

itself was fresh and more refined, though the place had been used before the rest of the house where I lived. I was about to leave when the old man who had been with me came to wish him good-bye. He was a tall, thin man, with a long, thin face, and a very thin mustache. He was dressed in a simple coat and breeches, and a wide-brimmed hat. He had a very kind and smiling expression, and his eyes were bright and full of life. He said to me, "Good-bye, my friend! You have been a good host to me, and I thank you for your hospitality. I will never forget your kindness, and I hope to see you again some day."

"Good-bye, my friend! You have been a good host to me, and I thank you for your hospitality. I will never forget your kindness, and I hope to see you again some day." He said this with a smile, and then turned and walked away. I stood there for a moment, watching him until he was out of sight. Then I turned and went back into the house. I was still in a daze, trying to make sense of what had just happened. I knew that I had been tricked, but I couldn't figure out exactly how. I was confused and uncertain, but I knew that I had been lied to.

"Good-bye, my friend! You have been a good host to me, and I thank you for your hospitality. I will never forget your kindness, and I hope to see you again some day." He said this with a smile, and then turned and walked away. I stood there for a moment, watching him until he was out of sight. Then I turned and went back into the house. I was still in a daze, trying to make sense of what had just happened. I knew that I had been tricked, but I couldn't figure out exactly how. I was confused and uncertain, but I knew that I had been lied to.

"And why should you?" I asked the captain indifferently. "I am come with no harm."

"It might make trouble for us," he said.

"I know! On the contrary, his father and mother both will be grateful to you afterwards for giving him refuge with his family. They will be happy to see him if you could bring him back."

"Throughout this time, I have been thinking about it. I stood looking outside the window, and I saw the sky above me. Very

The colonel and his officers had long been awake and were all gathered in his quarters for breakfast when I came in. They were conversing noisily among themselves, but suddenly fell silent as they noticed me. The colonel approached me with a dumbfounded look, "Which troop are you in?"

I replied that I did not yet have the honor of being in any of them, but I had come to ask him for that favor. The colonel listened to me in astonishment, "I don't understand you. You are really not enrolled anywhere?"

"No, I'm not."

"Why not?"

"I haven't the right."

"What! What does that mean, a Cossack without the right to be enrolled in a Cossack regiment! What kind of nonsense is that?"

I said that I was not a Cossack.

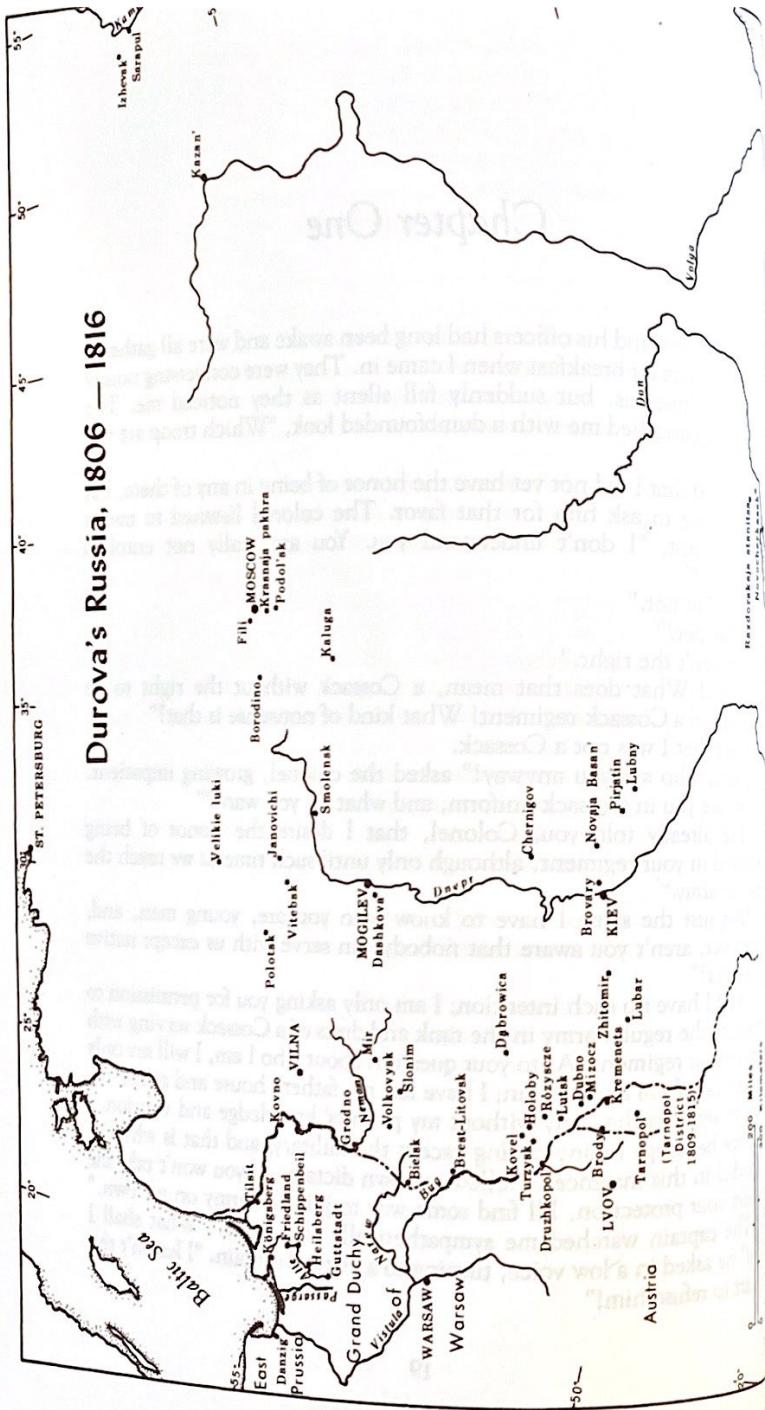
"Well, who are you anyway?" asked the colonel, growing impatient. "Why are you in Cossack uniform, and what do you want?"

