.

No one replied. Prince Gáltsin only puckered up

his face in a curious way, and looking over Miháylof's cap, said, after a short silence—

“Fine girl that, with the red kerchief. Don't you know her, Captain?”

“She lives near my lodgings, she's a sailor's daughter,” answered the Lieutenant-Captain.

“Come, let's have a good look at her.”

And Prince Gáltsin gave one of his arms to Kalóugin and the other to the Lieutenant-Captain, knowing he would thereby confer great pleasure on the latter, as was really the case.

The Lieutenant-Captain was superstitious, and considered it a great sin to amuse himself with women before going into action; but on this occasion he pretended to be a *roué*, which Prince Gáltsin and Kalóugin evidently did not believe, and which greatly surprised the girl with the red kerchief, who had more than once noticed how the Lieutenant-Captain blushed when he passed her window. Praskóuhin walked behind them, and kept touching Prince Gáltsin's arm and making various remarks in French; but as four people could not walk abreast on the path, he was obliged to go alone, until, on the second round, he took the arm of a well-known brave naval officer, Servyágin, who came up and spoke to him, being also anxious to join the aristocrats. And the well-known hero gladly passed his honest, muscular hand under the elbow of Praskóuhin, whom everybody, including especially Servyágin himself, knew to be a man no better than he should be. When (wishing to explain to Prince Gáltsin his acquaintance with this sailor) Praskóuhin whispered that this was the well-known hero, Prince Gáltsin, who had been on the Fourth Bastion the day before and had seen a shell burst at some

twenty yards' distance, considering himself not less courageous than the newcomer and believing that many reputations are obtained by luck, paid not the slightest attention to Servyágin.

Lieutenant-Captain Miháylof found it so pleasant to walk in this company that he forgot his *dear* letter from 'T—, and his gloomy forebodings at the thought of having to go to the bastion. He remained with them till they began talking exclusively among themselves, avoiding his eyes to show that he might go, and at last walked away from him. But, all the same, the Lieutenant-Captain was contented, and when he passed Junker Baron Pesth, who was particularly conceited and self-satisfied since the previous night (when for the first time in his life he had been in the bomb-proof of the Fifth Bastion, and had consequently become a hero in his own estimation), he (the Captain) was not at all hurt by the suspiciously haughty expression with which the Junker saluted him.

IV

But hardly had the Lieutenant-Captain crossed the threshold of his lodgings, when very different thoughts entered his head. He saw his little room with its uneven earth floor, its crooked windows, the broken panes mended with paper, his old bedstead with two Tóula pistols and a rug (showing a lady on horseback) nailed to the wall above it,¹ as well as the dirty bed of the Junker who lived with him, with its cotton quilt. He saw his man, Nikíta, with his rough, greasy hair, rise,

¹ A common way in Russia of protecting a bed from the damp or cold of a wall is to nail a rug or carpet to the wall by the side of the bed.

scratching himself, from the floor ; he saw his old cloak, his common boots, a little bundle tied in a handkerchief, prepared for him to take to the bastion, from which peeped a bit of cheese and the neck of a porter bottle containing *vódka*,—and he suddenly remembered that he had to go with his company to spend the whole of the night at the lodgments.

“ I shall certainly be killed to-night,” thought the Lieutenant-Captain ; “ I feel I shall. And really there was no need for me to go,—I offered of my own accord. And it’s always so : the one who offers himself always does get killed. And what is the matter with that confounded Nepshisétsky ? He may not be ill at all ; and they’ll go and kill a man because of him—they certainly will. However, if they don’t kill me I shall surely be recommended for promotion. I saw how pleased the Regimental Commander was when I said, ‘ Allow me to go if Lieutenant Nepshisétsky is ill.’ If I’m not made a Major, then I’ll get the Order of Vladímir for certain. Why, I am going to the bastion for the thirteenth time. Oh dear, the thirteenth ! unlucky number ! I am certain to be killed ; I feel I shall ; . . . but somebody had to go : the company can’t go with only an Ensign. Supposing something was to happen. . . . Why, the honour of the regiment, the honour of the army is at stake. It is my *duty* to go. Yes, my sacred duty. . . . But I have a presentiment.”

The Lieutenant-Captain forgot that it was not the first time he had felt this presentiment, that, in a greater or lesser degree, he had it whenever he was going to the bastion, and he did not know that, more or less strongly, every one has such forebodings before going into action. Having calmed himself by appealing to his sense of duty—which was highly developed

in him and very strong—the Lieutenant-Captain sat down to the table and began writing a farewell letter to his father. Ten minutes later, having finished his letter, he rose from the table, his eyes wet with tears, and, repeating mentally all the prayers he knew, he began to dress. His rather tipsy and rude servant lazily handed him his new cloak (the old one, which the Lieutenant-Captain usually wore at the bastion, was not mended).

“Why is my cloak not mended? You do nothing but sleep,” said Miháylof angrily.

“How sleep?” grumbled Nikíta; “one does nothing but run about like a dog the whole day—gets fagged, and mayn’t even fall asleep!”

“I see you are again drunk.”

“It’s not on your money if I am, so you needn’t scold me.”

“Hold your tongue, blockhead!” shouted the Lieutenant-Captain, ready to strike the man.

Upset before, he was now quite out of patience and offended at the rudeness of Nikíta, whom he was fond of, and even spoilt, and who had lived with him for the last twelve years.

“Blockhead? blockhead?” repeated the servant. “And why do you, sir, abuse me and call me blockhead? You know what times these are? It is not right to scold.”

Miháylof remembered where he was going, and felt ashamed.

“But you know, Nikíta, you would try any one’s patience!” he said mildly. “That letter on the table to my father you may leave where it is; don’t touch it,” he added, reddening.

“Yes, sir,” said Nikíta, becoming sentimental under

the influence of the *vódka* he had drunk, as he said, on his own money, and blinking with an evident inclination to weep.

But when, at the porch, the Lieutenant-Captain said "Good-bye, Nikíta," Nikíta burst into forced sobs and rushed to kiss his master's hand, saying "Good-bye, sir," in a broken voice. A sailor's widow who also stood at the porch could not, as a woman, help joining in this tender scene, and began wiping her eyes on her dirty sleeve, saying something about people who, though they were gentlefolks, took such sufferings upon themselves, while she, poor woman, was left a widow. And she told the tipsy Nikíta for the hundredth time about her sorrows; how her husband had been killed in the first *bandagement*, and how her hut had been shattered (the one she lived in now was not her own), and so on. After his master was gone, Nikíta lit his pipe, asked the landlady's little girl to go for some *vódka*, very soon left off crying, and even had a quarrel with the old woman about a pail which he said she had smashed.

"But perhaps I shall only be wounded," reasoned the Lieutenant-Captain with himself, arriving at the bastion with his company in the twilight. "But where? and how?—here or here?" he said to himself, mentally pointing to his chest and his stomach. "Supposing it were here" (he thought of his thighs) "and went right round? . . . But suppose it's here, and with a piece of a bomb, then it's all up."

The Lieutenant-Captain, passing along the trenches, safely reached the lodgments. It was in perfect darkness that he and a sapper-officer set the men to their work, after which he sat down in a hole under the breastwork. There was little firing; only now and again on our side or *his* there was a lightning flash, and

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the brilliant fuse of a bomb formed a fiery arc on the dark, star-speckled sky. But all the bombs fell far beyond or far to the right of the lodgment where the Lieutenant-Captain sat in his hole. He drank some *vódka*, ate some cheese, smoked a cigarette, prayed, and felt inclined for sleep.

