



The Raid, Leo Tolstoy

The Raid

A volunteer's story

Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude 1935

This short story was first published in 1853 and is set in the Caucasus. The story takes the form of a conversation between the narrator and a military captain about the nature of bravery. The Raid was based on Tolstoy's own experiences as an artillery cadet stationed in the Caucasus.

The portions of this story enclosed in square brackets are those the Censor suppressed, and are now published in English for the first time. The translation's original footnotes have also been included.

Contents

Chapter I

Chapter II

Chapter III

Chapter IV

Chapter V

Chapter VI

Chapter VII

Chapter VIII

Chapter IX

Chapter X

Chapter XI

Chapter XII

Chapter I

[WAR ALWAYS INTERESTED me: not war in the sense of manoeuvres devised by great generals — my imagination refused to follow such immense movements, I did not understand them — but the reality of war, the actual killing. I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodino.

I had long passed the time when, pacing the room alone and waving my arms, I imagined myself a hero instantaneously slaughtering an immense number of men and receiving a generalship as well as imperishable glory for so doing. The question now occupying me was different: under the influence of what feeling does a man, with no apparent advantage to himself, decide to subject himself to danger and, what is more surprising still, to kill his fellow men? I always wished to think that this is done under the influence of anger, but we cannot suppose that all those who fight are angry all the time, and I had to postulate feelings of self-preservation and duty.

What is courage — that quality respected in all ages and among all nations? Why is this good quality — contrary to all others — sometimes met with in vicious men? Can it be that to endure danger calmly is merely a physical capacity and that people respect it in the same way that they do a man's tall stature or robust frame? Can a horse be called brave, which fearing the whip throws itself down a steep place where it will be smashed to pieces; or a child who fearing to be punished runs into a forest where it will lose itself; or a woman who for fear of shame kills her baby and has to endure penal prosecution; or a man who from vanity resolves to kill a fellow creature and exposes himself to the danger of being killed?

In every danger there is a choice. Does it not depend on whether the choice is prompted by a noble feeling or a base one whether it should be called courage or cowardice? These were the questions and the doubts that occupied my mind and to decide which I intended to avail myself of the first opportunity to go into action.

In the summer of 184- I was living in the Caucasus at the small fortified post of N-.]

On the twelfth of July Captain Khl6pov entered the low door of my earth-hut. He was wearing epaulettes and carrying a sword, which I had never before seen him do since I had reached the Caucasus.

'I come straight from the colonel's,' he said in answer to my questioning look. 'To-morrow our battalion is to march.'

'Where to?' I asked.

'To M. The forces are to assemble there.'

'And from there I suppose they will go into action?'

'I expect so.'

'In what direction? What do you think?'

'What is there to think about? I am telling you what I know. A Tartar galloped here last night and brought orders from the general for the battalion to march with two days' rations of rusks. But where to, why, and for how long, we do not ask, my friend. We are told to go — and that's enough.'

'But if you are to take only two days' rations of rusks it proves that the troops won't be out longer than that'

'It proves nothing at all.'

'How is that?' I asked with surprise.

'Because it is so. We went to Dargo and took one week's rations of rusks, but we stayed there nearly a month.'

'Can I go with you?' I asked after a pause.

'You could, no doubt, but my advice is, don't. Why run risks?'

'Oh, but you must allow me not to take your advice. I have been here a whole month solely on the chance of seeing an action, and you wish me to miss it!'

'Well, you must please yourself. But really you had better stay behind. You could wait for us here and might go hunting — and we would go our way, and it would be splendid,' he said with such conviction that for a moment it really seemed to me too that it would be 'splendid'.

However, I told him decidedly that nothing would induce me to stay behind.

‘But what is there for you to see?’ the captain went on, still trying to dissuade me. ‘Do you want to know what battles are like? Read Mikhaylovski Danllevski’s Description of War. It’s a fine book, it gives a detailed account of everything. It gives the position of every corps and describes how battles are fought.’

‘All that does not interest me,’ I replied.

‘What is it then? Do you simply wish to see how people are killed? — In 1832 we had a fellow here, also a civilian, a Spaniard I think he was. He took Part with us in two campaigns, wearing some kind of blue mantle. Well, they did for the fine fellow. You won’t astonish anyone here, friend!’

Humiliating though it was that the captain so misjudged my motives, I did not try to disabuse him.

‘Was he brave?’ I asked.

‘Heaven only knows: he always used to ride in front, and where there was firing there he always was.’

‘Then he must have been brave/ said I.

‘No. Pushing oneself in where one is not needed does not prove one to be brave.’ ‘Then what do you call brave?’

‘Brave? . . . Brave?’ repeated the captain with the air of one to whom such a question presents itself for the first time. ‘He who does what he ought to do is brave/ he said after thinking awhile.

I remembered that Plato defines courage as ‘The knowledge of what should and what should not be feared’, and despite the looseness and vagueness of the captain’s definition I thought that the fundamental ideas of the two were not so different as they might appear, and that the captain’s definition was even more correct than that of the Greek philosopher. For if the captain had been able to express himself like Plato he would no doubt have said that, ‘He is brave who fears only what should be feared and not what should not be feared’.

I wished to explain my idea to the captain.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘it seems to me that in every danger there is a choice, and a choice made under the influence of a sense of duty is courage, but a

choice made under the influence of a base motive is cowardice. Therefore a man who risks his life from vanity, curiosity, or greed, cannot be called brave; while on the other hand he who avoids a danger from honest consideration for his family, or simply from conviction, cannot be called a coward.'

The captain looked at me with a curious expression while I was speaking.

'Well, that I cannot prove to you,' he said, filling his pipe, 'but we have a cadet here who is fond of philosophizing. You should have a talk with him. He also writes verses.'

I had known of the captain before I left Russia, but I had only made his acquaintance in the Caucasus. His mother, Mary Ivanovna Khlopova, a small and poor landowner, lives within two miles of my estate.

Before I left for the Caucasus I had called on her. The old lady was very glad to hear that I should see her 'Pashenka', by which pet name she called the grey-haired elderly captain, and that I, 'a living letter', could tell him all about her and take him a small parcel from her. Having treated me to excellent pie and smoked goose, Mary Ivanovna went into her bedroom and returned with a black bag to which a black silk ribbon was attached.

'Here, this is the icon of our Mother Mediatress of the Burning Bush,' said she, crossing herself and kissing the icon of the Virgin and placing it in my hands. 'Please let him have it. You see, when he went to the Caucasus I had a Mass said for him and promised, if he remained alive and safe, to order this icon of the Mother of God for him. And now for eighteen years the Mediatress and the Holy Saints have had mercy on him, he has not been wounded once, and yet in what battles has he not taken Part? ... What Michael who went with him told me was enough, believe me, to make one's hair stand on end. You see, what I know about him is only from others. He, my pet, never writes me about his campaigns for fear of frightening me.'

