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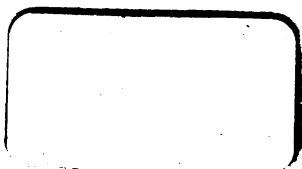
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G O N T A.

An Historical Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY
Henryk
COUNT HENRY KRASINSKI,

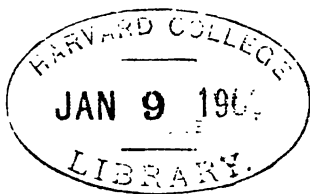
CAPTAIN IN THE LATE POLISH ARMY;
KNIGHT OF THE POLISH MILITARY ORDER; AND MEMBER OF THE POLISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND;

Author of "Vitold;" "The Poles in the Seventeenth Century,"
"The Cossacks of the Ukraine,"
&c. &c. &c.

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PREFACE.

IN order correctly to inform the reader of the principal political events connected with the celebrated rebellion of the *Haidamaques*, under *Zelezniague* and *Gonta*, in Poland, I must revert to the year 1764. Catherine II., Empress of Russia, had just placed upon the throne of Poland, Stanislas Poniatowski, one of her discarded lovers (a grandson of a Jewess), whose origin, weakness of mind, debauchery, and lascivious manners, drew upon him the indignation of the Polish nobles, at all times proud, restless, and difficult to manage. The mere puppet of Russia, he quietly crouched under the domination of Prince Repnin, the Russian Ambassador at the court of Warsaw. Repnin, one of the most celebrated scoundrels of his age, whose very name brings to mind infamies difficult to describe, and infamies difficult to believe. Universal indignation prevailed. Poland, systematically demoralized by Russia, at that time was already governed as a Russian province, and a confederation was forthwith formed at Bar (a little town in Podolia, a southern Polish province), on the 29th of February, 1768, by Adam Count Krasinski, bishop of Kamienietz, his brother Michael, Francis Potocki, Palawski, with his sons and nephew, and some other patriots. The object of this confederation was the expulsion of the Russians from the kingdom, the conservation of the Roman Catholic religion (the heart of the Polish nationality), and the elevation of Poland from the humiliation and anarchy in which she was plunged by the hellish intrigues of the Russian Government.

Ere long, without arms, ammunition, pecuniary resources, or regular troops, the confederates, headed by energetic leaders and daring officers, commenced a series of attacks against the Russian armies (commanded by the ablest Russian general, Souvarof), vanquished all his best lieutenants

(and even himself once), raised Turkey against Russia, killed 55,000 Russians in five years, made the whole of Russia tremble to her very foundation, and would, in all probability, have extirpated the Russian cancer from the heart of the kingdom, had they had the moral courage to dethrone King Poniatowski, and establish, under a firmer mind, a regular government in Poland.

As the confederation of Bar (without persecuting any religious persuasion,) protected the national creed, and menaced Russia with no ordinary danger, Catherine II. sent two hundred and fifty Greco-Russian priests, headed by the infamous and crafty Basil, the bishop of Tchegrine, into the south of Poland, for the purpose of exciting a religious rebellion against the nobles. Proclamations were likewise disseminated throughout the Ukraine, that the confederates of Bar, principally Roman Catholics, were desirous to enforce the conversion of the population of the Greek creed to the Church of Rome, or to exterminate them without mercy ; but that the Empress of Russia, holding the same religious tenets with the former, would despatch fifty thousand men to guard their liberties against the encroachment of their Polish masters. As from the Ukrainian grandees, protected by Turkey, the principal opposition to the king emanated, Repnin artfully contrived to persuade King Poniatowski to cause the Polish troops (on account of their rebellious spirit), under Branetzki, to be withdrawn from that province. After this had been done, she dechained also by her infernal machinations, from the wild islands of the Dnieper, the whole body of the Zaporogues, (an independent Cossack community, originally Polish, living by plunder, for a description of whom, see my work entitled "The Cossacks of the Ukraine,") under the fanatical Zelezniaque, whom she raised to the rank of a brigadier. The latter (preceded by swarms of Greco-Russian priests, who secretly distributed in the night large casks filled with consecrated daggers to the peasantry of their creed, for massacring their masters,) rushed suddenly with his barbarous hordes, like a terrible flood, upon the defenceless inhabitants of the Polish Ukraine.

All who were not of the Greek religion, aged men,

women, children, nobles, serfs, monks, tillers of the soil, Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, all were slaughtered indiscriminately. The entire province presented the spectacle of a town taken by storm. Cossack and rebel-serf vied with each other in acts of merciless cruelty: deep wells were filled up with the dead bodies of infants; nobles, females, and priests, were buried in the ground up to the chin, while the assassin torturers danced around them to the sound of music, amusing themselves at intervals with mowing off the heads of their victims, like the grass of the field. In the villages lay murdered women, and the mutilated trunks of adults and children crushed by the iron-bound hoof of the horses. All to whom flight was possible, sought a doubtful safety in remote places; while the whole of the nobles scattered throughout the Ukraine, fell victims to their remorseless foes. Examples were not wanting of serfs defending their masters with the utmost devotedness and bravery; most of the villages were taken by assault and burned to ashes; the inhabitants being slaughtered. A remnant of the Polish nobility took refuge at Houmagne, the principal fortified town of the southern part of the Ukraine, in which were stationed some Polish Cossacks under Gonta, and a few other soldiers.

Gonta was originally a serf, professing the Greco-Russian religion, and was born at Rosuski, a small village belonging to Szczesny Potocki, palatine of Kiow, the capital of the Ukraine. This nobleman was possessed of immense riches, and was the owner of the town of Houmagne with all its dependencies. Since the year 1760 he had confided this property to the care of a crafty steward, named Raphael Mladanovicz, who by his activity, skill, and talents, increased the well-being of his master's tenants, and considerably augmented the former's revenues. Houmagne soon became a flourishing place, and its riches and prosperity rapidly increased. As its inhabitants were composed of a mixture of Roman Catholics, members of the Greek catholic church, and of the Greek non-united schismatic church, several priests of the Roman and Greek churches came hither for the purposes of education and proselytism. This caused some alarm among the clergy of the Greek church. (I describe the difference which existed among them in the notes

of the work beforementioned.) An ill-feeling was engendered, and mutual calumnies and recriminations, with the various bickerings of religious animosity, followed in their train.

Gonta (living under the protection of Mladanovicz), a courtier by nature, and gifted with much acuteness of intellect, contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of his master, the Palatine Potocki ; who, highly appreciating the valour and abilities of his vassal, gave him the command of his Cossack troops. He also ameliorated his condition, enabled him to contract an advantageous marriage, and placed him in the proprietary tenure of two villages for a rent almost nominal. Gonta did not at first show himself unworthy of his master's bounty, and appeared to be actuated by a devoted attachment to his benefactor. As he at all times lived in perfect harmony with Mladanovicz, to whom he confided his two sons ; and as the palatine's high opinion of him was daily increasing, Gonta was entrusted with the command of all the baronial or seignoral troops in the neighbourhood ; and was cajoled, humoured, and flattered, as always happens in similar circumstances. Availing himself of all the advantages he enjoyed, he gained extensive influence and great consideration in the Ukraine ; and became the favourite of all the Cossacks, over whose minds he had obtained a powerful ascendancy.

After the retreat of the confederates, and the withdrawal of the regular troops, a dark presentiment of coming ruin, seized every heart. To secure the co-operation of Gonta, a deputation of the Polish nobles, headed by Negrassa, was sent to him. A large sum was offered him by this deputation, in the name of the Polish nobles, an equal sum from the Palatine Potocki, together with the property of two villages as an heirloom to his family, to be selected at Gonta's own choice, from his vast domains. To these gifts were also to be added a high commission in his troops, and Mladanovicz was to arrive with the legal documents of the cession of the two villages, the names of which were to be inserted in the title deeds according to the direction of Gonta. Having listened to and discussed the proposals of Negrassa, Gonta accepted them, and a final arrangement seemed thus to have been effected.

By a strange fatality, however, Mladanovicz did not make his appearance with the expected papers. Gonta, perhaps not without reason, attributed his absence to an evasion on the part of the palatine, relative to the donation of the villages. Mladanovicz, who was no stranger to the intended enrichment of Gonta, might have been jealous of losing even a small part of his master's possessions, and his blind selfishness might have made him forget that it is sometimes the soundest policy to be generous from interested motives. Nekrassa and the other members of the deputation had no sooner taken leave of Gonta with a favourable reply, than Basil, bishop of Tchegrine, of the Greco-Russian faith, suddenly came into the presence of the wavering chief. Basil was the bearer of titles and presents for Gonta, and by high-sounding promises on the part of the Empress of Russia, he endeavoured to prevail upon him to declare himself against the Poles, to join Zelezniaque, and to deliver up the town of Houmagne. He represented to him that the king of Poland was secretly favourable to the rebellion, and that he was borne out in this assertion by the conduct of Branetzki. Still all the insidious persuasions of this infamous prelate seemed incapable of alienating Gonta, who, in expressing his refusal, dwelt upon the bounty of the palatine his benefactor. At these words the Russian prelate, with Satanic joy beaming in his looks, informed Gonta that the palatine, whom he till now had deemed his benefactor, had been guilty of criminal conversation with his wife; and he placed before Gonta's eyes written evidences of the truth of his allegation. It is not known, and perhaps it will never be known, whether the letters which he exhibited to him, and which Gonta believed to be in the handwriting of his wife, were authentic or fabricated. That fac-similes of writing are sometimes undistinguishable from the genuine copy is well known. Authors vary in their statements relative to the production of the letters; but we have heard the fact averred by many persons, and have read it in the *Memoirs of Colonel Lagowski*, who spent part of his life in the Ukraine. After reading the letters, Gonta's countenance betrayed the anger that was raging in his heart: the inward struggle escaped not the scrutinising eye of the wily

delegate, who scarcely had time to renew his subtle persuasions, when Gonta declared against his country. The Cossacks under his command fraternised with the Haïdamaques under Zelezniaque, in a small wood called *Krekhovalasek*, rendered famous by this event. When the junction had been effected, the army of the rebels confessed themselves, with their chiefs, on this spot, and received absolution from the Greco-Russian priests, arrayed in their sacerdotal robes, to carry on a war of extermination against their unoffending fellow-creatures. Gonta, by an infernal stratagem, faithfully described in the drama, mastered the town of Houmagne with Zelezniaque, killed his own sons, and ordered eighteen thousand human beings to be put to the sword.

After this terrible event, Gonta, who took the command of all the rebels, pursued the work of carnage. Detachments of Cossacks pillaged Granof, Toplik, Daszo, Tulczyn, Monasterzyska, Haysyn, Bossovka, and Ladiszyn, while the inferior chiefs carried desolation as far as Balta, on the banks of the Dniester, in the Pobereze, and even to Turkey, as well as to the environs of Kiow. Soon after, however, some bands of the Haïdamaques were completely exterminated by Nekrassa with his Polish troops. The communes of Ositna, Kuzminogrobla, Subska, Siennitsa, and Podwysokie, signalized themselves by an heroic resistance and an unalterable attachment to their masters, who nobly recompensed them.

The main body of the Haïdamaques still remained at Houmagne under Gonta and Zelezniaque, when a detachment of Don Cossacks under Goloriva, and a body of Russian infantry under Kretchetnikoff, appeared in the vicinity of the town. Both these officers had received secret instructions to observe the Haïdamaques, and to gain the confidence of their chiefs. Goloriva visited these officers, gave them counsel, and performed his mission with considerable ability. When the troops headed by Nekrassa began to defeat and pursue the Haïdamaques in every direction, Gonta with his chiefs went to visit Goloriva, who received them with courtesy and marked politeness. Then, having secured their horses so as to prevent their escape, he suddenly changed his tone, and threw them into irons. He then attacked and routed the Haïdamaques, conjointly with the

Poles, who surrounded them on all sides, and delivered up Gonta, with eighteen hundred of the rebels, to General Branetzki by the orders of Kretchetnikoff. Branetzki found means to convey a secret message to Gonta, to assure him that, if he would observe strict silence and make no oral declaration, he would save him from impending death; but the same messenger was charged with an especial order to Goloriva that he should command his Cossacks to cut out the tongue and chop off the right hand of Gonta, under some frivolous pretext, in order to prevent him divulging state secrets. It is to be remarked that, after the murder of his two boys, Gonta's mind was partly deranged. He could never sleep nor take any rest; he constantly fancied he saw the ghosts of his children and of his mother cursing him. He spoke often to them in the dead of night; and before his execution, which took place in November, he bore already all the weight of the punishment of his horrible crimes. When one of the Hajdamaques discovered the son of Mladanovicz, a boy of ten years of age, who escaped death by accident, and conducted him to Gonta, the latter, moved by pity, not only saved his life but took care of him, paid him the greatest possible attention, and seems to have been particularly fond of that child, who, well acquainted with him, constantly asked what became of his father, with tears and lamentations. He twice escaped almost certain death, and was only wrested from Gonta's arms half-an-hour before his execution. It is also to be remarked that, after the rout of the Hajdamaques, when Gonta entered a small cottage near Serby, he discovered in it a female whom he had seduced in his youth, and who had predicted to him captivity and a terrible death. She was a natural daughter of a Turkish prisoner and a Bohemian woman. She had received a good education, possessed great accomplishments, and was for a long time the acknowledged mistress of General Branetzki, who, even after his marriage with the niece of Potemkin, secretly visited her. This woman (Marylka) had a tame fox which followed her everywhere, and of which she was very fond. General Branetzki passing accidentally through the village, saw the well-known fox entering the barn; he soon concluded that his mistress

must be there, and followed it ; but found Gonta kneeling at the feet of his former affection. From that time he felt for him an intense hatred, which was never abated. Marylka had a child, which was carried off by the Tatars, and not being able to recover it, she fell into deep melancholy, disappeared, and inhabited for many years, under another name, with two gipsies, an isolated dwelling on the banks of the Dniester. They had the reputation in the neighbourhood of having connexion with evil spirits.

Gonta was condemned at Serby, with every necessary formality, to undergo publicly the terrible punishment of the hooks, of mutilation, and death : he was executed in the presence of a great many eye-witnesses at the head-quarters of Branetzki. His howling was heard for two days. The severity of the punishment he underwent was augmented by incredible barbarities, and the survivors of his family were sent into perpetual banishment in Siberia.

After the death of Gonta, the Haïdamaques, being routed everywhere, were executed by thousands in all the southern parts of Poland. They were hanged, they were quartered, they were beheaded, during the space of several months. The greatest number of them suffered at Leopold, Lysianka, Berdyczew, Zytomirz, &c. During the massacre of the rebellion, a great many Polish families, driven from their homes by fear, wandered shelterless in the plains of Moldavia. The hospodar, however, was ordered to cause them to withdraw from his province. They had then no asylum nor place of refuge whither they could betake themselves ; but as the Turks were favourable to Poland, it was suggested to them, that they should proceed further into the heart of the country, to be more removed from the observation of the Russian agents. They accordingly retired into the interior of the province, when the Russians proclaimed the restoration of tranquillity in the Ukraine, and invited them to return, that they might repossess their estates, to prevent them falling into the hands of unauthorised occupants. This was a dark and infamous snare laid to entrap them ; and all those who returned during the year 1769 were put to the sword, by a new band of assassins organised by Tymienko. The dissolution of all social order was universal throughout

the Ukraine. No one who was known to have signed the confederation of Bar escaped destruction. Persecution, anarchy, and vengeance, exercised their direful sway during the space of several years, and the judicial executions did not cease till 1773. It is not possible to determine the exact number of those who were the victims of this terrible outbreak, more terrible, perhaps, than any other recorded in history.

In the space of a few months the Ukraine was changed from its flourishing and beautiful aspect into a vast desert, where "death and fire had altogether gorged the spoils of victory." Five towns, sixty boroughs, and a thousand villages were destroyed; more than two hundred thousand of the inhabitants, without reckoning those that were assassinated by Tymienko, lost their lives. The number of judicial executions amounted to six thousand; a number more than sufficient to entail upon the authors of this sanguinary carnage the execrations of posterity to the remotest ages. The Russian agents doomed beforehand to the scaffold those whom they excited to revolt in the sacred name of religion, while Russian policy reaped in this expedition two advantages—the subjection of the Ukraine, and the weakening of the Zaporogians.

At this time there lived in the Ukraine an aged Cossack, named Vernyhora, who, by his influence and humane feeling, often prevented the shedding of blood. He even predicted the fall of Poland, but also foretold its future regeneration.

Gonta was a man of middle stature, and was thin, beardless, and feminine in his features. He had neither the ferocious look nor the vigorous frame of Zelezniaque, but he surpassed him in quickness of invention, and in the arts of dissimulation. There was an evident perfidiousness lurking in his cat-like eyes; he seldom looked his interlocutor in the face, while the honied words of persuasion flowed from his lips. He paid the penalty of his fiendish career in the very prime of his life. It was never well ascertained what became of Zelezniaque, though various contradictory rumours were prevalent respecting him.

Nine years ago, having collected all possible information on the celebrated rebellion of the Haïdamaques, not only

from various Polish and foreign works, but also from verbal statements of eminent Polish exiles, and my own notes and observations on the Ukraine, I composed "Gonta" in French. Deeming it a subject unconnected with the civilized world, and too horrible for the civilized reader, I did not at first, contemplate publishing "Gonta." One of my friends, however, after its attentive perusal, induced me to change my resolution, and even to try my capacity in producing dramas for the stage. Subsequently, "Gonta" was rendered into English, and I now venture to submit it to the British public. I do not deny that a small portion of it resembles "Macbeth," (though not in words), but even that portion, which can be easily omitted, is based on historical facts already mentioned. As ghost stories and supernatural visions were known all over the world in the dark ages, before Shakspeare and after him, and will probably always prevail among the ignorant and superstitious, I see no reason why I should not avail myself of such dramatic "means and appliances," merely because Shakspeare did so.

In this dramatic production, which I have matured in the dead of night, often during the autumnal moaning of the northern blast, there is a curious mixture of eastern, southern, and northern imagery; there is an angel with the demon, there is a noisy joy with black sorrow and despair. There is (as it were) in it an Arab in the desert, a Cossack and his steed, a White Eagle and an Ossian's child, apparently in contradiction with each other; but in reality in perfect harmony with the countries which I have visited, the wild poetry which I have cherished, and the varied adventures which have fallen to my lot. In order to explain them to the reader, I think it necessary to mention that during my early boyhood I dwelt in the romantic valleys of Podolia,* and soon after drank for some years the winds of the mighty Steppes of the Ukraine, the Steppes of that dreary, fertile, and strange land, which ejected from the Dnieper with the foaming waters of its cataracts swarms of barbarian hordes against more civilized nations, and was nearly for a thousand years the arena of sanguinary battles. As I hunted also

* Podolia is near the Turkish boundary.

wild beasts in the gloomy forests of Litvanian Polesia, peeped occasionally into the most polite society, was no stranger to military life, studied deeply politics and history, and breathed at times the pure air of the secluded wilds of the borders; walking often with pleasure fifty miles a day; swimming through the lakes and rivers in winter; sleeping soundly on the tops of the snow-clad hills; two contrary elements, wildness and civilization, are easily to be explained in my writings, conversation, and taste, and will ever be my characteristics. Possessing by nature an independent spirit, open and sociable disposition, with disinterested character, cut off by destiny from all family ties, cherishing the country to which I am bound by the sacred laws of gratitude, as well as by fancy, and which I consider now as my adopted fatherland, I am often wrongly judged, and my real disposition towards it attributed to interested motives.

The town of Houmagne still exists; its ancient fortifications were razed by the orders of the Russian government in 1812, and a wooden palisade now only surrounds it. Its owner, Count Alexander Potocki, is amongst the emigrants from his country. His sister, the amiable Countess Kesielef, has left Russia and resides in Germany.

Begging sincere pardon of my readers for abusing their patience, I must also tell them that whoever is not acquainted with Polish customs, cannot well understand many scenes and dialogues in this drama. I am quite prepared to stand boldly all the stings of the critics, but expect also, as this is my first dramatic essay, their indulgence.

The sentences on Russia are not directed against particular individuals, but against the oppressive system of the government.

[For further particulars on Poland, and of the rebellion of Gonta, I refer the reader to my newly-published work, "The Cossacks of the Ukraine."]

I intend publishing "Gonta" in German, Italian, and Spanish. I have no means to prevent its being played in America, but I trust no American will take advantage of a Polish exile.

CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA.

GONTA, chief of the rebel Haïdamaques.

ZELEZNIAK, second in command.

BASIL, Greco-Russian bishop of Tchegrine.

NEKRASSA, a talented young chief of Polish Cossacks, an enemy to Russia.

VERNYHORA, an old Zaporoguan Cossack, his friend.

POTOCKI, the Palatine, lord of the town of Houmagne,

MLADANOVITCH (governor of Houmagne), the steward of Count Potocki.

BOY, son of Mladanovitch.

BRANETZKI, a Polish General, a friend of the Russians when sober.

JANIKOWSKI, his Aid-de-camp, a noted duellist.

STEMPKOWSKI, Brigadier in the Polish army, a good Pole.

DROZEWSKI, an ancient Polish nobleman.

KITCHEWSKI, an ancient officer.

KRETCHETNIKOFF, a Russian General.

SCHVATCHKA, a Cossack, attached to Gonta.

DOUDAR, an old Cossack.

LOVATY, his friend.

MADAME KITCHEWSKA.

MADELINE, } her Daughters.
JANE, }

THE SORCERESS.

A GIPSY WOMAN.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, &c.

GONTA.

AN HISTORICAL DRAMA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Hut of a Zaporogian Cossack in the Ukraine. Groups of Cossacks, walking with grave looks and solemn step before the hut, with their sabres hanging at their sides. Bundles of lances pyramidically arranged and stuck in the ground.*

An old Cossack. Another Cossack in the prime of youth.

Old Cossack. Strange events are hanging over the Ukraine.—Albeit the warm breath of Spring quickens the shuffling step of old grey-beard Winter in his slow retreat; albeit the dawn flings his golden banners over the eastern heaven, giving cheerful welcome to those out-shining beams that return to loosen the ice-bound soil, to give to the trees their green raiment, to the fields the serf-swain's carol, and to the majestic Dnieper his silvery mid-day splendour; yet the night winds still dance their wild dances upon the dreary Steppes. The lean, hunger-stricken wolves howl and prowl about our villages, as in the deepest snows of winter; the owl screeches his dismal wail; the eagles and the carrion-birds wheeling forth from their haunts upon the hoary crags of Kiow tower above our time-worn huts, scenting human flesh and shrieking their death notes fearfully and long.