"I've already told you, Colonel, that I desire the honor of being enrolled in your regiment, although only until such time as we reach the regular army."

"But just the same I have to know who you are, young man, and, moreover, aren't you aware that nobody can serve with us except native Cossacks?"

"And I have no such intention; I am only asking you for permission to travel to the regular army in the rank and dress of a Cossack serving with you or your regiment. As to your question about who I am, I will say only what I can: I am a nobleman; I have left my father's house and am on my way to serve in the army without my parents' knowledge and volition. I cannot be happy in any calling except the military, and that is why I've decided in this instance to follow my own dictates. If you won't take me under your protection, I'll find some way to join the army on my own."

The captain watched me sympathetically as I spoke. "What shall I do?" he asked in a low voice, turning to a grizzled captain. "I haven't the heart to refuse him!"



"And why should you?" answered the captain indifferently. "Let him come with us."

"It might make trouble for us."

"How? On the contrary, his father and mother both will be grateful to you afterwards for giving him refuge. With his resolve and inexperience, he will come to grief if you send him away."

Throughout this brief exchange between the colonel and the captain, I stood leaning on my sword, firmly determined, if I were refused, to get on my mountain-bred steed and ride alone to my intended goal.

"Very well then, young man," said the colonel, turning to me, "come with us, but I warn you that we are now on our way to the Don, and there are no regular troops there. Shchegrov! Give him a horse from our stables."

A tall Cossack, the colonel's orderly, started to carry out the command, but I made haste to take advantage of a chance to play the part of a soldier under orders and said, "I have a horse, your honor. I'll ride him, if you will permit it."

The colonel burst out laughing. "So much the better, so much the better! Ride your own horse. What's your first name anyway, my gallant lad?"

I said that I was called Aleksandr.

"And your patronymic?"

"My father's name is Vasily."

"So, Aleksandr Vasilevich, on the march you will ride always with the first troop, and dine and be quartered with me. Go to the regiment now; we are about to move out. Duty officer, order the men to mount."

Beside myself with joy, I ran to my Alcides and flew like a bird into the saddle. The spirited horse seemed to comprehend my rapture; he went proudly, arching his neck and flicking his ears rapidly. The Cossack officers admired Alcides' beauty and praised me, too, saying that I sat my horse well and had a fine Circassian waist. I had already begun to blush and become confused by the curious stares fixed on me from all sides, but this state could not be allowed to last for long. I quickly recovered and answered their questions courteously and plausibly in a firm, calm voice, seemingly quite oblivious to the general curiosity and talk aroused by my apparition among the Army of the Don.

At last the Cossacks had their fill of discussing and looking over my steed and me and formed ranks. The colonel came out, mounted his Circassian steed, and commanded, "To the right by threes." The regiment moved out. The first section, composed for the purpose of men with good voices, struck up the Cossacks' favorite song, "The Soul Is a Good Steed." Its melancholy tune plunged me into reverie: how long had it been since I was at home? In the garb of my sex, surrounded by girl friends, loved by my father, and respected by everyone as the daughter of

the town mayor? Now I am a Cossack, in uniform, wearing a saber. The heavy lance tires my arm, which has not yet reached full strength. Instead of girl friends, I am surrounded by Cossacks whose dialect, jokes, rough voices, and loud laughter all trouble me. An emotion like a desire to cry constricted my breast. I bent to the arched neck of my steed, hugged it, and pressed my face to it. This horse was a gift from my father. It alone was left to remind me of the days I had spent in his house. At last my conflicting emotions subsided. I sat up straight again and turned my attention to the sad autumn landscape, swearing with all my heart never to permit memories to sap my spirit, but to go my freely chosen way with firmness and constancy.

The march lasted over a month. I was delighted with my new situation. I learned to saddle and unsaddle my horse and led him to water just like the others. On the march the Cossack officers often raced their horses and invited me to test the speed of my Alcides against them also, but I love him too much to agree to that. Besides, my good steed is no longer in the first bloom of youth; he is already nine years old, and, although I am convinced that there is no horse in the entire Cossack regiment who can equal Alcides in speed as well as beauty, I am not so inhumanly vain as to exhaust my comrade for the hollow satisfaction of prevailing over the scraggy chargers of the Don.¹

At last the regiment reached the boundary of its lands and set up camp to await review, after which the men would be dismissed to their homes. The waiting and the review lasted three days. During that time I roamed the boundless Don steppe on foot with a gun or went riding. After the review, groups of Cossacks went their separate ways. It was a picturesque sight: a few hundred Cossacks, dispersing across the broad steppe, rode away from the site of the review in all directions. The scene reminded me of the scattered flight of ants when I chanced to fire a blank charge from a pistol into their hill.

Shchegrov called me to the colonel. "Well now, young man, our wanderings are at an end. And what about yours? What do you intend to do?"

"Go on to the army," I answered boldly.

"And of course you know where it is located? You know which road to take, and you have means for the journey?" asked the colonel with a wry smile.

His irony made me blush. "I will inquire about the place and the road, Colonel, and as to means, I have money and a horse."

"Your means are good only for the want of better. I pity you, Aleksandr Vasilevich! From your actions more than your words I've become con-

^{1.} Durova has taken seven years off Alcides' age as well as her own.

vinced of your noble origins. I don't know the reasons which have compelled you to quit your father's house at such a young age but, if it is really a desire to serve in the army, then only your inexperience can conceal from you the endless difficulties you will have to overcome before you attain your goal. Think it over."