(After I reached the Caucasus I learnt, and then not from the captain himself, that he had been severely wounded four times and of course never wrote to his mother either about his wounds or his campaigns.)

‘So let him now wear this holy image,’ she continued. ‘I give it him with my blessing. May the Most Holy Mediatress guard him. Especially when going into battle let him wear it. Tell him so, dear friend. Say “Your mother wishes it.”’

I promised to carry out her instructions carefully.

‘I know you will grow fond of my Pashenka,’ continued the old lady. ‘He is such a splendid fellow. Will you believe it, he never lets a year pass without sending me some money, and he also helps my daughter Annushka a good deal, and all out of his pay! I thank God for having given me such a child,’ she continued with tears in her eyes.

‘Does he often write to you?’ I asked.

‘Seldom, my dear: perhaps once a year. Only when he sends the money, not otherwise. He says, “If I don’t write to you, mother, that means I am alive and well. Should anything befall me, which God forbid, they’ll tell you without me.”’

When I handed his mother’s present to the captain (it was in my own quarters) he asked for a bit of paper, carefully wrapped it up, and then put it away. I told him many things about his mother’s life. He remained silent, and when I had finished speaking he went to a corner of the room and busied himself for what seemed a long time, filling his pipe. ‘Yes, she’s a splendid old woman!’ he said from there in a rather muffled voice. ‘Will God ever let me see her again?’

These simple words expressed much love and sadness.

‘Why do you serve here?’ I asked.

‘One has to serve,’ he answered with conviction.

‘You should transfer to Russia. You would then be nearer to her.’

‘To Russia? To Russia?’ repeated the captain, dubiously swaying his head and smiling mournfully. ‘Here I am still of some use, but there I

should be the least of the officers. And besides, the double pay we get here also means something to a poor man.'

'Can it be, Pavel Ivanovich, that living as you do the ordinary pay would not suffice?'

'And does the double pay suffice?' interjected the captain. 'Look at our officers! Have any of them a brass farthing? They all go on tick at the sutler's, and are all up to their ears in debt. You say "living as I do". ... Do you really think that living as I do I have anything over out of my salary? Not a farthing! You don't yet know what prices are like here; everything is three times dearer. . . .' The captain lived economically, did not play cards, rarely went carousing, and smoked the cheapest tobacco (which for some reason he called home-grown tobacco). I had liked him before — he had one of those simple, calm, Russian faces which are easy and pleasant to look straight in the eyes — and after this talk I felt a sincere regard for him.

Chapter II

NEXT MORNING AT four o'clock the captain came for me. He wore an old threadbare coat without epaulettes, wide Caucasian trousers, a white sheepskin cap the wool of which had grown yellow and limp, and had a shabby Asiatic sword strapped round his shoulder. The small white horse he rode ambled along with short strides, hanging its head down and swinging its thin tail. Although the worthy captain's figure was not very martial or even good-looking, it expressed such equanimity towards everything around him that it involuntarily inspired respect.

I did not keep him waiting a single moment, but mounted my horse at once, and we rode together through the gates of the fort.

The battalion was some five hundred yards ahead of us and looked like a dense, oscillating, black mass. It was only possible to guess that it was an infantry battalion by the bayonets which looked like needles standing close together, and by the sound of the soldiers' songs which occasionally reached us, the beating of a drum, and the delightful voice of the Sixth Company's second tenor, which had often charmed me at

the fort. The road lay along the middle of a deep and broad ravine by the side of a stream which had overflowed its banks.

Flocks of wild pigeons whirled above it, now alighting on the rocky banks, now turning in the air in rapid circles and vanishing out of sight. The sun was not yet visible, but the crest of the right side of the ravine was just beginning to be lit up. The grey and whitish rock, the yellowish-green moss, the dew-covered bushes of Christ's Thorn, dogberry, and dwarf elm, appeared extraordinarily distinct and salient in the golden morning light, but the other side and the valley, wrapped in thick mist which floated in uneven layers, were damp and gloomy and presented an indefinite mingling of colours: pale purple, almost black, dark green, and white. Right in front of us, strikingly distinct against the dark-blue horizon, rose the bright, dead-white masses of the snowy mountains, with their shadows and outlines fantastic and yet exquisite in every detail.

Crickets, grasshoppers, and thousands of other insects, awoke in the tall grasses and filled the air with their clear and ceaseless sounds: it was as if innumerable tiny bells were ringing inside our very ears. The air was full of the scent of water, grass, and mist: the scent of a lovely early summer morning. The captain struck a light and lit his pipe, and the smell of his cheap tobacco and of the tinder seemed to me extraordinarily pleasant

To overtake the infantry more quickly we left the road. The captain appeared more thoughtful than usual, did not take his Daghestan pipe from his mouth, and at every step touched with his heels his horse, which swaying from side to side left a scarcely perceptible green track in the tall wet grass. From under its very feet, with the cry and the whirr of wings which involuntarily sends a thrill through every sportsman, a pheasant rose, and flew slowly upwards. The captain did not take the least notice of it.

We had nearly overtaken the battalion when we heard the thud of a horse galloping behind us, and that same moment a good-looking youth in an officer's uniform and white sheepskin cap galloped past us.

He smiled in passing, nodded to the captain, and flourished his whip. I only had time to notice that he sat his horse and held his reins with peculiar grace, that he had beautiful black eyes, a fine nose, and only the first indications of a moustache. What specially pleased me about him was that he could not repress a smile when he noticed our admiration. This smile alone showed him to be very young.

‘Where is he galloping to?’ muttered the captain with a dissatisfied air, without taking the pipe from his mouth.

‘Who is he?’ I replied.

‘Ensign Alanin, a subaltern in my company. He came from the Cadet Corps only a month ago.’

‘I suppose he is going into action for the first time,’ I said.

‘That’s why he is so delighted/ answered the captain, thoughtfully shaking his head. ‘Youth !’

‘But how could he help being pleased? I can fancy how interesting it must be for a young officer.’

The captain remained silent for a minute or two.

‘That is just why I say “youth”,’ he added in a deep voice. ‘What is there to be pleased at without ever having seen the thing? When one has seen it many times one is not so pleased. There are now, let us say, twenty of us officers here: one or other is sure to be killed or wounded, that is quite certain. To-day it may be I, to-morrow he, the next day a third. So what is there to be pleased about?’

