

ZAKHAR BERKUT

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by

I V A N F R A N K O

**One of the Greatest Ukrainian
Writers**

*Translated from the Ukrainian for the
first time by*

THEODOSIA BORESKY

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ZAKHAR BERKUT

*A Historical Romance Depicting the Life and System
of Government of the People in the Carpathian
Region of Ukraine During the XIIIth
Century, at the Time of the
Mongol Invasion.*

INCLUDED

Brief Outline of Ukrainian History

FIRST EDITION

PRINTED AND BOUND IN THE U. S. A.

DEDICATED BY THE TRANSLATOR TO

ALL real Americans who understand and believe in the traditions and teachings of the founders of their republic; to whom, therefore, it is appropriate to present this book, the story of an independent, self-governing community of 13th century Ukraine, its struggle to preserve its ages-old democratic form of government from enemies within Ukraine and to repel the fearful Mongol Horde which had devastated the rest of the land.

All Americans who still possess the freedom-loving spirit of the pioneers and founders of their country will be spiritually refreshed by reading of a people who maintained their freedom by following the time-tested precepts of their forefathers who resisted all encroachments on their civil rights and liberty. They will intuitively sense that the ideas and ideals presented here are similar to the American concepts of freedom and government, people's rights, refusal to submit to tyranny and foreign invasion, determination for self-government, cooperation between communities for self-defence and trade, proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence and in various speeches and writings of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

INTRODUCTION

How melancholy it is in our Tukhlia today! True, the rivers Strey and Opir still wash its rocky, birch-rimmed shores; grass and flowers cover its vales in the spring, and in its clear azure skies, as in ancient times, still glides and circles overhead the giant eagle "berkut". But everything else, how it has changed, the forests, villages and especially the people!

The dense jungle growth of forests which covered almost its entire expanse to the edges of the rivers, except for the upland downs, now has become sparse, diminished, melted away like snow under the heat of the sun; here and there it has completely disappeared leaving behind bald spots of barren areas. In some places all that is left is charred remains of stumps among which grow forlorn spruce or the even more wretched maple saplings.

Where long ago peace reigned supreme broken only now and again by the mournful sound of a shepherd's "trembita" floating down from some far off upland, or perhaps the roar of a bison or a moose from the murky tangled thickets, now upon the downs shout the cattle herdsmen and in the ravines and gullies halloo the woodcutters, sawers and shingle-makers, ceaselessly, like deathless worms eating and cutting away the beauty of the Tukholian mountain region, the centuries-old spruces, pines and evergreens, either guiding them down stream, cut into lengths, to the new steam-powered sawmills or sawing them on the spot into boards and shingles..

But the people have changed most of all. At first glance it would seem they have become more civilized, but in reality all that has happened is that there has been an increase in the population. There are more villages and hamlets and more

houses in the villages, but within these houses there is also greater poverty and misery. The people are wretched, down-trodden, gloomy, towards strangers diffident and self-effacing. Each thinks only of himself without understanding that such a way of life disrupts their unity and causes the distintegration of the whole community.

That was not the way it had been here a long time ago! Though there were less people, what a valiant spirit they possessed! How courageously they lived amidst the inaccessible, primeval fastnesses, high up within the shadow of the mighty giant, Mt. Zelemenya. But for centuries misfortune has been tormenting them. Repeated onslaughts have uprooted their good life, and poverty has broken their freedom-loving spirit. Today only fragmentary accounts of those days remain to remind their descendents of that more fortunate life of their forefathers.

When sometimes an old granny, sitting on the hearth spinning wool, begins to relate stories to the little grandchildren about those times long ago, about the attacks of the ferocious, dog-faced Mongols and about the Tukholian leader Berkut, the children listen fearfully and tears glisten in their grey-blue eyes. But when the marvelous story ends, young and old sigh and remark, "My, what a wonderful tale!"

"Yes, yes!" grandma will say nodding her head. "Yes, my children! For us it is only a story, but long ago it was really so!"

"I wonder if those times will ever return?" some elder might remark. "The old sages say they **WILL** return again, but perhaps only before the end of the world?"

Cheerless indeed, it is in our Tukhlia today! Only legends endure to remind us of old times and the old life. The people of today, brought up in misery and subjugation in the thousand

year-old chains of foreign domination, refuse to believe they are anything but fiction.

Nonetheless the thoughts of a poet return to those old times, making the people come to life again. No matter how unlike our present ways of living those old customs were, all whose hearts are pure, sincere and sympathetic towards their fellow-men will find inspiration here which might well prove useful for the betterment of humanity in our present "civilized" times.

IVAN FRANKO

CHAPTER I

IT WAS the year 1241, when the Spirit of Spring had spread her magic mantle of fresh verdure over the hills and broad-backed, gently sloping mountain ranges of the Tukholian region in the Carpathian section of ancient Rus (Ukraine).*

One glorious day of this spring the woodland slopes of Mt. Zelemenya echoed with shouts and bellowing blasts of the huntsmen's horns.

Tuhar Wolf (Wowk), the new boyar of Tukhlia, had organized a big game hunt to celebrate the beginning of his rule in the region for just recently king Danilo of the principality of Halich had granted him full tenure over this section of luxuriantly grassy downs and mountain woodlands.

As soon as he had chosen a site and built himself a house, he arranged a hunting expedition as a way of self-introduction to the boyars* of surrounding communities.

* Ancient Greek writers called the land "Rhos" and later Latin writers, "Rutheni". In Ukrainian documents of old, the land is called "Rus" (pron. Roosh), this being the name of the dynasty as for instance the name Hapsburg or Hohenzollern.

Ukraine possessed the name Rus before the 10th century while the Muscovite or, as it is called today, the Russian nation did not have its beginning until the middle of the 13th century. The name Russia and the term Russian did not come into existence until the second half of the 18th century when the Muscovite government, in order to get its people to accept the name of another land, Rus, as their own, added on the the "sia", thus creating a new name.

Ethnographically the plains of Rus or Ukraine once stretched in a wide belt of about 600 miles along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, from the lower Danube and the Carpathian Range in the West, crossing the rivers Don and Volga and reaching to the Ural mountains in the East.

** Boyar: A member of an aristocratic order, next below that of the ruling princes; one of a privileged class.

In those days to undertake a hunt for big game was not just a means of pleasantly passing away the time but a grim and bloody risk, hazardous to life and limb. Bison, bears and wild boars are truculent, malignant brutes. Seldom did anyone ever succeed in killing one of them with a bow and arrow. Even deer were not bagged without a struggle. The actual kill most often had to be made by facing the animal and plunging a spear into its heart with all one's might. If the spear missed its mark, the life of the hunter became greatly endangered, especially if he was unable at the crucial moment to find momentary refuge from which to launch a renewed attack with a hunting knife or a strong, long-handled battle-axe.

Therefore it was not surprising to find that Tuhar and his company prepared for the hunt as if for a siege of war, with a supply of ammunition, bows and arrows, a coterie of servants, provisions of food and even a reputable sorcerer who knew how to heal wounds.

Nor was there anything unusual in that Tuhar and his guests were themselves as fully armed as warriors except for steel helmets and armor which would have been too burdensome to manage on their trek through the jungle growth and over fallen timber of the mountainside. The only remarkable aspect of this expedition was the presence of Tuhar's daughter, Peace-Renown (Meroslava), who not forsaking her father even in this adventure, ventured to join his company of hunters.

The Tukholian citizens, seeing her riding boldly and proudly among her father's guests, like a straight young willow tree among the oaks, followed her mounted form with approving eyes and spoke thus to one another: "What a girl! She'd make a fine young soldier, and probably a better man than her father!"

This was no mean compliment for Tuhar Wolf was a man as physically solid and strong as a giant oak, broad of shoulders,

brawny, and with a thick growth of black beard and hair so that he might well himself have been mistaken for one of the hairy Tukholian bears which he was bound to hunt down. But such a daughter as his Peace-Renown was also hard to find. Aside from her high rank of birth, her beauty, her loveable, kindly disposition, which a number of her contemporaries could no doubt be found to possess in equal degree (though not many could surpass her at that) there was one respect in which none would ever rival her and that was in her free-spirited nature, her initiative, the high degree of muscular development and dauntless courage, manifest only in those young men brought up under the direst stress of circumstances requiring from them an unremitting struggle with relentless nature.

It was apparent that from the outset, Peace-Renown had been permitted the greatest personal freedom, that her upbringing had been masculine in nature and that within the pleasingly formed feminine body dwelt a forceful and valiant spirit.

She was Tuhar's only child, her mother having died at her birth. Her nurse, an old peasant woman, had trained her from earliest childhood in the performance of practical, everyday tasks. And when she grew older, her father, to assuage his loneliness, took her everywhere with him. To satisfy her impulsive, zealous nature, he taught her the use of all the implements of warfare in the art of self-defense, to bear discomforts without complaint and to face danger without flinching. The greater the difficulties which presented themselves, the more audacious she grew in overcoming them, the stronger she developed physically and the more self-reliant mentally. Despite all this, Peace-Renown never for a moment was unfeminine. She was sweet of nature, good of heart and demure. All this, combined with her training, made a most harmonious and charming combination, so that whoever saw her and heard her speak, could never forget her. Her walk, her lovely voice

made them recall to memory the best moments of their lives, their youth; just as the first breath of spring brings memories to an old man of his young love.

The big game hunt was in its third day. Many deer and bison had been killed by the arrows and spears of the boyars. Near the bank of a noisy mountain stream, in a glade deep within the forest, the huntsmen had pitched their tents. Smoke rose high from huge campfires where upon iron racks hung great steaming kettles and where the meat of the game was being turned by the servants as it broiled and baked, to feed Tuhar's company of guests.

Today, the last day of the hunt was to be devoted to the most important and most dangerous of all, the hunt for bears. At the top of a steeply sloping hill strewn with broken branches and fallen timber and densely forested with sturdy beech and pine trees, separated from the rest of the terrain by deep ravines and gorges, was the ancient breeding ground of the mighty Bruin. There, Maxim Berkut, their mountain guide, assured them could be found the dens of the female bears from which they brought forth their offspring to instill terror into the entire community, on visiting its peaceful pastures.

Although some daring shepherds occasionally killed one or two beasts with their bows and arrows and spears, or managed to lure them into a trap, the number of bears was too great for such infrequent killings to insure the community against their ever-present menace.

It was no wonder that when the new boyar, Tuhar Wolf, announced to the inhabitants of Tukhlia that he was staging a bear hunt and asked them to lend him a guide, they not only sent him their very best young mountaineer, Maxim, son of Zakhar, their most prominent citizen and respected leader, but also a troop of young mountaineer archers, equipped with bows and arrows and javelins to lend assistance to the boyar and his company in the hunt. Tuhar's plan was to surround the hill-

side breeding ground with his company and to rid it once and for all of its savage inhabitants.

From earliest morn the encampment was alive with the excitement of preparation. The servants had been stirring about long before dawn getting ready the provisions of food and filling the guests' wooden canteens with a thirst-quenching drink of fomented honey. The Tukholian youths also prepared themselves by sharpening their knives and wooden arrows, drawing on durable moccasins and filling the compartments of their lunch baskets with roast meat, dumplings, bread, cheese and other food enough to last them the entire day.

Not until this day did Maxim Berkut assume the full responsibility of the expedition. He neither hurried nor tarried, nor did he neglect to oversee every detail of the preparations. Everything had its time and place. Whether among his fellow mountaineers, the older and more experienced boyars, or the servants, Maxim moved about calmly, unobtrusively, giving orders confidently as if he considered them all his equals. His friends were just as free with him as he with them, laughing and joking with him at the same time carrying out his instructions promptly and happily as though they were doing everything on their own initiative without being told. The company of boyar warlords, accustomed to sly, derisive laughter on the one hand and to toadying servility on the other, were in their ways neither as free nor as readily given to jollity, nevertheless, they respected Maxim's guidance and judgment and carried out his instructions without question.

Although the proud and arrogant boyars may have resented the presence of a common peasant "lout" who ordered them about as if they were his equals, it was demonstrated to them almost at every turn that his instructions were both sensible and necessary.

The sun had not yet risen when the huntsmen left their encampment. The mountains slept, wrapped in their blanket

of hushed tranquillity; dreamy mists enveloped the dark green, pointed crowns of the pine trees. Drops of dew hung like acorns among dense, many-pointed leaves; on the ground trailing garlands of climbing vines twisted and twined themselves around the roots of storm-uprooted trees, among the brambles of wild raspberry and blackberry bushes and intertwined themselves with the thick and fibrous shoots of wild hop vines. From the steep, darkly yawning gorges, rose a thick, grayish vapor, indicating that at their base flowed swift mountain currents. The air was oppressive with the mist and pungent odor of pine cones forcing their lungs to expand to their fullest capacity to catch a breath.

Wordlessly, the company of huntsmen pushed their way through the pathless jungle growth, over fallen timber and treacherous ravines. Maxim Berkut led the company followed by Tuhar Wolf, his daughter, the other boyars and the Tukholian youths in the rear. They proceeded cautiously, ears alert to every sound.

The woodland began to awaken to daytime activity. A woodpecker perched on the top of a giant pine a moment, slid down and pecked upon its bark his announcement of the sunrise. From a distance came the roars of bison and the yowls of jackals. The bears, having fed upon their kill, were drowsing away lolling on the soft, mossy beds of their dens at the bottoms of ravines and gorges, hidden beneath the screens of forest debris. A tribe of wild boars grunted at the bottom of a gulch, no doubt cooling their snouts in some icy torrent.

The company had made its toilsome way for an hour or more along the tangled thickets of the primeval forest. Their breathing was labored and difficult, they wiped their brows constantly of the trickling rivulets of perspiration, doing their best to keep up with their guide, Maxim, who kept glancing backward. At first he had objected to allowing Tuhar's daughter to accompany them on this most dangerous trip, but

Peace-Renown was firmly insistent. It was the first time she had been on such an extensive hunting trip and so she was unwilling to give up her plans to accompany them on its most exciting expedition. None of Maxim's arguments concerning the difficulties to be encountered on the way, the perils of the undertaking, the ferocity and cunning of animals maddened by shots that failed to hit their mark, availed to dissuade her. "All the better! All the better!" she had replied to everything, showing Maxim the intrepid ardor in her eyes, smiling up at him her sweet and utterly disarming smile so that Maxim, as if bewitched, ceased to press the matter further. Her father too, had at first opposed her wishes but in the end, as usual, gave in to her pleas.

Maxim was not a little amazed at her efficiency, rivaling that of the boyars, in surmounting the various obstacles which presented themselves in their path. He watched, astounded at how nimbly she leaped over fallen timber, her sure-footedness along ledges of steeply yawning gorges, how deftly she slid under tangled masses of forest litter and withal so unconsciously, naturally, that to Maxim it seemed as if she floated along propelled by magic, unseen wings. Observing her, he continued to marvel, "What a wonderful girl! What a wonderful girl! Why, I've never in my life seen anyone like her!"

At length they arrived at their destination. The breeding ground of the Bruins was a steep hill heavily timbered with giant beech and pine trees, strewn with huge boulders, logs and dried branches, accessible only from its southern side. It was closed off at its western, northern and eastern sides by sheer walls of rock which seemed as if they had been sliced off the giant Mt. Zelemenya and moved a few feet away from it. Beneath these walls of rock roared and foamed the icy waters of a narrow mountain stream.

These natural barriers on its three sides made the work of our huntsmen all the easier. All they needed to do was to

spread themselves out not too far apart, forming a flanking line along its southern side and in that formation to slowly ascend the hillside. The beasts, not having any other outlet, would eventually fall into their hands and be killed.

Having arrived at this strategic point, Maxim advised the company to stop a few minutes to sit down or lie down and rest before tackling their hard and dangerous task. The sun had already risen but the surrounding hill-tops and the branches of the giant pines obscured it from their view. After a short period of rest, Maxim began to arrange the hunters into a double row covering the entire width of the pass. At the narrower entrance of the corridor the men would stand five paces apart from each other, but as the sloping course widened on its ascent, the hunters would be forced to move further apart. The only matter which troubled Maxim was the question of what to do about Peace-Renown who persisted in demanding that she be given a separate place in the line rather than be forced to stay at her father's side.

"What!" she cried. "Am I not as good as any of your Tukholian youths?" her lovely face flushing rosilily under Maxim's regard. "You assign them individual posts but choose to ignore me—that is unfair! Besides, it would certainly bring disgrace upon my father if the two of us should be stationed at one position in the line. Isn't that so, father?" she questioned eagerly, persuasively. Tuhar Wolf did not have the heart to deny her.

Maxim began to repeat his exposition of all the hazards to be encountered. But all his arguments proved futile. She swept them all aside by answering, "Am I not strong? Do I not know the uses of the bow and arrow, the javelin, spear and battle-axe? Just let any one of your youths try to match his skill against mine and we'll see who'll be the winner!"

Finally Maxim had to give in. Nor could he carry in his heart the least resentment against this amazing and charming

girl. He wanted to place her in the least dangerous position, but he could not do so for the simple reason that they were all equally dangerous. Having assembled his company, his final command was: "Let us now pray to whatever God each knows and then we'll sound our horns all together. This will herald our presence here and alarm the beasts. Then we'll ascend the pass until we reach the portion where it begins to widen. There my fellow Tukholians will guard the entrance so that no beast shall enter it, while you Boyarins, will ascend to the summit, right up to the breeding lairs of the female bears!"

In a minute woodland glades and hillsides reverberated with the bellowing blasts of the hunters' horns. For a long moment the sound rolled, detonating over the forests and in the mountain ranges. The woodland was rudely wakened. A blue-jay screeched in terror over the pine trees. A frightened giant eagle flapped his wings and soared into the sky. A beast crunched among the broken branches and fallen logs, seeking shelter. When the din of the horns had died away, the hunters began their blocking ascent of the pass. Their hearts raced in anticipation of a possible surprise attack and a fight to the finish. They kept a straight formation as they advanced. The first row was composed of the boyars followed by the mountaineers. Maxim led the entire company, guiding their way, cautiously alert to every sound and sign of bear tracks. But the mighty king of the primeval forest fastness, the bear, had not yet shown himself.

They had now arrived at the narrowest part of the corridor beyond which it spread itself into a steep, upward inclining expanse. Here at Maxim's order they paused once more and blew upon their horns, sending their fearful, thunderous sound into the dim-lit dens and harbours of the bears. Suddenly there was a rustling and snapping of dry twigs nearby, behind a huge pile of thick, half-rotten, giant pine logs.

"Attention!" cried Maxim, "The beast is approaching!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when, through an opening between two great logs, a shaggy head appeared and two brown eyes, half-curious and half-afraid, peered at Tuhar Wolf, who stood at his place in line just about ten paces away from it.

Tuhar was an old soldier and an experienced huntsman. He was not frightened by this sudden, unexpected encounter. Without uttering a word, he pulled out a heavy, iron arrow, placed it in his bow and stepped back a pace to take aim..

"Aim for his eye, Boyarin!" whispered Maxim from behind him.

An apprehensive moment of silence; an arrow whistled and the beast howled and fell back. Although he disappeared from view behind the pile of fallen timber, his pain-maddened roars did not cease.

"After him!" cried Tuhar Wolf and pushed his way through the opening where the bear had disappeared. At the same time two of the boyar huntsmen had climbed atop the pile of timber and held their javelins in readiness to aim at the beast. Tuhar Wolf, standing just at the opening, shot another arrow at the bear who roared even louder and turned to run away, but his eyes filled with blood so that he could not see his way out and kept bumping into trees as he ran.

A javelin thrown by one of the boyars struck him between the shoulder blades; however, it failed to down him. The savage howls of the wounded beast increased in volume. In desperation, he reared up on his hind legs trying to wipe away with his hairy paws the blood from his eyes which continuously overflowed them, clawing and tearing at the leafy branches before him, throwing them to the ground. But to no avail, one eye was completely shattered by the arrow and the other kept filling up with blood. He wheeled around blindly and approached Tuhar again, who cast his bow aside and, ducking behind the up-turned root of the fallen tree, unhooked his pole-

axe from his belt grasping it in both hands. When the bear feeling blindly for the familiar opening between the logs appeared there, he swung the axe down on its head with all his might, splitting the skull in half, its bloody brain spattering him; and the still beast's carcass fell to the ground with a thud.

Joyously the horns announced their first victory. They dragged the beast out into a clearing, skinned him and then pressed further into the jungle. The sun had risen high into the heavens, diffusing its rays between the branches like skeins of golden silk. The huntsmen proceeded now in a more confident manner, complimenting themselves upon their intrepidity, strength and prowess.

"Although I am just a wolf, one of the lesser beasts," joked Tuhar boastfully, "I can still do justice to a Tukholian bear."

Maxim, listening to this ostentatious speech, could not understand himself why all at once he should feel so sorry for the Tukholian bear.

"Very stupid of the bears," he remarked at last, "to defend themselves singly. Now if only a few of them got together, it's doubtful whether even a whole pack of wolves could do anything to them."

Tuhar glanced at him angrily, but made no attempt to answer. The huntsmen pressed on, climbing over fallen timber, leaping from stump to stump, often falling into piles of heaped up, dusty dry branches and touchwood.

In the middle of this primeval fastness of giant forest growth, piled up brushy tangles and rock fragments, they found the bear trails, narrow but well trodden from centuries of use, thickly strewn with the bleached bones of sheep, goats and other domesticated animals.

Maxim now kept to the rear of the company of boyars, constantly making sure that each man maintained his position, examining the narrow paths for signs of fresh tracks, urging

on and helping those who were tired. He alone showed no signs of fatigue..

Peace-Renown observed him with a mingling of wonder and admiration whenever he chanced to pass by her. Although she had certainly seen many brave and sturdy young men, she had never met anyone like Maxim who combined within his person not only the robust vigor of a peasant worker but also the intelligence and capabilities of a leader.

There was a sudden crackling of dry twigs and out from behind a pile of branches jumped a grizzly. At first he ran on all fours, but perceiving his enemies, he reared up on his hind legs, seized a storm-uprooted sapling in his forepaws and swinging it around him advanced menacingly, growling intermittently. Directly in front of him in the line of march were two mountain boyars who had been the most loudly boastful, anxious to show off before the company how much they knew.

Seeing the dreadful enemy so close to them, they trembled and blanched with dismay, but were ashamed to run and hide. They had to face the situation no matter what the outcome might be. Two arrows from two bows shot out at once. One missed, whistling by the bear's ears and the other struck the beast's side, not wounding as much as enraging him.

Taking a mighty leap into the air, the bear flung his weapon, the beech tree, at one of his assailants, just missing him and striking a tree near-by a glancing blow.

Without pausing even a moment to give the hunters time to reflect on their next move, the bear lunged towards the one who stood in the center of his beaten path. A javelin gleamed in the trembling hand of one of the boyars as he made ready to throw it.

"Don't!" warned Maxim commandingly, running towards them, followed by Tuhar Wolf and another boyar. "Don't throw it, but get ready to defend yourself with a spear at closer range."

However, his warning went unheeded. The boyar threw the javelin at the beast. The distance was not great enough to make a forceful blow, his hand had trembled weakly therefore it was not surprising that the weapon, striking the beast's right shoulder, did not inflict a mortal wound.

The bear seized a log, broke it in half and with a harsh roar threw himself to the attack upon his adversary. The hunter already held a sharp, double-edged sword called a "bear stiletto", prepared to meet the assault by plunging it into the beast's heart. But the sword point slipped upward along the bony ribs, finding its mark near the shoulder while the bear embraced the boyar in a fateful hug. A horrible cry escaped the lips of the unfortunate victim, his bones crunched between the teeth of the bear,

The whole shocking scene had been enacted so quickly, so unexpectedly, that before Maxim and the two men with him could reach him to lend their assistance, the boyar already lay on the ground drawing his last torturous breaths, while the bear stood over him, fangs bared, howling ferociously with rage and pain from the wounds he had sustained in the battle. A chill shiver crept up the spines of the boyars at the dreadful horror of the scene holding them all rivetted to the spot except Maxim who quietly placed an arrow within his bow fashioned of flexible bone, took a couple of paces in the direction of the bear, aimed an instant and let the arrow find its mark in the grizzly's heart. With a last piercing howl, suddenly cut off as if by a knife, the bear toppled over on the ground and lay still.

The hills did not echo and reverberate with the joyous sound of victory over this kill. The boyars, forsaking their original positions, gathered around the scene of the misfortune. Toughened warriors though they were, accustomed to see men die before their eyes, they could not restrain a horrified gasp of consternation at the sight of the bloody, clawed and mangled

body of their comrade. Peace-Renown put her hand to her heart and averted her eyes.

The Tukholian youths improvised a stretcher out of broken branches and twigs, placed the body upon it and also dragged the beastly carcass after them. An onerous silence gripped the company of huntsmen. A great puddle of blood glistened moistly in the sunlight reminding all that only a few minutes before there had stood a living human being hale with the vigor of life and filled with ambitious hopes for the future, who now was but a formless mass of bloody flesh.

The greater part of their desire to continue the hunt had left the boyars. "To blazes with those cursed bears," said some. "Let them live and die here, for all we care! Why should we risk our lives for them?"

But Tuhar Wolf and particularly Peace-Renown and Maxim insisted upon finishing the task they had begun. Finally the boyars agreed but none seemed at all anxious to return to their posts.

"Permit me, gentlemen," spoke up Maxim, "a few words before we start again. Since my friends, the Tukholian youths, are guarding the entrance to the pass they will not allow any beast to leave or enter. Therefore it will not be necessary for us to keep at any great distance from each other. Also I think it would be best to divide ourselves into two separate companies and skirt along the edge of the gorge. In that way we'll drive all the animals into the center and with the aid of the Tukholian youths, in a more closely knit line, we'll surround the beasts and shoot them all down at once."

"Yes, yes, that's best!" cried some of the boyars without noticing the sardonic smile which momentarily played about Maxim's lips. The company then divided itself into two groups, one led by Tuhar Wolf and the other by Maxim. Peace-Renown, without being able to explain to herself just why she made the choice, joined the second group under

Maxim's leadership. Perhaps she thought it was for the sake of adventure, for Maxim made it plain that the second line of march was the more perilous one.

Once again the horns bellowed and the two groups separated. The huntsmen advanced singly and in pairs, sometimes coming together in groups and at times separating completely from each other, seeking outlets and pathways, for to proceed entirely in groups was impossible. They were now nearing the top of the hill whose rocky summit was barren of all growth. Just below the summit barring their path was a piled-up wall of boulders, fallen trees and broken branches. To get past this was the hardest and most hazardous part of their journey upwards. In one place the debris was piled as high as a tower.

Logs, branches, twigs, rocks and tangled masses of leaves formed the natural wall of a fortress. Maxim crept along the ledge of the abysmal gorge, catching hold here and there of the moss and infrequent growth among the rocks, seeking a pass which would lead them into the fortified, woodland fastness. But the boyars, who were not accustomed to such inconvenient and death-defying paths, continued on along the wall of the rampart hoping to find some break in it.

Peace-Renown stopped and hesitated as if something held her near Maxim. Her bright, intelligent eyes surveyed the towering mass, searching for even the smallest opening which might permit a passage through it. In a moment she was audaciously scaling the barrier of sharp rocks and timber. Standing at its top, she looked around her imperiously. The boyars were now some distance away, Maxim was not in sight and before her there stretched an utterly impassable confusion of rocks, branches, twigs, tangled vines and uprooted trees. But wait! A short distance away she noticed a giant pine log spread bridge-wise over the impassable area, seemingly presenting a safe way to reach the summit.

Without further reflection upon the advisability of her

move, she started in its direction and setting her feet upon the log, once more glanced backward haughtily. Proud of her discovery, she raised her handsomely-wrought horn to her coral lips and blew upon it triumphantly, its sound rolling over the woodland necropolis, detonating down into the ravines, crashing against distant mountain tops, echoing, re-echoing, until it lost itself in some dark jungle of underbrush. In a moment from some distance away came the answer of her father's horn and then of the other boyars. Peace-Renown paused, balancing herself on the log. It was a very ancient and dried-out one and from beneath it, within the impenetrable confusion of twigs, branches, logs and rocks, there seemed to come to her ears a faint sound as of a crunching of teeth and a low murmuring. She listened again more attentively, but she heard nothing. Reassured, she set her feet upon the log and proceeded confidently. Hardly had she taken five steps along it when the dry punkwood cracked and snapped under her and the daring girl went down with it among the branches, twigs and stones.

She landed on her feet without having let go any of her weapons. Grasped firmly in her strong hands, she held a silver pointed spear. Slung over one shoulder was a powerful bow and over the other a pouch filled with arrows and tucked behind the handsome leather belt which seemed as if it had been poured around the slim girlish waist, was a battle-axe and a stilleto with an intricately carved bone handle.. Falling unexpectedly into the dim cavern did not frighten her, she lost little of her self-composure, nevertheless, she began at once to look about her for some way out. At first she could distinguish nothing in the murky blackness but as her eyes accustomed themselves to the dimness, they encountered a sight which would make anyone's blood freeze, for barely five paces away from her, in a den, lay a huge female bear and her young, glaring menacingly at her unexpected guest. Peace-Renown gasped in dismay. Should she try to fight the fearful beast

herself or seek some means of escape and summon help? But it was not easy to find an outlet. All around her protruded the sharp points of twigs, trunks of trees and rocks. Although it might not be entirely impossible after a hard struggle to climb over them, within reach of the savage beast it was a dangerous risk. Peace-Renown definitely decided against launching an attack upon the beast, to defend herself only if it proved to be absolutely necessary and to at once blow upon her horn the call for help.

Before its sound had died away, the she-bear jumped up and, snarling, advanced towards the girl. There was no time for the bow and arrow, the beast was too close. She grasped her spear in both hands and, planting her shoulders squarely against the rock behind her, she held it out in front of her towards the bear. Distracted by the twinkle of the metal the beast paused. The two enemies stood face to face a long moment, neither moving her eyes from the other. Peace-Renown had no intention of starting the attack. The bear sought with her eyes some means of getting at her enemy. Suddenly she picked up a stone in her forepaws and reared upon her hind legs to take aim. At that same instant Peace-Renown with all the strength she possessed cast the spear, striking the beast between its forepaws. With a howl she toppled over on her back, bathed in blood. But it was not a mortal wound and in a moment the beast was up on her feet again. The blood streamed from her, but without heeding the pain, she lunged once more towards Peace-Renown who now fully realized her perilous predicament. The infuriated beast made straight for her, fangs bared in a horrible grin.

There was only one way to escape, by climbing unto the ledge of rock protruding just above her shoulders. With a swift movement, she stood upon the narrow ledge of rock. Her heart slowed its mad beating, now she felt a little safer, for if she was attacked here, she thought it would be easier to ward

off the beast from her superior position. Hardly had she time to ascertain what the beast was up to, when she noticed it approaching her from the other end of the ledge of rock, emitting savage rasping snarls from blood-smearred fangs. Cold beads of perspiration stood out upon her forehead. Peace realized that now the fateful moment had arrived when upon that narrow ledge of rock she must fight to the finish the battle for her life and that the victor would be the one who managed to hold his place upon the rock.

The she-bear was almost upon her. Peace-Renown tried to ward her off with the spear, but the bear, grasping it in her teeth, wrenched it from her hand with so much force that Peace-Renown almost lost her balance; then flung the weapon off into a pile of twigs.

"Now, I will surely have to die!" the thought flashed momentarily and disappeared, for she had not lost courage yet! She raised the battle-axe, grasped firmly in both hands, confidently ready to put up a vigorous battle. The beast slid ever closer to her. Peace-Renown felt its hot breath upon her cheek. A shaggy paw lifted, ready to strike, with its long sharp claws aimed for her chest. In a moment her mauled and mangled, bloody body would be forced off the ledge, for the battle-axe was too short to reach its mark beyond those huge, hairy paws.

"Help!" screamed panic-stricken Peace-Renown, her blood congealing with the horror of approaching death. Over her head, just in the nick of time, gleamed the shining point of a javelin and found its mark in the throat of the threatening beast which like a leaden maul now toppled off the rocky ledge.

On a crag of the rampart, just above her head, there appeared the glad, sun-reddened face of Maxim. One glance from the eyes of the grateful girl gripped his heart. Not a word passed between them for there was no time. The bear was still very much alive and howling ferociously, she sprang to her feet again. With a leap she was beside her young who, not

understanding the meaning of the struggle, played and tumbled joyously within their lair. Having sniffed them over, she set herself to the attack again. But this time Peace-Renown was prepared. Raising the battle-axe she swung it down with a mighty blow that cleaved the she-bear's head open. The beast's carcass jerked spasmodically from side to side a moment and then lay still.

In the meantime Maxim had climbed down and stood beside Peace-Renown. Tears of gratitude sprang to the girl's eyes and without uttering a word, she clasped and squeezed the hand of her rescuer warmly.

Maxim became confused, embarrassed, his face flushed and lowering his eyes, he stuttered, "I heard . . . your urgent call for help . . . but did not know where you were . . . Thank God I got here in time!"

Peace-Renown stood there holding the handsome young man's hand a long minute looking up into his candid, sun-burned and ruddy-cheeked, pleasant face. At the moment she felt nothing more than pure gratitude towards him for having saved her life. But when Maxim, taking courage, squeezed her small though strong hand in turn, then Peace-Renown felt a swift, sweet something steal into her heart and a shy blush deepened the rosy bloom of her lovely face. She lowered her eyelids and the words of thanks which had been ready upon her lips died away and in their stead a deep blush spread becomingly over her face.

Maxim was the first to break the spell. In the honest clean-cut young man's heart there was born a happy and irrevocable resolve. With it returned all his former self-composure. Raising the horn to his lips, he blew upon it joyously, announcing the victorious kill. From behind the wall of ruins the horns of Tuhar and the other boyars came in answer. Agile as a squirrel, Peace-Renown scaled the bank of ruins from which she had fallen and from that vantage point, related to the entire

company how Maxim had come to her rescue. With not a little difficulty, Tuhar and other boyar huntsmen climbed upon the wall. Tuhar embraced his daughter and held her for a long time. And perceiving blood upon her clothing, exclaimed, "My child, my child, my dear one, to think that you were in such awful danger!" and kept embracing her again and again as if he were afraid to let her go.

Then he climbed down to where Maxim was busying himself preparing to skin the bear. The cubs, not yet recognizing their natural enemy in man, continued their joyous romping around in the den, like puppies. They allowed themselves to be petted and seemed not at all afraid of human beings. Maxim caught them in his arms and set them down at the feet of Peace-Renown and her father.

"Well, here is your quarry," he said.. "Perhaps you will welcome these guests in your home."

The gathered company of boyars cheered by the capture, admired the cubs but viewed the carcass of the dead beast fearfully, examining its wounds and marvelling at the endurance and intrepidity of the girl who dared to engage such a huge beast in the struggle.

"Oh, no!" laughed Peace-Renown, "Without the help of this gallant young man I would be the one now lying there, like the bloody beast. I owe him the greatest debt of gratitude for saving my life!"

Tuhar Wolf seemed to be somewhat displeased with what his daughter was saying. Though she was certainly very dear to him and his joy at finding her safe and sound was profound, still he would very much have preferred if a boyar's son had saved her life instead of this common, Tukholian peasant lad and that despite the fact that the peasant youth had pleased Tuhar very much. To this proud boyar who had risen to the privileged rank in the favor of his king, it was hard to humble himself now before the peasant in order to thank him for hav-

ing saved his daughter's life. But there was nothing else to do. Strict discipline in the duty of politeness was so strongly entrenched in the boyar's training that even Tuhar Wolf could not break away from its tradition. Therefore, taking Maxim by the hand, he led him in front of the company of huntsmen and said, "My lad, my dearest and only child, my daughter, Peace-Renown, has told us that you have just saved her life. I have no reason to doubt but what she says is true. Please accept a father's deep-felt thanks for your valiant deed. I do not know how we are to reward you for this, but you can be sure that whenever you are in need of help, Tuhar Wolf will do his best to repay the great debt he owes you."

Maxim was perturbed by this unaccustomed praise before all the guests. He had neither expected nor wanted any thanks. Therefore he felt confused not knowing whether to make the usual trite reply or exactly what answer he should make. Finally he said simply, "You have nothing to thank me for, Boyarin! I did only that which anyone else in my place would have done. May your daughter Peace-Renown live long and happily, but I do not feel that any special reward is due me!"

He then turned and called to some of his Tukholian friends with whose help the bear was soon skinned and the cubs carried to the spot from which the company had agreed to start on their way back to camp after the hunt.

The sun neared its zenith spreading its hot, golden beams over the Tukholian mountainside; pine cones warmed by the sun suffused their heady perfume throughout the woodland and arrogantly fanning the air only now and again with his outspread wings, floated a hawk, high over the panorama, in the ocean of brilliant azure sky.

Perfect tranquillity pervaded all of nature. Only from one side of the giant Mt. Zelemenya echoed the sound of horns and shouts of the huntsmen. The hunt was at an end, although it had not been wholly successful.

At the head of the company of huntsmen, the Tukholian mountain youths carried, slung on a pole, three large bear skins and the pair of cubs in a bag. The servants brought up the rear, carrying upon the improvised stretcher the already stiff, bloody body of the boyar who had perished in the savage clutches of the bear.

Under Maxim's expert guidance they reached their encampment without undue loss of time. The entire company planned to return home as soon as they were finished with their noon-day meal. They were a long distance from home, but Maxim promised he would show them the shortest route to Tukhlia and from there to the home of Tuhar Wolf.

The Tukholian youths left as soon as they were finished with their dinner. Maxim remained with the boyars until the servants had broken up camp, took down the tents, packed away all the cooking utensils and hunting supplies. Then the company of boyars also set out upon the trail home, with Maxim in the lead.

CHAPTER II

THE ANCIENT community of Tukhlia was one of the largest settlements in the Carpathian Ranges consisting of, besides Tukhlia proper, two or three surrounding hamlets, the whole comprising a total population of about 3,000. This village and its environs were located not where lies the present Tukhlia but higher up towards the middle section of the ranges, in a distended, spacious valley now covered over by a dense forest of giant spruce and hemlocks, which is called "The Lost Valley".

Long ago, when this story was enacted, "The Lost Valley" was a richly productive area of land supplying its inhabitants with an abundance of the necessities of life. About three miles long and one and a half wide, the smoothly rolling valley was encompassed by immense, precipitous walls of rock so that it resembled a huge kettle from which the water had been emptied. That probably was exactly what had happened. High up from a crevice in the hard rock of the eastern wall, a cataract catapulted down into the valley and wound its serpentine way across it and out through another narrow outlet in the opposite wall of rock, hurtling down between its smooth rocky banks, breaking into several cascades for about three-quarters of a mile before it emptied into the Opir river.

The high, steep banks of the Tukholian basin were rimmed with a murky forest of giant pines which when viewed from below seemed to give the kettle-shaped valley even a greater depth and an indescribable, silent desolation, as if it were a

sphere complete in itself, removed from the rest of the world. In truth, it was a real mountain stronghold, accessible only with the greatest of difficulty. But in those days of ceaseless warfare when not only persons but communities as well were subjected to continuous attacks, the Tukholians were thankful for their isolation and preeminently because of it, were they able to continue to preserve their independent, ancient Rus, democratic form of government longer than the villages at the base of the Carpathian Ranges, all of which were now gradually passing into the hands of the booty-rich, privileged class of boyars.

The people of Tukhlia made their living mostly from breeding and pasturing domestic animals. Only the Tukhlian valley where the village and hamlets were situated lent itself to agricultural cultivation. Here rich harvests of oats, barley and millet were reaped every year. In the upland downs and glades of the forest, which were not individually owned but the property of the entire community, grazed flocks of sheep, representing the chief treasure store of the mountaineers, supplying them with wool for their clothing and flesh for food.

In the woodlands adjacent to the villages the people pastured their cattle, but the rough, mountainous nature of the region forbade the raising of great numbers of these heavier, clumsier animals.

The Tukholians' second most important source of supply was the forests. Not only were they well furnished with firewood and lumber for building purposes, but also were able to obtain from them an abundance of wild life, honey and fruit.

True, life in this rude mountainous woodland region was hard, exacting a continuous struggle with the savage forces of nature, snow, wild beasts, floods and the entire surrounding untamed primeval wilderness, but this struggle and the hardships of the life had been conducive to the development of a hardy, courageous and resourceful people whose freedom-loving

spirit made possible the preservation and continuance of their highly democratic and orderly form of government.

The sun had rolled far down from its mid-day position when high up over the Tukholian basin our well-known company of huntsmen descended, guided by Maxim Berkut. In the lead, preceded by Maxim, were Tuhar Wolf and his daughter, Peace-Renown. The rest followed them in small groups discussing the experiences of the hunting trip. The Tukholian valley, lit by the bright rays of the hot, mid-afternoon sun, appeared before the eyes of the company, like a huge, translucent lake with tiny black pebbles peeping from its depths. Enclosing it, stood the sheer walls of rock, like an immense stone fence, covered only here and there by patches of lichen growth and raspberry brambles.

At the entrance to the valley roared the waterfall, smashing its way downward, breaking against the rocks into silvery foam. By the side of the cascading stream, cut out of the live rock, was a narrow cart road by means of which the ascent could be made upward to the very top and over the crest of the Ranges, to the other side of the Carpathians into Hungarian territory. This highway was known to the mountaineers simply as the "Tukholian Trail" and considered by them as safer and more convenient than the Duklanian. Ten surrounding districts of the principality of Halich as well as of the Hungarian side of the Carpathians labored almost two years in the clearing of this pass. Since the residents of the Tukholian valley had put in the greatest amount of time and work in its construction, they were as proud of it as if it had been cut through exclusively by themselves.