V

Prince Gáltsin, Lieutenant-Colonel Nefyórdof, and Praskóúhin, whom no one had invited and with whom no one spoke, but who yet stuck to them, went to Kalóúgin's to tea.

"But you did not finish telling me about Váska Méndel," said Kalóúgin, when he had taken off his cloak, and sat in a soft easy-chair by the window unbuttoning the collar of his clean, starched shirt. "How did he get married?"

"It was a joke, my boy! . . . *Je vous dis, il y avait un temps, on ne parlait que de ça à Petersbourg,*"¹ said Prince Gáltsin, laughing, as he jumped up from the piano-stool, and sat down near Kalóúgin on the window-sill,² "a capital joke. I know all about it." . . . And he told, amusingly, cleverly, and with animation, some love story which we will omit, as it does not interest us.

It was noticeable that not only Prince Gáltsin but each of these gentlemen who established themselves, one on the window-sill, another with his legs in the air, and a third by the piano, seemed quite different people now to what they had been on the boulevard. There

¹ "I tell you, at one time it was the only thing talked of in Petersburg."

² The thick walls of Russian houses allow ample space to sit or lounge by the windows.

was none of the absurd arrogance and haughtiness which they had shown towards the infantry officers; here among themselves they were natural, and Kalougin and Prince Gáltsin in particular showed themselves very nice, merry, and good-natured young fellows. Their conversation was about their Petersburg fellow-officers and acquaintances.

“What of Máslofsky?”

“Which one?—the Leib-Uhlan or the Horse Guard?”

“I know them both. The one in the Horse Guards I knew when he was a boy just out of school. But the eldest—is he a captain yet?”

“Oh yes, long ago.”

“Is he still fussing about with his gipsy?”

“No, he has dropped her. . . .” And so on, in the same strain.

Later on Prince Gáltsin went to the piano, and sang a gipsy song capitally. Praskouhin, chiming in, put in a second unasked, and did it so well that he was invited to continue, and this delighted him.

A servant brought tea, cream, and cracknels on a silver tray.

“Serve the Prince,” said Kalougin.

“Is it not strange to think,” said Gáltsin, taking his tea to the window, “that we’re in a besieged town, and here’s a *pi-aner-forty*, tea with cream, and a house such as I should really be glad to have in Petersburg?”

“Why, if we had not even that,” said the old, always dissatisfied Lieutenant-Colonel, “the continual uncertainty we are living in—seeing people killed day after day, and no end to it, would be intolerable. And to have dirt and discomfort added to it——”

“But our infantry officers,” said Kalougin, “they

live at the bastions with their men in the bomb-proofs, and eat soldiers' soup—what of them?"

"What of them? Well, though it's true they wear the same shirt for ten days at a time, they are heroes all the same—wonderful men."

Just then an infantry officer entered the room.

"I . . . I have orders . . . may I see the Gen . . . his Excellency? I have come with a message from General N.," he said, bowing shyly.

Kaloúgin rose, and, not returning the officer's bow, asked with an offensive, affected official smile if he would not have the goodness to wait; and without asking him to sit down or taking any further notice of him, turned to Gáltsin and began talking French, so that the poor officer, left alone in the middle of the room, did not in the least know what to do with himself.

"It is a matter of the utmost urgency, sir," said the officer, after a short silence.

"Ah! well, then, come if you please," said Kaloúgin, putting on his cloak, and accompanying the officer to the door.

"*Eh bien, messieurs, je crois, que cela chauffera cette nuit,*"¹ said Kaloúgin, when he returned from the General's.

"Ah! what is it?—a sortie?" asked the others.

"That I don't know; you will see for yourselves," replied Kaloúgin, with a mysterious smile.

"And my commander is at the bastion, so I suppose I must go too," said Praskoúhin, buckling on his sabre.

No one replied; it was his business to know whether he had to go or not.

¹ "Well, gentlemen, I think there will be warm work to-night."

Praskóúhin and Nefyórdof left, to go to their appointed posts.

"Good-bye, gentlemen. *Au revoir!* We'll meet again before the night is over," shouted Kalóúgin from the window, as Praskóúhin and Nefyórdof, stooping in their Cossack saddles, trotted past. The tramp of their Cossack horses soon died away in the dark street.

"*Non, dites moi, est-ce qu'il y aura véritablement quelque chose cette nuit,*"¹ said Gáltsin, as he lounged in the window-sill beside Kalóúgin, and watched the bombs that rose above the bastions.

"I can tell *you*, you see . . . you have been to the bastions? (Gáltsin nodded, though he had only once been to the Fourth Bastion.) You remember just in front of our lunette there is a trench," . . . and Kalóúgin, with the air of one who without being a specialist considers his military judgment very sound, began somewhat confusedly, and misusing the technical terms, to explain the position of the enemy and of our own works, and the plan of the intended action.

"But, I say, they're banging away at the lodgments. Oho! I wonder if that is ours or *his*? . . . Now it's burst," said they, as they lounged on the window-sill looking at the fiery trails of the bombs crossing one another in the air, at flashes that for a moment lit up the dark sky, at the puffs of white smoke, and listened to the more and more frequent reports of the fring.

"*Quel charmant coup d'œil! a?*"² said Kalóúgin, drawing his guest's attention to the really beautiful sight. "Do you know, you sometimes can't distinguish a bomb from a star."

¹ "No, tell me, will there really be anything on to-night?"

² "What a charming sight! eh?"

"Yes, I thought that was a star just now, and then saw it fall . . . there! it's burst. And that big star—what do you call it?—looks just like a bomb."

"Do you know, I am so used to these bombs that I am sure when I'm back in Russia, I shall think I see bombs every starlight night—one gets so used to them."

"But had not I better join this sortie?" said Prince Gáltsin, after a moment's pause.

"Humbug! my dear fellow! don't think of such a thing! Besides, I won't let you," answered Kalougin. "You will have plenty of opportunities later on!"

"Really? You think I need not go, eh?"

At that moment, from the direction in which these gentlemen were looking, amid the boom of the cannon came the terrible rattle of musketry, and thousands of little fires, flaming up in quick succession, flashed all along the line.

"There! now it's the real thing!" said Kalougin. "I can't keep cool when I hear the noise of muskets; it seems, you know, to seize one's very soul. There's an *hurrah!*" he added, listening intently to the distant and prolonged roar of hundreds of voices, "Ah—ah—ah," which came from the bastions.

"Whose *hurrah* was it? there's or ours?"

"I don't know, but it's hand-to-hand fighting now, for the firing has ceased."

At that moment an officer, followed by a Cossack, galloped under the window and alighted from his horse at the porch.

"Where from?"

"From the bastion. I want the General."

"Come along. Well, what's happened?"

"The lodgments have been attacked—and occupied—the French brought up tremendous reserves—

attacked us—we had only two battalions,” said the officer, panting. He was the same officer who had been there that evening, but though he was now out of breath, he walked with full self-possession to the door.

“Well, have we retreated?” asked Kaloúgin.

“No,” angrily replied the officer; “another battalion came up in time—we drove them back, but the Colonel is killed and many officers. I have orders to ask for reinforcements.”

And, saying this, he went with Kaloúgin to the General’s, where we shall not follow him.

Five minutes later Kaloúgin was already on his Cossack horse (again in the semi-Cossack manner which I have noticed that all Adjutants, for some reason, seem to consider the proper thing), and rode off at a trot towards the bastion to deliver some orders, and await the final result of the affair. Prince Gáltsin, under the influence of that oppressive excitement usually produced in a spectator by proximity to an action in which he is not engaged, went out and began aimlessly pacing up and down the street.