Chapter III

AS SOON AS the bright sun appeared above the hill and lit up the valley along which we were marching, the wavy clouds of mist cleared and it grew hot. The soldiers, with muskets and sacks on their shoulders, marched slowly along the dusty road. Now and then Ukrainian words and laughter could be heard in their ranks. Several old soldiers in white blouses (most of them non-commissioned officers) walked together by the roadsides smoking their pipes and conversing gravely. Heavily laden wagons drawn by three horses moved steadily along, raising thick clouds of dust that hung motionless in the air. The officers rode in

front: some of them caracoled — whipping their horses, making them take three or four leaps and then, pulling their heads round, stopping abruptly. Others were occupied with the singers, who in spite of the heat and sultriness sang song after song.

With the mounted Tartars, about two hundred yards ahead of the infantry, rode a tall handsome lieutenant in Asiatic costume on a large white horse. He was known in the regiment as a desperate daredevil who would spit the truth out at anybody. He wore a black tunic trimmed with gold braid, leggings to match, soft closely fitting gold-braided oriental shoes, a yellow coat and a tall sheepskin cap pushed back from his forehead. Fastened to the silver strap that lay across his chest and back, he carried a powder-flask, and a pistol behind him. Another pistol and a silver-mounted dagger hung from his girdle, and above these a sword in a red leather sheath, and a musket in a black cover, were slung over his shoulder.

By his clothing, by the way he sat his horse, by his general bearing, in fact by his every movement, one could see that he tried to resemble a Tartar. He even spoke to the Tartars with whom he was riding in a language I did not know, and from the bewildered and amused looks with which they glanced at one another I surmised that they did not understand him either. He was one of our young officers, dare-devil braves who shape their lives on the model of Lermontov's and Marlinsky's heroes. These officers see the Caucasus only through the prism of such books as *A Hero of our Time*, and *Mullah-Nur*¹, and are guided in their actions not by their own inclinations but by the examples of their models.

¹ Novels by the above-mentioned authors. The lieutenant, for instance, may perhaps have liked the company of well-bred women and men of rank: generals, colonels, and aides-de-camp (it is even my conviction that he liked such society very much, for he was exceedingly ambitious), but he considered it his imperative duty to turn his roughest side to all important men, though he was strictly moderate in his rudeness to them; and when any lady came to the fort he considered it his duty to walk before her window with his bosom

friends, in a red shirt and with slippers on his bare feet, and shout and swear at the top of his voice. But all this he did not so much with the intention of offending her as to let her see what beautiful white feet he had, and how easy it would be to fall in love with him should he desire it.

Or he would often go with two or three friendly Tartars to the hills at night to lie in ambush by the roadside to watch for passing hostile Tartars and kill them: and though his heart told him more than once that there was nothing valiant in this, he considered himself bound to cause suffering to people with whom he affected to be disillusioned and whom he chose to hate and despise. He always carried two things: a large icon hanging round his neck, and a dagger which he wore over his shirt even when in bed. He sincerely believed that he had enemies. To persuade himself that he must avenge himself on someone and wash away some insult with blood was his greatest enjoyment. He was convinced that hatred, vengeance, and contempt for the human race were the noblest and most poetic of emotions.

But his mistress (a Circassian of course) whom I happened to meet subsequently, used to say that he was the kindest and mildest of men, and that every evening he wrote down his dismal thoughts in his diary, as well as his accounts on ruled paper, and prayed to God on his knees. And how much he suffered merely to appear in his own eyes what he wished to be! For his comrades and the soldiers could never see him as he wished to appear. Once on one of his nocturnal expeditions on the road with his bosom friends he happened to wound a hostile Chechen with a bullet in the leg, and took him prisoner.

After that the Chechen lived for seven weeks with the lieutenant, who attended to him and nursed him as he would have nursed his dearest friend, and when the Chechen recovered he gave him presents and set him free. After that, during one of our expeditions when the lieutenant was retreating with the soldiers of the cordon and firing to keep back the foe, .he heard someone among the enemy call him by name, and the man he had wounded rode forward and made signs to the

lieutenant to do the same. The lieutenant rode up to his friend and pressed his hand.

The hillsmen stood some way back and did not fire, but scarcely had the lieutenant turned his horse to return before several men shot at him and a bullet grazed the small of his back. Another time, at night, when a fire had broken out in the fort and two companies of soldiers were putting it out, I myself saw how the tall figure of a man mounted on a black horse and lit up by the red glow of the fire suddenly appeared among the crowd and, pushing through, rode up to the very flames. When quite close the lieutenant jumped from his horse and rushed into the house, one side of which was burning. Five minutes later he came out with singed hair and scorched elbow, carrying in his bosom two pigeons he had rescued from the flames.

His name was Rosenkranz, yet he often spoke of his descent, deducing it somehow from the Varangians (the first rulers of Russia), and clearly demonstrated that he and his ancestors were pure Russians.

Chapter IV

THE SUN HAD done half its journey, and cast its hot rays through the glowing air onto the dry earth. The dark blue sky was perfectly clear, and only the base of the snowy mountains began to clothe itself in lilac-tinged white clouds. The motionless air seemed full of transparent dust, the heat was becoming unbearable.

Half-way on their march the troops reached a small stream and halted. The soldiers stacked their muskets and rushed to the stream; the commander of the battalion sat down in the shade on a drum, his full face assuming the correct expression denoting the greatness of his rank. He, together with some other officers, prepared to have a snack. The captain lay down on the grass under his company's wagon. The brave Lieutenant Rosenkranz and some other young officers disposed themselves on their outspread cloaks and got ready for a drinking-bout, as could be gathered from the bottles and flasks arranged round them, as well as from the peculiar animation of the singers who, standing

before them in a semicircle, sang a Caucasian dance-song with a whistling obbligato interjected:

Shamyl, he began to riot
In the days gone by,
Try-ry-rataty,
In the days gone by!

Among these officers was the young ensign who had overtaken us in the morning. He was very amusing: his eyes shone, he spoke rather thickly, and he wished to kiss and declare his love to everyone. Poor boy! He did not know that he might appear funny in such a situation, that the frankness and tenderness with which he assailed every one predisposed them not to the affection he so longed for, but to ridicule; nor did he know that when, quite heated, he at last threw himself down on the cloak and rested on his elbow with his thick black hair thrown back, he looked uncommonly charming.