The colonel fell silent. I was silent also, and what could I say? Threatening me with difficulties! Advising me to think it over! Perhaps that might have been useful to hear at home, but since I have already gone two thousand versts, I can only continue and, whatever the difficulties, conquer them with a firm will. So I thought, but I kept my silence.

The colonel began again. "I see that you don't want to speak frankly with me. Perhaps you have your reasons, but I haven't the heart to let you go to certain destruction. Take my advice, remain here with me on the Don for now. The protection of a man of experience is indispensable to you. For the time being I offer you my home; live there until we set out on the next march. You won't be bored. I have a family, our climate, as you see, is very warm, there is no snow until December, and you can ride for pleasure as much as you like—my stable is at your service. Now we will go to my house, and I'll turn you over to my wife before I go on to join Platov in Cherkassk.² I'll be staying there until the next march, which won't be long in coming. Then you can travel with us as far as the regular army. Will you agree to follow my advice?"

I said that I accepted his proposal with sincere gratitude. It didn't take much wit to see how advantageous it would be for me to reach the regular army without attracting attention or arousing anyone's suspicion.

The colonel and I got into an open carriage and set out for Razdorskaja stanitsa, which was his home. His wife was greatly overjoyed by her husband's arrival. She was a middle-aged, comely, tall, plump woman with black eyes, brows, and hair, and the swarthy complexion common to the entire Cossack tribe. Her fresh lips smiled agreeably as she spoke. She took a great liking to me and was very kind to me, marveling that my parents let me, as she put it, "gad about the world" at such an extraordinarily young age. "You can't be more than fourteen, and here you are, alone in foreign parts. My son is eighteen, and I let him go to foreign lands only with his father, but alone! Oh, God! What might not happen to such a fledgling? Stay with us a while, you'll grow at least a little, you'll mature, and when our Cossacks are off on the march again, you'll go with them, and my husband will be like a father to you." As she talked, the colonel's good lady was setting the table with various treats—honey, grapes, cream, and sweet, newly pressed, wine. "Drink, young man," said my benevolent hostess. "What are you afraid of? Even we women drink it by the glassful, and our three-year-old children drink it like water."

^{2.} Matvej Platov was ataman (commander) of the Don Cossacks from 1801 until his death in 1818.

I had never tasted wine before, and so I drank the nectar of the Don with great pleasure. My hostess kept her eyes fixed on me. "How little you resemble a Cossack! You're so pale, so slender, so shapely—like a young lady. That's what my women think; they've already told me you're a girl in disguise!" And with this, the colonel's wife burst out laughing artlessly, without in any way suspecting how well her women had guessed, and what a faint heart her words gave the young guest whom she was so cordially plying with treats.

From that day I took no pleasure in staying with the colonel's family, but roamed the fields and vineyards from morning to night. I would have liked to leave for Cherkassk, but I feared new questions. It was not hard to see how badly the Cossack uniform concealed my striking difference from the native Cossacks; they all shared a distinctive countenance, and therefore my appearance, manners, and even my way of expressing myself were the object of their curiosity and speculation. Moreover, as I found myself continually remarked, I often became confused, blushed, avoided conversation, and went off into the fields all day even in bad weather.³

The colonel had not been home for a long time; his duties kept him in Cherkassk. My monotonous and idle life was becoming unbearable. I decided to leave and search out the army, although my heart quivered at the idea that I could expect the same questions and the same curiosity everywhere. But at least, I thought, they would be somewhat incidental, unlike here, where I served as the continual object of remark and speculation.

I decided to leave the next day at dawn and went home before nightfall to inform my hostess of my departure and prepare my horse and gear. As I came into the yard, I noticed an unusual bustle and scurry among the colonel's servants; I noticed a great number of carriages and saddle horses. I entered the parlor, and the first person I met was the newly returned colonel. A crowd of officers surrounded him; none of them, however, was among those with whom I had come to the Don.

3. In the 1839 Notes (48–49), Durova recorded her impression of the Don Cossack's way of life: "Of the pure patriarchal customs of the Army of the Don in its native land, I found the most noble to be that all their lieutenants, captains, and even colonels did not disdain to work in the fields! It was with great respect that I watched these valiant warriors, who had grown gray in martial exploits, whose bravery made their weapons dreaded, upheld the government which they served, and did honor to the land where they were born—it was with great respect, I say, that I watched them cultivating that land: they themselves mow the grass of their fields, they themselves take it into stacks. How nobly they make use of the time when they are at rest from warriors' occupations! How can one not honor people whose entire life, from childhood to the grave, is dedicated to the good either of their country or their family? How can one not prefer them to those who pass the best years of their lives tormenting defenseless hares and giving their children's bread to packs of borzoi hounds?"

"Hello, Aleksandr Vasilevich," said the colonel in response to my bow. "Have you gotten bored here in our land? Gentlemen, permit me: this is a Russian nobleman; he will accompany us to our destination." The officers bowed slightly to me and went on talking about their march. "Well now, how have you passed your time, Aleksandr Vasilevich? Have you come to love our Don, and isn't there anything on the Don you've come to love as well?" The colonel accompanied this with a sly, ironic smile.

I blushed as I caught the sense of the last question, but I replied politely in the spirit of the joke that I had done my best to avoid becoming so attached to their beautiful land that I would pay for it with later regrets.