Second Cossack. What so strange, so eventful in all this? Every year the Spring returns to give new life to nature, every year the wolf repeats his hungry howl, the eagles shriek and swoop upon their prey—every year the raven croaks and the owlet hoots. In all this there is nothing new.

Old Cossack. Nothing new! peace, false-reasoning youth!

B

when fourscore and five winters have thinned and blanched your locks ; when you have fought and bled in thirty wars ; when you have chased the foe beyond the seas, where the Odaliskues enchained our fellow-countrymen,—beyond that land where the Redeemer from a babe grew up to manhood for the good of man (*here all cross themselves*), beyond that land where the blue heaven is greeted by St. Sophia's dome ; when the scythe of death has mown down at your side whole hosts of victims ; when you have beheld the valour of your brethren in arms pile up around you heaps of gory dead ; when you have grown up in knowledge and become familiar with grief, you will then know that the Supreme permits the soul of man to read the pages of destiny, and that he reveals his decrees by visible presages. When Nalevayko was taken prisoner by Zolkiewski, the rivers overflowed and deluged a portion of our fair Ukraine—when the plague desolated our native land, the figure of a female in robe of dazzling white, with paleness on her brow, and hair streaming to the wind, was seen wandering on the Steppes at the dead of night. When Khmielnitski poured over suffering Poland dark streams of human gore, the souls of the dead were heard to moan along the skirts of the forests, and flocks of sea-birds, with grey wing and snowy breast, from the sterile sands of the Dnieper, soaring over the field of carnage, pierced the air with their shrill plaintive cries. Thus, at the present day, this unaccustomed aspect of nature forbodes calamities. Woe to the Ukraine !

All the Cossacks. Woe ! Woe to the Ukraine !

Third Cossack. An old woman of our village, saw last night upon the dark path leading to the wood, numerous apes in strangest mountebank attire, dancing round and round, and hand in hand with witches—to the back of each witch, with its little arms twined round her skinny neck, was clinging a naked babe ; and ravens, with human faces, bearing crosses in their talons, and with tears dropping from their eyes, were croaking blessings upon the fiendish crew, whose heads were bowing ever and anon (such was the old woman's tale), while vipers, wreathed about their temples, were darting venom from their forked-tongue jaws. On a sudden (she said) all vanished

from view, the heavens darkened, a loud hysteric laugh was heard, fire rained upon the earth, the thunder crashed, and the blue lightning played (all this the old beldame and others saw or heard). A stillness followed, and ere long (she affirmed) witches and ravens were seen scampering towards the Russian frontier. On the day after these strange sights appeared, a child of one of my neighbour's was bitten in the cheek by a mad dog, and in our village churchyard a poor helpless woman was seized with untimely labour and became a mother.

First Cossack. These portents are not difficult of interpretation. The apes in motliest garb are Russian soldiers—the witches are spies, who, under various pretexts, sneak into the bosoms of families, abusing the generous hospitality afforded them—the ravens with human faces are Russian priests, who, pretending to uphold the true faith, spread distrust and hatred, and preach desolation and murder—the vipers are the perfidious means they use to compass their unholy ends—the venom is the gold they lavish—the tears are the blood that is to flow—the hysteric laugh is the exultation of the satanic fiend rejoicing in the multitude of his victims—the fire rained from heaven, and the thunder and lightning are the carnage, havoc, and misery that will long weigh heavy upon the Ukraine—the succeeding stillness is the victory, which, after years of human slaughter, will drive those spies, those priests, that whole scorpion brood of monsters into the dark caverns, where the accursed of heaven atone their guilt.

Second Cossack. You have indeed well explained these ominous warnings; wherever the Russian priest or soldier, as friend or foe, directs his footsteps on Polish ground, pestilence precedes him—burnings, rapine, violations, murders, mark his track, and the curse of all is howled after him when he departs.

Old Cossack. I, for my part, would much rather behold him in hostile than in friendly guise: if he comes as an open, an undisguised foe, the spear and the sabre are reddened with his blood, but when he wears the hollow form of friendship, the crimes he perpetrates are not all catalogued even among the worst of human atrocities.

All the Cossacks. Too true ! too true—Woe ! woe to the Ukraine !

SCENE II.—*The Evening. Moonlight. The Cossacks enter the hut.*

IVAN and DOUDAR.

Doudar (appearing at the door of the hut). What news abroad ? Is Lovaty within ?

Ivan. He is, and numerous guests are partaking of his hospitality.

Doudar. Guests ! what guests, and whence ?

Ivan. Basil, a Russian priest (who must be some great personage, since so much attention is lavished upon him), several distinguished Zaporogian Cossacks, and two or three young mushroom upstarts from the capital of the czarina.

Doudar. I have fastened my steed to a tree on the left, give him your best heed, while I go and scrutinise these foreign vultures, lured by the scent of flesh that may escape their hungry anticipations.

SCENE III.—*A small Garden, which DOUDAR enters.*

Doudar. Lovaty ! (*they embrace each other*). How now ? A baptism ? A marriage ? I thought I observed a priest among your guests.

Lovaty. Neither a baptism nor a marriage, but something of graver moment now engages our attention. The Polish nobles, not satisfied with heaping wrongs upon us, have formed a confederation at Bar, to destroy the small remnant of our liberties, and to bow us to their wanton will, like beasts beneath the yoke. But the Almighty has cast an eye of pity upon our misfortunes, and Catherine II., the august empress of Russia, sends us succour.

Doudar (angrily). Catherine of Russia send you succour ! Alas ! as the wolf succours the lamb !

Lovaty. Ye Zaporogian Cossacks, dwelling beyond the cataracts of the Dnieper, on its wave-worn islets, ye are free as the free air ye breathe, and nought know ye of what is passing here. The people of the Ukraine are mourning in tears ; oft amid the richest crops of golden grain they feel

the keenest pangs of hunger, and when a few courageous sufferers raise but a feeble cry for justice, the vile menials, whose cruelty is whetted by the absence of their masters, silence the voice of complaint by tortures. These tyrannizing slaves, indulging in the most revolting excesses, are indeed deaf as the deaf adder to every appeal to their mercy.

Doudar. All this, it is true, wears a dark and uncheering aspect, but the heads of the state at Vilno and at Warsaw may be roused by powerful representations. Our nobles, far from slumbering in apathy on golden couches, have not all been gained over by foreign tampering. I know them well, they are rather vain than corrupt; many of them are actuated by generous sentiments, they will listen to our complaints and redress our grievances. If *they* spurn our appeal, still punishment may overtake the slavish throng, who are the true oppressors. But heaven defend us from Russian protection! better the dog that barks and bites not, than the dog that bites and barks not. The clamorous cur flies from the uplifted staff, while the silent savage is provoked to a far fiercer mood.

Lovaty. The soil of the Ukraine must be fattened with human gore. The empress is better than she is deemed. She offers us the religion of the Greek, the Poles oppress us with slavery, and seek to school us to the creed of monkish Papists, blaspheming rather than preaching in a tongue that all the witches in the world would vainly attempt to understand.

Doudar. Talk you of slavery? Russia is the veriest concentration of slavery. Ivan the Cruel, who let loose upon the people the fiercest untamed bears, built up a system of tyranny and bondage. Peter the Great enchained with roughest chains of iron his rougher hordes. Catherine, whose name thou soundest in my offended ear, tyrannizes over us, and seeks our ruin; the ruin of that Poland, which is one day to become the focus of liberty; of that Poland which is fated to be the sun of Slavonia, whose luminous rays shall enlighten the firmament from the Polar snows to the rifted rocks of Caucasus. Hear me, *Lovaty* (*he takes hold of his hand*), turn thine eyes towards the west, behold the lowly cupola of yon village church, reflecting to the

broad heaven the beams of the moon. Behold yon beautiful star, with what splendour he rides through the firmament at the van of a less brilliant host of star-crowned warriors, timidly ascending the dark blue ether. Such would have been Khmielnitzki, had he not contracted a baleful alliance with Moscow. Not in vain did he give utterance, in his dying hour, to these memorable words: "*Great is my sin, all powerful divinity, to have placed the land of the Cossack under the protection of the Czar Alexy. Better would it have been to confide in the Turkish Sultan, or the Khan of the Tatar, than in Muscovy. Return to Poland, Cossacks, be united, heart and soul, to your native country.*"

Enter BASIL.

Basil (the Russian priest, addressing Doudar.) May the Almighty shed his blessings upon the faithful! What arch-angel has sent thee hither, intrepid Cossack, to that spot where the chosen are preparing the balm of liberty for the Israelites groaning in Egyptian bondage. Has the light of the Holy Spirit beamed upon thee, that thou mayest break the ignominious bonds riveted by the accursed children of the Levites. The bosom of the church is ever open to receive the repentant sinner, and to throw a veil of oblivion over his iniquities.

Doudar. Father of the faithful, err not. I have never been a renegade to the faith of my forefathers: our holy church has ever numbered me, and shall ever number me, among her most zealous champions. Poland I love, but Russia I abhor, for I can distinguish treachery from friendship, the diamond from the sordid clay, and sooner will the winds of our Steppes sweep back the mighty cataracts, hurling their foamy avalanche of waters up the precipice, than thy perfidious words shall persuade me to wear with patience one link of the chain imposed by Russian tyranny.

Basil. My son, thy words are sharper than a two-edged sword. May the holy faith bring thee back into the fold whence thou seemest to have strayed. Does not the oppression of the people of the Ukraine, do not our insulted altars cry for vengeance? Not against Russia, not against your brethren in creed, did that man utter imprecations, who

having served his country forty years, and merited the highest grade, now commands but one poor regiment, when an upstart, whose only merit lies in his attachment to the Poles, has been raised to the rank of attaman. Nought have I to allege against these warriors, ever brave, ever true to their faith ; their only transgression is their blind devotedness to their young chief. A time will perhaps come, when they will cast from their bosom their false brethren, and then, another more advanced in years, more worthy of leading them to the field of glory, will find favour in the sight of the empress, and even, if peradventure opportunity give token of success, he may aspire to the honour of the crane-plume.*

Doudar. Peace, babbler ! No more. If I respected not the sacred garb thou wear'st, and the hospitable roof beneath which we stand, my sword would ere this have found a passage to thy treacherous heart. Whilst thou dwellest on the insults offered to our church I can forbear, but when thou would'st seek to cajole me with base, delusive promises, I scorn, I spurn thee ! What ! shall I, who for so many years have served my country, cease to look for merit, for valour, for honour in an attaman ? Every martial virtue has raised Nekrassa to that high rank. Oh, were he raised even to a higher elevation, neither the empress nor any of her issue should inscribe their names in the books of the Zaporoguians ; a peasant of Pultava should not bear the title of attaman of the Polish Cossacks ; no Russian soldier should ever pollute by his presence the right bank of the Dneiper ; you foreign priests should be driven back like rats, and if any one of you should dare to interfere with our political institutions, he should dangle on some gibbet-tree, to scare the rooks and the passing wayfarer.

Lovaty. Be not chafed to anger, Doudar ; bear in mind that we were playmates in our boyish years, that in our manhood's prime we fought and bled at each other's side in the red battle-field, that the earth will ere long receive us in her

* A crane's plume was attached to the attaman of the Zaporogian Cossacks, Attaman Koshovy, as a symbol of supreme military dignity. Attaman Koorennny was only a commander of a regiment, and had not a crane's plume.

cold bosom ; forget not that I have ever been thy warmest friend ; thou hast ever respected the ministers of our holy religion, in the name of heaven then forbear to disturb our peaceful abode.

Doudar. Would to heaven that peacefulness were the aim of this unworthy priest, and that his heart teemed not with Satanic wiles !

Lovaty. Come, gentle Doudar, lay aside thy wrath, be calm, be reconciled ; give him thy hand.

Doudar. Rather does this hand now seek to wield an avenging blade, and pauses, despite me, on my sabre's hilt. But enough ; I will say no more.

Basil. Thy reproof has chastened me sorely ; my heart deviseth not wicked imaginations, but let not the sun go down upon thy wrath, if a few vehement words have escaped my lips. My tongue, accustomed to pronounce maledictions upon the wicked, did but yield to the momentary torrent of my thoughts. I am very far from attaching no value to the bravery and merits of the young warrior whose praise is sounded throughout all Slavonia. I shall ever be proud to number him among my friends, although I have not to learn that men sometimes interpret not my heart aright, pouring the poison of suspicion upon my innocent actions. My sacred mission enjoins forbearance. My worthy brethren and friends here, in this hospitable abode, in the midst we will tranquilly discuss the subject of dispute, to the furtherance of the common weal, and the general good of mankind.

SCENE III.—*The Interior of the hut of the Cossacks.*

LOVATY, DOUDAR, BASIL, and COSSACKS.

Lovaty. Before we proceed to our discussion, it will not be amiss to indulge in a few stoups of the water of life.*

They all drink brandy, crossing themselves.

Basil (arranging his dark bushy beard). Glory to the all powerful ! Glory to the patriarch ! Glory to the empress ! Blessings upon the true believers ! I come amongst you, herald of the supreme will of Catherine II., empress of

* The Cossacks call brandy the water of life.

Russia, source of all grace, distinction, and power. The fame of your miseries and oppressions has reached even to the foot of her august throne. Looking down upon you with an eye of benevolence, she holds out to you a protecting hand, and opens to you the path to liberty and safety.

All the Cossacks. How ! What means this ?

Basil. Ye will soon have a chief, a new attaman (*with a sardonic laugh he exhibits a dagger*). Numerous chests, filled with daggers, have been conveyed into every commune. Every blade has been sanctified for its pious work by prayers and blessings. These weapons shall free you from the chains of bondage. In the name of the holy faith, the empress commands you to massacre all the Jews, whose children are real leeches of our people, and all the Polish catholics. No mercy ! no pardon ! from the Dnieper to the Boh ; men, women, and children, must be smitten by the edge of the sword : let the groans of the dying be borne across the Steppes by the winds of heaven : let the blaze of burning villages scare back the wolf, and let clouds of ascending smoke defy the eagle's piercing gaze. Such is Catherine's will, such her imperial commands.

Some of the Cossacks. Catherine ! away with her commands !—we are free ! we are free !

All the Cossacks. Down with her commands ! Down with her commands !

Basil. Be calm, my friends, be calm and listen. My tongue, obeying the dictates of my pious thoughts, has given utterance to words too strong in meaning. The empress, whose magnanimity and wisdom are resplendent as the brightest sunbeam in the eastern sky, is very far from striking a blow at your liberties ; nay, she would strengthen and shield them. Her whole aim is to deliver you from the Poles, and the papal domination, and to guard her powerful states from disorder and anarchy. Perish then the Poles ! death to the Poles !

Doudar (coming forward in a fury of indignation). Hold thy peace, detested viper ! loathsome, venom-bloated toad ! hoarse-croaking raven ! Silence thy keen-edged, blood-lusting tongue. Thou pantest for victims—thine own impious head shall ere long receive the falchion's greeting.

Must thou involve others in thy ruin ? Must thou trammel others in the nets that have been laid for thee ? Under pretence of being a champion of the faith, you preach bloodshed ;—whilst you would seem to advocate liberty, you are preparing burnings and desolation. As for you, my brethren, (*turning towards the Cossacks*) will you hearken to the counsels of this black, ill-boding screech owl, that ere long the northern vultures may swoop upon you and banquet upon your flesh.

All the Cossacks put themselves in vacillating movement ; they have drunk deep, but at present speak not. Basil, the Russian priest, draws a dagger and hurls it at Doudar, missing him, but exclaiming, "Death to the Poles !" "Death to the Papists !"

All the Cossacks. Death to the Poles ! Glory to the true believers !

Doudar (as he goes off). Ere the third morning's dawn, I will deal forth vengeance on these foul-beaked vultures.

Exit.

Basil. Ere the third morning's dawn, time will give birth to more than one event. Nekrassa cannot arrive in less than four days. When Gonta once is ours, we shall capture Houmagne (pronounced *Hooman*).

Men and horses are heard advancing. Voices are heard crying aloud, "Glory to the true believers!" ZELEZNIAK (pronounced Jelezniacke) enters with several others.

Zelezniak (in a distinct and appalling tone of voice). Friends ! I am ready to do your bidding. Glory to the true believers ! Death to the papist Poles ! no mercy !

He kneels before the priest, kisses his hand, and draws from his pocket a paper, which he shows him.

Basil (reading in a low murmuring voice). "All is going on well ; the victorious troops of the czarina encircle Poland ; reinforcements are marching to the Ukraine, to cut off all communication with the Polish forces. All the nobility must fall by our swords. Treasures are on the way to us."

(*Aloud.*) Brethren in creed and in arms, no time must be lost. Who shall be our chief?

All the Cossacks. Zelezniak ! Zelezniak !

Basil (to Zelezniak, giving him his blessing). Let the star of the true faith go before thee and guide thee. By the shedding of blood, strengthen thou the power of the patriarch. Destroy palaces, nobles, and papists. Spare neither age nor sex, and be thy fury like that of a maddened tiger. Block up in thy heart every avenue to mercy with three rows of impenetrable walls. Gird up thy loins : prompt and vigorous be the sword of vengeance !

Zelezniak. Holy father, fear not ; I will execute thy commands : terror shall go before us ; carnage and conflagrations shall bear us company. The time is at hand—To action ! To action ! Mercy ! I loathe and abhor thee !

Exeunt Zelezniak, Basil, and Cossacks.

Lovaty. (alone). Great God ! what dark thoughts overshadow my soul. Why can I not revoke the current of my actions ? What demon in the form and fashion of a priest has by words of perfidy entangled me in his deadly meshes ? But the die is cast. I have slipped the hyæna. Oh man ! how powerless art thou when thou needest another's bias, ill directed withal, to guide thine own actions ! (*He weeps, and kneels.*) King of kings, Sovereign and ruler of the universe, restore to my troubled soul its departed peace ; avert calamity from the Ukraine, and permit me to descend into the vale of closing life with a heart pure as the pure water gushing from its granite-cell, where the trooping wild-steeds slake their thirst ! But the dense clouds driven by the winds of Muscovy, roll westward their swelling masses, darkening the sun, and pouring down crimes and horrors upon Poland. Will my guardian angel prevail over the dark minister of evil ? Ah ! perhaps my fervent prayers will be unheard : peradventure the insatiate Moloch is thirsting for Polish blood, and the heavy doleful knell of death will be heard in the villages around. Peradventure the groans of slaughtered mothers and children will ascend to heaven, and the murderers, overtaken by divine justice, will aspire to martyrdom in the cause of liberty, when the empress, in her own heart deriding their credulity, and sur-

rounded by worthless courtiers, will lavish infamous honours and distinctions upon those who have swelled the number of the enormities bequeathed to Poland. (*The sound of bells and noise are heard.*) *Exit Lovaty.*

SCENE IV.—*A large moated Mansion.*

Several Noblemen and Females.

The Lord of the Castle, a Polish citizen, (addressing a superior officer, who comes on in uniform). Welcome, my dear colonel; many a slow and weary hour has ambled on since last we met. Has sickness laid its hand upon you? Long have I looked for you till now in vain. I began to fear that I should be condemned to hunt without you those ravening wolves that have begun their prowlings. It was only yesterday that they strangled one of my horses almost before my eyes. A score of my Spanish sheep have already become their prey, and this very day they pursued a child even to the court-yard of our mansion.

Col. Stempkowski. What, do they hunt in packs at this season of the year? There must be some cause for this.

Lord of the Castle. Their boldness surprises me, and tomorrow, colonel, I propose that we attack them in their lairs; attendants, horses, dogs, and guns are in readiness, and let your presence give the note of final preparation.

Stempkowski. I shall be delighted to bear you company, not only on the proposed excursion, but on aught else that it may be your pleasure to appoint.

Lord of the Castle. But to come to the cause of your long absence; my old house seemed to regret a guest with whom it had grown familiar and happy: its ancient walls, as if forlorn and widowed, seemed to sigh, and ask me where you were.

Stempkowski. Friends like you need scarcely be reminded that if I have been so long prevented from visiting you, the cause of my absence is to be traced to important business that has kept me in Moldavia. The purchasing of horses for my regiment has likewise detained me, and hindered me from discharging a duty not less agreeable to my heart than necessary for my existence.

Lord of the Castle. This argues then a preparation for war.

Stempkowski. A soldier, whose trade is war, is always prepared for the strife of arms, for death, and immortality.

His Friend. In these traits I read the true Polish noble. But you have just returned from a long journey ; you must know the news astir.

Stempkowski. The news : without awakening the curiosity of the ladies, I announce that we are on the eve of great troubles.

His Friend. Troubles ! how say you ?

Stempkowski. What ! know you not that hosts of Moscovite priests infest our land ; preaching, intriguing, and hatching mischief, while general Branetzki abstains from giving orders that the cold-blooded serpent brood be seized and put to death.

His Friend. From no authentic source had this yet reached me.

Stempkowski. My stay with you can be but a day ; to-morrow I must hence to collect the men under my command. Even yesterday, Zelezniak, a Cossack, notorious by his cruelty in past wars, was heard to utter the direst imprecations against the Catholic nobles ; and he was preparing, as he said, to tamper with and alienate the Cossacks of Potocki, commanded by Gonta.

A Female. In heaven's name, colonel, speak you of Zelezniak and Gonta ? I abhor them both, and dread them as a pestilence. They are men whose very names are terrible.

One of the Females. If any fearful calamity is at hand, inform us. Make it known to us, I implore.

Stempkowski. Be not alarmed ! Nought is there to excite your fears.

A GIPSY in tattered raiment enters hurriedly, crying aloud,
Bloodshed, tears, desolation, death ! poor innocent creatures !
(*She dances in wildest mood.*) Bloodshed, tears, desolation,
death ! Poor suffering humanity !

Lord of the Castle. Ho, there ! away with that maniac.

Gipsy. Neither maniac nor witch am I ; but your friend.
Bloodshed, tears, desolation, death ; poor innocent lambkins !
poor suffering sons of men !

The Servants of the household advance to seize her.