[In a word, everyone was cheerful, except perhaps one officer who, sitting under his company's cart, had lost the horse he was riding to another officer at cards and had agreed to hand it over when they reached head-quarters. He was vainly trying to induce the other to play again, offering to stake a casket which everyone could confirm he had bought for thirty rubles from a Jew, but which — merely because he was in difficulties — he was now willing to stake for fifteen. His opponent looked casually into the distance and persistently remained silent, till at last he remarked that he was terribly anxious to have a doze.

I confess that from the time I started from the fort and decided to take Part in this action, gloomy reflections involuntarily rose in my mind, and so — since one has a tendency to judge of others by oneself]

I listened with curiosity to the conversation of the soldiers and officers and attentively watched the expression of their faces, but could find absolutely no trace of the anxiety I myself experienced: jokes, laughter and anecdotes, gambling and drunkenness, expressed the general

carelessness and indifference to the impending danger [as if all these people had long ago finished their affairs in this world. What was this — firmness, habituation to danger, or carelessness and indifference to life? Or was it all these things together as well as others I did not know, forming a complex but powerful moral motive of human nature termed esprit de corps — a subtle code embracing within itself a general expression of all the virtues and vices of men banded together in any permanent condition, a code each new member involuntarily submits to un murmuringly and which does not change with the individuals, since whoever they may be the sum total of human tendencies everywhere and always remains the same?]

Chapter V

TOWARDS SEVEN THAT evening, dusty and tired, we entered the wide fortified gate of Fort M. The sun was already setting and threw its rosy slanting rays on the picturesque little batteries, on the gardens with their tall poplars which surrounded the fortress, on the yellow gleaming cultivated fields, and on the white clouds that crowding round the snowy peaks had, as if trying to imitate them, formed a range not less fantastic and beautiful. On the horizon the new moon appeared delicate as a little cloud. In the Tartar village, from the roof of a hut, a Tartar was calling the faithful to prayer, and our singers raised their voices with renewed energy and vigour.

After a rest and after tidying myself up a bit, I went to an adjutant of my acquaintance to ask him to let the general know of my intention. On my way from the suburb where I had put up I noticed in Fort M. something I did not at all expect: a pretty little brougham overtook me, in which I caught sight of a fashionable bonnet and from which I overheard some French words. The sounds of some 'Lizzie' or 'Katenka' polka, played on a bad ramshackle piano, reached me through the windows of the commander's house. In a little grocery and wine shop which I passed, some clerks with cigarettes in their fingers sat drinking wine, and I heard one of them say to another, *No, excuse me, as to politics, Mary Greg6revna is first of our ladies.'

A Jew in a worn-out coat, with a bent back and sickly countenance, was dragging along a wheezy barrel-organ and the whole suburb resounded to the tones of the finale of 'Lucia'. Two women in rustling dresses with silk kerchiefs on their heads and carrying bright-coloured parasols passed by along the planks that did duty for a pavement. Two girls, one in a pink, the other in a blue dress, stood bareheaded beside the earth-embankments of a low-roofed house, and shrieked with high-pitched, forced laughter, evidently to attract the attention of passing officers. Officers, dressed in new uniforms with glittering epaulettes and white gloves, flaunted along the street and on the boulevard.

I found my acquaintance on the ground floor of the general's house. I had scarcely had time to explain my wish to him and to get his reply that it could easily be fulfilled, when the pretty little brougham I had noticed outside rattled past the window we were sitting at. A tall, well-built man in an infantry major's uniform and epaulettes got out and entered the house.

'Oh, please excuse me,' said the adjutant, rising, 'I must go and announce them to the general.'

'Who is it?' I asked.

'The countess,' he replied, and buttoning his uniform he rushed upstairs.

A few minutes later a very handsome man in a frock coat without epaulettes and with a white cross in his buttonhole went out into the porch. He was not tall but remarkably good-looking. He was followed by the major, an adjutant, and a couple of other officers. The general's gait, voice, and all his movements, showed him to be a man well aware of his own value.

'Bonsoir, madame la comtesse,'¹ he said, offering his hand through the carriage window.

A small hand in a kid glove pressed his, and a pretty smiling face in a yellow bonnet appeared at the carriage window.

Of the conversation which lasted several minutes I only overheard the general say laughingly as I passed by:

'Vous savez que j'ai fait voeu de comhattre les infideles; prenez donc garde de la devenir.'²

1 'Good evening, Countess.'

z 'You know I have sworn to fight the infidels (the unfaithful), so beware of becoming one.' A laugh replied from inside the carriage, 'Adieu donc, cher general.'¹

'Nont au revoir?' said the general, ascending the steps of the porch. 'N'oubliez pas, que je m'invite pour la soiree de demain.'

The carriage rattled off [and the general went into the sitting-room with the major. Passing by the open window of the adjutant's room, he noticed my un-uniformed figure and turned his kind attention to me. Having heard my request he announced his complete agreement with it and passed on into his room.]

'There again,' I thought as I walked home, 'is a man who possesses all that Russians strive after: rank, riches, distinction; and this man, the day before an engagement the outcome of which is known only to God, jokes with a pretty woman and promises to have tea with her next day, just as if they had met at a ball!'

[I remembered a reflection I had heard a Tartar utter, to the effect that only a pauper can be brave. 'Become rich, become a coward,' said he, not at all to offend his comrade but as a common and unquestionable rule. But the general could lose, together with his life, much more than anyone, else I had had an opportunity of observing and, contrary to the Tartar's rule, no one had shown such a pleasant, graceful indifference and confidence as he. My conceptions of courage became completely confused.]

At that same adjutant's I met a young man who surprised me even more. He was a young lieutenant of the K. regiment who was noted for his almost feminine meekness and timidity and who had come to the adjutant to pour out his vexation and resentment against those who, he said, had intrigued against him to keep him from taking Part in the impending

1 'Good-bye then, dear general.'

3 'No,, au revoir. Don't forget that I am inviting myself for to-morrow's soiree.' action. He said it was mean to behave in that way, that it was unfriendly, that he would not forget it, and so forth. Intently as I watched the expression of his face and listened to the sound of his voice, I could not help feeling convinced that he was not pretending but was genuinely filled with indignation and grief at not being allowed to go and shoot Circassians and expose himself to their fire. He was grieving like a little child who has been unjustly birched ... I could make nothing at all of it.

Chapter VI

THE TROOPS WERE to start at ten in the evening. At half-past eight I mounted and rode to the general's, but thinking that he and his adjutant were busy I tied my horse to the fence and sat down on an earth-bank intending to catch the general when he came out.