"Look, Boyarin," said Maxim, pausing at the cataract, near the twisting, rock-hewn trail. "There you see the handiwork of the Tukholians. It leads as you can see, to away over the Beskid, the topmost range of the Carpathians. It is the first trail of its kind in these upper stretches of the mountain coun-

try. My father cut through more than fifteen yards of that road himself. Every footbridge, every curve and cross trail and as a matter of fact, its entire length was constructed under his direction."

The boyar glanced upward none too approvingly at the winding trail which stretched far above the catapulting, foaming emerald and silver cascade. Following it with his eyes downward to where it led into the valley, he shook his head and said, "Your father must certainly hold a strong rein over the community!"

"Rein, Boyarin?" questioned Maxim, surprised. "You are mistaken, sir! No one individual in our Tukhlia holds any rein, only the people themselves. But my father is a very learned and wise man, he gladly serves the community. When he stands up to speak at the municipal meetings, no one in all Carpathia can equal his eloquence or the wisdom of his words. Although the community listens to and follows his advice, my father has no special privileges and wants none." Maxim's eyes lighted up with the fire of his pride and admiration whenever he spoke of his father.

At these words, Tuhar Wolf hung his head in deep thought. Peace-Renown stared at Maxim with renewed interest and no little astonishment. While she was listening to Maxim's description of his father, it seemed to her as if she had known him all her life and that she would surely find in him a kindred spirit. But Tuhar Wolf's sullen, downcast mood increased. His forehead wrinkled in annoyance and his eyes, which had long withheld their antagonism, now turned angrily upon the speaker.

"So, it is YOUR father who is stirring up a rebellious attitude among the people of Tukhlia against me and the king?" he questioned reproachfully.

Peace-Renown was alarmed at her father's words and his tone of voice. She paled looking from her father's face to

Maxim's, uneasily. However, Maxim did not seem angered by the words and replied calmly, "Stirring up a rebellious attitude against you, sir? No, that is not true. You have been falsely informed. Rather the whole community resents the fact that you are using their pasturing grounds and forests as if they were your own without troubling yourself to ask their permission to do so."

"Oh, so I have to ask the permission of your community, do I? I might inform you that the king gave me permission to use these forests and downs. I don't need to ask for any other."

"That is exactly what my father has told the citizens, Boyarin. He is trying his best to calm them and advises them to wait for a decision by the folk-court session at which time the matter will be taken under consideration."

"The folk court!" cried Tuhar Wolf contemptuously. "Am I to be given to understand that I will be tried by this court?"

"I think you will find that it will be to your own advantage, Boyarin. You will have the opportunity then of explaining to the people just what your rights are in the matter, which may serve to quiet them once and for all."

Tuhar Wolf turned from him in disgust. They were proceeding along the trail where it curved in the center, in order that its descent might thus be rendered less precipitous and perilous. Maxim, walking behind them, could not keep his eyes off Peace-Renown. But his face no longer glowed with happiness as it had a short time before. The more Tuhar's face clouded with annoyance and resentment, the surer Maxim felt that a deep and impassable abyss was widening between himself and Peace-Renown. But the simple and unworldly mountain youth, knowing little of the heights of boyar ambitions, had hardly guessed how infinitely vast and impassable that barrier actually was.

They had now descended into the valley. At the base of the waterfall flowed a wide, peaceful stream, clear as crystal.

Near its banks whispered large caps of foam, forming themselves into heaped-up necklaces of glistening pearls. Amid large and small sharply pointed rocks sticking up from its visible bottom wriggled gleaming pearly white and red-speckled trout. In the center, at the base of the cataract, thundered a silvery column of cascade, reflecting from the sun all the prismatic colors of the spectrum.

"What a marvelous sight!" exclaimed Peace-Renown, admiring the shimmering, colorful waterful catapulting along its rocky path, set off by an overhanging ledge of dark green spruce trees in contrast.

"This is our Tukhlia, our paradise!" replied Maxim, sweeping his eyes over the valley, mountain range and waterfall with a visible expression of such pride as few kings seldom bestow upon their own kingdoms.

"Only for me you are poisoning life within this paradise," retorted Tuhar resentfully.

No reply was made to this remark. All three kept walking along wordlessly. They were nearing the village of Tukhlia where neat, wooden-shingled houses nestled in closely related groups, their yards hedged by mountain-ash, willow and wide-limbed pear trees. The people were all out, working in the fields. Only the stately, silver-haired, old grandfathers moved about the yards whittling something, making nets for fish or animals* and here and there gathered in groups to discuss the affairs of their community. Maxim nodded to them or shouted cheery greetings.

After a time Peace-Renown also greeted the ancients of Tukhlia whom they passed on the road. Only Tuhar Wolf walked along frowning morosely, without so much as a glance at the "smerdi"*** who dared to rebel against the will of his king.

* Nets were used to catch rabbits and other such small game.

*** Peasant lout; 'stinker'.

Nearing the center of the village, they noticed approaching them a singular company of men. Three old men, dressed in their Sunday best, were carrying a cerise red, silver-edged flag unfurled from a tall, beautifully carved and silver-encrusted pole. The flag was suspended by a large silver-trimmed chain, carved out of one solid piece of wood.

The three old men marched along slowly. They stopped in front of each homestead and called its owner by name. When one of its occupants appeared, they called out to him:

"Come tomorrow to the folk-mote!" and marched on.

"What in the world are they doing?" asked Tuhar, as the old men neared them.

"Why haven't you ever seen anything like this before?" asked Maxim unbelievably.

"No, I haven't. We have no such custom in Halich," replied Tuhar.

"They are the town-criers, summoning the people to the folk-mote," replied Maxim.

"Oh, I thought they were priests carrying a church banner!" laughed Tuhar sarcastically. "In our section, when a meeting is called, it's done quietly, passed on by word of mouth from house to house."

"Well, here the call to meeting is made by the district heralds and standard bearers who go through the streets summoning each citizen by name. They will call you also, Boyarin."*

"Let them call. I won't come! Your folk-mote can have no interest for me. I am here by the will of the king and can hold my own meetings whenever I think it is necessary to do so."

"You will call a town meeting yourself?" exclaimed the

* A district or the Ukrainian word for it 'kopa' meaning sixty or more people, a village or 'town', to use the old English or early American term.

astounded Maxim. "Without our consent and unassisted by our criers and our district banner?"

"I have my own heralds, my own banner and my own consent," replied Tuhar Wolf.

"But none of our people will attend your meetings. Our community abides only by those resolutions passed by the folk-court."

"We'll see about that!" retorted Tuhar stubbornly.

They were now abreast of the town criers who, perceiving the boyar, stopped and lowered the pole of the banner to the ground in front of them. One of the criers raised his voice and called out, "Boyar, Tuhar Wolf!"

"Present!" answered the boyar sullenly.

"Come tomorrow to the folk-mote!"

"What for?"

But the criers made no answer to his question, merely passed on their way.

"It is not their duty to answer questions," explained Maxim, trying to avert any added disinclination the boyar might entertain against attending the meeting.

After a protracted interval of silence while they proceeded through the village streets, Maxim spoke again, "Sir, will you permit an humble but sincere young man to give you some advice?"

"Go ahead, speak!" replied the boyar.

"Come to the meeting tomorrow!"

"And put myself at the mercy of your peasant court?"

"Even so; you can rest assured, sir, that the Tukholian folk-court always gives an honest judgment. You would not consider it a disgrace to be judged fairly would you?"

"Please, father," put in Peace-Renown, "do as Maxim asks you. I'm sure he is doing it all for your own good. He saved my life, father, that ought to prove he is not against you. He

knows the ways of the people here and so can best advise you what to do."

Tuhar smiled in spite of himself at this excellent display of feminine logic, but in a moment his forehead again wrinkled with irritation and displeasure. "So, you too, are taking Maxim's side?" he cried. "Of course he saved your life and I am grateful to him for that. Any time you or he asks me, I will give him a pair of oxen.. But you are speaking here of a matter in which neither you nor Maxim have any right to concern yourselves."

"No doubt, your insinuations, Boyarin, that I expect a reward is meant to belittle my dignity as a person. But you can rest assured that neither I nor my father will accept any reward from you! The fact that I ask you to come to the meeting tomorrow is done purely out of sincere friendliness because I would like to see a better understanding come about between you and the community."

"Well, in that case then, all right!" replied Tuhar, somewhat mollified. "I'll come to your folk-mote tomorrow, not to surrender myself to its will, mind you, but just to listen to what they have to say."

"Do come, do!" exclaimed Maxim, elated. "You'll see and be convinced yourself that the Tukholians know how to be just."

Tuhar's change of mind seemed to lift an oppressive weight off Maxim's heart. He felt gayer and resumed conversing confidently with Peace-Renown, pointing out to the left and the right of them spots of special interest or beauty and there was much they passed which was both beautiful and interesting.

They had arrived at the center of the village of Tukhlia and of the valley. The precipitous banks, hemming in the kettle-like valley, loomed in the distance like gleaming columns of marble. The stream flowed through the center, right by the roadside, gurgling and foaming over its rock-strewn bed, re-

freshing the entire valley with its coolness. The natural, high banks of the stream were further fortified by dikes constructed of fragments of rock washed down by the stream from the mountainside and huge logs of pine, to protect the village from spring floods. Here and there foot bridges with convenient hand railings spanned the stream. Directly behind the dikes were planted beds of beans and peas, set in neat rows, their vines twining themselves around the bean poles. There were also plots of beets and cabbages and fields of wheat which stretched like long green ribbons away beyond the houses.

The yards of the cottages were fenced in and cleanly kept, their surfaces smoothed over with a mixture of clay and dung. The outer walls of the cottages, built of smoothly planed logs, were not smudged over with clay but several times during the year washed and scraped to sleek glossiness by hand with the aid of bits of shell or pumice stone found in the bottom of the stream. Only in the lower corners where it was impossible to fit the logs tightly together, clay was used to seal the crevices. Each house was white-washed, presenting a bright and jolly aspect, peeping from among fresh green willows, or mountain ash, and pear trees by which each homestead was surrounded.

Behind the houses were the stables, barns and other farm buildings, wooden-shingled also and built of thick planks. Only the rounded, yellow-gold peaks of innumerable straw roofs sheltering stacks of grain or hay gleamed here and there between the high four pillars which supported them.

The entrance to each residence was guarded by two eucalyptus trees between which swung a gate of twigs of intricately woven pattern. To the topmost perch of every gate was nailed a swift flying bird of prey such as an owl, jayhawk, eagle or crow, its wings outspread as if in flight and its head bowed, representing the guardian spirit of the house.

"There is my father's residence," said Maxim, pointing to one just like the rest among them. There was no one about

the place but the door to the hallway was slightly ajar. In the southern wall of the house were two square-cut openings which in the summer-time were either left entirely open or were screened-in by a thin partition of perforated lime-stone. In winter, thick, wooden blinds were nailed over these openings. They were the windows of the period.

Peace-Renown gazed upon the Berkut homestead with its gateway guardian, a newly killed giant eagle whose iron-like grip of steel talons and black, hooked beak still seemed to threaten violence, with a mixture of curiosity and gravely absorbed interest. An atmosphere of serenity pervaded the place attracting the wayfarer to its cheery brightness. The entire piece of property was cut off from the main road by the crystal stream of water, softly murmuring and foaming against a rocky dam and spanned by a small bridge. Tuhar glanced towards the house and said, "Oh, ho, so this is where the sage of Tukhlia resides. I certainly would like to meet him and see what manner of bird he is!"

Maxim wanted to bid the boyar and his daughter farewell and to turn in at the bridge, but something urged him to go on along with them. Peace-Renown seemed to sense his mood.

"Are you going to leave us now?" she asked, turning her face away to hide the sudden emotion which swept over it.

"Well, I was just going to do that, but I've changed my mind. I think I will go on a ways further with you, through the pass, up to the trail leading to your house."

Peace-Renown was over-joyed at this, not knowing herself why she should be. And they continued on down through the village, talking, enjoying the scenery, each other's company, the sound of their voices, completely lost in each other's eyes, forgetting the presence of the father and the whole village about them. Although not a single word in the progress of their conversation made the slightest reference to themselves, or to their emotions and hopes, there trembled through their most

casual remarks the warmth of a powerful, magnetic, enduring attraction which drew the two fine and healthy young people unconsciously together. Nor did they apprehend in their innocence the difficulties they would encounter in the fulfilment of their first love.

But Tuhar Wolf, who walked ahead of them ruminating upon some way by which to impress the gathering on the morrow with his importance and superiority, was completely unaware of what was transpiring between the two young people. However, he was annoyed with the audacity of the youth in conducting himself with him and his daughter as if he were their equal. But for the time-being, he decided to keep his anger in check and to let the matter pass..

They had left the village and were nearing the spot where the kettle-shaped valley closed in upon itself, permitting the passage of only a narrow stream of water through a craggy gate of rock in the precipice. The sun had rolled down low over the top of the forest below, reflecting its thin rays in the stream of foaming water. The jagged crags of rock which transfused the flow of the stream from the Tukholian valley cast long shadows while the chill of twilight had already descended over the narrowest point of the slippery pass. Below, the stream of water dashed itself against a huge boulder while overhead the stiff, spring evening breeze soughed in the pine and beech trees. A trail had also been cut out of the rock on each side of the stream by the Tukholian mountaineers.

An icy tremor shook Peace-Renown when she entered the extraordinary rocky gateway. Whether it was from its chill dampness or from some premonition, the fact was, she took hold of her father's arm and pressing close to him, exclaimed, "What a fearful place!" stopping midway in the narrow corridor, looking up at the arch of rock. The place was indeed an awesome one, perhaps no more than about three yards wide and so smoothly carved out of the wall of rock by the force

of the swiftly cascading stream that one would almost swear it had been made by man. Guarding the entrance of this narrow pass was an immense, thick column of rock at the bottom worn thin by the action of the water while its top was formed almost in the shape of a huge head and covered with a growth of ferns and dwarfed birches. This was the famed "Sentinel of Tukhlia" which safeguarded the entrance to the valley, ready to fall upon and crush to death anyone who came there with evil intentions towards the inhabitants of the peaceful, fortunate paradise. Tuhar Wolf himself felt a chill creep up his spine as he looked at the fearful guard.

"Tchfu! Tchfu! What a dangerous-looking stone devil!" he spat, "hanging over the passageway as if it were ready to fall upon one at any moment!"

"This is a sacred stone, Boyarin," explained Maxim reverently. "Every spring the people decorate him with wreaths and garlands woven of the sacred fire-flower. He is the guardian of our Tukhlia."

"Oh, bah! Everything here is yours, everything is sacred, everything belongs to the Tukholians, until it's nauseating to listen to you!" cried Tuhar disgustedly. "As if there was no other world outside your precious Tukhlia!"

"To be quite honest," replied Maxim, "that is exactly how we feel. We love our Tuhlia above all other places in the world. Now, if everyone loved his section of the world as much as we love ours, all the people would live happily and peacefully always."

Maxim in his sincere purity of heart was evidently unaware how deeply he had cut into the heart and offended the boyar by this remark. Nor did he notice the hateful look Tuhar Wolf cast in his direction. Turning to Peace-Renown again, Maxim continued on loquaciously, in an even, warmly cordial tone, "There is an interesting story about this Sentinel. I'll tell it to you as I heard it from my father:

“It seems that a long, long time ago, when the giants lived in and roamed over the Carpathian Ranges, our Tukholian basin was a huge lake, entirely closed so that the water flowed over its top. It was an evilly enchanted lake with not a sign of life in it. The animals who drank from it had to die and any birds who flew over it, had to fall in and be drowned. This lake was under the influence of Morsanna, the Goddess of Death. But it so happened that the king of the giants quarreled with his mate and to spite her, he dealt the rocky basin such a mighty blow with his giant mallet that he cracked one of its walls and the water all seeped out of it thus breaking the evil spell. The whole section at once came alive. The bottom of the lake became a fertile valley, green with tall, wild grasses and bright with flowers. The stream which flowed through it, became filled with fish. Among the rocks slid various kinds of snakes and in the woodlands appeared wild animals and birds.”

“Morsanna the Goddess of Death was, of course, infuriated because she hates living things and to punish the king she turned him into the stone which is now the Sentinel of Tukhlia. But to the valley itself she could do nothing, for once the waters of death had flowed out of the lake, she could not make them return. Had she been able to return every drop of the water into the enchanted lake and to seal this crevice in the rock, then she would again be ruler over this region. Although the king of the giants is dead, Morsanna does not have any power to rule here either. But the king is not entirely dead. His spirit is present in that column of stone and guards the entrance to the valley. It is said that someday Morsanna will regain her lost power and try to rule over our Tukhlia once more, but when that happens, this enchanted Sentinel will fall upon Morsanna’s evil force and crush it to death.”

Peace-Renown listened raptly, fascinated by the tale, sympathizing with the benign king of the giants who was so ready

to fight with the evil Morsanna for the protection of the Tukholian inhabitants. Her heart filled with tenderness towards Maxim. How warmly and whole-heartedly she loved him at that moment!

Although Tuhar Wolf listened to Maxim's story, it was easy to see that he was not greatly impressed by it. Turning once more to gaze up at the Sentinel of Tukhlia, he curled his lips in a disdainful smile as if he thought, "What silly fools these peasants, to put all their faith and hope in such ridiculous superstitions!"

They passed beyond the narrowest section of the stream and were once more in open daylight. Suddenly before their eyes appeared the long expanse of the Opir valley which, hemmed in by the winding, undulating crests of mountain ranges, stretched far out to meet the valley of Strey. The sun was setting, dipping its hot purplish-red rays in the wide, oscillating waves of the Opir river. The Tukholian stream roared and foamed madly downward to bathe itself in the Opir, whose waters, reflecting the last rays of the sun, resembled blood flowing from a deep wound. All around them rose the murmuring of the wind in the murky forests.

They stopped a moment, drinking in the unforgettable glory of the scene. Maxim seemed to be swayed by a strong emotion which was forcing him to give it utterance. Finally he took courage, moved nearer to Tuhar Wolf, trembling and blushing and began: "Father Boyarin!" in an abashed and unnaturally mild tone.

"What is it?"

"I want to become your most devoted servant . . ."

"Servant? Oh, of course! Come with your father tomorrow and be hired, if you've a mind to really work for me."

"No, Boyarin, you misunderstand me. What I mean is . . . I want to be your son . . ."

"My son! But you have a father and from what I hear of

him, a much better, more just and wiser one than I, since he is going to try me tomorrow!" the boyar said with a wry smile.

"What I meant to say," Maxim corrected himself, "is that I want to marry your daughter, whom I love dearer than life, more than my soul!"

If a thunderbolt had suddenly dropped out of the blue and struck the ground in front of him, Tuhar Wolf would not have been as shocked as he was by this passionate but plain-spoken declaration of the youth. He stepped back a pace or two and surveyed poor Maxim up and down with a piercing, blazing fury. Rage had turned his face purple, clenched his teeth and trembled upon his lips.

"Lout, boor!" he exploded wrathfully at last so that the very hills reverberated with the damning sound of his outcry. "What is that speech you have just dared to address to me? Repeat it! It can't be that I heard aright!"

This furious exclamation by the boyar, returned to Maxim his usual cogent self-composure. He drew himself up to his full height before the boyar and said in a calm, assured tone of voice, "There wasn't anything in my speech, sir, that should offend you, nothing in it that would bring dishonor either upon you or your daughter. I merely asked for her hand in marriage because I love her more than anyone else in the world can possibly ever love her. Is the difference then between your boyar rank and mine really so vast that love could not bridge it? And in what manner aside from that, are you above me?"

"Enough, fool, enough!" Tuhar spluttered angrily. "My hand is upon the hilt of my sword itching to stop your stupid throat from further utterance. Only one thing prevented my using it already and that is that you saved my daughter's life today. Otherwise you would this moment be lying at my feet for daring to speak to me the way you have just now. Ignorant peasant that you are, how dare you so much as raise your eyes in the direction of my daughter? Is it because she and I

spoke to you as if you were a human being instead of kicking you like a dog? Or did you think that since you saved her from the clutches of the savage beast that you have a right to her as if she were a captive girl? Oh, no! If it had to come to that, I'd rather have seen her perish in the deadly embraces of the bear than that she should fall into your hands!"

"Please do not say that, Boyarin! Rather would I have perished myself than that one single hair of her head should have been harmed!"

At these words Peace-Renown turned her face away from them no longer able to hold back the long-threatening tears which now streamed down her face freely. Tuhar Wolf paid no attention but kept right on talking.

"You low-breed son of a stinking peasant, how dare you to put yourself on an equal footing with me? Imagine it, with me, who have spent all my life in the company of princes and who have been honored and rewarded by them for my heroic deeds! Why, my daughter can choose a mate from the very best and most prominent boyar families in the country, why should I give her away to you, a common, low-brow peasant, to take with you into your Tukholian hut where she would wilt and wither and die in poverty? No, no, no! Away, you poor deluded child! You know not what you're saying! You must have spoken in a fit of insanity!"

Maxim at last was fully convinced that his hopes would never be realized, that the boyar considered himself too far above him, looking down upon him as unworthy of his notice even. Needless to say, he was greatly disappointed, but there was nothing he could do about it.

"Boyarin, Boyarin," he said grievously, fervidly, "Too high have you raised yourself upon the wings of pride, but take heed! Fate often raises those highest whom she intends to cast down the lowest. Do not look down upon the poor, sir, the humble

workers, for who knows to what well you may yourself yet come to drink?"

"You boorish lout, how dare you have the temerity to lecture me!" stormed Tuhar, his eyes flashing angrily. "Get out of my sight at once, or I swear to God I won't be held responsible for plunging this stiletto into your chest just as I did to the bear this morning, regardless of the debt I owe you."

"Do not take offence, Boyarin, at the words of an ignorant youth," answered Maxim quietly. "Farewell!"

"And farewell to you, my star, who shone so wondrously for me for a day and now must be lost to me forever! Farewell, and may fortune smile sweetly upon you!"

"Wait! I have something to say about this, too!" cried Peace-Renown, turning towards them resolutely. "Fear not, dear youth, I shall not be lost to you, but will be yours!"

Tuhar Wolf, astounded by these words, stared at his daughter not knowing what to do.

"My child, what are you saying!" he interjected.

"Exactly what you hear, father dear. I'm willing to be his. I love Maxim. Father, let me become his wife!"

"You foolish girl, that's impossible!"

"Just try and you'll see that it is possible!"

"You're delirious, child, emotionally upset from being frightened this morning by the ferocious beast!"

"No, father, I'm perfectly well and in my right mind. I repeat, and swear by the rays of the setting sun that this youth must be and shall be mine! Oh sun, be my witness!"

And slipping her firm hand into Maxim's she reached up on tip-toe and pressed her warm, sweet lips to his.

Tuhar Wolf was dumbfounded. He could not move or utter a single word.

"Now, Maxim, you can go home and don't let anyone or anything discourage you. Peace-Renown has vowed that she will be yours and Peace-Renown knows how to keep a promise!"

“Come father, let’s be on our way. There’s our house yonder and here come our guests.”

Having said this, the amazing girl took her stupefied father by the arm and led him down the hill.

Maxim stood rivetted upon the spot for a long time enchanted in his happiness. And when at last he came to himself, he fell upon his face before the last pale rays of the sun and prayed fervently, as had his ancestors for ages past, and as did his father secretly now. Then he arose and quietly wended his way homeward.

CHAPTER III

JUST OUTSIDE the village of Tukhlia, not far from the waterfall and in the center of an expansive plain, stood a huge linden tree. No one seemed to remember when it was planted nor when it grew to its deeply rooted giant proportions. The Tukholian settlement was not a very ancient one and the trees which grew in the valley were far younger, comparatively, than this immense linden. Therefore it was not surprising that the people of the community venerated it regarding it as a hoary witness of antiquity and the beginning of the history of their valley.

The Tukholians believed that this ancient linden was the gift of their everlasting benefactor, the king of the giants, who had planted it in the valley with his own hands, as a sign of his victory over Morsanna.

In some rocky recess beneath the roots of the giant linden a spring found its source and bubbled forth to wander away, merrily babbling along its pebbly path to join the mountain stream.

Here the people gathered in folk-mote,* directed by their elders, to freely participate in the general deliberation and administration of all their affairs of local self-government.

The linden was encompassed by a wide, flat meadow. In rows facing the east, stood smooth, square blocks of stone, reserved seats for the elders of the community, the heads of its

* Folk-mote, town-mote, town meeting: assembly of the people for government and law. Town, village: a unit of rural administration more or less like the New England town.

families. There were as many of these seats as there were elders. Beyond them was an open space. Under the spreading linden tree, directly over the spring, stood a square-cut stone with a hole drilled in its center, to hold the town banner which was raised there for the duration of each meeting. Beside it was a raised platform for the speaker. Any citizen who wished to express his viewpoint on the matter under discussion would come up from the audience and stand on the platform so that everybody in the gathering might hear what he had to say.

The day after the boyar's hunting trip, a great crowd gathered on the "maydan" where the town meetings were held. The hum and clamor of their voices carried over all the valley. One by one, the elders left their village and hamlets and made their august, dignified way to take their places upon the reserved stone seats. Noisily the younger people assembled behind them, forming themselves in a broad semi-circle. There were women present also although there were not as many of them as men. Every citizen who was of age, whether male or female was obligated to attend these meetings. Although the deciding votes were cast only by the elders, everyone including the youth and women had a right to share in the discussion and thus influence the final decision of the elders.

The sun had risen high into the heavens when the standard bearers, who were the last to leave the village, came, carrying the district banner. Their appearance induced an excited whispering among the gathered citizenry, which died away when they neared the folk-mote. The three town criers bowed before the gathering and taking their stand in the center under the spreading linden tree, removed their hats. The rest of the men followed suit.

"Estimable assemblage!" spoke up one of the town criers, "Are you all prepared to hold a town meeting today?"

"We are prepared."

"Then may God be with us!" the other two replied and

raising the banner, they guided its staff into the hollow in the square stone block. This signified that the folk-mote was now in session.

Then from his place among the seated elders rose the oldest member of the community, Zakhar Berkut. Directing his slow but firm steps to the linden tree, he touched its bark and knelt down beside the spring bubbling forth from its source beneath the roots and dipping his finger tips into it, he passed them over his eyes and lips. This was the customary ritual, a very ancient one, considered to be necessary to clear the vision and purify the lips of those assuming the profound responsibility of deliberating upon matters vital to the welfare of the whole community.

Zakhar Berkut was over ninety years old, with hair as white as the wings of a dove, the eldest resident of the Tukholian valley and the father of eight sons, three of whom already occupied seats with him among the elders. Maxim was the youngest and like a stalwart young oak among the maples, already stood out from the crowd of youths, tall, commanding, clean-cut, rich in the experience of the life of the people, their character and their traditions.

Zakhar Berkut was the embodiment of those ancient patriarchs, the true fathers and leaders of their nation of whom sing the kobzars and about whom our earliest chronicles were written.* Despite his advanced age, Zakhar Berkut was strong and hard as flint. True, he no longer labored in the fields, herded the sheep or went hunting wild animals in the depths of the forests, but he did not stop working altogether. The orchards, bee-hives, herb-gathering and the healing art now occupied his time. At the first sign of spring, Zakhar could be seen already at work in his orchard, pruning, trimming, cleaning, digging, planting and transplanting. The people of the community were amazed at the man's knowledge of horticultural

* Kobzar: ancient bard of Ukraine; also epic poem.

ture and most grateful to him because he did not hide that knowledge but shared it eagerly with them helping and encouraging those who showed an interest to learn.. His beehives were located in the forest and every clear day he went there to look after them inspite of the bad roads, mud, snow-drifts and the distance.

But the Tukholian people came to love him best of all for his healing regarding him as their greatest benefactor because of his skill. When the proper time came, sometime between the seventh week after Easter and the holiday of John The Baptist (between the months of May and July) Zakhar, taking his youngest son Maxim, would leave for the hills to spend several weeks gathering herbs and medicinal roots.

The simple, wholesome life of the times, well-built, roomy houses and continuous though not too strenuous toil, the fresh, rarified mountain air of Tukhliá, protected the people from iterative and infectious diseases. However, there were frequent accidents, broken bones, cuts and bruises which no other healer could fix and cure as rapidly and efficiently as Zakhar Berkut. But upon none of these superior accomplishments was Zakhar content to rest for the remainder of his life. "Life is worth while," he was often heard to say, "only as long as a man can help others. As soon as he becomes a burden, cannot perform useful tasks, then he is no longer a man but a dead weight, not fit to be allowed to live. God forbid that I should ever become a burden to anyone or require their charity, no matter how well I might have earned my keep in the past years of service." These words were the golden thread of which Zakhar's ideal was spun and by which the moral grandeur of his life was led. Everything he did, said and everything he thought was always all for the benefit and good of others, and especially of the community. The community was his world.

While he was still a very young man, he had noticed how the wild beasts of the forests often crippled domestic animals

and people for life and he determined to learn how to mend their bones and cure their wounds. Thus he left his father's house and village and set out on the distant, unknown journey to find the famous sorcerer who, he had heard, knew how to heal wounds made by arrows. But the incantations of this sorcerer proved to be powerless. When Zakhar first came to his house, he had promised to give the man ten marten skins if he would teach him the magic incantations. The sorcerer agreed, but Zakhar was not satisfied just to learn the incantations, he wanted to make sure first that they really worked, so he drew out his hunting knife, made a deep gash in his thigh and said to the astounded sorcerer, "There, cure this!" But the incantations did no good.

"You see," the healer excused himself, "they were ineffectual because you made the wound yourself, on purpose. Such a wound cannot be cured by my chants."

"Then your incantations aren't suitable for my purpose. I need the kind of incantation that will work all the time regardless of whether the wounds are self-inflicted or not." Thereupon Zakhar Berkut departed from the house of the sorcerer and went forth in search of a better master in the art of healing.

He wandered far and wide over the ranges, hills, canyons and valleys for a whole year until at last he was directed to the Scythian monasteries. Among their monks was an hundred-year-old ancient who had lived for many years with the Greek monks in the hills of Athens where he had read and studied many of the classic documents and manuscripts of the Greeks. This monk possessed miraculous powers of healing wounds and moreover was willing to teach all that he knew to anyone who would abide with him in congenial companionship for a year and who would prove himself to be sympathetic, sincere and pure of heart.

Many prospective students came to the thoughtfully ab-

sorbed, grave-faced monk, but he was not pleased with any of them, not one stayed with him the required year or carried away any of the secrets of his marvelous knowledge of healing. It was to this monk that Zakhar Berkut finally applied, determined to outlast his period of trial.

Thus, having arrived at the Scythian monasteries, he asked to be brought before the ancient monk Akenthia, to whom he frankly told the mission of his journey. The grey-bearded, morosely frowning old monk Akenthia, accepted Zakhar without comment. And Zakhar stayed, not just a year, but three. He emerged from the monasteries a new man, his love for his people increased to even greater proportions, his words flowing cogently, calmly, intelligently and to the point, self-assured in their knowledge, crystal-clear pearls of wisdom; but against deceit, untruth, biting sharp as a razor.

In the four years that he was away Zakhar had acquired some knowledge of the world. He had been to Halich and Kiev, seen the kings and learned about their system of government, made friends with the boyars and merchants. All that he heard, observed and experienced, his unspoiled, keen young intellect filed away into the treasure-store of memory as food for meditation and future use. He returned from his travels not merely a proficient healer, but a leader. His indomitable will, patient statesmanship, loftiness of aim, lifted him out of the petty incidents of his age. His life became one long mastery of difficulty after difficulty.

Observing how in the valleys beyond the Carpathians the kings and their boyars were striving to weaken and destroy the people's democratic, cooperative self-government in their cities and villages, by setting up differentiations of class among them, so that in the ensuing chaos and disorder the people might be the more easily shorn of their power and turned into serfs, Zakhar Berkut became convinced that for the fellow citizens of his community there was no other means or hope for their

salvation than in intelligent and efficient administration of their internal affairs and the development of the cooperative spirit within their own and other environing communities, to insure for all of them their continued cultural development and impregnability.*

He had learned much from old Akenthia as well as from other learned men who came to the monastery about the merits and demerits of the various kinds of ruling governments in northern Rus, in the principality of Novgorod and other provinces; about the progress and development of civilization and the diverse practices of governments. All that he heard inspired him to make a firm resolve to devote his entire life to the betterment of community life in his beloved Tukhlia and the creation of a set of principles and workable laws which would bring about the closest possible cooperation among his people and their surrounding communities or townships.

Seventy years had now passed since he had returned from his wanderings. Like an archaic, giant oak stood Zakhar Berkut amidst the younger generations and saw with his own eyes the results of his long years of labor. There is no doubt but that he must have looked upon his work with the greatest feeling of joy and satisfaction. The community stood indivisible, a strongly united, cooperative body, each individual member secure in the enjoyment of all his liberties and free customs, municipal privileges, the rights of justice, common deliberation and freedom from arbitrary taxes. The community held its own court, conducted its own trials and managed all its affairs

* The king surrounded himself with a chosen warband of companions, servants or "thegns" (English) or boyars (Ukrainian) who were rewarded for their service by gifts from the public land. Their distinction rested not on hereditary rank, but on service done to the king. The fidelity of this warband was rewarded with grants from the royal domain, the king became their lord "the dispenser of gifts". Personal service at his court was held not to degrade but to ennoble. The boyar absorbed every post of honor while his wealth increased as the common folk-land passed into the hands of the king and was carved out by him into estates for his dependents.

of government entirely through the folk-mote. The municipal fields, downs and forests required no watchman for every member of the community was their owner and understood the need of conserving their natural resources. There were no poor in their township for the land produced enough food for all and the communal granaries and barns were always open to the needy. The kings and their boyars watched with jealous eyes this existence in which there was no room and no exigency for them. Once a year the king's revenue officer visited Tukhlia and the community tried its best to get rid of this undesirable guest as quickly as possible. In a day or two he would ride out of Tukhlia his wagon piled high with produce, for the community paid most of its taxes in raw materials. However, the king's revenue collector was never allowed to be the sole arbiter of the amount owed the king, as he was in many other communities. The Tukholians were very careful to give him the exact amount due the king and himself, but would not allow themselves to be overtaxed for his benefit.

Zakhar Berkut's vital, inspiring influence extended not only to the hamlets outside of the village of Tukhlia but for many, many miles around, to the other side of the Carpathians and into the sub-Carpathian region. They knew him not merely as a marvelous healer of wounds and all kinds of ailments, but as a great and golden orator, a sage statesman and profound thinker, "who when he speaks it is like the voice of God entering your heart and when he advises, whether it be a single individual or a whole community, not even a meeting place packed full with elders could render a better judgment."

Zakhar Berkut had long ago come to the conclusion that as in community life only the man who attempts to remain alone and aloof is weak so in a nation a single community must also lack strength unless it cooperates with other surrounding communities, thereby enabling each to preserve its

right to self-rule, and so insure the continued independence of the entire region.

His mind was far from being prisoned within his own village. In his continuous efforts to institute new judicial and administrative reforms for the improvement of community life in his own district, he never forgot about the others. In his youth he often visited other communities, attended their municipal meetings and gatherings, doing his best to learn their needs and to understand their people, everywhere directing his energies in persuading them to form permanent, friendly associations among the people within their own communities as well as joining in cooperative alliances, trade agreements and defence pacts with other surrounding districts whom a common interest drew together.

Such fundamental confederations which realized this idea and the spirit of unity among their communities were still vital and vigorous in the earlier days. The insidious greed of kings and boyars had not yet served to completely dissolve the natural brotherhood of peoples, that is why it was not surprising that under Zakhar Berkut's much beloved, enlightened, devoted and statesman-like leadership, this consolidation and this cooperative spirit was readily strengthened and revived.

Especially valuable were the trade agreements made with the Rus communities on the other side of the Carpathians, not only to the Tukholian community alone but to the entire Carpathian region which was rich in wool products but poor in grain of which the Rus communities on the Hungarian side of the Carpathians had a surplus. Therefore, one of Zakhar's chief ambitions was to make as direct and safe a trade route as possible up to and over the crest of the Carpathians. For many years he carried the idea for such a route in his head, roaming the length and breadth of the Tukholian region, surveying and scheming how the shortest, safest and least costly route might be cut through, at the same time ceaselessly striving to induce

the various communities on each side of the Beskid to agree to give their support to the project. At every opportunity which presented itself and at every folk-mote, he never failed to point out the advantages and the need of such a trade route until he had obtained their promise for fullest cooperation.

More than ten environing townships sent their representatives to the final conference held in Tukhlia at which they were to discuss and make plans for the construction of the new route. This was a day of great rejoicing for Zakhar. He not only assumed the full responsibility for its surveying and planning but also undertook, for sometime before it was begun, the task of organizing the work for its construction. In addition he set five of his own sons to work on it one of whom with his portable blacksmith shop was to be constantly present at the scene of the project to give the necessary assistance.

Each community supplied several workmen with tools and provisions. Under the critically discerning direction of Zakhar Berkut, this trade route was completed within a year. Its advantages at once became apparent to everyone. Trade connections with all of the rich mountain country and the valleys below it made the entire Carpathian region come alive and there began a brisk, profitable exchange of produce. Sheep-skin coats, cheese, herds of cattle and sheep went out of Tukhlia and wheat, rye and linens came in return.

This trail was more than a valuable trade route, it was a vital means of communication, bringing together culturally the communities on either side of the Beskid, which were of one nationality but divided between two different ruling governments.

Of course the Tukholian trade route was not the first in the Carpathians. There was an older and far more famous one called the Duklan Pass. The kings of Halich and Rus did not like this route because it represented a connecting link between the communities on each side of the Beskid, encouraging them

to continue their sturdy battle against oppression, their steady, ceaseless struggle for right and freedom; and chiefly because the Magyar princes and dukes often marched their armies over it to attack Red Rus. That was the reason why the princes of Halich and Premysl tried to block the route by erecting fortifications along it.

Because fortifications are constructed by political governments in order to preserve and extend their sovereign power, the results were bound to affect both the cultural development and the independent status of the communities involved. The kings of the provinces made grants to their boyars of vast tracts of lands belonging to the various townships along the Duklan route which they were assigned to guard with their armies, their ranks to be composed of men supplied by each community under the boyars' jurisdiction. In addition, the route was to be strongly fortified by barricades of wood and of stone in order to render it impassable to hostile forces.

Of course the full brunt of these responsibilities was born by the villagers. They were deprived not only of a large portion of their own lands upon which the boyars had come to settle but in addition became their guardians and defenders supplying them with recruits for their armies, servants for their households, provisions of grain and munitions, while at the same time, during sieges of war, they were subject to martial law and the military dictatorship of the boyars. Needless to say, the boyar, conceded such a wide range of authority, naturally exerted a potent influence in the village, doing his utmost to increase this power and thereby ever strengthen his own position.

To augment their wealth the boyars constructed their own private toll gates on the highway even in times of peace and collected duties on all imports and exports of foodstuffs, which in consequence served to slacken the trade over the Duklan route, weakening the communications and the cultural link be-

tween the various communities and crushing all friendly relations in the regions along it.

At the same time the checking of this energetic trade by obstruction of the route resulted in the fatal severance of their cooperative pacts against a common enemy which threatened self-rule within their townships. The people, accustomed to governing themselves through folk-mote, did not take kindly to the dictatorial ways of the boyars and there began a long, intense struggle between the boyars and the people which in the end unfortunately was not won by the communities because a united resistance was made impossible.

During Zakhar Berkut's time this struggle was by no means finished, as a matter of fact, in the isolated regions high up in the Carpathian ranges, it had not even begun and these, one can safely state, were the most fortunate in all of Rus during that period. The Tukholian region belonged to these fortunate few whose route, cresting over the Beskid, had contributed to its welfare for a long time. This route had not yet fallen into the hands of the boyars but belonged to everyone, the people on both sides of the Carpathians who, though they owed allegiance to two different kings, guarded it with equal zeal from attack by undesirable forces. Warning of an enemy's advance spread like a flash of lightning to the communities along the route so that they were able to swiftly and effectively repel it by the combined efforts of all their armies.

It was not surprising that the Tukholian district, located in the center of this trade route extending to both sides of the Carpathian ranges, grew increasingly desirable as a habitat and that it continued to preserve its independent, democratic form of government. By its example it kept alive the tradition of liberty and consolidation within the entire Carpathian region and especially in those communities which the king's boyars had taken over and in which the ruinous struggle had already begun

between the old democratic system of self-rule and the new totalitarian one.

Zakhar Berkut's dignity, his faculty of statesmanship and his convincing, passionate defence of the people's common right to self-government, free speech, free assembly, equality and justice, were responsible in a large measure for their continued independence. As long as a majority of them kept on struggling to retain their freedom and solidarity, the boyars could not spread their authority as rapidly as they would like and were forced to live agreeably within the communities, peacefully abiding by the laws and rules set up at town-mote at which they also sat among the elders sharing equal rights with all.

But such a state of affairs was exceedingly unpleasant to the boyars. They looked forward to times of war with as much anxious anticipation as to the greatest of feast days for then fortune smiled upon them. At once invoking their royal grant to power, they would use it to the fullest extent to destroy the people's democratic form of government so that once the authority had passed into their hands it would never again need to be handed back.

But there were no major wars. The king of Red Rus, Danilo Romanowich, though he was very kind to the boyars, but not as kind as his father had been, could not help them very much, for he was too occupied with the competitive elimination of provincial kings in his ambition to acquire the crown of the greater kingdom of Kiev than he was with the protection of his part of the country from the up to then unheard of Mongol hordes, which like a thunder cloud had appeared ten years before on the Eastern border of Rus in the Donets plateau region and slew the defending Rus kings in the fierce onset of the desperate, bloody battle at the river Kalka. Evidently scared by the dauntless heroism of the Rus soldiers who held them at bay, they had then disappeared beyond the Kalka river and nothing more was heard from them for ten years.