The Females. Harm her not ; touch her not.
Lord of the Castle. Lead her forth uninjured.

She withdraws, exclaiming the same direful words,
"Bloodshed, tears," &c.

Stempkowski (in a whisper). Let her be seized and questioned. I behold too great a number of peasants assembled. I will go forthwith to conduct hither the nearest troops of Nekrassa, and will return with the utmost speed.

Lord of the Castle (to a Servant). A light carriage immediately for the colonel, and yoke to it four of the fleetest steeds.

Servant (returning). The assembled peasants forbid me to harness the horses ; they have beset every approach to the castle, occupied the villages, and taken all our horses from the pasture at the end of the garden. Armed with long daggers they roll their fiery eyeballs like savage wolves, muttering curses against the Catholic nobles : they speak reverentially of the empress, in whose name Zelezniak is to do them justice.

All the Females. Zelezniak ! Zelezniak ! Alas ! we perish !

Stempkowski (to his Servant). How say'st thou, knave ? Speak'st thou truly ?

Servant. Yea ! my good master, as I love you, so speak I, sooth.

Stempkowski. With mine own eyes I will banish doubt.

He goes out, returns, and whispers to his friend.

His Friend. Up with the drawbridge : call together the inmates of the castle, distribute arms and ammunition.

Stempkowski. To guard against surprise, I will straitway hence with a few light-armed men to occupy the avenue to the garden, and drive a few of the sheep and beeves within the walls.

The Females shed tears.

Lord of the Castle. Weep not ; your tears avail not. Go down into the vaults, employ yourselves in making cartridges, and be assured we are not yet within the reach of death.

Stempkowski. Away with fear and weeping ! we have fifty

of the stoutest hearts to repel even the fiercest attacks, and provisions for three weeks have been secured. If Satan himself should besiege us, our fire would soon prove too hot for him: victory must be ours. The craven only dies. Death comes not to the brave. What is the number of our assailants?

The Females withdraw.

Lord of the Castle. More than five thousand confident and determined spirits. Each minute swells their numbers. Well armed they seem. If Negrassa comes not to our aid, we shall perish, but for no mean price will we sell our lives.

Stemp. Happen what may, I forbode no unfavourable issue.

SCENE V.—*Apartments of the Palatine Potocki, in the Castle of Tulczyn.*

A MESSENGER enters.

Potocki. Well; have you seen Gonta?

Messenger. I have seen him, and I gave him your liege's letter.

Potocki. Wore he a countenance of gaiety or sadness? did he appear moved, or was he absorbed in thoughtfulness?

Messenger. He appeared deeply absorbed; after having twice perused your letter, he began to pace the room with rapid strides; he then rolled and twisted the paper in his fingers. Suddenly he stood still, as if turned to stone; then he laid his palm upon his brow, muttered something, and bade me return in haste to Toultschiene, whither he would follow me without delay.

Potocki. Could'st thou interpret nought of what he muttered?

Messenger. His words were inaudible; but I thought I heard him say, "Zelezniak, the tiger."

Potocki. How, say'st thou so? Art sure?

Messenger. The sounds of such words came upon my listening ear.

Potocki. It is then no idle bugbear, but a danger palpable and near; like the blue adder ready to uncoil itself and strike. Leave me.

The Servant withdraws.

Enter an ATTENDANT, who announces,

Colonel Gonta has just arrived, and seeks admission straightway into the presence of your highness.*

Potocki. Admit him.

Enter GONTA.

Welcome, welcome, colonel, we are living in eventful times. Is it true that Zelezniak has placed himself at the head of the rebel peasants, and is now marching with a strong body of men against Houmagne, attended by numerous Moscovite priests?

Gonta. All this is true, my liege.

Potocki. Know you that chief?

Gonta. I know him well. I have served under the same banners with him in many a campaign; he is a man of unbounded fanaticism, who at the bidding of a priest would yield his body to the torturer's knife—and his thirst of blood is unquenchable. His past life, rich in crimes, was but the seed time of future horrors. Other ruthless destroyers brood over their sinister projects in dark caverns, or in the gloom of night, that the sun may dart no ray of light upon their murderous thoughts. He, on the other hand, plans in broad day his villainies, mocking heaven with prayer and uplifted crucifix. Like the savage beast-king of the forest he openly flies to danger; but never, as oft-times that noble animal, does he spare the prostrate foe. When the thirst of vengeance racks him, his eyes dart forth beams of flame, his muscles are contracted, and his breast heaves, while from it seems to ascend his deep-drawn, hollow, blood-chilling voice, which would fill with dismay even the fiercest tigress. When the groans of his victims reach his ears, he gloats with savage gladness over their prolonged agony, till their death plunges him once more into moodiness and dull satiety.

Potocki. A portrait darkly shadowed forth, in dreadful sooth!

Gonta. Darkly drawn your highness, but faithful as the gloomy mountain reflected in the silvery lake.

* The palatines were addressed by this title.

Potocki. Is he sagacious, intelligent, astute ? holds he the ascendant over his inferior officers ?

Gonta. He is gifted with an energetic soul, a rare self-possession, and unexampled coolness amid dangers ; skilful in forestalling cunning, he scorns to practise it himself ; he is open and frank in disposition, and exerts a powerful influence over the common herd ; but a man of subtle spirit by flattering his wishes might lead him as a child, and, above all, were that man a priest.

Potocki. Then he is not so dangerous as he appears. Have you heard of a certain Basil, a Russian priest, who dogs his heels and pursues him, as the shark follows the warship in its ocean-track ?

Gonta. Much have I heard of this priest. Flexible and crafty, active and indefatigable, cruel and perfidious is he. Zelezniak cannot but fall into the snares of this insidious demon, this lurking serpent, thrown by the empress upon the soil of Poland.

Potocki. In the present aspect of affairs upon what course shall we then determine ?

Gonta. Assemble troops, give battle to Zelezniak, hang every Muscovite priest that treads on Polish ground, if he cannot justify his presence by satisfactory reasons.

Potocki. Your counsels, brave Gonta, command my strong approval, but where find some active, enterprising chief, capable of inspiring the people of the Ukraine with a certain amount of confidence ; a chief who, to the Polish Cossacks, may set an example of fidelity to Poland, who may act in concert with Branetzki and other generals of the republic ?

Gonta. The search would not be in vain. In holy writ we learn, " Seek and thou shalt find, knock and it shall be opened to thee." But in these stormy times, when suspicion taints the very air we breathe, even grey-haired warriors can scarce escape its baleful influence. Does any man refuse to crouch to priestly power, be he of Cossack and not of noble blood, men sneer at his merits and his probity : his honour, his experience, his wisdom, all, all are derided. None will allow that his heart glows with patriotism.

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Brother holds brother in distrust, and friend looks coldly on friend.

Potocki. Be not moved above measure. Tell me of Branetzki.

Gonta. Of Branetzki ! Too friendly with our foes, he is linked in amity with the Moscovite generals. Kretchetnikof and Podhorotchanin fatten at his board, and with our ducats reinforce their purses. Branetzki is no stranger to the present troubles. I know from good authority that very equivocal orders relative thereto have been brought to him from Warsaw. Catherine cajoles him with her gold and the hope of the Polish crown. He that serves two masters must soon encounter many a suspecting scowl ; beggared, ere long, in confidence and fortune, the poor bankrupt scarce possesses, in old age, a staff to beat off the cur that snaps or barks at his heels.

Potocki. 'Tis shrewdly answered ! but what is your opinion of Stempkowski ?

Gonta. Of Stempkowski ! His is a valiant soldier, who wears his honour next his heart ; grown grey in arms, adored by his soldiers, and esteemed by all men ; he will face the storm, not as a courtier but as a good and loyal Pole.

Potocki. We may then rely upon him ?

Gonta. Assuredly, your highness.

Potocki. Your three regiments of my Cossacks ? Can you reckon upon them ?—As yet, they have taken no part in the troubles.

Gonta. With strictest discipline I have learned to curb them, they will obey me in aught that I command.

Enter a COURIER.

Courier. Colonel Stempkowski has ordered me to inform your highness that bands of peasants in open rebellion marched last night to join Zelezniak, who, according to rumour, is about to attack the town of Houmagne. My master's regiment and two others, likewise, are under arms. Nekrassa with his Cossacks will come up to-morrow, and, accordingly, if your highness' regiments, under Gonta, assemble and attack the Haidamaques the day after to-morrow, all the rebels will be exterminated before they can concentrate themselves under the walls of the fortress.

Potocki. Mladanovitch commands at Houmagne ; his troops and artillery are numerous ; the town is provisioned for three weeks, and is proof against a sudden assault. The rebels must have time to assemble at some single point, that other places may be cleared of their dangerous presence : we shall be able to surround them by degrees, and crush them when disorder and famine have thinned their ranks.

Courier retires.

How say you, Gonta ? A desultory warfare, skilfully maintained, is ever more dangerous to the invader than a pitched battle, for order and discipline are ever found to overpower the hordes unpractised in the art of war, however brave and obstinate in actual conflict.

Gonta. When we stand on the brink of some daring enterprise, we must foresee the chances, and value them with nicest calculation ; we must not suffer our presumption to mislead us. If we would burn a town, we must kindle the destroying element at various points, that the flames may the more easily devour their prey. The same rule applies to many other things. If we would combat a powerful enemy, we must not look lightly on the smallest incident that may turn to our disadvantage. In the present crisis I, in part, approve your sentiments, but it appears to me that we should do well to divide the rebels ; to hurl, adroitly, the torch of discord amongst them, ere we give them battle—I would counsel that your highness delay the attack for a few days.

Potocki. In all weighty matters, brave Gonta, I have already proved your wisdom and experience. I will therefore speak to you in all sincerity. You were born within the precincts of our domain, nay, beneath our roof ; for your bravery and noble qualities I raised you to the rank of colonel of my troops—ere long new favours shall be added—I brought you up, I gave you a virtuous wife, and heaped riches upon you ; I trust that in you I behold an enemy neither to the republic nor to myself. The traitorous king, a slave to tyrannising lusts, surrounded by the vilest courtesans, a mere puppet to the Empress Catherine, has banished from the throne of the Jagellons the virtue, the honour, the ancient dignity that graced it. He crouches at the feet of the Mos-

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covite ambassador ; and all our privileges, all our liberties have been annihilated. Poland can no longer endure the chains of such a bondage. The nobles are assembling the Confederation of Bar ; that true focus of patriotism, aims at the ejection of the Russians, the dethronement of Stanislaus, the recovery of our ancient independence by the sword, the punishment of traitors, and the placing of a worthier monarch upon the throne. March, then, at the head of my troops, and crush the rebels. Pursuing a glorious career you will be ennobled, you will preserve your high rank in the service of the republic, and other rewards of valour will be yours. I have perhaps been too frank with you—be equally sincere with me, and unbosom yourself without restraint.

Gonta. I passed the best years of my youth in your illustrious abode. My heart is filled with the warmest gratitude for the favours you have heaped upon me. But I avow that the enterprise in question wears a serious aspect, and demands mature reflection. I know not whether the nobles will acquiesce in the confidence your highness would repose in me ; they are arrogant in prosperity, and versatile at the approach of danger. I have marked their distrust in me ; their suspicion lurks not unseen through the flimsy veil they cast over it. Will they not thwart the high promises your highness has made me ? If I assent to your proposal—I ask for unlimited powers, for, when once I have commenced my course, I am not a man to recede or swerve. Ere I load my shoulders with the heavy responsibility of such an enterprise, I will endeavour to discover how the Cossacks are affected, how Branetzki, how the nobles towards thee. In three days I will return and give you my decision, or I will make it known to your highness by means on which you may rely. Meanwhile, my presence is needed in various places.

Potocki. Go, and return to save us. Deserve well of your country. May the guardian angel of your soul guide your actions, and spurn from you the counsels of the evil one.

Exeunt Potocki and Gonta.

SCENE VII.—*A Tavern in the Ukraine.*

Several Haidamaques, some seated, some standing. Two aged men arranging their long grey beards and speaking to each other in a low tone. Several Jews, whose bewildered looks betoken great disquietude. Jugs, glasses, bottles of beer upon the table. A cask stands near on one side.

First old Man. We must wait for this festival, it seems, as Jews for the Messiah.

Second old Man. Be not impatient, the flesh-pots are preparing, all will be ready in due time. In a few days, perhaps, our land will be cleared of these accursed heretics. After this morning's devotions, our heaven-sent minister implored the God of mercy to grant prosperity to Russia, whose sovereign queen looks upon us with an eye of benevolence, and permits us to destroy by fire the Jews and all the Polish Papists and Protestants. But see, here comes one who brings us news.

The MESSENGER enters, bearing on his back a large sack filled with daggers, perceptible through a rent.

Messenger. Excellent weapons for holy use! (*turning and gazing intently around*)—Sure, no Pole is present here! Let joy be ours! the time is come! let no dog of a Jew escape. Bind them hand and foot. (*They are bound.*) Now! now! be armed! (*he scatters about some of the daggers*). Not for the first time do the Russians, our friends and brethren in creed, bestow such presents on us. The ministers of religion have consecrated these avenging blades! Now to the work of vengeance! God and the Empress! Jew and papist Pole perish alike! 'Tis the will of heaven—obey!

The Jews are dragged away to be massacred.

The Murderers enter again, with daggers reeking with blood.

Let us to the village.

Szvatchka. To the village! Far from it! The game

would take wing ere the time, although every path and outlet are guarded. Not one papist, were he Satan himself, will be able to escape. Let us now distribute more daggers amongst the peasants of the Greco-Russian creed. Above all, avoid premature collision, which would betray our designs, and might be attended with fatal consequences to us.

*Exeunt Peasants, all except Szvatchka and two old men, and another Haidamaque.**

Haidamaque (to one of the old Men). Rouse yourselves, you are slumbering. To the work of vengeance! Quick! Five already I have sent to everlasting rest (*he shows his bloody dagger*). Fain would I have buried six inches of my steel in the throat of my lord and master, but the sly old fox, scenting the danger, slipped out of my sight.

Szvatchka. Take courage, for one noble missed you will have a hundred at Houmagne, where the liege-lords have taken refuge. But you pant with fatigue. Rest yourself. Sleep, you will be awakened at the fitting time. (*He throws himself on the ground.*)

A Haidamaque sentinel cries, "Who goes there?"
Two men, and a boy, ten years old, are seen passing. "A Friend!" is answered.

Szvatchka. Who are those?

Sentinel. A man and a young boy, whom I know not.

Szvatchka. Seize them, and bring them hither. (*They are brought.*) Who, and whence are you? This child, who is he?

Khitchewski (in a peasant's garb). I am a sword-cutler from Kiow—this is my nephew—I was ordered hither.

Szvatchka. A sword-cutler! yea, and a papist too! I remember having seen you in Polish uniform at a neighbouring fair.

The Boy. Dear uncle, will they kill us?

Khitchewski. No, child! We are not Poles!

* The rebel peasants were called Haidamaques.

At this word the Haidamaques awakened, spring up, and brandishing their daggers threaten to kill the child and Khitchewski. "We are not Poles!" The daggers are lowered.

A Haidamaque (advancing, and riveting his eyes upon the child). A pure papist brat, I swear—I saw both him and this fellow at mass with some Polish officers. Let us snip their wesands—these are no peasants. This hand (he lays hold of the boy's hand), so smooth and delicate, tells not of a peasant's lot.

Khitchewski. That hand has ne'er been worn by toil. The boy has lived with a priest at Kiow, to become, one day, a faithful servant of our Holy Patriarch. He can chant the sacred hymns of the church. Come, boy, fear not, and greet them with a stave.

The boy sings a hymn.

HYMN.

On the shore mark yon thousands of warriors and steeds,

And behold how the billow has rolled back its prey ;

See the foemen all slain, but no foeman that bleeds :

Mark the chariots all rent, and the wheels swept away.

See the pride of the tyrant has waned, and the sun

Of his glory has set on the far-crimsoned wave ;

Haughty Misraim is fallen, ere the slaughter's begun,

And the deluging waters now yield him a grave.

The Jehovah of battle 's on Israel's side,

On the clouds living splendour mysterious hath stood—

In the wave-mountain pass, with destruction as guide,

The pursuer 's o'erwhelmed by the avalanche-flood.

Szvatchka. Wondrous well ! wondrous well ! (He crosses himself ; the others follow his example.—The Boy takes courage, jumps upon his neck, and lays hold of a glittering chain of gold.) But come, the pass-word !

Khitchewski. 'Tis here.

He shows to Szvatchka a copper coin, bearing the image of the Empress Catherine, of the year 1768.

Szvatchka. Let them pass unmolested—they are no papists.

Exeunt omnes.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A small rustic abode.*

The wife and two daughters of KHITCHEWSKI. The daughters in peasant's attire.

Madame Khitchewska. May God and the Holy Virgin, sovereign protectress of our dear Poland, guide the steps of my husband and nephew.

Jane (the younger daughter). Are my father and our dear little cousin in danger ?

Mother. Yes ; they are crossing the country in the dress of peasants, and must pass through the midst of the Haidamaques, ere they can reach us.

Jane. Be not alarmed, mother, our beloved father will soon arrive, and with him our dearest cousin. As to our brother, you know that he is already at Houmagne.

Mother. How do you know they will soon arrive ?

Jane. How ? my heart tells me so, dear mother.

Mother. God grant that your heart may not deceive you, but sometimes we believe what we wish to be true.

Jane. I believe that my father, our little cousin, and Nekrassa, are in safety. My heart tells me that.

Mother. Come, let me embrace thee, child ; you dispel my solicitude and anguish, as the dawn chases away the darkness.

Jane. And when our dear father returns, he will leave us no more.

Mother. Such, my dear child, is my hope and my prayer.

Jane. Where are we, mother ?

Mother. Under the roof of a friend.

Jane. Do I know that friend, mother ?

Mother. Yes, you have seen him often.

Jane. What is his name ?

Mother. Vernyhora.

Jane. Vernyhora ! Vernyhora ! oh ! I have often heard

you speak of him ; he is Nekrassa's friend and ours likewise. Is it not so, sister ?

Madeline. Yes, sister, he is our friend.

Jane. Oh ! mother, mother, yonder is Nekrassa's sabre, perhaps he is here too. (*Turning towards her sister.*) Look, Madeline, look ; it is Nekrassa's sword, with a Turk's head and a crescent for the hilt.

Madeline. I do not remember whether it be his.

Jane. You do not remember ! I recollect it well, for one day, when Nekrassa went with my father to look at the horses in the stables, you drew it from its sheath, and after having waved it through the air like a soldier, you kissed it, as the clergyman sometimes kisses the blessed book of the gospel, and I have not forgotten that I told you it was a great sin so to kiss a Turk. Was it not a sin, mother ?

Mother. A sin, my dearest child, let me kiss *you*, THAT assuredly, is no sin.

Madeline. My dearest, kindest little sister ; talk not of such trifles, when we have reason to be so serious ; for who knows how soon we may fall into the hands of the savage Haïdamaques ?

Jane. I like to talk of Nekrassa ; he is so kind, so generous, so good. Is he not, dearest sister ? I know you like him too. Must we not always speak the truth, mother ; and love our friends.

Mother. You must always speak the truth. God tells you so, and you must not only love your friends, but your enemies also. But it is not allowed us to give too much liberty to the tongue ; that may sometimes be the cause of much mischief.

The aged VERNYHORA enters.

All the Females together. Welcome, welcome, Vernyhora !

Mother. But where are my husband, and my little nephew ?

Vernyhora. They are on the way, and will come hither ere they repair to Houmagne to sift the intentions of Gonta, for suspicion hangs like a cloud about him, which, with the keenest visions' ken, it will be difficult to penetrate. Since his return from Tulczyn, his conduct is crooked, and awakes uneasiness. He has been seen of late to hold frequent par-

ley with the rebels. In moody silence he gazes on the ground, and to no one unlocks the secrets of his heart. He alone can curb Zelezniak, and prevent the consummation of that monster's cruel purposes. The fate of the Ukraine depends wholly on Gonta. There is a struggle on both sides to gain him. Your husband has long known him, and he seems attached to your family. Your husband, then, at his country's call, must accompany Negrassa in this arduous mission.

Mother. Men's actions are guided by their planets, and none is arbiter of his own destiny. I know not how, my heart shudders at the very name of Gonta, I would that my husband and Negrassa go not to Houmagne.

The Daughters. No, mother, indeed they must not go.

Vernyhora. I know not how, by any different venture, to compass the end we aim at. The austere virtue of your husband will not blench on the path of duty. The honourable skulk not when dangers threaten. When our country's voice sounds in our ears and we obey not its summons, destruction is the inevitable consequence. If amid rocks and shoals the steersman is deaf to the hoarse-voiced warning of his chief, the strong-ribbed bark is dashed to pieces, and all are buried in the foaming waves. Unhappy the land in which private advantage is not sacrificed to the public good.

Mother. Alas ! the public weal too oft becomes a woe to the deserted wife or mother. Our sons, our husbands, fall by the hostile sword, and what defence is left us but unavailing tears ?

Vernyhora. Be not moved, lady. Your grief is yet untimely. The dews of sorrow must not fall ere the night of misery comes on. Compose yourself ; nay, be cheerful, and let me ask you how my humble dwelling, which you honour with your presence, comports with your wishes and your comforts.

Mother. Your hospitable dwelling affords me all the happiness of a tender home, and I pray that heaven may guide my husband hither in safety.

Jane. Do tell me where Negrassa is. I am sure he is in the house. Sister and I should be so glad to see him. He would soon put to flight the wicked Haïdamaques.

Vernyhora. Would to heaven he were here !

Jane. But I have seen his sabre, and he himself must be near at hand.

Vernyhora. But, my dearest child, there are other sabres like Nekrassa's. And you, Madeline, why so sad? your brow is overcast; the light of those bright eyes is dimmed, and trouble seems to weigh upon your heart.

Madeline. My father, my mother, and my brother, are in danger: terror and dismay, war and death, are drawing their nets around us, and perhaps ere long the destroying angel with dark wings disspread will hover over devoted Poland. Can I then be cheerful, and know the sweets of happiness?

Vernyhora. Evil bodements do not always herald evil. Ofttimes a gloomy daybreak is the harbinger of golden sunshine. We must not, then, take alarm at misfortunes before they come.

SCENE. II.

A SERVANT enters.