VI

Soldiers passed carrying the wounded on stretchers or leading them under their arms. It was quite dark in the streets; only here and there one saw lights, in the hospital windows or where some officers were sitting up. From the bastions still came the thunder of cannon and the rattle of muskets,¹ and the lights

¹ Rifles, except some clumsy *stutzers*, had not been introduced into the Russian army, but were used by the besiegers, who had a yet greater advantage in their artillery. It is characteristic of Tolstoy that, occupied with men rather than mechanics, he does not, in these Sketches, dwell on this disparity of weapons.

continued to flash in the dark sky as before. From time to time you heard trampling hoofs as an orderly galloped past, or the groans of a wounded man, the steps and voices of stretcher-bearers, or the words of some frightened women who had come out into their porches to watch the cannonade.

Among the spectators were our friend Nikíta, the old sailor's widow, with whom he had again made friends, and her ten-year-old daughter.

"O Lord God! Holy Mary, Mother of God!" said the old woman, sighing, as she looked at the bombs that kept flying across from side to side like balls of fire; "what horrors! what horrors! Ah, ah! oh, oh! Even at the first *bandagement* it wasn't like that. Look now, where the cursed thing has burst, just over our house in the suburb."

"No, that's further, they keep tumbling into Aunt Irena's garden," said the girl.

"And where, where is master now?" drawled Nikíta, who was not quite sober yet. "Oh! how I love that 'ere master of mine even I myself don't know. I love him so that, should he be killed in a sinful way, which God forbid, then, would you believe it, granny, after that I myself don't know what I wouldn't do to myself! S'elp me, I don't! . . . My master is that sort, there's only one word for it. Could one change him for such as them there, playing cards? What are they? Ugh! there's only one word for it!" concluded Nikíta, pointing to the lighted window of his master's room, to which, in the absence of the Lieutenant-Captain, the Junker Zhvadchévsky had invited Sub-Lieutenants Ougróvich and Népshisétsky (whose face was swollen), and was having a spree in honour of a medal he had received.

“Look at the stars, look at 'em, how they're rolling!” The little girl broke the silence that followed Nikita's words. She stood gazing at the sky. “Here's another rolled down. What is it a sign of, eh, mother?”

“They'll smash up our hut altogether,” said the old woman with a sigh, leaving her daughter unanswered.

“As we went there to-day with uncle, mother,” continued, in a sing-song tone, the little girl, who had become talkative, “there was such a b—i—g cannon-ball inside the room, close to the cupboard. *A'spose* it had smashed in through the passage, and right into the room, such a big one—you couldn't lift it.”

“Those who had husbands and money all moved away,” said the old woman, “and there's the hut, all that was left me, and that's been smashed. Just look at *him* blazing away! The fiend! . . . O Lord, O Lord!”

“And just as we were going out, comes a bomb fly—ing, and goes and bur—sts and co—o—vers us with dust. A bit of it nearly hit me and uncle.”

VII

More and more wounded, carried on stretchers, or walking supported by others and talking loudly, passed Prince Gáltsin.

“Up they sprang, friends,” said the bass voice of a tall soldier, carrying two guns over his shoulder, “up they sprang, shouting ‘Allah! Allah!’¹ and just climbing

¹ Our soldiers, fighting the Turks, have become so accustomed to this cry of the enemy, that they now always say that the French also shout Allah.—*L. T.*

one over another. You kill one, and another's there, you couldn't do anything; no end of 'em——"

But at this point in the story Gáltsin interrupted him.

"You are from the bastion?"

"Just so, y'r honour!"

"Well, what happened, tell me?"

"What happened? Well, y'r honour, such a force of 'em poured down on us over the rampart, it was all up. They quite overpowered us, y'r honour!"

"Overpowered? . . . but you repulsed them?"

"How's one to repulse 'em, when *his* whole force came on, killed all our men, and no re'forcements are given?"

The soldier was mistaken, the trench remained ours; but it is a curious fact, which any one may notice, that a soldier wounded in action always thinks the affair lost, and imagines it to have been a very bloody fight.

"How is that? I was told they had been repulsed," said Gáltsin irritably. "Perhaps they were driven back after you left? Is it long since you came away?"

"I am straight from there, y'r honour!" answered the soldier; "it is hardly possible; they must have kept the trench, *he* overpowered us quite."

"How are you not ashamed to have lost the trench? It's awful!" said Gáltsin, provoked at such indifference.

"What if *he'd* the force?" muttered the soldier.

"Ah, y'r honour," began a soldier from a stretcher which had just come up to them, "how could we help giving it up when *he* had killed almost all our men? If we had the force we wouldn't have given it up, not for nothing. But as it was what could one do? I stuck

one, and then something hits me. Oh, oh—h! steady, lads, steady! Oh, oh!” groaned the wounded man.

“Really, there seem too many men returning,” said Gáltsin, again stopping the same tall soldier with the two guns. “Why are you retiring? You there, stop!”

The soldier stopped, and took off his cap with his left hand.

“Where are you going, and why?” shouted Gáltsin severely; “you scoun——”

But having come close up to the soldier, Gáltsin noticed that no hand was visible beneath the soldier’s right cuff, and that the sleeve was soaked in blood to the elbow.

“I am wounded, y’r honour.”

“Wounded? How?”

“Here—must ‘a’ been with a bullet,” said the man, pointing to his arm, “but I don’t know what struck my head here,” and bending his head, he showed the matted hair at the back stuck together with blood.

“And whose is this other gun?”

“It’s a French rifle I took, y’r honour! But I’d not have come away if it weren’t to lead this fellow—he may fall,” he added, pointing to a soldier who was walking a little in front, leaning on his gun, and painfully dragging his left leg.

Prince Gáltsin suddenly felt horribly ashamed of his unjust suspicions. He felt himself blushing, turned away and, neither questioning nor watching the wounded men any more, he went to the hospital.

Having pushed his way with difficulty through the porch among the wounded who had come on foot and the bearers who were carrying in the wounded and bringing out the dead, Gáltsin entered the first room,

gave a look round, and involuntarily turned back and ran out into the street: it was too terrible!

VIII

The large, lofty, dark hall, lit only by the four or five candles with which the doctors examined the wounded, was literally filled. The bearers kept bringing in fresh men, laying them side by side on the floor (which was already so crowded that the unfortunates jostled one another and were soaked with each other's blood), and going to fetch more wounded. The pools of blood visible in the unoccupied spaces, the feverish breathing of several hundred men, and the perspiration of the workmen with the stretchers, filled the air with a peculiar, heavy, thick, fetid mist, in which, in different parts of the hall, the candles burnt dimly. The sound of all sorts of groans, sighs, death-rattles, now and then interrupted by shrill screams, filled the whole room. Sisters, with quiet faces, expressing not an empty, feminine, painfully tearful pity, but active, practical sympathy, here and there among the bloody coats and shirts stepped across the wounded with medicines, water, bandages, and lint. The doctors, with sleeves turned up, kneeling beside the wounded—near whom the assistants held the candles—examined, felt, and probed their wounds, not heeding the terrible groans and the prayers of the sufferers. One doctor sat at a table near the door, and at the moment Gáltsin came in was already entering No. 532.

“Iván Bogáef, Private, Company III., S— Regiment, *fractura femuris complicata!*” shouted another doctor from the end of the room, examining a shattered leg.

“Turn him over.”

"Oh, oh, fathers! Oh, you're our fathers!" screamed the soldier, beseeching them not to touch him.