However, the memory of that onslaught remained with the people who lived in constant dread of its repetition by that fearful horde. Those least concerned seemed to be the kings of the various provinces and their thegns, the boyars. Immediately after the battle at Kalka, they settled down once more to their former series of petty conflicts, disputes over crowns and the undermining of the democratic system of self-rule in the various townships.

How senseless! They were trying to uproot the oak which fed them with its acorns. If on the other hand, they had applied their authority and power toward the strengthening instead of the eradication of this system in the communities and the voluntary associations and spirit of national unity which arose between the people as a result of it, Rus would probably have never fallen before the arrows and battle-axes of the Mongol hordes, but would have firmly stood its ground and defended itself like a deeply-rooted, giant oak which withstands the autumnal hurricanes.

The Tukholian region was fortunate indeed, for up to then it had escaped the despotic, acquisitive eyes of the princes and boyars. Whether this was because it lay tucked away from the rest of the world, high up amid the mountain ranges or whether it was because there was no great wealth within it, the fact remained that the boyars didn't seem to be particularly desirous of crowding themselves into this secluded nook. But this good fortune did not last forever. One bright, clear day brought the boyar Tuhar Wolf into this valley section and without saying a word to anyone, he started to build himself a house some distance away from the Tukholian community but on property belonging to it on the top of a hill overlooking the Opir river. The people were so astounded that they did not at once object to this new development. But gradually they began to question him, who he was, where he was from and why he had come.

"I am the boyar of king Danilo," explained Tuhar Wolf

proudly. "For my services and heroism, the king has rewarded me with the lands and forests of this Tukholian region."

"But these lands and forests belong to our community!" replied the Tukholians.

"That does not concern me in the least," answered the boyar. "You will have to take your claims to the king! I have my grant from the king and that is all I need to consider."

The people of Tukhlia just shook their heads at the words of the boyar and said nothing. In the meantime the boyar never once neglected to continue his boasting of the king's gracious kindness and good-will towards him, although at first he neither pressed himself upon the people nor mixed in their community's affairs.

At the outset the people, especially the younger generation, whether from curiosity or because of their natural hospitality, often visited the boyar and performed various services for him then just as suddenly ceased going there, completely neglecting him. This at first perplexed and then exasperated the boyar who began to retaliate by annoying the Tukholian residents in various ways.

His house stood on a hillock just above the Tukholian trail and he, following the examples of other boyars, erected a gateway upon it, demanding a toll of those who wished to pass through it. But the Tukholian people were not so easily imposed upon. They understood at once that a decisive struggle had now begun for them and they determined, upon Zakhar Berkut's advice, to stand resolutely on their rights without yielding an inch of their ground.

Within a week after the toll gate had been put up, the people of Tukhlia sent their elected delegation to Tuhar Wolf. These delegates put their business before him in the form of two brief but pointed questions: "What are you up to, Boyarin?" and "Why are you closing off the highway?"

"Because I feel like it!" replied he. "If you don't like it, go and complain to the king!"

"But this road does not belong to the king, it belongs to our community!"

"That does not concern me either."

With this the delegation was dismissed.

However, immediately following their return homeward came a whole troop of Tukholian youths equipped with hatchets who calmly but efficiently chopped down the offending toll gate and made a bonfire of it not far from the boyar's manor. The boyar raged back and forth in his yard like a maddened animal, cursing the dirty peasant louts but he did not attempt to stop them and for sometime afterwards did not endeavor to put up another toll gate.

Thus the first violation of their democratic principles, encroaching on their right to personal freedom, had been successfully resisted, but the people did not rejoice prematurely over this victory. They realized that this was probably only the prelude to other such infringements and attacks. And they were right, for it was not long before their suspicions were fully realized. One day their sheep-herdsmen came running into the village bringing somber tidings, that the boyar's serfs had driven their herds away from the best communal pastures. Hardly had the herdsmen time to explain what had happened in detail when the community's foresters came running also to report that the boyar was measuring and fencing off for himself a large portion of their forest. Again the community sent its delegation of representatives to Tuhar Wolf.

"Why are you trying to harm the people by taking from them what is theirs?"

"I am taking only that which my king has granted me."

"But these are not the king's lands, they belong to us! The king had no right to give away that which he does not own."

From that time on there continued a ceaseless struggle between the people and the boyar. At one time the people would drive the boyar's herds off their downs and at another his servants would drive theirs away. The forests taken over by the boyar were guarded both by the people's and his foresters among whom there ensued frequent quarrels leading to fights. This so infuriated the boyar that he ordered his servants to kill any animals they found on the pastures he had taken as his own and one forester whom he found on his sectioned-off part of the forest he ordered to be tied to a tree and flayed with thorny switches until he almost died.

This was already too much for the community to bear. There were many voices raised in favor of dealing with the boyar according to their oldest precepts of apportioning punishment to an incorrigible and pernicious citizen who was a murderer and a thief, by driving him away from the vicinity of their land and tearing down his house. A large majority of the citizens favored this procedure and it is certain that matters would right then have come to a crucial point for the boyar, if it had not been for Zakhhar Berkut who expressed the opinion that it was against democratic principles of justice to pass sentence upon an individual until he had been given an opportunity to present his side of the situation and that it was only fair the boyar be first called to their town meeting and tried by the folk-court, which after a proper and thorough deliberation would hand down a final decision in the matter. This sensible and sage advice was heeded by the Tukholians.

Certainly there was no one in all the gathering who was more aware than Zakhhar Berkut of the full significance of this momentous occasion. He realized that the moment had arrived when the test of all that he had spent his life-time in teaching and establishing, would be revealed in the decision passed by the people's court. Had it been purely a question of simple justice, he could rely upon the judgment of the folk-court with-

out the slightest doubt or misgiving. But here was a need for weighty deliberation, the first time in the life of the Tukholian municipality, on alien but immensely important issues which threatened to entangle them inextricably.

Zakhar understood very well that the decision whether favorable or unfavorable to the boyar threatened the municipality with untold danger. A favorable decision would mean an acknowledgment once and for all time, not only of the boyar's freedom from guilt, but his power to humble the community and his right to take permanent possession of the forests, pasturing down and to assume a stranglehold on the entire township which would be the first obstruction to their independence and the hardest to bear, upon the restoration and strengthening of which he had worked ceaselessly for the past seventy years. An unfavorable decision, demanding the removal of the boyar from the municipality would also create a menacing risk for the community. What if the boyar should be able to diplomatically persuade his king by intimating that the people of the Tukholian region were disloyal subjects and so arouse his ire and enlist his aid? This might lead to dire consequences, perhaps spell complete ruin for their region as like decisions had brought on the ruin of several other communities which their kings had considered rebellious and handed over to the boyars and their kind to divide and despoil among themselves.

Both of these solutions pressed with onerous solemnity upon the heart of old Zakhar and before beginning the discussion, he sent a fervent prayer from deep within him, to the Sun-God Dayboh, asking him to illumine his intellect and that of the gathering in order that they might choose the right path to lead them out of their difficulties.

"Illustrious gathering!" he began his address. "I shall not attempt to conceal the weight and import of the deliberations, concerning what business you already know, facing today's de-

cision of the folk-court. When I turn my eyes upon what is going on around us and what is now also threatening our community, I somehow feel that the peaceful existence we have enjoyed so long will never return, that the time has now come to show by deed and strife whether our democratic form of government is durable and our cooperative spirit equal to the intense conflict which is approaching. You all know what struggle is advancing upon us, and not from only one direction, but you will hear more about this today, so I need not at this time go further into detail concerning it."

"However, I would like to point out and impress indelibly upon your minds how great is our need to take a firm and unyielding stand upon matters encroaching on our liberty. But in this neither I nor anyone else has the right to dictate to you. If you wish, you will heed my advice, if not, the privilege is yours to reject it. The most I can say is that today we are at the cross roads and must choose the road we are to follow. It is fitting then that those of us who are old and wise should explain very carefully our choice and to what it will eventually lead us as well as where we stand right now."

"Rest your eyes a moment, estimable citizens, upon our banner which for over fifty years now has listened to our words and observed our acts. Do any of you know the significance of this symbol? Our ancestors, the hallowed and time-honored forefathers, made the banner and passed the secret of its symbolism on to me, saying, 'Zakhar, someday, at a transitional moment in the community's history, when it needs the cool prudence, and the quick perception of what is possible, you must reveal to the populace the true significance of our ensign's symbolism and explain to them that only in the strictest observance of our time-tested principles of cooperative democracy rests our spiritual salvation and our liberty, and that failure to conform to these principles, neglect of the precepts left by our ancestors,

will bring the direst misfortune upon the municipality and cause its complete disintegration.’”

Zakhar paused a moment. The gathering was considerably stirred by these passionate words. All eyes were fixed upon the brilliant red banner, silver edges glinting in the sun, which floated in the breeze like a stream of live blood held by some magic within its proportioned bounds, suspended from the pole stuck in its groove in the square block of stone.

“Until now, I have never spoken to you about this,” Zakhar continued, “because we were secure in our peace and happiness. but it is time for me to break my silence. Turn your eyes once more upon our banner! You will note that the strong chain which holds it in place was fashioned out of one solid piece of timber each of whose rounded links is complete in itself, constructed to accept its responsibility as a unit and well able to hold its own. This chain then, represents our race, fashioned by the hands of a Benevolent Creator. Every single link within this chain represents a community, an integral, incontrovertible part of the whole and yet free within itself as if it were a link closed in upon itself, living its own life and fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities. Only the solidity of each unit assures the indivisibility and freedom of the whole. Should just one of these units weaken within itself and break, then the whole chain would be rendered useless and its united power broken. Therefore the disruption of democratic rule within one community creates a sore spot which brings on a disease infecting the whole sacred body of our nation, Rus. Woe to the community which willingly allows itself to become the focal point for such an infection without doing all in its power to resist it! It would be far better for such a community to disappear from the face of the earth and to lose itself within an abyss!”

These last words of Zakhar Berkut’s rose on a high menacing note, ringing in the ears of the listeners momentarily shut-

ting out the sound of the waterfall which nearby thundered down against the rock and like a live column of crystal reflected all the prismatic colors of the sunshine in a shimmering ribbon above the heads of the gathering.

Zakhar continued, "Cast your eyes upon that banner again! You will further note that each link of the chain is encrusted with silver in various pleasing designs. These incrustations are not a burden upon the links but add to their general attractiveness and stoutness. Thus each community also has its invaluable customs and institutions of government, born of necessity and established by the wisdom and experience of our predecessors, which hold it together."

"These institutions are sacred not because they are ancient and were established by our forefathers but because they are democratic, non-coercive and non-restraining to the honest and law-abiding individuals and repressive only to those who are evil and wish to harm the community. Nor do these institutions of government restrain or coerce the municipality but lend it the power and authority to preserve what it holds good and beneficial and to destroy that which is deemed harmful and evil."

"If it were not for those silver incrustations the wooden links could easily crack and break and their union within the chain be destroyed. Therefore, if it were not for our sacred, well-established institutions of democratic government, our fundamental associations within and outside the township, which insure order and mutual protection for all the members, the community would fall apart."

"Take heed, estimable citizens! The hand of a thief has stretched forth its talons to tear off the silver incrustations from our link, to weaken and then trample under-foot our liberty and our traditions of independent government under which we have so tranquilly and fortunately lived!"

"We will heed! We will not allow him to do it!" cried

the chorus of voices from the gathered populace. "We will defend our liberty and our independence to the last drop of our blood!"

"Very good, my children!" replied Zakhar Berkut, deeply moved. "It is the only way! It seems to me as if the very spirit of our benevolent Giant Sentinel has entered your hearts today for you have rightly sensed the symbolic import of our banner. 'Why is it red?' It means blood! To the very last drop of their blood the people of our municipality and our country should defend their freedom and their inviolable right to a democratic form of government! You can take my word for it that the time is not far off when the shedding of your blood will be demanded of you. Let us make ready then to defend ourselves!"

That instant all eyes as if at a given signal turned towards the village. At the entrance to the trail which led by the waterfall and up towards the crest of the mountain ranges, appeared a group of proudly dressed, fully armed men. This was, in all his pomp and resplendence, the boyar Tuhar Wolf and his guard of mercenaries coming to the Tukholian meeting. Regardless of the heat on the late spring day, the boyar was in full military regalia, garbed in shining steel armor replete with palettes and knee-pieces and a shining steel helmet topped with a tuft of cock's feathers fluttering in the wind. At his side, in its sheath, hung a heavy sword. Slung over his shoulder was a bow and a "saydak" filled with arrows and tucked behind his belt a battle axe, its sharp wide blade and bronze head gleaming in the sun. Over all this fearsome armor, to indicate his peaceful intentions, the boyar had draped a sheepskin, its mouth converted into a clasp on his chest and its paws with their sharp claws clasping his waist. Accompanying the boyar were ten archers and battle-axe carriers also dressed in sheepskins but without the armor. The gathering shuddered involuntarily at sight of the advancing company; they all realized

that this was the enemy which menaced their freedom and independence.

While they were still a distance away, Zakhar was finishing his speech: "Here comes the Boyarin, who boasts that his gracious king granted him our lands, our bodies, our liberty and our souls. See how insolently he proceeds in the knowledge of his king's good graces and that he is the king's servant and his slave! We do not need the graciously benign mercy of a boyar nor do we have need for becoming vassals! That is the reason why he hates us and calls us "stinkers", louts. But we are fully aware that his supercilious posturings are silly and that an upright, free man cares nothing for arrogance but on the contrary, bases his nobility upon the tranquillity of his conscience and the power of his wisdom. Let us then display our superiority by our dignity and our wisdom that we should not humiliate him but that he, himself, within the depths of his own soul, should be humiliated! I have finished!"

A gentle stir of satisfaction and happy resolution swept over the gathering. Zakhar walked back to his seat. Momentarily complete silence reigned over the folk-mote, until Tuhar Wolf neared the gathering and greeted them, "Good day, Citizens!" touching his helmet with his hand but without removing it from his head.

"Good day to you, Boyarin!" answered the assemblage.

Tuhar Wolf, with disdainful, presumptuous strides took his stand on the platform under the linden tree and with a brief sweep of his glance over the gathered populace, began peremptorily, "You have called me before you and so I have come. What is it that you want of me?"

These words were spoken in a lofty, brisk tone, which evidently was meant by the boyar to manifest his preeminence over the town-mote. He did not look at the people directly but toyed with his battle-axe turning it about in his hands as if its shining blade and bronze head amused him, showing very

plainly by this act his scornfully contemptuous attitude towards the entire populace and its folk-court.

"We called you here to appear before the folk-court so that before we pass judgment on your past conduct we might hear what you have to say in your own behalf. By what right and for what purpose are you trying to wrong the people of this community?"

"Tried before the folk-court?" repeated the boyar in mock surprise, turning his face towards Zakhar. "I am in the service of the king, a boyar. No one has the authority, outside the king or another boyar, to prosecute me."

"As to whose servant you are, Boyarin, we shall not question you, that does not concern us. As to your rights we will discuss them later. For now, please be so good as to tell us from where you came to our village?"

"From the capital of the principality, Halich."

"And who ordered you to come here?"

"Your master and my master, king Danilo Romanowich."

"Speak for yourself and not for us, Boyarin! We are free people and acknowledge no master. And why did your master order you to come to our village?"

The boyar's face flushed with anger at Zakhar's sharply spoken words. He paused a moment undecided whether to go on answering his cross-examiner or not. Then checking his anger, he continued quickly, to cover up his untimely break, "He appointed me the guardian of his dominion and his subjects, the warlord, defender and chief of the Tukholian region and granted to me and my heirs forever, the right to settle on Tukholian soil as a reward for my many years of unflinching service."

"Here is the deed of his grant with his seal and his signature upon it!" With these words the boyar withdrew his hand from inside his wide leather belt and magnanimously brought

forth from one of its pockets the king's deed, raising it high into the air so the whole gathering might see it.

"Hide your grant, Boyarin," said Zakhar quietly, "We wouldn't know how to read it and the seal of your king does not mean anything to us. Rather tell us yourself, who is this king of yours?"

"What!" exclaimed the amazed boyar, "You don't know king Danilo Romanowich?"

"No, we acknowledge no king."

"Ruler of all the lands, towns and cities from the river Scian (pron. Shon) to the Dnieper, from the Carpathians to the mouth of the river Buh?"

"We have never seen him and to us he is not a ruler. For instance, when a shepherd is the ruler of a herd, he protects it and defends it against wolves and other wild beasts, driving it at mid-day heat to a cool stream and in the chill of evening to a warm, safe pen. Does your king do all this for his subjects?"

"The king does even more for them," replied the boyar. "He gives them wise laws, sage governors and sends them his faithful servants to defend them against enemies."

"That is not true, Boyarin," interrupted Zakhar. "You see, even the sun in the sky has hidden its bright face so as not to hear your deceitful statements. Just laws were handed down to us not by your king but our ancestors and forefathers. The king's wise governors we have never seen and have lived in concord and peace governing ourselves by our own principles of cooperative self-rule. Our forefathers taught us long ago that a man alone is not sufficient unto himself any more than a single individual is wise enough to equitably dispense just judgment to all, but that the people's government administered for their collective good is the only just and honest government. Without the king's warlords lived our forefathers and we have lived up until now and as you can see our homes have not

been plundered and our children have not been taken away to enemy camps."

"That might have been true until now, but it will no longer be so in the future."

"What it is going to be like from now on we do not know, nor do you either, Boyarin. But tell us one more thing, is your king a just man?"

"The whole world knows and sees his justice."

"Is that why he sent you here to instate his justice among the people in our Tukholian mountain region?"

The boyar was visibly confused by this direct question, but after only a moment's hesitation, he answered, "Yes."

"What do you think, Boyarin, can a just man wrong his subjects?"

The boyar remained silent.

"Can he with dishonest acts instill justice into their hearts and by wronging them win their respect and love for him?"

The boyar continued his silence, toying with the blade of his battle-axe.

"You see, Boyarin," finished Zakhar, "your lips are silent, but your conscience tells you that this cannot be true. However, your just king has done that to us, whom he has never seen and does not know, about whose welfare and fortune he does not trouble himself and who have never done anything to harm him, but on the contrary, every year give him a bountiful gift in the form of taxes. How could he be so unjust towards us, Boyarin?"

Tuhar Wolf glared at Zakhar furiously and replied, "You're talking nonsense old man! The king cannot be unjust to anyone!"

"Oh, but he has wronged us by that very grant of which you boast so much! Let me put it this way: Would I not be wronging you if, without asking your permission, I took that glistening steel armor away from you and gave it to my son?"

That is exactly the sort of thing your king has done with us. What your armor is to you, our lands and forests are to us. From time immemorial, we used them and guarded them as carefully as if they were the eyes in our heads and here you come along in the name of your king and say, "This is mine! My king gave me this as a reward for my valuable services!" And you proceed to drive away our shepherds, kill our forester, right on our own lands! Tell me, how can we be expected after such exemplary justice to consider your king a worthy ruler?"

"You are wrong, old fellow!" replied Tuhar Wolf. "All of us, and everything we own including our cattle and our lands are the property of the king. The king alone is free and we are his vassals. His will is our law. He can do with us as he pleases."

These words struck Zakhar Berkut like a deafening blow on the crown of the head. He bowed his gray old head and was silent for a long moment not knowing what to say. Also as if dealt a deadly blow, an onerous silence held the folk-mote.

At last Zakhar stood up. His face glowed with a peculiar light. He raised his hands in supplication to the sun: "Oh Brilliant Sun, Benevolent and Free Giver of Light, do not listen to the hateful words which this man has dared to speak before your very face! Do not heed them, I beg of you, forget that they were ever uttered on our realm, up to now not even by such thought defiled! Do not punish us for them! For I know you will not let it pass unpunished. And if there, in that king's Halich many other such people have been pro-created, then wipe them off the face of the earth, but in your punishment of them for their evil ways, do not destroy also the rest of our race!"

These words apparently soothed Zakhar. He sat down again and turning to the boyar, said, "We have heard your convictions, Boyarin. Please do not repeat them here before us

again, but keep them exclusively to yourself. Let us now tell you what we think of your king. Harken to our impression but do not be offended by it! You will understand yourself why we cannot consider him as a sovereign father and protector!"

"A father knows his own child, its needs and desires, but your king does not know us nor wants to know us. A chief or ruler guards his charges from enemies and from all harm. The king has never protected us from either rain, storm, sleet, or from the Bruin and these are our worst enemies. He, it is true, proclaims that he defends us from attacks by outlaw bands of Uhri (Hungarians). But how does he protect us? By sending us even worse enemies than these Uhri warriors, his insatiable boyars with their hireling soldiers. The bands of outlaws will attack, plunder what they can and go their way. The boyar, on the other hand, settles down as lord of the soil and is not satisfied with any kind of booty. His career of conquest is aimed at sheer dispossession and enslavement of all of us forever."

"Not as a ruler and father of our country, do we consider your king, but as the curse of God, sent to us as a chastisement for our sins, from whom we must buy our way out through yearly sacrifices of goods as gifts. The less we know of him and he of us, the better we like it. If only all of our nation of Rus could be rid of him today with all of his gang it would certainly still be a great and prosperous country!"*

Tuhar Wolf listened to the passionate dissertation of the

* There's a note by Ivan Franko which states that from Zakhar's speech we must not get the erroneous impression that king Danilo was an evil man. History testifies that he was a sympathetic and for those times a democratic enough sort of individual endowed with unusual wisdom and diplomacy. However, Zakhar's speech is also characteristic of the people's attitude at that time towards all the internal wars of dissension carried on by the kings of the various provinces in their competitive effort to gain control of the vast, rich and prosperous Grand Duchy of Kiev.

old sage with a mingling of wonder and awe. Although raised in the shadow of the king's court and spoiled by its rottenness and meanness, he was underneath it all a prince, a soldier and a man; he was moved to feel within his heart, if only a very tiny fraction, some of the strong emotion which emanated from the person of Zakhar Berkut. At the same time his conscience had been far from clear for expressing those insincere words giving recognition to the king's unquestionable right to sovereignty. His own spirit had often rebelled against this right and here he had tried to cover up with the king's claims to unbridled domination, his own craving for power. It was therefore not surprising that Zakhar Berkut's words penetrated deeper into his heart than he cared to admit. For the first time he glanced at him sympathetically and all at once felt sorry for that mighty relic whose downfall, to his way of thinking, was so imminently inescapable.

"Poor old man, I pity your gray old head and your youthful spirit. You have lived a long time upon this earth, too long it seems to me! Living within your heart in antiquity, with the passionate thoughts of your youth, you have stopped understanding the new view-points and developments of modern times. That which was desirable long ago does not necessarily have to be now or forever. Everything that lives must be out-lived. Outmoded and out-lived also are your youthful dreams of freedom and democracy. Afflictive times are now upon us, old man! They demand one mighty ruler over all our land who would knit the strength and power of the whole nation together into one central unit, enabling him to better defend the country against the enemy which advances from the East. You, old fellow, do not know all this and so you think that things are just the way they used to be a long time ago."

"You are wrong again, Boyarin," replied Zakhar Berkut. "I admit that it is not good for an old man to give himself up to golden dreaming while closing his eyes to modern needs

and developments. Nor do I think it is right to despise the good because it is old or to think a thing is evil because it is new. This is the custom only among young men and at that among poorly trained youths. You are trying to tell me that I don't know what is going on around us? At the same time I am wondering which of us knows more and in greater detail exactly what is transpiring?"

"You have reminded me of the deadly enemy which threatens us from the East, by expressing the idea that you plan to stem the advance of this enemy through the combined might of all the people held in one set of hands. Now I will tell you what I know of that enemy!"

"Isn't it true, Boyarin, that yesterday the king's messenger came to you to inform you of a renewed attack by the terrible Mongols on our Rus-Ukraine; that they, after a long siege took Kiev, ruined and plundered it and now like an enormous black storm cloud are moving towards our Red Rus? We, Boyarin, knew all this for a week already and knew that the king's messenger had been dispatched to these parts, as well as what his message contained. The king's messenger was delayed, ours traveled faster. The Mongols have long ago entered our Red Rus, plundered and devastated many cities and villages and separated themselves into two armies. One went west, perhaps to Seudomir in Poland and the other to the upper stretches of the Strey valley into our section. Isn't it true, Boyarin, that you did not know this?"

Tuhar Wolf stared at old Zakhar in astonishment.

"I may as well inform you further, so you will know how close is our cooperative alliance with various neighboring communities, that we hold reciprocal agreements with all of them including the Sub-Carpathian municipalities to relay to each other as rapidly as possible all important news affecting the welfare of the entire Carpathian region. These Sub-Carpathian municipalities are likewise in concord with others, the

Pokutian and Podilian regions so that everything of consequence to us, which happens in any part of Rus, is transmitted as speedily as lightning, travelling from community to community until it reaches us."

"Of what good is such news to you, if you cannot aid yourselves!" the boyar retorted surlily.

"You are right, Boyarin," replied Zakhar gravely. "The municipalities of Podilia and Pokutia cannot aid themselves for they have been stripped and reduced to serfdom by the king's boyars who will not permit them to arm themselves or even to learn the proper art of self-defence."

"Now you can see what putting supreme power into one man's hands means! In order to gather together the power of the whole nation into one pair of hands, the entire nation of peoples must be weakened and subdued. To invest supreme power into one man over a nation of people, it is necessary to first take away the freedom of every township and region, to destroy their local self-government and to disarm the entire population, leaving the Mongols free access to our country."

"Let's take for example our Rus, at this crucial moment. Your ruler, your all powerful king Danilo, has disappeared, gone no one knows where. Instead of turning to his people, granting them their liberty and organizing them into a living and unconquerable garrison against the Mongol invaders he, while the Mongols are plundering his country, has run to the king of the Uhri, begging for his assistance! But the Magyars are not anxious to help us although they are also threatened by the onset of the same enemy."

"Now that your king Danilo has vanished, who knows but you may soon see him in the camp of the Magyar Khan as his faithful servant so that with the price of his enslavement and humiliation he may purchase his own domination over the still weaker populace."

The boyar, listening to this discourse, began to plan what to do, how to make the best of this situation.

"Did you say the Mongols are threatening even this realm with their attack?"

Zakhar smiled peculiarly at this question. "They are, Boyarin."

"And what are you planning to do, surrender or defend yourselves?"

"It would do no good to surrender for those whom they capture they put to service in the forefront of their heaviest battles."

"Then it means you intend to defend yourselves?"

"We shall try to do all in our power."

"Well then, accept me as your commander. I will lead you to the battle against the Mongols."

"Wait, Boyarin, we have not yet come to the choice of a commander. You have not yet explained the reasons for your past behavior towards our community. We will gladly accept your sincere wish to aid our community but our forefathers taught us that for a clean deed there is need for clean hands. But will your hands be clean enough for such an enterprise?"

This sudden change of subject a bit embarrassed Tuhar Wolf and he replied, "Elders, citizens! Let us bury past grievances and let bygones be bygones. The enemy is drawing nigh and I want to join forces with you against it. Further investigation to get to the bottom of your grievances will merely confuse the issue and you will profit nothing by it."

"No, that is not so, Boyarin! It is not our grievances that we are trying to get to the bottom of, but to the truth. You came here under false pretenses and behaved fraudulently towards us, how then can we entrust you with command over us in a war with the Mongols?"

"See here, old man, are you purposely determined to irritate me?"

"I must remind you, Boyarin, that you are on trial by the people's court and not parrying in debate," Zakhar brought him up sharply.

"Tell me, if after settling on the Tukholian lands would you want to become a citizen of our community?"

"I was sent here by the king as a warlord."

"We have told you that we do not accept you as our overlord and particularly as the overlord of our lands. Do not disparage our lands and our people, then perhaps we'll accept you in our community as an equal among equals."

"Oh, so that's it!" exploded Tuhar Wolf angrily. "So this is your brand of justice! Do you mean to tell me that you expect me to give up the good will and kindness of my king to beg favors from peasant louts?"

"Of course, Boyarin, otherwise you cannot become one of us. The township will not tolerate a nonconforming alien among its citizens."

"Will not tolerate?" laughed Tuhar sarcastically.

"Our predecessors told us that a harmful and useless member of a community such as a murderer, horse thief or an alien who wants to take possession of their lands, without the consent of the people, should be driven out together with his family beyond the confines of the municipality and his house torn down."

"Ha, ha, ha!" the boyar laughed forcibly. "You dare to compare me, the king's boyar, favored by the king's graciousness for my services, to murderers and horse-thieves?"

"What else, Boyarin? Let your own conscience tell you whether you have acted any better towards us than a murderer. You take away our lands, our greatest and only wealth; you drive our people away from what is theirs, beat them to death when you catch them and you kill our herds! Is that how respectable citizens behave?"

"Be done with such talk old man, I can no longer bear to listen to it, it affronts my honor!"

"Wait, Boyarin, I have not yet finished," replied Zakhar Berkut calmly. "I'm glad you brought up the subject of your honor and those services rendered your king which you have continued to vaunt before us at every opportunity. Would you be so good as to tell us exactly what they were so that we too might pay them homage?"

"I have spilled my blood in twenty battles!"

"To spill your blood, Boyarin, is not enough of a service. Even a murderer often spills his blood, but they hang him just the same. Tell us, against whom and for whom you have done battle?"

"Against the king of Kiev, against the Volynian, Polish and Mazovian kings. . . ."

"That is quite enough, Boyarin! Those wars are a disgrace not an honor for you or the kings. They were purely wars of extermination, massacres of innocent peoples."

"I also fought against the Mongols at the battle on the river Kalka."

"And how did you fight against them?"

"What do you mean, how? The way it was necessary to fight, holding my ground firmly until I was wounded and taken prisoner."

"That was well said, except that we don't know if it is actually true."

"If you don't know, then don't attempt to talk about what you know nothing."

"Hold on a moment, Boyarin, and don't decry our ignorance. We will see to it that we find out what we don't know!" With these words, Zakhar Berkut stood up and turning to the assemblage said, "Estimable gathering! You have heard the open attestation of Tuhar Wolf presented in his own behalf?"

“We have.”

“Is there anyone among you who can testify as to the truth of his testimony?”

“I can!” a voice answered from among the assembled.

The boyar started as if shot by an arrow at the sound of that voice and for the first time cast a sharp, fearful glance over the gathering.

“Whoever wishes to testify for or against this man, let him come up here in front of the gathering and present his evidence,” said Zakhar.

Before the town-mote came a man not yet old but crippled, with a leg missing from one side of his body and an arm from the other, his face furrowed by deep scars. It was Metko The Soldier, as he was called by the populace. A few years back, he had come to them limping on his wooden leg, recounting fearful tales of the Mongol invasion, the battle at the river Kalka and the concurrent defeat of the kings; how those taken prisoners were crushed to death beneath the boards which served the Mongolian commanders as seats at their repast. He, Metko, had also fought in the battle while in the service of a boyar with whom he was taken prisoner, and had somehow contrived to make good his escape from prison. For a long time he had wandered among the villages and cities of Rus, until at last he had chanced to come to the Tukholian valley retreat. He was so pleased with it that he wanted to settle down there for the rest of his life and because he could with his one hand weave pretty baskets and knew many songs and tales about far off lands, the community accepted him as a member, cooperatively feeding and clothing him. He was respected and honored by them for his wounds received in the defence of his country and loved by all for his honesty and cheerful disposition. This was the Metko who now came forth to testify against the boyar.

“Tell us, Soldier Metko,” Zakhar began his questioning.

“Do you know this boyar against whom you wish to testify?”

“I certainly do,” replied Metko confidently. “It was while a mercenary in his service that I fought in the battle at the river Kalka.”

“Silence, stupid vassal!” shouted the paling boyar. “Forbear or else your miserable existence will end right where you stand!”

“Boyarin, I am no longer your slave, but a free citizen and only my fellow-citizens have the right to order me to be silent. I remained silent long enough but now they command me to speak.”

“Honorable citizens! My testimony against the boyar Tuhar Wolf is important and terrible. He was a trait . . .”

“If you were silent until now, then be silent forever!” yelled the boyar. The battle-axe glinted and Metko The Soldier, his skull cleaved in two, fell to the ground.

“Oh!” gasped the assemblage, jumping to its feet. Angry voices rose from the gathering. “Death to him! Death to him! He has desecrated our meeting place and killed a citizen of our town in the presence of our folk-court!”

“Dirty louts!” the boyar shouted back at them. “I am not afraid of you! A like fate awaits any one of you who dares to lay hands upon me or utters a word against me. Hey there, faithful guards, come here to me!”

The archers and battle-axe wielders themselves pale and tremulous surrounded the boyar. Menacingly, his face flushed with fury, he stood amidst them with the bloody battle-axe upraised in his hand. At Zakhar’s sign the crowd quieted down.

“Boyarin!” said Zakhar. “You have sinned irrevocably before God and our people. You have killed a witness at a session of our court and in the presence of the citizens of our municipality. What he wanted to testify against you, we have not found out and do not want to know, let your conscience be the

judge. But with his murder you have acknowledged your guilt and added a new grievance. The community can no longer endure your presence on its lands. Move away from us. Leave at once! Three days from today, our people will come to raze your house and destroy all traces of your ever having been among us."

"Let them come!" spluttered the boyar angrily. "We'll see who will destroy whose traces. I spit upon your court! I'd like to see anyone come near my house! Come my guards, let's leave this churlish gathering!"

The boyar marched away, surrounded by his mercenaries. *For a long time an oppressive silence reigned over the town-mote.* The youths removed the bloody body of Metko The Soldier.

"Estimable gathering," said Zakhar at last, "is it your will to mete out the sort of punishment to the boyar Tuhar Wolf as our forefathers commanded us to give to such people?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the populace.

"Whom do you nominate to carry out the orders of our court?"

Ten youths were selected among whom Maxim Berkut was included. It was hard for Maxim to accept this nomination. No matter how hateful he considered the boyar, still he was the father of the one who had bewitched his heart and come to occupy his every waking thought, of whom he dreamed constantly and for whom he would have given his very life. And now she too was doomed, innocently, through her father's guilt! Despite this, Maxim did not refuse the nomination. Hard as it might be for him to carry out the order of the people's court, deep within his heart he was overjoyed at the prospect the opportunity would give him of seeing her once more and to try at least to smooth over with his personal good will the harshness of the folk-court's jurisdiction.

In the meantime the business of the session proceeded.

The envoys from surrounding townships were called upon to give their reports and to confer with them how they could best cooperate to defend themselves against the imminent onslaught of the Mongols.

"We are ruined," reported the messengers from the Sub-Carpathian communities. "Our villages are burned to the ground, our cattle have been stolen, our youths are all killed. The Mongols have left behind them a wide-spreading river of conflagration and desolation in the entire Sub-Carpathian region. The king sent us no assistance for our defence and the boyars who had imposed themselves upon us in time of peace turned against us in our hour of need."

The envoys from Korchena and Tustania, told their story: "We are threatened by inundation. On the wolds below the Senevid valley, gleam the white tents of the Mongols. There are countless numbers of them advancing which it would be useless for us to even think of resisting. We are taking everything we can carry and fleeing to the hills and forests. Our boyars had at first begun to erect barricades along the highway, but are now for some reason procrastinating. It is rumoured that they are planning to sell out to the Mongols the passage through our highway."

The messengers of other mountain range districts said: "Our crops are bad and now many refugees have come to us from the valley below the ranges. The pre-harvest is very hard on us. Save us and our guests from starvation by helping us in our extremity!"

Envoys from the Hungarian side of the Carpathians told them: "We have learned that the Mongol horde is advancing into the Carpathian region. In the name of the Gods of Rus and all other Gods of our forefathers, we beg of you, neighbors and brothers, check that fearful mob. Do not allow them to penetrate into our country! Your villages are natural fortresses: every hill and mountain range, every ravine and gorge

can take the place of a thousand soldiers. But as soon as they push themselves over the crest then we are lost for there is nothing to hold them back and all our efforts will avail us nothing. We are ready to aid you with all we have, with bread and men, only don't give up, don't lose courage but take your stand and fight the barbaric horde."

Then Zakhar Berkut replied, "Honorable citizens and envoys of neighboring communities! We have all heard your reports of what a terrible storm has hit our land of Rus. Armies of trained soldiers have fought and fallen. The numbers of the enemy are vast and due to the unfortunate circumstances which prevail in our Sub-Carpathian regions, they have been allowed to penetrate into the very heart of our realm, right up to the doorstep of our house. The kings and boyars have been beheaded or have openly turned traitors to the country."

"What shall we do? How can we defend ourselves? I do not think it advisable for us to go beyond the confines of our Tukholian valley. We certainly will do our best to defend the Tukholian trail, with your help, respected citizens of communities over the mountains, but we cannot promise to defend other highways. That will be your duty, honorable citizens of Tustan. But if we should be successful in repelling the enemy ourselves, then we will gladly lend you our assistance."

To this the messengers from Tustan replied, "We realize father Zakhar, that it is not possible for you to defend us and that it is necessary in such a time as this for each to defend his own first. But at the same time we would like to ask your kind consideration of the fact that our communities are not as fortunate as yours, that the boyars have taken us in hand and that it is they who guard the forts, the trails and highways. If they should feel like turning them over to the Mongols, what then could we do? The only hope we have left and upon which we base our sole salvation, is that the Mongols will not

use your trail, in which case you, having set guards to watch your trail, then will be able to come to our assistance."

"Citizens, citizens!" Zakhar reproached them splenetically. "The power it seems is in our hands, we have the ability to think like men, but we talk like children! You put your faith in "if" and "maybe". However, of this you can be sure, that when our community is no longer threatened by the danger of attack, we will come with our entire populace to aid you. But first of all, you must protect yourselves against your own enemies, the boyars. So long as the forts and trails remain in their hands, you cannot draw a single breath safely; you will never be secure against their treachery. Any time at all this cunning, parasitic race will betray you. It is high time to stop dreaming and to sound their death knoll by taking action. Each community, one by one, must shed the chains in which the insatiable boyars and their kings have bound you with their self-aggrandizement. Not until this is accomplished will we be able to aid you!"

The envoys from Tustan hung their heads sadly at Zakhar Berkut's words.

"Father Zakhar," said they, "knowing our people, you speak as if you did not know exactly what is the matter with them! The daring spirit of their race and their old courage have long been crushed and their will broken. We thank you for your advice and will repeat it to our citizens, but will they follow it? If only you were to come among them and tell them these things yourself!"

"My honorable neighbors! How can my words have any greater weight with them than their own needs, than the dictates of their own common sense? No! If matters have come to such a pass as you describe among them, then even my words can no longer help you, then our communities are indeed lost and our entire Rus is lost!"

The sun had rolled far down from its mid-day position when the people, at the close of the meeting, were returning to their homes in the village and hamlets. Without the usual accompaniment of joyous songs and shouts, but gravely and quietly, walked the young and old alike, their thoughts filled with foreboding. What would the following days bring them?

The envoys from environing communities, inspired and encouraged, went their ways also. Only the town banner, symbol of the solidarity and concord of the populace, waved high and joyously in the breeze, the clear, pale blue of the spring sky shining with glory above it, as if it did not see the fears and tribulations of those bound to the earth.

CHAPTER IV

A WIDE RIVER of conflagration, devastation and death stretched across ancient Rus. The terrible Mongol Horde from the far off steppe lands of Asia had secretly and suddenly swooped down upon the country and for many centuries afterwards undermined it at its very roots causing the disintegration of the fabric of its national life. The first cities to fall were Kiev, Kaniv and Pereyaslav, which were razed to their foundations. The same fate befell thousands upon thousands of other cities, towns and villages. The redoubtable chief commander of the Mongols, Batu-Khan, nicknamed Batiyem, led his horde of one hundred thousand, driving before him about four times as many prisoners, gathered as he moved, who were forced to fight for him in the front lines of battle. He advanced, distending this forcible army along the entire breadth of Rus, treading up to his knees in blood. It was impossible to even attempt a united resistance against this vast army, especially since Rus had become impoverished and divided against itself, torn by civil quarrels arising out of the dissensions among her ruling kings and other self-seeking factions in the various provinces.

Here and there the city dwellers endeavored to stem its progress by closing the gates of their cities, guarded by massive walls and fortifications. The Mongols often lost considerable time in breaking down these ramparts. But feebly held cities were rendered defenseless far more frequently through treason and bribery than mere weakness of their fortifications.

The goal of the dreadful Mongol Horde was the Uhri

(Hungary), then a rich and prosperous country inhabited by a race closely related to the Mongolian whom the great Jinghis Khan had, in an act of self-aggrandizement, ambitiously asked to surrender themselves. However, the Hungarians were unwilling to capitulate and the barbaric Mongol Horde was subsequently ordered to reassert the supremacy of the great Jinghis Khan by attacking in his name and wreaking its vengeance upon them. According to the plans of Batiyem, the Horde was to march to its attack upon Hungary simultaneously from three different directions; from the east by way of Rumania, from the west through Moravia and from the north over the Carpathians. To carry out this purpose, the Horde divided itself into three sections: one under the leadership of Kaydan, advancing through the Bessarabian Steppes into Rumania; the second, under the command of Peta, separated itself from the main Horde at Volynia and advanced across Red Rus to the sources of the Dniester river, in order to ford it easily, and then invaded the Sub-Carpathian region, seeking trails which would lead it over the crest of the Carpathians. Those taken prisoners from this region as well as a few traitorous boyars, led the Mongols along the highway overlooking the bank of the river Strey, to the Tukholian trail and, as the Korchenian messengers had reported, their tents were already gleaming whitely on the wold below Mt. Senevid.