Servant. Two strangers are without and crave admittance.

Vernyhora. How are they attired?

Servant. As peasants, and unarmed.

Vernyhora. Permit me, lady, to leave you for an instant.

Exeunt Vernyhora and Servant.

The Mother. Alas! if they should be Haidamaques, or Russians, come to take us by surprise!

Jane. Oh, no, mother, they are neither Russians nor Haidamaques; since they dare to come alone to the house of Vernyhora.

Enter NEKRASSA, KHITCHEWSKI, and his Nephew.

Vernyhora. (*entering with two men*). I introduce to you these two gentlemen and this little boy, whom you have perhaps seen before, and who will be very happy to make acquaintance with you.

The Mother. They are welcome: the friends of Vernyhora must be ours.

Jane. 'Tis my dear father, Nekrassa, and our little cousin! (*The Females rush towards them, and load them with embraces and caresses.*) Was I not right, mother, in saying that they were neither Haidamaques nor Russians; but how different

you look in that dress (*turning towards* Nekrassa). You cannot think (*speaking to* Nekrassa) how uneasy my sister was about my father, and about you, too.

Nekrassa. Your sister's regard, dearest Jane, does me much honour, and commands my warmest thanks.

A SERVANT rushing in with precipitate haste.

Servant. Numerous Haïdamaques are prowling round our wood, and Gonta is said to be in the neighbourhood.

Khitchewski. We must hence, Nekrassa, with all possible despatch, and hold conference with Gonta. Farewell, my beloved wife ! farewell, dearest children ! my nephew will stay with you. I shall soon return ; but if I come not back, you will join me at Houmagne, where you will be in greater safety. A trusty guide will conduct you thither.

Madame Khitchewska. God grant that you may return ; but my heart overflows with bitterness ! Stay but an hour longer with me, ere you depart.

The Daughters (weeping). Go not away, father : do stay a little while ; leave us not so soon.

Khitchewski. My dearest children, my country imposes upon me the cruel necessity of leaving you. I commit you to the protection of Vernyhora.

The Daughters. Farewell, father ! farewell !

They hang upon his neck and sob audibly. Exeunt all but Vernyhora and Madame Khitchewska.

Vernyhora. The tears of affection are like precious pearls ; of more value are they than diamonds—they at once adorn and protect the softer sex. When they profusely fall, God, sooner or later, repays them with joy.

Madame Khitchewska. Alas ! my heart is sad, and joy has fled from me for ever.

Enter a SERVANT.

Servant. The Haïdamaques are coming down the hill on the way to our village.

The Mother (wringing her hands). We perish. May the God of mercy take pity upon me and my daughters ! Let us fly to Houmagne.

Vernyhora. Flight is impossible ; every path, every outlet

is beset by bands of Haïdamaques. In truth, I fear not these bandit hordes ; they will never dare to attack me. But I have just received intelligence that the Russian general, Kretchetnikoff, has sent a detachment of his troops, disguised as peasants, to seize me, and afterwards co-operate in the siege and capture of Korsougne (pronounced Korsun.)

The Mother. Death is at hand ! we perish !

Vernyhora. Soothe the anguish of your soul ; I will find means to save you. There is yet time, not a hair of your head shall be injured by the Russian chief, nor by the empress herself. The fatal moment is not yet come. In all the affairs of man, destiny sounds the appointed knell that signals an appointed deed.

The Mother. Save us, then ; oh ! save us, kind Vernyhora.

The Daughters (who have again entered). Save, us then ; oh, save us, kind Vernyhora !

Vernyhora (to the Servant). Go with these females and this little boy to the boat that is moored to the river's bank, and row them to the castle of Korsougne. When you have reached it, with a shrill whistle twice give token of your coming, and the castle gate will forthwith give you ingress. From Korsougne you will get safe convoy to Houmagne. I will in the mean time disguise myself, and seek refuge in the covert of the adjacent woods. Take trusty arms, and God be with you. Farewell !

They all embrace and withdraw.

SCENE III.

At Sokolovka, a small village in the Ukraine.

Gonta (alone). Which way then will the balance of my destinies preponderate ? The king is endeavouring to lure me by the promise of titled greatness and pompous recompense. He in secret invites me to take part with the Haïdamaques in exterminating the nobles of the Ukraine, who would pluck him from his throne. General Kretchetnikoff, in the name of the empress, makes golden offers to seduce me into a communion with these same destroyers. False glory, avaunt ! with thy flickering lamp thou shalt not draw me from the right path into the deep morass where thy lustre is

engendered. The palatine Potocki would enlist me on the side of those hated nobles. I am bound hand and foot to the huge chariot-wheels of destiny. Will they then stop their mighty revolution, and leaving me ever at the highest, ne'er descend to crush me? Riches, titles, a golden coronet will be mine, and the proud palatine will be unable to hinder me from embracing as my lawful spouse his fairest niece, whom I adore. All this will be mine. But, at what a price! I will pause to think on't.

Enter an OFFICER.

Officer. Colonel, a young officer of distinction has just arrived in company with a nobleman; they have urgent matters to communicate to you, and request an audience without delay.

Gonta. Admit them, and leave us.

Enter NEKRASSA and KHITCHEWSKI.

Nekrassa. Do you know me, Colonel Gonta? for since we met, many a winter's snowy garb has clothed our plains.

Gonta. I give thee greeting, Nekrassa. Know you! I should know you all the world over. Unbending as the fallen angel, what brings you hither? Come you to plead in defence of the nobles, or in quest of some fair one have you journeyed this way?

Nekrassa. You have well divined my double errand.

Gonta. "Grasp all, lose all," says the adage.

Khitchewski. This is no time for idle speech, or mirthful interchange of words. In all sincerity inform us at once, does the cause of Poland receive your defence or opposition?

Gonta. If I undertake her defence, she will receive my highest energies; on the other hand——

Nekrassa (interrupting him). Mock me not with equivocations; a plain, straightforward soldier's answer best becomes a soldier.

Gonta. Poland has inflicted no wrong upon me. I have no reason therefore to be her enemy. The nobles regard me with an untoward eye; and yet they would have me defend them against the Haidamaques. As for you, without

asking you, I can affirm that you are a determined champion of the nobility.

Nekrassa. The leopard changeth not his spots. I am unalterable ; but, Gonta, I could sooner believe that the fiend of darkness would besprinkle himself with holy water, than that you would lay bare the secrets of your heart.

Khitchewski. Youth are sometimes rash in the expressions they use to their old friends ; but their intentions are not a whit the worse for that.

Gonta (to *Nekrassa*). This is not a time for prolonged and empty parlance ; be brief, precise, and frank in your questions—in replication I will be the same.

Nekrassa. Will you declare openly for the Poles ? will you attack forthwith and annihilate the *Haïdamaques* ? will you give battle to the Russians ? will you, in short, perform your duty, and destroy those horse-leeches that suck the blood of Poland ? Do all these things, and, in the name of the nobles, I promise you all that you may wish to obtain.

Gonta. I have several regiments of Cossacks under my command, who would follow me to the uttermost ends of the earth. In one week from the present time we can combat and crush the *Haïdamaques*, and eject our perfidious protectors, the Russians ; but what guarantee, what pledge, shall I receive that the nobles, when the danger is past, will maintain their engagements ? When the king, *Branetzki*, and others of distinction are against me ; when I am no longer useful, they will perhaps cast me off, as a thing that cumbereth them.

Nekrassa. You will then be against us ; you will wage fierce battle against those who have grown up from childhood with you ; against your fellow-countrymen, your brethren.

Gonta. God forbid ! in matters of such moment, prudence dictates circumspection. Ere I give a decisive answer, grant me a quarter of an hour, that I may trace and develope the course of conduct it best becomes me to pursue. But, *Nekrassa*, you wear the look of one careworn and fatigued.

Nekrassa. In sooth, I am somewhat wearied ; sleep has not visited these eyelids for several anxious nights. But *Khitchewski* is in haste to escort his wife and children from

Korsougne to Houmagne, where he has to make important communications to Mladanovitch, and he will probably return to-day.

Exit Khitchewski.

Gonta. Enjoy a short repose, then, good comrade ; fling off your sabre, and throw your tired limbs upon my couch in the adjoining chamber. In an hour, at latest, I will awake you, and when I have given you my final explanations, we will depart hence together.

Nekrassa. Be it so ; but on condition that you will rouse me from sleep if any one in the mean time should seek an interview with you.

Gonta. Rely upon me : fear not.

Nekrassa unbuckles his sabre-belt, flings down his sabre, and retires.

Gonta (alone). The will of man against the power of destiny is as the gossamer-web against the keen-edged steel. The decisive moment is about to be unrolled from the dark scrolls of time. Yon lurid cloud, like a canopy upraised from the gulfs of Hades, seems to overshadow moving files of demons. In the bright blue spot of ether, far beyond, hosts of transfigured angels are hymning the Almighty's praise. What means this strange imagery, these vain phantasms, that thus, in spite of me, distract my resolution, and with their shadowy terrors mock me. Fool that I am, to gaze at them, when my nature lacks not stuff to pull them down from their airy thrones ! Oh, Madeline, Madeline, thou who art my heart's only heaven, direct hither thy footsteps, banish thy misgivings, requite my ardent love with but a hope-awakening smile. But see, those furies ! My imagination, in despite of me, conjures up those terror-striking visions—they vanish ! It is time to take the right path, or perhaps it is too late.

He girds on his sword.

SCENE IV.

Enter BASIL, bishop of Ctchegrine.

Basil. I give thee cordial greeting, good Colonel Gonta.

Gonta (with an involuntary emotion of horror). Holy

father, peace be with thee ! if thy coming, or thy errand needs personal converse with me, weightier matters demand my immediate presence, and I must hence.

Basil. Stay, oh, stay, my son. In the name of the holy church, in the name of the people of the Ukraine, I command thee—stay ! I invoke thy aid.

Gonta. The time for that is past.

Basil. Say, rather, the time is at hand. I am the bearer of this imperial missive from the empress, our gracious sovereign.

He delivers to him a parchment scroll, which Gonta unrolls and reads, the holy father riveting his eyes upon him the while.

Her imperial majesty does not, in imitation of the Poles, recompense by unsubstantial promises a service rendered, but loads with riches and honours those whose lucky stars have guided them to her beneficence, those whom she vouchsafes to attach to her royal throne.

Gonta stands in silent fixedness ; he again contemplates the scroll, which he holds with trembling hands. His countenance and whole frame betray a violent struggle within his breast : clouds of sadness, and rays of joy, alternate on his brow.

Gonta (speaks as if alone). She names me attaman of the two Ukraines. She gives to me and my heirs for ever the town of Batourin with all its possessions. I am to bear the title of prince ; and of prince, decorated with the order of St. Alexander Nefskie ; so many favours——

The holy father here takes from his pocket a small casket, which he opens, dazzling the eyes of Gonta with a cross of gold set with diamonds, and he attaches it with a red ribbon to Gonta's breast.

Basil. Son, behold the gift of our sovereign, for thou art now her faithful servant ; thou art master and lord of an extensive territory ; princes will bow their proud heads before thee ; princesses will court thy favours ; thou wilt elevate the friends and abase thy enemies, trampling them beneath thy feet as creeping worms.

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Gonta (taking off the cross, and sighing heavily, gives it back to the holy father). The time is past, as I have already told thee : I have bound myself on the side of Poland.

Basil. Insensate man ! of Poland, say'st thou ?

Gonta. Of Poland.

Basil. By our lady ! By St. Nicholas ! That word of Poland strikes heavily on my ear. 'Tis a hated word, and my heart revolts at it. But let me implore thee to consider—thou art not entirely free from ambition—not in vain has nature endowed thee with that brilliant valour, that active, untiring, and flexible soul. Thy very word, thy look, thy voice, all in thee marks out a man above the ordinary stamp. Thou wilt go down to the grave, and leave behind thee no glorious reminiscence, as the waterflood descendeth to the sea. No ! like a bright meteor riding through the air, thou wilt dazzle the awe-stricken eyes of thy fellow men. Speak but one word, one syllable of assent, and all the Ukraine will rise to do thy bidding. An army as numerous as the wild herds of our Steppes will read thy behests in thy looks, and perhaps a coronet of diamonds will, after victory, encircle thy brow, for the empress would not be slow to raise up the Ukraine into the high eminence of a kingdom tributary to Russia, rather than leave it in the possession of Poland.

Gonta. I have bound myself by a sacred promise : that promise I cannot break.

Basil. A promise, to whom ? to the palatine, forsooth—who needs not thy promise—he is thy lord, thou his vassal, his serf ; *he* orders and *thou* must obey.

Gonta (with emotion). I his vassal ! I his serf ! I am colonel of the Zaporoguan Cossacks. I shall become a noble, a citizen, and shall have the honour of a seat in the Diet. I shall perhaps rise to be attaman of the Polish Cossacks : to this high post I shall attain without guilt, without treason, without perjury.

Basil. As the traveller in the wilderness panteth for the water-spring which in semblance glistens in the distant view, so thy heated imagination thirsteth for unreal and empty glories. Thou a noble ! thou a citizen ! thou an attaman of the Cossacks ! Thinkest thou that the Polish nobility, so

arrogant and so proud, will permit a vile peasant, without name, without riches,—a peasant of the Greco-Russian creed to become their equal,—and sit with them in the Diet? Vain hope! hollow ambition! Thou art, it is true, colonel of Potocki's troops. He has raised thee to that rank, and to-morrow he can pull thee down, strip thee of the cognizances of thy command; yea, even in the broad streets chastise thee with ignominious blows, and send thee forth to be a lowly swine-herd.

Gonta. Hold! this is more than I can endure. Peace! no more! I am armed with a sabre, that has ever befriended and honoured me. With it did I win a lovely wife, who, God preserve her soul, after our union was blessed with endearing children, and snatched prematurely from me by death.

Basil. Know that that wife was the palatine's base concubine. Thou seem'st to place the same faith in female virtue as in Polish promises.

Gonta. Thou liest in thy teeth, infamous priest, thou liest; no wife was ever more virtuous, none more pure from stain.

Basil. I lie not. Here are the letters of the palatine to thy wife, and here thy wife's replies.

He thrusts them into the hands of Gonta, who reads them.

Gonta (trembling). Oh God! it is indeed her hand! O that I had plucked out these eyes ere they received such damning proof. Fool that I was to be abused—and yet she seemed to love me. When the alarms of war called me from my happy home, she wept. O that those tears, those treacherous tears, that then bedewed the earth, had given birth to some poisonous viper, that might have warned me of her shame. But vengeance shall be mine.

Basil. Vengeance be thine! Nay, like a beaten hound, thou wilt lick thy master's hand.

Gonta. Insulting priest, be gone! Leave me instantly.

Basil. Poor wretched wittol; leave thee, say'st thou? A time will come when thou wilt regret that thou hadst not listened to me.

Gonta (aside.) The dates of these letters prove that they were written after the birth of my youngest child. This appears inexplicable.

Basil. It was then only, perhaps, that thy master dallied with the INNOCENCY of thy tender dove. But more that touches thee, I can yet unfold.

Gonta. Speak, then, though every word be a poisoned dagger plunged into my heart.

Basil. I tell thee that the love of the Palatine Potocki's fair cousin lights up a tender flame in thy bosom, softening thy high and haughty bearing, and attaches thee to the Polish cause. But other letters of curious import I still possess.

Gonta. Where are they ?

Basil. Here.

Gonta (looking at them tremblingly). They are in the hand-writing of the palatine !

Basil. Read them, read them aloud. Thou hesitatest. Give them to me ; I will read. *He reads.*

"Dear Cousin,—I have just been informed that Gonta dares to aspire to your hand ; I hope that the cousin of a palatine knows what is due to herself, and I have no fear that you reciprocate the love of one of my vassals. In the present state of things, without giving him any hope, abstain from wounding him with too blunt a refusal, for he is proud and vengeful, and a dangerous dissembler, holding no little influence over our people. When the war is concluded, I will think of you.—Potocki."

Gonta. Can I be deceived ? Is it then the undoubted hand, the genuine signature of the palatine ? It is.

Basil. Understand'st thou these words ? "*When the war is concluded, I will think of you.*" The fairest interpretation it can bear is this, while thou art necessary to him he will tolerate and cajole thee ; when with thy aid he has crushed his enemies, when thy sword has saved him, he will drive thee from his presence as some overweening cur that fawns and clamours in his path. Alter but a word, and his true meaning may equally well be understood. "*When the war is over, I will think of HIM.*" He will think of thee, forsooth ; and thou wilt dangle on a gibbet ! But let us see what the answer is. *He reads.*

"My dear Cousin,—I have received your letter. I have noticed the advances of Gonta, but I will not encourage them, as I entertain a deep aversion for him. I am very far from concealing from you that I love another, who is kind, brave, and generous ; he has received my plighted faith, and no other shall be my husband. This is Nekrassa, in the present crisis he alone can save us.—Madeleine Khitchewska."

Gonta (with amazement and trembling). Nekrassa ! Oh that abhorred villain ! to come under this roof and mock me.

He walks to and fro with hurried strides, and lays his hand energetically on his sabre's hilt.

Basil. Under this roof ?

Gonta. Yes.

Basil. When ? at what hour ?

Gonta. This very day—even now.

Basil. What here ? within these walls ?

Gonta. Within these very walls !

Basil. Where is he now ?

Gonta. In the adjoining room (*pointing to the door*).

Basil. He then has overheard all ? In the adjoining room ?

Gonta. No ; he has not heard : in deep sleep he lies.

Basil. In the name of the faith, my son ; in the name of the people of the Ukraine, I implore thee to accept the command of thy brethren : thy enemy, thy direst enemy, thy rival, is in thy power. The Omnipotent himself is raising thee to greatness and glory ; hearken to his supreme dictates. Behold, another letter, which is Nekrassa's, and confirms his guilt.

Gonta (torn by anguish). For the righteous cause of the true faith, for the welfare of the people of the Ukraine, I accept the gifts of the empress.

He takes up the order of St. Alexander and the patent of nobility, striding up and down, and betraying the most appalling emotion ; exclaiming, "I am undone !" The ghost of his Mother, pale and horrible, flits by him, and whispers in his ear a withering curse. He looks aghast ;

horrified he exclaims, "Where am I?—hideous vision!"

Basil. Hast thou seen aught terrible? What so dreadful racks thee?

Gonta. 'Twas nothing; 'twas nothing. But what of Nekrassa?

Basil (holding up a dagger, while a hellish grin distorts his visage). This will give satisfaction, where just anger prompts. Remember that God armed the feeble hand of Judith to strike off the head of Holofernes. Our arms this day are destined by the Almighty's will to destroy our oppressors and vindicate our freedom.

Enter ZELEZNIAK with several Haidamaques.

Basil. It is Zelezniak.

Zelezniak. Hail, holy father Basil!

He kisses the hand of the priest, who blesses him with a sign of the cross.

Basil. Glory to thee, Zelezniak! thou that art numbered in the flock of true believers. Thou (*turning towards Gonta*) know'st not, peradventure, the brave Zelezniak, who serves us with devoted ardour, and is worthy of our confidence.

Gonta. I knew him in time past. We must now renew our acquaintance; he will execute my orders, and be my right hand in the time of need.

Basil (to Zelezniak). Behold our attaman, our chief; behold the prince of Batourin, by the gracious will of the empress.

Zelezniak. We will render obedience to our attaman. Let him but command the massacre of the Poles, the destruction of the Jews, and of every renegade to our faith, and we will obey.

Basil. We will obey the chief whom heaven appoints to execute the vengeance long delayed.

Zelezniak (to Gonta). I now remember, noble attaman, that we made an inroad into Wallachia under the same chief; you were centurion in the same regiment as Nekrassa—that upstart, who, however, begins to handle the sabre with tolerable skill. I was formerly under his orders for a few

days, and I must avow that on two occasions already he has gained a victory over our men. As for me, I will serve you not in council, but in the field—my head is slow to conceive and plan complicated projects ; but my hand will be quick to despatch into the other world those dogs of unbelievers.

Basil (to Zeleznik). In our perplexity you can then aid us. We would rid ourselves of a hated enemy.

Zeleznik (with savage emphasis). Be he a Jew, to the flames with him ! be he a Pole, massacre him ! be he a Protestant, out with his tongue ! be he a Mahometan or heathen, let his bleeding head do homage to the rising sun !

Basil. Dost thou assent, Gonta ? (*Gonta replies not.*) Dost thou assent, Gonta ? (*in a louder tone.*)

Gonta (after deep and silent reverie). The will of heaven be done ! (*he points to the door of the room, in which Nekrassa lies sleeping.*) Our foe is there—and unarmed.

Basil (with ferocious joy advances stealthily towards the door). I will see whether he sleeps (*he gently opens the door*).

Zeleznik (unsheathing his deadly weapon). I am ready to do thy bidding.

Basil. He sleeps heavily. In the name of our holy church, in the name of the true faith, I will absolve thee from past and future sins. Strike him to the heart.

Zeleznik (with unsheathed dagger). Holy father, I will smite to the heart's inmost core—but tell me—whom—

Basil. Nekrassa ! devoted in heart and soul to the Polish Catholics—our relentless foe.

Zeleznik. Nekrassa ! never !

Basil. How say'st thou ? never !—the cause ?

Zeleznik. He saved my life, and is no Papist. If he refuses to side with us, I will combat him on the field of battle in open conflict, and then, if he falls by my sabre, I shall have nothing to reproach myself withal. I have pledged myself, I deny it not, to burn, to maim the heretics ; but I cannot massacre in cold blood one of our own brethren locked in the arms of sleep.

Basil (attempting in vain to snatch the dagger from Zeleznik). Son of the faithful, if thou hearkenest not to the

orders of our church, and refuseth obedience to our attaman, I myself will pluck from the earth this poisonous plant: a zealous votary of the faith, I will accomplish the work of a warrior, and perform a sacrifice grateful to offended heaven.

Zelezniak (sheathing his dagger). Hold, priest, and go thy way.

He opens the door at which he had entered, and gives signal with a loud whistle. Numerous Cossacks rush in precipitately.

Close well the doors; guard with strictest watch yon man within, your prisoner; woe to you if he escapes! thrice, and thrice woe to you, if you harm one hair of his head! give admittance to no priest, were he even the patriarch of St. Sophia.

The Cossacks. Your orders shall be obeyed.