"*Perforatio capitis!*"

"Simon Nefyórdof, Lieutenant-Colonel of the N—Infantry Regiment. Have a little patience, Colonel, or it is quite impossible; I'll have to leave you!" said a third doctor, poking about with some kind of hook in the skull of the unfortunate Colonel.

"Oh, don't; oh, for God's sake be quick! be quick. Ah——!"

"*Perforatio pectoris.* . . . Sebastian Séreda, Private . . . what regiment? But you need not write that: *moritur.* Carry him away," said the doctor, leaving the soldier, whose eyes turned up, while the death-rattle still sounded in his throat.

About forty soldiers, stretcher-bearers, stood at the door waiting to carry the bandaged to the wards and the dead to the chapel. They looked on in silence, broken only now and then by a heavy sigh at the scene before them.

IX

On his way to the bastion Kaloúgin met many wounded; but knowing by experience that, in action, such sights have a bad effect on a man's spirits, he did not stop to question them, but, on the contrary, tried not to notice them. At the foot of the hill he met an orderly-officer galloping fast from the bastion.

"Zóbkín! Zóbkín! wait a bit."

"Yes, what?"

"Where are you from?"

"The lodgments."

"How are things there?—Hot?"

"Oh, awful!"

And the orderly galloped on.

In fact, though there was now but little small-arm firing, the cannonade had recommenced with fresh heat and persistence.

"Ah! that's bad!" thought Kalougin, with an unpleasant sensation, and he, too, had a presentiment, *i.e.*, a very usual thought,—the thought of death. But Kalougin was ambitious, and blessed with nerves of oak; in a word, he was what is called brave. He did not yield to the first feeling, but began to nerve himself. He recalled how an Adjutant, Napoleon's he thought, having delivered an order, galloped with bleeding head full speed to Napoleon.

"*Vous êtes blessé ?*"¹ said Napoleon.

"*Je vous demande pardon, sire, je suis mort,*"² and the Adjutant fell from his horse, dead.

That seemed to him very fine, and he even a bit imagined himself to be that Adjutant. Then he whipped his horse, assuming an even more dashing Cossack seat, looked back at the Cossack, who, standing up in his stirrups, was trotting behind, and rode quite gallantly up to the spot where he had dismounted. Here he found four soldiers sitting on some stones smoking their pipes.

"What are you doing there?" he shouted at them.

"Been carrying off a wounded man and sat down to rest a bit, y'r honour," said one of them, hiding his pipe behind his back and taking off his cap.

"Resting, indeed! . . . to your places, march!" and he went up the hill with them, through the trench, meeting wounded men at every step.

¹ "You are wounded?"

² "Excuse me, sir, I am dead."

After ascending the hill he turned to the left, and a few steps farther on found himself quite alone. A splinter of a bomb whizzed near him, and fell into the trench. Another bomb rose in front of him and seemed flying straight at him. He suddenly felt frightened; he ran a few steps at full speed and lay down flat. When the bomb burst a considerable distance off, he felt exceedingly vexed with himself, and rose looking round to see if any one had noticed his downfall, but no one was near.

But when fear has once entered the soul it does not easily yield to any other feeling. He, who always boasted that he never even stooped, now hurried along the trench almost on all fours. He stumbled, and thought, "Oh! it's awful! they'll kill me for certain," his breath came with difficulty, and perspiration broke out all over his body; he was surprised at himself, but no longer strove to master his feeling.

Suddenly he heard footsteps in front. Quickly straightening himself, he raised his head and, boldly clanking his sabre, went on more deliberately. He could not recognise himself again. When he met a sapper-officer and a sailor, and the officer shouted to him to lie down, pointing to a bright spot which, growing brighter and brighter, approached more and more swiftly and came crashing down close to the trench, he only bent slightly, involuntarily influenced by the frightened cry, and went on.

"There's a brave 'un," said the sailor, looking quite calmly at the bomb, and at once deciding with experienced eye that the splinters could not fly into the trench, "he won't even lie down."

It was only a few steps across open ground to the bomb-proof of the Commander of the bastion, when

Kaloúgin's mind again became clouded and the same stupid terror seized him ; his heart beat more violently, the blood rushed to his head, and he had to constrain himself with an effort in order to run to the bomb-proof.

" Why are you so out of breath ? " said the General, when Kaloúgin had reported his instructions.

" I walked very fast, your Excellency ! "

" Won't you have a glass of wine ? "

Kaloúgin drank a glass, and lit a cigarette. The action was over, only a fierce cannonade still continued from both sides. In the bomb-proof sat General N——, the Commander of the bastion, and some six other officers, among whom was Praskoúhin. They were discussing various details of the action. Sitting in this comfortable room with blue wall-paper, a sofa, a bed, a table with papers on it, a wall-clock, with a lamp burning before it, and an *icón*¹—looking at these signs of habitation, at the beams more than two feet thick that formed the ceiling, and listening to the shots that here, in the bomb-proof, sounded faintly, Kaloúgin could not at all understand how he had allowed himself to be twice overcome by such unpardonable weakness. He was angry with himself, and wished for danger, in order to test his nerve once more.

" Ah ! I'm glad you are here, Captain," said he to a naval officer with big moustaches who wore a Staff-Officer's coat with a St. George's Cross, and who had just entered the bomb-proof and asked the General to give him some men to repair two embrasures of his

¹ The Russian *icóns* are paintings, in Byzantine style, of God, the Mother of God, Christ, or some saint, martyr, or angel. They are usually on wood, and are often covered over, except the face and hands, with an embossed gilt cover.

battery which had become blocked. When the General had finished speaking to the Captain, Kalougin said: "The Commander-in-Chief told me to ask if your guns can fire case-shot into the trenches."

"Only one of them can," said the Captain sullenly.

"All the same, let's go and see."

The Captain, who was in command of the battery, frowned and gave an angry grunt.

"I have been standing there all night, and have come in to get a bit of rest.—Couldn't you go alone?" he added. "My assistant, Lieutenant Kartz, is there, and can show you everything."

The Captain had already been more than six months in command of this, one of the most dangerous batteries. From the time the siege began, even before the bomb-proofs were erected, he had lived continuously on the bastion, and had a great reputation for courage among the sailors. That is why his refusal struck and surprised Kalougin. "So much for reputation," thought he.

"Well, then, I will go alone, if I may," he said in a slightly sarcastic tone to the Captain, who, however, paid no attention to his words.

Kalougin did not realise that whereas he had, all in all, spent some fifty hours, at different times, on the bastions, the Captain had lived there for six months. Kalougin was still actuated by vanity, the wish to shine, the hope of rewards, of gaining a reputation, the charm of running risks. But the Captain had already lived through all that: at first he felt vain, showed off his courage, was foolhardy, hoped for rewards and reputation, and even gained them; but now all these incentives had lost their power over him, and he saw things differently. He fulfilled his duty accurately,

D

but, quite understanding how much the chances of life were against him after six months at the bastion, he no longer ran risks without serious need; and so the young Lieutenant, who joined the battery a week ago and was now showing it to Kalougin, with whom he vied in uselessly leaning out of the embrasures and climbing out on the banquette, seemed ten times braver than the Captain.

Returning to the bomb-proof after examining the battery, Kalougin, in the dark, came upon the General, who, accompanied by his staff officers, was going to the watch-tower.

"Captain Praskouhin," he heard the General say, "please go to the right lodgment and tell the second battalion of the M— Regiment, which is at work there, to cease their work, leave the place, and noiselessly rejoin their regiment, which is stationed at the foot of the hill in reserve. Do you understand? Lead them yourself to the regiment."

"Yes, sir."

And Praskouhin started at full speed towards the lodgments.