It was twilight. A heavy fog hung over the Sub-Carpathian valley. The wooded hills of the Tukholian region were enveloped in dense mists resembling smoking volcanoes ready to erupt. Foaming at the twists and turns, the Strey river rushed along its rocky bed. The sky was covered with myriad trains of shimmering stars and on earth, in the broad expanse of plain overlooking the Strey river, there began the glimmering of lights at first wide-apart, flickering pusillanimously, then spreading, flaring boldly, until the whole plain as far as eye could see was covered with their blazing glow. Like the gently

rippling waves of a calm sea the lights fluctuated in the darkening expanse above the valley, here bright and enlivened and there vacillating, dying out. These were the campfires of the Mongols.

But away in the distance where the twinkling sea of light ended, burned other fires appallingly wide, which curved around the Mongol encampment in a broad, fiery belt, at times flaming high into the air. Here the foreign marauders plundered, robbed and murdered the people, taking the able-bodied prisoners, burning and demolishing everything they could not carry away with them.

It was almost dusk when along the narrow trail leading towards the crest of the lower Senevid mountain range rode two people on their small but sturdy, sure-footed Carpathian mountain horses.* One of the riders, a man in his prime, was dressed and armed as a warrior, with a helmet, sword, battle-axe, and a lance fastened to the horse's saddle. The coarse, thick, already greying hair falling to his shoulders, showed from beneath the helmet. Even the thick mists, rolling themselves upward from the gorges and ravines completely enveloping the mountain ranges, could not hide the look of deep dissatisfaction and defiant, blind determination evident upon his face which every now and then reflected the wild outbursts of blasphemy and wrath, waxing in bitter mirth as if a palsy with its accompanying queer involuntary flutter of muscles wrenched at his joints followed by a clouding into gloomy meditation, until his fine, sensitive horse also trembled at the man's agitation.

The other rider, a young and beautiful girl was garbed in a tunic of fine, striped linen and a turban of beaver skin, which did not quite succeed in confining the luxuriantly abundant tresses of yellow-gold hair. Suspended across her shoulders was a bow made of the flexible horn of a bison and a "saydak" (pouch) filled with arrows. Her dark, flashing eyes swept the

* Swift for use in war and broad-backed for carrying packs.

panorama, enthralled by the evenly undulating contours of the mountain masses resembling woolly lambs with their covering of dark-green forests, and reveling in the lucent green canopy of rolling downs and wolds.

"What a magnificent view, father!" exclaimed her vibrant, melodious voice when their horses tarried a moment at a narrow bend in the uphill pass over which they were laboriously traveling in order to reach their destination before complete darkness set in. "What a beautiful region!" she repeated, in a lower, more subdued tone, gazing backward, indicating with her glance the vast reaches of the darkening valley.

"And what despicable people inhabit that region!" cut in the the other rider bitterly.

"You shouldn't say that, father!" she defended hotly and at once became embarrassed and noticeably lowering her voice she added, "I don't know, but I personally have found those people very likeable."

"Oh, I know that YOU like them!" cried the other rider reprovingly, "and particularly that you've taken a very great fancy to one of the worst among them, that abominable Berkut! Oh, I realize that you're ready to even forsake your own father for him; that you've already stopped loving me because of him! But what can I do when it seems faithlessness is part of the very nature of daughters! But I warn you girl, beware! Don't trust that glossy exterior! Don't trust a snake no matter how attractive a color it assumes."

"Father, father, what awful ideas you entertain! How cruelly you accuse me! I have confessed to you that I love Maxim and I have vowed before the sun that I will be his. However, I do not belong to him yet, but to you. And even when I am his, I will not stop loving you, never, father, never!"

"Foolish girl, you will not be his, there's no use even thinking about it! Have you forgotten that you are a boyar's daughter and he a peasant lout, a shepherd?"

"No father, that isn't true! He is a prince among princes, a finer, more gallant, more valiant and more honorable man than all the other sons of boyars I've ever seen. Besides father, it's too late now to retract it, I have made the vow and must keep my promise!"

"What matters the oath of a silly, love-blinded girl?"

"Father, I'm not a silly, love-blinded girl! It is not the result of a wild, unthinking impulse, without careful deliberation beforehand nor even without the help of a higher power." These last words were uttered in a reverently hushed tone.

The boyar turned towards her curiously. "What is this I hear? What kind of a higher power prompted you to such crass foolishness?"

"Listen father!" the girl said, turning towards him and slackening the reins on her horse. "The night before we started on the bear hunt, my mother appeared to me in a dream. She looked just as you have always pictured her to me: in a white dress with flowing hair, but her face was rosy with life and bright as if lit by the rays of the sun; her lips curved in a joyous smile and her eyes shone with infinite mother love. She advanced towards me with outstretched arms and embraced me warmly."

"'Peace-Renown, my only child!' said she, in a gentle, loving tone, which I can still hear echoing in my heart, 'Heed what I am going to tell you: the most important moment of your life is approaching, my dearly beloved daughter! Your heart will be stirred and awakened. Listen to the voice of your heart, my daughter and heed its dictates!'"

"'Yes, mother!' I said, trembling with the force of an indescribable emotion."

"'Then I bless your heart!' she replied, vanishing in a whiff of heavenly odorous scent, and I awoke. Truly my heart did speak, father, and I followed its urging. My mother's blessing is upon me!"

"Foolish girl, that was but a dream! What you were thinking of during the day, you dreamed at night! And anyway," the boyar added after a pause, "and anyway, you will never see him again!"

"Never see him?" cried Peace-Renown, alarmed. "Why won't I see him? Is he dead?"

"Even if he lived to be a hundred, you won't ever see him again because we will never return to that region."

"Not return? Why?"

"Because," replied the boyar with a forced casualness, "because those KIND people of yours and first of all, that old devil, the father of your Maxim, passed a unanimous resolution at their town meeting to drive us out of their village, to tear down our house and destroy all signs of our ever having lived there! But just wait, you churlish boors and you will learn with whom you have to deal! Tuhar Wolf is not just a common Tukholian wolf, but knows how to get the best of even the Tukholian bears!"

These words struck like a dagger in Peace-Renown's heart.

"Drive us away, father? Why do they want to drive us out? Oh yes, I think I know, it must be because of that forester whom you ordered so cruelly beaten though I begged you to the point of tears to let him go?"

"How you always do remember the unpleasant things!" broke in Tuhar Wolf splenetically although deep in his heart he was pained at this reproach coming from his own daughter's lips.

"Oh, I know very well that if you had been present at their meeting you would have sided with them against your own father! But what can one do? Your father is old and crabbed, does not know how to make his eyes twinkle or how to sigh. No, you are not satisfied with such a companion! And what does it matter to you that your father has become prematurely grey trying his best to insure your future, while

that newer, more attractive, younger companion is probably right now along with his fellow Tukholians demolishing our house, our last and only stronghold in the world!"

Peace-Renown could not endure her father's bitter reproaches any longer and hot tears of injustice sprang to her eyes. "Rather, it is you who no longer love me!" she sobbed. "I do not know why you should suddenly turn so bitterly against me? I'm sure I have given you no cause for it! You have taught me yourself to live honestly and to tell the truth always. Has telling the truth all at once become so offensive to you?"

The boyar was silent, his head lowered sullenly. They were nearing the crest of the mountain, climbing along the narrow trail furrowed between giant beeches which completely obliterated their view of the sky. The horses, given their reins, themselves sought the path in the pitch darkness, their hoofs clattering hollowly along the sloping rocky trail.

"Since we've been banished from Tukhlia where are we going now?" asked Peace-Renown suddenly wiping away her tears with the back of a sleeve and gazing towards the summit of the steep incline.

"Into the world wherever our eyes lead us," replied the father.

"But you said we were going visiting at another boyar's?"

"That's right. The truth happened to be inconvenient so I lied to you."

"Where are we going now then?"

"Wherever you want. It's immaterial to me. Do you think we should go back to Halich to the king who growing weary of me was so glad to rid himself of us? A foxy individual that one, getting everything he can out of a man, sucking out all his life's strength and then discarding him like the pit of a cherry after all its juice is sucked out. That's just what he did with me. And how glad he was when I asked him for

a grant of Tukholian land! 'Go,' he said to me, 'so that I might never see you here again! Go and fight out your miserable claims with the "smerdi", as long as you don't come back here to me again!' Well then, should we go to him to complain against those Tukholians and ask him to aid us?"

"No, father!" said Peace-Renown. "The king's assistance won't redress the wrong already done, but may make matters worse."

"You see," replied the boyar without heeding the implication in his daughter's last words. "Or perhaps we should return to Tukhlia, to those execrative peasants, to that devil Berkut and ask their forgiveness, submit to their court's punishment, give up our boyarism and beg them to admit us into their community as equals among equals, to live with them as they live, together with their sheep among the oats and manure?"

Peace-Renown's whole sturdy body straightened itself involuntarily and her face began to light up at these words. "What do you think, father, is there a chance that they might take us back?" she asked eagerly.

"Who knows!" replied the boyar cynically. "It all depends upon the gracious goodwill of their reverend boors, the elders, and particularly of the oldest and greatest boor of them all, Zakhar Berkut!"

"Father, why can't we give it a try? The Tukholians dislike to be unjust. Even though they have condemned us, they have done so according to their laws. And perhaps . . . perhaps you father, with some . . . your quick-tempered ways have added on to it all? But if we were to approach them nicely, speak to them gently . . ."

"What in the name of heaven is that?" cried Peace-Renown, suddenly breaking off her train of thought.

Their horses stopped at the summit of the range and before them as if by magic spread the extensive Strey valley, a sea of fire, the sky reflecting its flaming glow. As if up from hell,

terrifying noises arose from the valley: the neighing of horses, the clanging of armor, the shouts of sentries, the hum of voices of black slaves who tended the fires and mingling with them, from the distance, came the heart-rending cries of those being slaughtered, voices of women driven off to slavery or shame, screams of children tossed on pikes, the pitiful pleadings of chained men led to prison, the lowing of cattle and the crackling of burning buildings collapsing, cascades of sparks flying up to the sky like swarms of fireflies. The blood-red glow of the fires revealed down below dotted over the plateau beside the river, innumerable rows of tents, divided by broad lanes, where the bulk of the Mongol garrison lay cantoned. The men appeared to be crawling like ants between these tents gathering about the campfires. Peace-Renown, petrified by the scene, was unable to take her eyes away from it. Even the gloomily morose old boyar seemed unable to move from the spot, losing his eyes in that monstrous bloody sea, nostrils filled with the odor of bitter smoke and blood, listening to the clamor, the screams, groans and triumphant shouts of victory. Even the horses beneath the two riders, sensing their horror, trembled visibly, pricking their ears, pawing at the ground as if afraid to go any further.

"Father, will you please tell me what in God's name is that?" exclaimed Peace-Renown at last.

"Our allies," replied Tuhar Wolf surlily.

"Oh! It must be the Mongols about whom the people spoke with such dread?"

"Yes, it is they!"

"Destroyers of our Rus!"

"Our allies are against the abominable "smerdi" and their independent style of government."

"Father, this means our doom too! When there are no more peasants left who will feed the boyars?"

"Have no fears, my daughter, no storm has yet been strong

enough or deadly enough to destroy the root and seed of that lowly breed."

"But father, the Mongols spare the house and property of no one, not even the king's palaces! You told me once yourself how they crushed the kings to death beneath the boards upon which they sat eating their meals."

"That is all for the good also! Let them crush the kings, those cunning ravens! But they did not crush a single boyar. I repeat once more, they are our allies!"

"But father, would you want to be allied with those barbarians, drunk on the blood of our Ukrainian race?"

"Why should I concern myself who they are and what they're like? Through them lies our only salvation. I don't care if they are Lucifer's helpers in person, if they only aid me!"

Peace-Renown blanched and stared at her father fearfully. The change in him was startling. In the blood-red flare of the bonfires which lighted up the entire region, his face looked fantastic, monstrous wild and the red glow reflected on his helmet turned it into a wreath of blood encasing his face. They both had dismounted from their horses and stood on the steep bank of the mountain, staring at each other.

"How terrible you look in this light, father," whispered Peace-Renown. "Why, I hardly recognize you!"

"Why don't you speak frankly, daughter," replied the father with a wild, mirthless laugh. "I know what you wanted to say! You wanted to say to me, 'I cannot go on with you any further, father, I will leave you, traitor to our country, and I will return to my beloved, faithful Berkut!' Go on, say it, and leave me! I will go where fate awaits me and will to the end of my days continue to strive for your welfare." The bitter, harsh tone of the boyar's reproach softened in the end, grown tremulous with emotion, so that Peace-Renown burst into unrestrained weeping and throwing her arms around her father's neck, sobbed:

"Oh, father! How you rend my heart! Have I hurt you so deeply? I know that you love me! I . . . I . . . will never leave you! I will be your slave, your captive to my dying day, but please don't go there and allow our good name to be forever dishonored!" Still weeping, she knelt at her father's feet and embraced his knees with her arms bathing his hands in her tears. Tuhar Wolf was visibly moved, two tears squeezed themselves out of his old eyes and dropped down upon her. He lifted Peace-Renown to her feet and embraced her fiercely.

"My child," he spoke very gently now, "don't complain so against me! Misfortune has filled my heart with bitterness and my mind with anger. But I know that your heart is of purest gold and that you will not desert me in my days of trial and anxiety. You see, we two are alone in the world with no one to turn to, no one from whom we can expect any help, only ourselves. We have no other choice. We must accept aid from whomever we can get it!"

"Father, father!" cried Peace-Renown through tears. "Your resentment against the Tukholians has blinded you and is compelling you to your own destruction. Suppose we are unfortunate, is that any reason why we should become traitors to our country? No! It is better for us, if we are cast out of society, to die of starvation first!"

"You are too young, my daughter, too zealous without being aware of what starvation and poverty are like. I have experienced them both and want to protect you from such knowledge. Just don't argue with me! Come let's ride to our destination! What is predestined will happen, we cannot outwit our fate!" He jumped upon his horse and spurred him on. It was no use for Peace-Renown to try to stop him now, he was already descending the other side of the mountain. Weeping, she followed after him. In her simple, childish faith, she continued to believe that she would still be able to somehow win her father over and protect him from inviting his own doom

by turning traitor against their country. The deluded girl did not realize how deeply her father had sunk into that abyss already so that in truth for him there was no other way out except to fall deeper, down to its very bottom.

The farther down they descended the thicker the uncanny, murky darkness drew around them and the less they could see except for the flickering of campfires and the vast billowy sea of distant fires of the burning villages and cities. However, the roar and tumult increased to deafening volume. The wreaths of smoke ate into their eyes and took away their breath.

The boyar set his horse in the direction of the first campfire which flared high in the middle of the plain. Here was stationed the Mongolian sentry. Nearing it, they perceived five men dressed in fur coats with the fur side out (in Ukraine it is the custom to wear coats with the fur on the inside), wearing tri-cornered fur turbans, their bows slung over their shoulders and battle-axes in their hands.

Not far from the guards' campfire, Peace-Renown overtook her father and catching hold of his hand, said, "Father, in God's name, I beg of you, turn back from here!"

"Where to?"

"Let's go back to Tukhlia!"

"No. It's too late! We will return there later, but not submissively pleading for their mercy. We will go as guests and I'd like to see whether your Berkut will dare to drive us out then!"

At this juncture the Mongols became aware of the presence of strangers and with savage yells, bows held in readiness, they surrounded them.

"Who goes there?" several called in their own language and in Ukrainian.

"A humble servant of the great Jinghis Khan!" answered Tuhar Wolf in Mongolian.

The Mongol guards gaped at him in astonishment.

"Where are you from, who are you and what is your business here?" asked one, apparently the captain of the guards.

"That is not for your ears," replied the boyar sharply, in Mongolian. "Who leads your army?"

"The grandsons of the great Jinghis Khan, Peta-Behadir and Burunda-Behadir."

"Then go and tell them 'The river Kalka flows over a muddy bed and empties into the Don.' We will await your return here by the fire."

With slavish respect the Mongols backed away from the unknown arrivals who spoke their tongue and in such an authoritative tone, which they were accustomed to hear only from their khans and princes. In a minute the captain of the guards had put another man in his place and leaping upon his horse galloped away to the encampment which was perhaps three-quarters of a mile away from the sentry's campfire.

Tuhar Wolf and Peace-Renown dismounted from their horses which one of the guards took from them, cleaned, watered and tied in a field of rye sown by peasants on the fertile land. The guests drew closer to the campfire warming their hands grown cold from the chill of the spring evening.

Peace-Renown shivered visibly. The bursting gush of hot blood turning to ice as it rushed, left her face white. She did not raise her eyes to her father's face. For the first time hearing the Mongolian tongue from her father's lips and noting with what deference the Mongols obeyed his orders, she began to realize that this was probably not the first time her father had met those dastardly despoilers of her fatherland and to suspect the truth of the gossip she had heard in the court of king Danilo, that Tuhar Wolf, in the battle at Kalka, committed treason by revealing to the Mongols in advance all the secret plans made by the kings for the defense of their country. True, the gossipers had admitted that there was insufficient proof by which to convict him and cause him to be beheaded.

The boyar had stood in the front line of battle and was taken prisoner during the first skirmish. But the fact that he was released quickly and without demand of ransom did strike some of them as very peculiar though the boyar swore the Mongols released him in deference to his valiant heroism. The truth of the matter was never brought to light. However, all at the king's court began to shun Tuhar and even the king himself no longer trusted him as much as he had in the past. In the end, the boyar himself becoming conscious of the change, had asked for a grant of land in the Tukholian region. Without so much as even asking the boyar his reason for withdrawing from Halich to bury himself in the inconceivably wild and dismal woodland wilderness and especially with a pretty daughter, king Danilo yielded him the grant, obviously glad to be rid of him. And when he prepared to leave the city of Halich all the boyars who had been his comrades in battle for many years were very cool in their parting farewells.

All this came back to Peace-Renown's mind in one flash and all that had perplexed and exasperated her in the past, now seemed very clear and understandable. It meant what the gossipers had said was true, her father had been in league with the Mongolian marauders ten years back, therefore, he was already a traitor! Peace-Renown, crushed by the weight of the realization of her father's guilt, bowed her beauteous head in sorrow. Her heart ached terribly. She felt the strong, holy bonds of love and respect for her father which she had carried from her childhood, one by one snap and lie broken. How alone in the world and forsaken she felt now, though her father sat by her, how miserably forlorn and unfortunate though a short while before her father had assured her that he was doing everything he could to insure her welfare and future happiness.

The boyar sat there also none too happily, his heart evidently disturbed by turbulent emotions. Whatever it was he was thinking, his eyes never once left the flickering flames of

the campfire, watching the smouldering logs crackling and spluttering, which appeared to be red-hot columns of iron. Were they the reflective thoughts of a man who had reached his decision or had some dreadful premonition laid its icy hand upon his heart and sealed his lips? The fact remained that he, a deliberate and experienced man, avoided Peace-Renown's eyes and only stared into the red-embered fire watching the burning logs turn into ashes.

"My dear," said he at last softly, without turning his eyes away from the fire.

"Father, why didn't you kill me yesterday?" whispered Peace-Renown, doing her best to hold back the threatening tears. Her voice though low, chilled the boyar's heart. He could not find an answer to her pointed query and was silent, continuing staring into the fire until the guard returned from the encampment.

"The grandsons of the great Jinghis Khan send greetings to their friend and invite him to their tent for a military conference."

"Let us go!" said the boyar, getting up from his place by the fire. Peace-Renown stood up also though her legs obeyed her unwillingly. In a moment the Mongolian guardsmen brought their horses, lifted Peace-Renown up on her horse and surrounding them, led them to the camp.

The Mongolian encampment was arranged in an immense square protected by a deep fosse. There were twelve paths leading to each side of the square, all posted with armed guards. Though no enemy threatened the encampment, it was nevertheless vigilantly guarded according to the strict military rules of the warring Mongols. In contrast, the Christians equaled the Mongolians neither in discipline of their men, aptitude and training of their leaders, nor in the management of huge armies of men.

At the entrance to the entrenchment, there ensued a loud,

harshly shouted conversation between the guards stationed there and those who led the boyar and his daughter, after which they assumed charge of the unfamiliar guests and conducted them to the tents of their chieftains. Though Peace-Renown was quite crushed by the weight of her new knowledge and shame which burned in two bright spots on her girlish cheeks, she had not lost her usual alert audacity nor forgotten her princely training in endurance to the extent that she would neglect to interest herself in the lay-out of the encampment and in all the other new arrangements heretofore unseen by her. She keenly observed the guards who led them. They were short, thick-set and dressed in sheep-skin coats, over which they slung their bows and pouches of arrows on their shoulders, resembling bears or other wild beasts. Beardless, displaying their heavy jowls with the high cheekbones; bright, beady eyes barely visible from between the short-lashed, narrowed eye-lids and small flattened noses made them singularly unattractive. The reflection of the fire-glow cast a ghastly greenish tint upon their yellow skin making them appear even more execrable. Speaking in their throaty, sing-song language, their heads drooping dejectedly, they resembled a pack of wolves out for a kill. Their tents, as Peace-Renown now noticed, were made of waterproof canvas pitched on four poles tied together at the top and covered by big caps of horse-hide to protect them against any leakage during the rain. In front of the tents, set on stakes, were bloody human heads with expressions of pain and horror frozen upon their pale bluish faces lit by the fire-glow into terrifying omnipresent simulacra.

Beads of cold perspiration stood out on Peace-Renown's forehead at this sight. The thought that her head might also soon be sticking up there before the tent of some Mongol warlord did not trouble this courageous girl. On the contrary, she would rather have right then smouldered in one of those huge bonfires and had her head set up as a trophy in front of

the tent of some victor than look with her living eyes upon those heads which had but recently belonged to men who thought, worked and loved. How could she walk across this damnable camp of the brutal conquerors to do the smugly safe and treacherous deed!

"No, no!" she thought. "It shall not happen. I will not go a step farther. I will not be a traitress to my country! I will forsake my father if I cannot persuade him to give up his imprecatory plan."

They stopped before the tent of the chief commander Peta, closest friend of Batiyem. Except for three ensigns fastened to its top, the tent was not distinguishable on the outside from the others around it. However, its interior was handsomely arranged in the customary Asiatic manner. But neither the boyar nor Peace-Renown entered the tent, for they found the Mongol chieftains before their tents sitting by the bonfire where the slaves were roasting two sheep. Perceiving their guests, the chieftains jumped to their feet, grasping their weapons though they made no attempt to move forward from their positions to greet them. Cognizant of the Mongolian practice regarding women, the boyar motioned his daughter to remain where she was while he removed his helmet and slipping his bow from his shoulders approached, bowing low before them and stood there silently, about three paces away from the commanding chieftain Peta, his eyes cast respectfully downward.

"From what king do you bring us your message?" asked Peta.

"I know of no king other than the great Jinghis Khan, the master of all the world!" replied the boyar. This was the usual procedure of formal humiliation in greeting.

Peta then extended his hand to the boyar with ceremonial decorum and also with a show of pleasure.

"You have come at the right time," said Peta, "we were awaiting our ally."

"I realized my obligations," replied Tuhar Wolf. "Only in one way have I disobeyed your customs. I brought my daughter to the encampment."

"Daughter?" queried the astonished Peta. "Were you not aware that our military rules forbid the presence of women in the encampment of warriors?"

"Yes, I know that. But what could I do with her? I have no home, no relatives, no wife! Aside from me and the great Jinghis Khan, she has no other protector! My king was very eager to be rid of me from his city and those execrable louts, my slaves, have rebelled against me."

"Nonetheless, she cannot remain here."

"I beg the grandsons of the great Jinghis Khan to allow her to stay here at least tonight and tomorrow, until I can find some safe place to leave her."

"Our friends shall be welcome guests here," replied Peta graciously then. Turning towards Peace-Renown, he said in his unfamiliar Ukrainian, "Come hither, girl!"

Peace-Renown was alarmed at these words addressed to herself by the fearful Mongol chieftain. Eyes filled with loathing and disdain, she gazed at the wrecker of Rus without making the slightest move to obey him.

"Draw nearer, Peace-Renown," her father ordered. "The great chieftain of the Mongolian armies has received us very kindly."

"I don't want his kindness!" returned Peace-Renown.

"Come here, I command you!" the boyar ordered threateningly. Peace-Renown advanced unwillingly.

Peta surveyed her with his bright, beady eyes. "Beautiful girl! Too bad you cannot stay here! Take example from your father, girl, be true to the great Jinghis Khan. Great fortune will smile upon you. Here girl, let me give you this ring from your king Mestoslav, signifying safety from all harm. Show

it to Mongol soldier . . . they all let you pass, do not harm you."

"And now, let us go to the tent." With these words Peta slipped the big gold signet ring he had taken in the battle at Kalka from the king Mesteslav off his finger and proffered it to Peace-Renown. Set within the ring was a beautiful green beryl with figures carved upon it. Peace-Renown hesitated about accepting the gift from the enemy which perhaps represented the reward for her father's traitorous deed.

"Take it, child, it is the gift of the great descendant of Jinghis Khan," said the boyar. "It's a sign of his gracious beneficence assuring your safety within the encampment."

"We will have to part, my dear. Their military rules forbid women to remain within their entrenchment. But with that ring you will be able to come and go whenever you need to do so."

While Peace-Renown still hesitated an idea suddenly suggested itself to her and she took the ring. Turning her face away demurely, she said briefly, "Thank you!"

Peta ordered that she be taken to another tent which had been hurriedly prepared for her father while Tuhar Wolf remained with the Mongolian commanders to take part in their parley.

The first to speak was Peta, chief commander of the army, a man of about forty and a typical Mongolian, short, with lively, deep-set, piercingly bright little eyes, cool-headed, quick to resolve and quick to strike.

"Sit down, friend," said he to the boyar. "When we tell you that we have been anticipating your arrival, we wish to have it understood that we praise your faithfulness to the great Jinghis Khan. However, you are somewhat tardy. Our army has been here three days already while the great Jinghis Khan, in sending us to the West, to the land of his serfs the Magyars, had warned us against tarrying in any place as long as three

days without sufficient cause. Our brother, Kaydan-Behadir, who marches across Rumanian territory, will probably reach Hungary before us, conquer their capitol and what honor will that bring to the army under my command?"

To this the boyar replied, "I understand perfectly what you mean, Behadir. I'm sorry the faithful servant of the great Jinghis Khan could not arrive at your encampment any sooner, but it was not until yesterday that I heard of your approach. However, having once learned of it, I came at once. Let not this short delay worry you unduly, Behadir. Though our highways are not broad, they are safe. The gate to the kingdom of the Magyars will be opened to you, if you will but knock."

"What highways are there and in whose hands?" questioned Peta briefly.

"One is the Duklan Pass running by the river Scian and then through a defile in the mountains. This trail is comfortable and commodious, trod many a time by Rus and Magyar armies.

"Is it far from here?"

"From here to Peremysl it's a two-day march and from Peremysl to the mountains two more days."

"Who guards it?"

"It is guarded by our king's boyars who have constructed barricades along it. But the boyars are not happy in their service with the king, Danilo Romanowich, therefore they do not guard their forts very zealously. The promise of a small reward will easily persuade them to side with the great Jinghis Khan."

"But why have we never seen any of them in our encampment before?" questioned Peta.

"They have their hands full, great Behadir. The people among whom they live and who must send armed men to guard the forts bear their overlordship unwillingly. The spirit of revolt and discontent is strong among the people. They still

long for the old order of things when there were no kings and no rulers, when each community administered its own government and the people cooperated against a common enemy, electing and deposing their leaders whenever there was need. Within one of these communities, in the quiet solitude of his mountain valley, lives an ancient fellow whom they call a sage. He has been largely responsible for the continuance of the rebellious attitude among the people against the change from the old order of things. The people look upon the boyars as if they were wolves. If they knew that a boyar openly sided with the great Jinghis Khan, they would stone him to death. When at your advance, the boyars surrender themselves by allowing you to take their forts, the people will scatter like chaff before the wind."

Peta listened to the boyar's recitation attentively and a contemptuous smile played upon his thin lips. "What an extraordinary system you have here! The king rebels against his servants, the servants against the king, the king and his servants against the people and the people against all rule! Extraordinary state of affairs! In our country, when the various petty chieftains once planned to rebel against the great Jinghis Khan, he called them all together to his village and surrounding it with his true followers commanded them to fill eighty giant kettles with water and to set them on to heat at huge campfires. When the water began to boil, he ordered two petty chieftains, without making distinction between the guilty and the innocent, thrown into each kettle and boiled until the flesh fell away from their bones. Then he required them to be taken out and sent back to their subject peoples so that they might learn by this example what happens to leaders who fail to obey and respect the great Jinghis Khan. That is exactly the sort of lesson you need here. And we will teach it to your people. Give thanks to your gods that they have sent us to your lands because if it were not for us, you would devour each other

like hungry wolves!"

The boyar's blood congealed listening to this tale but he dared not utter a single word in protest or contradiction to this conception of justice.

"But tell me, where is the other highway?" questioned Peta further.

"The other is the Tukholian Trail," replied the boyar, "though narrower and hillier, it is nearer and absolutely safe. There are no forts on it or any of the king's boyars. The peasants guard it themselves."

"We're not afraid of your peasants!" scoffed Peta.

"There's no need to be afraid of them," put in the boyar. "They are unarmed and unskilled in warfare. I can easily lead your army over that trail myself."

"But perhaps on the Hungarian side these trails are strongly fortified?"

"The Tukholian is not entirely fortified and the Duklanian is fortified but not very effectively."

"Is the Tukholian route to Hungary a very long one?"

"For fully armed men, it will take one day to reach Tukhlia. Spending the night there and starting out at dawn, you will reach the Uhri downs by nightfall."

"And through the Duklan Pass?"

"Counting the time it will take to storm the forts, at least three days."

"Well then, lead us through the Tukholian trail!" replied Peta.

"Allow me to make a suggestion, great Behadir," spoke up one of the Mongol army chieftains, a man of Herculean build and dark olive complexion, dressed in a steppe tiger skin coat which only too obviously indicated his Turkish origin. Burunda-Behadir, rivaling Kaydan in fame, was a passionately vengeful and ruthless warrior, uniting his thirst for blood with the worst forms of evil. The Mongolian military code to

which he invariably adhered left behind his onset, rapine and blood and desolate ruins, blazing homesteads and towns, the greatest number of dead and mutilated and the widest rivers of conflagration. He outdid Peta with his forceful intrepidity. In front of his tent every night there were twice as many fresh human heads as in front of any other warrior's. But Peta did not envy his cool cynicism or his crimes. With his faculty for organizing great masses of men and his capacity for far-reaching combinations in managing huge armies at battle and conducting strategic treks and attacks, in one long series of victories, he felt far superior to Burunda. Therefore he willingly allowed Burunda to take the initiative in the front lines of the most dangerous battles, holding him in check like a heavy iron maul and then letting him go into the battle with his contingent of blood-thirsty Turks at the crucial moment to finish the conquest.

"Of course, brother Burunda!" replied Peta.

"Let me conduct my legion of ten thousand over the Tukholian trail while you take the Duklan pass. When we arrive at the Hungarian side, I will at once strike at the strongest Duklan fortresses, rid them of those who guard it and so make clear the way for you."

Peta stared at Burunda in amazement for this was the first time that killer had uttered words of such clear wisdom. Burunda's plan was a good one, though bold, and he was the right man to carry it out.

"Very well," replied Peta, "We'll do as you say! Choose your men and start your march the first thing in the morning."

"Please permit me to make a suggestion also, great Behadir," said Tuhar Wolf.

"Please do!"

"Since you have decided to send a part of your army along the Tukholian trail and, because of its narrowness even I would not advise sending all of your army through it, then allow me

to go ahead of you with a small contingent to occupy the entrance to the trail before the Tukholian louts learn of our advance and barricade it against us."

"Very well then, go ahead!" said Peta. "When do you want to start?"

"Right away so that I can reach my destination by tomorrow noon."

"In that case, let there be an end to our conference and may the gods favor the success of our armies!" said Peta getting up from his place. The other chieftains arose also. Tuhar Wolf asked Peta to select a division of the bravest men for him and went to his tent to refresh himself and to take leave of his daughter.

In the dark tent, on a couch covered with soft feather beds stolen by the Mongols, sat Peace-Renown, weeping bitterly. Not until now, after all the terrible and unexpected experiences she had been through, did she have time to think everything over and to ruminate upon every phase of the predicament into which her father had maneuvered her. Her plight was indeed perilous, seemingly inescapable. Her father was a traitor, a Mongolian slave; she was in the Mongolian entrenchment, half guest and half captive and withal thoroughly unprotected and alone against a hostile power. Her last support, her ardent belief in the prophetic dream that her love for Maxim was luckily fated and in her mother's blessing, even this now in the cool light of reason began to waver, bleeding her heart. How could she ever face Maxim again? How would she be able to explain to him her willing or unwilling presence in the Mongolian encampment? Like poisonous snakes these questions writhed in her heart and she let the tears flow copiously weeping as if her heart would break.

With soft, hesitant tread, the father approached her and laid his hand upon her shoulder. She did not raise her head or move but kept on weeping.

"Daughter, Peace-Renown," said he, "don't cry, child! "God willing, everything is going to turn out all right!"

Peace-Renown sat there immobile, aloof, uncaring, as if she had not heard.

"Forget that peasant lout! A more fortunate future awaits you. There are great things and great happiness in store for you and he . . . what is there for him? Tomorrow by noon he will have fallen dead by my sword."

"Who?" Peace-Renown questioned, jumping to her feet with a heart-rending cry.

"Who will fall dead?" she repeated. "He, Maxim? Are you leading the Mongol attack upon Tukhlia?"

"No, of course not!" denied the boyar. "Who told you that?"

"You did yourself!" Peace-Renown accused him. "Father, tell me the truth. What are you planning to do? You need not be afraid of me! I can see for myself very well that I cannot marry Maxim! It is not because I am above him in rank that I cannot marry Maxim! Oh no, I am beneath him, I feel infinitely far beneath him because he is an upright and honorable person and I am the daughter of a traitor and perhaps even myself a traitress! So father! You were very clever, so clever that you have outwitted yourself! You claimed that you were striving for my welfare and my future happiness, but you have destroyed my happiness! Now that you've accomplished what you were after, what good is life to me?"

"But tell me, what are you conspiring against him?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing! He is probably right this minute climbing high into some lurking place among the mountain ranges."

"No, no, no, I do not believe you! Tell me what plans you discussed with the Mongols."

"We planned ways and means of reaching the border of Hungary."

"And I suppose you are going to show them the Tukholian trail just to revenge yourself on the Tukholians?"

"Foolish girl! Why should I want to avenge myself on them? They are too inconsequential for my vengeance!"

"I want to direct the Mongols to the Hungarian border for the simple reason that the sooner they leave our Rus the less damage they will leave behind them."

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" cried Peace-Renown. "But on the way they will finish their ruination of what is now still whole. Are you leading them to Tukhlia right now?"

"No, not to Tukhlia. I am taking charge of only a small contingent with which to barricade the entrance to the Tukholian trail."

"The one who holds the gate also owns the house.' Now I understand. You said yourself not long ago, up on top of the mountain that tomorrow Maxim and other Tukholian youths were coming to raze our house? You want to assail them with the aid of these Mongolians!"

The boyar stared at her in astonishment. He began to fear her as if she were a seeress who knew everything he had thought and schemed.

"Daughter, forget about him!" said he. "Only that awaits him which destiny has proscribed for him."

"No, father, you cannot put me off with that! I am going to Tukhlia to warn him and save him from your assault. And if I see that it is necessary to do so, I will take his side and will defend him and myself to my last bit of strength against you, father, and your perfidious allies!"

"You are insane, girl!" exploded the boyar. "Take care you do not infuriate me! This is an important matter!"

"What do I care about your wrath!" retorted Peace-Renown coldly. "What can you do to me that is any worse than you have already done? If you kill me, you will only be doing me a favor, for I do not care to live. Let me go to him!"

"No, stay here, you fool!"

"Yes, stay here until you go and quietly murder the one who is dearer than life to me! Oh no, I will not stay!"

"Stay here! I swear to God that I will not raise a hand against him!"

"Oh, I know very well what that means!" cried Peace-Renown. "But of course, you are a boyar, how would it look for you to fight a mere lout! You will order your vicious friends to aim their poisoned arrows at him!"

"Well, since you are so concerned about it, I give you my word of honor that neither I nor anyone else in my company shall touch him, no matter how hard he fights against us! Surely that ought to be enough!"

Peace-Renown stood there shaken by suppressed emotion and could not utter a word. Was she sure that was enough or not? Oh, how she wished she were a bird and could fly to him and with eager chirpings warn him of the danger! But of course that was an impossibility!

Her father armed himself and before leaving the tent, said in parting, "I'm asking you again and commanding you to stay within the encampment until I return and then you can do whatever you please. Now, good-bye."

He went out and the flap of the tent which served as a door stirred restlessly after him.

With clasped hands, the picture of forlorn wretchedness and abject despair, Peace-Renown stood in the middle of the tent, paralyzed with dread, her head bowed and her lips parted, ears strained for the last sounds of the hoof-beats dying away south of the entrenchment in the direction of Tukhlia to which her father was leading the Mongols in order to revenge himself on the Tukholians.

CHAPTER V

WITH BURDENED HEART Maxim Berkut marched amidst the band of Tukholian youths sent to execute the folk-court's orders. He had grown up with a feeling of deep attachment for his community and an inviolable respect for its laws. Though it was against the dictates of his innermost heart and he would have preferred not to have been chosen by the community to drive from its lands the people's enemy, Tuhar Wolf, still he could not refuse to obey. His heart cried out in revolt against the very thought of meeting with Peace-Renown and her father as enemies, that he might have to defend himself against the boyar's guards and perhaps even against the boyar himself, shedding human blood in the presence of the one for whom he was ready to lay down his life. True, he was firmly resolved to accomplish his purpose as inoffensively as possible without bringing about bloodshed, but who could guarantee him that the boyar, realizing he was in the wrong, would not start trouble first? This was more likely to happen than not.

"But no," thought Maxim, "if he wants my blood, I will not defend myself. I will expose myself willingly, let him kill me! Life he will not permit me, then let him give me death! Farewell, my Tukhlia! Farewell, dear father! Farewell, my brothers and friends, you will never see Maxim again! Hearing of my death, you will grieve and say: 'He died for the good of his people!' But you will never guess that I wanted and purposely sought death!"

Thus thought Maxim advancing toward the group of build-

ings on a knoll overlooking the Opir River. The boyar's house was built of thick, smoothly-planed fir logs, dove-tailed at the corners, similar to those still built in some Ukrainian villages today. Its roof was of heavy wooden shingles covered by a thick coating of red waterproof clay. The windows, as in all houses of that period, were cut out in the southern wall of the house. Instead of panes of glass, cattle bladder membrane was used, stretched out on frames, diffusing a weak yellowish light into the interior. The doors at the front and back of the house led into a long hall whose walls were hung with diverse pieces of armor and weapons, with horns of stags, and bison, with skins of boars, wolves and bears. On either side of the hall were doors leading into spacious, high-ceiling chambers containing ovens of clay and handsomely carved shelves for dishes. One of the rooms was Tuhar Wolf's and on the opposite side of the hall his daughter's. In back were two wide store rooms, one used as a kitchen and the other as servants' quarters. In the boyar's living room the walls were draped with bear skins except by the bed where hung an expensive Persian rug, probably acquired by the boyar while on some military expedition East. There also hung his bows, hunting knives and other weapons. Peace-Renown's room, hung with gleaming soft furs and bedecked with flowers had also its floors covered with deep, soft furs. On the wall opposite the windows, directly over her bed, hung an expensive metallic mirror and beside it a wooden, silver-encrusted "Teorban", a four-stringed musical instrument, the beloved friend and confidante of Peace-Renown's girlish musings and day-dreams.

In a glen not far from the house, were the stables, barns and other farm buildings including a small cottage for the herdsmen. But today, a quiet desolation reigned in the spacious boyar domicile. The boyar and Peace-Renown were away, the servants had been dismissed, the animals ordered driven to herd with a neighboring Korchenian settler; only the archers

and battle-axe men remained behind and they too were melancholy, did not talk, joke or sing, seemingly waiting for a more serious undertaking, preparing themselves by arming with bows and arrows, axes and spears, silently, glumly as if for certain death. What was the meaning of this?

One of them who was standing in the middle of the highway, guarding it, blew a signal upon his horn and the fully armed guard of mercenaries formed themselves in a row before the boyar's house, spears couched and bow strings drawn ready for a fight. Moving along the trail appeared the band of Tukholian youths and seeing that the guards stood in military formation before the boyar's home, they also began to prepare themselves for the battle. Maxim's eyes anxiously searched among the armed company for the boyar and noting that he was not present sighed with relief as if a heavy weight had been lifted off his shoulders and began boldly to arrange his company for the combat. It was not long before the Tukholians with bent bows, gleaming battle-axes and spears approached the boyar's mercenaries and halted within fifty paces of them.

"Boyarin, Tuhar Wolf!" called Maxim.

"The boyar, Tuhar Wolf is not at home!" replied the guards.

"Then you, his faithful followers, heed what we have to tell you in the name of our Tukholian municipality. The community has sent us to escort you, willing or unwilling, out of our district, in accordance with the resolution passed by our folk-court at its last meeting. Will you remove yourselves willingly or not?"

The guards were silent.

"We ask the second time!" said Maxim.

The guards remained silent without relaxing their tensed bows.