Zelezniak (to Gonta). Noble attaman, you may hew my limbs in pieces ere I will suffer you to harm Nekrassa.

Basil. Son of the faithful, calm thyself. The fervour of excessive zeal, the love of our liberty, and devotion to our holy faith have hurried me on to seek the death of Nekrassa. I acknowledge my transgression. Although he is entrammelled in the nets of Satan; although his heart lusts after popish abominations, he is nevertheless our brother, nor must we chastise him ere we have tried every means to reclaim him, and call him back to the right path. I concur then with your determination that he be detained a prisoner.

Great noise is heard without.

Gonta. What means that tumult?

A Cossack. We have just arrested a Polish officer, who had been blaspheming against us, and who was endeavouring to escape in a chariot and four.

Basil. I leave you for a while.

Gonta. Bring him in.

The Polish Officer. I will teach you, vile scum, to cause me so much trouble.

Gonta. Curb your wanton tongue, proud officer; I am commander here; if they have treated you with disrespect, I will look to it, but if they have only executed my orders, you are giving vent to useless clamour.

The Officer. For whom do you take me, you who thus unbridled your insolent tongue? Have you dared to arrest me on the public highway? Know that I am aide-de-camp of General Branetzki, general in the service of his majesty Stanislaus Augustus, king of Poland, a king under the especial protection of the empress of Russia, while you are but a miserable colonel of the serfs of Potocki.

Gonta. Provoke me not with sarcasms. I am no longer in the service of Potocki. Three trusty regiments of Cossacks will come in a moment at my call to bring you to reason, ere your general can protect you.

Basil (returning). Some envoy from the general, forsooth!

The Officer. Is it thou, father Basil?

Basil. At thy service.

The Officer. 'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good. Thou art the very man I was seeking.

Basil. For what object? speak without disguise. Here stands our attaman, Gonta; this is Zelezniak, a brigadier under his command; and thou art, I perceive, Captain Janikowski, aide-de-camp of General Branetzki, our friend.

Janikowski. All is going on wondrously well; the confederate generals, a few days ago, made their submission to General Kretchetnikoff. Apraxin will to-morrow attack the town of Bar. General Branetzki has just sent a brigade of lancers as a reinforcement to the Russians, and he himself, at the head of his guards, is moving on to Vinnitza; and do thou good, father Basil, assemble thy followers with all haste, and march with the attaman upon Houmagne. The news of the capture of this town will prove useful to thee in two respects. The whole of the Ukraine will be cleared of troops: send partisans everywhere with Gonta, and fall upon the rebel nobles. Now farewell, for I must rejoin the general this very day.

Basil. Assure the general from me, captain, that I do my best in executing his orders; we have now an intelligent chief, and all will go on successfully.

Janikowski. Farewell then, till we meet again.

Zelezniak (with vehement energy). Yon fellow is a papist, a traitor, a vile reptile, that must be trampled under foot and crushed.

Gonta is violently excited.

Basil. Noble attaman, and thou valiant brigadier, let us not waste the precious moments in idle parley ; let us march in all haste to Houmagne, and we will settle the rest on the way.

Gonta. I must first review my soldiers, and give them brief instructions.

Basil. We will then accompany thee.

Zelezniak. Guard the prisoner strictly, and woe to you if any harm befalls him.

Speaking to the Cossacks.

Exeunt Zelezniak, Basil, and Gonta.

SCENE IV.—*The same.*

Several files of Cossacks drawn up in order are seen in a meadow ; they defile in succession before GONTA, who reviews them, and places himself at the head of them, together with the PRIEST and ZELEZNIAK.

Basil (holding the uplifted crucifix in his hand, and looking up towards heaven). Sons of the faithful free-born children of the Steppes of the Ukraine ! ye have long lived in dishonour and groaned under oppression. But the days of ignomy are past, and the hour of deliverance is at hand. The august empress of all the Russias, of the same creed as yourselves, sends you succour, extending towards you her protecting hand. *(He takes forth a paper and reads.)* Give ear to her imperial ordinance :—"We, Catherine II., Empress of all the Russias, having learned that the Polish nobility, not satisfied with oppressing the subjects of its Russic territories of every kind of vexations, and with persecuting our religion, give their protection to the Jews, the eternal enemies of the Christians, and the murderers of the blessed Redeemer *(he here crosses himself)*, authorize and command Maximus Zelezniak, brigadier of Low Zaporogua, to enter Poland, to massacre without distinction all the nobles, the Jews, and the protestants, to burn their dwellings, to take possession of their riches, and we likewise order our troops to give aid and assistance to the insurgent people of the Ukraine.

"Petersburg, 15th May, 1768. Catherine II., Empress of

all the Russias ; Kretchetnikoff, Lieut.-General of the armies of Russia."

All the Cossacks at the conclusion hurl up their caps into the air as a mark of approval, and cry aloud, "Long live Gonta our attaman ! Long live Gonta !"

Basil (crossing himself). Accept the symbol of this high dignity, with which the gracious empress deigns to decorate thee.

He attaches to Gonta's cap a crane-plume.

Zelezniak. Long live our Attaman Gonta ! death to the popish priests ! death to the Poles !

Gonta. Death to the popish priests, death to the Polish nobles.

The Cossacks reiterate shouts of "Death to the popish priests ! death to the Polish nobles !" and march off with slow and solemn step, to the sound of melancholy martial music, headed by Basil, Zelezniak, and Gonta.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Interior of the Cave of a Sorceress.*
Thunder and Lightning.

The Sorceress. The night is dark, the thunder growls,
And round my cave a grim wolf prowls :—
A grim wolf thirsts for human gore.

She advances to the door to listen.

And hark ! his footsteps near the door.

Gonta knocks, and calls.

Who's there ? who calls ? who'rt thou ?

Gonta (advancing). A mortal—seeking in the page of fate

To read and penetrate his hidden doom.

(Aside.) The gloomiest thoughts sweep o'er my troubled soul,

As o'er the desert plains the moaning blast.
 A dismal, starless night has gathered round me ;
 No inward passion can relieve the gloom
 Poised on its black and mighty wings above me.
 Oft have I stood in silent wonderment
 Upon the Dniester's bank, and marked the flood
 Rush headlong down the foamy precipice ;
 And from the roaring water's eddying gulph,
 No more to rise above the craggy height,
 I have drawn a lesson for my future life.
 In aught I have planned to do, I will not swerve.
 I will not retrograde, but, onward ever,
 Yea, onward ever ! though hell's terrors bar
 My future path, I'll on and ne'er recede,
 If vengeance can be mine.

Sorceress. Come in, advance.

Gonta. If to thine eye the future is disclosed,
 And thou the threads of destiny can'st trace ;
 If to the prosperous thou can'st foretell
 The fortune he'll enjoy ; and, if to those
 Whose death to the carrion vulture's beak
 Prepares a feast, thou can'st with truth predict
 Their hideous end, to me my fates unfold.

Sorceress. The God invisible that rules the world,
 That bids the ocean flow, the sun revolve,
 That gives the midnight moon her paly light,
 And the high heaven, with stars as numerous
 As ocean's sands, hath inlaid and adorned,
 That mighty God has not to mortal ken
 Unwound the links of that mysterious chain
 Which binds the future to the present hour.
 Why, then, attempt to raise the darkening veil ?

Gonta. Speak, and unfold. No beggar of thy aid
 Am I, nor do I set the meanest price
 On thy vain words, if aught of good they tell :
 But if unhappiness and woe and wail,
 Cassandra-like, thou uninspired mak'st known,
 With veriest scorn I'll mock thy vain forebodings.

Sorceress. Poor child of arrogance and nothingness !
 Thy heart, e'en now, amid thy hollow vaunts,

Is racked by terrors dire, and all thy limbs
 Are trembling. Know, vile dust, in human form,
 The stars that bode thee well are waxing pale
 And setting. Know, brief are thy threads of life.
 Thy guardian angel, with the powers of hell
 In fiercest combat struggles, but in vain.
 A human demon seeks in bloodiest toils
 To entrap thee—fly, oh fly, while yet 'tis time.

Gonta. Whate'er befall me, vengeance shall be mine.

Sorceress. Vengeance ! Yes, guilt on innocence avenged !
 If vengeance then be thine, and triumph fail
 Thy guardian spirit, thou wilt wade through blood,
 Spilt by thy murderous agency and hand.
 Murderer ! and prince of murderers ! man's worst
 deeds
 Will be outstripped in bloodiness by thine,
 And thine own flesh by carrion vultures torn,
 By vultures shall to heaven's four winds be borne.

The Sorceress dances wildly, crying aloud, "Blood-shed, tears, desolation ! death ! poor suffering humanity !" She continues dancing and reiterating the same awful denunciations. She is seized with fearful trembling, and her whole frame is frightfully convulsed. Howlings of wolves, hoarse croakings of ravens, death-knell in the distance, and low moanings are heard.

Gonta. Again this fearful spectre !

The ghost of his Mother, unseen but by himself, passes close to him, and utters the awful execration—"I curse thee ! I curse thee !"

The Sorceress (recovering from her frantic fit). Invisible spirits ! sisters of darkness, that wander over the earth, torment me ! hither, and torment me !

SCENE II.—*Enter three Witches, arrayed as Furies, with torches in their hands and wreaths of serpents round their heads.*

First Witch. Hail, Gonta !

Second Witch. Hail, Gonta !

Third Witch. Hail, Gonta !

All three Witches. All hail, Gonta ! welcome to us, Gonta !

The whistling of the winds and the sounds of muffled drums are heard. They dance hand in hand, circling around to the sound of unearthly music (which the orchestra accompanies).

All hail Gonta ! Thou art our's ! Long have the angels, our enemies, disputed the possession of the prey !

They renew their circling dances, and as each Witch faces the four quarters of the winds, she repeats in succession—"To the east, the south, the west, the north !"

Gonta (awe-stricken). What mean these unearthly hags ?

First Witch. Now the hell-broth let us prepare.

Second Witch. The brazen cauldron hither bear.

Third Witch. The fire is burning fiercely there.

First Witch. Spirits of grim Pluto's train,
Gnomes and elves and spectres vain,
Spirits of the dark blue deep,
Spirits who by rivers sleep,
Spirits of the bright red flame,
Your promptest succour now I claim.
Quick to the task ! the task !
Your readiest aid I ask.
Come sisters, hand in hand,
Let us dance the mazy round ;
Once for sea and once for land
Let us dance the mazy round ;
Once for air and twice for sky,
Let us dance the mazy round.

The Witches dance round the fire.

Second Witch. Leaves of weeping willow sere,

Glistening with a dewy tear :

Tear from maniac-mother's eyes ;

Tear by maniac-mother shed

On the dark earth's dreary bed,

Where her babe wolf-murdered lies.

Flow'rets plucked from warrior's tomb,

Where the cypress hangs its gloom.
 Hair of maiden streaming o'er
 Warrior's corse on fields of gore.
 Sprigs of rue, from phrensy's brows,
 Wreathed with roses intertwining.
 Moss that on a grave-stone grows,
 Lilies with pale heads reclining.
 Thrice three drops of fairy wine
 Sipped from beads of eglantine.
 Stored for use in cowslip flower,
 Glow-worm found at midnight hour.
 Stir with branch of feathery yew,
 Quick, the dainty charm let us brew.

*The Witches again join hands, and dancing round
 the cauldron, repeat as before.*

Spirits of grim Pluto's train,
 Gnomes and elves and spectres vain,
 Spirits of the dark blue deep,
 Spirits who by rivers sleep,
 Spirits of the bright red flame,
 Your promptest succour now I claim.
 Quick to the task ! the task !
 Your readiest aid I ask.
 Come sisters, hand in hand,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for sea and once for land,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for air and twice for sky,
 Let us dance the mazy round.

All the Witches. The charm is too weak, let us try
 another ! try another ! try another !

Third Witch. Brain of toad and adder's fang,
 Ears of swine that flapping hang,
 Slime of snail and lizard green,
 Rib of weasel lank and lean,
 Death-moth's wing and black hound's paw,
 Vulture's tongue and eagle's maw,
 Drowned man's thumb and hedge-pig's skin,
 Bristles and all, hurl, hurl them in :

Night raven's crow and eggs of snake,
 From the reeking dunghill take,
 Where buried lies from mother torn,
 The bony wreck of child unborn.
 Root of mandrake, grown beneath
 Gibbet-tree on barren heath,
 With its fatal shriek that slew
 Him who uptore it where it grew.
 Cast in of living serpents nine,
 Stir with bough of feathery pine.

*The three Witches dance with wildest movement
 round the fire, and again repeat, as before.*

Spirits of grim Pluto's reign,
 Gnomes and elves and spectres vain,
 Spirits of the dark blue deep,
 Spirits who by rivers sleep,
 Spirits of the bright red flame,
 Your promptest succour now I claim.
 Quick to the task ! the task !
 Your readiest aid I ask.
 Come sisters, hand in hand,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for sea and once for land,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for air and twice for sky,
 Let us dance around in mazy tread,
 Strong and sure is the charm we have made.

Thunder and Lightning.

Gonta. Is it some dreadful dream ? Say, loathsome
 hags, who are you ? Furies in truth, or fiends in resem-
 blance only are ye ? Be your power great, terrible, and
 infinite, say, why disturb the peace of mortals ? An un-
 earthly joy, foretaste of future carnage, is kindled in your
 eyes. Draw near, and this mystery explain. If ye can
 tear the veil that hides the future, tell me if ever a circlet
 of gold will adorn my brow, and whether my wishes will be
 accomplished ?

All the Witches. We are what we are, and what we have
 been ; we shall visit thee again.

The Sorceress (trembling and writhing in frightful convulsions.) What torments ! What terrible penance ! Why can I not reveal so many mysteries ? The fire is pursuing me ; the destroying flame is seeking its prey.

Gonta. Woman or demon, tell me who thou art ; unfold to me what will be my fate, and make known to me by what authority thou predictest the future.

The Sorceress. I have committed a great sin ; for my whole life I am doomed to dwell with wicked spirits. Thirty years of penitence and prayer have not greatly pacified the wrath of heaven ; to the darkness of the grave I shall ere long descend. The future I am permitted to foretell, for in human affairs much is mysterious and inexplicable. *Success will partly crown thy projects.*

Gonta. And shall a coronet of gold be mine ?

The Sorceress. From the twin stars of the gloomy light,
When two dark clouds shall hang in air,
Then thou'lt be wooed by a circlet's might.
Of war's captivity beware !

SCENE III.

General BRANETZKI and one of his Aides-de-camp.

Branetzki. I am much amazed that Captain Janikowski has not yet returned ; he ought to have been here by this time, and my instructions should have been already fulfilled.

Kretchetnikoff. Your instructions are not so easily fulfilled. Vernyhora is on his guard, and in constant communication with Nekrassa. They are both well acquainted with the country ; every path they know. If we could prove too much for them, another order of dignity bestowed by the empress would be my reward, and other distinctions too would perhaps be mine.

SCENE IV.—*The same.*

Enter an Attendant.

Branetzki. What news ?

The Attendant. A courier from his majesty has just arrived from Warsaw.

Branetzki. Admit him instantly.

E

Enter the COURIER.

The Courier. Here are the despatches, general.

Branetzki (opens and reads them). "We, Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania, and Grand Russic Duke, having been apprised that the nobles of the Ukraine are provoking by their persecutions the insurrection of the common people, and giving visible protection to the confederates of Bar, who threaten to disturb the good harmony between us and my most faithful allies the Russians; we command you not to suppress this insurrection, but to propagate it secretly, and to employ all possible means to implicate in these troubles Gonta, at the head of the Cossacks of Potocki, a man of great capacity, in order that he may take possession of some important towns in the Ukraine, inasmuch as this would be a means of ridding ourselves insensibly of the powerful enemies of our throne in those territories. If, however, this insurrection should extend so far as to threaten the peace of our southern provinces, it will then be necessary to put it down, and punish according to law the principal leaders that shall have compromised themselves by excess of cruelties, and above all to do away all proofs that we have taken part in this outbreak. Further, we give order that the Russian forces be strenuously aided in exterminating all partisans, but in all cases with prudence and discretion, so that our troops may be rather a reserve than a vanguard. Since our views and our policy require such a line of conduct, the punctual execution of our orders will gain our high and bounteous favour, and secure to yourself, general, the friendship of Repnin, ambassador of Russia at your court, who will not fail to make known your merits to his august Sovereign and Empress, our faithful ally. All this a profound secret between ourselves. Warsaw."

Kretchetnikoff. The despatch seems to be important.

Branetzki. It contains several instructions relative to future movements and actions, but there is also a notification to yourself, general, from the ambassador Repnin. (*Kretchetnikoff takes the notification and reads it.*) "We, by the grace of God Catherine II., Empress of Russia, by these presents make known to Lieutenant-General Kretchetnikoff,

commanding a division of our troops cantoned in the environs of Kiow, that it imports us to lend assistance to the insurgents of the Polish Ukraine, under the direction of the Attaman Gonta, to combat with hostilities the confederates of Bar, who are aiming at independence, to give secret encouragement to all means that may enable us to rid ourselves of the nobles. In every instance, place, and circumstance, Poland, and above all her nobles, have been the enemies of Russia. They alone opposed a barrier to the views of Peter the Great, whose aim was to take possession of Constantinople, and to wrest from the English their supremacy in the East. Consequently it behoves us to foment distrust, to divide the united, to disorganise all order, and to exterminate the Catholics (for unity in religion is a powerful motive of friendship), to scatter gold over Poland as occasion may require, to make preparations for her conquest ; and we charge you, while speaking of my disinterestedness, my friendship, and of my best intentions towards the Poles, to inculcate in their minds the belief that Russia alone can put an end to their misfortunes. In every country, and especially in Poland (where notions of chivalry actuate the nobles), there are men weak enough to believe in the language of diplomacy, and to become its dupes. We also make known to you, that it is our imperial will and pleasure that you use every exertion to seize a certain Vernyhora and his friend Nekrassa, brigadier of Polish Cossacks, who, according to the reports of the ministers of our religion, are the most formidable opponents to our designs touching the Ukraine. You will maintain a good understanding with the Polish general Branetzki. Means of success do not fail us ; we must turn them to good account. You must keep fair with our partisans, and punish our enemies, crush the weak, and flatter the powerful. In case public opinion should force the Polish troops to give battle to the Haidamaques, it behoves us to assist the stronger party, and to condemn those whose swords, destined for the murder of their masters, have been blessed by the priests in the name of the holy faith. Given at Petersburg, — day of our Lord."

Branetzki. We have a sufficiency of employment upon our hands.

Kretchetnikoff. Your aide-de-camp has not yet returned ; perhaps some evil has befallen him.

Branetzki. I entrusted him with two squadrons of lancers, and gave him every requisite for the due execution of my commands. He is not the man to flinch and turn round when danger looks him in the face ; he can with any one lay siege to a fair one's heart ; he has disarmed, killed, or wounded the most renowned duellists that have confronted him ; "war to the knife" is his motto, when he is seated at the festal board with which I honour him withal ; he is a man of universal genius : in short, at a revel or a riot, at his cups or the dice, at a quarrel or a duel, Poland has not his equal. But here he comes. *Enter Janikowski.*

How speed affairs ?

Janikowski. Well in some respects, and badly in others. Gonta at length has sided with us, and is marching upon Houmagne, together with Zelezniak. • The fortress of Korsougne, where some of the nobles have taken refuge, has been assaulted, but without success. A noble, who has taken the command, twice drove back the assailants, with an immense loss on the part of the Haïdamaques. A battalion of Russian infantry, disguised as peasants, and with several pieces of cannon, assisted in a third assault, which nearly triumphed over the most strenuous resistance. Already Zelezniak, with an incendiary torch in the one hand, and his drawn sabre in the other, had been the first to leap upon the ramparts, when a squadron of unknown cavalry was seen advancing at full gallop. A square was formed ; the cavalry halted an instant ; then, having formed into detachments, at a signal agreed upon beforehand, and with shouts of "Death to the Moscovites !" they dashed with their lances upon the square, which, unable to sustain this terrible shock, was broken and cut to pieces. Markof, with five hundred Russians, and a thousand Haïdamaques, bit the dust. The remainder of these ferocious bands made a hurried retreat under Zelezniak, who, covered with disgrace and carried away by the rush of the retreating soldiery, and uttering dreadful imprecations, had fallen back upon the forest of Grekhof, where he is rallying the fugitives.

Branetzki. And the cannon ?

Janikowski. They have been taken by Nekrassa, who ordered them to be mounted forthwith in battery upon the ramparts.

Branetzki. He has then made his escape from Sokolofka.

Janikowski. Not only did he escape, but he slew three men that attempted to seize him, and he is drawing the other Cossacks to his standard.

Branetzki. It must be admitted that he is a man of no little activity, and when he acts he is in earnest ; although he is our enemy, I would wish to have such officers under me.

Kretchetnikoff. Russia will give you a thousand such.

Branetzki. Yes ; as like to him in real value, as glittering glass to the diamond.

Kretchetnikoff. Our horses are unrivalled.

Branetzki. You have excellent horses, but sorry horsemen, forsooth ! you have every requisite for forming superb cavalry, but that you never will have. In a charge, the cavalry must possess an impulsive energy and a noble contempt of death ; they must be dexterous in handling their arms, and be actuated by a principle of honour which debasing blows cannot inspire. This is the reason why our cavalry has beaten and ever will beat yours on equal terms, and with equal numbers. Your Moscovite, a true Russian peasant (setting aside the Cossacks and the nobles), on horseback, and sword in hand, is like a bear imitating a French dancing-master. Our true Pole courts danger, and appears to be born for glory and the sound of the trumpet.

Kretchetnikoff. You must remember, general, that we are allies, and must not indulge in these invidious comparisons.

Branetzki. Come, a glass of generous tokay, and down with politics !

Kretchetnikoff. With all my heart. (*They drink.*)

Branetzki. Another glass ; here's to better news.

Kretchetnikoff. Be that your toast. I'll drink it cheerfully, and even thrice repeat it, an ye will.

Branetzki. I must beware of too copious libations, for drink steals away the wits and gives too much license to the tongue.

Kretchetnikoff. A bottle of good wine in good company,

invigorates and refreshes the mind ; and is a sore foe to your dissembler's studied words.

Branetzki. Come, then. Sincerity for ever !