The firing was now becoming less frequent.

X

"Is this the second battalion of the M— Regiment?" asked Praskouhin, having run to his destination, and coming across some soldiers carrying earth in sacks.

"Just so, y'r honour!"

"Where is the Commander?"

Mihaylof, thinking that the Commander of the Company was being asked for, got out of his hole and,

taking Praskóuhin for a Commanding Officer, saluted, and approached him.

"The General's orders are . . . that you . . . should go . . . quickly . . . and especially quietly . . . back—no, not back, but to the reserves," said Praskóuhin, looking askance in the direction of the enemy's fire.

Having recognised Praskóuhin and made out what was wanted, Miháylof dropped his hand and passed on the order. The battalion became alert, the men took up their muskets, put on their cloaks, and set out.

No one, without experiencing it, can imagine the delight a man feels when, after three hours' bombardment, he leaves so dangerous a spot as the lodgments. During those three hours Miháylof, who more than once—and not without reason—had thought his end at hand, had had time to accustom himself to the conviction that he would certainly be killed, and that he no longer belonged to this world. But, in spite of that, he had great difficulty in keeping his legs from running away with him when, leading the company with Praskóuhin at his side, he left the lodgment.

"*Au revoir*," said a Major, with whom Miháylof had eaten bread and cheese sitting in the hole under the breastwork, and who was remaining at the bastion in command of another battalion, "I wish you a lucky journey."

"And I wish you a lucky defence. It seems to be getting quieter now."

But scarcely had he uttered these words when the enemy, probably observing the movement in the lodgment, began to fire more and more frequently.

Our guns replied, and heavy firing recommenced.

The stars were high in the sky but shone feebly. The night was pitch dark; only the flashes of the guns

and the bursting bombs made things around suddenly visible. The soldiers walked quickly and silently, involuntarily outpacing one another, only their measured footfall on the dry road was heard besides the incessant roll of the guns, the ringing of bayonets when they came in contact, a sigh, or the prayer of some poor soldier lad, "Lord, O Lord! what is it?" Now and again you heard the moaning of a man hit, and the cry "Stretchers!" (in the Company Miháylof commanded, the artillery fire alone carried off twenty-six men that night). A flash on the dark and distant horizon, the cry "Can-n-non!" from the sentinel on the bastion, and a ball flew buzzing above the Company and plunged into the earth, making the stones fly.

"What the devil are they so slow for!" thought Praskóuhin, continually looking back as he marched beside Miháylof; "I'd really better run on; I've delivered the order. . . . However, no; they might afterwards say I'm a coward! What must be, will be: I'll remain."

"Now, why is he walking with me?" thought Miháylof, on his part. "I have noticed, over and over again, that he always brings ill-luck. Here it comes, I believe, straight for us."

After they had gone a few hundred paces they met Kalóugin, who was walking briskly towards the lodgments, clanking his sabre. He had been ordered by the General to find out how the works were progressing there. But meeting Miháylof, he thought he could just as well, instead of going himself under such a terrible fire—which he was not ordered to do—find out all about it from an officer who had been there. And Miháylof giving him full details of the work, Kalóugin,

after going some way with him, turned off into a trench leading to the bomb-proof.

"Well, what news?" asked an officer who was eating his supper there all alone.

"Nothing much; it seems that the affair is over."

"Over? How's that? On the contrary, the General has just gone again to the watch-tower, and another regiment has arrived. Yes, there it is,—listen! The muskets again! Don't you go; why should you?" added the officer, noticing a movement Kalougin made.

"By rights I certainly ought to be there," thought Kalougin, "but I have already exposed myself much to-day: the firing is awful!"

"Yes, I think I'd better wait here for him," he said. And about twenty minutes later the General and the officers who were with him returned; among them was the Junker Baron Pesth, but not Praskouhin. The lodgments had been retaken and occupied by us.

After receiving a full account of the affair, Kalougin, accompanied by Pesth, left the bomb-proof.

XI

"Your coat is bloody; you don't mean to say you were in the hand-to-hand fight?" asked Kalougin.

"Oh, it was awful! Just fancy——"

And Pesth began to relate how he led his company, how the Company-Commander was killed, how he himself stabbed a Frenchman, and how, had it not been for him, we should have lost the day.

This tale was founded on facts: the Company-Commander was killed, and Pesth had bayoneted a Frenchman, but in recounting the details the Junker invented and bragged. He bragged unintentionally,

because during the whole of the affair he had been, as it were, in a fog, and so dazed that everything that happened seemed to him to have happened somehow, somewhere, and to some one. And, very naturally, he tried to recall the details in a light advantageous to himself. What really occurred was this :—

The battalion the Junker had been ordered to join for the sortie, stood for two hours under fire close to some low wall. Then the Battalion-Commander in front said something, the Company-Commanders became active, the battalion advanced from behind the breastwork, and, after going about a hundred paces, it stopped to form into company columns. Pesth was told to place himself on the right flank of the second company.

Quite unable to realise where he was and why he was there, the Junker took his place, and involuntarily holding his breath, while cold shivers ran down his back, he gazed into the dark distance, expecting something dreadful. He was, however, not so much frightened (for there was no firing) as disturbed and agitated at being in the field beyond the fortifications.

Again the Battalion-Commander in front said something. Again the officers spoke in whispers, passing on the order, and the black wall formed by the first company suddenly sank out of sight. The order was to lie down. The second company also lay down, and, in lying down, Pesth hurt his hand on a sharp prickle. Only the Commander of the second company remained standing. His short figure, brandishing a sword, moved in front of the company, and he spoke incessantly.

“Mind, lads! show them what you’re made of! Don’t fire, but give it them with the bayonet—the dogs! When I cry ‘Hurrah,’ altogether mind, that’s

the thing! We'll let them see who we are; we'll not shame ourselves, eh, lads? For our father the Tsar!"

"What is your Company-Commander's name?" asked Pesth of a Junker lying near him. "How brave he is!"

"Yes, he always is, in action," answered the Junker. "His name is Lisinkóvsky."

Just then a flame suddenly flashed up straight before the company, who were deafened by a resounding crash. High up in the air stones and splinters clattered. (Some fifty seconds later a stone fell from above and took a soldier's leg off.) It was a bomb fired from an elevated stand, and the fact that it reached the company showed that the French had noticed the column.

"It's bombs you're sending! Wait a bit till we get at you, then you'll taste a three-edged Russian bayonet, damn you!" said the Company-Commander, so loudly that the Battalion-Commander had to order him to hold his tongue and not make so much noise.

After that the first company rose, then the second. They were ordered to charge bayonets, and the battalion advanced.

Pesth was in such a fright that he could not in the least make out how long it lasted, where he went, or who was who. He went on as if he were drunk. But suddenly a million fires flashed from all sides, something whistled and clattered. He shouted and ran somewhere, because every one ran and shouted. Then he stumbled and fell over something. It was the Company-Commander, who had been wounded at the head of his company, and who, taking the Junker for a Frenchman, had seized him by the leg. Then, when Pesth had freed his leg and risen, some one else ran

against him from behind in the dark, and nearly knocked him down again. "Run him through!" some one else shouted, "what are you stopping for?" Then some one seized a gun and stuck it into something soft. "*Ah Dieu!*" cried a dreadful, piercing voice, and Pesth only then understood that he had bayoneted a Frenchman. A cold sweat covered his whole body, he trembled as in fever, and threw down the gun. But this lasted only a moment; the thought immediately entered his head that he was a hero. He again seized the gun, and shouting "Hurrah!" ran with the crowd away from the dead Frenchman. Having run twenty paces he came to a trench. Some of our men with the Battalion-Commander were there.