"You did very well," said the colonel, "because tomorrow at first light both we and you must bid farewell to our quiet Don! The Ataman regiment has been entrusted to me, and we have orders to march to Grodno province. There you will have a chance to join any regular regiment that suits you; there are lots of them there."⁴

At three in the morning I saddled Alcides and led him to the Cossack ranks. But since the colonel wasn't there yet, I tied up my horse and went into the parlor where the officers were all assembled. A great number of young Cossack women had come to see their husbands off. I witnessed a moving scene. Shchegrov, who was always at the colonel's side on the march, was with him on the Don also; his father, mother, wife, and three lovely grown daughters had come to see him off and once more bid him farewell. It was affecting to see the forty-year-old Cossack bowing to the ground to kiss the feet of his father and mother and receive their blessing, and afterwards himself blessing in exactly the same way the daughters who fell to his feet. This parting ritual was completely new to me and made a most mournful impression on my soul! "This," I thought, "is how children should part from their father and mother. But I—I ran away! Instead of a blessing, reproaches of aggrieved parents have pursued me, and perhaps. . ." Horrible thought!

Absorbed in these sad reflections, I didn't hear them all go out, leaving the parlor empty. A rustling noise behind me caught my attention and wrenched me from my mournful reveries most disagreeably. One of the colonel's women was creeping up behind me, "And why are you still standing here alone, young lady? Your friends are mounted, and Alcides is running around the yard," she said with the look and ironic smile of a true satan. My heart shuddered and suffused with blood. I made haste to get away from this *Megaera!*

4. The officer who commanded the Ataman regiment during the 1807 Prussian campaign was Stepan Balabin, which fits with Durova's use below of the initial "B." for her benefactor's son (*Voennaja entsiklopedija*, vol. 3 [St. Petersburg, 1911], 228).

The Cossacks were already in formation. Nearby my Alcides was pawing the ground with impatience. As I rushed to catch him, I met the colonel's stern gaze: "In your situation you should always be first; for you it's imperative, Aleksandr Vasilevich," he said, riding out before the ranks. At last the traditional "To the right by threes" set the regiment moving. Soon "The Heart Is a Good Steed" rang out again, and the scenes of our earlier life on the march were renewed, but I am no longer the same girl. Having aged a few months, I have grown bolder, and I am no longer thrown into confusion at every question. The officers of the Ataman regiment, better educated than the others, remarking in my deportment the courtesy that serves as a mark of good upbringing, treat me with respect and seek out my company.

In early spring we arrived in the little town of Druzhkopol on the banks of the Bug. The Brjansk Musketeers under Colonel Liders are quartered here also. The officers of the two regiments are often together. Their way of life seems deadly to me: they sit in a stuffy room from morning to night, smoking pipes, playing cards, and talking nonsense. The colonel asked me whether I wanted to enlist in the Brjansk regiment.

"God forbid, Colonel," I replied. "If there were only infantry on the terrestrial globe, I would never have come to join up; I don't want to serve on foot."

"Well, just as you please. You'll get your chance yet; you're still all too young."

I love to go out walking at night alone in the forest or the fields. Yesterday I strayed quite far from the town and was still on my way home well after midnight. Absorbed as usual in my thoughts, I was walking fast and paying no attention to my surroundings. Suddenly a groan, hollow and apparently coming from under the ground, broke into the nocturnal hush and my reveries. I stopped, looked around, and listened closely. Again I heard a groan and saw that I was ten paces away from a graveyard and that was where the groans were coming from. Not the least trace of fear perturbed my soul. I approached the graveyard, opened the enclosure, went in, and began walking around the graves, stooping and listening. The groans were resounding throughout the graveyard, and I went on from one grave to the next, until at last I ended up behind the church and heard to my surprise that the groans were being carried on the wind from the direction of a swamp half a verst away.

Since I had no idea what this could mean, I hurried to reach the colonel's quarters in time to catch Shchegrov awake and recount the incident to him. And, in fact, I found Shchegrov still vigilant and very angry. I was to some extent under his supervision, my prolonged absence

at night had frightened him, and so my story was very badly received. He told me with vexation that it was foolish of me to drag about graveyards at night sniffing the graves like a jackal and that this strange taste would end up giving me the pleasure of contracting the swamp fever from which a great number of soldiers in the Brjansk regiment were dying; and he ended his sermon by remarking that if, instead of coming to them just out from under my mama's wing, I had taken the time to let the milk dry a bit on my lips, I would know that the groans I heard came from a bird living in the swamps called a bog-bull—that is, a bittern. The old Cossack's grumbling took away any wish on my part to ask why this bird does not cry, sing, or whistle, but groans. I went to bed without another word.

The colonel's son studied with the Jesuits in Lubar. He invited me to visit him there to feast my eyes on the extraordinary girth and enormous size of two of his teachers. We are quartered ten versts from Lubar, and so I rode my horse there. I stopped at the tavern where the colonel always stays. Entering the sort of spacious room one usually finds in every tavern, I saw a young Jewess chanting her prayers. She was standing before a mirror, quietly whining her psalms while simultaneously blacking her eyebrows and listening with an ironic smile to a young infantry officer who was saying something to her in a low voice. My entrance interrupted this scene. The Jewess turned toward me, quickly looked me over, and came up so close that her breath felt warm on my face. "What can I do for you?" she asked, almost whispering. I replied that I was asking her to care for the horse I was leaving at her tavern.

"Will you be spending the night here?" she asked, still in the same mysterious way.

"I'll spend the night at the Jesuit monastery, or maybe here—I don't know for certain."

At the mention of the Jesuit monastery, she turned away from me without a word, ordered a worker to take my horse, resumed her previous pose before the mirror, and started humming through her teeth again, bending toward the officer, who once more began talking to her. I left them and went to make sure that Alcides was well placed. Seeing all his needs satisfied, I went directly to the *klasztor* of the Jesuit fathers.