Kretchetnikoff. But, general, I would fain know your opinion of our infantry ?

Branetzki. The bravery of your infantry is passive ; to do justice to your foot soldiers, it must be allowed that they stand fire admirably, that they are immoveable in their ranks, and know how to retreat.

Kretchetnikoff. In these points they are unsurpassed.

Branetzki. Here I must beg to differ from you. Your infantry, without being equal to the English, French, Polish, or Swedish, in attack, is superior to the German or Italian infantry.

Kretchetnikoff. Why can we not attain an equality with the English, French, or Swedish infantry, or with yours ?

Branetzki. Because you are for the most part devoid of agility. You know neither how to attack, nor repel an attack with the sword or sabre, and the balls of your foot soldiers never touch but those who are predestined to fall. It is often possible for an assailant to approach your columns and pull the ears of a man in the ranks, without losing a hair of his head from your fire.

Kretchetnikoff. What peculiarity distinguishes the English, French, Polish, and Swedish infantry ?

Branetzki. First, the English infantry stands firm as a rampart, spurning death, and repelling attacks of cavalry or the sabre to a high degree of admiration. The Polish infantry is distinguished by agility, skill in handling their arms, and elasticity of movement ; they fire with precision, and are in no want of good officers ; they only require to be commanded well. The Swedish infantry is no less terrible in attack than defence ; they are proof against the effects of climate and weather ; they have more than once beaten yours with as much facility as the wind driveth the dust before it. With respect to the French infantry, it is incomparable in the attack with the bayonet, in the rapidity of its marches, and in the impetuosity of its shock ; it is also far above you in point of officers, who are taught the art of war, and are chosen, not by family connexions, but for the

courage they display in the field ; and as long as they are marching forward, and above all in a temperate climate, great things may be achieved with them. Dazzle the eyes of a Frenchman with glory, there is no barrier that can oppose him ; nay, he would go in quest of glory to the depths of Hades, if the chief knows how to choose his time, and to take advantage of the disposition of his soldiers.

Kretchetnikoff. You talk wondrously well ; and I should like to hear your opinion of our artillery.

Branetzki. It has good horses and excellent trains ; it may indeed frighten cowards by the number of its pieces, but not by its balls, which seldom approximate very closely to the enemy. One might, without fear of interruption, play a game of cards under their fire. Your artillery then, which has hitherto been deficient in well-trained officers and good artillery-men, cannot bear comparison with one that is characterised by excellence ; and besides, every officer in active service cannot live upon his pay without peculation, he is incompetent for the honest performance of his duty. What do the nations you conquer obtain from you ? Several thousand of ukases, contradicting each other in almost every particular ; an army of spies, and functionaries with consciences dead to every impression. The vicious system of your government demoralizes the whole of Russia, engendering frequent conspiracies, and breathing its pestilential venom on all within its reach.

Kretchetnikoff. If the troops of Russia are so inferior to those of many other nations, why then does she domineer over almost all Europe ?

Branetzki. That is a different matter. It cannot be denied that Russia, next to England, has one of the best cabinets of statesmen. Russia never shrinks back from any means of advancing, and her diplomacy is constantly gaining ground. The throne of Poland is occupied by a base poltroon, a grovelling mendicant of the favours of your empress, by a man who knows not how to take advantage either of resources or circumstances ; but if there was a king at Warsaw, who had a beard on his chin, you would not be here, either in the guise of foes or friends, for it is a terrible mistake to suppose you are powerful. If you are attacked in earnest at

the two seas that wash your shores, if you are assailed by the press, and by insurrections, you will then become as humble and insignificant as you are now arrogant and overbearing, and sooner or later the systematic demoralisation of your people, the heartless rapacity of your government, will exercise a terrible reaction upon the artificial state of Russia, and will cause its abasement and ruin.

Kretchetnikoff. Our empress has been ever actuated by good intentions towards the republic of Poland; and she now covertly solicits an opportunity of displaying her gracious bounty and august protection.

Branetzki. Your empress has ever covertly aimed at seizing the whole of the Ukraine, and of dismembering Poland; and to weaken it, she preaches rapine and death under the mask of religion.

Kretchetnikoff. Bear in mind that I am her faithful subject.

Branetzki. Babble not of your empress, your soldiers, or your loyalty. As long as all of you remain unchanged, there will be no tranquillity in Poland; but as long as this refuse of the kings Poniatowski, shall reign in Poland, there will be no possibility of striking a decisive blow, and this being the case, it would be better to side with the stronger, with your Repnin, or rather your empress. If I have expressed myself, general, in a way to give you umbrage, let me be excused, if I remind you that I am at home, under my own roof, and that my tongue has been made to vacillate rather too freely by the power of the ruby god. I have used a soldier's freedom, and as a soldier you will admit my plea.

Kretchetnikoff. Say no more.

A Russian Officer (interrupting). How dare you calumniate in our presence the empress, your best friend?

Branetzki (with a malignant sneer directed at the aide-de-camp who has just interrupted). What means that fool with his interruptions?

Janikowski (to the Russian aide-de-camp). Go to, and meddle not with matters that concern you not.

The Russian Officer. Speak you thus? know that I am a colonel, you but a captain.

Janikowski. You are colonel in the Russian army, it is true, and I am captain in the service of my own

country ; but I counsel you to withdraw, and not to annoy a general.

The Russian Colonel. Our empress will ere long quell the arrogance of you Poles, and your general will have to show his obedience to me.

Janikowski. Hence ! vaunting fool, be gone !

They struggle together.

Kretchetnikoff. What means this ? You dare in my presence thus to brawl.

Branetzki (to Janikowski). I put you under arrest—your sword !

Kretchetnikoff. Such proceedings must have an end. I have to send a report to St. Petersburg on this subject.

Branetzki. If it is a duel that you want, he is the man for you—and for a dozen of your officers in succession.

Kretchetnikoff. They have both drank too freely ; the brawl has not taken place in public, and strong provocations have been given to your aide-de-camp. Give him then your hand, and let amity be renewed.

The Russian Colonel (to Janikowski). I admit that I was in the wrong to give you provocation, and to be wanting in respect to your general, the friend of our empress, who has commanded us to live in harmony, and to have a good understanding with your general : he must be obeyed, for obedience in Russia is the soldier's cognizance.

Branetzki. Be then reconciled ; join hands, and be friends. Make apologies, Janikowski, to the colonel willingly.

They shake hands.

The Russian Officer. Peace is then signed between us ; and to convince you that I harbour no ill will against you, I have heard that some of my soldiers have stolen from you a silver box ; I will recover it.

Janikowski. It has been stolen, but the guilty are not easily detected.

The Russian Officer. Not so difficult, I ween.

He rings, and a SERGEANT enters.

How many thieves are there in your regiment ?

The Sergeant. Thrée notable ones ; an it please you, general !

The Russian Colonel. Give each of them five hundred blows forthwith, and let the box be found.

Kretchetnikoff. A round thousand to each, do you hear, sergeant?

The Sergeant. As you command. *Exit Sergeant.*

Kretchetnikoff (to Branetzki). Let us try our luck again at a game of cards—for since I have been laying siege to the hearts of those lovely peasant girls, I always lose.

Branetzki. Lucky in play, unlucky in love, they say.

A noise is heard without.

Enter a RUSSIAN OFFICER.

Russian Officer. A brawl, a serious brawl! a Polish soldier has just drawn his sabre upon some Russians.

Branetzki. Bring him hither. (*The soldier is brought in.*) What have you been doing, fellow?

The Soldier. I have been attacked by the Russians; we were in a tavern. A Russian sergeant commanded me to cap to him; I refused. He replied that the Russians would, before long, teach the Poles, Turks, and the English, a lesson of humility. I bade him hold his tongue, and speak ill of our faithful allies so to our very teeth. Instead of listening to me, he raised his hand to strike me. I struck him down and trampled him under foot, when several armed Russians came up. I drew my sabre to defend myself. I soon laid a couple of them at my feet, cut off the ears of another, and remained master of the tavern.

Branetzki. Who were the authors of this brawl? Go and ascertain (*to one of his aides-de-camp*).

Janikowski goes, and returns to say that the soldier was not the aggressor.

Branetzki. That being the case, take warning for the future, and go hence. Here is something for you (*giving him his purse*).

Kretchetnikoff. This soldier richly merits punishment; and I insist that he be treated as he deserves.

Branetzki. You insist—do I hear aright?

Kretchetnikoff. I *do* insist. With my own hands will I seek redress, if I am refused.

Branetzki. Is it thus that you speak ?

Kretchetnikoff. I am commander of a division.

Branetzki. So am I.

Kretchetnikoff. Summon the battalion, and let them stand to arms in the court-yard.

Branetzki (to his aide-de-camp). Summon into the court-yard two squadrons of lancers, and a company of grenadiers of the guard—be their muskets loaded——

Kretchetnikoff. Hold ! General, not so rash. What are you doing ?

Branetzki. My duty. Here, in my own house, you have insulted me. I challenge you to mortal combat—be our weapons pistols, in the English fashion (*to Janikowski*). Load two pistols, present one to the General, hand one to me—and procure us passports for the other world.

Kretchetnikoff. What, are you seized with madness, colonel ? I am your friend, and have been instructed to cultivate your friendship.

Branetzki. Revoke then your order, and apologise.

Kretchetnikoff. I will do so, and here is my hand.

Branetzki. Here, then, and let us once more be friends.

A Courier enters and hands despatches.

Kretchetnikoff. The empress opportunely renews in this despatch her commands that I endeavour by all means to keep on good terms with you ; she sends me several acts of grace, and an order for you, general.

Branetzki. The instructions are certainly seasonable, for we were on the point of being embroiled in a way that might have cost us dear. The fumes of the wine had conjured up some busy mischiefs in my brain.

Kretchetnikoff. Be what has passed between us then buried in the deepest oblivion.

Branetzki. The oblivion of the heart—for ever let it be forgotten.

Enter A RUSSIAN SUBALTERN.

A Russian Subaltern. The thieves have been punished with all due justice ; one of them is dead ; the other two have been carried to the hospital, and it turns out to be a different man that stole the silver box.

Kretchetnikoff. Let a report be drawn up that the one, who is dead, died of apoplexy. As to the other two, soothe them with a few ducats and some brandy. If their future conduct draws chastisement upon them, be their chastisement diminished to a third of their deserts.

Branetzki. I will bear them in mind, but it seems that justice is administered rather strangely among you here.

Kretchetnikoff. With a little precipitation, I avow.

Branetzki. I must go and give orders to my troops under present emergencies.

Kretchetnikoff. A similar duty devolves upon me too.

Exeunt omnes.

SCENE V.—*The Palatine POTOCKI in his audience chamber.*

Enter a MESSENGER.

Potocki (to the Messenger). What news?

The Messenger. Gonta has definitively gone over to the side of the Haïdamaques.

Potocki. How say you? to the Haïdamaques? Impossible!

The Messenger. There is not the slightest doubt of it; he long vacillated, and he was on the point of giving battle to the rebels, when on a sudden the priest Basil came in contact with him, and by his insidious eloquence so took advantage of circumstances, that the mind of Gonta, as some waxen form, was moulded into the shape that Russian policy sought to give it, through the agency of that hateful minister of religion. After having been created attaman by the Empress of Russia, he fraternized with Zelezniak, who swore obedience and fealty to him. Gonta's Cossacks, blindly attached to their leader, immediately sided with the rebels at Sokolofka, amid the cries of "Death to the Polish nobles!" "Glory to the true believers!" a thousand times repeated.

Potocki. And were you an eye-witness of all this?

The Messenger. With mine own eyes I beheld the Cossacks panting for blood, and in their savage looks, that flashed with fury, I beheld the baleful lustre of an unearthly joy. I escaped from danger, yea, from threatened torture, and by the Divine mercy, though wounded and long pursued, I have reached you in safety.

Potocki. The truth of your narrative I can no longer

doubt—you have faithfully served me during fifteen years. Other intelligence, too, contributes to confirm the information you have brought. A Polish noble, bred in the camp, can calmly gaze on danger—and in truth the danger that now threatens is not light. (*He rings ; an attendant enters.*) Let all the troops in the vicinity be assembled, arm my household serfs, and station them in battle array in front of the palace. Let the cannons upon the ramparts be loaded, and the gates of the town be closed. As Nekrassa has beaten the Russians at Korsougne, and turned on one flank the army of the Haidamaques, so as to prevent it from carrying Houmagne by a sudden assault, I will turn them on the other by forming a junction with the troops of Colonel Stempkowski, and then with our combined forces we will fall upon the rebels. Ho, there ! (*an officer appears.*) Any one that will bring me an answer from Houmagne shall receive a distinguishing recompense. I will leave you to the command of the town, and I will go to gird on my sword,—no maiden sword,—but one that oft has reeked with hostile blood. The answer may be brought to me on my march to outflank the Haidamaques.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Sentinels are seen pacing to and fro near a forest, and several priests of the Greco-Russian creed, with long beards, and pompous robes, are listening to the confessions of some Haidamaques on their knees. GONTA, and Bishop BASIL, are seen whispering with evident signs of deep emotion.*

Basil. A tardiness has come over thee, yea, as the locust-cloud over the land of the Egyptian, and mystery enshrouds thy hesitation. Zelezniaak is before the town ; no hostile attack can impede our march. Your Haidamaques, like fiery coursers, whose necks are clothed with thunder, now pawing and rejoicing in their strength, can with difficulty be reined. Why, then, delay to scatter the enemy as chaff before the wind ? Let the trumpet's clang

bid the impatient warriors advance. Houmagne shall be ours by stratagem or force.

Gonta. A fortified town will prove no easy capture.

Basil. Where the lion's might is baffled, the fox's craft finds entrance, or the serpent steals unseen. We must try every means for the good of religion.

Gonta. Oft, beneath the very threshold, the reptile finds admission and speedy death.

Basil. Noble attaman, prince of Batourme, behold the faithful, yon true believers, ready to yield up their lives in defence of their religion. Behold how they pant for glorious achievement. If thy soul is powerless to cast off those scruples, which fools call conscience, I counsel thee to prepare thyself by pious shrift for meeting death fearlessly face to face. God has given the ministers of his word power over much that affects the soul of man in this pilgrimage to life eternal; they are permitted to shed the balm of consolation on the troubled spirit, and to point out the way to endless bliss.

SCENE II.—*GONTA is seen confessing to BASIL, who appears to evince great horror at what he hears. Numerous priests arrayed in white robes. On a sudden unearthly rumblings, like the sullen distant roar of thunder are heard. At the sound of sacred music, BASIL and the other Priests rise and repeat aloud—"In the name of the holy Trinity, I absolve thy sins." The communion is then administered to the Haïdamagues.*

Basil (speaking to Gonta audibly). Rise, attaman, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I absolve thy sins; and I command thee to be prodigal of papist blood. Death to the papist nobles!

Gonta (in a terror-inspiring voice). Death to the nobles! Death to the infidels! Death without mercy!

The Priests. Death to the Polish nobles! Death without mercy!

The Haïdamagues and Cossacks. Death to the Polish nobles! Death without mercy! Death to the heretics!

The Cossacks defile before GONTA and BASIL. (The Priests sprinkle them with holy-water as they pass off.)

SCENE III.—*The same.**Enter ZELEZNIK.*

Zelezniak. Noble attaman, and thou high minister of our holy faith, all hail !

Gonta. Thy proud bearing, thy nimble tread, and the joy that beams in thy eyes, give token, valiant brigadier, of some brilliant success.

Zelezniak. The Lord of Hosts hath in his mercy vouchsafed to us the victory. The ignominy heaped upon us by our defeat at Korsougne has been washed away by the blood of the unbelievers. I have speeded hither from Houmagne. The besieged yesterday sallied out and attacked us. Severe was the conflict, and terrible our vengeance. A hundred nobles fell, defending themselves with desperate bravery ; many others were wounded, and the rest were taken prisoners. As the dead are no longer to be feared, I have left their bodies to the wolves and birds of prey — the wounded have been provided for, they'll groan and curse and writhe no more. As to the captives, some swing on gibbets, high post of eminence for men so worthy ? (*Here a demoniac laugh distorts his features.*) To others the sun has set for ever, they'll see him at least no more ; a few others with some Jews, have fed the flames that crackled in concert with airs of martial music, varied at intervals by the prayers of our priests for the souls of the heretics and the prosperity of the empress. Houmagne cannot hold out long against us : but thy presence is needed before its walls. If thou wilt return with me, in a few hours the destroying angel will hover over the devoted town, whence scarcely a bird could escape unobserved by our falcon-eyed beleaguers.

Gonta. Know you who commands at Houmagne ?

Zelezniak. Mladanovitch.

Gonta. And the garrison ? waves the banner over men of pith and valour ?

Zelezniak. One of those circumcised dogs, who was burned with others, assured me (vainly relying on the promise of mercy, if he spoke the truth) that the garrison is

composed for the most part of nobles, by no means deficient in resolution, and determined to make the most vigorous defence: that their cannons are few, their provisions scanty; that on the one hand, if none of their emissaries have escaped us, on the other hand they have taken and hanged on the ramparts all our Cossacks that were attempting secret ingress. But it is high time to command the assault; the reinforcements may give fresh vigour to the garrison, and our strength is already on the wane.

Basil. Do you maintain a secret correspondence with any of the garrison?

Zelezniak. None.

Gonta. Then an assault will be unsuccessful, other means must be tried. What, ho! there! send me hither a Cossack, quick-witted and intelligent, mark ye.

Zelezniak. One of the emissaries from the town was recently taken and put to death; on his person were found papers addressed to you.

Gonta. Where are they? (*reads them.*) High-sounding promises—from the commander of the garrison and from the nobles—too late they come; yea, as the smell of a feast to him whose appetite is cloyed.

Basil (with bitter irony). And yet the smell of roast is sometimes grateful.

Gonta. These golden offers, however, must not slip through our fingers. We must turn them to some account. Send hither a trusty and intelligent soldier. (*Enter Soldier.*) Convey this paper to the commander of Houmagne; tell him that I am on the way to succour him, marching from Sokolofka by the northern road; and, mind, be secret as the grave on what you here have seen. As you draw near the fortress, gallop your horse at full speed, as if you feared the Haïdamaques in pursuit. (*Exit Soldier.*) And do you, Zelezniak, resume your operations before the town; I, myself, in mock attack upon your cavalry, will cut through your lines with my Cossacks. Direct your fire against me—let the greatest tumult prevail within your lines, and make a pretended retreat. Some of my Cossacks, as if killed, shall fall from their horses. Let some of your Haïdamaques do the same, that the besieged on the walls, whence every move-

ment will be seen, may be the more fatally deceived.* If the stratagem succeeds, as doubtless it will, they will open the gate to admit me and my cavalry—you will arrive at night-fall, and I will contrive so to admit you and a part of your forces into the town as not to awaken the suspicion of the inhabitants.

SCENE III.—*The town of Houmagne. Cannons on the ramparts, Sentinels pacing to and fro.*

MLADANOVITCH, the Governor, and other Officers. A COS-
SACK arrives out of breath, bringing a letter.

Mladanovitch. What tidings ?

A cannon shot is heard.

The Cossack. I am bearer of a letter from Colonel Gonta, who is coming by the northern road to your assistance ; he has already dispersed some of the forces of Zelezniak, and will soon be here.

Noise of musketry is heard.

Gonta (entering). At last I am come to save you or perish in your defence.

Mladanovitch. Welcome, thrice welcome, our guardian angel ! (“Long live Gonta, long live the Cossacks,” is the loud acclaim heard without, from a thousand voices.) Come to the castle and see my family and your two sons, who are talking every day of their father’s arrival. The elder is the exact image of you. My own son, who with Khitchewski escaped by a miracle the murderous Haïdamagues, is every day singing his hymns and amusing our ladies with the unaffected narrative of his adventures. But you must be weary, and need refreshment.

Gonta. A good chief attends rather to the well-being of his soldiers than to his own. I heartily accept your invitation, but I must entreat you to allow me first to introduce into the town some detachments of my Cossacks, who have borne the brunt of battle and have need of food for themselves and their faithful steeds. We have ridden thirty miles, and fiercely skirmished.

Mladanovitch. Your soldiers have come to defend us,

* It is literally correct, and the stratagem succeeded.

they shall be admitted. Give orders that the gates be opened to them (*speaking to an officer*). They shall eat, drink, and be regaled. (*Cries without are heard, "Treachery ! treachery ! fire upon them. Hold ! they are our friends."*)

Gonta (in great perturbation). What means that alarm ?

Mladanovitch. Your Cossacks, it seems, are mistaken for the soldiers of Zelezniak. But that mistake, you hear, has been rectified.

SCENE IV.—*At the Castle of Houmagne.—A table loaded with viands.*

GONTA, MLADANOVITCH, *several Ladies, Polish Officers, and Nobles.*

Mladanovitch (presenting Gonta several papers). Before you seat yourself, I make known to you that the palatine has in this letter commanded me to reward you with fifty thousand ducats from himself, and with an equal sum contributed by the Polish nobles, and he charges me to apprise you that you are the possessor of several villages. Patents of nobility for you and your heirs for ever will be forwarded forthwith, if you consent to crush the Haïdamaques.

Gonta (reads the paper, pressing it in his fingers with an air of violent emotion, then in deep-drawn solemn cadence he utters). IT IS TOO LATE.

Mladanovitch (with deep and intense surprise). Too late !

Gonta. Yea, too late ! for I am already here to undertake your defence, and destroy these desperate besiegers. But where are my children ? where your own son ? send hither the dear boy.

Mladanovitch. Your two sons were for safety removed to a distant part of the castle—they will be here anon to embrace you. My little boy is well ; he loves you as he loves his own father : but here he comes. *The Boy enters.*

The Son of Mladanovitch (throwing himself on Gonta's neck and kissing him). Now you are come, those wicked Haïdamaques will not be able to hurt us, will they ?

Gonta. What, have they frightened you, my dearest boy ?
(*Kissing him.*)

The Boy. You should have seen what savage looks they

had ; how they flashed their great knives about ; they wanted to kill me and my uncle. I chanted a hymn to them, and they let us go. You will defend us against them, will you not ? (*Embracing Gonta again.*)

Gonta. If I can defend you, I will. (*Aside.*) Destiny rules in every thing.

The Boy. I have been praying every day for your safety.