"And I have killed one!" said Pesth to the Commander.

"You're a fine fellow, Baron!"

XII

"Do you know Praskouhin is killed?" said Pesth, accompanying Kalougin, who was returning home.

"Impossible!"

"Yes, I saw him myself."

"Well, good-bye . . . I must be off."

"I am very pleased," thought Kalougin, approaching his lodgings. "It is the first time I have had such luck when on duty, it's first-rate; I am alive and well, and shall certainly get an excellent recommendation, and I am sure of a gold sabre. And I really have deserved it."

After reporting what was necessary to the General he went to his room, where Prince Galtsin, long since

returned, sat awaiting him, reading a book he had found on Kalougin's table.

It was with wonderful pleasure Kalougin felt himself again safe at home, and having put on his night-shirt and got into bed, he related to Galtsin all the details of the affair, recounting them, very naturally, from a point of view from which the facts showed what a capable and brave officer he, Kalougin, was,—which it seemed hardly necessary to allude to, since every one knew it, and had no right or reason to question it, except, perhaps, the deceased Captain Praskouhin, who, though he used to consider it an honour to walk arm-in-arm with Kalougin, had, only yesterday, told a friend privately that though Kalougin was a first-rate fellow, yet, between you and me, he was awfully disinclined to go to the bastions.

When Praskouhin, walking beside Mihaylof after Kalougin left them, had just begun to revive somewhat on approaching a safer place, he suddenly saw a bright light flash up behind him, and heard the sentinel shout "Mortar!" and a soldier walking behind him say, "That's coming straight for the bastion!"

Mihaylof looked round. The bright spot seemed to have stopped at its zenith, in the position which makes it absolutely impossible to define its direction. But that only lasted a moment; the bomb—coming faster and faster, nearer and nearer, so that the sparks of its fuse were already visible and the fatal whistle audible—descended towards the centre of the battalion.

"Lie down!" shouted some one.

Mihaylof and Praskouhin lay flat on the ground. Praskouhin, closing his eyes, only heard how the bomb crashed down on to the hard earth close by. A second passed which seemed an hour: the bomb had not

exploded. Praskóuhin was afraid: perhaps he had played the coward for nothing. Perhaps the bomb had fallen far away, and it only seemed to him that its fuse was fizzing close by. He opened his eyes, and was pleased to see Miháylof lying immovable at his feet. But at that moment he caught sight of the glowing fuse of the bomb, which was spinning on the ground not a yard off. Terror—cold terror, excluding every other thought and feeling, seized his whole being. He covered his face with his hands.

Another second passed—a second during which a whole world of feelings, thoughts, hopes, and memories flashed before his imagination.

“Whom will it kill—Miháylof or me? Or both of us? And if it's me, where? In the head? then I'm done for; and if in the leg, they'll cut it off (I'll certainly ask for chloroform), and I may survive it. But perhaps only Miháylof will be killed; then I shall relate how we were going side by side, and how he was killed, and I was splashed with his blood. No, it's nearer to me . . . it will be I.”

Then he remembered the twelve roubles he owed Miháylof, remembered also a debt in Petersburg that should have been paid long ago, and the gipsy song he had sung that evening. The woman he loved rose in his imagination, wearing a cap with lilac ribbons; he recollected a man who had insulted him five years ago, and whom he had not paid out; and yet, inseparable from all these, and from thousands of other recollections, the present thought, the expectation of death, did not leave him for a moment. “Perhaps it won't explode,” and with desperate decision he wished to open his eyes. But at that instant a red flame pierced through the still closed lids, and with a terrible crash something

struck him in the middle of his chest. He jumped up and began to run, but stumbling over the sabre that got between his legs, he fell on his side.

"Thank God, I'm only bruised!" was his first thought, and he wished to touch his chest with his hand; but his arms seemed tied to his sides, and it felt as if a vice were squeezing his head. Soldiers flitted past him, and he counted them unconsciously—"one, two, three soldiers; and there's an officer with his cloak tucked up," he thought. Then lightning flashed before his eyes, and he wondered whether the shot was fired from a mortar or a cannon. "A cannon, probably. And there's another shot, and here are more soldiers—five, six, seven soldiers: they all pass by." He was suddenly seized with fear that they would crush him. He wished to shout that he was hurt, but his mouth was so dry that his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and a terrible thirst tormented him. He felt it wet about his chest; and this sensation of being wet made him think of water, and he longed to drink even this that made him feel wet. "I suppose I hit myself in falling and bled," thought he, and giving way more and more to fear lest the soldiers who kept flitting past might trample on him, he gathered all his strength and tried to shout "Take me with you!" but instead of that he uttered such a terrible groan that he was frightened to hear it. Then some other red fires began dancing before his eyes, and it seemed to him that the soldiers put stones on him; the fires danced less and less, but the stones they put on him pressed more and more heavily. He made an effort to push off the stones—stretched himself—and saw and heard and felt nothing more. He had been killed on the spot by a bomb-splinter in the middle of his chest.

XIII

When Mihályof saw the bomb and fell down, he too, like Praskóuhin, lived through an infinitude of thoughts and feelings in the two seconds that passed before the bomb burst. He prayed mentally, and repeated, "Thy will be done." And at the same time he thought, "Why did I enter the army? and why did I join the infantry to take part in the campaign? Would it not have been better to have remained with the Uhlan regiment at T——, and spent my time with my friend Natásha? And now here I am," . . . and he began to count "one, two, three, four," deciding that if the bomb burst at an even number he would live, but if at an odd number he would be killed. "It is all over, I'm killed," he thought when the bomb burst (he did not remember whether at an odd or even number), and he felt a blow and a cruel pain in his head. "Lord, forgive me my trespasses!" he muttered, folding his hands; he rose, but fell on his back senseless.

When he came to, his first sensation was that of the blood trickling down his nose and the pain in his head, which was much less violent. "That's the soul passing," he thought. "How will it be *there*? Lord! receive my soul in peace. . . . Only it's strange," thought he, "that, dying, I should hear so distinctly the steps of the soldiers and the sounds of the firing."

"Bring stretchers! Eh, the Captain is killed!" shouted a voice above his head, which he involuntarily recognised as the voice of the drummer, Ignátyef.

Some one took him by the shoulders. With an effort he opened his eyes, and saw the sky above him, the groups of stars, and two bombs racing one another as they flew above him. He saw Ignátyef, soldiers

with stretchers and guns, the embankment, the trenches, and suddenly realised that he was not yet in the other world.

He was slightly wounded in the head by a stone. His first feeling was one almost of regret: he had prepared himself so well and calmly to go *there*, that the return to reality, with its bombs, stretchers, and blood seemed unpleasant. The second feeling was unconscious joy at being alive; and the third a wish to get away from the bastion as quickly as possible. The drummer tied a handkerchief round his Commander's head, and taking his arm led him towards the Ambulance Station.

"But why, and where, am I going?" thought the Lieutenant-Captain when he had collected his senses. "My duty is to remain with the company, and not to leave it behind, especially," whispered a voice, "as the company will soon be out of range of the guns."

"Never mind, my lad," said he, drawing away his hand from the attentive drummer, "I won't go to the Ambulance Station, but will stay with the company.

And he turned back.

"It would be better to have it properly bandaged, your honour," said Ignátyef. "It's only the heat of the moment makes it seem nothing; mind it don't get worse, and just see what warm work it is here. . . . Really, your honour——"

Miháylof stood for a moment undecided, and would probably have followed Ignátyef's advice had he not reflected how many severely wounded there must be at the Ambulance Station. "Perhaps the doctors will smile at my scratch," thought the Lieutenant-Captain, and in spite of the drummer's arguments he returned to his company.