The monstrous obesity of young B.'s teachers, the reverend fathers Hieronim and Antonio, was in fact horrifying to me. The huge mass of their bodies exceeded all probability; they were almost totally unable to stand, but remained sitting and recited the entire church service seated in their cell. Their breathing was like a hollow roar. I sat down in a corner and stared fixedly at them in consternation and a kind of dread. The young Cossack pinched his nose and stopped his mouth in order to keep from laughing out loud at the odd sight of me together with his two monsters in cassocks.

At last the call to supper interrupted the reverend fathers' pious rumbblings, the young scamp's grimaces, and my consternation. We took our places. The rascal B. whispered in my ear that hospitality obliged him to seat me between his teachers so I could have the full pleasure of their conversation. I tried as quickly as I could to sit down beside him, but I failed: a huge hand gripped mine, and a voice rang out in a low roar almost at the ceiling, "Wouldn't you like to take the seat between us? I beg you humbly, here, if you please!"

That supper was a genuine ordeal for me. Since I don't speak Polish, I didn't know how to answer my terrible neighbors to the right and left. Moreover, I had another fear, that of overeating on the delicious food of Poland. I was deathly hot, I blushed incessantly, and sweat stood out in drops on my forehead. In short, I was in torment and extremely comical. But at last the chairs scraped loudly, and the huge fathers got up. Their muttered prayers floated over my head like the distant rumble of thunder. After the completion of all possible formalities, I was overjoyed to find myself outside the monastery enclosure. My first impulse on going out the gates was to put distance at a near run between me and the walls of the hospitable retreat in which it was so melancholy to live and so difficult to breathe.

The Ataman regiment is on its way to Grodno. The Cossacks are sharpening their lances and sabers. There is no approaching Alcides; he snorts, frisks, and kicks. My good steed! What lot awaits us?⁵

We have arrived in Grodno. The regiment will be here for only two days, and then it will go abroad. The colonel sent for me: "Now you have a good chance to enlist in any of the cavalry squadrons forming here which suits you. But take my advice. Be frank with the commander of the regiment you decide to join. That alone isn't enough to get you accepted as a cadet, but at least you will win his favorable disposition and good opinion. And, meanwhile, make haste to write your parents to send you the necessary proofs of nobility without which you can either be rejected outright or, at the very least, remain for a long time in the ranks."⁶

I thanked him for the advice and for the protection which he had so long extended me and at last bade him farewell. The next day the Cossacks went abroad, and I remained behind in Grodno.

5. Napoleon defeated the Prussians at Jena in October 1806. The succeeding Russian movement into Poland was met by the French with the occupation of Warsaw in November. After a series of clashes culminating in the bloody and indecisive battle of Eylau in the winter of 1806-1807, the Russians and French withdrew to prepare for a decisive spring campaign in East Prussia.

6. A cadet—the Russians used the German word "Junker"—was a nobleman who enlisted as a common soldier.

Grodno. I am alone, totally alone! I'm staying in a roadside tavern. Alcides incessantly neighs and paws the ground; he too has been left alone. From my window I can see passing throngs of uhlans playing music and dancing. They are amicably inviting all the young men to join in their merriment. I am going to find out what is going on.

It is called the *verbunk!*⁷ God help me, if there is no other way of joining a regular regiment except through the *verbunk!* That would be extremely disagreeable. While I was watching this dancing expedition, the swordbelt-wearing cadet who was in charge of it (or, as they call him, the *namiestnik* or deputy), approached me: "How do you like our life? It's gay, isn't it?"⁸

I replied that it was indeed and walked away from him. The next day I learned that this regiment was the Polish Horse, that it was recruiting to bring the regiment up to strength after heavy losses in battle, and that it was commanded by a captain.⁹ Once I had gathered this information, I searched out the quarters of the deputy who spoke to me yesterday. He told me that, if I wanted to enlist and serve in their regiment, I could address my request to their Captain Kazimirski and that there was absolutely no need for me to dance with the throng of riffraff worming its way into the regiment. I was overjoyed by the possibility of joining the army without submitting to the odious ritual of dancing in the streets, and I told the deputy so. He could not help laughing: "But it's all done voluntarily, you see, and anyone who doesn't want to take part in our bacchanalia can easily avoid it. Would you like to come with me to see

7. The *verbunk* was a common recruiting ritual in Hungary and Poland. Denis Davydov speaks of printers dealing unceremoniously with his poetry "the way they used to recruit [*verbovali*] various tramps for hussar regiments: at noisy dinners and merry feasts, amidst uproarious revelry" (*Autobiography*, *Voennye zapiski* [Moscow, 1940], 36).

8. The "swordbelt cadet" in Russian was *portuej-junker*, a term applied to a cadet who had been promoted to sergeant and was eligible for and awaiting an opening for commission; the Polish equivalent was *namiestnik*.

9. In the reign of Emperor Paul I (1796-1801) three regiments of Russian light cavalry, all lance-bearing and designated from 1806 as uhlans (lancers)—the Polish Horse (Kon-nopolskij), Lithuanian (Litovskij), and Tatar (Tatarskij) regiments—were formed in the lands Russia acquired by the three partitions of Poland between 1772 and 1795. Paul wanted "to furnish a suitable occupation for the large numbers of Polish nobility" (Faddej Bulgarin, *Vospominanija* [St. Petersburg, 1846], part 2, 157). Durova was to end up serving in two out of three of these regiments. The light cavalry consisted of hussars and uhlans. Their functions were similar to those of the Cossacks; on campaign they made up the advance- and rear-guards, carried out reconnaissance and picket duty, and in battle covered the flanks of the infantry; in peacetime they were frequently assigned to patrol the borders. Uhlans carried sabers and a brace of pistols; the first ranks bore lances, and the best marksmen in the rear ranks had carbines (A. A. Kozhevnikov, "Armija v 1805-1814 gg.," *Otechestvennaja vojna i russkoje obshchestvo*, vol. 3 [Moscow, 1912], 67). That a captain instead of the usual colonel was commanding the Polish Horse is an indication of the severity of the death toll in the winter campaign.