The heat and glare of the sun were now replaced by the coolness of night and the soft light of the young moon, which had formed a pale glimmering semicircle around itself on the deep blue of the starry sky and was already setting. Lights appeared in the windows of the houses and shone through cracks in the shutters of the earth huts. The stately poplars, beyond the white moonlit earth huts with their rush-thatched roofs, looked darker and taller than ever against the horizon.

The long shadows of the houses, the trees, and the fences, stretched out daintily on the dusty road. . . . From the river came the ringing voices of frogs;¹ along the street came the sound of hurried steps and voices talking, or the gallop of a horse, and from the suburb the tones of a barrel-organ playing now 'The winds are blowing', now some 'Aurora Waltz'.

I will not say in what meditations I was absorbed:

¹ Frogs in the Caucasus make a noise quite different from the croaking of frogs elsewhere. first, because I should be ashamed to confess the gloomy waves of thought that insisently flooded my soul while around me I noticed nothing but gaiety and joy, and secondly, because it would

not suit my story. I was so absorbed in thought that I did not even notice the bell strike eleven and the general with his suite ride past me. [Hastily mounting my horse I set out to overtake the detachment.]

The rear-guard was still within the gates of the fort. I had great difficulty in making my way across the bridge among the guns, ammunition wagons, carts of different companies, and officers noisily giving orders. Once outside the gates I trotted past the troops who, stretching out over nearly three-quarters of a mile, were silently moving on amid the darkness, and I overtook the general. As I rode past the guns drawn out in single file, and the officers who rode between them, I was hurt as by a discord in the quiet and solemn harmony by the German accents of a voice shouting, 'A linstock, you devil!' and the voice of a soldier hurriedly exclaiming, 'Shevchenko, the lieutenant wants a light!'

The greater Part of the sky was now overcast by long strips of dark grey clouds; it was only here and there that a few stars twinkled dimly among them. The moon had already sunk behind the near horizon of the black hills visible to the right and threw a faint trembling light on their peaks, in sharp contrast to the impenetrable darkness enveloping their base. The air was so warm and still that it seemed as if not a single blade of grass, not a single cloudlet, was moving. It was so dark that even objects close at hand could not be distinguished. By the sides of the road I seemed to see now rocks, now animals, now some strange kind of men, and I discovered that they were merely bushes only when I heard them rustle, or felt the dew with which they were sprinkled. Before me I saw a dense heaving wall followed by some dark moving spots; this was the cavalry vanguard and the general with his suite. Another similar dark mass, only lower, moved beside us; this was the infantry.

The silence that reigned over the whole division was so great that all the mingling sounds of night with their mysterious claim were distinctly audible: the far-off mournful howling of jackals, now like agonized weeping, now like chuckling; the monotonous resounding song of crickets, frogs, and quails; a sort of rumbling I could not at all account

for but which seemed to draw nearer; and all those scarcely audible motions of Nature which can neither be understood nor defined, mingled into one beautiful harmony which we call the stillness of night. This stillness was interrupted by, or rather combined with, the dull thud of hoofs and the rustling of the tall grass caused by the slowly advancing detachment.

Only very occasionally could the clang of a heavy gun, the sound of bayonets touching one another, hushed voices, or the snorting of a horse, be heard. [By the scent of the wet juicy grass which sank under our horses' feet, by the light steam rising from the ground and by the horizons seen on two sides of us, it was evident that we were moving across a wide, luxuriant meadow.] Nature seemed to breathe with pacifying beauty and power.

Can it be that there is not room for all men on this beautiful earth under those immeasurable starry heavens? Can it be possible that in the midst of this entrancing Nature feelings of hatred, vengeance, or the desire to exterminate their fellows, can endure in the souls of men? All that is unkind in the hearts of men should, one would think, vanish at contact with Nature — that most direct expression of beauty and goodness.

[War! What an incomprehensible phenomenon! When one's reason asks: 'Is it just, is it necessary?' an inner voice always replies 'No'. Only the persistence of this unnatural occurrence makes it seem natural, and a feeling of self-preservation makes it seem just.

Who will doubt that in the war of the Russians against the mountain-tribes, justice — resulting from a feeling of self-preservation — is on our side? Were it not for this war, what would secure the neighbouring rich and cultured Russian territories from robbery, murder, and raids by wild and warlike tribes? But consider two private persons. On whose side is the feeling of self-preservation and consequently of justice? Is it on the side of this ragamuffin — some Djenni or other — who hearing of the approach of the Russians snatches down his old gun from the wall, puts three or four charges (which he will only reluctantly discharge) in his pouch and runs to meet the giaours, and on seeing

that the Russians still advance, approaching the fields he has sown which they will tread down and his hut which they will burn, and the ravine where his mother, his wife, and his children have hidden themselves, shaking with fear — seeing that he will be deprived of all that constitutes his happiness — in impotent anger and with a cry of despair tears off his tattered jacket, flings down his gun, and drawing his sheepskin cap over his eyes sings his death-song and flings himself headlong onto the Russian bayonets with only a dagger in his hand?

Is justice on his side or on that of this officer on the general's staff who is singing French chansonnettes so well just as he rides past us? He has a family in Russia, relations, friends, serfs, and obligations towards them, but has no reason or desire to be at enmity with the hillsmen, and has come to the Caucasus just by chance and to show his courage. Or is it on the side of my acquaintance the adjutant, who only wishes to obtain a captaincy and a comfortable position as soon as possible and for that reason has become the hillsmen's enemy? Or is it on the side of this young German who, with a strong German accent, is demanding a linstock from the artillerymen? What devil has brought him from his fatherland and set him down in this distant region? Why should this Saxon, Kaspar Lavrentich, mix himself up in our blood-thirsty conflict with these turbulent neighbours?]

Chapter VII

WE HAD BEEN riding for more than two hours. I was beginning to shiver and feel drowsy. Through the gloom I still seemed to see the same indefinite forms; a little way in front the same black wall and the moving spots. Close in front of me I could see the crupper of a white horse which swung its tail and threw its hind legs wide apart, the back of a white Circassian coat on which could be discerned a musket in a black case, and the glimmering butt of a pistol in an embroidered holster; the glow of a cigarette lit up a fair moustache, a beaver collar and a hand in a chamois glove. Every now and then I leant over my horse's neck, shutting my eyes and forgetting myself for a few minutes, then startled by the familiar tramping and rustling I glanced round, and felt as if I were standing still and the black wall in front was moving

towards me, or that it had stopped and I should in a moment ride into it. At one such moment the rumbling which increased and seemed to approach, and the cause of which I could not guess, struck me forcibly: it was the sound of water. We were entering a deep gorge and approaching a mountain-stream that was overflowing its banks.¹ The rumbling increased, the damp grass became thicker and taller and the bushes closer, while the horizon gradually narrowed. Now and then bright lights appeared here

¹ In the Caucasus rivers are apt to overflow in July. and there against the dark background of the hills, and vanished instantly.