"And where is Staff-Officer Praskoúhin, who was with me?" he asked, when he met the Ensign who was leading the company.

"I don't know; killed, I think," replied the Ensign unwillingly.

"Killed? or wounded? How is it you don't know? wasn't he going with us? And why did you not bring him away?"

"How could we under such a fire?"

"Ah! what have you done, Michael Ivánitch?" said Miháylof angrily. "How could you leave him if he's alive? Even if he's dead his body ought to have been brought away."

"Alive indeed, when I tell you I myself went up and saw him!" said the Ensign. "Excuse me, it's hard enough to collect our own. . . . There they are, the villains," added he, "it's cannon balls they're sending now!"

Miháylof sat down and held his head, which ached terribly when he moved. "No, it is absolutely necessary to go back and fetch him; he may still be alive," said Miháylof. "It is our *duty*, Michael Ivánitch."

Michael Ivánitch did not answer.

"There now! he did not take him at the time, and now soldiers will have to be sent back by themselves. . . . and how can one send them? Under this terrible fire they may be killed uselessly," thought Miháylof.

"Lads! some one will have to go back to fetch the officer who was wounded out there in the ditch," said he, not very loudly or peremptorily, feeling how unpleasant it would be for the soldiers to execute this order. And so it was. As he had not named any one in particular no one came forward to obey the order.

"And, after all, he may be dead already: it is not

worth while exposing men uselessly to such danger. It's all my fault, I ought to have seen to it. I will go back myself and find out whether he is alive. It is my *duty*," said Miháylof to himself.

"Michael Ivánitch! you lead the company, I'll catch you up," said he, and lifting his cloak with one hand, while with the other he kept touching a small *icón* of St. Metrophanes that hung round his neck and in which he had great faith, he ran quickly along the trench.

Having convinced himself that Praskóúhin was dead, Miháylof dragged himself back panting, his hand holding the bandage that had slipped on his head, which now again ached badly. When Miháylof overtook the battalion, it was already at the foot of the hill, and almost beyond the range of the shots. I say 'almost,' because a stray bomb now and then came even here.

"To-morrow I had better go and be entered at the Ambulance Station," thought the Lieutenant-Captain, while a medical assistant, who had turned up, was bandaging his head.

XIV

Hundreds of bodies, freshly stained with blood, of men who, two hours before, had been filled with various lofty and trivial hopes and wishes, lay with stiffened limbs on the dewy, flowery valley between the bastions and the parallels, and on the smooth floor of the Mortuary Chapel in Sevastopol. Hundreds of men, with prayers and curses on their parched lips, crawled, writhed, and moaned, some among the corpses in the flowery valley, others on stretchers, on beds, and on the bloody floor of the Ambulance Station! And,

just as on other days, the dawn appeared over the Sapoún hill, the twinkling stars paled, the white mist rose above the dark roaring sea, the rosy morning glow lit up the east, the long purple clouds travelled across the blue horizon, and, just as on other days, promising joy, love and happiness to all the awakening world, in power and glory rose the sun.

XV

The next evening the Chasseurs' band was again playing on the boulevard, and again officers, junkers, soldiers, and young women promenaded round the pavilion and along the side-walks under the sweet, white, blooming acacias.

Kalougin, Prince Gáltsin, and a Colonel were walking arm-in-arm near the pavilion and talking of last night's affair. The main clue to the talk, as always in such cases, was not the affair itself but the part the speaker had taken in it. Their faces and tones were serious, almost sorrowful, as if the losses of the night had touched and saddened every one of them. But, to tell the truth, as none of them had lost any one very dear to him, this sorrowful expression was only an official one they considered it their duty to exhibit.

Kalougin and the Colonel, though they were first-rate fellows, were, in fact, ready to see such an affair every day if they could have a gold sword, and be made Major-General each time. It is very well to call some conqueror a monster because he destroys millions to gratify his ambition. But go and ask any Ensign Petroushef or Sub-Lieutenant Antónof, on their conscience, and you will find that every one of us is a little Napoleon, a little monster, ready to start a battle and

kill a hundred men, only to get an extra medal or one-third additional pay.

"No, I beg pardon," said the Colonel, "it began first on the left side. *I was there myself.*"

"Well, perhaps," said Kalougin, "*I spent more time on the right. I went there twice, first to look for the General, and then just to see the lodgments. That's where it was hot!*"

"Kalougin must know," said Galtsin. "By the way, V—— told me to-day that you are a trump——"

"But the losses, the losses are terrible!" said the Colonel. "*In my regiment we had four hundred casualties. It is astonishing that I am still alive.*"

Just then the figure of Miháylof, with his head bandaged, appeared at the end of the boulevard and came towards these gentlemen.

"What, are you wounded, Captain?" said Kalougin.

"Yes, slightly, with a stone," answered Miháylof.

"*Est-ce que le pavillon est baissé déjà?*"¹ asked Prince Galtsin, glancing at the Lieutenant-Captain's cap, and not addressing any one in particular.

"*Non, pas encore,*"² answered Miháylof, who wished to show that he understood and spoke French.

"Do you mean to say the truce still continues?" said Galtsin, politely addressing him in Russian, and thereby intimating (so it seemed to the Lieutenant-Captain): 'It must, no doubt, be difficult for you to have to speak French, so hadn't we better simply . . .' and thereupon the Adjutants left him. The Lieutenant-Captain again felt exceedingly lonely, as he had done the day before. After bowing to various people—some of whom he did not wish, and some of whom he

¹ "Has the flag of truce been lowered yet?"

² "No, not yet."

did not venture to join—he sat down near Kazásky's monument and smoked a cigarette.

Baron Pesth also turned up on the boulevard. He related that he had been present at the parley, and how he had spoken with the French officers. According to his account, one of them had said to him, "*S'il n'avait pas fait clair encore pendant une demi-heure, les embuscades auraient été reprises,*"¹ and he replied, "*Monsieur! je ne dis pas non, pour ne pas vous donner un démenti,*"² and he told how well it had come out, etc. etc.

In reality, though he had been at the parley, he had not managed to say anything particular, though he much wished to speak with the French (for it's awfully jolly to speak with those fellows). Junker Baron Pesth had long paced up and down the line asking the Frenchmen near to him, "*De quel régiment êtes-vous ?*"³ He got his answer and nothing more. When he went too far beyond the line, the French sentry, not suspecting that "that soldier" knew French, abused him in the third person singular: "*Il vient regarder nos travaux, ce sacré——*"⁴ In consequence of which Junker Baron Pesth, finding nothing more to interest him at the parley, rode home, and on his way back composed the French phrases he was now repeating.

Captain Zóbof, who spoke so loud, was on the boulevard, the shabbily-dressed Captain Obzhógof, the artillery captain who never curried favour with any one, a Junker fortunate in his love affairs,—all the same faces as the day before, and all with the same recurring motives.

¹ "Had it remained dark for another half-hour, the ambuscades would have been recaptured."

² "Sir, I will not say no, lest I give you the lie."

³ "What regiment do you belong to?"

⁴ "He's come to look at our works, the confounded——"

Only Praskóúhin, Nefyórdof, and a few more were missing, and hardly any one now remembered or thought of them, though there had not been time for their bodies to be washed, laid out, and put into the ground.

XVI

On our bastions and on the French parallels white flags are hung out, and between them in the flowery valley lie heaps of bootless, mangled corpses, clad in grey and blue, which workmen are removing and piling on to carts. The air is filled with the smell of decaying corpses. From Sevastopol and from the French camp crowds of people have poured out to see the sight, and with eager and amicable curiosity draw near one another.