Gonta. Your prayers have been heard, good boy ! It seems (*aside*) the die is cast !

Mladanovitch. Shall I send to hasten the coming of your two sons ? they have never ceased talking about you—the dear boys, I love them with almost a father's love.

Gonta. Hurry them not ; there is yet time.

A tumult is heard without, and the son of Mladanovitch manifests great alarm.

Enter an OFFICER.

Officer (to the commander of the fortress). The Cossacks are maltreating our people, and seem to be our enemies rather than our friends.

Gonta. How say you ? I will look to it forthwith ; their disobedience of my orders shall be visited with condign chastisement.

Exit Gonta.

Officer (to Mladanovitch). You know that our garrison is but feeble ; we have provisions but for three weeks ; the whole town is encumbered with fugitives, old men, women, and children,—useless mouths. What are we to do in case of assault ?

Re-enter GONTA, and hears the last part of his communication.

Gonta. Be not concerned ; to avoid surprise, my troops are mounting guard and keeping diligent watch.

Enter KHITCHEWSKI.

Khitchewski. All our hope lies in your timely succour, good Colonel Gonta. I intended yesterday, were it possible, to make my way to you at Sokolofka, but Mladanovitch detained me here.

Gonta. You ought to have had an interview with me there, and all would have gone on here in quite a different

way. (*Aside.*) Some villages and twice fifty thousand ducats are to be mine—tardy promises forsooth !

Khitchewski. Your succour, colonel, will be nobly rewarded. The Polish nobles are actuated by sincere gratitude. The path to honour with them is not the path to ruin. A gibbet is the ready sequel to the favour of the empress. Just heaven ! strange Cossacks, I behold !

Gonta. There is nothing wonderful in that. Not only my own Cossacks, but some of Nekrassa's have come with me to your aid.

Khitchewski. Where then is Nekrassa ?

Gonta. He was at Sokolofka, but he is there no longer. I have received tidings of him, and I expect him hourly ; nay, at the present moment. I will go to the ramparts and see if I can descry him.

Khitchewski. We are saved then. I will hence, and remove the fears of my wife and daughters.

Exit Khitchewski.

Several COSSACKS enter in mournful silence, with eyes darting fire ; they take their station near the door. MLADANOVITCH enters in a state of complete bewilderment.

The Cossacks. Noble attaman, we grieve to be inactive, and we are panting for the promised pastime.

Mladanovitch. Colonel Gonta, have you betrayed us ?

Gonta. Fear not, fear not ; bring hither my two sons—they shall be a hostage of my faith. If I am a traitor, be avenged on them.

Other COSSACKS enter with sombre looks ; one of them carries a torban, a sort of guitar.

The Cossacks. Delay no longer, noble attaman, it is time that the promised sports begin.

A tumult is heard ; it increases in intensity—is for a moment stilled, and again renewed. All the Polish Officers lay hold of the hilts of their sabres.

Gonta. Wait awhile ; in the meantime, sing me in chorus, to the sound of the torban, an ancient song of the Ukraine—one of those airs, at once so melancholy, so wild, so sweet ; the favourite song of my loved spouse, now no more. It

will call back to my soul those happy days that have swept down the floods of time.

All listen in solemn silence. Gonta is profoundly moved ; he weeps ; his countenance gradually assumes a deeper tint and a broader shadow of sadness. In a moment, after the last chorus has been repeated, horror and rage indescribable are visible in his aspect.

Enter MLADANOVITCH, conducting Gonta's two sons.

Mladanovitch (to the two boys). Embrace your father, and beseech him to defend us.

The children run to throw themselves on their father's neck, exclaiming, " Father ! dear father !" Gonta softly repels them ; then kisses them ; and again repels them with gentle hand. A tumult is heard.

Enter BASIL, ZELEZNIAC, and armed COSSACKS, on a sudden.

Mladanovitch. Treachery, treachery ! we are undone ! To arms ! To arms !

The Cossacks (calling out in an appalling tone). The promised sport ! The promised sport ! It is time ?

Zelezniak. On, on, to the task !

Gonta. Havock ! havock ! On, on !

*His two sons embrace his knees ; he seizes the elder, and plunges his dagger into the heart of the boy : he does the same with the younger. A feeble shriek escapes their lips, and they lie weltering in their blood at their father's feet.**

Now kill without mercy ! Havock ! havock ! on, on !

Many of the nobles are massacred, but not without a most determined resistance ; reports of firearms, groans, shrieks, and the clash of arms are heard. The Cossacks pass and repass ; pursue and destroy.

Basil (uplifting his hands towards heaven). The blessing

* This is historically and literally true.

of the Omnipotent be on thy head, noble attaman. A Polish mother gave birth to thy children—they have perished for the glory of our holy faith and our beloved empress.

Report of firearms, the sound of bells, cries, and groans are heard, followed soon by a hollow and undefinable murmur, which gradually dies away till it is imperfectly heard.

Exeunt all but Gonta.

Gonta (alone). Who goes there ?

The Spectre of his Mother. It is I.

Gonta. This hideous phantom ever !

The Spectre. Yea, ever ; ever will I haunt thee. I, who bare thee, curse thee—thy mother—thine own mother—thee, the fruit of her womb.

Gonta. Oh, spare me !

The Spectre. Never, never ; my eternal curse wither thee !

The Spectre vanishes.

Enter a COSSACK (leading by the hand the Son of Mladanovitch).

Gonta. What would'st thou ? The boy—who ?

The Cossack. A lovely boy ; all his family have been massacred. The uplifted knife was already about to descend upon his heart, when he fell on his knees, and with a voice so sweet and touching, appealed to me ; moved with pity, I spared the innocent creature. After great difficulty I rescued him in safety from the fury of the Haïdamaques.

Gonta. I had children ; alas ! they are no more. Soul-harrowing spectres, avaunt. Furies, goad me not !

The Boy (throwing himself at Gonta's knees, and weeping bitterly). My father, my sister, and my brother, have been killed ; save me, save me ! I loved my father so dearly. I will love thee, and call thee father, too—a second father. Thou know'st how I love thee ; that I have always prayed for thee. Thou wilt defend me, wilt thou not ?

Gonta (moved to tears). Be not afraid ; I will save and defend thee. Take care of him (*addressing the Cossack*).

Put on him Cossack attire, and conduct him into an upper part of the castle. Guard him ; cherish him.

The Cossack. Noble attaman, I will obey you. No one shall harm the poor orphan boy.

SCENE V.

GONTA, ZELEZNIAC, and BASIL.

Gonta. Who comes ?

Zelezniak. Noble attaman ; after a severe conflict, thanks to your plans, we have been triumphant. Yet several of those dogs of nobles barricaded themselves in the town hall, and under an old officer made a most desperate resistance, fighting like lions. Several hundreds of our soldiers fell in the attack ; but we at length captured their chief, with twelve nobles, all wounded, and five females. Desirous of amusing our wearied soldiery with an entertaining exhibition, I permitted them to make the females dance, to the sound of music, round a small circle fenced about with lances, having their points turned inwards. Their pirouettes afforded no little mirth. Three were bled too profusely by the advancing spear-points, and are dead ; the two others still continue to perform their evolutions. As to the wounded nobles, accused by the public voice of knowing where the military chest is concealed, a slow fire around them occasionally fraternises with them.

Gonta. And where are these men ? these females ?

Zelezniak. Yonder.

He points to them. The women are seen surrounded by lance-bearing Haïdamagues.

Basil. Permit them to prolong their lives, if they will consent to adopt our holy religion. Such are the new instructions, which I have just received from the empress. Accursed dogs ! where is the military treasure concealed ?

Khitchewski. Abhorred demon ! bloodthirsty wolf ! priest of Moloch ! I know not where it is ; and, if I knew, thou couldst not force me to declare.

Basil. Fire has marvellous power to extract a secret ; beware !

Khitchewski. Moscovite viper ! I know not where it is.

Basil. Harken, sinner, hardened in iniquity—thou hast thus far atoned for thy backslidings by what thou hast already endured, but thou hast yet opportunity to save thy life. Renounce thy heretical faith—perhaps a ray of the true religion will enlighten thee ; perhaps from an enemy thou wilt become our brother, and with thy companions enjoy the gracious pardon of the empress, whose mercy is inexhaustible.

Khitchewski. It is for thee, thou delegate from the abode of the accursed, it is for thy empress to receive pardon for her atrocities, not to give it to others.

Zelezniak. I will——

The wrathful menace of the priest is interrupted by Madeline, the daughter of Khitchewski, who rushes in exclaiming—

Madeline. Mercy ! mercy ! mercy ! save my father !

She falls at the feet of Gonta.

Khitchewski. Ah ! my daughter !

Gonta. Now, pretty dove, thou art at length caught in the springs. We shall see how thou wilt release thyself. A posture so humiliating becomes not a lady dignified by all the titles and privileges of nobility, endowed with all the charms of beauty, and besides the cousin of a palatine. Thou lovest another, I know, and hast an aversion for me ; but thy humiliation is unbecoming.

Madeline. To what humiliation within the limits of virtue would I not descend to rescue my father from impending massacre. Oh mercy, mercy ! spare my father—my sister has just fallen by the hand of ruthless murderers. My mother, my poor mother, received a mortal wound in defending her—I implore thy mercy for my father. Of what crime is he guilty ? what fault has he committed ? he has only defended himself : even the sparrow defends itself against the terrible vulture when he attacks it in its nest ; and shall not the man to whom honour is dearer than life, who has been trained up amid war and dangers, raise up his arm to repel the hostile sword ?

Gonta. If honour commands him to spurn the advantages offered him, let him die.

Madeline. Oh pronounce not that soul-chilling sentence, but let the generous impulse of pity dispose thy heart to mercy. Remember that the lion, monarch of the forest, who by his roar alone makes every creature tremble, sometimes spares his prostrate victim, and will you not imitate that noble beast, when a frail and tender being implores you in behalf of every thing that is dear to her in this world. If your dreadful judgment be put in execution, let me perish too ; to live without my father would be worse than death. Oh torture me, if you will, but spare my father ;—the last feeblest grasp of breath that passes from my lips will bear with it the name of father ! Oh spare him ! If you tear him from me, and I am doomed to survive him, I shall be disconsolate, forlorn, and helpless as the tender nestling, bereft of all fostering care by the cruel falcon's beak.

Gonta. Hear me, woman : thou knowest not what has been passing here ; seest thou this blood with which my garment is red. This blood is still warm. Know'st thou whose blood this is ?

Madeline. I know not. Oh that heaven would drop into your heart the dew of mercy !

Gonta. On one condition, I will hear thy prayer.

Madeline. Angel from heaven ! May the all-powerful God bless your days and pardon your sins !

Gonta whispers something in her ear. Madeline at hearing this rushes towards her father.

Khitchewski (the father). Impurest and most loathsome of impure and loathsome reptiles. Serpent in human shape, what dardest thou ? I implore thy mercy, and in thy mercy kill me, or may the lightning's forked terrors descend and blight my vision, that I may not look on your hated, execrable form.

Zelezniak. Hear, noble attaman ; away with those serpent hisses ! Away with delay ! we must grant him the mercy he craves. *He is about to kill him.*

Madeline. Oh heaven, my father !

Gonta. Smite him not, I charge you.

Zelezniak. Despatch, then, this prating woman, for she will pour into thy soul the venom of compassion, and the death of many a heretic may thus be lost.

Basil. I am about to leave you for awhile—*Zelezniak* will accompany me—I hope before our return you will be yourself again.

Exeunt Basil and Zelezniak.

Gonta (addressing the captive Nobles). Accursed papists, through the triple wall of my hatred of you, one of your daughters has found access for the odious influence of dangerous mercy. You are at liberty to escape death, and to enjoy besides the pleasures of life, but on these conditions ; that you make known to me the place where the military treasure is concealed, and, abandoning your heresies, embrace the true faith.

The Nobles. We refuse your conditions. We will not abrogate our faith ; we are prepared to die, and our deaths will be avenged.

Gonta. Ye refuse.

The Nobles. We are prepared to die a thousand deaths rather than assent.

Gonta. To the flames with the miscreant crew.

Madeline (clasping his knees). God of mercy !

Gonta. But, *Madeline*, for the last time, hear my words : despite thy former disdain, I love thee still. I have committed dreadful crimes. But thy father's life——

Madeline. Oh save it, save it, I implore you.

Gonta. On one condition. *He whispers in her ear.*

Madeline. Take—take my life, to spare me such an indignity.

Gonta. No, thou shalt live ; but thou art the murderess of thy father.

Khitchewski. I forbid thee, *Madeline*, on pain of heaven's vengeance, to save me by dishonouring thyself.

Gonta. Bear them away ! to the flames with them.

Madeline (hanging on Gonta's neck as he retires). Oh ! spare my father. Oh spare him ! spare him ! Mercy ! mercy !

A C T V.

SCENE I.

SHVATCHKA, ZELEZNIAC, BASIL, and several HAIIDAMAQUES.

Gonta (to *Shvatchka*). Where are those twelve proud-crested nobles, that with insulting tongues dared and defied us ?

Shvatchka. Noble attaman, you have forgotten that you gave me an order for their execution.

Gonta. Love is a sore disturber of the mind, and plays sad pranks with the powers of reason. In truth, slight remembrance have I of any order I gave you. Have they then been executed ?

Shvatchka. Their heads were struck off in the presence of father Basil and Zelezniak.

Gonta. Died they as it becomes the brave ?

Shvatchka. Yea, as lions. Would that I myself could yield up my life in martyrdom to my faith with equal courage and resignation. Neither entreaties, nor the gleaming falchion raised to strike the deadly blow, could move any one of them to renounce in word or deed his popish superstitions. The falchions achieved their purpose, and twelve bleeding heads lay weltering in pools of gore.* I marked their last momentary grimaces, and one of them visibly gnashed his teeth with ire. Each head now lies wan and ghastly beside the body to which it gave dignity and companionship in life.

Zelezniak. Noble attaman, I have often contemplated, the dying among the sons of men, and I can say without fear, that my heart was never softened at the sight of human blood ; but I avow, that I have never seen men that displayed so much fortitude in their dying moments ; and, 'fore heaven, if the duties dictated by my conscience did not call upon me to shed the blood of the heretic, I should have been excited to pity, and should have spared their lives.

Basil. Though they were hardened sinners, I poured liberally upon them the sacred water of purification, ere their last pilgrimage was performed. I prayed for their

* This is of literal historic truth. The meadow in which they were decapitated, is called to this day, "The meadow of the twelve heads." After their death three hundred Polish nobles were executed in a similar way.

souls, that they might pass without too severe a penance from this life to dark inscrutable eternity.

A tumult is heard, but in a moment it ceases.

Gonta (hearing the tumult). What means that tumult ?

Basil (with bitter irony). The Haïdamaques have probably resumed their pastime!

Exeunt all but Gonta.

SCENE II.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

Attendant. A young Polish lady has just escaped from the chamber where she was this morning placed for security—with her hair hanging over her shoulders, and in all the wildness of despair ; pale, though beautiful, she has come hither, and is continually asking for her father, weeping and sobbing bitterly.

Gonta. It is the daughter of Khitchewski—fruit too long forbidden !—but have my orders relative to her father been attended to ?

Attendant. With all due care they have been fulfilled.

Gonta. Then go and send her into my presence.

Exit Attendant.

Enter MADELINE.

Madeline. Oh, shame ! whither can I fly from thy influence ? Oh, that I could hide myself in the depths of earth and no more behold the light ! Yet, before I betake myself into the gloomy refuge of a cloister, humbled to the dust and crawling like a worm, I will embrace the knees of my father, and implore his forgiveness of my involuntary crime. To save him I was guilty. Oh, paternal bosom ! how I now yearn to fly to thee to allay the thirst of my affection, and crave in tears a father's blessing ! Where then is my father ? where ? Tell me, ferocious man, whose eyes glare upon me like a maddened tiger ; does he yet live to lighten the burden of my infamy ? Perhaps he is pining in sickness. I will watch by his side night and day. Oh, point me out the spot where he lies.

Gonta. Peace ! compose yourself, you shall see him.

Madeline. Where is he ?

Gonta. He is near.

Madeline. Alas! where?

Gonta. Here; on the left——

Madeline. Oh; I will fly to his presence.

Gonta. Be not impatient—stay—do not awake him—he probably sleeps. With the greatest difficulty I rescued him from the Haidamaques. I caused him to be conveyed hither for safety; he was groaning with bodily anguish, but he is now relieved from his sufferings.

Madeline. Let me behold him.

Gonta. You behold him there.

Drawing back the arras and pointing to the aged man reposing on a couch.

Madeline. God of mercy! how pale.

She rushes towards him, but Gonta pulls her back.

Gonta. Tread lightly; he sleeps.

Madeline. What angelic serenity is depicted on his face. Oh, I must embrace him! oh, I will fall gently on his knees.

Gonta. Nay, kiss him not; you will awake him!

Madeline slightly kisses his wan cheek, when the gory head, which was artificially tied to the body, tumbles down: she beholds his bloody bosom, and discovers that he is dead.

Accept that pledge of my affection——

Madeline. Oh, ruffian! monster! tiger! loathsome reptile! Of murderers most murderous!

Gonta. Nekrassa.

Madeline. Heaven help me!

Gonta. Nekrassa!

Madeline. Oh my poor murdered father!

Gonta (in a sarcastic tone). Nekrassa.

Madeline (in the frenzy of despair). Holy Virgin Mary, mother of the blessed Jesus, protectress of our dear Poland: all-powerful God, that hurlest thy lightnings on the heads of infamous assassins, avenge this deed of blood.

Gonta. Vengeance is a salutary balm for the wounded

soul ; but God meddles not with things here below, and avenges no one.

Madeline. Oh ! murderer, most cruel ! May heaven's curse destroy you in like manner.

Gonta. All is still and tranquil. Think you that your invocations will be for that the better heard ?

Madeline. Yes ; all is still and tranquil. Black vengeance, come forth from thy dark retreat, and plunge thy poisoned daggers into the hearts of all the guilty. Oh, all ye furies, enemies of mankind, I evoke your aid—avenge me ! avenge me !

A voice. Blaspheme not ! you shall be avenged.

Madeline bounds forward, seizes a dagger, and rushes towards Gonta, but before she reaches him, she falls and dies, uttering these words, "Russia ! Vengeance !" The sounds of celestial music are heard for a while till they die away into silence.

Gonta (raising slightly the body of Madeline and letting it drop again). The breath of life has deserted the poor clay it tenanted, and has vanished into nothingness ! Oh, Moscow, poison and gangrene of humanity ; thou den of infamy and despotism ; mighty focus of crimes engendered in thy capital. Guilt is thy idol, guilt is the shrine of thy adoration. In one eternal round of crime thou pursuest thy baleful course. If all thy atrocities could be gathered together, the heavens would be enwrapped in gloom, the sun would be covered with a funereal veil, and the earth would groan with horror. Inexhaustible source of calamities and desolation ! he that touches thee is plague-stricken ; he that once listens to thee is hurled into an abyss of misery, or the gibbet ends his woe. Oh, Moscow, I have listened to thy counsels, where then shall I find a cavern dark enough to hide my countenance from the rays of day ? When now I direct my thoughts to myself, my hair stands erect, and seems to bristle with hissing vipers. I had two sons ; where are they ? I had friends ; where are they ? there was one I loved ; where now is she ? all, all, lie weltering in their blood, and I am their murderer ! In a few hours they will be buried in the cold earth, and return to dust ; and every

grain of that dust will cry so loudly for vengeance, that all living men will curse me; and the very hyenas and tigers, for fear of beholding me, will quit their lairs and betake themselves to the uttermost corners of the earth. Whither now shall I fly? The morrow will be followed by another morrow, and every day will add a link to the chain of eternity, that awful measure of my punishment! Ye legions of demons, unpeople your dismal abodes and assemble! Ye furies, rack your brains to invent the torments I deserve. Vile priest, I was thy dupe! Curses be on thee and me!

SCENE II.

GONTA (*remains*). *Several HAIDAMAQUES enter.*

One of the Haïdamaques. Noble attaman, we have done much and achieved it well.

Gonta. Hence, and to your pastime again—

The Haïdamaque. We have despatched all—no living soul is left.

Gonta. Where is the priest?

The Haïdamaques. He is just gone towards the well, into which we threw all the infants. The priest, believing some may still be alive, is throwing in huge stones to crush them, while he continues repeating prayers for their souls.

Gonta. Oh, that I could wither the monster with my curses! Go; I command you. He that shall save one child by rescuing him alive from that well shall receive an ample reward.

Seen to Gonta alone, appears in the distance, a long file of children headed by the two sons of Gonta, and followed by Madeline. After her comes a man bearing the head of an old man; twelve other men, each bearing a bleeding head succeed.

Gonta. Who has been removing those heads?

The Haïdamaques. What heads?

Gonta. How now, see ye not the head of an old man, and twelve other heads borne in procession by twelve men in white raiment, preceded by my two sons and by other children, who I thought had been put to death?

The Haidamaques. Nought do we behold.

Gonta. Nought, say ye ; Knaves ! villains ! liars ! out with you. I will teach you obedience ; go quickly, and remove that insulting, horrifying pageant.

Enter an OFFICER.

Gonta. What intelligence do you bring ?

The Officer. The Poles have risen to a man in a neighbouring village ; the peasants defend their masters with the most determined bravery, and have killed thirty of our men.

Gonta. Attack the village ; plunder it ! lay it desolate ! destroy every living soul therein.

A Haidamaque (to the Officer). It is too late for that. The Polish army is every where ; it has just cut to pieces one of our regiments—Shvatchka with five men has escaped as by a miracle. Vernyhora is assembling the Cossacks of the nobles, and Colonel Stempkowski has reinforced them with his regiment.

BASIL entering hastily with ZELEZNIAK.

Basil. God protect us. Branetzki will overthrow Stempkowski's lancers, as he overthrew the dragoons of the guard. The generals in the service of the empress will easily make head against that miserable horde.

Zelezniak. He that fights must not rely on the hope of reinforcements ; but on the sword, his true friend and ally.

Gonta. To arms ! let all be mounted quickly, and do battle with the Poles. No quarter. We must be beforehand with them.

• *Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE III.

POTOCKI, *the palatine* ; NEKRASSA, VERNYHORA, DROZEWski, STEMPKOWSKI, and several Polish Officers.