‘Tell me, please, what are those lights?’ I asked in a whisper of a Tartar riding beside me.

‘Don’t you know?’ he replied.

‘No.’

‘The hillsmen have tied straw to poles and are waving it about alight.’

‘Why are they doing that?’

‘So that everyone should know that the Russians have come. Oh, oh! What a bustle is going on now in the aouls! Everybody’s dragging his belongings into the ravine,’ he said laughing.

‘Why, do they already know in the mountains that a detachment is on its way?’ I asked him.

‘How can they help knowing? They always know. Our people are like that.’

‘Then Shamy¹ too is preparing for action?’ I asked.

‘No,’ he answered, shaking his head, ‘Shamy won’t go into action; Shamy will send his naibs² and he himself will look on through a telescope from above.’

‘Does he live far away?’

‘Not far. Some eight miles to the left.’

‘How do you know?’ I asked. ‘Have you been there?’

‘I have. Our people have all been.’

‘Have you seen Shamy?’

‘Such as we don’t see Shamy! There are a hundred, three hundred, a thousand murids³ all round him, and Shamy is in the centre,’ he said, with an expression of servile admiration.

Looking up, it was possible to discern that the sky,
1 Shamil was the leader (in 1834-59) of the Caucasian hill-tribes in their resistance to Russia.

2 A naib was a man to whom Shamil had entrusted some administrative office. L. T.

3 The word murid has several meanings, but here it denotes something between an adjutant and a bodyguard. now cleared, was beginning to grow lighter in the east and the Pleiades to sink towards the horizon, but the ravine through which we were marching was still damp and gloomy.

Suddenly a little way in front of us several lights flashed through the darkness; at the same moment some bullets flew whizzing past amid the surrounding silence [and sharp abrupt firing could be heard and loud cries, as piercing as cries of despair but expressing instead of fear such a passion of brutal audacity and rage that one could not but shudder at hearing it.] It was the enemy's advanced picket. The Tartars who composed it whooped, fired at random, and then ran in different directions.

All became silent again. The general called up an interpreter. A Tartar in a white Circassian coat rode up to him and, gesticulating and whispering, talked with him for some time.

'Colonel Khasanov! Order the cordon to take open order,' commanded the general with a quiet but distinct drawl.

The detachment advanced to the-river, the black hills and gorges were left behind, the dawn appeared. The vault of the heavens, in which a few pale stars were still dimly visible, seemed higher; the sunrise glow beyond shone brightly in the east, a fresh penetrating breeze blew from the west and the white mists rose like steam above the rushing stream.

Chapter VIII

OUR GUIDE POINTED out a ford and the cavalry vanguard, followed by the general, began crossing the stream. The water which reached to the horses' chests rushed with tremendous force between the white boulders which here and there appeared on a level with its surface, and

formed foaming and gurgling ripples round the horses' legs. The horses, surprised by the noise of the water, lifted their heads and pricked their ears, but stepped evenly and carefully against the current on the uneven bottom of the stream. Their riders lifted their feet and their weapons. The infantry, literally in nothing but their shirts, linked arm in arm by twenties and holding above the water their muskets to which their bundles of clothing were fastened, made great efforts (as the strained expression of their faces showed) to resist the force of the current. The mounted artillerymen with loud shouts drove their horses into the water at a trot. The guns and green ammunition wagons, over which the water occasionally splashed, rang against the stony bottom, but the sturdy little horses, churning the water, pulled at the traces in unison and with dripping manes and tails clambered out on the opposite bank.

As soon as the crossing was accomplished the general's face suddenly assumed a meditative and serious look and he turned his horse and, followed by the cavalry, rode at a trot down a broad glade which opened out before us in the midst of the forest. A cordon of mounted Cossacks was scattered along the skirts of the forest.

In the woods we noticed a man on foot dressed in a Circassian coat and wearing a tall cap — then a second and a third. One of the officers said: 'Those are Tartars.' Then a puff of smoke appeared from behind a tree, a shot, and another... .. Our rapid fire drowns the enemy's. Only now and then a bullet, with a slow sound like the buzzing of a bee's wings, passes by and proves that the firing is not all ours. Now the infantry at a run and the guns at a trot pass into the cordon. You can hear the boom of the guns, the metallic sounds of flying grape-shot, the hissing of rockets, and the crackle of musketry. Over the wide glade on all sides you can see cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Puffs of smoke mingle with the dew-covered verdure and the mist. Colonel Khasanov, approaching the general at full gallop, suddenly reins in his horse.

'Your Excellency, shall we order the cavalry to charge?' he says, raising his hand to his cap. 'The enemy's colours¹ are in sight,' and he points with his whip to some mounted Tartars in front of whom ride two men

on white horses with bits of blue and red stuff fastened to poles in their hands.

‘Go, and God be with you, Ivan Mikhaylovich!’ says the general.

The colonel turns his horse sharply round, draws his sword, and shouts ‘Hurrah!’

‘Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!’ comes from the ranks, and the cavalry gallop after him. . . .

Everyone looks on with interest: there is a colour, another, a third and a fourth. . . .

The enemy, not waiting for the attack, hides in the wood and thence opens a small-arms fire. Bullets come flying more and more frequently.

‘Quel charmant coup d’oeil!’² says the general, rising slightly, English fashion, in his saddle on his slim-legged black horse.

‘Charmant!’ answers the major, rolling his r’s, and striking his horse he rides up to the general: ‘C’est un vrai plaisir que la guerre dans un aussi beau pays,’³ he says.

‘Et surtout en bonne compagnie,’⁴ replies the general with a pleasant smile.

The major bows.

At that moment a hostile cannon-ball flies past with a disagreeable whiz, and strikes something. We hear behind us the moan of a wounded man.

1 The colours among the hillsmen correspond to those of our troops, except that every dzhigit or ‘brave’ among them may make his own colours and carry them.

2 ‘What a charming view.’

3 ‘Charming... War in such beautiful country is a real pleasure.’

4 ‘Especially in good company.’ This moaning strikes me so strangely that the warlike scene instantly loses all its charm for me. But no one except myself seems to notice it: the major laughs with apparently greater gusto, another officer repeats with perfect calm the first words of a sentence he had just been saying, the general looks the other way and with the quietest smile says something in French.

'Shall we reply to their fire?' asks the commander of the artillery, galloping up.