Kazimirski? He'll be very pleased to acquire such a recruit. And, besides, I'll cheer him up for the rest of the day when I tell him about your misgivings." So saying, the deputy burst out laughing wholeheartedly, and off we went.

From the deputy's room we had to cross the large public room that, as I said before, is to be found in every tavern. It was full of uhlans and prospective recruits, all of them dancing and singing. I clutched the deputy's arm and tried to get through the noisy crowd as quickly as I could, but just then one of the uhlans clamped his arm around my waist, drew me into the circle, and with a stamp of his foot prepared to begin the mazurka in which a few couples were already capering and sliding helter-skelter. The deputy freed me from the arms of these enchanted dancers, his laughter redoubled by this unexpected incident. At last we arrived at Kazimirski's quarters.

Cavalry Captain Kazimirski is about fifty years old, with a noble and at the same time martial appearance. All the features of his agreeable face are imbued with good nature and valor. As I came in, he evidently took me for a Cossack officer, bowed politely, and asked, "What can I do for you?"

I said that I wished to serve in the Polish Horse and, since I knew that he was in charge of bringing the regiment up to strength, I had come to ask him to let me enlist.

"You, enlist in the Polish Horse!" said the captain in astonishment. "You're a Cossack. You belong to the Army of the Don, and you should be serving there."

"My attire has deceived you. I am a Russian nobleman and, consequently, I can choose any form of service I wish."

"Can you prove it?"

"No. But if you are willing to trust my word alone that I really am a Russian nobleman, I will know how to value your indulgence, and at the end of the campaign I pledge to furnish the regiment with everything necessary to confirm the truth of my words."

"How do you come to be wearing a Cossack uniform?"

"My father did not want to enroll me in the army. I ran away in secret, joined company with a Cossack regiment, and came here with it."

"How old are you? What's your name?"

"I'm in my seventeenth year. My name is Durov."¹⁰

The captain turned to one of the officers of his regiment: "What do you think? Shall we take him?"

"It's up to you. But why shouldn't we? There's a war on, we need men, and he promises to be a gallant lad."

¹⁰. According to her service record, Durova enlisted under the name of Aleksandr Sokolov.

"But if he's a Cossack and trying to escape his own folk for some reason by enlisting in a regular regiment?"

"It's not possible, Captain! It's written on his face that he's not lying. At that age they haven't learned to dissemble. Besides, if you turn him down, he will just go on to someone who won't be so overly cautious and you'll lose a good recruit. . . ."

This entire exchange was in Polish. The captain turned to me. "I agree to accept your word, Durov! I hope that your conduct will justify my trust."

I would have liked to say that it would not be long before he saw for himself whether I was worthy of the honor of being accepted as one of the warriors with the enviable good fortune of serving Alexander, but I kept silent, fearing they would take this as an unseemly boast. I said only that I had a horse and would like to serve on him if I could.

"Impossible!" said the captain. "You will be given an army horse. However, you can keep him with you until you get a chance to sell him."

"Sell him! Alcides!" I cried involuntarily. "Oh, God preserve me from that misfortune! No sir, Captain, I have money. I'll feed my horse at my own expense, and I won't part from him for anything on earth."

Kazimirski was himself a cavalryman from the cradle; my attachment to the best of wartime comrades pleased him greatly. He said that my horse could have a place in his stable and feed as well, I could ride him when we went abroad, and he himself would undertake to secure permission for me to serve on him. After this he sent for one of the uhlans on duty with him and put me under his supervision, ordering him to teach me to ride in formation, wield a saber, shoot, master a lance, and to saddle, unsaddle, pack, and curry my horse. When I have learned something about all of that, he is to give me a uniform and put me on duty. The uhan listened to the order and took me at once to the muster-room—which is what they call the cottage, sometimes merely a shed, where young soldiers are instructed in all that pertains to military service.

Every day I get up at dawn and head for the muster-room; from there we all go together to the stables. My uhan mentor praises my quick comprehension and constant readiness to practice evolutions, if need be from morning to night. He says that I'll be a gallant lad. I must confess, however, that brandishing the heavy lance—especially the completely worthless maneuver of swinging it over my head—makes me deathly tired, and I have already hit myself on the head several times. I am also ill-at-ease with the saber; it always seems to me that I will cut myself. I would more readily suffer a wound, however, than display the slightest timidity.

I spend all morning in training and then go to dine with Kazimirski,

who quizzes me with paternal indulgence, asking me whether I like my present pursuits and what I think of the military craft. I replied that I have loved the military craft from the day of my birth; that martial pursuits have been and will be my sole exercise; that I consider the warrior's calling the noblest of them all and the only one in which it is impossible to admit any vices whatsoever because fearlessness is the primary and indispensable quality of the warrior. Fearlessness is inseparable from greatness of soul, and the combination of these two great virtues leaves no room for vice and low passions.

"Do you really think, young man," asked the captain, "that it is impossible to have qualities meriting respect without being fearless? There are many people who are timid by nature and have outstanding qualities."

"I can well believe it, Captain. But I also think that a fearless man must surely be virtuous."

"Perhaps you're right," said the captain with a smile. "But," he added, patting me on the shoulder and twirling his mustaches, "let's wait for ten years or so, and also for your first battle: experience can be rather disillusioning."

After dinner Kazimirski lay down for a nap, and I went to the stable to give my horse his midday portion of oats. After this I was free to do whatever I wanted until six in the evening.