Listen to what these people are saying to each other.

Here, in a circle of Russians and Frenchmen who have collected round him, a young officer, who speaks French badly but sufficiently to be understood, is examining a Guardsman's pouch.

*"Eh sussy, poor quah se waso lié?"*¹

*"Parce que c'est une giberne d'un régiment de la garde, Monsieur, qui porte l'aigle impérial."*²

*"Eh voo de la guard?"*³

*"Pardon, Monsieur, du 6-ème de ligne."*⁴

*"Eh sussy oo ashtay?"*⁵ pointing to a cigarette-

¹ "And this, what is this tied bird for?"

² "Because this is a cartridge pouch of a Guard regiment, monsieur, and bears the Imperial eagle."

³ "And do you belong to the Guards?"

⁴ "No, monsieur, to the 6th Regiment of the line."

⁵ "And this: where did you buy?"

holder of yellow wood in which the Frenchman is smoking a cigarette.

"*A Balaclava, Monsieur ! C'est tout simple en bois de palme.*"¹

"*Joli,*"² says the officer, guided in his remarks not so much by his own free will as by the French words he knows.

"*Si vous voulez bien garder cela comme souvenir de cette rencontre, vous m'obligez.*"³

And the polite Frenchman puts out his cigarette and presents the holder to the officer with a slight bow. The officer gives him his, and all present, both Frenchmen and Russians, smile and seem pleased.

Here is a brisk infantry-man in a pink shirt, with cloak thrown over his shoulders, accompanied by others who stand by him, with their hands at their backs, and merry, inquisitive faces. He approaches a Frenchman and asks a light for his pipe. The Frenchman draws at, and stirs up the tobacco in his own short pipe, and shakes a light into that of the Russian.

"*Tabac boon ?*" says the soldier in the pink shirt, and the spectators smile. "*Oui, bon tabac, tabac turc,*" says the Frenchman. "*Chez vous autre tabac—Russe ? bon ?*"

"*Roos boon,*" says the soldier in the pink shirt, while the onlookers shake with laughter. "*Fransay not boon, bong jour mossier !*" says the soldier in the pink shirt, letting off his whole stock of French at once, and he slaps the Frenchman on the stomach and laughs. The French also laugh.

¹ "At Balaclava, Monsieur ! It's only made of palm wood."

² "Pretty."

³ "If you will be so good as to keep it as a souvenir of this meeting, you will do me a favour."

"*Ils ne sont pas jolis ces b—— de Russes,*" says a Zouave among the French.

"*De quoi de ce qu'ils rient donc ?*"² says another, a dark man with an Italian accent, coming up to our men.

"*Coat boon,*" says the cheeky soldier, examining the embroidery of the Zouave's coat; and everybody laughs again.

"*Ne sors pas de ta ligne, à vos places, sacré nom !*"³ cries a French Corporal, and the soldiers separate with evident unwillingness.

And here, amidst a group of French officers, is one of our young cavalry officers gushing. They are talking about some Count Sazónof, "*que j'ai beaucoup connu, Monsieur,*" says a French officer with only one epaulet—"c'est un de ces vrais comtes russes, comme nous les aimons."⁴

"*Il y a un Sazónof, que j'ai connu,*" says the cavalry officer, "*mais il n'est pas comte, à moins, que je sache, un petit brun de votre âge à peu près.*"⁵

"*C'est ça, Monsieur, c'est lui. Oh ! que je voudrais le voir, ce cher comte. Si vous le voyez, je vous prie bien de lui faire mes compliments—Capitaine Latour,*"⁶ he said, bowing.

¹ "They are not handsome, these d—— Russians."

² "What are they laughing about ?"

³ "Don't leave your ranks; to your places, damn it !"

⁴ "Whom I knew very intimately, Monsieur. He is one of those real Russian Counts, of whom we are so fond."

⁵ "I am acquainted with a Sazónof, but he is not a Count, as far as I know,—a small, dark man, of about your age."

⁶ "Just so, Monsieur, that is he. Oh ! how I should like to meet the dear Count ! If you should see him, please be so kind as to give him my compliments—Captain Latour."

"N'est-ce pas terrible la triste besogne, que nous faisons ? Ça chauffait cette nuit, n'est-ce pas ?"¹ said the cavalry officer, wishing to maintain the conversation and pointing to the corpses.

"Oh, Monsieur, c'est affreux ! Mais quels gaillards vos soldats, quels gaillards ! C'est un plaisir, que de se battre avec des gaillards comme eux."²

"Il fait avouer que les vôtres ne se mouchent pas du pied non plus,"³ said the cavalry officer, bowing, and imagining himself to be very agreeable.

But enough.

Let us rather look at this ten-year-old boy in the old cap (probably his father's), with shoes on his stockingless feet, and nankeen trousers held by one brace. At the very commencement of the truce he came over the entrenchments, and ever since he has been walking about the valley, looking with dull curiosity at the French and at the corpses that lie on the ground, and gathering the blue flowers with which the valley is strewn. Returning home with a large bunch of flowers he holds his nose to escape the smell which is borne towards him by the wind, and stopping near a heap of corpses collected together, he gazes long at a terrible, headless body which lies nearest to him. After standing there some time, he draws nearer and touches with his foot the stiff, outstretched arm of the corpse. The arm trembles a little. He touches it again more boldly ; it moves, and falls back again to its old position. The

¹ "Is it not terrible, this sad duty we are engaged in ? It was warm work last night, was it not ?"

² "Ah, Monsieur, it is terrible ! But what fine fellows your men are, what fine fellows ! It is a pleasure to fight with fellows of that make."

³ "It must be admitted that yours are no fools either."

aa / Fabrice
aa Waterloo in
aa Chateaux de
aa Pome.

boy gives a sudden scream, hides his face in his flowers, and runs towards the fortifications as fast as his legs can carry him.

Yes, white flags are on the bastions and on the parallels; the flowery valley is covered with dead bodies; the beautiful sun is sinking towards the blue sea; and the undulating blue sea glitters in the golden rays of the sun. Thousands of people crowd together, look at, speak to, and smile at one another. And these people—Christians confessing the one great law of love and self-sacrifice—looking at what they have done, do not at once fall repentant on their knees before Him who has given them life and laid in the soul of each a fear of death and a love of good and of beauty, and do not embrace like brothers with tears of joy and happiness.

The white flags are lowered, again the engines of death and suffering are sounding, again innocent blood flows, and the air is filled with moans and curses.

There, I have said what I wished to say this time. But a painful hesitation seizes me. Perhaps I ought to have left it unsaid. Perhaps what I have said belongs to that class of evil truths which, unconsciously hidden within the souls of each one, should not be uttered for fear of becoming injurious, as the dregs in the bottle must not be shaken for fear of spoiling the wine.

Where in this tale is the evil shown that should be avoided? Where is the good that should be imitated? Who is the villain, who the hero of the story? All are good, and all are bad.

Not Kalougin, with his brilliant courage—*bravoure de gentilhomme*—and the vanity which influences all his actions; not Praskouhin, the empty, harmless fellow

cf. f. xxvi.

But it is a camp
that it was not we
who beg an this we
that we are not
defending our old
country, our
fatherland.

(though he fell in battle for faith, throne, and fatherland); not Miháylof, with his shyness; nor Pesth, a child without firm principles or convictions,—can be either the villain or the hero of a tale.

The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty, who has been, is, and will be beautiful—is Truth.