"We warn you for the third time!" shouted Maxim.

The guards continued their silence and stood ready for battle. Maxim was puzzled as to why they made no reply but without waiting any further, he commanded his company to release their arrows at the guards. The arrows buzzed like a disturbed nest of bumble bees and stuck in the house over the mercenaries' heads. At that instant the guards, as if at a pre-arranged signal, threw down their weapons and with outstretched arms rushed toward the Tukholian youths.

"Comrades, brothers!" cried they. "Don't be offended by our silence. We promised the boyar that we would meet your approach with armed resistance, but we did not promise to spill our blood and die for his injustice. We were present at your municipal session and we know that the boyar has wronged the community and that the decision of your people's court is only just. Perform the tasks you were assigned to do and if your fathers are willing we will beg them through you to allow us to stay in your community for we do not care to serve the Boyarin any longer."

The joy of the Tukholians and especially of Maxim was immeasurable. They all threw down their weapons and piled them up before the boyar's house, happily relieved, shouting and laughing, embracing their new and unexpected allies with whom only a moment before they had expected to engage in bloody combat. Maxim was the happiest among them all because his fears had not materialized and he was forced to fight neither Peace-Renown's father before her eyes nor did he have to drive away into unknown trails the one with whom he would never wish to part. His joy at this simple effecting of an unpleasant duty for a moment wiped out all other uncertainties.

Accompanied by the boyar's happy guards, the Tukholians entered the house examining its interior curiously but without disturbing anything. Maxim approached Peace-Renown's room with tremulous anticipation expecting to find her either in tears or furious, desiring to cheer and soothe her with words of sin-

cerest sympathy. But Peace-Renown was not in her room and this disturbed Maxim. "Where was she?" he thought, at once determining to ask the guards who were stirring about gaily preparing a banquet to welcome their Tukholian guests in proper brotherly fashion. But the answer given by them did not at all dispel Maxim's uneasiness.

The boyar had left with his daughter early yesterday morning but where had he gone? On what business and when would he return? They did not know. He had commanded them to put up an armed resistance to the Tukholians and whether because he noticed their sullen, unwilling expressions or perhaps because he was pre-occupied with thoughts of other matters, he had cut short his talk with them and ridden away. That was all Maxim could gather from questioning the guards.

It can be readily understood why these facts served to dim his exultation and to throw a shadow of doubt upon the trustworthiness of these new friends. What did it all mean? Was there hidden treachery? Had the boyar planned a trap for them? But Maxim did not wish to reveal his suspicions to all. He whispered warnings to a few of his best friends to be on their guard and himself explored every nook and cranny of the whole house. But he found nothing that would confirm his distrust.

"Fine building!" Maxim remarked to the guards who were now setting the tables, "too bad we shall have to tear it down. Of course we shan't really wreck or destroy it, but will take it apart carefully and pile up the building materials so the boyar will, whenever he desires to do so, be able to cart them away. Therefore his property must be preserved for him in good condition."

In the meantime the guards had brought out from the rooms and placed in the hall long oaken tables spread with fine white table cloths, platters of a variety of delicious food and the favorite fermented honey beverage, "mead".

With merry shouts and festive songs the banquet began. The longer the youths sat at the tables, the more they ate and drank, the more subdued grew their hilarity, seemingly without cause or reason. Although the honey drink foamed in the artistically carved wooden mugs, the broiled meat steamed appetizingly on the wooden platters and sincere friendly conversation hummed around the table, nonetheless, in each heart there seemed to tremble an un-voiced dread, as if they all awaited some bad news. An unexplainable, but to all apparent, constraint hung in the air. Did the walls of the boyar's house cramp the spirits of the free citizens?

One of the boyar's mercenaries stood up and raising his jug full of mead, began to speak: "Brothers, this is a day of great rejoicing for us and no evil son of man. . . ."

But he did not finish. He paled and shuddered. All the banqueters jumped out from their places on the benches behind the tables upsetting them with all the food and drink.

"What is it? What is it?" the cry arose and all made for the doors.

As inconsequential as this sign was, the far-off, hollow clatter of horses' hoofs, what an inconceivable amount of confusion it created in the boyar's house! One ran this way, another that, this one sought this, another that outlet and all of them distracted, disconcerted, stampeded over the wooden jugs, plates of food, the white tablecloths and the overturned oaken tables. Maxim was the first to escape from this melé and glancing about him immediately recognized the seriousness of their predicament. "To arms, brothers, to arms! The Mongols are coming! The Mongols!"

That command was like a thunder clap. They all stood as if paralyzed, the panic and confusion changing to stupefaction but it lasted only an instant. The hoof-beats grew louder and nearer and their imminent danger roused all of them from their torpor of surprise. Here they all were, bold, strong and

young; each one of them in his childhood days had imagined himself on the battlefield, in peril, in bloody combat with the enemy and desired and prayed that his dream might come true and he be given opportunity some day to stand face to face with the dreaded enemy in the defense of his country; here their chance had come, why should they be frightened by it? Only for a moment the terrible news and the name "Mongols" had shocked them after which they became themselves again; each one now held his weapons in his hands and stood assembled with his fellows prepared for the struggle.

"It is most important for us, comrades, to keep within the yard close to the shadow of these walls. Until the enemy succeeds in driving us away from this house and surrounding us out in the open, we have nothing to fear. This house will serve as our fortress."

He placed the archers by twos and threes at the windows and doors, the number depending upon the importance and accessibility of their posts. Some were to remain inside the house to supply the archers with arrows from the boyar's store room. The main body was to stand guard at the entrances, so that whenever it became necessary to do so they could break up the attacking vanguard and drive the Mongols away from the house.

In the meantime the Mongols arrived at the shore of the Opir river, stopped, dismounted from their horses and dividing their regiment into three separate groups, took the three paths leading uphill. It was apparent that someone thoroughly familiar with the region led them, for all these maneuvers took place quickly without irresolution and without undue waste of time. This maneuver also plainly indicated that the Mongols aimed to surround the house from all sides at once.

But who was this, at the head of the central Mongol contingent, advancing so self-assuredly and impudently? The comrades watched hardly believing their own eyes. It was

none other than the owner of the house, the arrogant boyar, Tuhar Wolf.

"Our boyar! Our boyar!" cried some of the guards whose sincerity Maxim had doubted and to whom he had for that reason assigned places among his Tukholians.

"Yes, that is your boyar, all right, an informer, traitor to his fatherland! After this, would you still wish to serve him faithfully?"

"No, no!" cried all the guards together. "Death to the traitor! We will disperse the ranks of the enemy or ourselves perish in the attempt to defend our country!"

Pleased by this revelation, Maxim replied, "Forgive me brothers. For a moment I misjudged you, thinking that perhaps you had intrigued against us with your boyar. But I can see now that I had judged you unfairly. Let us stay together, close to the walls so they cannot surround us in the open and let us try to inflict as many losses among them as possible. The Mongols, as I have heard, are not expert in besieging, especially such a small division of them. We should be entirely successful in repelling their attack."

Poor Maxim, he tried to instill in others the hope which began to wane in himself from the first moment he had seen the Mongols and particularly now when their superior force spread itself before the eyes of the defenders. However, he had the gift of inspiring his men with confidence both in him and their own ability to meet the enemy successfully. His comrades had occasion to witness more than once his keen, inexhaustible faculty of resource, his perception and judgment in situations of great danger. Blindly trusting his words and his commands each took care to guard his place as long as he could assured that the one next him would be equally well protected.

And now the Mongols in a wide circle three rows deep, besieged the boyar's house and held sharp stone-tipped arrows within their bows ready to aim at the brave young men who

guarded it. Their leader had not yet given the signal to shoot. It seemed that he wanted to try persuasion first, for he advanced from the ranks towards the main group of defenders and said: "Unfaithful serfs and louts! It seems that your courage is as illimitable as your stupidity, that you would dare to raise arms against the army of the great Jinghis Khan, today the unquestionable ruler of all Rus? Surrender yourselves to him and he may forgive you. But those who try to resist his force will be unmercifully crushed, like worms beneath wagon wheels."

To this speech Maxim replied brusquely and stoutly, "Boyarin! At a very inopportune time have you called us, the sons of free citizens, serfs! Look at yourself! Perhaps such a name applies to you much more than to us. Up until now you were the slave of a king and today you are the slave of the great Jinghis Khan and probably have lapped the milk spilled on the horse's back of one of his behadirs. If you savored its flavor it does not necessarily prove that we would also be tempted by it. The great force of the powerful Jinghis Khan we do not fear. It may lay us dead but it shan't make us slaves. But of you, Boyarin, all the power of the great Jinghis Khan will make neither a free nor an honorable man."

Caustic and abrupt was Maxim's speech. At another time he would have minded that before him stood the father of Peace-Renown, but now he saw only an enemy, more, a traitor, a man who trampled under his own honor and good name, to whom because of that no respect was due.

His comrades applauded his speech boisterously. The boyar foamed at the mouth from wrath.

"Execrable youth!" cried he. "Just wait and I will show you that you have boasted of your freedom far too soon. This very day the chains shall click about your wrists and ankles. To-day yet, you will crawl in the dust at the feet of the Mongolian army's commander!"

"I will sooner die!" replied Maxim.

"But you will not die!" cried the boyar.

"Hey there followers," he addressed the Mongols in their tongue, "to the attack! Spare none but that one, him we must capture alive!"

He blew the signal to start the battle. Hills and forests reverberated with the thunderous blast. Silence reigned in the boyar's court, but it was an ominous silence. Like the venom of a snake, the Mongols' arrows shot into the boyar's courtyard. Of course the attackers were too far removed as yet to score any direct hits on the defenders, or having hit, to wound them seriously. That was the reason Maxim commanded his friends not to release their shots yet but to save their ammunition for use at closer range when they could inflict more serious damage to the enemy.

To prevent the foe from advancing too rapidly and too close to the house, Maxim, with a select detail of comrades remained in the yard about twenty paces away from the entrance to the house, behind a thick, wooden partition, part of an unfinished fence. This wall of fence was just high enough to hide a man and so the arrows of the Mongols did not reach the youths. That was why their few, though well-aimed shots scored death blows on the Mongols and held them back.

Tuhar Wolf, enraged by these tactics, cried, "Advance upon them!" and hastened to lead the Mongols running towards the fence.

Behind the fence it was as quiet as if all had died there. The Mongols rushed towards it, almost it seemed they would fall upon it when all at once, as if they had sprung out from the ground, rose a row of heads over husky shoulders, and numerous steel shots whistled through the air, finding their marks among the enemy. The stricken screamed in pain. Half of the front line of Mongols dropped like grass mowed

down and the other half retreated without the slightest regard for the boyar's counter commands and curses.

"Hurrah for our youths! Hurrah for Maxim! Hurray, Tukhlia!" cheered the encouraged youths.

But the boyar did not allow this vexation to make him forget himself. He assembled another group of Mongols and gave instructions how they should proceed next time, without dispersing at the first attack by the foe but advancing at all hazards over the bodies of their dead. In the meantime Maxim was also instructing his youths as to the procedure they should follow. With weapons held in readiness they awaited another attack by the Mongols.

"Forward! At them!" shouted the boyar and a hailstorm of arrows was released at the Tukholians. The Mongols once more advanced in formation towards the fence. Again when they neared them, the youths released well-aimed shots and a large number of Mongols fell to the ground screaming with pain. However, the remainder did not retreat but ran on yowling piercingly until they reached the fence.

It was a tense moment. The thin partition of fence separated the two mortal enemies who though very close together still could not reach each other. For a moment complete silence fell over both groups, only a rapid, excited breathing could be heard from both sides of the fence. All at once as if upon a given signal the Mongolian battle-axes thundered against the fence and at the same instant the Tukholian youths, with a powerful lifting, swinging motion, pushed it over onto the Mongols. At the same time that the wall fell, knocking down the front row of Mongols, the youths, armed with pole-axes, jumped upon them cleaving their heads open. Blood spurted, the shouts, screams and groans of the foe echoed around the boyar's domicile and again the group of attackers disbanded leaving their dead and wounded behind them.

A joyous shout of victory from their friends within the

house, greeted the defenders and again the Mongols answered with a hailstrom of shots and the boyar with wrathful cursing. Regretfully, the youths were now forced to give up their knocked-down covert which had served them so well in their first encounter with the Mongols. Without having suffered any loss of men, without wounds, weapons intact and company in order, facing the enemy, the youths retreated to the walls of the boyar's house.

While on the southern side of the court the youths were so fortunately repelling the onsets of the Mongols, there went on a courageous though not so successful battle on the northern side of the yard. The Mongols had assaulted their positions suddenly and made it very hot for them for a while. Here too, the Mongolian arrow shots caused little injury to the defenders. These youths had engaged the Mongols in a skirmish but the dense rain of shots they met forced them to turn back with a loss of three of their wounded whom the Mongols at once chopped to bits.

While awaiting the time of fresh action, Maxim's first thought was to go around to each post and ascertain the effectiveness of their defense position. In a living chain the Mongols encompassed the house and without a let-up rained their arrows upon it. The defenders shot back but not so continuously. To Maxim it was apparent almost at once that the attackers were aiming to drive them inside the house from which it would be difficult to inflict heavy losses upon the Mongols and where it would be an easy matter to be cornered. That meant it was of utmost importance for them to hold to their posts outside the walls of the house. But here they were exposed to the thick-flying shots of the Mongols! To protect themselves against them at least a little, Maxim ordered all the doors and table tops removed and placed before each post for use as shields. From behind the security of these im-

provised stockades, the youths easily shot their arrows at the Mongols.

Maxim went from post to post devising ways and means for more efficient defense and heartening his comrades with words and example. "Let's hold our own, comrades!" said he. "The Tukholians will soon hear the noise of battle or someone may chance by and see what is going on here and we will be sent assistance."

The battle had raged for half an hour. The Mongols shot and swore wrathfully at the "Rus dogs" not so much because they would not surrender but because they dared to so boldly and fortunately defend themselves.

Tuhar Wolf now conferred with the Mongolian leaders to determine upon some plan by which to make a resolute, finishing attack.

"Let us rush in upon them!" said one.

"No, an onrush is too hard, let's keep on shooting until we shoot them all down!" said another.

"Wait," said Tuhar Wolf, "there will be a time for both. Just now we are most concerned with how to drive them away from their lesser posts. My advice is to gather our center as if for a charge to distract their attention and at the same time let the flanks converge on both sides of the yard to the walls of the unguarded additions. Those walls are without windows but when our men take their stand there, they will nonetheless be able to inflict a lot of damage on the enemy."

The officers readily agreed to this suggestion for they were entirely unfamiliar with any tactics other than those used in ordinary battle in the open fields and consequently were incapable of handling such situations.

The Mongolian force stood at attention, in battle formation. Weapons clanged, swords and battle-axes flashed in the sun. Firmly and boldly the Tukholian youths also grasped their weapons, making ready for a hard struggle. While the

Mongolians counseled on how best to make a renewed attack, Maxim had not been day-dreaming either. A fortunate idea had occurred to him. In the wooden-shingled roof of the boyar's house on all four sides were cut out tiny windows. At each of these vantage points Maxim placed two of his weaker men to watch the maneuvers of the enemy and to try to inflict with shots of arrows or stones all the injury possible from these positions. While one stayed at his post by the window the other handed him ammunition or whatever was needed and kept all their comrades down below informed as to the enemy's progress.

The horns sounded and the Mongols whooped wildly throwing themselves into the assault upon their adversaries. They ran quickly about half the distance between them, halted and aimed their shots at the defenders. When the besieged, who were prepared to battle resolutely to the finish, greeted them with a hailstorm of shots inflicting wounds and causing many losses, the whole Mongolian line retreated at once.

The youths greeted this retreat with loud derisive laughter. "See, Boyarin!" shouted Maxim, "The powerful force of the great Jinghis Khan evidently has the heart of a rabbit, it takes a swift run forward and then leaps back. Isn't it a shame for you, a distinguished old hero, to command such dispirited, fearful creatures who are brave like sheep, only in a crowd, and none stands alone even for half a man?"

The boyar made no answer to this mockery, he saw very plainly that Maxim laughed too soon. And Maxim himself was rapidly made aware of his mistake.

The triumphant shouts of the Mongols echoed right behind the walls of the additions on the right and left side of the house at once. At the same time that the main body of Mongols had been feigning an attack, they had crept up to these walls. Because the walls were windowless and doorless the youths had not guarded them so carefully. Of course the young men at

their posts in the attic had seen the Mongols advancing from both sides and a few well-aimed shots fell from the windows upon them but that did not check the Mongols because the eaves of the house shielded them from most of the danger of shots from above.

Maxim paled when he heard the screams of the captured nearby and learned from a guard sent down from the roof what they meant. "We are lost!" he thought. "To defend ourselves now is impossible. Now we must fight not for our lives, but to the death."

Tuhar Wolf rejoiced noisily when he saw how well his plan had worked.

"How do you like that, peasants?" he roared. "We'll see how long your arrogance will last now. See, my soldiers are right under your walls."

"Set the walls on fire and they'll soon be smoked out of that nest. Once out in the open we'll play cat and mouse with them!"

Maxim realized that matters had come to a crucial pass. He called together all his friends for it was no use under the circumstances to try to hold their various posts since the Mongols were already building a fire under the walls of the house.

"Brothers," said he. "It seems that we shall have to die. There is little hope for a rescue now and as you already know but one fate awaits those who fall into the hands of the Mongols. They will not show mercy to anyone who falls into their hands as they did not spare our wounded comrades. If we are to die, then let's die like men with weapons in our hands!"

"What do you think, should we stay here and defend ourselves to the last at least partially protected by shielding walls or would you rather we made one last concerted effort to break up the ranks of the Mongols?"

"Yes, yes, let's charge the Mongols!" answered all his com-

rades. "We are not foxes whom a hunter has to smoke out of their burrow."

"Very well! If that is what you want," replied Maxim, form yourselves into three rows; cast your bows and arrows aside and take up your pole-axes, battle-axes and hunting knives and follow me! Remember, look not back in this battle. Fight to the death. Hit hard. Forward like men!"

Like a huge stone boulder released from a giant engine, against the walls of a fortress, the youths hurled themselves upon the Mongolian columns. Before they reached the Mongols, they were met by a shower of arrows. However, these arrows took no toll of them for their front line carried before it as a shield, the top of a table stuck on two spears, which stopped the arrow shots. When they neared the Mongols, the first row dropped its shield and the whole troop fought desperately with the enemy. At first the Mongols were disconcerted, confused and started to draw back but Tuhar Wolf was there leading them and encircled the youths with the whole company of Mongols like hunters surrounding their quarry with dogs.

In a short time the scene became one of un pitying slaughter. The valiant youths swung their axes cutting down the Mongols by tens, but Tuhar Wolf continued to send in reserves against them. Blood spurted from the dead and wounded; the wails and screams of the dying, the ferocious howls and yells of the killers, all these terrible sounds rose and fell from edge to edge of the cliffs like deep bursts of thunder, combining into a discord which rent the heart and pierced the ears, detonating into the welkin beneath the smiling, golden sun, within the dense, murky forests of spruce trees and in the gorges on whose bottoms hurtled the foaming icy mountain torrents.

"To the right, comrades! All together, forward!" shouted Maxim, fending off with his broad-axe three Mongols at once who were doing their best to knock the weapons from his

hands. His warriors followed him with desperate venom. On the right, where it was easier, despite the superior and growing force of the enemy, the line of Mongols was weakest and their own position of defense the strongest. They turned, made a furious charge and put the flanks before them to flight.

"After them, drive them before you!" Maxim's shouted encouragement continued as he rushed forward with his bloody pole-axe to strike the rear of the Mongols. His comrades pressed after him and the retreat of the Mongols soon turned into a panicky, headlong dash, the youths pursuing, hewing them down one after the other. Before them was an open plain and a short distance from it a dusky, fragrant forest. If only they could reach its protection, then no Mongolian army no matter how great could best them there.

"Forward, comrades, forward, towards the woods!" shouted Maxim and breathlessly, silently, bloody and terrible, like savage beasts the youths drove before them the retreating Mongols in the direction of the forest.

Tuhar Wolf, noting their goal, roared with laughter. "Good-bye! Pleasant journey!" he shouted after the youths. "We will see you later!"

Along the plain overlooking the Opir river rolled three clouds of dust following three groups of people running after each other. The first group were the panic-stricken Mongols, in hot pursuit came the Tukholian youths under the leadership of Maxim and following them ran the main Mongolian force led by Tuhar Wolf. Another contingent of Mongols, which soon disappeared from view without being noticed by the youths in the heat of their mad pursuit, had been sent out earlier by Tuhar Wolf, over the hill, to overtake the youths.

Suddenly the fleeing Mongols halted. Before them appeared an unexpected barrier, a deep defile carved out of the precipitous, solid rock, the beginning of the Tukholian trail. In that place the walls were of sheerest smoothness, almost two

rods deep, so that to climb down them was impossible and to jump hazardous, especially for the first row which would naturally expect that those following them would jump down on top of them.

Roused by the fear of imminent death which even to the most easily frightened brings courage, the Mongols stopped, turned and faced their adversaries. At that precise moment a ray of hope flashed through them for they perceived, following their assailants, the approaching company of friends. Their hands involuntarily seized upon their weapons. But this sudden spurt of courage was not sufficient to save them. Like the raging fury of a storm the Tukholian youths, with fierce cries, plied axe and javelin, pushing them back to the ledge of the abyss. With cries of horror those in back toppled over to the bottom of the pass, hitting it with a dreadful thud while those in front were hewed by the swords and battle-axes of the Tukholians. Now the youths themselves stood on the rim of the sheer wall of rock of the pass and trembled with terror. Tuhar Wolf with his Mongols approached them from the rear. In front of them was the gorge. What should they do? A moment of deliberation was enough for Maxim. The sight of the injured Mongols lying at the bottom of the ravine gave him an idea.

"Those in the last row, face the approaching Mongols and try to stop their onrush. Those in front, throw the corpses of the Mongols down before you and jump on top of them!"

"Hurray!" cheered the youths exultantly, accomplishing his command. The still-warm bodies of the Mongols thudded hollowly at the bottom of the gorge and a ray of hope for their safety lighted up the faces of the youths. At this juncture the pursuing Mongols caught up with them, Tuhar Wolf in the lead.

"Now!" he shouted. "This time you shan't escape me!" and with his heavy battle-axe he knocked down the first of the

defenders who stood in his path and who only yesterday had been his most faithful archer. He emitted a deathly moan and fell at the feet of the boyar. His comrade swung a battle-axe towards Tuhar to avenge his friend's death and at the same moment was upraised from both sides by Mongolian lances. The entire rear line of youths fell after a short battle. These were the weakest, wounded in the last battle, who in their pursuit of the Mongols, had lagged behind the others. Nonetheless, they rallied to the fatal struggle and managed to halt the advance of the Mongols if only for a few brief moments while their more fortunate comrades got safely to the bottom of the defile.

"Get into formation!" commanded Maxim, "in single file along the wall of the pass. If they want to pursue us here we'll give them a bath of death."

"The first row, jump in after them!" commanded Tuhar Wolf without weighing the advisability of such a move. The first row of Mongols jumped but none of them got up alive, in fact, many did not even reach bottom alive, for they were met in the air by the pole-axes of the youths.

"Hurray!" shouted the youths. "Come on, the second row jump down also."

But the second row standing on the edge of the gorge was not in any hurry to jump. Tuhar Wolf realized his error and hastily ordered a strong division to march further down, to the opening of the canyon in order to close it off.

"Now we'll catch our birds in the cage," he rejoiced. "There are my hunters yonder, coming up! Come men, to the attack!"

The savage shouts of the Mongols echoed in the canyon at Tuhar Wolf's feet. This was the contingent, sent out by him earlier to overtake the enemy, which now rushed like a torrent into the entrance of the pass towards the Tukholians.

"Let's make our escape through the lower end of the pass!"

cried the youths, but just one glance in that direction convinced them that they might as well abandon all hope of being saved. The entrance to the pass was darkened by another contingent of Mongols advancing towards them to close off all possible chances of escape from the rocky cage.

"Our death is inevitable," said Maxim, wiping his bloody battle-axe in the shaggy coat of a dead Mongol lying at his feet. "Comrades, let us put up a stiff fight, boldly, to the last of the battle."

Though in number they were insufficient, they marched courageously forward to meet the invaders calling up their remaining strength for the encounter with the Mongols without regard for the vastly superior and growing force of the enemy. They rushed straight at the regiment of Mongols and once more confused them inflicting heavy losses upon them. But the whole force of the enemy moved against them directly, backing them down into the depths of the pass, breaking up their formation. With heroic resistance the youths fell one after the other, like grass when scythes are cutting, only Maxim, though he fought like a lion, did not sustain a single wound. The Mongols avoided him or if they crowded him it was only with the intention of knocking the weapons out of his grasp and taking him prisoner as Tuhar Wolf had ordered them to do.

Struck in the rear and the flank by fresh Mongol warriors, they were in a hopeless position, forced within that inescapable stone cage to the wall, with only as much free space before them as they could hold by their swords and pole-axes. Since they did not let their weapons out of their hands their arms began to weaken while the Mongolian reinforcements rolled in like a flood upon them.

In that serious and dreadful period when all feared destruction, some, losing all hope and seeing the futility of further defending themselves threw themselves blindly into the thick of the fight and in one moment perished under the broad-axes.

Others, whispering a prayer, pressed themselves against the wall as if it could protect them, comfort them, and still others, though they fronted their foes, they did so unconsciously, mechanically swinging their pole-axes, the death blows of the Mongols finding them already dead, unfeeling, their souls having long fled. Only a small group of them, altogether five, surrounding Maxim, held on like a crag of rock on the summit of a mountain in a hurricane. This group, standing on a pile of dead had repelled the ceaseless onslaughts of the Mongols, their swords, hunting knives and axes dulled, their clothing soaked, their faces and hands covered with blood.

Confidently and loudly Maxim's voice rose from time to time, heartening his comrades to continue defending themselves. The awe of the moment filled every man. Each wished to surpass every other in valor. Tuhar Wolf, watching from his height, quivered from excitement and rage, marvelling at the great skill and endurance of the valiant youth who swept down almost singly on the foe, as a storm wind.

"Ye gods, what a heroic youth!" said he to himself. "I'm not at all surprised that he has bewitched my daughter. He could charm even me with his princely character!" And then turning to the remaining Mongols who stood on the rim of the gorge, he shouted, "Forward, jump down on them! Let there be a finish to this massacre. Only that one," pointing to Maxim, "do not harm!"

All together, like an avalanche, the Mongols jumped down on the still unconquered handful of heroes throwing them to the ground. Once more the maddened yells of the Mongols echoed, once more they rushed on them savagely and fought desperately with the Tukholians but not for long. Each hero was attacked by a whole troop of Mongols and each lost his head. Only Maxim stood like an oaken monarch in the middle of a plain. He cleaved in two the Mongol who had jumped upon him and swung himself towards another when at that

precise moment a powerful arm with steel-like grip grasped him by the neck from behind and flung him heavily to the ground. Over Maxim, reddened with arrogant anger and the strain, bent the face of Tuhar Wolf. "Now lout!" cried the boyar, smirking, "you see, I know how to keep my word? Come followers, fasten the iron chains upon him!"

"Though in chains, I shall still remain a free man. These chains bind but my hands and ankles, yours bind your soul!" remarked Maxim.

The boyar laughed uproariously at this and left to set about reorganizing the Mongolians whose numbers had become greatly depleted in the bloody battle. Tuhar Wolf planned to march back to his house and return to the Mongolian encampment with the greater number of the remaining Mongols and the chained Maxim. The rest he ordered to encircle and guard the entrance to the pass strewn with corpses.

"Those cursed peasants!" complained the boyar, counting his losses. "What a lot of men they've incapacitated! Well, the devil take the Mongols, I'm not sorry for them. If over their dead bodies lies the path to the power I seek, I would turn against them also. But this barbarian, this Maxim, he's some warrior! Who knows perhaps he too could serve my purpose? I must get all I can out of him while I still have him in my hands. He must be my guide through the mountains, for the devil only knows what their trail is really like and whether there are any misleading cross-trails upon it! Now while he's still in my hands, I must try to win him over, use a little persuasion! who knows to what he may yet be prevailed upon to agree?"

In the meantime the Mongols were saddling their horses preparatory to leaving. Maxim, chained at the wrists and ankles, covered with blood, hatless, his clothing torn, sat numbly on a stone beside a stream, his teeth clenched, his heart full of torment. Before him on the field and in the pass, lay piles of

the shattered, blood-smearred bodies of his comrades and foes, not yet entirely cold. How fortunate those corpses seemed to him! They rested so peacefully on their bloody beds, without anger, without suffering or animosity. They only seemed to mock at chains and the power of the great Jinghis Khan, while a bit of iron became in the hands of the self-willed and insolent barbarians an instrument of torture for their bloody revenge upon him. How lucky were those dead! Although they were crippled, still they resembled men, while these chains had in one moment turned him into something less than even a beast, a slave!

“Oh, just Sun-God!” cried Maxim in a rising of despair, “It cannot be your will that I should die in chains? You could not have so often greeted my more joyous days in the past with your bright smiles, just so you could mock my boundless woe today?”

“Oh, Sun, surely you could not have stopped being a benevolent God to our Tukhlia and become the protector of those savage barbarians?”

But the sun laughed! With brilliant hot rays it sparkled in the glistening puddles of blood, kissing the bluish lips, crushed skulls and wounds of the dead from which oozed the shattered brains and protruded the warm human guts. And with the same violet hot rays it poured itself into the green forests, upon the pagan-hued flowers and unto upland downs which bathed themselves in the clear, azure ether.

The sun laughed and with its god-like smiles wounded even more deeply Maxim's torn heart.

CHAPTER VI

ZAKHAR BERKUT had had an anomalous dream. It seemed to him in the dream that it was the anniversary of their festive holiday, The Sentinel. The whole community was gathered about the stone guard at the narrows of the entrance to the Tukholian Trail. The maidens carried wreaths, the youths musical instruments and all were attired in fresh, gala garments. And as befits the oldest member of the community, he was the first to approach the sacred stone, supplicating it with prayer.

A secret, disquieting dread seemed to have taken possession of his heart as he prayed, distressing him to the very depths of his soul. What exactly that fear was he could not explain. He prayed fervently, adding several words and phrases to the old, time-established litany, a new more impassioned prayer flowed from his lips. The people of the community were stirred by it and fell upon their faces while he did the same.

But the words did not stop flowing. It grew darker, the heavens became overcast with threatening purple clouds. It thundered and the lightning flashed across the sky, blinding their eyes; the ground shook under them and at the same time the sacred stone lurched forward from its place and with a terrible crash came falling down upon him.

"What could such a dream mean?" Zakhar kept asking himself over and over again. "Was it a good omen or bad?" But he could find no answer except that the dream had left in its wake an oppressive sense of apprehension which clouded Zakhar Berkut's fine forehead with a somber expression.

It was not long before the cause for this feeling of foreboding manifested itself. Immediately after noon alarming and unexpected tidings were brought into Tukhlia. The shepherds from neighboring downs ran breathlessly into the village announcing that they had witnessed a battle in progress before the boyar's house with a regiment of unfamiliar dark-skinned people and had heard strange blood-curdling yells.

Every Tukholian youth who could carry a weapon armed himself with whatever came to hand, rushed to the scene of the struggle and halted some distance away upon seeing the battlefield strewn with corpses and covered with blood and the boyar's house surrounded by a swarm of Mongols. There was not the least doubt in their minds but that all the youths sent to demolish the boyar's house had perished in defeat in the unequal conflict with the foreign assailants. Not knowing what to do, the Tukholian young men returned to the village spreading their shocking news on the way.

Listening to them old Zakhar shuddered and bitter tears rolled down his old face. "This must be the answer. The prophesy of my dream has been revealed!" he whispered. "My Maxim laid down his life in defence of his village. And that is how it should be! Everyone dies once, but the privilege of dying honorably, heroically, does not come to everyone. I should not grieve but rejoice in his fate!"

Thus old Zakhar tried to comfort himself but his heart ached intolerably. He loved his youngest son profoundly, with all the vast power of his great soul. But he bore it stoically. The community called to him, needed his counsel and wisdom.

A multitude of people, young and old, thronged to the narrows of the Tukholian Trail, a short distance beyond which their mortal enemy maintained its position.

For the first time in the history of the Tukholian settlement, the folk-mote gathered without the customary ritual, the summoning of the people by the town criers carrying the

district banner, but amid the clanging of axes, scythes and uproar of the populace roused to take arms. Confusedly, the elders mingled with the youths, the armed with the unarmed, even the women moved about restlessly, seeking more news concerning the foe or noisily bewailing their fallen sons.

How should they try to defend themselves? How should they start? What should they do? buzzed the questions among the populace. One thought, however, was uppermost: The entire population must stand before the entrance to the trail and defend itself against the Mongols to the last drop of its blood. The youth, especially, favored immediate action.

"We want to lay down our lives in the defence of our country as our brothers did!" they vociferated. "Only over our dead bodies shall the foe enter our Tukholian valley!"

"Erect stockades at the entrance to the trail, first, and then assail the Mongols from behind them!" advised the more thoughtful elders.

When the hubbub had somewhat subsided and order was secured, Zakhar Berkut spoke: "Although it is a military matter and not in my line, nor for an old man like me to deliberate upon since I can take no part in it, nevertheless, I still think that we will be deserving little praise, if we rout the Mongols just from our village alone, especially when we take into account the fact that it won't be so very hard for us to do this. Our sons died by their hands. Their blood has been spilled over our land and it is calling upon us to have vengeance. Will we revenge ourselves upon our enemies, wreckers and ravagers of our country when we merely rebuff them from our village? No, repulsed from our village, they will swoop down doubly wrathful upon other communities. Not just to repel then, but to defeat them, should be our aim!"

The folk-mote listened attentively, respectfully, to the words of their old sage and the youth, always eager for drastic action, was ready to agree to this counsel at once, considering

all discussion ended, although it had no idea how all this was to be accomplished. But several voices from among the elders rose in disapproval.

"It is with no wish to offend, you, father Zakhar, or to disparage your respectful old age, that I disagree with you," spoke up one townsman. "But your advice though wise and holding promises of glory, is not prudent for us to follow. Our forces are too small compared to the enormity of the Mongolian. We have not yet received aid from any other of the mountain top communities and even if it came in time, our numbers still would not suffice to even surround the Mongolian army, let alone defeat it in an open battle. And how otherwise are we to rout them? No, no! Our army is too inadequate! We will be lucky if we can defend our village and turn them away from our trail, but we shouldn't entertain any false hopes of disbanding them!"

Though Zakhar was hurt he was ready to discard his youthfully zealous ideas in favor of the opinion of the majority and would have acknowledged the validity of their arguments when two unexpected occurrences boosted the spirit of the Tukholian townspeople and perceptibly changed the entire aspect of their decision on the problem.

From the other end of the valley, marched along the road, one after the other, accompanied by loud blasts of trumpets and wails of trembitas, three companies of armed youths from three different townships. Each town carried its ensign before it and their stout-hearted battle songs echoed far over the hills. This was the vanguard of aid promised the Tukholians from the mountain crest communities. Man after man, like a forest of full-grown maples, stood all three proud companies, in long, straight rows before the folk-mote and dipped their banners before the villagers in salute. It was a pleasure to gaze at the healthy red cheeks, warmed by manful courage and pride in the fact that the time had come for them to shield with their broad

chests all that they held dearest on earth, that upon the might of their armed resistance everything depended, and that they held upon their shoulders the greatest responsibility of manhood.

An uproarious shout of welcome greeted their approach. Only the mothers who had just lost their sons wept piteously at sight of the country's finest flower of manhood, which probably by tomorrow would also lie slain as those of their dear ones who had fallen today, their corpses mercilessly crushed by the *melée*.

An unbearable ache seized old Zakhar Berkut's heart also when he gazed upon those youths and thought how proudly Maxim would have stood out from among them. But what was the use in thinking! One cannot return the dead and only those who are alive can think living thoughts and perform living deeds.

Their elation had not yet subsided at the arrival of the needed assistance, the folk-mote had not had time yet to get started on any discussion or deliberation when there appeared from the forest depths on a sunny glade above the Tukholian narrows, a new and unexpected host. Lying close and holding on to his neck, in order to more swiftly and safely ride through the forest without getting caught on overhanging branches, rode some person towards them as swiftly as the foaming horse, bleeding from numerous cuts torn by branches and thorns, could carry him. Who this could be it was hard to guess at that distance. The person was dressed in a Mongolian sheepskin coat, with the fur side turned out, and wore a handsome beaver-skin turban. The youths took the rider to be a Mongolian scout and advanced towards him with drawn bows. But having left the forest and neared the bank of the precipitous bluff from which it was necessary to climb down into the Tukholian valley, the supposed Mongol dismounted from the horse, removed his sheepskin coat and revealed himself to all the as-

tounded on-lookers as a woman, dressed in a fine, silk-striped, white linen coat with a bow slung over her shoulder and the gleaming blade of a battle-axe tucked neatly behind her belt.

"It's Peace-Renown, the daughter of our boyar!" exclaimed the Tukholian youths unable to take their eyes off the beautiful, audacious girl. It was plain she hardly noticed them, but leaving her horse where she had dismounted, began to search about for a path by which to descend into the valley. Quickly her keen eyes discovered a passage downward almost entirely hidden by the wide pointed shoots of ferns and brambles of raspberry bushes. With confident step, as if she had been accustomed to it all her life, she let herself down this path into the valley and approached the gathering.

"Good day, estimable citizens," she said, coloring slightly. "I hurried, to inform you that the Mongols are coming and will be here before nightfall, so that you might prepare yourselves to meet them."

"We know all about the Mongols," the voices rose from the assemblage. "That is no news to us." The voices were harsh, unfriendly towards the daughter of the despicable boyar because of whom so many of their youths had perished. But she was not offended by their stern reprimand although she was fully conscious of it.

"It is all the better for me! Then you are already prepared," she replied. "And now please direct me to Zakhar Berkut."

"Here I am, young woman," said old Zakhar, coming towards her. So great was the reverence he had won in her heart that Peace-Renown gazed upon him with deference and esteem for some time. "Let me inform you, venerable father," she spoke in a voice tremulous with uncontrollable emotion, "first of all, that your son is alive and well. . . ."

"My son!" cried Zakhar, "Alive and well! Oh, thank God! Where is he? What is he doing?"

"But do not be shocked, father, by the news which I am about to reveal to you. Your son is in the Mongolian encampment . . . a prisoner!"

"A prisoner?" he exclaimed as if struck by a thunderbolt. "No! That can't be true! My son would first be rent to shreds before he would allow himself to be taken prisoner. It can't be true! You are trying to deceive me, wicked girl!"

"No, father, I am not deceiving you, it's really so. I have come straight from the Mongolian camp. I saw him there and talked with him. They overpowered him by trickery and fastened chains about his ankles and wrists. Himself unhurt, he was covered with the blood of foes. No, father, your son has brought no dishonor upon your name!"

"What did he say to you?"

"He told me to go to you father, to cheer and comfort you in your grief at his loss and to become your daughter, your ward, because I, father," here her voice broke, "I am an orphan, I have no father!"

"No father? Why, has Tuhar Wolf died?"

"No, Tuhar Wolf is alive, but Tuhar Wolf has stopped being my father since he . . . turned informer . . . and became . . . a Mongolian slave."

"That was to be expected," replied Zakhar sullenly.

"That is why I cannot consider him as a father any longer, because I do not want to be a traitress. Father Berkut be my protector! Take me for your own! Your unfortunate son implores you through my lips."

"My son, my unfortunate son!" groaned Zakhar Berkut, avoiding Peace-Renown's eyes. "Who can ever compensate me for his loss?"

"Fear not, father, he may not be killed, we may yet succeed in freeing him. Please listen to the message he asked me to bring to you."

"Go ahead speak!" said Zakhar, glancing at her briefly.

"He advised the Tukholians not to try to stop the Mongols at the entrance to the valley, but to let them in. Here they could be encircled and killed off to the last one. If that proves not feasible, then starve them to death. Barricades must be constructed first on the trail by the waterfall and everything of value carried out of the village, all the stores of grain, bread, all the cattle, and then the Mongols closed in from all sides. Here or nowhere else will you defeat them, Maxim said."

The assembled listened heedfully to Peace-Renown's speech. A deep silence fell over them all when she stopped speaking. Only Zakhar, proudly and radiantly, straightened himself and approached Peace-Renown with outstretched arms.

"My daughter," he said. "Now, I can see that you are worthy of being a daughter to Zakhar Berkut. These are truly the words of my son . . . from them flows his intrepid spirit! With these words you have re-awakened my paternal instinct. Now it is easier for me to bear the loss of my son when heaven has sent such a daughter as you to take his place!"

Laughing and weeping with joy, she flew to his embrace. "You mustn't say that, father!" she said. "Your son will not be lost, but will return to you safely. He will return here this very night with the Mongol Horde and if with God's help we defeat it, then we will also release him."

At that moment from the entrance to the valley came the shouts of the Tukholian guards, "The Mongols are coming! The Mongols!" swiftly running towards the townspeople at folk-mote to warn them that the Mongol Horde with a countless army could be seen approaching along the Opir river.

They were forced to make decisions without delay as to the manner in which they would defend themselves. Zakhar Berkut repeated the counsel of his son to let the Mongols into the valley and there surround them and kill them off or starve them to death.

This time there were no dissenting voices raised against the

scheme and promptly the people dispersed homeward to gather all their possessions and wealth for concealment in the forests. The youths from the neighboring villages who had come to lend their assistance swiftly hastened to the upper part of the valley by the waterfall, where they busied themselves constructing the stockades to barricade the pass and prevent the Mongols from getting through.