'Yes, frighten them a bit!' carelessly replies the general, lighting a cigar. The battery takes up its position and the firing begins. The earth groans under the shots, the discharges flash out incessantly, and smoke, through which it is scarcely possible to distinguish the artillerymen moving round their guns, veils your sight.

The aoul has been bombarded. Colonel Khasanov rides up again, and at the general's command gallops towards the aoul. The war-cry is again heard and the cavalry disappears in the cloud of dust it has raised.

The spectacle was truly magnificent. The one thing that spoilt the general impression for me — who took no part in the affair and was unaccustomed to it — was that this movement and the animation and the shouting appeared unnecessary. The comparison involuntarily suggested itself to me of a man swinging his arms vigorously to cut the air with an axe.

Chapter IX

OUR TROOPS HAD taken possession of the village and not a single soul of the enemy remained in it when the general and his suite, to which I had attached myself, rode up to it.

The long clean huts, with their fiat earthen roofs and shapely chimneys, stood on irregular stony mounds between which flowed a small stream. On one side were green gardens with enormous pear and small plum trees brightly lit up by the sun, on the other strange upright shadows, the perpendicular stones of the cemetery, and long poles with balls and many-coloured flags fastened to their ends. (These marked the graves of dzhigits.)

The troops were drawn up outside the gates.

['Well, how about it, Colonel?' said the general, 'Let them loot. I see they are terribly anxious to,' he added with a smile, pointing at the Cossacks.

You cannot imagine how striking was the contrast between the carelessness with which the general uttered these words, and their import and the military surroundings.]

A moment later, dragoons, Cossacks, and infantry spread with evident delight through the crooked lanes and in an instant the empty village was animated again. Here a roof crashes, an axe rings against the hard wood of a door that is being forced open, here a stack of hay, a fence, a hut, is set on fire and a pillar of thick smoke rises up in the clear air. Here is a Cossack dragging along a sack of flour and a carpet, there a soldier, with a delighted look on his face, brings a tin basin and some rag out of a hut, another is trying with outstretched arms to catch two hens that struggle and cackle beside a fence, a third has somewhere discovered an enormous pot of milk and after drinking some of it throws the rest on the ground with a loud laugh.

The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. was also in the aoul. The captain sat on the roof of a hut and sent thin whiffs of cheap tobacco smoke through his short pipe with such an expression of indifference on his face that on seeing him I forgot that I was in a hostile aoul and felt quite at home.

‘Ah, you are here too?’ he said when he noticed me.

The tall figure of Lieutenant Rosenkranz flitted here and there in the village. He gave orders unceasingly and appeared exceedingly engrossed in his task. I saw him with a triumphant air emerge from a hut followed by two soldiers leading an old Tartar.

The old man, whose only clothing consisted of a mottled tunic all in rags and patchwork trousers, was so frail that his arms, tightly bound behind his bent back, seemed scarcely to hold onto his shoulders, and he could scarcely drag his bare crooked legs along. His face and even Part of his shaven head were deeply furrowed. His wry toothless mouth kept moving beneath his close-cut moustache and beard, as if he were chewing something; but a gleam still sparkled in his red lashless eyes which clearly expressed an old man’s indifference to life.

Rosenkranz asked him, through an interpreter, why he had not gone away with the others.

‘Where should I go?’ he answered, looking quietly away.

‘Where the others have gone,’ someone remarked.

‘The dzhigits have gone to fight the Russians, but I am an old man.’

‘Are you not afraid of the Russians?’

‘What will the Russians do to me? I am old,’ he repeated, again glancing carelessly round the circle that had formed about him.

Later, as I was returning, I saw that old man bareheaded, with his arms tied, being jolted along behind the saddle of a Cossack, and he was looking round with the same expression of indifference on his face. He was needed for the exchange of prisoners.

I climbed onto the roof and sat down beside the captain.

[A bugler who had vodka and provisions was sent for. The captain’s calmness and equanimity involuntarily produced an effect on me. We ate roasted pheasant and chatted, without at all reflecting that the owners of that hut had not merely no desire to see us there but could hardly have imagined our existence.]

‘There don’t seem to have been many of the enemy,’ I said, wishing to know his opinion of the action that had taken place.

‘The enemy?’ he repeated with surprise. ‘The enemy was not there at all! Do you call those the enemy? . . . Wait till the evening when we go back, and you will see how they will speed us on our way: what a lot of them will pour out from there,’ he said, pointing to a thicket we had passed in the morning.

‘What is that?’ I asked anxiously, interrupting the captain and pointing to a group of Don Cossacks who had collected round something not far from us.

A sound of something like a child’s cry came from there, and the words: ‘Stop . . . don’t hack it. . . you’ll be seen . . . Have you a knife, Evstigneich . . . Lend me a knife. . . .’

‘They are up to something, the scoundrels . . . replied the captain calmly.

But at that moment the young ensign, his comely face flushed and frightened, came suddenly running from behind a corner and rushed towards the Cossacks waving his arms.

'Don't touch it! Don't kill it!' he cried in a childish voice.

Seeing the officer, the Cossacks stepped aPart and released a little white kid. The young ensign was quite abashed, muttered something, and stopped before us with a confused face. Seeing the captain and me on the roof he blushed still more and ran leaping towards us.

'I thought they were killing a child,' he said with a bashful smile.

Chapter X

THE GENERAL WENT ahead with the cavalry. The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. remained in the rear-guard. Captain Khl6pov's and Lieutenant Rosenkranz's battalions retired together.

The captain's prediction was fully justified. No sooner had we entered the narrow thicket he had mentioned, than on both sides of us we caught glimpses of hillsmen mounted and on foot, and so near were they that I could distinctly see how some of them ran stooping, rifle in hand, from one tree to another.

The captain took off his cap and piously crossed himself, some of the older soldiers did the same. From the wood were heard war-cries and the words 'lay giaour', 'Urus! iay' Sharp short rifle-shots, following one another fast, whizzed on both sides of us. Our men answered silently with a running fire, and only now and then remarks like the following were made in the ranks: 'See where he1 fires from! It's all right for him inside the wood. We ought to use cannon,' and so forth.

Our ordnance was brought out, and after some grape-shot had been fired the enemy seemed to grow weaker, but a moment later and at every step taken by our troops, the enemy's fire again grew hotter and the shouting louder.

We had hardly gone seven hundred yards from the village before enemy cannon-balls began whistling over our heads. I saw a soldier killed by one. . . . But why should I describe the details of that terrible picture which I would myself give much to be able to forget!

Lieutenant Rosenkranz kept firing, and incessantly shouted in a hoarse voice at the soldiers and galloped from one end of the cordon to the other. He was rather pale and this suited his martial countenance very well.

