

## Chapter XXII

The Captain and the head of the village rode away, and Olenin, to please Lukashka as well as to avoid going back alone through the dark forest, asked the corporal to give Lukashka leave, and the corporal did so. Olenin thought that Lukashka wanted to see Maryanka and he was also glad of the companionship of such a pleasant-looking and sociable Cossack. Lukashka and Maryanka he involuntarily united in his mind, and he found pleasure in thinking about them. 'He loves Maryanka,' thought Olenin, 'and I could love her,' and a new and powerful emotion of tenderness overcame him as they walked homewards together through the dark forest. Lukashka too felt happy; something akin to love made itself felt between these two very different young men. Every time they glanced at one another they wanted to laugh.

'By which gate do you enter?' asked Olenin.

'By the middle one. But I'll see you as far as the marsh. After that you have nothing to fear.'

Olenin laughed.

'Do you think I am afraid? Go back, and thank you. I can get on alone.'

'It's all right! What have I to do? And how can you help being afraid?'

Even we are afraid,' said Lukashka to set Olenin's self-esteem at rest, and he laughed too.

'Then come in with me. We'll have a talk and a drink and in the morning you can go back.'

'Couldn't I find a place to spend the night?' laughed Lukashka. 'But the corporal asked me to go back.'

'I heard you singing last night, and also saw you.'

'Every one...' and Luke swayed his head.

'Is it true you are getting married?' asked Olenin.

'Mother wants me to marry. But I have not got a horse yet.'

'Aren't you in the regular service?'

'Oh dear no! I've only just joined, and have not got a horse yet, and don't know how to get one. That's why the marriage does not come off.'

'And what would a horse cost?'

'We were bargaining for one beyond the river the other day and they would not take sixty rubles for it, though it is a Nogay horse.'

'Will you come and be my drabant?' (A drabant was a kind of orderly attached to an officer when campaigning.) 'I'll get it arranged and will give you a horse,' said Olenin suddenly. 'Really now, I have two and I don't want both.'

'How--don't want it?' Lukashka said, laughing. 'Why should you make me a present? We'll get on by ourselves by God's help.'

'No, really! Or don't you want to be a drabant?' said Olenin, glad that it had entered his head to give a horse to Lukashka, though, without knowing why, he felt uncomfortable and confused and did not know what to say when he tried to speak.

Lukashka was the first to break the silence.

'Have you a house of your own in Russia?' he asked.

Olenin could not refrain from replying that he had not only one, but several houses.

'A good house? Bigger than ours?' asked Lukashka good-naturedly.

'Much bigger; ten times as big and three storeys high,' replied Olenin.

'And have you horses such as ours?'

'I have a hundred horses, worth three or four hundred rubles each, but they are not like yours. They are trotters, you know.... But still, I like the horses here best.'

'Well, and did you come here of your own free will, or were you sent?' said Lukashka, laughing at him. 'Look! that's where you lost your way,' he added, 'you should have turned to the right.'

'I came by my own wish,' replied Olenin. 'I wanted to see your parts and to join some expeditions.'

'I would go on an expedition any day,' said Lukashka. 'D'you hear the jackals howling?' he added, listening.

'I say, don't you feel any horror at having killed a man?' asked Olenin.

'What's there to be frightened about? But I should like to join an expedition,' Lukashka repeated. 'How I want to! How I want to!'

'Perhaps we may be going together. Our company is going before the holidays, and your "hundred" too.'

'And what did you want to come here for? You've a house and horses and serfs. In your place I'd do nothing but make merry! And what is your rank?'

'I am a cadet, but have been recommended for a commission.'

'Well, if you're not bragging about your home, if I were you I'd never have left it! Yes, I'd never have gone away anywhere. Do you find it pleasant living among us?'

'Yes, very pleasant,' answered Olenin.

It had grown quite dark before, talking in this way, they approached the village. They were still surrounded by the deep gloom of the forest. The wind howled through the tree-tops. The jackals suddenly seemed to be crying close beside them, howling, chuckling, and sobbing; but ahead of them in the village the sounds of women's voices and the barking of dogs could already be heard; the outlines of the huts were clearly to be seen; lights gleamed and the air was filled with the peculiar smell of kisyak smoke. Olenin felt keenly, that night especially, that here in this village was his home, his family, all his happiness, and that he never had and never would live so happily anywhere as he did in this Cossack village. He was so fond of everybody and especially of Lukashka that night. On reaching home, to Lukashka's great surprise, Olenin with his own hands led out of the shed a horse he had bought in Groznoe--it was not the one he usually rode but another--not a bad horse though no longer young, and gave it to Lukashka.