There was a great commotion in the village. Shouts, commands and questions, the bellowing of oxen and continuous creaking of two-wheeled carts resounded from all directions, reverberating and re-echoing among the mountain tops. Sorrowfully the Tukholians bade farewell to their cottages, yards, homesteads, and green fields which this very day were to be ruined and trampled under the terrible Mongol inundation. The mothers carried their tearful, frightened youngsters and the fathers drove the beasts, the ox carts loaded with household goods, including bags of bread and clothing.

Dust rose in huge, billowy clouds over the village, only the silvery stream foamed and burred as usual. The archaic giant Sentinel at the narrows of the entrance to the valley stood desolate, mourning the departure of his children from the beautiful valley, leaning over the entrance as if to bar the way with his giant stone form.

The hoary linden likewise grieved after them, standing forlorn in the middle of the meeting place outside the village, and the roaring cataract reflecting the crimson glow of the setting sun like a liquid column of blood hung disconsolately over the deserted Tukholian basin.

The village was empty, the houses enveloped in the long, gloomy shadows of evening. The clouds of dust had settled on the roadways and the calls and shouts were stilled as if a primeval desolation had devoured all life within the valley. The sun sank behind the Tukholian hills, cuddling into its blanket of rosy clouds. The dark purple spruce forests around

Tukhlia whispered softly, secretively, as if communicating to each other some portent of evil. Even the earth for some reason quaked and groaned. The atmosphere though pure and brisk, quivered, set in motion by a qualmish hum, weird enough to make even the bravest shudder. Far away in the distant forests in the deep dark gorges and ravines within the impenetrable and impassable primeval fastnesses, yowled the wolves, barked the foxes in their dissonant tones, lowed the stags and roared the bison.

Within the village it was quiet and dead; in the sky, bright and clear. But no! All at once the sun became obliterated from view by a black cloud which like a living wall pushed its way from out of the west to descend over Tukhlia, filling the air with wild, hoarse screams. These were the omens and inseparable companions of the Mongol Horde, the ravens, vultures and buzzards, moving in innumerable flocks, attracted by the prospect of food.

The evil foreboding birds flapped their wings in the air and the flock separated into fragments like clouds rent by storm winds. The dusky eaves of the Tukholian houses suddenly became covered with the black hosts, and their noisy tumult, like rapidly boiling water in a huge kettle, arose from the valley. Mutely and passively, standing on the precipitous banks of their kettle-shaped valley, the Tukholians watched the vicious birds, in their hearts damning these prophets of death and destruction.

But soon the scene changed. Like spring flood waters through a break in a dam, there began to hurl themselves, screaming wildly, other black hosts into the basin. Row after row rolled in, like a torrent beneath a waterfall, slowing down only after they had passed through the narrow breach, forming themselves into long lines moving ahead without check, inundating the deserted valley. In the lead on a white steed rode the redoubtable giant Burunda-Behadir and beside him another, shorter man, Tuhar Wolf.

Slowly they rode ahead as if waiting for the moment of precipitate attack by the villagers. But there was no attack. The village lay as if in slumber. With savage cries the first ranks of Mongols broke into the houses, as it was their custom, with intent to kill and plunder, but there was no one to murder and the houses were all empty. With shouts of rising fury the Mongols tore from house to house, breaking in the doors, tearing down fences, gates, bursting barrels, crushing reed baskets and wrecking the clay ovens. But all their wrath availed them nothing, no one showed himself in the village.

"The cursed dogs!" said Burunda to Tuhar Wolf. "They scented us and have hidden themselves. Until we meet up with them we cannot make our camp here safely overnight. Lead us to the opening of this hole! We must first make sure of our exit!"

"Our exit is assured," Tuhar Wolf calmed him albeit he was himself puzzled as to why the Tukholians had vacated the village. And though he tried to soothe the behadir, he asked him to order the army to stop searching for loot and hurry to the outlet. Unwillingly the vanguard of the Mongol Horde marched forward while those in the rear were still pressing through the narrows, flooding the basin ever more deeply.

Now the first series of soldiers came out of the village and hastened to the corridor carved out of the rock. Within the valley, near the entrance to the passage, it was pitch dark. The unwary Mongols marched right up to it only to be met by an avalanche of rocks and stones, wounding and killing them.

The screams and groans of the wounded aggressors echoed to the welkin. The swift-flying birds crowed above their prey. The Mongols began to retreat and to disperse when Burunda and Tuhar Wolf, with unsheathed swords, halted them.

"Which way, fools?" roared Burunda angrily. "There's the opening to the corridor before you, follow after me!" And driving before him a whole troop of soldiers, he rushed them

straight towards the dark entrance to the corridor. Here they were given a fine welcome. A hailstorm of stones rained down upon their heads and blood flowed over the eyes of not a few of Jinghis Khan's soldiers, the brains from their shattered skulls spattering the rocky walls.

As if from hell, terrible wails arose from the dark corridor and above them all, louder than the rest, the voice of Burunda thundered, "Move along, rabbit-hearted! Come on with me!" And others, disregarding the renewed hailstorm of stones, pushed into the corridor.

"Go on, further, into the breach!" yelled Burunda, holding a shield over his head to protect himself from the falling stones.

In the meantime Tuhar Wolf, perceiving a group of youths on the top of the bank, ordered the Mongols who stood near the corridor, to fire a burst of arrows at them. Screams spread over the top of the bank and the Mongols loudly yowled their exultation. To avenge their wounded three the indignant Tukholian youths began to hurl down with increased violence immense slabs of rock on the invaders. All this would not have stopped the determined Burunda, if inside the corridor, where it curved outward, there had not appeared an unexpected hindrance; the passageway was obstructed to its very top by a mass of rocks. The Tukholians were assailing them with increased ferocity, the stones falling like hail, felling the Mongols one after the other so that Burunda finally realized his determination was useless, that they could not get through until they succeeded in driving the Tukholians off the top.

"Go back!" commanded Burunda and the few survivors of the vanguard, breathless, like pebbles hurled from a sling, flew out of the corridor.

"The corridor is blocked!" cried Burunda out of breath, to Tuhar Wolf, wiping the perspiration and blood off his face.

"Let's leave them for now and let them rejoice!" advised Tuhar Wolf.

"No!" cried Burunda, giving the boyar an arrogant glare. "The warriors of the great Jinghis Khan, do not put off until tomorrow what needs to be done today."

"But what can we do here today?" asked Tuhar Wolf, looking with a shudder towards the darkly yawning corridor from which there still escaped the horrible groans of mortally wounded Mongols.

"We must drive those dogs from their ambush!" shouted Burunda wrathfully, pointing to the ridge of the rocky bank. "Fetch some ladders here, men! The front line climb up the ladders and those in back hold the Tukholians at bay with shots! We'll see who defeats whom!"

Ladders were brought from nearby houses and on Tuhar Wolf's advice, nailed together with strips of wood laid horizontally across them to form a wide wall of ladders. The Tukholians looked down upon their work tranquilly. The Mongols raised their built-up ladder and leaned it against the wall of rock. The Tukholians greeted them with stones, arrows and javelins, but this did not discourage the Mongols, for as soon as one group fell wounded, others lugged the huge ladder further and the places of the wounded were quickly taken by fresh recruits. At the same time the rear lines of Mongols shot a steady stream of arrows, forcing the Tukholians backward. Fear began to grip the Tukholians.

Not far from the scene of battle, shielded from the arrow flights by an immense boulder, sat Zakhar Berkut on a pile of straw occupied with the wounded. He removed the arrows, cleansed the wounds with Peace-Renown's assistance and was busying himself bandaging them, having first smeared the wounds with some carefully compounded salve, prepared beforehand from the sap of the balsam fir, when some panicked warriors ran over to him to inform him of their dilemma.

"How, my children, can I aid you?" replied the old man,

but Peace-Renown jumped up from her place and hastened to view the cause of the danger confronting them.

“Don’t lose courage!” she said to the Tukholians. “We’ll soon fix them! Let them go on shooting. You arm yourselves with spears and crawl downhill. When the first series is half-way up the wall of rock, then strike at them all together! They will themselves shield you from the arrow shots and having knocked down the front ranks, you will knock down also the rear. The darkness is fortunate for us and having warded them off this time, we will have peace for the rest of the night.”

Without a word of protest the Tukholians got down on their hands and knees and let themselves down the steep incline, first having taken spears into their hands. The shots flew for some time yet and then ceased, an indication that the first row on the ladder had reached its top. With bated breath the Tukholians lay in wait for the foe. They heard the squeak of the ladder rungs, the hard rasping breath of the men, the clang of their weapons, and in front of the crouching youths, slowly, pusillanimously, bobbed up their furry turbans and under them the black, fearful heads with their bright beady eyes. Those eyes, fearful and attentive, stared ahead without blinking an eyelash as if they were of glass, past the crouching Tukholians, their heads rising ever higher and higher, now their shoulders showing and below them their backs covered with shaggy furs and now the full expanse of chest. With fierce cries the Tukholians flung themselves upon the Mongols plunging their spears deep into the broad chests of the aggressors. Shouts, groans, wails, shrieks, confusion, here and there spasmodic convulsions of death, here and there a short combat, curses, groans of the damned and like a heavy log, the foe tumbled down the ladder, knocking down subsequent rows of men. On top of that disorderly pile of bloody, moaning, groaning and roaring

flesh, corpses and living men, heavy stones and missiles fell from above.

Above that hell of turmoil, half-veiled by the cloak of night, arose up the hill the triumphant shouts of the Tukholians, the mournful yowls of the Mongols and the thunderous, execrable curses of Burunda-Behadir, who paced up and down the meeting place raging as if he were mad, tearing at his hair. In the end without checking his wrath he swung towards Tuhar Wolf with his sword unsheathed. "You pale-faced dog!" he sprang to Tuhar Wolf's side. "You, two-faced traitor," he yelled, gnashing his teeth, "it's all your fault! You led us into this ditch from which we can't escape!"

Tuhar Wolf reddened hotly at these words which no Mongol had ever addressed to him before. His hand involuntarily grasped his sword, but at that same moment a deep and unendurable ache smote his heart so that his hand relaxed its grip and fell to his side as if it were of clay. He bowed his head and clenching his teeth, replied in a subdued tone of voice, "Great Behadir, your anger is unjustified towards the faithful servant of Jinghis Khan. It is not my fault that the "smerdi" are repelling us. Order the army to retire for the night and rest. Tomorrow morning you will see for yourself that they will scatter before our arrow shots like the dry autumn leaves before a strong wind."

"So that's it!" shouted Burunda. "So they might fall upon and murder the army sleeping in the houses!"

"Then order the houses to be burned while the soldiers sleep out in the open under the canopy of the sky."

"Always you speak craftily and offer clever plans to avert my wrath and to absolve yourself of any blame! But not this time! You brought us here, now you must get us out and that the first thing in the morning without any more loss of time or men. Do you understand? You will live up to the bargain or suffer dire misfortune."

All for naught Tuhar Wolf tried to convince the savage behadir that it was not entirely all his fault, that he had advised him as he thought it would work out for the best, that the Mongol council had accepted his proposals and agreed with his plans, that no leader could possibly give guarantees against an unexpected turn of events or be held responsible for hindrances which might occur on their march. But all his arguments were rejected by Burunda's convictions to the contrary, as if they had been peas hurled against a stone wall.

"Very well, Boyarin," he said in the end, "I will do as you say, but just the same tomorrow you must show us a way out of this hole or else bear the consequences. These are my final words. I am waiting for deeds and not excuses from you."

Arrogantly and scornfully, he turned away from the boyar and went to his Mongols, shouting orders to them to set fire to the entire village at once and to clear the valley of everything that might serve the enemy as cover from which to attack them at night. The Mongols whooped with joy. They had been awaiting just such an order for sometime.

From all directions at once the fiery tongues of flames lapped the weird, pitch blackness which had settled over the Tukholian valley. The smoke burst forth in columns, rolling itself out like a thick blanket over the valley. The roofs crackled, shrunk by red streaks of flames sometimes leaping high into the air and at times, as if crouching, smoldering slowly, seemingly accumulating strength for another leap towards the sky. At another time, the flames buffeted by the wind, spread themselves into a glimmering, oscillating lake of liquid fire. The roar of toppling timbers and crashing walls echoed hollowly along the valley, the burning, piled-up sheaves of grain and hay glowed like coals, here and there ribbons of whitish smoke rising from their centers. The trees burned like candles, their leaves carried high into the air flitting about like

swarms of fireflies. The entire Tukholian valley now resembled a fiery hell.

With savage screams and yells of delight, the Mongols danced about and ran about the conflagration, flinging into the fire everything that came to hand. With mournful groans the hoary witness of the folk-mote, the giant linden, toppled over to the ground, cut down by Mongolian hatchets. The air in the Tukholian basin became heated as in a real kettle and suddenly from the surrounding hills a fierce wind blew downward whirling the sparks around, tearing at the burning stacks of straw and the roofs, strewing them about like fiery shots. The Tukholian stream for the first time in its life mirrored such a brilliance and for the first time became heated in its chill rocky bed.

The conflagration lasted for perhaps two hours. The Tukholians, boundless grief expressed upon their faces, watched dumbly from the steep high banks of the valley.

Then the Mongols began to extinguish the fires by throwing whatever was not completely burned into the stream and busied themselves digging a fosse around the site chosen for their encampment.

In a moment in the center of their camp rose the tents for the officers. The rest of the army was to sleep under the open sky on the heated ground.

Again it was dark in the Tukholian basin. The Mongols would gladly have built themselves campfires, but that was impossible, too late they remembered that they had laid waste to the whole valley with the conflagration and everything in it that could be burned had been burned or washed away by the stream. The army was forced to sleep and to stand guard in the dark. Even the trenches were not dug as deep as they were required to be, for it had already grown too dark to finish them.

Wrathful and dissatisfied, restless as a black storm cloud,

Burunda paced back and forth in the encampment examining the trenches and reviewing the guards set by them, calling together all the officers, giving instructions how they should guard themselves against an attack in the middle of the night.

It was nearly midnight before the encampment finally quieted down. Only the shouts of the guards and the roar of the waterfall broke through the reigning calm. However, in one spot within the Mongolian entrenchment there shone a light. This was the flickering flame of a torch in the tent of Tuhar Wolf. A whitish flame glimmered, crackled and smoked, devouring the melting tar, throwing an uncertain light over the interior of the tent. Empty and desolate it was in the tent, just as now in the heart of Tuhar Wolf. He paced back and forth absorbed in meditation. Burunda's bitter reproaches burned in his proud soul. They were like a slap in the face, opening his eyes and making him realize on to what a slippery path he had blundered.

"Peta promised me a gracious reward from Jinghis Khan," he grumbled, "and this barbarian treats me like a dog. Am I then the lowliest of their servants, comparable to a mere slave? Peta promised me all the cities and the entire territory of Carpatho-Rus, a great kingdom, while Burunda here, is threatening me with what I know not, without cause. And he could fulfill that threat, too, the damned devil! Should I give in to him, try to please him? I must! I'm in his hands! I'm a prisoner, a slave, as that lout Maxim said."

"That reminds me, where is that Maxim? Could I not do what Burunda desires with his help? Could I not, for instance, exchange him for a way out of this hole? That's a good idea!"

He called two Mongols to him who lay not far from his tent and ordered them to find and bring to him the prisoner Maxim.

Unwillingly, muttering something, the Mongols obeyed

him. Apparently the air of the Tukholian valley was not conducive to sharp Mongolian discipline.

But where was Maxim? How did he fare as a prisoner?

Maxim sat in the middle of the Tukholian main road, shackled with heavy chains, as it happened, exactly across from his father's homestead with his face turned to the yard in which he had danced as a child and only yesterday walked about freely, occupied with the daily chores and over which today moved crowds of hateful Mongols. They had brought him here on a horse and when the order had come to halt and burn the village they threw him off the horse into the street. No one touched him or guarded him but it was impossible to run away for throngs of Mongols wove back and forth about him, yelling, ruining and searching for booty.

Maxim was hardly conscious of what was transpiring around him. He sat there immovably, like a milestone by the roadside. His mind was a void. Thoughts refused to flow together or to shape themselves. Even his visual impressions declined to take definite form, flickering and glimmering before his eyes like frightened black birds. He felt clearly only one thing, that the chains pressed into his flesh like cold iron snakes sucking all the strength out of his body and all the thoughts from his brain.

All at once the flames had burst around him, the smoke spread itself over the roadway in thick clouds and enveloped Maxim, smarting his eyes and taking away his breath. Tukhlia was on fire! Maxim sat in the center of the conflagration and did not stir. The wind whirled the smoke, showering him with sparks and blew the heated air upon him, but Maxim, his tongue pasted to the roof of his mouth, his heart choking him, seemed unaware of it all. He would have been glad to die in the conflagration, to fly up like a golden spark and then die out, there in the clear cool sky, somewhere near the twinkling stars. But the chains, those insufferable fetters! How hor-

ribly they squeezed him, weighed upon him! There his father's house caught fire! The flames burst out from under the eaves, twisting themselves like snakes across the windows and peered into the house through the door, driving from it a huge cloud of smoke in order to themselves occupy the Berkuts' living quarters.

Maxim watched the conflagration in a stupor. It seemed as if something in his chest was being torn out of him, consumed by the flames and burned to ashes. When the flames died down, the roof caved in, the coals settled themselves on the scene of his birthplace, and there burst forth from the blazing mass a whole sea of sparks to the sky, Maxim cried out in anguish and jumped to his feet to run somewhere, to save something, but after taking just one step forward, he fell senseless to the ground.

The conflagration had died down, a hot bitter smoke blew over the valley, the battle-cries of the Mongols, who under the leadership of Burunda and Tuhar Wolf had fought with the Tukholians at the entrance to the corridor, had ceased. The night sky had cleared and the stars appeared over Tukhlia. All was peace and quiet in the Mongolian camp, but Maxim still lay as if dead in the middle of the road facing the charred remains of his house. The stars shone mournfully upon his pale, blood-smeared face, a faint rising and falling of his chest the only indication that here lay not a corpse but a living man.

This was the state in which the Mongols found him and at first had feared that he was dead, smothered by the smoke of the conflagration. Not until they threw some water on him, washed his face and gave him a drink of water, did he open his eyes and look about him.

"He's alive! He's alive!" the Mongols yowled happily and grasping the half-unconscious, weakened Maxim under the armpits, half-dragged him on the trot to the tent of the boyar.

Tuhar Wolf was alarmed at sight of the detested youth in

such a pathetic state. His freshly washed face was bloodless, lips cracked from the smoke and eyes glazed from fatigue and emotional duress, his legs trembling under him as if he were a hundred year-old man for, having stood upon them a minute, he could no longer hold himself up but collapsed on to the ground. The Mongols withdrew from the tent.

The boyar gazed upon Maxim thoughtfully for a long time. What reason was there for him to hate the young man? Why had he brought upon his young head such horrible suffering? Why had he not ordered him killed at once instead of allowing him to undergo this slow, inevitable death, for it was certain that the Mongols would not release him alive and that as soon as they got tired of dragging him along with them, they would butcher him like an animal and cast him by the roadside. And for what had he come to hate this poor young man? Was it because he had saved his daughter's life? Or was it because she had fallen in love with him? Was it for his upright, princely bearing and courage, his honesty and frankness? Or was it because he had considered himself his equal? Now they HAD become equals, they were both prisoners and both unfortunate. Tuhar Wolf felt his anger and dislike towards Maxim die down like the exhausted flames of a fire for which there is no more fuel. He had already, as soon as Maxim had been taken prisoner, tried to make friends with him, not from any real desire for his friendship but through craftiness. However, Maxim had refused to even speak to him. Of course the boyar offered him such advice as it was impossible for Maxim to accept. He had counseled him to go into the service of the Mongols and lead them through the trail over the crest of the mountains, promising him a substantial reward. If he refused, he threatened that the Mongols would kill him. "Let them kill me!" was the only answer the boyar had gotten from him. Strangely enough, even then those proud words which bore witness to Maxim's staunch

soul and his great love for freedom, did not anger the boyar but pleased him very much. He felt as if an iceberg had enclosed his heart and was now melting away. Upon the charred remains of free Tukhlia, he began to understand that the Tukholians had acted both wisely and equitably and his heart though blinded by greed for power, was not entirely deaf to the voice of his conscience which recognized their rights. The boyar had ruminated upon all this today and already looked with a different attitude upon the prone, half-dead, miserable form of Maxim crouching upon the ground within his tent.

He approached him, took him by the hand intending to raise him up to a sitting position on a bench.

"Maxim!" he said kindly. "What has happened to you?"

"Let me alone!" Maxim groaned, "And let me die in peace!"

"Maxim! Boy! Why should you think of death? I'm trying to find a way of making you free and here you talk of death! Get up and sit here on the bench. Pull yourself together, I have something to discuss with you."

Though Maxim only half understood and only half-believed the words and sudden compassion of the boyar still his primitive needs, his weakness, hunger and fatigue were too strongly demanding for him to be able to refuse the boyar's hospitality.

A mug of fiery wine refreshed him immediately, resurrecting his former vitality to renewed life; a piece of roast meat quieted the pangs of hunger. While he ate, the boyar sat opposite him inspiring in him with kindly words the desire and courage to live.

"Foolish youth," he said, "fellows like you need to live and not die! Life is a precious thing and for no riches in the world can you purchase it."

"Life as a prisoner is worth nothing," replied Maxim. "Death is preferable."

"Well, of course," said the boyar. "But I am telling you that you can be free."

"By turning traitor against my people and leading the Mongols over the mountains. No, death is better than freedom won that way."

"I am not talking about that now," said the boyar, smiling. "I say that you can be free without turning traitor, as you call it, and tonight!"

"How?" asked Maxim.

"I thought you'd be interested," smiled the boyar again. "Well, this is my scheme. Your Tukholians have surrounded us and obstructed the exit. Of course their resistance is laughable for they can't really stop us. But we can't afford to waste any more time. That's the most important matter to us just now, time."

Maxim's eyes glowed at this news. "The Tukholians have surrounded you, you say?" he cried joyously. "And you can't get out? Oh, thank God! You can expect you won't get out either. The Tukholians are an ingenious people, whomever they once catch they aren't likely to let out of their hands again."

"Tut, tut, tut!" broke in the boyar. "Don't rejoice too soon, my boy. Our numbers are not so small that a group of your Tukholians could so easily capture. I've been trying to tell you that it's not so important whether we are detained here or not but it's the time we have to consider. Every minute counts. We are in a hurry."

"But what can I do?"

"Just this! I'm thinking of going tonight to your Tukholians for a parley. I want to promise to return you to them in exchange for our free passage through here. I expect you to . . . I hope you will . . . tell me the right words to use

which will reach the hearts of the Tukholians and your father and win them over to our plan.”

“Your effort will be all for naught, Boyarin. The Tukholians will never agree to such a bargain.”

“Not agree?” cried the boyar. “Why won’t they agree?”

“The Tukholians will fight to the last man before they will allow you to pass over their mountain trail. Do you think they would turn traitors to their brothers in the mountain crest and beyond the mountain communities whose villages would be destroyed like our Tukhlia?”

“But they will be destroyed anyway, foolish youth!” replied the boyar. “Your Tukholian army is far too insignificant to stop us.”

“‘Don’t praise the day,’ Boyarin, ‘before evening has come!’ A large army isn’t necessary here when the barriers of rocky walls and steep hillsides provide natural fortresses to hinder you.”

“Well, anyway, tell me how I should talk to your father and the Tukholians to make them listen.”

“Speak to them from the heart, sincerely, truthfully, it’s the only way to influence them.”

“But it doesn’t work that way, boy, it doesn’t!” protested the disappointed boyar. “It’s not as simple as all that in dealing with your people. Your father is an experienced old sorcerer, who knows exactly what magic words reach into every heart. He must surely also have taught you these words. For instance, without those magic words you could not possibly have persuaded my archers to fight against the Mongols as doggedly as they would not have fought for even the best pay.”

Maxim laughed. “You are a strange man, Boyarin!” he replied. “I know no such sorcery, but frankly speaking, even if I knew the magic words, I would not reveal them to you so you could not persuade the Tukholians to assent to such an uneven exchange.”

The boyar reddened angrily. "Be careful, boy! Remember who you are and where you are!"

"Remember you're a prisoner, that your life depends upon the good will of the Mongols."

"My life isn't worth anything!" replied Maxim quietly. "I don't care whether I live or die! Whoever has known but a moment of imprisonment has tasted worse than death!"

At this juncture the flap of the tent was lifted up and with a quick movement Peace-Renown entered. She cast a swift glance around the tent and without even so much as a nod towards her father, she flew to Maxim's side. "Here you are, here you are!" she cried. "Something seemed to draw me here. My dearest, Maxim, how are you? What has happened to you?"

Maxim sat as if paralyzed, without taking his eyes off Peace-Renown. She held his hand in hers. Her words rang like an Easter bell announcing that Christ had risen, or like a reviving dew falling upon a wilted flower. And she, the sweet darling, knelt down beside him bathing his weighty chains in her tears, washing away with them the dried blood from his wrists.

What a joy, what warmth entered Maxim's heart at her nearness and the touch of her soft hands! How warmly the blood throbbed in his chest! How fiercely the desire to live re-awakened itself in him! And here the chains were pressing, squeezing him unmercifully, reminding him that he was a prisoner, that over his head hung a bloody Mongolian knife. That thought in this joyous moment twined itself around his heart like a snake and made the tears drop from his eyes and roll down his cheeks.

"Peace-Renown," he said, turning his face away. "Why did you come here to add to my grief? I was ready for death and now you have re-awakened my desire to live!"

"My beloved!" replied Peace-Renown. "Don't lose cour-

age! I risked all kinds of perils to come here into the enemy camp and tell you not to lose hope!"

"What is the use of hoping? Hope won't break these chains."

"But my father will remove them!"

"Oh, your father! So he tells me, that he's ready to do it, but first he asks me to do him a service which is impossible for me to perform."

"What kind of a service?"

"He wants to go to the Tukholians and arrange with them for a clear passage for the Mongols through this valley in exchange for my freedom and asks me to tell him the magic words which would induce the Tukholians to favor his plan."

Peace-Renown glanced at her father for the first time and her amazement increased with each moment to one of joy.

"Father," she said, "is this true?"

"Yes," replied Tuhar Wolf.

"Do you believe Maxim knows the magic words?"

"He must know them. How else, from the very first, could he have bound you to him. Without the use of charms this could not possibly have happened."

Peace-Renown smiled, throwing Maxim a glance of infinitely tender love and then turning to her father, she said, "Have you obtained permission from your commander for such a parley?"

"Not yet, but it will take only a moment. His tent is not far from mine."

"Then go now. In the meantime I'll persuade Maxim to reveal those magic words to you."

"You will persuade him?"

"You will see! Just go!"

"Bewitched girl!" the boyar grumbled to himself, leaving the tent. "Enchanted and no doubt about it! She actually forces herself upon him!"

"My sweetheart, Maxim!" said Peace-Renown, as soon as the boyar had left the tent, twining her arms around his neck, kissing his pale, chapped lips. Don't worry! The Mongolians won't get out. They will all meet their death here!"

"My little star, my precious darling, Peace-Renown!" replied Maxim sadly, "How glad I would be to believe this, but their numbers are too great and ours too small."

"Reinforcements from the mountain crest communities and from the Hungarian side of the Carpathians have been sent to aid us."

"Their weapons are inadequate."

"Don't worry even about this. Listen, one hundred axes are chopping away in the forest. In a little while, one hundred campfires will flame above the valley and by each campfire your carpenters will be making engines with which to hurl stones into the very heart of the Mongolian entrenchment."

"But who thought of all this? Who showed our carpenters how to make these engines?"

"I did, darling. I often observed and examined such machines which stand on the top of the walls in Halich. Before the sun rises from behind Mt. Zelemenya fifty such machines will be hurling stones on the heads of the Mongols."

Maxim hugged Peace-Renown, pressing her with fierce joy close to his heart. "Light of my life!" he said. "You will yet be the deliverer of our Tukhlia!"

"No, Maxim!" said Peace-Renown. "It is not I who will be the redeemer but your father. What are my engines but poor toys against such a foe? But your father will release a more potent power, which no enemy can withstand."

"What sort of power?" asked Maxim.

"Listen!" said Peace-Renown. Unbroken peace reigned everywhere, only far off in the distance, muffled peals of thunder rolled along the Carpathian battlements, detonating.

"It's thundering," said Maxim. "So, what of it?"

"What of it?" replied Peace-Renown quickly. "It's certain death for the Mongols! That is a more formidable destroyer than they and a destroyer that will aid us. Only listen!" and she glanced about the tent, though no one was there, as if she distrusted even its quietness and emptiness. Then she leaned towards Maxim's cheek and whispered a few words into his ear.

"As if jerked up by a powerful arm Maxim sprang up so that the chains jingled upon him.

"Girl or jinnee!" he cried, staring at her half-fearfully and half reverently, expecting her to vanish. "Who are you and who has sent you here with such tidings? For now I see that you cannot be Peace-Renown, the daughter of Tuhar Wolf. No, you must surely be the spirit of that great Sentinel whom they call the guardian of Tukhlia."

"No, Maxim, no, my beloved!" replied the amazing girl. "It is I, Peace-Renown, the same Peace-Renown who loves you so very, very dearly, who would gladly give up her very life just to make you happy."

"As if I could ever be happy without you!"

"Wait, Maxim, listen to one more thing I have to tell you, get out of this encampment, right away!"

"How can I get out? The guards are not asleep."

"The guards will let you pass. You can see for yourself that they let me through. But you must change into my clothes and take this gold signet ring. It was given to me by the commander permitting me the freedom of coming and going among them. If you will show it to the guards they will let you pass."

"And you?"

"Don't worry about me. I will remain here with my father."

"But the Mongols will discover that you let me free and then they will not spare you. Oh no, I don't want it that way!"

"Don't worry about me, I can take care of myself."

"So can I!" replied Maxim stubbornly.

At this point the boyar re-entered the tent, sullen, red of face and frowning morosely. Burunda had shown himself even less kindly disposed towards him than before and greeted his proposal to exchange Maxim for their free passage reprovingly and in the end barely agreed to it. The boyar began to feel an increasing tension around him as if the iron bars of a prison were pressing themselves ever closer upon him.

"Well?" he said sharply, not glancing at either his daughter or Maxim.

A bright thought flashed into Peace-Renown's mind.

"Everything is all right, father," she replied, "only . . ."

"Only what?"

"Maxim's magic words are such that they are ineffective unless pronounced by his own lips."

"Well then, the devil take him!" muttered the boyar wrathfully.

"Wait, father and listen to my counsel. Order his chains removed and go with him to the Tukholians. Here is the signet ring Peta gave me, with it the guards will let him through."

"Oh! Thank you my daughter for your very kind advice! 'Take him to the Tukholians!' And that means throw away my last chance of success. The Tukholians will take the prisoner and drive me away! No, I won't do it. I will go myself and without his magic words."

Peace-Renown saddened. Her brilliant eyes filmed over with tears. "My darling!" she said, kneeling down beside Maxim, again putting her arms around him. "Do as I ask you, take this ring!"

"No, Peace-Renown. Don't worry about me!" said Maxim. "I have already planned what to do. Go and help our people and may our Sentinel aid you."

Peace-Renown's parting from Maxim was indeed difficult. Though she tried her best not to show it, she left him with the almost certain expectation that he would meet his death. Stealthily kissing him and pressing his hand warmly, she ran out of the tent after her father.

Maxim was left alone in the boyar's tent his heart beating in a confusion of emotions, joy, fear and hope.

CHAPTER VII

"WHAT IS THAT thudding noise resounding from the forest?" the boyar asked his daughter who walked beside him through the Mongolian encampment.

"They're chopping down trees," Peace-Renown replied briefly.

"Now, at night, in the dark?"

"There will soon be light."

Hardly had Peace-Renown said this, when atop the steep cliffs which walled in the kettle-shaped valley, here and there glimmered points of light; the Tukholians were striking sparks with flint and building campfires. It was not long before the banks of the entire valley were studded with rows of blazing campfires which gleamed in the pitch darkness like the bright eyes of giant wolves crouching for a leap down into the valley to devour the Mongolian forces.

Beside each campfire stirred groups of silhouetted figures. The sound of wood chopping echoed with re-doubled intensity.

"What are they doing now?" the boyar asked his daughter again.

"They're trimming and scraping the wood."

"What for?"

"When you get there you'll find out."

They continued on their way through the camp. Every so often the guards stopped them when it was necessary to show their credentials from the commander in order to be allowed to pass.

The guards, watching the bonfires fearfully, awakened their officers, but they, observing that the Tukholians were going about their business peacefully, ordered them not to create a disturbance but to remain alert at their posts. The fact that they started so many campfires, they were told, was all the better for the Mongols, it meant the Tukholians would not try to attack secretly in the dark. As long as those fires burned, they could sleep in peace and recuperate their energies for the arduous undertaking awaiting the army the next day.

Tuhar Wolf and his daughter left the entrenchment and having crossed a short stretch of plain came to a precipitous wall of rock. They searched a long time before Peace-Renown finally located the path among the brambles and ferns which would lead them to the top. They began toiling upwards.

"Who goes there?" shouted voices down from the nearest campfire.

"Friends," answered Peace-Renown.

"What friends?" shouted the Tukholians, barring their path. But they soon recognized Peace-Renown, who led the way.

"And who is behind you?"

"My father. The Mongolian behadir sent him for a peace parley with your elders."

"What the deuce do we need a parley for? As soon as it's daybreak we'll talk to them all right, but it won't be of peace!"

"How brave you are!" Tuhar Wolf laughed sarcastically. "Well, well, well, we won't have to wait very long for that pleasure! Only we don't know whether it'll be such a pleasure for your mothers, to see your young heads stuck on Mongolian lances!"

"The devil take your speech, noxious raven!" the Tukholians expostulated, surrounding the boyar.

"Now, now," Tuhar Wolf calmed them. "Of course I

don't wish that upon you, I wish only to point out that it wouldn't be very nice if it happened. It is for this special reason, to protect you from just such a fate, that I'd like to negotiate for peace with your elders. I feel sorry for you, hot-blooded, inexperienced youngsters! You are ready to go to your death blindly without stopping to think whether it will benefit anyone or not. But your elders ought to be able to give the matter a less emotional and more objective consideration."

As he talked the boyar drew closer to the campfire by which some carpenters were planing the freshly cut pieces of timber, while others were making grooves in the planed logs and still others drilling holes and sharpening wooden pegs to fit into them.

"What is this you're making?" the boyar questioned the workmen.

"Guess if you're smart!" they gibed, fitting together frameworks of wood resembling gates, joining a pair of them together horizontally at the top and bottom with split halves of timbers.

The boyar watched these operations a moment and then slapped his thighs in astonishment. "Trebuchets!" he exclaimed. "Men, who taught you how to make such machines?"

"Oh, there was someone who showed us how," replied the carpenters, noncommittally. And taking hold of a strong beech stump, they chipped out a hollow to form a huge ladle to the handle of which heavily woven ropes were to be fastened and wound tightly on two windlasses attached to the front posts of the framework. An immense wooden basket filled with stones was to be attached to the other end. The force of its prodigious weight, released by the wound-up ropes, was to hurl stones from the ladle far out upon the Mongols in their encampment.

Tuhar Wolf glanced around him. Beside each campfire

worked other craftsmen (in Tukhlia every man knew carpentry) making other such machines. The youths, women and children were occupied plaiting the necessary ropes.

"Well, I see our Mongolians will have a difficult time of it under these circumstances, trying to find themselves an outlet from this hollow," thought Tuhar Wolf, following his daughter further into the forest, along a beaten path, towards the glade in the middle of which an enormous campfire burned and where the council of Tukholian elders had gathered for deliberation.

"Peace-Renown," Tuhar Wolf asked after a moment's silence, "did you teach them how to make the engines?"

"Yes, I did," she replied, watching her father intently, expecting a wrathful outburst. But to her amazement there momentarily passed a look of satisfaction on the boyar's face.

"Very good, daughter!" he said tersely.

Peace-Renown was surprised, not understanding what that change in her father's stand signified. She did not realize that his belief in the fortunate outcome of the Mongolians' march and especially in the ability of the Mongolians to keep their promises had become very shaky and that in this new turn of events the boyar was forced to turn to the people while the action of his daughter stood in the way of accomplishing his purpose.

They neared the clearing where the Tukholian wise men sat wakeful, engaged in conference. It was a spacious glade turned somewhat to the south, from the north closed off by an impregnable bluff of crumbly Carpathian slate. A belt of giant spruces encompassed the glade from the east, south and west, so that the sun only at its zenith could peer into it.

In ancient times, the entire surface of this glade had been paved with immense flag-stones which were now covered with a downy growth of moss and clusters of prickly fern. Only one path in the center was well trodden, leading to a deep

cave within the wall of rock facing directly south. The inner walls of the cave were a dull grey, free of any embellishment except for benches and recesses hewn out of the rock. Here the rock was red, burned by the fires on the hearths, of which traces still remained. Only the ceiling had a single ornamentation carved out of the rock in the shape of a hemisphere as large as a loaf of bread and incrustated with a thick, gleaming rim of gold to resemble a corona. This was an ancient Tukholian sanctuary where members of the younger generation came to offer up their prayers to the highest creator of life, the sun-god Dayboh, whose gold-encircled image was carved on its ceiling.

Although the Tukholian people had long ago been baptized by the Christian monks and went to pray to the Christian God at the Catholic church in Korchenia, still they never quite completely neglected the god of their forefathers, so that the path to the Glade of Light never became entirely grown over and the everlasting campfire in the center of it was never allowed to die out(it was called the "Glade of Light" because of this perpetual campfire) and before the small side altars of "Ladi" and "Did" there often smoked the fragrant balsam fir and jerked spasmodically the sacrificial doves provided by the youths and maidens.

However, as time went on, the people gradually began to forget and neglect the old gods and the old customs until only a few of the elders clung to the liberal and purely communal precepts of their ancient, benevolent religion which did not frighten the people with threats of punishment and suffering after death but considered the greatest punishment to be death itself, the physical and spiritual deterioration of perfidious individuals, disbelievers in a Benevolent God.

The new religion originating in the East and brought to our lands united itself with our old religious beliefs and only in this combination was it able to survive peacefully in the

hearts and minds of the people. Gradually the elders with their belief in the ancient creed died out and the few who remained did not dare to follow it openly or teach it to the younger generation but practiced it alone in secret, hiding it within their hearts with the sad conviction that it would also die and be buried with them.

One of the last known avowed adherents to the old religion in our land of Rus, was Zakhar Berkut. The astonishing fact was that he had carried out this creed from the Scythian monasteries, from the old monk Akenthia. Whether the miraculous old healer had only related to his pupil everything about that ancient religion or whether in his own heart he felt it was closer to the forces of nature and the Truth and was therefore drawn more to it than to the Byzantinic Christianity, the fact was that Zakhar, after his stay within the monastery, brought out with him a greater love for the old religion, vowing to be true to it until death.

He knew about the Glade of Light in his Tukhlia within which long ago the perpetual campfire had died out and where the fragrant balsam fir no longer smouldered before the altars and which the Korchenian priests had denounced as a cursed and evil place. No matter how forsaken this Glade of Light had become, still no one up to that time had dared to touch the image of the sun or the gold leaf with which it was incrustrated. That image still shone in the middle of the cave's ceiling awaiting the mid-day sun to reflect its rays in a thousand beams.

Of his own free will, Zakhar Berkut had taken upon himself the care of this ancient sanctuary. The path which showed itself across its center became well trodden by his feet every spring for more than fifty years. On his annual trips in search of medicinal roots and herbs Zakhar spent a week alone within the Glade of Light in prayer and meditation and after each

such session returned to the village encouraged and strengthened in spirit, with clearer and purer thoughts of wisdom.

Many times during his stay there, the Tukholians, observing from down in their valley how the blue wreaths of smoke from the balsam fir swirled over the tops of the spruces which surrounded the Glade of Light, remarked among themselves, "That must be old Zakhar praying to the ancient gods." They said this without malice, and without intent of poking fun at him, for Zakhar, though he did not attempt to teach anyone the old religion, nonetheless strove all the more earnestly to teach everyone to respect the religious beliefs and convictions of others.

Here in the Glade of Light the Tukholian elders had assembled to keep vigil in this portentous night. A great campfire burned in the center of the Glade. Surreptitiously the ancient spruces whispered as if recalling old times. From the flare of the campfire the golden image glittered in the ceiling of the open cave shooting out crimson-colored rays. The elders sat in meditation listening to the thump of hatchets within the forest and the tales of ancient times recounted by old Zakhar.

A strange spirit had possessed the old man today. He, who had never liked to talk about the old beliefs, today grew loquacious and talked with such tender pathos as he used only when speaking upon matters dearest and closest to his heart. He spoke of the creator Dayboh, of the defeat of Svitovid, how the three sacred doves, Dayboh, Svitovid and Perun created the earth from a grain of sand; how Dayboh searched for three days in the bottom of the ocean until he found three grains: one grain of wheat, one of rye and a third of barley and gave them to the first man, Did, and his wife, Ladi; how Perun gave them a spark of fire and Svitovid a hair from which, with his blessing, there sprung a cow and a herdsman for it, whom they called Volos (hair). Zakhar went on relating further about the life of the first people on earth, about the flood from

which the people fled to the hills and caves, about the ancient giants and their king, the Tukholian Sentinel, who released the enchanted waters of the Tukholian lake.