The good-looking young ensign was in raptures: his beautiful dark eyes shone with daring, his lips were slightly smiling, and he kept riding up to the captain and begging permission to charge.

1 He is a collective noun by which the soldiers indicate the enemy. 'We will repel them,' he said persuasively, 'we certainly will.'
'It's not necessary,' replied the captain abruptly. 'We must retreat.'

The captain's company held the skirts of the wood, the men lying down and replying to the enemy's fire. The captain in his shabby coat and shabby cap sat silent on his white horse, with loose reins, bent knees, his feet in the stirrups, and did not stir from his place. (The soldiers knew and did their work so well that there was no need to give them any orders.) Only at rare intervals he raised his voice to shout at those who exposed their heads. There was nothing at all martial about the captain's appearance, but there was something so sincere and simple in it that I was unusually struck by it. 'It is he who is really brave,' I involuntarily said to myself.

He was just the same as I had always seen him: the same calm movements, the same guileless expression on his plain but frank face, only his eyes, which were brighter than usual, showed the concentration of one quietly engaged on his duties. 'As I had always seen him' is easily said, but how many different shades have I noticed in the behaviour of others; one wishing to appear quieter, another sterner, a third merrier, than usual, but the captain's face showed that he did not even see why he should appear anything but what he was.

The Frenchman at Waterloo who said, 'La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas,'¹ and other, Particularly French, heroes who uttered memorable sayings were brave, and really uttered remarkable words, but between their courage and the captain's there was this difference, that even if a great saying had in any circumstance stirred in the soul of my hero, I am convinced that he would not have uttered it: first because by uttering a great saying he would have feared to spoil a great deed, and secondly because

I 'The Guard dies, but does not surrender.' when a man feels within himself the capacity to perform a great deed no talk of any kind is needed. That, I think, is a peculiar and a lofty characteristic of Russian courage, and that being so, how can a Russian heart help aching when our young Russian warriors utter trivial French phrases intended to imitate antiquated French chivalry?

Suddenly from the side where our young ensign stood with his platoon we heard a not very hearty or loud 'Hurrah!' Looking round to where the shout came from, I saw some thirty soldiers with sacks on their shoulders and muskets in their hands managing with very great difficulty to run across a ploughed field. They kept stumbling, but nevertheless ran on and shouted. In front of them, sword in hand, galloped the young ensign.

They all disappeared into the wood. . . .

After a few minutes of whooping and clatter a frightened horse ran out of the wood, and soldiers appeared bringing back the dead and wounded. Among the latter was the young ensign. Two soldiers supported him under his arms.

He was as pale as a sheet, and his pretty head, on which only a shadow remained of the warlike enthusiasm that had animated him a few minutes before, was dreadfully sunk between his shoulders and drooped on his chest. There was a small spot of blood on the white shirt beneath his unbuttoned coat.

'Ah, what a pity!' I said, involuntarily turning away from this sad spectacle.

'Of course it's a pity,' said an old soldier, who stood leaning on his musket beside me with a gloomy expression on his face. 'He's not afraid of anything. How can one do such things?' he added, looking intently at the wounded lad. 'He was still foolish and now he has paid for it!'

'And you?' I asked. 'Are you afraid?'

'What do you expect?'

Chapter XI

FOUR SOLDIERS WERE carrying the ensign on a stretcher and behind them an ambulance soldier was leading a thin, broken-winded horse with two green boxes on its back containing surgical appliances. They waited for the doctor. Some officers rode up to the stretcher and tried to cheer and comfort the wounded lad.

'Well, friend Alanin, it will be some time before you will dance again with castanets,' said Lieutenant Rosenkranz, riding up to the stretcher with a smile.

He probably supposed that these words would raise the young ensign's spirits, but as far as one could judge by the latter's coldly sad look the words had not the desired effect.

The captain rode up too. He looked intently at the wounded man and his usually calm and cold face expressed sincere sympathy. 'Well, my dear Anatol Ivanich,' he said, in a voice of tender sympathy such as I never expected from him, 'evidently it was God's will.'

The wounded lad looked round and his pale face lit up with a sad smile.

'Yes, I disobeyed you.'

'Say rather, it was God's will,' repeated the captain.

The doctor when he arrived, [as far as could be judged by the shakiness of his legs and the redness of his eyes, was in no fit condition to bandage the patient: however, he] took from his assistant bandages, a

probe, and another instrument, rolled up his sleeves and stepped up to the ensign with an encouraging smile.

‘So it seems they have made a hole in a sound spot for you too,’ he said in a carelessly playful tone. ‘Let me see.’

The ensign obeyed, but the look he gave the merry doctor expressed astonishment and reproof which the inebriated practitioner did not notice. He touched the wound so awkwardly, quite unnecessarily pressing on it with his unsteady fingers, that the wounded ensign, driven beyond the limits of endurance, pushed away his hand with a deep groan.

‘Let me alone!’ he said in a scarcely audible voice. ‘I shall die anyway.’

[Then, addressing the captain, he said with difficulty: ‘Please, Captain .. . yesterday I lost.. . twenty rubles to Dronov. . . . When my things are sold ... let him be paid.’]

With those words he fell back, and five minutes later when I passed the group that had formed around him, and asked a soldier, ‘How is the ensign?’ the answer was, ‘Passing away.’

Chapter XII

IT WAS LATE in the day when the detachment, formed into a broad column and singing, approached the Fort.

[The general rode in front and by his merry countenance one could see that the raid had been successful. In fact, with little loss, we had that day been in Mukay aoul — where from immemorial times no Russian foot had trod.

The Saxon, Kaspar Lavrentich, narrated to another officer that he had himself seen how three Chechens had aimed straight at his breast. In the mind of Ensign Rosenkranz a complete story of the day’s action had formulated itself. Captain Khlopov walked with thoughtful face in front of his company, leading his little white horse by its bridle.]

The sun had hidden behind the snowy mountain range and threw its last rosy beams on a long thin cloud stretching motionless across the

clear horizon. The snow peaks began to disappear in purple mist and only their top outline was visible, wonderfully distinct in the crimson sunset glow.

The delicate moon, which had risen long since, began to grow pale against the deep azure. The green of the grass and trees was turning black and becoming covered with dew. The dark masses of troops moved with measured sounds over the luxuriant meadows. Tambourines, drums, and merry songs were heard from various sides. The voice of the second tenor of the Sixth Company rang out with full force and the sounds of his clear chest-notes, full of feeling and power, floated through the clear evening air.

1852

The End