However exhausted I get from brandishing all morning that sister to the saber, the heavy lance, and from riding in formation and jumping obstacles, my fatigue passes after half an hour of rest, and from two to six I roam the fields, mountains, and forests on foot, fearlessly, tirelessly, and without a care. Freedom, a precious gift from heaven, has at last become my portion forever! I respire it, revel in it, feel it in my heart and soul. It penetrates and animates my existence. You, young women of my own age, only you can comprehend my rapture, only you can value my happiness! You, who must account for every step, who cannot go fifteen feet without supervision and protection, who from the cradle to the grave are eternally dependent and eternally guarded, God knows from whom and from what—I repeat, only you can comprehend the joyous sensations that fill my heart at the sight of vast forests, immense fields, mountains, valleys, and streams and at the thought that I can roam them all with no one to answer to and no fear of anyone's prohibition. I jump for joy as I realize that I will never again in my entire life hear the words: *You, girl, sit still!* It's not proper for you to go wandering about alone. Alas, how many fine clear days began and ended which I could watch only with tear-stained eyes through the window where my mother had ordered me to weave lace. This mournful recollection of the oppression in which my childhood years were passed puts a quick end to my cheerful capers. I remain downcast for an hour or so as I recall life at home, but fortunately I

recollect it less and less each day, and just the mere thought that my liberty is as boundless as the horizon makes me giddy with joy.

The captain has ordered me and one of my comrades, Wyszemirski, assigned to the first platoon under the command of Lieutenant Boshnjakov. The platoon is quartered in a landowner's impoverished village surrounded by swamps.

What a famished land this Lithuania is! The inhabitants are so poor, pale, gaunt, and dispirited that it is impossible to look at them without pity. The clayey land, scattered with stones, rewards poorly their laborious efforts to fertilize and cultivate it. Their bread is as black as coal and mixed with something prickly as well (gravel). It is impossible to eat; at least I can't manage to finish a single slab of it.

We have been stationed here for over three weeks. They have given me a uniform, a saber, and a lance so heavy that it feels like a log; they have given me woolen epaulets, a plumed helmet, and a white crossbelt with a pouch full of cartridges. It is all very clean, very handsome, and very heavy. However, I hope to get used to it. But what I will never be able to get used to are the tyrannical army boots—they are like iron! Until now I wore soft and deftly sewn shoes, my foot was light and free, but now! Oh, my God! It is as if I were nailed to the ground by the weight of my boots and huge clanking spurs. I would gladly order the Jew shoemaker to make me a pair of boots, but I have so little money. What cannot be changed must be endured.

From the day I put on my government boots, I could no longer roam around the way I used to and, since I am perishing from hunger every day, I spend all my free time in the vegetable patch digging up leftover potatoes with a spade. By working diligently for four hours straight, I succeed in uncovering enough to fill my cap. Then I carry my booty in triumph to my hostess to cook. This grim woman always tears the cap full of potatoes from my hands with a grumble, spills them into a clay pot still grumbling, and, when they are done, puts them in a wooden bowl and shoves them along the table to me in such a way that a few of them always roll onto the floor. What a malicious woman! She has no obvious reason to begrudge me the potatoes; theirs are already harvested and hidden away somewhere. The fruit of my indefatigable labors is only those which were left very deep in the ground or somehow escaped the workers' attention.

Yesterday my hostess was pouring milk when I came in with my cap full of potatoes. She was startled and I, overjoyed, began begging her most earnestly to give me a little milk with my potatoes. It was terrible to see the spite and hatred that swept across her face. Cursing roundly, she poured the milk into a bowl, tore my cap from my hands, spilled all my

potatoes onto the floor, and then, however, rushed at once to pick them up. This last action, the reason for which I could only conjecture, made me laugh.

Our platoon commander, Lieutenant Boshnjakov, has taken Wyszemirski and me into his quarters. Being well brought up, he treats us both as it becomes a gentleman to treat equals. We are living in the landowner's house. They have given us—our officer, that is—a large room separated by a hallway from the rooms of our host. Wyszemirski and I are the total masters of this chamber, because our lieutenant is almost always out and rarely sleeps at home. He spends all his time in a neighboring village at the house of an elderly landowner, a widow. She has a pretty daughter, and our lieutenant's valet tells us that he is mortally smitten with her. The wife of our landowner, a young lady of rare beauty, is very unhappy that her lodger does not stay in his own quarters. Every time she sees me or Wyszemirski she asks with a charming little burr, "What does your officer do at NN's? He is there from morning to night and night to morning!" From me she hears only one answer: "I don't know." But Wyszemirski finds it amusing to assure her that the lieutenant is afraid of losing his peace of heart and thus flees his dangerous quarters.

I have become accustomed to my fetters—that is, to my army boots—and now I run as lightly and tirelessly as before. But the heavy oak lance still nearly breaks my arm off in drill, especially when I have to swing it over my head. What a vexatious maneuver!

We are on our way abroad! Into battle! I am both happy and sad. If I am killed, what will become of my old father? He loved me.

In a few hours I shall leave Russia and be in a strange land! I am writing to my father where I am and what I have become. I write that I fall to his feet and embrace his knees, imploring him to forgive my flight, give me his blessing, and permit me to follow the path essential to my happiness. My tears fell on the paper as I wrote, and they will speak for me to my father's heart.

I had no sooner carried the letter to the post when the order was given to lead out the horses—we are moving out right away. I am being permitted to ride, serve, and go into battle on Alcides. We are on our way to Prussia, and, as far as I can tell, we are in no great hurry. Our marches are moderate, with halts as usual every third or fourth day.

On the third march Wyszemirski said that the next halt was not far from the hamlet of an uncle, with whom his sister lives and is being

brought up. "I'm going to ask the captain for permission to ride over there for a day. Will you go with me, Durov?"

"If they let me, I'll be glad to go," I answered.