The Palatine Potocki. Our arms have already been in part victorious ; before we risk a general engagement with the enemy, it would be well to select a leader. You are all equally brave, I know, and prepared to shed the last drop of your blood in the sacred cause of our common country.

Colonel Stempkowski. Although I have grown grey in

our honourable profession, and might seem to have some right to the chief command: I forego this right, and, if a younger man than I am appears to be better qualified for that high station, our country's weal commands the sacrifice of self-love.

Drozewski (a Polish nobleman). We all know, colonel, and can appreciate your bravery and your virtues, and no one among the officers of the crown can dispute your right to the chief command; but there are Cossacks too amongst us, and it is well to ascertain whether Polish troops will obey the orders of a Zaporoguan Cossack, who, although young, might not be behind them in bravery, and might even surpass them in the knowledge of the localities and the resources of the enemy.

Major Kordisz. Never has a Polish noble, a noble of the regular army, served under the orders of a Cossack, whose habits, whose arms, and every warlike appurtenance, bear but little affinity to those of the Polish guard.

Nekrassa. I am very far from arrogating to myself any right to the chief command; and I would willingly place myself under the orders of Colonel Stempkowski, for though I was not born in Poland Proper, I am as much devoted to my country as others, and equally ready to yield up my life in its defence.

Stempkowski. Such language, Nekrassa, becomes a soldier. Lithuanian, Mazovian, Cossack, all are Poles, and he that aims at placing barriers of distinction between them, aims at disorganisation and anarchy, and seconds the views of Russia, our most terrible and implacable foe. Vernyhora will not, then, assume the chief command?

Vernyhora. To every thing there is a season. I have been engaged in many wars, and more than once have I commanded. Now that more than fourscore-and-ten winters have shed their snows upon my locks, I feel myself more capable of giving counsel than commanding.

Drozewski. There are not two suns to rule the day—neither must there be two chiefs to command an army. But we are wasting the time in deliberation, when we should be acting; when the foe, strong in courage, strong in the abilities of a chief, strong by despair, is ready to fall upon us; therefore,

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considering the circumstances and the recent victories achieved by Nekrassa, I will place myself under his orders.

All the Officers. We will follow your noble example.

Nekrassa. My brother soldiers! accept my thanks for the confidence with which you honour me. I accept the chief command, and, with God's help, we will overthrow the Haidamaques. Let us march forthwith to Teplique, where, according to the reports we have received, Gonta and Zelezniak are in force. The reinforcements which are to strengthen us under the command of Sobanski are an omen of almost certain victory.

Exeunt omnes.

SCENE IV.

Night.—GONTA, alone in a Forest.

Gonta. What do I behold?—who art thou?—hateful form!

Spectre. Thy evil genius.

Gonta (muttering). Why comest thou from thy unknown haunts thus to strike trouble into my soul? Be thou a spirit of the upper or the nether world—avaunt, and leave me in peace!—

Spectre. The Moscovite priests have for ever banished peace from thy soul—there is no longer any peace for thee on earth.

Gonta. Begone—glare not upon me with those terrible eye-balls——How the blood drips from them—those dread closed eyes—that awful paleness (*He sees twelve bleeding heads*)—those thin white locks on that old man!—Who art thou that thus terrifiest me?

Spectre. Thy evil genius.

Gonta. Shall I win the battle?

Spectre. If thy rival does not command the army which is to fight against thee?

Gonta. What will be my end?

Spectre. Consult the dark weird sisters once again, and for the last time.

The Spectre disappears.

Gonta. What, ho, there! hither, I say. (*A Cossack appears.*) Did you hear a noise?

Cossack. Nothing but the distant neighings of the horses and the hootings of an owl. The night is beautiful and serene.

Gonta. Where is Zelezniak ?

Cossack. He is sleeping beneath a tree, and muttering fearfully in his dreams.

Gonta (aside). He sleeps ! then he is less guilty than I. What sounds are those I hear ?

Cossack. The enemy is encamped hard by, and we are hemmed in on all sides ; to gain the Boh is impossible.

Gonta. False varlet, you lie in the very throat of you.

Cossack. Noble attaman, you do me wrong.

Gonta. What hut is that near yonder wood ?

Cossack. It is the dwelling of the witches ; and we all have a presentiment of some coming evil, for whenever we fought with the Turks, and bivouacked near the abode of witches, we were beaten ; several of my comrades have made this remark.

Gonta. Peace ! not a word of this ! Is it yet the dawn ?

Cossack. The eastern heaven yet wears no streak of orient red.

Gonta. Return to your post. I will hence and look to the sentinels.

SCENE V.—*A dark Cavern. A brazen cauldron upon a bright-burning fire. Vipers writhing, hissing, and spitting their venom into the sputtering flame. A black dog and several elves playing with owls. Thunder and Lightning.*

Enter THREE WITCHES, with owls perched on their heads.

First Witch. Five times I have heard the blind-hound's howl,

As he scented the corpse corrupt and foul
That floats on the Dnieper's tide.

Second Witch. Five times the fever-phrenzied maid
Vain throes hath felt, and now she is laid
In earth by her wooer's side.

Third Witch. Five times and five the owlet's lay
Hath warned us of our long delay.

All the Witches. Round the blazing fire let us whirl,
Round the light smoke's wreathing curl.
Then the ingredients in we'll throw,
While the seething waters glow.

First Witch. Head of grimalkin, that snatched from its
nest

Twittering swallow with blood-dropping breast.
Venom-sworn viper, that writhing on high,
Hungering gerfalcons bore to the sky.
Scorpion* hair-clad, by his ire,
That perished in the girdling fire.

All the Witches. Quick, let us dance, like whirlwind
twirling,

Around the sputtering flame,
Around, around.

Quick, let the enchanted bubbles whirling
Our charm's full strength proclaim,
Around, around.

Second Witch. Foot of dwarf, and giant's eye
Jaundice-stained by jealousy.

Hanged man's ear lopped off at night,
Tongue of priestly Moscovite,
One of that dread assassin brood,
Lusting for fellow Christian's blood.
Heart of strangled czar, that fell
Amid a people's mocking yell.
Water-snake from Pinsk's dank fen,
Mingle and mingle, again, again.

Bruise and pound.

Around, around.

All the Witches. Quick, let us dance, like whirlwind
twirling,

Around the sputtering flame,
Around, around.

Quick, let the enchanted bubbles whirling
Our charm's full strength proclaim,
Around, around.

* In the south of the Polish Ukraine, a hairy scorpion is sometimes met with. It is much more dangerous than that of Italy. The author, when a boy, saw one in the above country.

Third Witch. Lorn widow's tresses, plucked away
 From drooping head on nuptial day,
 Husband-reft by tusks of bear,
 Lurking in Lithuanian lair.
 Water-lily's pallid bloom,
 Wooing with lips of ashy hue,
 Drowning-man in dying doom,
 Thrown from bark by wicked crew.
 Little finger severed there,
 From hand of Samogitian fair,
 Despairing, pining, sighing,
 Weeping moaning, dying.

All the Witches. Quick, let us dance, like whirlwind
 twirling,
 Around the sputtering flame,
 Around, around.
 Quick, let the enchanted bubbles whirling
 Our charm's full strength proclaim,
 Around, around.
 Mingle and mingle, bruise and pound,
 Around, around.
 Let the vapouring wreaths arise,
 Screening from beholder's eyes
 Our flying messengers, whose might
 Helped us to make the charm aright.

Enter THE SORCERESS.

The Sorceress. Well and good! your deeds merit my
 praise. I foresee the end of my penance, and the day of
 liberty. Oh shade of my virtuous husband, whom I poisoned
 for the sake of an adulterous gallant that soon disdained and
 spurned me, I crave thy pardon. My crime, engendered in
 sombre night, I have expiated by a long and terrible atone-
 ment. (*A voice is heard* "I pardon thee.") *She falls into a*
convulsive fit.

All the Witches. Spirits of grim Pluto's reign,
 Gnomes and elves and spectres vain,
 Spirits of the dark blue deep,
 Spirits who by rivers sleep,
 Spirits of the bright red flame,

Your promptest succour now I claim.
 Quick to the task ! the task !
 Your readiest aid I ask.
 Come sisters, hand in hand,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for sea and once for land,
 Let us dance the mazy round ;
 Once for air and twice for sky,
 Let us dance around in mazy tread,
 Strong and sure is the charm we have made.

*An undefinable murmur is heard. Unearthly music.
 The cavern is darkened. Some one knocks.*

All the Witches. Open, and advance.

Gonta. Again those dark mysterious hags ! I conjure you, tell me what will be my end ?

First Witch. Thou hast listened to the counsels of a Moscovite.

All the Witches. Torment his soul ! come forth to view !

A hollow, rumbling sound is heard, and two phantoms of young children covered with blood, and wearing crowns of martyrs, make their appearance. The phantoms in a feeble but distinct tone, "Thou hast listened to the counsels of Russia—woe to thee !"

Gonta. Merciful God ! the forms of my two children, whom I murdered with my own hand. Soul-harrowing sight ! oh, Russia ! vengeance !

The spectres of the two children vanish—demoniac laughter is heard. Another phantom appears.

The Phantom. Gonta, Gonta, Gonta ! thou hast followed the guidance of a Moscovite priest—woe, woe, woe to thee ! Why didst thou murder me ? *The phantom disappears.*

Gonta (aside). It was Mladanovitch, the governor of Houmagne, once my friend. I will behold no more.

The demoniac laughter is redoubled. The spectres of two sisters arrayed in white appear ; then the ghost of a female more advanced in years comes into view.

The Spectres. By thy murderous agency, my mother and my sister were assassinated; and of my own death you were the guilty cause. Russia's counsels have misled thee—woe to thee! assassin! traitor!

Gonta (aside). Oh, agonising sight! it is Madeline! oh, pardon me. Why quails my heart before these spectral horrors, these mockeries unreal?

The spectre of an aged man, with pallid forms of males and females covered with blood pass by; then twelve men, each bearing a gory head. A gibbet, borne by two forms like furies, and the trunk of a quartered body, from which one hand had been lopped off. Gonta recognises this body as his own. Various supernatural forms—laughing hysterically.

Gonta. Oh that my eye-balls would drop from their sockets, that I might not, despite myself, glare upon these hideous visions! These are the men that perished in the massacre at Houmagne. Myself too,—oh awful spectacle!—I recognise.

He draws his sword and cuts the air in vain.

The Sorceress (recovering from her convulsive fit). Dost thou recognise me, Gonta? Eighteen years ago thou didst lead me from the path of virtue, and, to aggravate thy guilt, didst force me to poison the best of husbands.

Gonta. Ah, I recognise her—'tis she, the long forgotten Lucy!

The Sorceress. I have now expiated my crime, and I perish.

The cavern is suddenly darkened, and everything disappears amid the terrors of thunder and lightning.

Gonta (alone). Ho, there! some one hither. (*A Cossack comes at his call.*) Did you hear the appalling war of the elements? A subterraneous rumbling, and at times sounds that resembled mournful, deep-toned music?

Cossack. The night has been tranquil, and the stars have twinkled with unusual brightness, but at the sides of the

morning star, two mysterious dark masses of clouds are suspended, and the hut of the witches is in flames.

Feeble sounds of human voices are heard.

Gonta. Have then the witches been seen to issue from their dwelling? Clouds hanging on the morning star, say you? The prediction of the Sorceress! (*aside.*)

Cossack. No one has seen the witches escape: for aught we know they are burning to death.

Gonta. Perhaps I have been sleeping, and these but empty phantoms, with which sleep perturbs the wakeful soul! But, no! a sulphureous vapour still taints the air where the hell-born fiends have passed: may the earth yawn to swallow them, and bury with them their horrible predictions in the abysses of subterranean fire. What news of the army?

Cossack. The guard commanded by Branetzki has withdrawn.

Gonta. That is well, but who commands the vanguard that is near us.

Cossack. Nekrassa.

Gonta. False, lying knave! I believe it not.

Enter ZELEZNIK, SHVATCHKA, OFFICERS, and Haidamaques.

Zelezniak. An unwonted iciness has suddenly cramped and benumbed me, and dark bodements seem flapping their raven wings around me. I know not what it is that thus weighs upon my brain. Is it remorse? Away with such a thought! The earthquake, the pestilence, repent not of the ruin they have caused. A sacrifice, a blood-offering, grateful heaven, I have achieved my mission! and are my destinies hurrying down the verge of the final steep?

Reports of fire-arms, tumult and cries of "to arms!" interrupt him.

An Officer (rushing in). The vanguard is briskly attacking us.

Gonta. Then let us confront them. Order—But who commands them?

The Officer. Nekrassa.

Gonta. Nekrassa! A curse upon thy false tongue! It cannot be.

Zelezniak. If Nekrassa commands, a glorious opportunity for wiping away the stain of the defeat I sustained from him at Korsougne presents itself. Revenge! revenge! Great god of battles! permit me to cut down this upstart chief, this swollen gourd, the produce of a night, or may I perish as the vile canker-worm that crawls beneath its sheltering leaves.

Gonta (aside). I feel that the lamp of my life is burning dimly, and will in a few brief hours, nay, minutes perchance, consume the oil that feeds it. Like a Lithuanian bear I will die undaunted, although the hope of success has vanished. (*To Zelezniak.*) Make head against the attacking vanguard. I will support you with the reserve.

The clash of arms is heard, hostile combatants engage, an Officer contending with Zelezniak. They cross swords, and pause.

The Officer. Who art thou? thy name?

Zelezniak. Thy blood will run cold when thou hear'st it,—
Zelezniak.

Officer. Abhorred tiger!

They continue fighting desperately, and the Officer falls.

Nekrassa (in the mêlée). Where is the hyena of the Ukraine?

Zelezniak. I am here, and with thy life——

The mêlée separates them.

Drozewski (vigorously assailing Zelezniak). Blood-pampered savage!

Zelezniak. Hell-born monster!

They fight, Zelezniak falls by an unknown hand.

Gonta. On, on, Zelezniak, the day is ours.

A voice. Zelezniak is slain.

Gonta. Then all is over.

He retires, slaying several in his retreat. The Haidamaques take flight.

SCENE VI.

DROZEWSKI, NEKRASSA, VERNYHORA, STEMPKOWSKI, *Officers and Soldiers. A flourish of trumpets.*

Drozewski. At length victory is with us ; yea, as a flower on the bridal garland, it smiles upon and cheers us.

Stempkowski. To you, old as you are, such flowers must long since have withered ; yet, it appears, they have not lost all their fragrance ; but he that has fought like a lion is permitted in the exultation of victory to indulge in joyous comparisons.

Nekrassa. Oh, that our valiant brethren in arms, who have fallen in the battle, could gladden us with their living presence ! yet, perhaps, their spirits are hovering over us and sharing our joy.

Drozewski. The battle is not to the strong without some loss on their side. My son is not amongst us.

Vernyhora. Your son has fallen—three of the enemy had been swept down by his resistless sabre's might, when a musket-ball laid him lifeless beside the bleeding corpses of those he had slain.

Drozewski. He was my most cherished child. I loved him—he has died the death of a brave man ; it was his destiny to perish by so glorious a death. He has crossed the narrow flood that separates the mortal from the eternal, and peace be to his soul !

Stempkowski. What has become of Gonta ?

Nekrassa. I sought him everywhere amid the contending foe. Despairing of victory, he fled with a few of the Haidamaques from the scene of bloody strife ; twice I was at his heel, twice he escaped me. But now, unless the waters of the Boh have engulfed him, we will chase and capture him alive or dead. I have ordered a squadron of lancers to cross the river in quest of him ; we will search the neighbourhood in every direction, and make his escape impossible.

SCENE VII.—*A Forest.*

GONTA, SHVATCHKA, and a little BOY. *They are flying in all haste.*

Shvatchka. Look not thus despairing : we will cross the Dniester and the Dnieper too, and plunge into the heart of distant lands ; and we are provided with sufficient gold to live peacefully in some remote and solitary retreat.

Gonta. The time is past.

Shvatchka. How ? the time past ?

Gonta. We are surrounded by the Poles ; there is danger which ever way we direct our flight—danger with serpent-coils entangles our footsteps.

Shvatchka. Let us then go back.

Gonta. That would lead to our immediate capture ; we must conceal ourselves till darkness comes on, and then pursue our way.

Shvatchka. Can we not seek refuge amongst the forces of Branetzki ; he will perhaps save us.

Gonta. That would be throwing ourselves into the jaws of the shark ; he has changed sides, and is now exterminating the Haïdamagues.

Shvatchka. No matter ; he was my personal friend ; I will make my way to him. Wait for me at Groushka.

Gonta. Go then, and I will await you there ; use all your eloquence with him, and promise eternal silence : endeavour to persuade him to permit us to cross the Dniester.

The son of Mladanovitch (to Gonta). Why are you so sad ?

Gonta. My heart is sorely wounded.

The Boy. Why is your heart sorely wounded, when the weather is so fine—when you are not ill ?

Gonta. Because I listened to the Moscovite priest.

The Boy. The wicked priest ! But what soldiers are those yonder ? They are my father's soldiers. I will run to see him.

Gonta. Peace, boy ! speak not. Come this way, we must hasten to Groushka.

The Boy. To Groushka. Where, then, is my father and my little brothers?

Gonta. (*greatly moved*). They are dead—and are now in heaven.

SCHVATCHKA (*returning with hurried step*).

Gonta. What cause of alarm? why so soon returned?

Shvatchka. Branetzki was coming in this direction. I have seen him, and he bade me endeavour to cross the Dniester with all haste; but if, by any ill-luck, Stempkowski should intercept me, he told me that he had no power to save me.

Gonta. Not a moment must be lost. I have directed our Haidamaques, if overtaken, to state that we have fled in a different direction to that which we shall take.

Shvatchka. But there, by the river side, stands a lonely house; near it we may find means to transport ourselves in safety over the river. We may excite the compassion of the inmates, as the people consider us as martyrs. Let us knock.

Gonta knocks.

A voice within. Who is there?

Gonta. One seeking hospitable shelter.

The Peasant (*opening the door*). Hail, glory to the Saviour!

Gonta. World without end, amen (*crossing himself*). Grant us refuge from our enemies.

The Peasant. My hut affords no safety, for the whole country is overrun by Polish and Russian troops in pursuit of the Haidamaques. The Russians, though they call themselves our friends, are guilty of every depredation—they plunder, they pillage, they violate.

A tumult is heard.

Shvatchka. Let us fly. Stempkowski's troops are upon us, let us unmoor the boat, and cross.

The pursuing soldiers rush upon the stage, seizing Gonta and Shvatchka, whom they bind.

A Polish Officer. It is thou, serpent!

SCENE VIII.

JANIKOWSKI *aide-de-camp* of BRANETZKI. *Several Polish and Russian Officers.*

Janikowski (addressing one of his brother officers). I congratulate you on your capture. General Branetzki has given me a written order to the effect that, whoever should take Gonta prisoner, is bound to send him immediately, under a strong escort, together with his accomplices, to the headquarters at Kodnia, whither I am to accompany him.

The Officer. What child is that? Let him be taken from the monster, lest injury befall him.

The Boy (son of Mladanovitch, weeping). Take me not away; he is my second father.

The child falls on the neck of Gonta, who embraces him with tears.

Gonta. Take him, his tears and wailings wring my heart; more terrible are they than the tortures which I must soon endure. It is the son of Mladanovitch, who was massacred by my orders.

The boy is taken from him and led away.

The Officer (to Gonta). From what motive, monster, have you been guilty of the enormities laid to your charge? (*Gonta preserves a disdainful silence*). You will not reply. Think that you must soon appear before the Supreme Judge of judges, and that a sincere avowal of your crimes will perhaps lighten your punishment in this world as in the world to come.

Gonta remains silent for a while, he then weeps and sobs; his countenance then gradually assumes an air of sombre and calm ferocity—he makes no reply but by scornful gestures.

Janikowski. It is in vain to urge him. We will hence with him to Kodnia, where he and the partners in his guilt will be punished according to the laws.

They bear him away.

SCENE IX.—*The same.*

A Russian COLONEL, with other Officers, and some Cossacks.

The Colonel (to Janikowski). Where is Gonta?

Janikowski. There; without.

The Colonel. My soldiers also have assisted in capturing him; we therefore must accompany him too, to the place whither he is to be escorted. But he must be firmly bound hand and foot, otherwise he may escape.

SCENE X.

The Polish General BRANETZKI, with the Russian General KRETCHETNIKOFF, and their staff, Polish and Russian Officers and Soldiers. An Executioner. Priests and Judge.

Several Haïdamaques in chains. GONTA occupying the place of the chief criminal.

Branetzki (reads aloud). "We, Stanislaus Augustus, king of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Grand Russic Duke, having been apprised that Gonta, a serf belonging to the palatine Szczesny Potocki, promoted to the rank of colonel of the Cossacks of his master, instead of enjoying peaceably enviable advantages, excited the common people to revolt, plundered the town of Houmagne, killed with his own hand his two sons, committed incredible atrocities in our southern provinces, and was the cause of the loss of two hundred thousand souls in the Polish Ukraine, so far as even to threaten to disturb the good harmony existing between our states and those of the august Empress of Russia, our best and most faithful ally, order our troops commanded by General Branetzki, to combat by arms the peasant Gonta (who has dared to assume the title of attaman of the Cossacks, and to decorate his breast with Russian orders), and to employ all possible means with the Russian troops commanded by Lieutenant-General Kretchetnikoff, to suppress this terrible revolt, and to punish exemplarily the leaders of the Haïdamaques. As the Almighty has vouchsafed to shed his blessing on our arms, and as Gonta has been taken,

we order him to be executed as a parricide and a traitor. The peasant Gonta is to be smitten on the cheek by the hand of the executioner, as a seal of infamy; to have his hands struck off, and his tongue cut out; to stand upon a bar of red-hot iron during a quarter of an hour; and then to be quartered alive, inch by inch, in order that his bones may be thrown to the four quarters of the globe. The rebel Gonta is to be executed on the spot where he shall be taken."

*Warlike music is heard, flourishes of trumpets,
then the condemned march, slow and solemn.*

A voice. Russia ! Vengeance !

Gonta is led to execution.

Exeunt omnes.

THE END.

COSAQUE ET DZIUBA.

Allegretto.

LES ADIEUX DU COSAQUE.

T. C. JOHNS, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street.