The Tukholian elders listened to these tales as if to news of some new, unheard of world. Many things about which they had talked and of which they had sung without understanding them, were now clearly defined in vivid word images and Zakhar Berkut himself seemed to them to be the last of those benevolent Tukholian giant sentinels or guards around whose remarkable exploits the succeeding generations would also weave legends.

Suddenly there was a snapping of dry twigs on the path and Peace-Renown accompanied by Tuhar Wolf appeared from the forest blackness. Peace-Renown came straight towards old Zakhar while the boyar stopped by the campfire.

"Father," said Peace-Renown to Zakhar, "I saw your son!"

"My son?" replied Zakhar Berkut quietly, as if speaking of the dead.

"Yes. With the help of this ring I passed by the Mongolian guards and talked with him. We can expect, father, that he'll soon be free."

"It's very hard, daughter, very hard! But who is this that came with you?"

"It is I, old man," said Tuhar Wolf stepping forward, "do you remember me?"

"I remember your face . . . you were the boyar, Tuhar Wolf. What brings you here to us?"

"I came to you, Tukholian elders, as an emissary of peace from the great behadir Burunda, the commander of the Mongolian army."

"What does Burunda-Behadir want from us?" asked Zakhar.

"Burunda-Behadir commands me to say to you that his army is legion and unconquerable. It is useless, therefore, for

you to put up barricades on your trail and useless to build engines for hurling stones, all of which will prove fruitless against his superior forces."

"Evidently your Burunda is beginning to fear us if he has thought of trying to frighten us. It's a good sign. Go on, tell us what else he told you to say to us."

"No, elder, you must not consider the words of the Mongolian commander so lightly. His threat is half the punishment and his punishment is terrible, like the punishment of God! Please heed the rest of what behadir Burunda commands me to say to you. The goal of his march is Uhri, the kingdom of the Magyars which had submitted to the rule of the great Jinghis Khan but now rebels and refuses to recognize his sovereignty. To punish this insurgence the great Jinghis Khan sent his army to the West. Should it be your concern to check its progress?"

"Behadir Burunda, the commander of a part of that vast army, wishes to depart from here amicably. He holds prisoner one of your own men, your son, elder Zakhar. This is all he wants you to do: Raze your barricades and allow the Mongolian army to get out of the valley. In exchange for this, he will return the prisoner to you alive and well. Think how advantageous for you is Burunda's benign proposition. Your resistance is useless, no matter what you do, the Mongols will eventually level your fortifications and will go their way. But they don't want to lose any more time in your valley or to spill any of your blood and are ready to give back your man for their passage through. If your decision is unfavorable, it's understood that certain death by horrible torture awaits him and for you also awaits a bloody massacre in which, despite your best efforts, you will be crushed and destroyed utterly. Choose then for yourselves what is best!"

The Tukholian elders listened attentively to Tuhar Wolf's speech and upon some of the points it was apparent they agreed.

Observing this, Zakhar said, "Honorable brothers, do you want to hold a council to consider Burunda's proposal seriously or are you unequivocally agreed in favor of accepting his proposal at once as it stands?"

"Let's deliberate upon it first!" the elders replied. Then Zakhar asked Tuhar Wolf to withdraw for a few minutes.

Imperiously, the boyar retreated in the company of his daughter.

"Zakhar," said one of the townsmen, "this is definitely a question of life or death for your son. Wouldn't it be better for us to forego an uncertain battle and save the boy?"

"You're wrong, this is not a question of my boy's life at all," remonstrated Zakhar Berkut. "If it were really a matter concerning my boy, I would say to you, 'I have no son, my son died in battle.' But this is a question of loyalty to our neighbors, those living on the mountain crest and on the other side, who are depending upon our defence and who, unprepared, would all have to perish by the hands of the Mongolians. That is why I am telling you, don't consider my son, but proceed as if he were already buried!"

"Nonetheless, Zakhar, the outcome of a war with a preponderate Mongolian force is problematical."

"Well then, every last one of us will die in the battle. After that, over our corpses, the Mongols can go wherever they please. But to negotiate an agreement with them now on such unequal terms as the exchange of the life of one youth for the death and destruction of our neighbors would be shameful, treason. But who can predict in advance whether the outcome of the war with the Mongols is indefinite? Our position has every advantage, the Mongolians are locked in a rocky basin. With comparatively small losses to ourselves we can go on resisting their most determined attacks. But I doubt we will need to lose even that. This very night we will unleash our

strongest ally which no human power can withstand, even if it's ten times stronger than the Mongolian."

"Then you advise us to reject Burunda's proposition?"

"Absolutely."

"And give your son up to inevitable death?"

"Don't remind me of my son!" cried Zakhar agonizingly. "Whoever reminds a father of his son in such a situation as this acts contrary to the dictates of common sense. My better judgment tells me to reject the proposal. What my heart tells me is no one else's concern but mine!"

"Well then, have it your way!" said the elders. "If God has willed that he should die, there is nothing we can do to prevent it. If not, then he will be saved from the clutches of the brutal foe."

They summoned the boyar and Zakhar stood up to deliver the council's decision. Her heart thrashing with a dreadful fear, Peace-Renown watched his face, still hoping that the Tukholians would want to ransom her Maxim.

"Logically, as you understood it, you presented the proposal for the agreement desired by your commander very well. We do not blame you, it was your duty to the man you serve to make his proposition sound as desirable to us as possible. Please now harken to what the common peasant intellect of our community replies to your proposal: If it were purely a matter between me and your behadir, I would gladly give him everything that I own including my own grey old head for the release of my son. But you are proposing to us an unfair exchange by which only I and my family will benefit, with a consequent loss not only of one township but all the communities through which your army will march. Is it right then to make such a sacrifice? Of what use is my son to the mountain top and beyond the mountain communities? If we let you out of this valley, it will mean the destruction of those other neighboring townships with whom we are in concord. We

promised and undertook to defend them against the attack and upon this guarantee they sent us their aid, five hundred select young men. Plainly our duty is to hold our own to the very last and we intend to do this. It's possible God has willed that you will defeat us, in that case we shall not stop you. But remember, that only over the dead bodies of the last Tukholians will you be able to get out of this valley. But then who knows, perhaps the conquest is to be ours, then you can be sure that having come into our valley you have all entered your graves so that even your corpses will never again be carried out of it. Either we will all die or you will, there is no other choice. This is our answer."

Zakhar Berkut's face flushed with a strange fire while he pronounced these terrible words, so that the boyar, gazing at the tall old man with his hand outstretched, could find no adequate reply to make. He saw plainly that it was useless to argue any further and silently he turned about and walked away.

A gloomy silence hung over the council, only the fire crackled and spluttered and the unceasing felling and scraping of wood being made into engines with which to kill the Mongols resounded within the glade.

"Father!" cried Peace-Renown in a tortured voice. "Father, come back!" She ran after him and caught him by the hand. Filial love once more overpowered her with an undeniable force. "Father, come back! Stay here among your own people! Face the aggressors with them in battle like a brother at the side of his brothers and they will forgive you for everything in the past. But there . . . what can you expect from them? They will deceive you, will intoxicate you with promises and then murder you! Father, please don't go back to the Mongols . . . there only death awaits you!"

The boyar stood undecided, lost in thought, but only for a moment. Then he embraced Peace-Renown and said half-

gently and half-reprovingly, "Foolish girl, it's not time yet for me to die! The Mongols have not yet lost all hope for escape. It will be necessary to make the most of what we have. But if matters don't turn out well there . . ."

"Please, dear papa," whispered Peace-Renown through tears, "forsake such thoughts! How do you know it won't be too late for you then!"

"Fret not, it shan't be too late. Stay here and befriend the Tukholians for my sake . . . but I must return. Don't forget, daughter there also . . . is . . . your Maxim and who knows, perhaps we can be of some assistance to each other. Farewell!"

Tuhar Wolf disappeared into the forest of saplings, hurrying along the path to the campfire above the cliffs by which he would find the path leading down into the Mongolian entrenchment. He examined the almost completed engine by the campfire, tried the ropes and shaking his head remarked, "It's too weak!" and then, accompanied by Tukholian guards, he made his descent down the steep, narrow path into the valley.

In the meantime over the Glade of Light brooded an ominous silence as if within its center lay the body of a dearly beloved comrade. Only Peace-Renown sobbed audibly wiping away the tears which rolled down her face. Finally she moved nearer to Zakhar and said, "Father, what have you done?"

"That which it was my duty to do. It would not have been right to do otherwise," replied Zakhar.

"But it's your son, your own son! What will happen to him?"

"Whatever God wills, daughter. That's enough, please don't cry any more! We have work to do. There you see the starry wagon rolling down to the west and the quail in the thickets is announcing the approach of dawn."

"Come fellow citizens, let us go to the defence, rather to

the attack, to do battle with the aggressors to the last. Keep in mind the sort of answer I have sent them. Come, let no one remain behind. The old and the very young, all will be found useful. Let us show those barbarians what a community can do!"

With a busy hum of voices the Tukholian elders arose and left enmasse the Glade of Light, proceeding to the edge of the cliffs to inspect the work of the carpenters, the trebuchets. These trebuchets standing at every campfire were almost finished, crudely put together, constructed of thick, raw wood, drilled and fitted together with wooden pegs, hurriedly, not for durability but for immediate use. But it was not for the viewing and examining of the engines that Zakhar had called the people. They paused there only for a moment and proceeded further in groups skirting the banks of the valley until they reached the place where the Tukholian stream squeezed itself through the crevice of the wall of rock down below, to flow out of the valley and where beside it, slightly tilted over it, stood the enormous square column of stone called the Tukholian Sentinel. The Tukholian townspeople hurried there, led by Zakhar and Peace-Renown, the youths carrying on their shoulders ladders and long thick timbers of fir, the girls huge wreaths woven of leaves and spruce twigs and the elders long rolls of rope and cordage. The campfires on that side of the valley had been put out so the enemy would not catch an untimely glimpse of what was going on there.

Slowly, carefully, noiselessly, like a quiet stream the assemblage began to wind its way down the steep paths into the valley, catching hold here and there of rocks and crags. A band of armed stalwart youths descended first and stood in formation at the bottom, three rows deep, about a thousand paces away from and facing the Mongolian encampment. Then came the youths with the ladders, ropes and fir timbers. The ladders were placed against the crags and the fir timbers

quietly slid down. The girls handed their wreaths to the youths . . . it was not absolutely necessary for them to descend all the way into the valley where any moment the enemy might attack. Last came the elders with Zakhar Berkut and having reviewed the position of the armed youths and all their preparations they hastened to the narrows through which the Tukholian stream foamed and rolled in crystal waves out of the valley.

Zakhar paused before the Sentinel and began to gaze up at him intently. Peace reigned everywhere. Zakhar prayed: "Our great Guardian! You whom our forefathers regarded as their protector, whom we have revered until now with yearly festivities, night after night, three times in succession now, you have appeared to me in my dreams as if you were falling on top of me to crush me. I believe that you are benign and merciful and if you are calling me to yourself, then I take joy in your summons and will gladly follow you. But if you are weary of your everlastingly upright position, then destroy, oh Master, with your great weight this vicious enemy, the children of Morsanna who again today have overflowed your blessed kingdom, the Tukholian valley! Break once more her evil power as you did before when with a forcible blow of your mighty arm you cracked this solid wall of stone, allowing the waters to seep through it, and gave this beautiful valley to the people! Dam it up again and let the brutal conquerors, who are now abusing us, perish!"

At this juncture a fiery flash rent the dark heavens from south to north and far away in the mountains echoed a hollow roar of thunder.

"Yes! That was your mighty voice!" cried Zakhar joyously.

"Come children! For the last time let us crown this sacred stone."

Four youths climbed up a ladder to the top of the column

of rock and entwined it with green wreaths. Again it thundered to the south.

"It is his will, children!" said Zakhar. "Wind the ropes about him! And you others, quickly, take the spades! Dig around the base and place the timbers. Quickly, children, quickly!"

Rapidly, noiselessly, toiled tens of pairs of arms by the Sentinel. At the top it was being entwined with cordage and at the bottom spaded up at its foundation. In this ditch fir timbers, which were to serve as levers, were placed at right angles to help loosen and knock the stone column down across the corridor. Swiftly the efficient youths made all the necessary preparations, took away the ladders and placed thick blocks of stone beneath the wooden levers.

"Take hold of the ropes all of you who can reach them! The youths take hold of the levers!" commanded Zakhar and at once a hundred hands were set to the task.

"Come, all together, pull!" cried Zakhar. "Pull! Pull!"

The people grunted with the effort, the levers of solid timber squeaked and creaked but the stone did not even budge.

"Once more! Pull harder!" shouted Zakhar and himself laid hold of the rope. The huge stone swayed a little.

"It's moving, it's moving!" the people cried exultantly.

"Again! Pull with all your might!"

Once more the people grunted with the effort and all at once the pull of the ropes slackened, the huge stone swayed at its foundation a moment and then with a deafening crash fell across the stream of water, blocking the entrance. The Tukholian valley groaned and trembled from the force of the blow, the pearly drops of water splashed high in all directions and the joyous outcry of the Tukholians filled the air.

The Mongolian army peacefully sleeping in its camp was rudely wakened, the guards screamed, the officers barked commands, weapons clanged, but in a moment all was still again.

The Mongolians, expecting an attack, stood ready to defend themselves, but the Tukholians did not even dream of attacking them. They were busily preparing an altogether different sort of offensive.

Zakhar, nimbly as a youth, examined the position of the reclining stone. It had fallen as well as if it had been fitted there for ages past. It wedged its sharp points between the jagged crags which formed the opening of the corridor and with all its enormous mass, bridged the stream. It is true of course that it did not dam up the waters of the stream entirely as they flowed in a deeper bed, but some of the Tukholian youths were already lugging big slabs of rock while others cleared the bottom of the stream of sand and cobble-stones in order to seal the stream's outlet completely; while still others were building a wall with the thickest blocks of stone within the corridor, along the other side of the fallen column, about six yards across. That wall with the mighty Sentinel as its base could safely withstand the strongest possible pressure of the stream.

"Faster, children!" urged Zakhar, standing by the stream, lending aid to the work now with his hands and now with advice. "Block up the stream before the water gets too deep. High up in the mountains there seems to have been a severe rainstorm. Soon the flood waters will come, then it will be too difficult for us to finish our task. The wall must be built up even with those overhanging crags. Now we'll see how effective the power of Jinghis Khan will be against the force of the water!"

The work proceeded speedily. In a short while the course of the stream was entirely checked. Wrathfully the blocked-up stream whirled around in its bed as if it did not understand why its flow should have been stopped. Time after time it dashed itself furiously against the wall of stone, gnawing at the blocks of rock fitted at the bottom, searching for a vent

between them, but it was all in vain, everywhere stone was piled upon stone, firmly pressed and fitted and knocked together into a solid, impenetrable bulwark. The water gurgled. It pressed all its might against it then ceased, astonished, outwardly quiescent, but boiling with fury within its crystal depths. Like a bison who, preparing for a charge, stands with his head lowered, horns turned towards the ground, quietly awaiting the opportunity to make a sudden charge upon the enemy, the Tukholian stream, unaccustomed to being prisoned, halted for a moment, calmed itself as if it grew weary and napped in its shallow banks, meanwhile gathering sufficient force and boldness for a renewed and more resolute attack, at first only gently pressing itself against the wall as if trying out with its shoulders whether the barrier suddenly put in its way would not yield. But the wall stood firm, cold, smooth, disdainfully impervious in its impregnability.

The busy, attentive hands of the Tukholians kept on strengthening it laying down stone after stone block upon block cementing them together with sticky-smooth, impervious clay. Like a new mountain raised up out of the ground by an infinite power the dam of rock rose ever higher and higher under the hands of the Tukholians. The armed youths had long ago abandoned their position within the valley facing the Mongolian camp and exchanged their bows and battle-axes for cross-bars and adzes with which to trim the slabs of rock for fitting them together.

Happily Zakhar watched the progress of their work and in his eyes there glowed the certitude that they would defeat the enemy.

In the east, over the Mongols' entrenched camp, the clouds were flushed with pink. It was dawning. The rosy glow enveloped the peak of Mt. Zelemenya extending its sparkling rays ever lower downward. The clouds parted a little more, then slowly, timidly, the sun rolled out into the sky and peeped

at the Tukholians occupied with their task. Glancing up at the rising sun, Zakhar's heart filled with joy and with outstretched hands and upraised voice he greeted it.

"Oh Sun, great and brilliant ruler of the earth! Everlasting protector of all those who are pure of heart and soul! Look down upon us! You see, we have been assaulted by a barbaric foe who has ruined our homes and ravaged our country and murdered thousands of our people. In your name we have stood in mortal combat with the enemy and by your light we vow to go on fighting until we draw our last breath. Help us in that fierce struggle! Give us courage, skill and unity. Let us not crumble under their bombardment or be frightened by their preponderance in numbers, but let us believe in our strength and ability! Inspire in us the spirit of harmony and cooperation and give us the intelligence to apply strategy to defeat the marauders. Oh Sun, I bow as our forefathers bowed before you and pray to you sincerely, with all my heart, give us victory!"

His prayer was done. His passionate, potent words quivered in the clear, fresh morning air. They were heard not by the Tukholians alone but the hills heard them and passed their echo on from peak to peak. Also they were heard by the waves of the dammed-up stream and, as if it had reconsidered the matter, it stopped hurling itself against the stone barrier and instead began backing away from it.

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE THE BOYAR was away on the unsuccessful errand, Maxim sat in his tent pondering what he should do. His short meeting with Peace-Renown was like a bright ray of sunshine in the brooding darkness of his helpless imprisonment. Her words, her glances, the touch of her hands, the tidings she brought, all this it seemed snatched him back from the brink of a murky grave, restoring him once more to life. He felt his old courage and hope returning. Quietly but with optimistic thoughts he waited, listening for the boyar's footsteps.

"So you are still here?" cried the boyar, entering the tent. "Poor boy, all in vain I tried my best to obtain your freedom. But your old man is obstinate! Though he's grey, he's still a child."

"Didn't I warn you, Boyarin, that your efforts would prove fruitless?" replied Maxim.

"But tell me, what exactly did my father say to you?"

"He said they would fight to their last breath, and that's all there was to it. 'Either we will all be slain,' he said, 'or you will.'"

"My father doesn't say things like that just to hear himself talk, Boyarin. He is in the habit of considering matters thoroughly before he speaks."

"I've noticed myself," the boyar admitted unwillingly, "that he doesn't say much but whatever he says is the truth. But what is there to do? No matter how you look at it the

battle of the Tukholians against the Mongols is an uneven match. Force will break even straw no matter what may be said for its toughness."

"Listen Boyarin, there are also ways to curb force," Maxim contended.

"Oh yes! I have seen their contrivance! My daughter is a hot-head. You have bewitched her, that's certain. She has taught them how to make trebuchets. We shall get a hailstorm of stones here tomorrow, but not such a very damaging one, for they did not know how to plait good strong ropes for the sling."

"Besides these trebuchets, you think they have no other means?"

"I do not know. It seems they have not. But we haven't long to wait, we'll see what happens in the morning. My worst worry is Burunda, he's annoying me, insisting that I find a way to lead them out of here tomorrow morning without battle or loss of time. And here the Tukholians are acting like wild bucks determined to stand with their horns lowered against us. Now what am I going to do? If I can't do anything, then I can't, that's all there is to it!"

"No, Boyarin, you shouldn't be so easily discouraged. For the time being you're in Mongolian hands just as I am. Therefore you have to do what they command."

"But how am I to accomplish it?"

"Perhaps I could be of service, Boyarin. I'm grateful to you for the kindness you have shown me today. If you wish, I will try to help you."

"You? Will help me?" cried the boyar, astonished. "What can you do to help me?"

"I know of a safe and secret path that will lead us out of this valley, about which no one in Tukhlia knows outside of my father and myself. This path is unguarded. Over it a troop of Mongols can be led to the top to surround the trail

and then it will be an easy matter to tear down the barricades and march out of the valley."

The boyar stood stupefied before Maxim, not believing his own ears. "How can this be?" a lightning thought flashed through his brain, disappeared, and a twinge of pain pierced his heart. Regardless of how antagonistic he had been towards Maxim until recently, nonetheless he had been pleased by his noble staunchness and determination; therefore when he heard such a speech from Maxim's lips, it seemed to him as if within his heart something deep and sacred was being rent to shreds, the last vestiges of his belief in the inherent honesty and integrity of man.

"Young man!" he exclaimed. "What are you saying? Did you actually mean to do something like that?"

"Of course, Boyarin." Maxim said half-gravely and half-teasingly. "You said yourself that under stress even straw will break."

"But YOU, you, who not long ago vowed, 'I'd rather die than turn traitor!'"

"But what else is there to do?" asked Maxim solemnly again. "If a vow can't be kept, it just can't!"

"And you, with such a susceptible, compliant nature dare to think that my daughter will go on loving you?" cried the boyar angrily.

"Boyarin," said Maxim bitterly. "Do not remind me of her!"

"You see, how it pains you. Evidently you realize yourself what I say is true."

"Who knows, Boyarin, who knows! We are at war and war teaches all sorts of strategems. But what if . . . I?"

"What if you . . . what? Why don't you finish?" cried Tuhar Wolf.

"Nothing, nothing! I only wanted to ask you again if you accept my proposition?"

"The question is, are you REALLY thinking of leading the Mongols against your Tukholians?"

"Yes, I really am, if only it will be possible . . ."

"What do you mean, 'if only it will be possible'? Does it mean only if the path is unguarded?"

"No, I guarantee that the path will not be guarded and that we'll pass through it in broad daylight unobserved, if only there will be no other obstacle."

"What other obstacle could there be?"

"I . . . don't know. . . ."

"In that case, there's no sense in standing here arguing about it. Let's go to Burunda!"

"Go alone, Boyarin and repeat to him what I've just told you. You need make no mention about a possible hindrance because I reiterate, neither the Tukholians nor any other armed people will hinder us and no other obstacle will frighten those daredevils."

"Very well!" Tuhar Wolf replied.

"And ask him to order my chains removed, otherwise it will be impossible for me to do anything."

"That's to be understood," said the boyar and went out, wondering on the way what this paradox meant.

What fearfully painful moments Maxim underwent in the interim, while the boyar was out informing Burunda concerning his design. With his head in his hands, he sat there in dreadful uncertainty, straining to catch with his ears the faintest swishing sounds, as if awaiting the coming of someone dearest to his heart. He shuddered and quivered as if a palsy had seized him, his teeth chattered as if he were bitten by the frost. But the moments stalked by quietly, peacefully, interminably each of them tearing into his heart like a bear's sharp claws. What if it didn't turn out as Peace-Renown had told him it would and the boyar began to press him to fulfill his promise. Well, it stands to reason that death would not pass

him by this time. He had been prepared for death for a long time now, but to die without having kept his word, which he had sworn to do, to him whose future and perhaps even life depended upon the keeping of that promise, to die a traitor even if only in the eyes of another traitor, that thought was worse torture than death itself.

Also death itself seemed far worse now after seeing Peace-Renown again, than it had been an hour earlier when he had sat in the middle of the road choked by the smoke from the conflagration and gazed mutely at the fire which destroyed his house. But what was that? The earth trembled and a loud reverberation stirred the air, causing an uproar in the camp. Shouts arose, the clanging of weapons. What had happened? Maxim jumped to his feet and clapped his hands until the chains clanged. Joy, joy! The Tukholians were at work! It meant they were building that obstacle which would hinder the Mongols, and prevent him from becoming a traitor! Now he could die in peace for he would not have to break his word with his enemy. His heart thumped turbulently, he could not sit still and began to pace up and down the tent. The hubbub in the camp began to subside and in a moment, the boyar reentered the tent. His face was alight with happy satisfaction.

"Boy," he began immediately, "your proposition came just in the nick of time! It saved me from untold danger. Did you hear that noise? Your Tukholians are crafty, they're building barricades right behind us. Come quickly to the commander, he's already choosing a detail to go with you. We need to get out of here in a hurry; it's not safe here!"

Like sharp knives these words cut into Maxim's heart. But come what may, he needed to detain their march until the moment when it would be rendered impossible.

"Since when, Boyarin, have you begun to fear the peasants' barricades? I don't think there's any sudden danger confronting the Mongols. Let the Tukholians amuse themselves with

their stockades, we will drive them away from them soon enough. But there's no need to hurry. As you can see, it's still dark. Not until it is broad daylight will we be able to find the outlet I have spoken to you about."

"What sort of an outlet is it that can be found only in broad daylight?"

"Listen a moment, Boyarin, and I will tell you. In a section of our yard, buried beneath a covering of earth, there's a giant flagstone. We have to find that spot, spade away the dirt, lift up the stone and we will enter a long, narrow, underground passage which will lead us out of the valley to the top, right into the Glade of Light, where you saw my father awhile ago."

"Well then, why wait any longer? Let's go and search for it at once!" cried the boyar.

"That's easy enough for you to say, Boyarin, but you have forgotten something, the village was burned down, our fences and buildings burned also and all signs which would indicate the place were destroyed so that in the dark I could never find it. Besides, as I said before, why hurry when our way out is assured in broad daylight?"

"Oh well, have it your way," the boyar consented in the end. "I'll go and tell Burunda about this and will send someone right away to unchain you. Only remember, young fellow, you'll still be under guard, because, to tell you the truth, neither Burunda nor I trust you completely and if there's any trickery, you can expect certain death."

"I realized that all along, Boyarin," Maxim replied calmly.

The boyar went out again and soon after two Mongolian blacksmiths entered and removed the heavy chains from him. Maxim, once rid of the iron weights which had squeezed and gnawed for almost twenty-four hours not only his flesh but also it seemed his soul, felt as light as if he had been re-born.

Light of heart and full of hope, he was led by the Mongols before the tent of Burunda.

Burunda measured him from head to foot with his ferocious, piercing eyes and spoke to him through his interpreter, Tuhar Wolf.

"Slave," said Burunda, "I am told that you know of a secret outlet from this valley?"

"I do," replied Maxim.

"Are you prepared to show it to us?"

"I am."

"What favor do you expect in return for it?"

"None."

"Then why are you doing this?"

"As an indication of my good-will."

"Where is this outlet?"

"On my father's property."

"Can you find it right away?"

"I cannot. Everything which would indicate it has been burned down and the passage is deeply buried beneath the earth. But as soon as it's daylight I will find it."

"It's growing light now. Go and search for it! And one more thing, if you are telling us the truth and find the passage, then you will be set free and in addition will receive a gift. But if you're trying to dupe us with empty promises then you will atone for it by the most horrible torture."

"I'll take your word for it, great behadir!" said Maxim, "and you can also depend upon mine!"

"Go and search for the passage. Here are your helpers. I will also accompany you."

How slowly and cautiously walked Maxim! How minutely he examined every little nook, every stone, as if trying to recall the exact position of the place changed by yesterday's conflagration! Though he was still some distance away from his father's homestead, he stopped several times, bent close to the

ground, thumped it, dug a little here and there and always kept glancing ahead, at the stream from where his own help was to come. With snail-like pace the detachment of Mongols crawled behind him. Burunda grew impatient.

“Don’t be angry, great Behadir!” said Maxim. “Yesterday’s conflagration completely destroyed all traces of life within the valley. It’s difficult for me to place everything at once. In a minute now, we’ll be in my father’s yard.

With eager, expectant eyes, Maxim glanced towards the stream. God be praised! The banks were full. In a moment the water would begin to flood the valley. Beyond the village, near the corridor, there appeared wide rivulets and little lakes, blood red in color, reflecting the rays of the rising sun. Now it meant he could proceed with confidence. Maxim dissembled no longer but quickly led the Mongolians unto his father’s property, selected a spot where the earth reverberated hollowly and Burunda, quivering with impatience shouted an order for the Mongols to dig. Not until then did he glance about him and observe the overflowing stream.

“What is that?” he cried, gripped by some inexplicable fear.

Tuhar Wolf also shuddered. Only Maxim stood unperturbed.

“It’s nothing, Behadir. Last night there was a heavy rain-storm up in the mountains and after each such storm our stream overflows a little. But that’s nothing, the water never reaches as far as here.”

“If that’s so,” said Burunda, checking his fears, “then dig on!”

But Maxim was not telling the truth. The water flooded the valley ever wider and wider and only the ignorant and frightened Mongols did not suspect that this was not an ordinary overflow from the rains, for the waters in the stream

were clear and did not flow forward or foam but swelled higher and higher overflowing the banks.

In the meantime the digging proceeded slowly though the Mongols did their best. All at once their spades struck something hard. It was the flag-stone. The stone was broad, wider than the hole the Mongols had dug. It was necessary to dig up a much larger area in order to remove it or to be able to crack it. Maxim watched the rising of the water with worried eyes. The section of the valley below the village was already covered. In long waves the water rolled in the opposite direction from that in which it had naturally flowed since the beginning of time. Suddenly from the Mongolian camp resounded cries of panic. The water had overflowed the fosse and flooded the camp in a thousand rivulets.

"Slave, what does it mean?" Burunda questioned Maxim.

"Well, Behadir," replied Maxim, "it looks as though there's been a cloud-burst in the mountain-tops. Our stream seems fuller than usual. But it's not sensible for us to be afraid of water that reaches to the ankles!"

"Knock out the flag-stone!" he yelled at the Mongols, "and let the great behadir see that I was not fooling him!"

The Mongolian axes thundered against the flag-stone, but the stone was thick and strong and it was not easy to break it.

"Hit it harder," shouted Burunda, unable any longer to control his fear of the water which had made a lake out of a large part of the valley and was now rolling straight towards them. But the block of stone was of Tukholian temperament and resisted as long as possible. Then it cracked. One more concerted blow and it crumbled into pieces. With it also collapsed the Mongols who had been standing atop it. The opening of the dark underground corridor showed itself to the eyes of the gathered.

"You see, Behadir!" said Maxim. "Now tell me yourself, have I been tricking you?"

But somehow Burunda failed to be greatly overjoyed with the uncovering of the underground pass. In long, rolling waves the water came towards them and splashed at their feet. In another moment with a joyous swish it flowed into the newly uncovered hole.

"Stop the water, stop the water!" cried Burunda and the Mongols set themselves to work to keep the water from getting into the opening. But their work was in vain. The water covered the ground, the clay softened and dissolved into mud in the hands of the Mongols. Such an attempt could not stop the force of the water which kept rolling into the hole ever more strongly from all directions splashing for a long time there and then disappearing within it until in the end it had filled it completely.

Stupefied the Mongols stood around the hollow and watched how the water flooded their last remaining outlet from the valley.

"Vassal!" said Burunda to Maxim, "is this your way out?"

"Behadir," replied Maxim, "can I command the water where not to go?"

Burunda did not reply to this, only gazed at the water around him which continued to rise, ever deeper covering the valley. Already with a smoothly mirrored surface it glistened over the entire valley. Only here and there peeped tiny islands of dry land. In the Mongolian camp there was a roaring tumult though the water reached barely up to their ankles.

"Behadir," said Maxim to Burunda, seeing that he was preparing to return to his tent. "I want to remind you of your promise. You said that whenever I showed you the outlet, I would be set free. I showed it to you."

"And the outlet disappointed me. You will be set free only when we have all come out of this valley and not before."

And Burunda left him, followed by his company, to return and restore order among his confused soldiers.

The Mongolian army stood in military formation up to its ankles in water, worried and helpless. Though the water which covered the whole valley, smooth, clear, shiny as melted glass, was low, its force and the waterfall which like a lighted column hung above the watery plain, constantly adding to it, was what disheartened the Mongols.

But it did no good to stand there! Their very fear at sight of the threatening danger awakened them to the need of some kind of action even if it was useless action. It was therefore imperative for them to do something, to try their luck, for otherwise Burunda realized, all that mass of Mongols would disband, pursued by its fear. Burunda ordered the whole army to band itself and to stand in one group.

“What are you, men or cats, that you’re so scared of these few drops of water? Haven’t we crossed much greater rivers than this? What is this stream compared to the Ayka, Volga, Don and Dnieper? Have no fear, water up to our ankles can’t drown us. Forward to the corridor! We’ll attack all together in one mass. Let us advance at all hazards! We must defeat them!” Thus shouted Burunda and marched forward in the lead. The Mongolian army moved after him, wading in the water with noisy splashes which echoed to the hills and reverberated in the forests.

But a hundred paces from the corridor, they were met by a deadly storm of stones released from the trebuchets. Boulders, slabs of stone, sharp, pointed rocks washed down by the waterfall and gathered from the stream, rained down upon the massed army breaking bones and cracking open skulls. The waters beneath their feet were crimsoned with blood. Disregarding Burunda’s shouts, the group dispersed, the biggest portion of it backing away to where the stones could not reach it. Burunda himself together with his personal following of dauntless Turkomen had to retreat, for the hailstorm of stones

grew denser while the Mongolian shots did no damage to the Tukholians.

Tuhar Wolf, observing the position of the enemy, noticed that by the biggest engine, which unceasingly hurled either heavy blocks of stone or whole bushels of pebbles down on the Mongols, stood his own daughter, Peace-Renown, among several Tukholian elders and directed all the workings of that machine.

Maxim had noticed her sometime before and did not take his eyes off her. How happy he would have been to stand there by her side and listen to her courageous, intelligent commands and to injure the enemy at her direction! But alas, that was not his fate! There he stood himself among these foes, without chains but still powerless, a prisoner, wishing that a stone thrown by her hands might end his torture and his life.

Tuhar Wolf tugged at his sleeve.

"It's no use staring up there, boy," he said. "My daughter's gone completely crazy. Look what she's doing! Nonetheless, for us it's getting worse and worse. Do you have such floods as this very often?"

"Like this? Never!"

"What do you mean 'never'?"

"Because this is not a flood. You can see yourself the water is clear."

"Not a flood? Then what is it?"

"Haven't you already guessed, Boyarin? The Tukholians have blocked the outlet of the stream in order to flood the valley."

"Blocked it up!" cried the boyar. "That means . . ."

"It means the stream will continue to swell until . . ."

"Until what?"

"Until it drowns all of us, of course!"

The boyar pounded his head with his fists. "And you knew this all along?"

"I found it out from your daughter. My father thought of it, Boyarin."

"How unfortunate! And why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

"What for?"

"We might have both saved ourselves."

"We have plenty of time for that," replied Maxim quietly. "Only let us stay together and if anything should happen don't let anyone harm me, Boyarin, while I am unarmed."

"That's to be understood," said the boyar. "But what shall we do?"

"For now, there's no need to be afraid," replied Maxim. "The stream is narrow and the valley wide, the water is rising very slowly. But it won't continue so for long. In perhaps an hour or so there will come down from the mountain tops a real flood and it will quickly fill the valley. By evening the waters will have risen higher than the tallest man. We must hold out until then for while the Mongols are still alive they will never let us out of their hands."

"But until that time they could easily chop us up to bits."

"Don't worry, Boyarin. A man in danger is not likely to be belligerent. He thinks first of preserving himself and not about another's death. Let's try to find a safe place for ourselves to stand on where the water will not reach to drown us when the flood comes."

While the boyar and Maxim were talking the Mongols had moved back from the wall of rock and stood irresolutely in the middle of the lake. The water reached nearly to their knees. Burunda glared furiously at the unexpected enemy which was not intimidated by his angry voice or his warrior's might. He kicked at it, spit at it, scolded and swore at it with the most terrible oaths, but the foe, quietly and peacefully splashed in the valley, flowing along in slow waves, continuing to increase. It was reaching up to the knees of the Mongols,

hindering their march, taking away their desire to fight, weakening the army's morale. What could all this mean? Would the waters continue to rise? When they rose as high as their waists all their movements would be hampered and the Tukholians would shoot them all down with their stones like ducks. But the water was still clear, translucent, only where the Mongols waded about, it stood in broad muddy pools.

Tuhar Wolf approached Burunda.

"Great Behadir," he said, "we are in grave danger."

"Why?" asked Burunda frowning sulkily.

"These waters will not recede for our enemies have dammed up the stream in order to drown the entire Mongolian army in the valley."

"So!" cried Burunda, "and you abominable slave, dare to tell me this, when you led us into this hole yourself?"

"You fail to remember, great Behadir, that I could not lead you here to be betrayed for what menaces you also threatens me."

"You can't fool me! You went there last night to negotiate with them for the destruction of the Mongols."

"If that is so, do you think, Behadir, knowing about the destruction of the Mongols in advance, I would have returned to die here with them?"

Burunda was somewhat mollified. "What shall we do?" he asked. "Should we just give up and die?"

"No, we must defend ourselves. In a few minutes, Behadir, a real flood will pour down from the mountains and it will rapidly fill up this valley. First of all we must defend ourselves against it."

"But how?"

"Order your army, while the water is still clear, to gather stones from the bottom and heap them up, each company a pile for itself. Standing on them we will be able to defend ourselves at least from the weaker enemy, the Tukholians."

Without stopping to cogitate upon it long, Burunda ordered the soldiers to gather the stones and pile them up in separate heaps, each group one for itself. This order which threatened them with no danger pleased the Mongols and their expectations of something dry to stand on instead of wading up to their knees in the cold water warmed their courage. With joyous whoops they set themselves to the task, wading around in the valley, collecting the stones and heaping them up.

The Tukholians stood atop the banks encompassing the lake, watching the work and taunting them.

“Come nearer! Here!” they called to the Mongols. “We have plenty of stones and will distribute them generously among you!”

But whenever any Mongols came close enough to their positions immediately the engines creaked and the stones swept down like an avalanche upon the unfortunate who, wading around in the deepening swell of the waters, tried to hide themselves and tired themselves but could not escape. Whether they wanted to or not, the Mongols were forced to stay in the center of the valley out of reach of the Tukholian trebuchets. Burunda almost went mad in his helplessness, listening to the derisive laughter of the Tukholians.

“We can’t fail like this!” he cried. “Come here to me, my faithful Turkomen!”

The most daring contingent of the Mongolian force gathered around him, men sturdy as oaks and ferocious as steppe tigers, whose skins they wore fastened about them. He led them towards one of the Tukholian positions which was placed well forward, by itself, on the top of a sharp, overhanging cliff. A small group of Tukholians stood beside the new machine.

“Aim a volley of your poisoned arrows at them!” cried Burunda. They buzzed through the air like a swarm of

bumble bees. The wounded Tukholians screamed in pain and dispersed. The Mongols moved forward.

"Don't let them assemble again!" shouted Burunda. "Don't let them hurl any more stones down upon us! We can strengthen our position here."

He divided the group into two companies, one to keep on shooting at the enemy's post and the other to pile up the stones for protection against the rising waters. Tuhar Wolf and Maxim, whom Burunda constantly kept with him also helped with the work by carrying stones and heaping them up. But this work was getting more difficult to accomplish as time went on. The water had risen to their waists. There began to be a shortage of stones and the piles had not yet reached the surface. Burunda directed the archers who had already succeeded in wounding ten Tukholians. They were dying from the tragic effects of the snake poison, which had gotten into their blood, and for which all of Zakhar Berkut's healing skill could do nothing.

"Give up that station, children!" advised Zakhar. "Let them stand in front of that precipice. They cannot save themselves that way, especially with the water beneath them!"

The Tukholians gave up their post. The Mongols waded around in the water happily adding more stones to the piles. Finally there were no more stones to be found.

"It won't do us much good, boys, just to heap up the stones," Burunda said to his soldiers. "The archers, stand on top of the piles and keep on shooting with your bows. The rest come with me! We must hold this post and climb up the wall of rock, even if the heavens should come tumbling down upon us. You slaves, come with me also and lead the way!"

"Behadir," said Maxim through Tuhar Wolf acting as interpreter, "it's useless for us to try struggling up that way. There's no path there to the top."

"There must be one!" Burunda insisted and jumped into

the water, his Turkomen following behind him. The bottom was uneven; the Mongols slipped and fell. The water, whipped by a stiff breeze, beat in enormous waves against the steep wall, hampering their progress. Although from the Mongolian position it was no further than two hundred paces to the bank, they spent over half an hour traversing the distance. But the water by the wall was still deeper reaching almost to their armpits and they found not a trace of a path leading up the wall of rock. From neighboring Tukholian positions the stones hailed down upon the daredevils, and although the largest number of them either dashed themselves in vain against the wall of rock or fell into the water, Burunda's station in that place was exceedingly inconvenient and ineffectual.

"Perhaps your youths know how to climb better," Maxim mocked. "It's quite possible to clamber up the wall to the top."

But none of the steppe-raised Turkomen could scale the precipitous wall of stone.

"In that case," said Maxim, "let me, Behadir, be the first to climb to the top and show you how."

But Burunda was no longer listening. He was already planning something else. He divided his company once more, one group he left in the newly gained position, beneath the protection of an overhanging ridge of rock, with the other group, Tuhar Wolf and Maxim, he set out to seek a more advantageous post. But as soon as the group of them, wading up to their waists in the water, showed themselves beyond the protecting ridge protruding from the wall of rock, the Tukholian engines bombarded them with stones, felling nearly half their number. The rest were forced to retreat.

"Let us return to our safer post, Behadir," said Tuhar Wolf. "Do you hear the foam and splash of the waves and the screams coming from the upper end of the valley? I think the real flood is on the way."

The boyar was right. The thunderous roar of the catapult from which the very earth shook indicated that the inundation was coming. In immense, muddy waves, the waters cascaded down into the valley, discoloring the entire surface of the broad lake and covering it with large caps of foam. In place of the clear, smooth mirror of water, the mad waves of a boisterous sea hurled themselves against the rocky banks, swaying, undulating, vascillating, forming whirlpools.