'Why should you give me a present?' said Lukashka, 'I have not yet done anything for you.'

'Really it is nothing,' answered Olenin. 'Take it, and you will give me a present, and we'll go on an expedition against the enemy together.'

Lukashka became confused.

'But what d'you mean by it? As if a horse were of little value,' he said without looking at the horse.

'Take it, take it! If you don't you will offend me. Vanyusha! Take the grey horse to his house.'

Lukashka took hold of the halter.

'Well then, thank you! This is something unexpected, undreamt of.'

Olenin was as happy as a boy of twelve.

'Tie it up here. It's a good horse. I bought it in Groznoe; it gallops splendidly! Vanyusha, bring us some chikhir. Come into the hut.'

The wine was brought. Lukashka sat down and took the wine-bowl.

'God willing I'll find a way to repay you,' he said, finishing his

wine. 'How are you called?'

'Dmitri Andreich.'

'Well, 'Mitry Andreich, God bless you. We will be kunaks. Now you must come to see us. Though we are not rich people still we can treat a kunak, and I will tell mother in case you need anything--clotted cream or grapes--and if you come to the cordon I'm your servant to go hunting or to go across the river, anywhere you like! There now, only the other day, what a boar I killed, and I divided it among the Cossacks, but if I had only known, I'd have given it to you.' 'That's all right, thank you! But don't harness the horse, it has never been in harness.'

'Why harness the horse? And there is something else I'll tell you if you like,' said Lukashka, bending his head. 'I have a kunak, Girey Khan. He asked me to lie in ambush by the road where they come down from the mountains. Shall we go together? I'll not betray you. I'll be your murid.'

'Yes, we'll go; we'll go some day.'

Lukashka seemed quite to have quieted down and to have understood Olenin's attitude towards him. His calmness and the ease of his behaviour surprised Olenin, and he did not even quite like it. They talked long, and it was late when Lukashka, not tipsy (he never was tipsy) but having drunk a good deal, left Olenin after shaking hands.

Olenin looked out of the window to see what he would do. Lukashka went out, hanging his head. Then, having led the horse out of the gate, he suddenly shook his head, threw the reins of the halter over its head, sprang onto its back like a cat, gave a wild shout, and galloped down the street. Olenin expected that Lukishka would go to share his joy with Maryanka, but though he did not do so Olenin still felt his soul more at ease than ever before in his life. He was as delighted as a boy, and could not refrain from telling Vanyusha not only that he had given Lukashka the horse, but also why he had done it, as well as his new theory of happiness. Vanyusha did not approve of his theory, and announced that 'l'argent il n'y a pas!' and that therefore it was all nonsense.

Lukashka rode home, jumped off the horse, and handed it over to his mother, telling her to let it out with the communal Cossack herd. He himself had to return to the cordon that same night. His deaf sister undertook to take the horse, and explained by signs that when she saw the man who had given the horse, she would bow down at his feet. The old woman only shook her head at her son's story, and decided in her own mind that he had stolen it. She therefore told the deaf girl to take it to the herd before daybreak.

Lukashka went back alone to the cordon pondering over Olenin's action. Though he did not consider the horse a good one, yet it was worth at least forty rubles and Lukashka was very glad to have the present. But



why it had been given him he could not at all understand, and therefore he did not experience the least feeling of gratitude. On the contrary, vague suspicions that the cadet had some evil intentions filled his mind. What those intentions were he could not decide, but neither could he admit the idea that a stranger would give him a horse worth forty rubles for nothing, just out of kindness; it seemed impossible. Had he been drunk one might understand it! He might have wished to show off. But the cadet had been sober, and therefore must have wished to bribe him to do something wrong. 'Eh, humbug!' thought Lukashka. 'Haven't I got the horse and we'll see later on. I'm not a fool myself and we shall see who'll get the better of the other,' he thought, feeling the necessity of being on his guard, and therefore arousing in himself unfriendly feelings towards Olenin. He told no one how he had got the horse. To some he said he had bought it, to others he replied evasively. However, the truth soon got about in the village, and Lukashka's mother and Maryanka, as well as Elias Vasilich and other Cossacks, when they heard of Olenin's unnecessary gift, were perplexed, and began to be on their guard against the cadet. But despite their fears his action aroused in them a great respect for his simplicity and wealth.

'Have you heard,' said one, 'that the cadet quartered on Elias Vasilich has thrown a fifty-ruble horse at Lukashka? He's rich! ...'

'Yes, I heard of it,' replied another profoundly, 'he must have done him some great service. We shall see what will come of this cadet. Eh!

what luck that Snatcher has!

'Those cadets are crafty, awfully crafty,' said a third. 'See if he don't go setting fire to a building, or doing something!'