We went to see the captain. When he heard what we wanted, he sent us off at once, merely ordering Wyszemirski to take good care of his horse and emphasizing to us both that we had to be back in the squadron without fail on the second day. Off we went. The estate of landowner Kunat, Wyszemirski's uncle, was five miles from the village where our squadron would spend the day and, although we trotted all the way, we did not arrive until the dead of night.¹¹ The silence was broken only by a monotonous knocking sound from inside the high fence that enclosed the spacious yard of the manor; it was the watchman making his rounds and hitting something against a board. The gates were not locked, and we rode unhindered into a smooth, broad yard covered with green grass. But as soon as our horses' hoofbeats were heard in the still of the night, a pack of loudly barking watchdogs instantly surrounded us. I started to dismount anyway, but when I caught sight of a new arrival running up to us, a dog nearly on a level with my horse, I got back into the saddle and resolved not to get down even if we had to wait until dawn for someone to chase away the beasts attacking us. At last the watchman came into sight carrying his clapper. He recognized Wyszemirski at once and was delighted. At his first sign the dogs retreated to their kennels. Servants appeared, brought lights, took our horses and led them off to the stables, and invited us into the overseer's house, because the masters were asleep and the doors locked tight all around.

I don't know how the news of Wyszemirski's arrival penetrated the locked doors of the house, but his sister, who was sleeping near her aunt's bedroom, heard of it and came at once to see us. She was a very pretty child about thirteen years old. She curtseyed solemnly before her brother, saying "Jak sie masz?" and rushed in tears to hug him. I couldn't understand the contrast.¹² They served us supper and brought rugs, pillows, straw, and sheets to make up beds for us. Panna Wyszemirska rebelled against these arrangements. She said that the bedding was unnecessary, it would soon be daytime, and her brother would surely rather sit and talk to her than sleep. The overseer laughed and gave her the choice of going to her room and letting us go to sleep or staying and lying down between us to talk to her brother. The little girl said, "Wstydź się, pane ekonomie!"¹³ and went away, after kissing her brother and bowing to me.

The next day they called us to coffee with pan Kunat. The imposing-

11. The distance is in Polish miles, which equal about $4 \frac{1}{2}$ English ones.

12. "How do you do?" (Polish) The formal manners of the Polish nobility within the family were frequently remarked on.

13. "For shame, honorable overseer!"

looking Polish gentleman was sitting with his wife and sons in an old-fashioned parlor lined with crimson damask. The chairs and sofas were upholstered in the same fabric and decorated with a fringe which had undoubtedly once been gold but was now all tarnished and blackened. The room had a gloomy air completely at odds with the kind and good-natured appearance of its owners. They embraced their nephew, bowed politely to me, and invited us to share their breakfast.

The entire family took the greatest liking to me. They asked me my age and where I came from and, when I told them that I lived not far from Siberia, Kunat's wife shrieked in surprise and looked at me with new curiosity, as if an inhabitant of Siberia were a supernatural being. Throughout Poland people have a strange concept of Siberia. Kunat looked up on the map the city where my father lives and assured me with a chuckle that I was mistaken in calling myself a Siberian; on the contrary, I was an Asian. I saw paper and pencil on the table and asked permission to sketch something. "Oh, gladly," answered my hosts. I had not practiced this agreeable art for a long time and was so glad to have the chance to draw a picture that I sat over my voluntary task for more than two hours. When I had finished sketching Andromeda on the cliff, I was showered with praise by Kunat's young and old. I thanked them for their indulgence to my mediocre talent. I would have liked to present the picture to panna Wyszemirska, but the elder lady took it from my hands, saying, "If you have no use for it, give it to me. I will tell everybody that a Polish Horse soldier, a native of Siberia, drew it!"

Kunat heard her. "Excuse me, my dear, you're wrong. Durov is an Asian. Here, see for yourself," he said, dragging the huge map over to his wife's table.

The next day we said goodby to the Kunats. They rode with us for about ten versts in an open carriage. "Sketch a landscape of our village, Durov," said Kunat's wife. "It will remind you sometimes of people who have come to love you like a son." I said that I would never forget them even without that. At last we parted. The Kunats' carriage turned back, and we proceeded at a light gallop.

Wyszemirski was quiet and sullen. His saddlebags were filled with various provisions and loomed over the flanks of his horse in two large mounds. At last he began talking. "Let's go at a walk; Uncle's gifts have overloaded my horse's back. Why did I go to see them? Strangers are dearer to them than family! They were occupied only with you, and I might as well have not been there at all. What good are relations like that!"

Wyszemirski's pride was suffering cruelly from the clear predilection his family had shown me. I tried to placate him. "What do I care, Wyszemirski, whether your uncle and aunt were occupied with me, when your sister never once glanced at me and never said a word to me the

entire time we were with them? Would you like to trade? You take your uncle and aunt's attention, and give me the caresses, tears, and kisses of your sister."

Wyszemirski sighed, smiled in a wry, melancholy way, and began telling me that his little sister complained of too strict custody and constraint. At once I remembered my life in my father's house, Mama's strictness, my cruel bondage, the endless hours bent over work; I remembered—and my face clouded with sorrow. I sighed in my turn, and the two of us traveled the rest of the way in silence.

Today our squadron rejoined the regiment. Tomorrow Captain Kazimirski must present us all for review by Major-General Kachowski, and tomorrow also we will all be assigned to other squadrons.

The review is over. Kazimirski had the courtesy not to put me in the ranks of the recruits, but presented me individually to Kachowski. He assigned me to the leib-squadron commanded by Captain Galéra.

At last my dreams have come true! I am a warrior! I am in the Polish Horse, I bear arms, and, moreover, fortune has placed me in one of the bravest regiments of our army!