It was dreadful to look out over the valley. Here and there groups of Mongols, like tiny isolated islands, showed themselves above the waters. There was not a trace left among them of any kind of military discipline. Like chaff blown about by a strong wind, the army had scattered over the valley, fighting with the waves, here and there moving about with difficulty, screaming and cursing. No one heard or paid any attention to anyone else. Some of the more fortunate stood on the piled-up stones and were at least for the time being safe from the pressure of the flood. Others sank in the water up to their shoulders and to their necks holding themselves up by leaning on their spears or swung their bows high over their heads. But most of them had discarded their bows which like straws now whirled about in the maelstrom. Some had taken off their fur coats and let them float away although their teeth chattered from the cold, hoping somehow to lighten their weight and thus keep themselves afloat. Those who were short caught hold of the taller ones, knocking them down and together with them spluttered and splashed about fighting the waves, until they went down. Others began to swim away though they themselves did not know why or to where they should swim.

The piles of stones hurriedly amassed in the center of the valley could hold only a small number of lucky ones and they were the object of deadly jealousy and witless cursing by those who were drowning. Around each pile there pressed thousands

of them, maddened and howling, trying to get on to a place of safety. Uselessly those who stood on the piles of stones argued that the piles could not hold them all, that someone had to die. But no one wanted to die, they were all anxious to clamber up on the rocks. Those who stood on the piles perforce had to defend themselves against that pressure if they did not wish to be displaced. Their mallets and battle-axes crashed against the arms and skulls of other Mongols. Brother cared not about brother in that terrible moment of approaching death. Friend murdered friend with fiercer wrath than he ever would have an enemy. Those of the sinking who stood deepest in the water, back of the rest, nearest their watery death, pressed forward, those who stood close by the piles exposed to the blows of their comrades, pressed backward screaming; those in the center howled with pain and fear, crowded on all sides, pushed by those in front and back into the water. Some already sinking, frantically caught hold of the heaped-up stones beneath the surface, dislodging them.

Suddenly five of the piles gave way and all those who had stood upon them were thrown into the water and were in the same predicament as those from whom they had defended themselves. And the unfortunate ones, who had not been allowed to stand upon the piles, their senses benumbed by deathly fear, now whooped joyously whenever a new pile gave way, throwing new sacrifices into the jaws of the unmerciful foe.

A killing, destructive mania had seized some of them who began killing and ruining everything in sight. One of them, a giant of a man with face of purplish hue, his teeth clenched and lips bitten until they bled, was blindly hacking away with his battle-axe at any of his comrades who came near or chanced to fall under his hands and when no one came to hand he hacked away at the foaming bloody waves.

Another, giggling hysterically, kept knocking down into the

water any who happened to have found a higher place to stand on, a stone or corpse of a comrade. A third roared like a bull and butted the sinking from the back. Another folded his hands over his head and screwing up his face whimpered and bawled like a child. Some of them, seeing nothing but their inevitable death, clung to their comrades trying to climb on their shoulders, hanging on to their hair, forcing them down to the bottom and sinking along with them.

Like fish on their way to spawn, caught in a narrow stream, splashing and sticking their open mouths above the surface of the water to catch a breath of air, so here in the middle of the enormous, muddy, whirling lake, spluttering, fighting, sinking, rising to the top a moment, waving their arms and jerking their heads and sinking again, the Mongols drowned by the hundreds and thousands.

Hushed and motionless like wooden posts the Tukholians stood on the banks. Not even the stoutest and hardest-hearted could go on watching without shuddering, shedding a tear or emitting cries of pity at the wholesale drowning of human beings.

Paralyzed by boundless woe, Burunda-Behadir, watched the scene of horror. Although he was himself threatened by no lesser danger, though the water reached to the shoulders of his own select division of men and the swift currents which appeared in the stream tugged at their legs and reminded them of an urgent need to return to their position of safety, still Burunda stood for sometime tearing at his hair, emitting terrible, unrestrained cries, bemoaning the disaster which had befallen his army. No one dared to speak to him in that awful moment. All stood around him shivering, buffeted by the infinitely powerful enemy, water.

"Let's go back!" said Burunda at last and they made straight for the pile of stones which the Turkomen had gathered in front of their post. They were just in time. The

water rose higher, stronger. Between them and their goal there opened a wide whirlpool which they could withstand only in a mass by taking hold of hands. Only the giant Burunda went ahead of them breaking the turbulent waves with this stout chest.

Like an islet in the center of a sea stood the group of soldiers upon their pile, up to their waists in water, with bows drawn, aimed for the Tukholian post. Their military discipline had not yet been destroyed by their peril. Luckily their heap of stones was bigger than that of the others, made up of huge slabs of rock which only under water could so easily have been lifted and moved. More than a hundred additional fully armed men could stand on it and there were exactly that number with Burunda without counting those whom he had left near the wall of rock beneath the protecting ridge.

Standing upon the pile, Burunda's comrades sighed a little in relief. First of all they glanced towards the cliff where they had left their companions, about forty in number. In that spot was a furious whirling and swishing of waves dashing themselves against the sharp projections of the cliff, splashing their silvery foam high up the wall. There was not a sign of the Turkomen, only at those times when the waves momentarily calmed themselves, something black showed against the background of the dark stone wall; this was apparently the only living man left from among that company. With paralyzing grip, he clung to the cliff no matter how vehemently the mad waves pulled and yanked at his body. He did not scream, did not cry out for help, only swayed with each influx of the tide until in the end he also disappeared, like a leaf washed down stream.

Burunda, benumbed, his face blue from suffering and wrath, glanced over the valley. The dreadful cries and wails had ceased. In the whirlpools, here and there showing above

the surface of the water, whirled about clenched fists, feet or heads. Only ten groups of living men like ten black islands stood on their stone heaps, but even they were no longer soldiers only badly frightened, disarmed weaklings, trembling and un-nerved by their despair. Although they were within hearing distance of each other, they could not aid each other and whether banded together in one group or alone they were just as helpless, awaiting their inevitable death.

CHAPTER IX

"BOYARIN, what do you think will happen to us?" Burunda suddenly asked.

"We'll all be drowned," replied Tuhar Wolf quietly.

"That's what I thought," affirmed Burunda. "But what infuriates me most of all is that we'll all die without a struggle, without glory, like cats thrown into a pool."

The boyar made no answer to this. New developments turned everyone's attention upon himself. Evidently the Tukholians were not content to wait until the water had risen high enough to drown the rest of the miserable Mongols; they were in a hurry to finish off the enemy.

In the forest above the catapulting cataract their youths were chopping down thick fir trees, sharpening them at both ends like stakes and tying stone weights to them so they would float beneath the surface of the water without being detected. When swiftly flowing currents from the catapulting waterfall appeared in the center of the lake, they let the fir timbers float down stream straight towards the Mongolian posts. The very first of these dealt a forceful blow with its sharp point to one of the heaps of stones upon which the Mongols stood. The stones crashed beneath the water and, pressed down from above by Mongolian feet, the pile loosened and gave way. With loud oaths the Mongols fell into the water. Three of them landed on top of the fir timber and grasped hold of it. The current swung them with the fir log down stream into the depths until it chanced upon a whirlpool which twirled

the fir around and stood it up on end. The Mongols slid into the water and were never seen again.

Other Mongols who were so violently dislodged from their places trampled each other down into the water or called for help while trying to right themselves. Two or three of them, evidently good swimmers, set out for the banks but even here death did not escape them. Only a few were allowed by their comrades to take places on neighboring piles. But they were not safe there for long. The Tukholians, noticing the success of their first effort, began to float log after log down into the valley. However, these rams failed to do much damage to the Mongols for the strong current carried them past most of the Mongolian posts.

Then Peace-Renown made a new suggestion, that they nail several pieces of timber together and lower these rafts with the aid of ropes down the waterfall into the valley, keeping them close to the banks. Ten vigorous fully armed youths were to stand upon each raft, two of whom would steer the rafts with long poles against the Mongolian stations. It didn't take long before two such crafts were ready to be lowered down the waterfall, which had been reduced considerably by the swell of the flood. Twenty stout and dauntless youths stepped unto the log rafts and were carried down stream to battle with the Mongols.

It was an easy though resolute combat. The first group of Mongols whom they rammed were almost entirely unarmed, terrified and dismayed. They quickly pushed these unfortunates into the water with their poles. The Mongols on the other piles whimpered pitifully, seeing their approaching death. Burunda gnashed his teeth when he saw the enemy's merciless manner of warfare and grasped hold of his weapons but his wrath was useless, the poisoned arrows of his Turkomen could not reach the bold Tukholians. The obdurate behadir was forced to stand up to his chest in water and helplessly watch

the Tukholians annihilate post after post of the Mongolian army.

With clenched teeth, squatting on their rafts, the Tukholians rode the waves, steering towards the Mongols. At some of the posts they were met by an obstinate resistance. Blood flowed, groans and wails rose from both sides, corpses fell from the rafts and the stone heaps but the resistance of the Mongols was of short duration. Like a blazing fire that sweeps over a field of mowed hay and devours stack after stack of dried hay, the Tukholians swept the dwindling Mongols off their heaps, one after the other, into the water and into the chill embraces of death. Soon there was not a trace left of the little black islands in the center of the lake. Further away towards one side of the valley, not far from the banks, there stood the last remaining group, like the last black rock, lifting its peak above a flooded area. This was Burunda's personal contingent, one hundred select Turkomen, Tuhar Wolf and Maxim, all that remained of the once prodigious Mongolian army, which was to have marched over the Tukholian trail to the kingdom of the Magyars and which had found here among the mountain ranges a chill grave in the icy mountain streams though it had successfully crossed the Ayka, Volga, Don and Dnieper rivers. This intrepid group of men who stood surrounded by water without hope of being saved, with but one desire, to sell their lives dearly in battle, was the last sacrifice to Mors.

The entire population of the Tukholian township had assembled before this last enemy stronghold. They lowered two additional rafts in order to encircle and harass the enemy from all sides. The foe was bombarded from the top of the bank by a barrage of heavy missiles and arrows. Most of these did not reach Burunda's post, others even though they reached it, did not harm the Turkomen. However, the Tukholians were afraid to come too close because of the volleys of poisoned

arrows aimed at them. Swiftly noting the futility of their shots, they ceased and stood quietly watching.

High up on the edge of the cliff, stood Zakhar Berkut, eyes fastened on his son who stood among the foes, agilely avoiding the bursts of flying arrows and stones. Further away among those who did the shooting, stood Peace-Renown and her glances flew faster than her shots into the group of enemies among whom stood all that was most precious in her life, her father and Maxim. With each arrow shot released by the bow of a Tukholian, her heart almost failed her.

The youths upon the rafts soon tired of aiming from a distance without hitting their marks. They took courage and drew nearer. The Turkomen greeted them with their poisoned arrows and wounded several. But they soon noticed that the foes were all out of that deadly ammunition and with savage yells they closed in upon them, steering their rafts directly towards them. Silently the Turkomen, held together by a discipline as unyielding as iron, awaited their attack, tightly grouped together to resist the Tukholians and the waves. But the Tukholians, having come to within two rods of them, hurled their javelins which hung suspended from their wrists by long spiral leather thongs. Ten foes howled at once and ten bodies toppled over into the water. Again the youths threw their javelins and again a few more of the enemy fell.

"Damnation upon you!" Burunda yelled at them in a wild frenzy of blasphemy. "They will pick off all of us that way, the dirty louts!"

But his wrath now had the same effect as the gentle evening breeze which sighs in the pines but harms no one. The Tukholian youths, screaming like vultures, circled around the enemy, attacking from all sides, killing one here, one there, with well-aimed javelin throws. Further self-defence was made impossible for the Mongols. They were forced to stand quietly as if bound, awaiting their death.

"Behadir," said Tuhar Wolf to Burunda, "can't we somehow manage to save at least our own lives?"

"What for?" Burunda questioned sullenly.

"Life is sweeter than death!"

"I suppose so," replied Burunda, and his eyes glistened not with any real desire to live but to get his revenge. "What shall we do?"

"Perhaps they would be willing now to grant us our lives and freedom in exchange for the return of the prisoner."

"Let's try it!" approved Burunda and grabbing Maxim by the front of his shirt, he pulled him up before him. Beside him stood Tuhar Wolf who began to wave with a white kerchief.

"Tukholians!" he called, turning his face upwards toward the bank. Everything quieted down.

"Tell them that if they want this slave returned to them alive they must grant us our lives and set us at liberty. If they refuse, we will know how to die, but first he will die, right before their eyes."

"Tukholians!" called Tuhar Wolf, "The Mongolian commander promises to return this prisoner to you sound and well and asks in return that you set those of us who are now left at liberty. If you do not consent, then inevitable death is awaiting him."

As if desiring to convince them of the reality of his threat, Burunda raised his terrible battle-axe over the head of the unarmed Maxim.

The entire community stood petrified with horror. Old Zakhar shuddered and turned his eyes away from the sight which tore at his heart strings.

"Zakhar," said the Tukholian elders gathering around him. "We think it is all right to accept this proposition. The bulk of the Mongolian army is vanquished and those few remaining men should not frighten us."

"My brothers, you do not know the Mongolians! Among that small group of people is their most formidable commander who will never forgive us for the destruction of his army. He will lead a new one into our mountains and who knows if we will be able to disband it so easily the next time!"

"But your son, Zakhar, your son! Take heed, death awaits him! Look, the axe is upraised over his head!"

"It is better that my son should die than for his sake a single enemy should escape from our country."

Weeping, Peace-Renown approached old Zakhar.

"Father," she wept, "what are you thinking of doing?" Why do you want to lose your son and . . . me, father? I love your son. I vowed to marry him and be his wife. The moment of his death will also be mine!"

"Poor girl," replied Zakhar. "How can I comfort you? Your only concern is a pair of flashing dark eyes and a handsome build while I must consider the good of all. There is no choice here, my daughter."

"Zakhar, Zakhar!" cried the townspeople. "We are all convinced there's been enough slaughter and that the power of the Mongolian army has been fatefully broken. We do not desire the death of the rest therefore we put their destiny as well as that of your son into your hands. Take pity upon your own flesh and blood!"

"Take pity upon our youth, our love!" Peace-Renown implored, weeping.

"You can promise them anything and everything until they return your son," said a youth from one of the communities beyond the crest of the mountain. "As soon as Maxim is free, you give us the sign and we will send all the rest of them to the bottom to feed the crabs."

"No!" Zakhar expostulated angrily, "that would be dishonorable! The Berkuts keep their promises even to enemies

and traitors. The Berkuts never soil their hands or their hearts with deceitful spilling of blood!"

"That's enough of such talk my children! Wait and I will send them an answer myself, with my own hands." And turning about he went to the engine upon whose laddle lay a huge slab of stone and with a strong, firm hand, took hold of the rope which held the ladle in its loading position.

"Father, father!" cried Peace-Renown, running after him, "what are you going to do?"

But Zakhar yielded no whit. As if he had not heard her cry, he quietly adjusted the ladle and aimed it at the enemies.

In the meantime Burunda and Tuhar Wolf vainly awaited an answer from the Tukholians. Maxim hung his head silently resigned to accept his fate, as he stood beneath Burunda's upraised battle-axe. Only Tuhar Wolf for some reason trembled.

"Oh, why should we have to wait so long!" cried Burunda finally. "Once we were born and once we must die. But before I die, you vile vassal, must die first!" And he swung a powerful arm backward the better to cleave open Maxim's head. In a flash Tuhar Wolf's sword gleamed above Maxim's head and the threatening, murderous arm of Burunda, together with its upraised battle-axe, was slashed off from the shoulder in one movement, falling spattered with blood like a piece of cord-wood into the water.

Burunda howled with fury and pain and with his left hand seized Maxim by the chest. His eyes filled with loathing, he turned towards the treacherous boyar. Maxim ducked and with all the strength at his command butted the ferocious Turkoman with his head and shoulders on the left side of his body so that Burunda lost his balance and toppled over into the water, pulling Maxim after him.

In the ensuing second the huge stone cast by the Tukholian trebuchet under Zakhar Berkut's guidance hummed through

the air and struck the group of foes. The water splashed up to the clouds, the pile of rocks crashed and heart-rending screams echoed to the top of the bank. In a few moments the surface of the lake was smooth and calm again and there was not a vestige left of Burunda's company.

The Tukholian townspeople stood upon the bank watching breathlessly. Old Zakhar, up till then so hale and strong, now trembled like a little child, drained by the tax of energy, and covering his face with his hands, wept bitterly. At his feet lay the unconscious form of Peace-Renown.

Suddenly joyous shouts echoed from below. The youths who rode the waves on their rafts near the place where Maxim had disappeared with Burunda, suddenly caught sight of him as he floated up from beneath the waters, sound and whole, and greeted him. Their elation rapidly spread itself to the entire community. Even those who had lost their own sons, brothers and husbands, rejoiced in Maxim's safety, as if with his return all their dear ones lost in battle also had returned.

"Maxim is alive! Maxim is alive! Hurray for Maxim!" The echoes thundered and reverberated far into the forests and along the peaks of the mountain masses. "Father Zakhar! Your son is alive! Your son is returning to you!"

Quivering with suppressed emotion, eyes filmed with tears, Zakhar raised himself.

"Where is he? Where is my son?" his voice quavered.

Soaking wet, his face shining with happiness, Maxim jumped off the raft unto the bank and clambered up to his father's feet.

"Father!"

"My boy! Maxim!"

Neither could say more. Zakhar swayed a moment and fell into his son's strong young embrace.

"Father, what ails you?" cried Maxim, noting the deathly

palor steal over his father's face and feeling the chill tremor which shook his body.

"Nothing, my son, nothing!" replied Zakhar quietly smiling. "The Sentinel is calling me to him. I hear his voice, my son. He is beckoning to me, saying, 'Zakhar, you have done your work, now it is time to rest!'"

"Father, father, don't say such things!" Maxim wept, kneeling beside him.

Old Zakhar, at peace and softly smiling, lay upon the moss, his face alight, turned to the mid-day sun. He removed his son's hand from his breast gently and said, "No son, don't weep for me, I am very fortunate! But look around you, a little further away, there is someone who needs your attention very badly."

Maxim turned and his heart stopped still. There on the ground lay Peace-Renown, deathly pale, intense suffering and despair manifest upon her beautiful face. The youths had already brought some water and Maxim set to work reviving his beloved, rubbing her temples, hands and feet. Finally she sighed, opened her eyes and then closed them again.

"Peace-Renown! Peace-Renown! My sweetheart!" cried Maxim kissing her hands, "Come back to me!"

Peace-Renown, as if awakening from deep slumber, gazed up in wonderment at Maxim's face."

"Where am I? What has happened to me?" she questioned weakly.

"You're right here among us, beside your Maxim!"

"Maxim?" she questioned sitting bolt upright.

"Yes, yes! See I am alive! I am free!"

Peace-Renown was silent for a long moment unable to overcome her surprise. Then she flung her arms about Maxim's neck and wept with joy, "Maxim, my beloved!" was all she could say.

"But where is my father?" she asked a little later.

Maxim turned his face away. "Try not to remind yourself of him, dearest! He who weighs Truth and Falsehood, is now weighing his evil and his good deeds. Let us pray that the good will overbalance the bad."

Peace-Renown wiped away the tears and glanced up lovingly at Maxim.

"But come, Peace-Renown," said Maxim. "There's our father and he is leaving us."

Zakhar looked at the young pair, joy filling his eyes.

"Kneel down here beside me, children!" he said softly. "Daughter, Peace-Renown, your father died. Let us not judge whether he was guilty or innocent, for he died like thousands of others, but do not grieve, daughter! In place of a father, fate is giving you a brother. . . ."

"And a husband!" added Maxim, pressing her hand in his.

"Let the Gods of our forefathers bestow their blessings upon you, children!" said Zakhar. "In crucial times fate has brought you together and united your hearts. You have shown yourselves capable of withstanding the worst storms. May your union on this day of victory portend that our nation will also withstand corrupt and pernicious influences without the disruption of its fundamental unity and the loss of its integrity and humanitarianism."

And with already cool lips he kissed Peace-Renown and Maxim on their foreheads.

"Now children, get up and lead me just a little ways! Before I go I would like to say a few words to the townspeople whom I have tried so earnestly to serve all my life."

"Fathers and brothers! Today's victory is a great accomplishment for us. How did we win? Was it by our weapons alone? No. Was it by our adroitness and strategy? No. We are victorious because of our sincere cooperation with each other and the efficiency of our united effort. Remember this well! As long as you continue to live in harmony and work

and hold together, each for the other and all for one, so long no enemy will be able to conquer you. But I am certain my brothers, and my soul intuitively senses this, that this is not the last attack upon the solidarity of our community, that there will follow others which in the end will crush our independence, our vigor, and destroy our community. Evil times will come to pass for our nation.”

“Brothers will become strangers to each other, sons will not recognize their fathers and there will begin great quarrels and dissensions throughout our land of Rus which will devour the strength of our people, cause the decay of the whole nation and sell it into bondage. People will be dispossessed, enslaved by their own and foreign oppressors, who will make of them, under a purely despotic system, their obedient and hard-working slaves to do the bidding of their slightest wishes.”

“But sometime during that corrupt period, the people will again recall their ancient system of self-rule, and they will be blessed if they will recall the times and ways of their forefathers quickly and desire once more to make the transition from serfdom to freedom. Fortunate will be they indeed, who will live in those times! They will be great and glorious days, the springtime of the rebirth of the nation.”

“Hand down to your children and grand-children therefore, the stories of the old days and old ways. Let that memory continue to live among them during troublous times, as a glowing ember which does not die in a heap of ashes. The time will come when the spark will ignite and start a new fire! Farewell!”

Old Zakhar sighed heavily, glanced up at the sun, smiled and in a moment was gone.

No one wept after him, neither his sons, his neighbors nor the townspeople, for they realized that it's a sin to weep for the fortunate. Rather, with felicitous songs they bathed his body and carried him to the Glade of Light, to the ancient

home of the Gods of his predecessors and having placed his body within the sanctuary, with his face turned to the golden image of the sun on its ceiling, they fitted an enormous flagstone into the entrance and cemented it up. Thus rested old Zakhar Berkut in the laps of the Gods who had lived in his heart and whispered the brilliant thoughts which inspired him all his life with the ingenious probity to do so much good for his community. So dear became his memory that liberty and independence itself seemed incarnate in his name.

Many changes have taken place since that time. Only too literally has the old townsman's prophesy been fulfilled. Great hailstorms and clouds of evil have passed over our land of Rus. The old democratic system of rule is long forgotten, it seems dead and buried. But no! Isn't it time right now, in our day, that it should be renewed again? Aren't we the ones living in that fortunate period of the re-birth of our nation, which dying old Zakhar Berkut predicted would come someday? And aren't we today, at least living in the dawn of its re-awakening?

A P P E N D I X

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF
UKRAINIAN HISTORY

by

THEODOSIA BORESKY

(Part of this material appeared as an article, "Ukraine the
Forgotten Nation of Europe" in THE COMMONWEAL,
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TO THE MAJORITY of people not only of Western Europe and America, but also to political and intellectual circles, Ukraine is a "terra incognita".

Many foreigners and Muscovites to whom the Tzarist regime taught a falsified history of Russia have come to believe that Ukraine as a political concept does not exist. Some have gone so far as to say that it was conceived by the Germans to mask their colonial aspirations. However, even before World War I, Ukrainians were averse to being confused with Russians. Ukraine possessed the name Rus (pron. Roosh) as early as the 10th century, while the Muscovite or (as it is called today) the Russian nation did not have its beginning until the middle of the 13th century. Although for more than 125 years it has been drilled into them by the Russian government and schools that they were Russian, the Ukrainian people never have lost their original identity.

Ancient Greek writers called the land "Rhos" and later Latin writers, "Rutheni". In Ukrainian documents of old the land is called "Roos", this being the name of the dynasty as for instance the name Hapsburg or Hohenzollern.

As early as the year 1187 we find the name "Ukraina" mentioned in the Ipatiev Chronicle in connection with the death of a Ukrainian prince, Volodimir.

It was when the Ukrainians lost their independence to Poland and Muscovy that these two countries forbade them the further use of the name of their homeland. Thinking to make their assimilation more complete the governments ordered their scholars and historians to disprove the origin of the name "Ukraina". Thus between them a myth was fabricated that the name "Ukraina" meant a section or piece of Russian territory, a sort of borderland, and that in reality there was and had never been any such country as Ukraina nor any such people as the Ukrainians. This information was written into

their encyclopedias and history books and taught to the whole nation, causing of course much misunderstanding of the problem of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian nation.

However, in the French National Library a map of the year 1580 has been found on which the land Ukraina is plainly indicated. On the map of H. L. De Beauplain of 1650 Ukraine is indicated by "Typus Generalis Ukrainie". In another book of his, "Description d'Ukraine" published in 1650 De Beauplain gives definite boundaries of Ukraina and identifies it as entirely independent of Poland and Muscovy. (The name Russian did not begin to be used until the second half of the 18th century).

Likewise maps of the Italian geographers Sancone and Cornetti of the years 1641 and 1657 have been found in which Ukraina is called "Ukraina a Paesa de Cosacchi" (Ukraine or the land of the Kozaks). In the same library there is a globe of Cornelius dated 1660-1670 in which Ukrainian lands are called "Ukraina". Then there is an English map of Morden 1709 where also is found the name "Ukraina".

Thus it can readily be seen that the name Ukraina was used from the very beginning of its history not only by the Ukrainians themselves but also by European scholars of that time. The very oldest folk songs of the Ukrainian people, still in existence today, indicate that the name "Ukrainian" was used by those clans occupying the land on which Ukrainians still live today.

Ethnographically the plains of Ukraine once stretched in a wide belt of about 600 miles along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, from the lower Danube and the Carpathian range in the west, crossing the rivers Don and Volga and reaching to the Ural mountains in the east. About 773,400 square kilometers, bordering upon the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, are under the U. S. S. R.; 132,200 square kilometers, consisting

of East Galicia, the western section of Volhynia, Kholm, Pidlyashe and Polisy, are under Poland; 17,600 square kilometers, the provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina, are under Rumania; and 14,900 square kilometers (one third of which has now been given to Hungary), Podkarpatska-Rus, are under Czechoslovakia; which makes a grand total of 938,100 square kilometers of land occupied by the Ukrainian people under the various controlling governments. (Both these and the following figures were taken from a survey prepared by Prof. V. Kubyovych and published in the Ukrainian General Encyclopedia (Lviv) Vol. III).

The number of Ukrainians under U. S. S. R. is estimated at 35,026,000; under Poland 6,257,000; under Rumania 1,100,000; under Czechoslovakia 569,000, making a total of 42,952,000. When to this is added the number of Ukrainians in the U. S. A., Canada and South America, a very conservative estimate of the total number of Ukrainians in the world is about 45 million people. Since most of these figures were based on an old census (1910) taken by foreign rulers in Europe and since many Ukrainian immigrants coming to America and Canada gave instead of their true nationality, the name of the ruling government, the figures may actually run as high as 56 million people.

It may seem not a little strange to one reading this article that such a large number of people have no independent nation of their own, until he learns something of the history, the oppressions suffered, and the evolution of the Ukrainian problem. By that time he can do naught but admire the courage of the people who have so successfully resisted every effort to be assimilated and to be discouraged from keeping their original identity, their culture and religion.

Proof that such a land as Ukraine and such a people as the Ukrainians have existed and still exist today was fully demonstrated by the immediate seizure of the opportunity at

the fall of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires in 1917 and 1918 to set up a government of their own according to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, and by the formation of the Ukrainian National Republic, 1917-1919, consisting of all those sections and their population as mentioned above (with the exception of Podkarpatska Rus).

In July 1919, pressed from the west by the Polish army, attacked simultaneously on one side by the Russian Bolsheviki and by Denikin's army on the other and from the southwest by the Rumanian armies, the Ukrainian forces were cornered in a "Quadrangle of Death". The Ukrainians fought heroically for several months before their defense collapsed. An epidemic of typhus, lack of food and medical supplies finally wiped out the Ukrainian armies who suffered under the most horrible conditions of famine and disease. (Reports of this were vividly described by Col. Davison of the American Red Cross).

Once more Ukrainian lands became divided among foreign rulers, Russia, Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, which governments continued to deny the existence of such a nationality as the Ukrainians and the recognition of their desires for self-rule.

For a while, in the recent division of Czechoslovakia, it seemed as though Carpathian-Ukraine might have a chance at last for self-rule. During the time of the formation of the Ukrainian National Republic, this section had from its beginning preferred to become an autonomous state under Czechoslovakia rather than join in with the new Republic and risk the danger of annexation by Poland or Russia. Czechoslovakia had promised Carpathian Ukraine (or Podkarpatska-Rus) self-rule which promise was never carried out. After a wait of 19 years, she was about to get complete autonomy, when Poland interfered by demanding that Ruthenia be divided between herself and Hungary. Since division of Czechoslovakia

was based upon claims previous to the War, Poland had no right to demand any part of Ruthenia, since she had never occupied that section. But she firmly backed Hungary in this so that now one-third of Carpathian Ukraine comprising the most important cities and the most fertile land has been given to Hungary. Poland has been anxious that no part of Carpathian Ukraine be free as that might give the Ukrainian people a chance for a centralization of their forces to plot a successful revolution to gain back the other sections that once belonged to them and in which Ukrainian people have lived for centuries, such sections as Galicia, under Poland, the southern part of Russia, and Bukovina and Bessarabia in Rumania.

Thus from foreign domination of the Ukrainian people and the occupation of Ukrainian lands has arisen the Ukrainian problem and the Ukrainian Cause. To understand this problem and this cause completely one must become familiar with at least a brief sketch of Ukrainian history and the evolution of the Ukrainian problem.

The history of Ukraine like that of other nations begins with a semi-legendary or, as the Ukrainian historians call it, the "Scytho-Sarmatian" period, between 500 B.C. and 900 A.D. when the country was in a constant state of invasion, emigration, war and ceaseless turmoil until there evolved a blending of the different races of invaders with the original inhabitants into one people, called "Rhos" by the Greek writers and later "Rutheni" by the Latin writers.

The most romantic and prosperous period in Ukrainian history, between the 9th and the 14th century, was called the Golden Age. There existed a proud and independent kingdom, the largest, most highly civilized, richest and strongest of all its contemporaries in Europe. Whoever was responsible for laying the foundation of this great historic structure, whether it was founded by the Goths or developed gradually from the

Scythian period in the 9th century A.D. we will never know for the first documents of the Grand Duchy of Kiev were forever lost in the confusion that marked the first period of Ukrainian national life. All we know is what Nestor the Monk, first Ukrainian historian, wrote in describing the princes of Kiev who gradually subdued and governed, from the seat of the Kingdom of Kiev, the tribes he calls "Ruthenian".

The first Grand-Dukes or Ukrainian Knights mentioned in history (by Nestor) are the three semi-legendary brothers, Kyl, Schek and Horiv. It is said that the eldest of these was responsible for the restoring and building up of the ancient capital of Kiev, which in consequence was named after him.

These rulers were succeeded by Norsemen, Oskold (860-867) and Dyr (880). A Greek writer describes Oskold's appearance as that of a typical Kozak, with heavy drooping mustache, shaved head and a tuft hanging down from the middle of it to his nose. Ihor, the terror of Byzantium, on whose gates he at one time fastened his shield, succeeded a popular prince called Oleh, who reigned after Oskold and Dyr. Then came Olga the Wise, wife of Ihor, and then King Sviatoslav.

Cunning, powerful and ambitious were these great Ukrainian rulers. However, the most romantic figures in Ukrainian history were King Sviatoslav and his successor-son Volodimir The Great or The Saint, who completed the amalgamation of the various Ukrainian provinces into one centralized state, the vast Grand Duchy of Kiev, whose power extended far, to even distant lands, to the Khazars of the Volga and the Finns of the North, whom he made pay tribute to Ukraine. Volodimir is often also called The Saint because he introduced Christianity into his realm. More than that, through Christianity (and the monks and priests who came there) the country became open to all the arts and learning of foreign lands and especially of Byzantium. He allied himself further with Byzan-

tium through his marriage to Anne, daughter of the Emperor, which event he brought about by the most adroit maneuverings. He again restored and rebuilt Kiev into the most beautiful and the wealthiest capitol in Europe.

With so much conquered territory the Kingdom of Kiev came into command of all the land from the Viking to the "Greek", as the Dnieper was called in those days. Sviatopolk, son of Volodimir succeeded his father to the throne. The first clash between Ukrainians and the Poles came during his rule. During his short reign he murdered his brothers fearing their rivalry as pretenders to the throne, for he was of illegitimate birth. Yaroslav (1019-1064), the compiler of laws, restored the prosperous days of Volodimir. Volodimir II "Monomachos" (1112-1125) was the last ruler in the Golden Era. He was married to Gytha, daughter of Harold, king of the Anglo-Saxons. (Many English historians recognize a Celtic strain in Ukrainians). He made treaties with the barbarians who pressed upon the frontiers of the Kingdom. At one time he took three hundred princes of various Mongolian tribes of Polovetzians prisoners. After "Monomachos" death the Steppe became the highway of the westward march of the nomad Tatar hordes of whom nothing was heard until then. Ukraine, unprotected by nature on her eastern frontier, suffered ceaseless invasion. Every effort was made at that time by the existing Ukrainian kings to stop this invasion, even though other problems became sadly neglected.

With the strength of the controlling government concentrated upon stopping invasions by the Tatar tribes, provincial ambitions rose within the empire, weakening the state so that soon the whole degenerated into an insecure zone and the center of national life was transferred to the better protected parts of Western Ukraine.

Kiev was thus deprived of its great prestige. Instead, the Viceroys of Galicia and Lodomeria demanded that the country

look up to them as its national leaders. Because of the clashes with Kiev all they succeeded in doing was in preparing the whole section for easy devastation by the barbarians.

In 1169 Andrew Kitan, the prince of the newly formed Finno-Slavonic Duchy of Muscovy, stormed the ramparts of the Ukrainian capital and conquered it.

By 1240 the Tatars completed the devastation, begun by the Muscovites, of the Dnieperian Ukraine, so that it was turned into sparsely populated disunited provinces paying tribute to the Tatars.

Halich and afterwards Lviw (Lemberg) chief towns of Western Ukraine now took the place of Kiev.

The most celebrated rulers of the period were Roman (1199-1206) and his son Danilo. If it had not been for king Roman's successful amalgamation of the provinces of Galicia, Volhynia (Lodomeria), Kholm and Podolia, the whole heritage of Volodimir the Great might have right then passed into the hands of the Tatars or the Muscovites. His dominions were still the largest, territorially, in all of Europe, stretching between the Carpathians and the Dnieper and reaching in the south as far as the shores of the Black Sea and the mouth of the Danube. Roman was the first of the Galician princes to be called "Lord of all Ruthenia". For a brief period after his death reigned Hungarian and Polish princes who were related to the Galician dynasty.

Roman's son Danilo (1228-1264) was the last of the rulers of ancient Ruthenia. His death spelled the end of Ukraine's political independence.

Harassed by the Tatars, it was easy for Poles and Lithuanians to annex separately and independently the various parts of Ukrainian territory. While the Poles' chief interest was in Galician and neighboring provinces, the Lithuanians centered their attention upon the lands lying between the latter and the river Dnieper. In 1568 they formed a federated state

of which Ukraine was part. But the Poles were successful in eliminating the Lithuanians and taking exclusive control of former Ukrainian lands.

Although Ukrainian political life stagnated at this time, there was a new development in religion and literature. This period saw the establishment of the "Unia" and the rise of the Kozaks.

In 1596 a number of Ukrainian bishops formed a Council at Brest to proclaim their adhesion to the doctrine and hierarchy of Rome. This "Unia" strengthened Western European influences in Byzantine Ukraine and was brought about by the close relationship with Poland.

In this period also came the rise of the Kozaks as a result of the social changes in the status of the conquered Ukrainian people. Many old aristocratic families of Ukraine allowed themselves to become Polonized and helped abet the Poles in oppressing the Ukrainian people. Such action provoked revolution. Although the Kozaks had been in existence since the Scythian and Cimmerian times, it was not until now that their ranks began to swell to a formidable number, as a result of the reduction of the Ukrainian people to a state of serfdom by Polonized and Polish barons. Many hundred thousands of freedom-loving Ukrainians fled slavery to join the ranks and seek the protection of their knights, the Kozaks.

As a matter of fact, the most important occurrence during the Polono-Lithuanian period was this organization and growth of the Kozaks. Their first great leader was Petro Konashevich (1602-1624) who proclaimed himself Hetman of Kiev Ukraine and of the whole army in the year 1618. By successful campaigning and through diplomatic action he brought about the union of various Kozak divisions and transferred them from a half-military, half-piratic group into a well-trained and disciplined army that was successful in reviving part of Ukraine

into a semi-independent state. The strength and influence of the Kozaks became so great that Ukraine called itself Kozakian.

Petro Mohila, the metropolitan of Kiev (head of the "Uniate" church) with the help of Petro Konashevich and his Kozaks' protection founded the first Ukrainian University called the "Akademia" of Kiev. This period under the regime of the Kozaks is famous for the spread of general education, literature, art, the establishment of printing presses and the building of many beautiful churches.

Poland, alarmed at the growing strength of the Ukrainian state, made several attempts to resist Ukrainian separation. At first it was quite successful, but after each attack by the Warsaw forces the Kozaks continued to emerge ever stronger until the climax of these wars of liberation was reached when Bohdan Khmelnytsky became Hetman of Ukraine. He was successful in annihilating the enemy's forces and freeing all of Ukraine from foreign domination. When he returned to Kiev he was immediately proclaimed the Hetman of Ruthenian Ukraine. It has often been said that Khmelnytsky made a grave error in not pushing the enemy further than Warsaw. In the resulting disintegration of the Polish state he could easily have then conquered all of Poland and thereby changed completely the history of the Ukrainian nation.

Poland, Muscovy, Turkey, Venice, Hungary and Sweden sent gifts with their envoys to Ukraine bidding for her alliance, but for ten years the Kozak Republic refused to ally itself with any foreign powers. Poland, missing the loss of so much valuable territory, plotted against the Ukrainian nation until she stirred up the enmity of her neighbors.

It was under these circumstances that the Hetman decided to enter into an alliance with Muscovy even though such an alliance was against the will of the people. This momentous treaty was completed in 1654 at Pereyaslav. From that time

on the section of Ukraine which spreads beyond the Dnieper stood in uninterrupted connection with Muscovy. In 1667 Muscovy and Poland plotted the partitioning of the entire Ukrainian territory. The Dnieper was to be the boundary between Muscovite and Polish domination. The Ukrainians continued to resist both Muscovite and Polish treachery. Doroshenko, Hetman of Western Ukraine, was successful in repulsing both their armies. In Eastern Ukraine, Mazepa, the elected Hetman, induced the Swedes to give their assistance, but he was not so fortunate. In the battle of Poltava the combined Ukrainian and Swedish armies were defeated by Muscovite troops. Since 1709 the history of Eastern Ukraine is one of gradual destruction of its independence. In 1764 the Hetmanian system of rule was abolished and a "Little Russian Board" was introduced in its place.

In 1775 the Zaporozhian Sitch (the Kozak organization) was forever outlawed by a treaty that still to this day remains in the Statute book of the former Russian Empire, the only reminder of a once powerful, independent, democratic state of Ukraine upon whose ruins the present great Russia has risen.

Western Ukraine underwent a long series of wars between the Poles and Ukrainians in which sometimes one ruled and sometime the other. Mazepa's unfortunate campaign affected the future of both Western and Eastern Ukraine so that it became a center for Russian and Polish intrigue, until it finally became partitioned by Poland, Russia and Austria-Hungary.

Thus the 19th century found a number of "governments" of Russia and the "Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria" of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the place of the once independent nation of Ukraine.

A revival of Ukrainian literature, art, language and the "Uniate" religion in the Russian part of the country brought fierce persecutions during the 19th century. This national revival, however, soon spread over the whole territory includ-

ing its Austrian part. It took root and grew tremendously in strength and power until the Ukrainian people once more proclaimed their will for independence during the World War by seizing the opportunity for self-determination in the formation of the Free Republic of Ukraine 1917-1919. New partitioning of Ukrainian territory (1919), new persecutions of Ukrainians for adhering to their language and their church in Poland, bloody purges of Ukrainian nationalist leaders in Soviet Russia, new re-partitioning of Carpathian Ukraine to Hungary (1938) has not solved the Ukrainian problem nor killed the will for independence. If for centuries between the time of the last independent Kozak state (1615-1654) and the formation of the Republic of Ukraine in 1917 the Ukrainian people were not assimilated and discouraged from grasping the first opportunity for self-determination, it stands to reason they will never be assimilated nor discouraged, especially when they have the moral support of their Americanized brother Ukrainians who have found a haven in American independence, for basically the spirit of the Ukrainian is freedom-loving, and he is anxious that his brothers in Europe should attain it.

In spite of all denationalization processes in Europe the Ukrainian people are keeping their identity intact by privately owned Ukrainian libraries and schools where they can continue to pass on to their children the Ukrainian heritage. Persecutions serve only to bring about fiercer tenacity to Ukrainianism until some day when the opportunity presents itself again, the Ukrainian people will rise again and claim the right for self-government.

Had not Poland interfered with the granting of full autonomy rights to all of Carpathian Ukraine, by her intrigue with Hungary in supporting her demands for Ruthenia, this section might have presented the opportunity for which the Ukrainians have waited, to make it a starting point for a revival of an independent Ukrainian state. Poland was much too wary and

fearful that the sections under her rule would be the first to be taken away from her and that the minorities which form fifty percent of the Polish state might cause its disintegration.

If all ruler nations would cease from oppressing their minorities they would go far in establishing permanent peace. Why don't they learn to take as an example the freedom America allows her citizens who form a vast, happy melting pot of nations?

T H E E N D